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Comment

ONE may wonder whether the Ford Administration has taken the decision to re-escalate the war in Indochina, following the example of its predecessors. The events of the past few months give reason to suspect it: US warships have been cruising in Vietnamese waters; air force personnel were sent to South Viet Nam from the Philippines, Thailand or Japan; the 3rd Marine Division stationed in Okinawa has been put on alert; many US military officials, including Admiral Gayler, have visited Saigon and Phnom Penh; massive quantities of weapons and war material have been introduced into South Viet Nam and Cambodia for the puppet administrations; an airlift is being carried out between US bases in Thailand and Pochentong airport in Phnom Penh; SEATO forces' military manoeuvres were organized in the China Sea.

At the same time a vigorous propaganda campaign has been launched by Washington to give the impression that a large-scale offensive by North Viet Nam is imminent. Reconnaissance flights were carried out over North Viet Nam allegedly

to detect troop movements and the supply of war material to the South.

Emphasis has been particularly laid on the necessity of a supplementary military aid of 300 million dollars to Nguyen Van Thieu and 222 million dollars to Lon Nol, not counting the aid under the title of "Food for Peace". The military aid to Thieu is estimated to be worth 1,293 million dollars for the fiscal year 1976 and will remain at roughly the same level for the fiscal year 1977. Strong pressure is being put on the US Congress to approve these aids.

Ford, Kissinger, and Schlesinger have, each in turn, tried to throw responsibility for the eventual "loss" of South Viet Nam and Cambodia on the US Senate and House of Representatives in the event of the Administration's request being rejected. Once again the domino theory and US "prestige" in the "free world" are invoked; the content of the Paris Agreement has been so distorted that it is now taken to mean a new US commitment to the Saigon puppets. In brief, all the arguments already used by

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presidents from Kennedy to Nixon are being rehashed.

Nguyen Van Thieu and Lon Nol have been forced to retreat in face of the patriotic forces — but their failures are deliberately explained as the result of the reduction of US aid. Everyone knows, however, that, on the eve of the signing of the Paris Agreement, several billion dollars worth of armaments and war material were hurriedly introduced into Phnom Penh and Saigon and that, even after January 27, 1973, they continued to be sent there, in violation of the signed Agreement.

The puppet troops' defeat in South Viet Nam as well as in Cambodia must be attributed to the lowering morale of these troops, who are wondering why they should continue to die for interests that are not theirs. Their failure is also a result of the popular opposition to the puppet authorities who have been continuing to sow terror with their sweeps and "pacifi-

cation" operations, their arrests and imprisonments.

The crimes perpetrated last month by Nguyen Van Thieu were particularly significant in this respect. He struck against the Hoa Hao religious sect by ordering the dissolution of its armed forces. At a single blow, he decreed the closing of five newspapers, the confiscation of nine others, and the arrest of a score of journalists. Then he unleashed his police against a popular demonstration for the freedom of the press, wounding six Saigon deputies, priests, and journalists. On the occasion of Tet, he caused the war psychosis to increase by cancelling all leave for his troops, and appeared on television to call for a "fight against communism till the last bullet."

The obstinacy of Ford and his collaborators in supporting such a war maniac says much for the bellicose nature of the current US administration for whom the Paris Agreement

seems no longer to exist. However, just as Thieu is hated by the Vietnamese people — 48 Saigon deputies staged a hunger strike during the Tet festival, and wrote a petition in their blood to demand an end to the repression against the press — Ford and Kissinger have met with strong opposition from the American people: many Congressmen and many newspapers are protesting against their war policy.

It may be true that the American leaders are dreaming of resuming their military adventure in Indochina, but they cannot be unaware that times have now changed. There is no doubt that any such plans will end in failure. The Indochinese peoples have increased their strength tenfold over the past decade and the balance of forces has greatly altered since the conclusion of the Paris Agreement, which remains the only just basis for the settlement of the Viet Nam problem.

February 25, 1975

FACTS AND EVENTS

He Should Have Got A "War Prize"

OVER two years ago, when he negotiated the Paris Agreement, Kissinger made people believe that he was a hero of peace. Indeed, wasn't that the aim of the Agreement — to end the war and restore peace in Viet Nam?

The Nobel Prize Jury thus singled him out for its award.

But since the signing of the Agreement, South Viet Nam has never known a single day of peace, for the US has been going on with its military involvement and intervention. After Nixon, Ford is continuing to give Nguyen Van Thieu the weapons and dollars he needs for the maintenance of a "Vietnamized" war. The principal aide of both US presidents in this venture is Kissinger himself who is now putting his heart and soul in the battle for getting ap-

proval for an extra aid of 300 million dollars to Nguyen Van Thieu in the form of bombs and munitions.

Kissinger has thus shown to his naive admirers that they have been mistaken on his account. Nevertheless, for those who know him well, there has been nothing surprising in his behaviour. Without going any further back we may recall that, at the end of 1972, when the text of the Paris Agreement was ready for signature, it was he who advised Nixon to start the aerial blitzkrieg against Hanoi and Haiphong in the hopes of snatching fundamental concessions from the Vietnamese negotiators. On the occasion of the second anniversary of the signing of the Paris Agreement, replying to someone who was interviewing him, Kissinger

revealed that the main aim in the negotiations was to "pull out US forces from Indochina" and to "repatriate American P.O.Ws."

At the same time he made it clear in a State Department report that his Viet Nam policy is to "provide the South Vietnamese with the military means to defend themselves."

And early in 1974, this same man made a strange declaration when he affirmed that the Paris Agreement offers a legal basis for the US to continue its commitment towards Nguyen Van Thieu.

Kissinger has always been one of the chief instigators of the war which is now raging in South Viet Nam.

He should have won a "war prize."

From 1929 to 1930 :

The Birth of the Indochinese Communist Party

The end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930 was a time of upsurge for the patriotic and social struggle throughout Viet Nam. While the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois political groups and parties (like the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang — the Vietnamese Nationalist Party) disintegrated under the blows of the colonial administration, three communist organizations came into being in Bac Ky (Tonkin), Trung Ky (Annam) and Nam Ky (Cochinchina).

These organizations merged to form the Dang Cong San Viet Nam (the Viet Nam Communist Party), later renamed as Dang Cong San Dong Duong (the Indochinese Communist Party), and it fell to this Party to undertake the leadership of the Vietnamese revolution.

To commemorate the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Party, Nhan Dan published a series of articles written by Thép Moi. Large excerpts from these are given below:

THE beginning of 1929 saw an unprecedented growth in the new revolutionary forces in Viet Nam.

Not only Hanoi, but Saigon, too, was in a ferment. The Saigon-Cho Lon Workers' Association, dominated by the workers of the Ba Son arsenal, whose leader, Ton Duc Thang (1) had joined the Revolutionary Youth, was greatly influenced by the new movement which was expanding not only in State schools, such as Chasseloup Laubat, Petrus Ky, the Teachers Training School, the Girls' School, the Technical School and the Gia Dinh School of Fine Arts, but also in private schools. It was at this time too that the revolution established a base in the secondary school at My Tho.

To get an idea of the strength of the Saigon movement at that time, one may recall that, in 1929, Krautheimer, the Governor of Cochinchina, banned all distribution of playbills to advertise evening entertainments, for fear that this would be used as a cover to spread revolutionary leaflets. And this order was given just when the passion for Cai Luong (reformed opera) was at its height! Leaflets had brought the programme of the movement to every corner of the country. The records of local Party branches, documents of the French Security Bureau and public newspapers of that time (till mid-1930, authorised to publish news from police bulletins), all mention the appearance of revolutionary leaflets in big cities and towns during 1929.

In 1933, in Bac Ky alone, it is said that some 100,000 leaflets were distributed. But each individual leaflet was produced at the cost of untold difficulties and dangers: if captured, the distributor would be subjected to savage tortures and a heavy prison term, while even to keep a leaflet in one's possession was to risk one's life.

* *

Nguyen Cong Hoa (2) tells in his memoirs how he and two other unemployed young workers celebrated Tet in Haiphong in 1927. A short time before, they had found a job in a small workshop only to be cheated out of their salaries by the owner who fled to Hanoi. Thus, when Tet came they had nothing to eat and nothing with which to buy food. Unable to pay their bill, they did not dare stay in their boarding house. They decided to flee Tet and kill time in pagodas and temples, which would be crowded with pilgrims on Tet eve. Unfortunately, when they came to Ven pagoda, a robbery happened which brought on a police raid. They hurried away, thus arousing the suspicion of the police who made straight for them — and so the bursts of firecrackers which ushered in the Lunar New Year found them running for their lives to get away from the police. So "that night, we, three skilled workers, were forced to sneak into An Duong cemetery and take shelter in a tomb."

In this tomb, a question kept haunting them: why were they so miserable despite their working abilities! Then one day in Spring 1928, "an unprecedented event stirred up public opinion in Hai-phong: leaflets of the Viet Nam Thanh Nien Cach Mang Dong Chi Hoi (Viet Nam Revolutionary Youth League) (3) appeared everywhere calling on the people to overthrow the capitalists, colonialists and feudalists in order to wrest back factories for the workers and land for the peasants. We didn't know where these leaflets came from, but they kept on appearing and attracted us as a magnet does iron. From then on, we often got together to discuss the situation and kept a sharp eye out for new developments. Something was going to happen; that's what we all expected. And above all, we were anxious to make contact with Secret Societies. Our friends were numerous and we went to different places to try to find members of those societies but without success. We even sold our clothes to get money to send our friend Buu to Hongai for a clue. But Buu took a long time to reply..."

(1) Now President of the DRVN.

(2) Now Vice-President of the Viet Nam Federation of Trade Unions.

(3) Founded by President Ho Chi Minh in February 1925. The seat of its Central Committee was in Canton (China).

It was not only the revolution which was trying to draw in the masses, the working people themselves were ready for the revolution and actively looking for it. This helps explain the vigorous growth of the movement. When Hoa was finding jobs first in an oil company, then in the cement plant and then the brick factory, the young workers were already on the right tracks, believing that, if they went forward bravely with their own struggle the revolution would come to them. And this is what effectively happened. When such workers joined the movement, they brought along with them a spirit which closely bound the movement with life itself.

"I plunged headlong into the organization's activities, continued Hoa's memoirs, with all the pent-up energy accumulated during long years of misery and oppression. Tireless and fearless, with all the inherent advantages of being workers among workers, my friends and I animated the movement in Ha Ly quarter. It was not that we had exceptional talents, but simply because we were zealous and our force was always very big. My friends were those who had been through fire and water together and remained true to each other. We had worked in every factory and lived in every corner of Haiphong. We had had full trust in each other, even before joining the revolution. Now, in our mutual activities, this trust was continually strengthened."

Confided to the workers, the revolutionary leaflets were in good hands: "The workers were ingenious distributors of leaflet. Someone would stick a bundle of leaflets on the conveyer belt. When the machines were started up the leaflets would be scattered all round the workshop during working hours without incriminating any particular person. Others would put them on the roof of a car so that when the car moved they would be blown onto the streets. Sometimes, they would boldly cut off the electric current and take advantage of the blackout to distribute leaflets throughout the factory."

From the first leaflets that they received, several workers began to familiarize themselves with written words. The leaflets were used as spelling texts for them in study courses conducted by their fellow workers.

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Late in 1928, public opinion in the whole country was aroused by the French recruitment of labourers for the rubber plantations in French Caledonia and the other French-controlled islands. A newspaper of that time wrote: "The recruitment of coolie labour is an immoral but very lucrative enterprise. At the latest price estimates, every recruit brings the entrepreneur a profit of at least 15 piastres. According to official statistics, 40,000 coolies are shipped to the Pacific islands every year. No wonder that Mr. Bazin is carrying on his negotiations with the Government..." (the following passage was deleted by French censorship).

The whole of the Northern countryside, reduced to poverty by colonialist and feudal exploitation and continuous natural calamities, was teeming with recruitment agents. In Thai Binh, some peasants were induced to sign up as workers in the towns. When they learned that they were, in fact, recruited as coolies, they demanded to return home and were beaten to death by the agents. Brought to trial, the agents got away with a mere suspended sentence for "unintentional homicide."

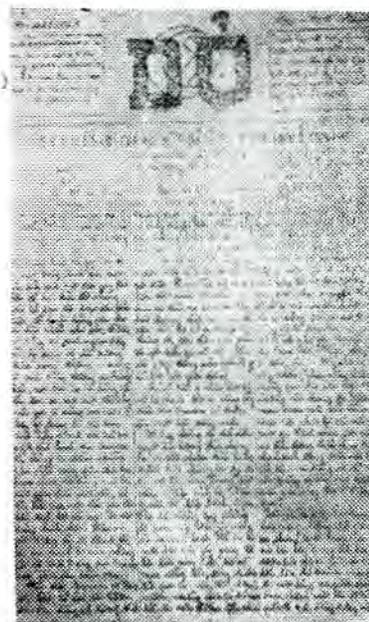
Poll tax was levied on male adults at a rate of 2.5 piastres each. The village chiefs of An Lap and Xa Cat, two villages in Thai Binh province, sold recruiters official demands for peasant forced labour at 10 piastres a head. The French, mandarins, village notables and overseers vied with each other to rob the poor and to trade in yellow-skinned people.

The situation was critical. The Viet Nam Revolutionary Youth League issued leaflets as a call to the peasants:

"Compatriots! Compatriots!

We've borne enough misery!
We've suffered enough poverty!

The French colonialists occupied our country and reduced us to buffaloes and horses. They exploit and oppress us ruthlessly: forced labour, heavy taxes, murder, imprisonment. Now they are trying to trick us so that they can send us to work as coolies in their rubber plantations in the Pacific islands. They want to use our flesh and blood to fertilize their rubber trees. Don't be taken in by their devilish schemes. Compatriots! Stand together and fight for your right to return to your village!



Front page of Do (Red), an underground newspaper. This issue dated October 30, 1929 expresses the desire of the revolutionary movement for the immediate foundation of a Communist Party.

Down with the colonialist recruitment of labour!"

The leaflets were distributed along Route No. 1 and Route No. 5, and at the landing places for ferry boats sailing to Nam Dinh and Haiphong.

Doan Van Trien, a member of the Vietnamese Nationalist Party (VNQDD) (4), one of those involved in the assassination of Bazin — later, when he was deported to Poulo Condor island he became converted to Communism — recalled that his friends in the VNQDD looked on the Communists' release of leaflets as an infantile game, a manifestation of cowardice and a lack of fighting spirit. It was partly in order to show their own revolutionary methods that the VNQDD decided to take action.

(4) A Party consisting mainly of petty-bourgeois, patriotic and reformist elements. Its revolutionary dynamism practically ended after the Yen-Bai uprising (February 1930). Many of its members later joined the Communist Party.

The last days of the Year of the Dragon (1929) was drifting away to be replaced by the Year of the Snake. The Hanoians had just finished making their offerings at the altars of their ancestors. The city was echoing with the banging of firecrackers. All this noise covered the sound of three gunshots. "It was Saturday, February 9. At 19.30 hours, as he was leaving 110 Hue Street, after visiting a girl friend, Miss Germaine Garcel, employee of the *Grands Magasins Réunis* (French-owned general department store), Mr. Bazin, director of the recruitment of coolies, was hit by three shots just as he was on the point of entering his car. Just before he was shot, two young men had been seen handing him a note written in French: "Vampire. You are scattering Vietnamese over all corners of the globe." (Report from a newspaper of that time).

After the assassination of Bazin, the French tried to mislead public opinion by attributing the cause of the incident to competition among recruiters of coolie labour. They used this as a pretext to arrest some of the sons of Bach Thai Buoi (5). Then, they rounded up the members of the VNQDD: 40 soldiers, 39 businessmen, 37 landowners, plantation owners and medical practitioners, 36 teachers, 10 shop assistants, 6 students and 2 teachers of Chinese characters.

Then came the treachery of Sergeant Duong, a member of the VNQDD Central Committee, whose father was a Frenchman. Duong disclosed all that he knew to the French. A sum of five thousand piastres was offered for the capture of Nguyen Thai Hoc, the Party Chief. Between the end of March and the beginning of April, the French Security Bureau made another round-up at the "Viet Nam Hotel", the fundraising enterprise of the VNQDD.

While the VNQDD sought funds in hotel-keeping, the Youth League kept a garage and car-hire firm in Hanoi at No. 20, General Bichot Road (today Eastern Gate Street) as a source of financial support and a liaison centre. It was looked after by Do Ngoc Du alias Phiem Chu, who may well be considered our Party's first economics cadre. Still in his twenties, Phiem Chu had great gift for organisation. At his request, a number of first-class mechanics

were sent in by the League to serve as his assistants. Among them was Tran Trong Hoan, a skilled turner at the Nam Dinh Textile Mill. Not only was he highly reputed for his craftsmanship at every factory where he had worked, he was also known as a staunch fighter and a highly-valued cadre. When the French made a raid on the shop, he was arrested. Though savagely tortured, he said nothing about the Party, insisting that he was only a hired employee, thus enabling Phiem Chu to make his escape and obliging the Criminal Court of Kien An province to acquit him on the grounds of insufficient proof. Following his release, Hoan became the Party Secretary for Haiphong, just at a time when the revolutionary movement was facing its gravest difficulties. As for Phiem Chu, he really knew about business. With very limited funds he bought broken-down old cars, had them repaired and put them into use again. His cars went regularly to and fro on the roads between Hanoi and the northern frontiers. Thus, he fulfilled the twofold task of establishing a communication network and raising funds for the League.

No one now remembers how many cars there were at our "base" at No. 20, General Bichot Road. But we may have an idea about the number from the fact that Phiem Chu could manage to carry all the provincial delegates in his own cars to an important All-Tonkin Conference held at Borel plantation in Ba Vi (now in Ha Tay province) in April 1929.

Events began to move quickly.

At this juncture, though, the National Committee of the Youth League had not agreed on the founding of a Communist Party. This was told us by Tran Van Cung (6) in a report to the Bac Ky Youth League Committee on his return from Hong Kong in January 1929 where he was supposed to be attending a preparatory meeting for a National Congress of the League (the preparatory meeting did not, in fact, take place as planned). This news, however, could not prevent the progressive elements of the League who were in control of the Bac Ky Committee from forming the first communist cell at a meeting at No. 5D Ham Long Street in Hanoi. But they continued to use the Bac Ky Committee as the vehicle through

which to direct the revolutionary movement.

The All-Tonkin Conference of the Youth League at Borel plantation marked a unanimity of views of the most numerous division (or *Ky*) of the three divisions of Viet Nam. On the question of founding the Party, there was keen discussion which lasted throughout the final night of the Conference. Everyone was eager to see the Party founded. Finally, the Conference endorsed the 8-man Ham Long cell's proposal on how to proceed with the matter. Under this proposal, the question would be raised at the National Congress when all the three divisions and the Central Committee would be represented. In the meantime, the Bac Ky Committee decided to push ahead with the "proletarianization" campaign (7), develop the workers' and peasants' associations, intensify communist education and step up the struggle of the masses. At the same time preparations would be made for the founding of the Party; the Ham Long "nucleus" was entrusted with drafting the Party manifesto, political programme, regulations and draft organizational structure.

The Conference decided to dispatch a 4-man delegation including Tran Van Cung and Ngo Gia Tu (8) to the Youth League National Congress, due to be held in May 1929, in Hong Kong.

(5) One of the first Vietnamese bourgeois engaged in shipping and mine exploitation who was made bankrupt by the colonial administration.

(6) Alias Quoc Anh, one of the eight founders of the first communist cell in Viet Nam (end of March 1929).

(7) Members of the Viet Nam Revolutionary Youth League had, since 1928, to work in factories, mines, plantations, etc., in order to train themselves and to engage in agitation and organizational work among the workers.

(8) Ngo Gia Tu, alias Ngo Si Quyet, an outstanding leader of the Indochinese Communist Party, one of the founders of the first communist cell, Secretary of the Nam Ky Party Committee. He was arrested by the colonial administration at the end of 1930 and was killed at sea in an attempted escape from Poulo Condor in January 1935.

Ngo Gia Tu, one of the founding members of the Communist Party of Indochina

An issue of Bua Liem (Hammer and Sickle), central organ of the Party

No. 5D Ham Long Street, office of the first communist cell in Hanoi



As the Central Commission for the Study of Party history has remarked, the objective necessity of founding a genuine political party of the working class "was not recognized at that time by all the national leadership of the League." The national leadership was too far distant and was out of touch with the situation within the country. Some delegates from Trung Ky and Nam Ky supported the moves to establish the Party but the majority of delegates from these two divisions had not fully grasped the urgency of the question. The political ideology and degraded conduct of Lam Duc Thu (9) also helped to delay the historical process.

Facing the Bac Ky delegates' resolute demand for the founding of the Party, Lam Duc Thu made maximum use of his authority: "As Chairman of the Congress, I declare a suspension on all discussion on the question of founding a Communist party. Whoever wishes to form such an organization may leave and discuss it somewhere else."

Fully conscious of the historical significance of the founding of the Communist Party, Ngo Gia Tu, after a brief exchange of ideas with Tran Van Cung, rose to his feet and said: "On behalf of more than 900 Bac Ky members out of over 1,500 members of the

whole country, we have put forward our proposal but we have failed to win the Congress approval of it. If we remain here, we don't know what account we shall give to those who have mandated us to form a Communist Party. As we cannot fulfil our mandate, we declare our dissociation from the Congress."

Lam Duc Thu was taken by surprise. He frowned. Comrade Tu looked into his eyes and then turned to address his fellow-delegates: "We used to study communism together in the past. We will meet again in our work so long as we still share a common cause."

So they walked out. This was a courageous action on their part, all the more so as another of the Bac Ky delegates, Duong Hac Dinh (10), frightened by Lam Duc Thu's authority, deceived by his trickery and fearing that once away from Thu he would have no money for the journey home, finally decided to remain with Thu. (In later years, Dinh was to sink even deeper in the mire of betrayal). Comrades Tu, Cung and Nguyen Tuan alias Kim Ton, another member of the Bac Ky delegation, with barely twenty piastres in their pockets, were now to be seen wandering around Hong Kong, Thu's "domain",

where comrade Cung had once been with him for some time; he had disliked his luxurious style of life in his comfortable house on the hill but had never suspected that Thu might turn out to be a traitor. But even then both Cung and Tu had kept their distance from Thu. Now, although they had little money, they had to spend that night in a hotel room. Having locked themselves in, they took care to hang a copper basin onto the knob of the door hoping this would give them some warning in case Thu might send his agents to assassinate them.

In the end Tu was able to borrow some money to cover the journey home from a Vietnamese who was teaching in Pei-hai. The teacher agreed to lend them money on condition that he was to be refunded immediately after

(9) Member of the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Revolutionary Youth League. An opportunist, he did a lot of harm to the Central Committee's activities and later betrayed the League.

(10) Member of the Bac Ky Committee of the Revolutionary Youth League. After being expelled from the League, he was arrested by the French colonialists and later worked for them.

Tu arrived home. On their arrival in Haiphong, Tu asked Mrs. Vinh, a nurse and a sympathizer of the Youth League, for help. She unhesitatingly disposed of her wedding bracelets for the sum Tu wanted.

Back in Hanoi, Tu and Cung made a report on their mission and issued a statement on their dissociation from the Youth Congress. The pioneer communist cell (now less Duong Hac Dinh, expelled, but with two new members, Nguyen Phong Sac (11) and Tran Tu Chinh alias Bung Thong) proceeded with the preparations for the founding of the Party. The drafting of documents under the care of Trinh Dinh Cau (12) and Nguyen Dac Canh (13) had been to some extent completed.

In December 1922, the U.S. imperialists bombed Kham Thien Street (Hanoi), thousands of our fellow-countrymen were killed or wounded, and thousands of houses were destroyed on the odd-numbered side of the street. The only house with an even number which was destroyed was the No. 312. It was here that twenty delegates of the newly founded communist organizations in Bac Ky decided to found the Communist Party of Indochina (14) on June 17, 1929. The Conference was held for several days during which the delegates adopted the Manifesto which set forth the fundamentals of Communism, analysed the situation in the country and criticized the other groups' viewpoints while refuting the allegations of enemy propaganda. Here the strategy and tactics of the Vietnamese revolution were drafted. Lacking the time to go more deeply into every problem, the conference only adopted some slogans which summarized the Party's political programme. The Conference also worked out the Party regulations based on the model regulations of the Third Communist International. After the founding of the Party, the leaders were sent to various parts of the country to set up new party branches. They decided to meet again on the following Tet to develop the party's line and make it more concrete.

"The birth of the Communist Party of Indochina gave a great impetus to the Communist movement in Indochina." (*Forty-five years' activities of the Viet Nam Workers' Party*, edited by the Central Commission for the Study of Party History).

While the Communist Party of Indochina was being founded,

public opinion in the country was anxiously following the course of some trials which were being held. The French rulers forced the newspapers to make daily reports on the cases. In addition to this long-term policy to terrorize the people, the Governor General Pasquier was intensifying his repressive measures. In early July, 1929 when the Nguyen An Ninh (15) case was brought to court in Nam Ky, the VNQDD was standing trial in Bac Ky. At the trial, Mr. Ninh appeared wearing a white jacket and holding a table cloth in his hand; he was barefooted. During the trial, a young man named Pham Van Kiem whipped out a pistol and fired at the face of the French judge.

At the trial of the VNQDD in Hanoi, from July 3rd to 7th, 1929, the presiding judge was Bride. In this trial we were to see clearly all the devious tricks of this judge. He had studied carefully all the files and documents relating to the case. When he needed any material, he sent a man over at once to the Archives Department of the Governor General's Office to fetch it. Anh with the original text in hand, he questioned the defendants and argued with them in order to prove the intellectual superiority of France. He cleverly confronted the VNQDD 1928 regulations with those of 1929, in an attempt to divide the ranks of those standing trial, and show up the inconsistent and vague character of their party's line (16).

The hardest blow dealt at the VNQDD was the disclosure of the case of the "Viet Nam Hotel". Bride made public a letter written by Nguyen Van Lung, alias Giao Lung (Teacher Lung), who had been manager of the hotel in succession to Nguyen Van Kinh (Kinh had been suspected of betraying the party and murdered by Ky Con (Little Ky) at the Botanical Garden). In his letter, sent to the VNQDD Hanoi Committee, Lung complained that the party was in danger of going bankrupt due to the fact that many members brought their friends and relatives to the hotel to dine and refused to pay. Some of them had brought prostitutes to the hotel and occupied rooms to smoke opium. Corruption and waste was rampant and the whole party organization was in disorder. Secret agents had managed to worm their way into its inner councils. The party's budget suffered a deficit of 2,000 piasters. The prosecutor remarked in conclusion: "In this new type highwaymen's tavern,

extravagance, drinking, prostitution and revolution went hand in hand."

The good elements in the VNQDD who were still at large decided to restore the party's reputation. Nguyen Thai Hoc was given a twenty-year prison sentence in absentia.

As Nguyen Thai Hoc was outlawed, the party elected To Chan, comrade To Hieu's (17) elder brother, as the head of the party. He determined to achieve the supreme objective of the VNQDD at that time — the assassination of Governor General Pasquier. As the attempt failed he was sentenced to life imprisonment. But this prison sentence later brought To Chan to the side of Ngo Gia Tu, and this is the image of To Chan we shall always remember — that of the staunch Communist who stood firm by the side of Ngo Gia Tu.

(to be continued)

THEP MOI

(11) Member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Indochina (The Bac Ky communist organization) and later member of the Indochinese Communist Party. He led the Soviet movement in Nghe Tinh in 1930-1931. He was arrested and killed in May 1931 by the colonial administration.

(12) One of the founders of the first communist cell.

(13) One of the founders of the first communist cell, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Indochina, he was in charge of the Tong Cong Hoi Do (the Federation of Red Trade Unions).

(14) Communist organization founded on June 17, 1929 largely by members of the first communist cell in Hanoi. Its forerunner was the Viet Nam Revolutionary Youth League. It operated mainly in Bac Ky and in the northern provinces of Trung Ky.

(15) A patriot who enjoyed a great prestige among the progressive intelligentsia of the time.

(16) In its 1928 constitution, the VNQDD advocated the "social democratic" revolution. In 1929 it adopted the slogans of the French revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity.

(17) Member of the Bac Ky Committee of the Communist Party of Indochina. Arrested by the colonial administration he was deported to Poulo Condor and then to Son La prison and died in March 1944.

People's Militiawoman and Party Member

Vu thi Thanh Nham, 28, is deputy-chief of the people's militia of Nghia Thang commune, Nam Ha province.

In the resistance war against US aggression, she distinguished herself in many exploits chiefly in the destruction of magnetic bombs by rudimentary means.

She was made heroine of the people's armed forces on September 3, 1973.



Militiawoman

Everything was new for her in the people's militia. Certainly, it was more difficult than learning how to till the land and the men would make fun of her whenever she was awkward at carrying out one of the regulation movements. However the company leader and other militia-women — the old hands — did everything they could to help her. Little by little she revealed herself as someone of intelligence and efficiency. At the end of the course, she passed the exam with flying colours and was appointed a platoon leader.

The young men were leaving for the front in greater and greater number. The rural administration decided to set up a section of militiawomen and chose her to command it. First of all she had to find some new recruits. It was not an easy job. However she was confident of success — the young village women were brave and hard-working, they were putting up a good show in their houses in the absence of their husbands. And then "if men can handle a gun, why not women?" She knocked at every door.

"Sorry, I've a baby and my husband is away. I'm busy all the time", replied Khai, a Catholic.

"We'll help you do the house-work", Nham insisted. "You

only have to attend drills and meetings regularly, you'll be exempted from patrol duty and night watch. At the front, your husband will be only too pleased to learn that you are also taking part in the common fight."

However the others were not so easily persuaded. Nham realized that she must practise what she preached by finding a balance between her activities in the militia, production and housework. Her family was short-handed. Her father, a fisherman, sometimes kept at sea for months on end. She had to do everything alone — working at the cooperative, caring for her old mother and looking after the house. Every evening was taken up by militia activities so she could only work in the day time. She willingly accepted the most difficult jobs, working in the hardest winter days or late into the night, so as to be able to get a number of work-points equal to those of an average worker. When she was on night duty she would work at sunset or before the sun rose to grow azolla for the cooperative or look after her pigs and poultry. At noon, she did miscellaneous works at home and attended to her kitchen garden. Whenever she had a few moments free she would lend a hand to large families or those whose father was at the front.

SHE went to see Chinh off. She would have liked to go in place of her younger brother or at least to join up on the same day as he. She, whose stormy temper was well known around that region at the mouth of the River Ninh, now appeared to be feeling anxious.

Soon Johnson unleashed his aero-naval war against North Viet Nam. Living on the seacoast, she and her fellow villagers quickly realized the cruel and odious character of the enemy. Each time she saw squadrons of planes flying over her village to bombard Hanoi or Nam Dinh, she felt a lump in her throat. She made up her mind to join the people's militia.

These efforts gave more weight to her words. The young country women held her in esteem and followed her example.

The section of militiawomen saw its numbers growing. By day she would be on the look out for enemy planes; at night she would haul her artillery piece to the

water's edge ready to bombard any warships or commando boats which should venture into this region.

On March 18, 1966, together with the militia of a nearby commune, her section downed an American plane. It had been one year on the job.

Destruction of Time Bombs

One day, at dawn, while the farmers had just gone to the fields and the fishermen were at sea, five A7s flew over dropping time bombs and mines on the river mouth. From her CP beyond the dyke, Nham mentally counted the number of bombs released and marked their point of impact. She handed over her duty to her companion and hurriedly gathered wooden boards on which she wrote the words: "Prohibited zone." Then she took a raft and stuck up the boards. Unfortunately, as she was on her way back several bombs exploded at once, hurling her onto the shore.

Her ears sang. Around her was the broad expanse of water with nobody in sight. When she came to, the sun was at its zenith. But thanks to the boards, before the sun went down the fishing boats returned safe and sound.

The extraordinary meeting of the Commune's Party Committee which ended late in the night took the decision to set up a team for the de-activation of time bombs, and appointed Nham team leader. That token of confidence enraptured her, but she wondered whether her mother would give her consent. Would anyone agree to join her team?

Aware of her recent accident, some neighbours advised her against accepting the assignment.

However she thought to herself: "Someone will teach me to destroy the bombs, I'm the section leader — if I refuse who will shoulder the burden for me?"

In the beginning, her mother objected. For nights on end, in response to the old mother's opposition, she would whisper per-

suasions into her ears: "You have let Chinh go to the front, mama, so let me join the fight too. Now that the Yankees drop bombs on the seacoast, we must find means to destroy them. It's a matter of life and death. All over the country everyone's joining in the fight. That's the only way to drive them away so that Chinh will be able to return home. The soldiers will show me how to destroy the bombs. Don't worry."

The mother gradually calmed down. The first girl Nham recruited for her team was Cay. On seeing Nham come in, Cay's mother said to her face: "I'll never let my daughter go. She'll be killed by the bombs and then who will compensate me?"

Nham could see it was going to be a tough job persuading them. She asked Cay straight out: "The rural administration has taken this decision. Our youth organization has chosen you as one of the team. What do you think of it?"

"You see, my mother won't allow me to go. Anyhow I'd never be able to tackle it, I'm afraid!"

Nham was not discouraged. She knew very well what a good militiawoman Cay was, and how she had devoted herself to this work ever since the beginning. So she made a new attempt. "Don't worry, Cay! We're all going to tackle it. Before, who would have believed that we could have shot down enemy planes! And there, we grounded one, didn't we?"

The following days Nham returned to the charge. Finally Cay's mother listened to reason and let her daughter join the team.

In fact all the girls contacted were unwilling at first. What

would become of them if they lost an arm, a leg or an eye? For men it was no problem but for young girls it's not so easy.

After weighing the pros and cons, all of them agreed to join the team to defend their village and help the resistance.

A team of five girls was set up for the destruction of bombs.

The enemy was attacking day and night. Hundreds of submarine mines, time bombs and magnetic bombs of various types were being dropped. With a naval unit, the team took part in the de-activation of bombs and detection of mines to "learn on the job". For the first five nights nothing happened. But over the next five they succeeded in blowing up ten bombs at the mouth of the river.

With the experience gained, Nham suggested that a raft with the necessary devices be made for this work. The proposal was accepted.

One morning, the team made a sortie under Nham's command. She steered the boat. La took charge of reconnaissance. Dan controlled the raft. Cay and Vung were in charge of first aid if necessary. They spent hours and hours at the river mouth. No explosions. Nham stopped the boat and asked her friends: "We're hungry and cold... Shall we continue or return home?" Everyone decided to go on with the work, even in the night. The later it got, the more windy it grew, the tide grew higher and the air colder. Nham strained her eyes and turned the raft towards the deep water. At every moment, the frail raft ran the risk of going down. It was far from the shore. Suddenly the water seemed to shake. Nham had no time to stop the boat before the bombs exploded from all sides making high waterspouts. The boat leapt and threw the crew overboard. The raft was blown to smithereens.

Keeping her presence of mind, Nham raised her head above the water and called her comrades. They all answered. Reassured,

(Continued on page 30)

Main Economic Tasks For 1975

1975 the third year of peace, will be a year of great economic tasks aiming notably, at

—completing, in the main, economic restoration while developing the forces of production and gradually reorganizing the economic structure in order to carry out the transition from small-scale production to large-scale socialist production;

—progressively improving the life of the people;

—gradually reducing the economy's structural disproportions;

—satisfying the needs of national defence while providing an effective, substantial aid to the revolutionary struggle in South Viet Nam and the construction of the liberated zone there; and

—actively preparing for the second five-year plan (1976-1980).

To this end, in comparison with 1974, there must be an increase of 19.6% in GNP and of 19.5% in national income. The total value of industrial production, handicrafts included, must increase by 22% and that of agricultural production by 8.6%. Investments in capital construction will be up by 41.5% and the volume of goods to be transported within the country by 22%.

These overall economic targets must be given concrete form according to the different sectors:

Industry

In this sector, the problem is to put back into operation those enterprises that were damaged by the bombing and have not been restored yet, to step up heavy industries such as coal-mining, power, chemicals, building materials, etc., with a view to meeting the need not only of these industries but also of other sectors, chiefly agriculture, in equipment, parts, materials—primary and otherwise—and at the same time developing the production of food products and other daily consumer goods.

Priority will be given to the production of means of production (Group A), whose value will be up by 26% as against the 19% increase in the value of

the production of consumer goods (Group B).

Those industries which are run by the central administration will develop at a greater rate than locally-run industries and handicrafts, at 28%, 17% and 15.3% respectively.

Mechanical engineering will remain the key branch.

The commissioning of 15 new factories, together with the reorganization and expansion of old enterprises, will help increase production, particularly that of farm equipment—230% for tractors, 46% for mechanical pumps, 45% for farm machinery, and 200% for diesel motors. Great attention will also be paid to the production of farming implements: the number of rudimentary tools will be 10 times, and that of improved carts four times, greater...

This will necessitate a doubling of investment in mechanical engineering. Total industrial investment will increase to 18% from the rate of 15% in 1974.

In metallurgy, great importance will be attached to the restoration of the Thai Nguyen Steel and Iron Complex and the completion of the Gia Sang Rolling Mill, which will begin production this year, and also the expansion of the various tin and chromite mines. Cast iron output will be up by 50%.

The power industry will push up production by 19% to increase by 32% the energy fed to industry and by 20% that to agriculture. The reorganization of the existing stations and transmission lines, the operation of the new station in Ninh Binh and the last boilers at the Uong Bi station, will make the capacity of the industry 32% greater.

Coal mines will produce 1.5 million additional tons. The restoration of open-cast mines and the modernization of shaft mines are continuing and are expected to increase the industry's capacity by 17.5%.

In the *chemical industry* priority will be given to the production of fertilizers and insecticides. The production of phosphoric fertilizers in particular will go up by 24% thanks to the modernization of

the plant at Van Dien. Stress will also be laid on the completion of the nitrate fertilizers plant at Ha Bac and the expansion of the apatite mines in Lao Cai to meet the growing demand for fertilizers.

As demand for *building materials* will be greater, cement output will go up 40% through an increase of 17% in the capacity of existing cement plants, principally the Haiphong Cement Works. Production of bricks and timber will be 22% higher. The operation of new brickyards, thanks to which productivity will increase by 36%, and the production of prefabricated concrete blocks to be carried out in the course of the year, together with the completion of new cement plants, will enable this branch to step up production in the years to come.

In the *light industries*, including the *food industry*, great attention will be given to the processing of farm products (soya, sweet potato, cassava, maize and various species of beans) and to the production of staple commodities—43% more for salt-water fish, 22% more for kitchen salt, 25% more for paper, etc. Cotton goods will increase by 19.5%, and the putting into operation of the first sections of the new textile mill in Vinh Phu will raise the capacity of this branch 67%. Handicraft output will be 15.3% higher, chiefly in consumer goods and in exports.

Agriculture

The task remains the intensification of the production of food-stuffs, chiefly rice, whose output will increase by 5—6%.

The production (reckoned in terms of rice) of dry crops—particularly sweet potato, potato, maize, and cassava—will see an increase of 40%, which will entail the expansion of the acreage sown to winter crops. As this acreage is to reach 500,000 hectares within a few years, appropriate measures must be taken in 1975 to pave the way for its development. This will also help expand animal husbandry, which is becoming an independent line and is expected to increase by 16%, particularly pig-rearing which,

with 6.5 million pigs altogether, will allow the consumption of meat to increase by 14%.

A major step forward will be taken in the regionalization of the main industrial crops (jute, mulberry, tea, sugar-cane, tobacco, citrus fruits, etc.) for light industry and exports.

For the second five-year plan a great task is the reclaiming of new lands, mainly in the midlands and the highlands, for perennial crops. From this year, preparations will be made for the resettlement of 250,000 persons with a view to gradually reducing demographic pressure in the delta area.

For the attainment of all these objectives, a series of important measures must be taken: to intensify the combat against submersions and flooding by completing the irrigation system together with the putting into operation of new major projects (pumping-stations, reservoirs, dams, etc.); to rearrange the fields in order to mechanize farming on 11.5% of the cultivated acreage (an increase of 25%); to turn out more industrial products (farming implements and farm machinery, chemical fertilizers, power, fuel, building materials, etc.) The aid of industry, therefore, is more indispensable than ever, and will constitute a *sine qua non* for the development of agriculture. In 1975, agricultural cooperatives will be supplied with 400,000 tons of coal to replace straw as the main fuel, which will be used for making manure. The selection and multiplication of new strains

(rice, jute, tobacco, maize, groundnut, soya, etc.) and of new breeds of livestock will be carried on actively in better-equipped experimentation centres.

There is another, no less important, task to be accomplished: the improvement of the management of cooperatives and the reorganization of agricultural production, as defined by the Agricultural Conference in Thai Binh in August 1974. (See *Viet Nam Courier*, Numbers 30 and 31, November and December 1974).

All these efforts must give their results in 1975: gradually to bring about a balance between arable farming and breeding, progressively reduce rice monoculture in favour of dry crops and industrial crops, and reduce domestic consumption of farm products in order to help the export trade.

Transport and Communications

Very heavy tasks are imposed on this sector because of the increasing needs of the economy.

It is necessary to complete the essential restoration of the road and railway system (with 2,550 metres of bridges to be repaired), the enlargement of seaports, particularly the harbour at Haiphong; the dredging of waterways, etc. Besides new building projects will start and new work on the infrastructure will be carried out to improve the management of enterprises and modernize the means of transport.

The objective to be attained by the end of 1975, therefore, is to raise the capacity of transport by rail to the pre-1965 level, and increase by 20% the activity of the ports, as compared with 1964.

Capital Construction

The building of the material and technical bases requires important investment, of which 87.6% will go to the productive sector, as against 86% previously, with the following distribution: 40.6% (against 34% previously) to industry, 17.7% to agriculture, forestry and irrigation work, and 18.2% to transport and communications, etc.

Priority must be given to the completion of projects now under way and to restoration work, while starting work on new projects for the second five-year plan (1976-1980).

Stress will therefore be laid chiefly on work related to mechanical engineering, metallurgy, power, coal extraction; and the production of chemical products and building materials with agricultural development essentially in view.

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Very great efforts must also be made in other sectors of the economy for the achievement of the targets set for the Plan:

— *Foreign trade*: the value of imports, 78% of which will be marked for equipment, machinery, parts, raw materials, etc., will increase by 4%. Meanwhile the value of exports will be 30%



The Cam Pha engineering plant in Quang Ninh province being put into operation

greater, and 24% up on 1964, the best year before the US war escalation;

— The volume of *retail goods* will increase by 18% in the organized market, whose proportion of the market will go up from the current 72% to an expected 86%. The purchase of products by the State will show a marked increase: 40% for farm products and food products, and 23% for industrial products.

— The *budget* will go up by 11.1%.

— *Improvement of the standard of living.*

The essential need is to gradually reduce the restrictions imposed by the state of war, to the extent allowed by the development of production.

Housing construction remains an urgent task, and investments for this will go up 78.5%. 400,000

of the 650,000 square metres envisaged will go for living quarters in the major cities and the principal industrial centres, with 90,000 square metres for Hanoi, 42,000 for Haiphong, 38,000 for the Quang Ninh mining area and 35,000 for the Bac Thai industrial region not counting the construction of housing on a private basis.

The supply of staple commodities (food — industrially processed or otherwise) will be maintained at the level of the previous years, with a larger quantity for certain items like eggs, fish, and fresh vegetables.

The readjustment and raising of salaries and allowances will be made alongside the creation of new jobs for 500,000 persons of working age and the establishment of a piece-work system in all sectors of the economy.

There are still many difficulties in this domain for a country which has only just emerged from

an atrocious war. Yet the people's State is doing its best to lessen the hardships of the people while taking into account its other imperative national and international tasks.

In order to carry out the economic tasks set for 1975, other economic, political and ideological levers must be brought into play, including the improvement of the management of the economy and the State; the consolidation and perfection of the socialist relations of production in State-run enterprises, agricultural cooperatives and handicraft cooperatives; the mobilization of all sections of the population in a "socialist emulation drive", etc. These tasks, once fulfilled, will provide a solid basis for the advancement of socialist construction.

VU QUOC TUAN

FACTS AND EVENTS

Thieu's Honour

IN September 1974 three Saigon dailies published the famous "Indictment No. 1" in which Thieu was denounced as the greatest wrongdoer in South Viet Nam.

After that four other dailies revealed that Thieu and Huong had covered up the case of a corrupt provincial chief.

In both cases Thieu, considering himself the victim of "insults" and "libels", invoked decree-law 007, a law signed by him which bans any attack upon the honour of the Head of State and started proceedings against the dailies concerned.

Masses of people gathered at the tribunal to express their support for the press. Thousands of policemen were sent to the spot to crack down on these crowds and the tribunal ordered by Thieu had to be adjourned till February 20, 1975.

Still waiting for justice, Thieu declared himself the victim of another "insult". Prior to the

town elections, a member of the town council of Bien Hoa declared that "as long as Thieu remains in his position, it is no use asking for another mandate."

As this time it was a "verbal insult", and not a published one, Thieu had to rack his brains to discover any legal device which would justify reprisal measures. Finally he found in his archives a law dating back to... 1881 — a good time ago, back in the period of French colonialism — which laid down a penalty of imprisonment for anyone who spoke ill of the "governor". Thus Thieu's tribunal condemned this poor councillor to a suspended sentence of five months' imprisonment.

But there was still more to come touching Thieu's honour. Following the publication of the "Indictment No. 1" which denounced him for corruption, malversation, etc., in early February many Saigon dailies published "Indictment No. 2" in which Thieu was accused of "political" crimes. He is seen in the Indictment as a brutal and incapable

dictator, a warmonger who clings to his presidential chair in order to feather his nest to the great distress of his subjects who, as a result, are eager for his departure.

It is true that Indictment No. 2 as well as No. 1 was prepared by persons notorious for their pro-Americanism who did not fail to express erroneous opinions about the Paris Agreement, about the resistance, etc. All the same, Thieu, feeling himself threatened by dangerous opponents, has immediately taken up arms against the Indictment. Being unable to punish its authors, he once more vents his spleen on the press which has published the document.

This time, he didn't take the trouble to find a law to defend his honour. He simply ordered the seizure of nine dailies, five of which had already had their publication permits withdrawn. Meanwhile 19 journalists have been arrested and accused of "communism."

Laos: Two Years After the Vientiane Agreement

THE signing of the Vientiane Agreement and its Protocol (on February 20, 1973) and the formation of the Provisional Government of National Union and the National Political Council of Coalition in April 1974 were great victories for the Lao people. "This was a great event in the political life of our people who are highly rejoiced by this success", said Prince Souphanouvong, President of the Lao Patriotic Front and Chairman of the NPCC, in an interview granted to *Viet Nam News Agency* in April 1974. The Prince continued: "We, the people of Laos, are seizing advantage of this opportunity to take the destiny of our nation in our own hands without tolerating any umbrella of protection by any country."

While, in the 1957 coalition government the patriotic forces held two ministries and in the coalition government in 1962 they had two ministries (one of them

combining the post of vice-premier) and two vice-ministries, this time their number of portfolios is equal to that of the Vientiane side (11 for each side plus 2 for independent personalities).

Like the 1962 settlement, in 1973 also, "the Provisional Government of National Union (is) formed according to a special procedure by direct investiture of H.M. the King, it works under the principle of unanimity between the two sides" (Article 7 of the Vientiane Agreement).

But unlike 1962, besides the PGNU, a National Political Council of Coalition has been formed, a body independent and equal in rights to the PGNU, composed of 42 members (16 from the patriotic forces, 16 from the Vientiane side and 10 reserved for independent personalities). Prince Souphanouvong was elected Chairman of the Council which acts as a legislative body with even more extensive powers.

Major Advances on the Road to Peace and National Concord

The establishment of the PGNU and NPCC was made possible as a result of the progress achieved in the execution of the cease-fire order and the neutralization of the cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang.

Since the establishment of these two supreme bodies, those and many other provisions of the Vientiane Agreement and its Protocol have been carried out more thoroughly. In the main, the cease-fire order has been put into effect. In many localities, national concord has been the keynote in the relationship between the armies of the two sides. Thirteen out of the twenty-seven markers specified in the Vientiane Agreement have been planted. The regroupment zones of one side on the territory of the other have been determined. Representatives of the two sides in the Central Joint Committee for the Implementation of the Agreement have

worked out regulations guaranteeing land and river communication between the two zones.

In the cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang, the police and armed forces of the two sides, equal in numbers and equipped with an equivalent quantity of arms, have taken up position at set points to oversee the security of the government offices and the population. The joint command has agreed on the zones under their respective control and on the withdrawal to a radius of 15 kilometres from the two cities of the Vientiane armed forces exceeding the figure stipulated in the Agreement. The two sides have also reached agreement on the organization and methods of patrols in order to gradually normalize the political and social life of these two cities by establishing order and security.

At the end of November 1974, after an inspection tour made within a 15-kilometre radius of

the royal capital of Luang Prabang, the joint committee in charge of the neutralization of that city confirmed that the Vientiane army had pulled out of the area. The same withdrawal will soon be carried out in Vientiane.

In January 1975, the Central Joint Committee for the Implementation of the Vientiane Agreement signed a document on the withdrawal of foreign troops from Laos and the liquidation of all foreign military and paramilitary organizations in Laos. In this document the Vientiane side agreed to mention "American and Thai troops" as the foreign armed forces which should leave the country. The two sides will make an inspection tour in a number of localities.

Most active have been the joint police forces which laid hands on many gambling houses and gang headquarters. A big gambling den which had been operating undisturbed by the Vientiane police at a hotel in Vientiane under the protection of the general commanding the armed forces, who received a bribe of one million kip per week, was raided by police belonging to the patriotic forces within the joint police force. In this raid 43 people were arrested including many important personalities and a number of US-made weapons were captured. A Thai second lieutenant who should have withdrawn from Laos before June 1, 1974 was seized at the same time. An American lieutenant-colonel, Robert Gibson, working under the camouflage of a business-man, was also apprehended after having shot dead two civilians. Many attempted riots kindled by the ultra-reactionaries have been nipped in the bud — such as the incidents occurring in front of the National Assembly on July 9, 1974, at the That Luong Fair on October 29 and 30, 1974 and at Wattay airport on November 1, 1974, the breaking into the residence of Mr. Khamphan Simmalavong, one of the independent members of the National Political Council of Coalition and the blow-

ing up of his car and garage, and the distribution of leaflets threatening the life of members of the National Political Council of Coalition.

Many foreign militarymen and spies acting under civilian or religious cover have been unmasked.

The return to their respective side of the personnel imprisoned during the war has been completed. The organization of the return of those people forced to leave their homes during the hostilities has been under debate between the two sides and a document on this question was signed on December 20, 1974. Preparations are being made for its application by drawing up a list of the names and wishes of each person, preparation of means of transport, etc.

At its April 10, 1974 session, the Provisional Government of National Union passed a 10-point programme of action presented by Mr. Phoumi Vongvichit, Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister, on behalf of the Central Committee of the Lao Patriotic Front, aimed at creating favourable conditions for the government and various ministries to work in the new circumstances. The 10 points to be solved were as follows: the transfer of the work of the former ministries to the newly-appointed ministers; the drawing up of a work programme for each ministry; the fixing of the principles and working methods of the government and each ministry; the determination of the relationship between the government and the NPCC, between the government and the Central Joint Committee for the Implementation of the Agreement, and between the ministries and the various NPCC commissions; the popularization of the Vientiane Agreement and its Protocol; the assistance given to the Joint Committee for the Implementation of the Agreement regarding the implementation of the military provisions of the Agreement and its Protocol; the guarantee of democratic liberties; the examination and execution of effective measures to fix new market prices in order to alleviate the difficulties of the people's life; the planning of the national budget for 1974-1975 and requesting of foreign aid; the revision of relations between Laos and other countries in accordance with the policy of peace, independence and neutrality of the Kingdom of Laos.

The work of the Provisional Government of National Union in

the past ten months, including the period in which Mr. Phoumi Vongvichit, of the patriotic forces, acted as Premier during the absence of Prince Souvanna Phouma in France for medical treatment, has proceeded smoothly, thanks to the spirit of compromise and good will, shown by the government members belonging to the patriotic forces and the support given by all strata of the population.

As the NPCC is already carrying out its functions in the interests of the nation, the PGNU unanimously refused permission for the "Vientiane National Assembly" — an organ masterminded by the Vientiane ultra-rightist elements — to hold its ordinary session on May 11, 1974, and in July 1974 took the decision to demand its dissolution.

Peace and national concord are the cherished aspirations of all the Lao people as they are objectives and principles guiding all the activities of the Provisional Government of National Union. They receive a clear embodiment in the economic, cultural and social life of the nation as well. The 1974 annual That Luong economic and cultural fair was held on October 16, under the slogan "Peace, Concord and Development". At this fair all artistic performances considered to be corrupted, unhealthy and unconstructive, as put on by foreigners in former years, were banned.

Measures to raise Lao national consciousness were also introduced into the Vientiane cinemas: the playing of Lao songs, film commentaries in the Lao language and saluting of the national flag and the King's portrait.

For the school year 1974-1975, all primary and secondary schools in Vientiane received orders to teach in Lao, as was already being done in the liberated areas, so as to help to "release Laos from the influence of colonialist culture and achieve a genuine independence" (statement by Mr. Ounneua Phimmasone, Vice-Minister of Education, Arts, Youth and Sports, at the secondary school teachers' conference held in Vientiane in October 1974.)

Deeply concerned with the interests of the people and wishing to bring a gradual improvement of their living standards, the PGNU has endeavoured to meet the legitimate demands of office and factory workers, whether working for the administration or for American, Thai or Lao-

owned enterprises, for wage rises, reduction of working hours, human treatment, democratic liberties and the removal of officials or managers who do not follow the government line and are authoritarian, corrupt or self-interested.

In furtherance of its foreign policy of peace and neutrality and the establishment of friendly relations on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence with any country regardless of its social system, the Lao government has recognized the Republic of Guinea Bissau and established diplomatic relations with a number of countries, including Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the German Democratic Republic.

The PGNU sent a delegation, led by Mr. Phoumi Vongvichit, Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister, to attend the 29th General Assembly of the UNO. At that session Mr. Phoumi Vongvichit delivered an important speech dealing with the present situation in Laos, the successful formation of the PGNU and the NPCC, the domestic and foreign policies of Laos and its political position on current major problems in the world. The speech was supported by the delegates of many countries.

Two economic delegations of the PGNU led by ministers Soth Phetrasi and Ngon Sannanikone, paid visits to many countries in Asia, Africa and Europe in order to negotiate aid agreements for Laos.

Over the past year, the NPCC has also been very active. It held two regular sessions.

At the first session, lasting from April 24 to May 29, 1974, it appointed a standing committee, a secretariat and five commissions and laid down rules for its internal organization and its methods of work. In addition to its seat at Luang Prabang, it has set up a permanent delegation in Vientiane.

But the paramount importance of its first session was its debate and approval of the political report made by its Chairman, Prince Souphanouvong, and its adoption of the 18-point political programme (12 points on internal and 6 points on foreign affairs) and temporary regulations on democratic liberties.

This political programme outlines the domestic policy which will rapidly turn Laos, just emerged from a war unleashed by US imperialism, into a country with a thriving economy and a developed culture — and education, whose people will be well-informed and enjoy a happy and

healthy life. In foreign affairs, it aims at making Laos a genuinely independent and neutral country, free from any outside interference and aggression, a country which will not take part in any military alliance but is ready to establish friendly relations with all countries irrespective of social system on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence and to accept aid from any country as long as there are no strings attached.

The political programme advocates that "the two sides must strictly and fully apply all the above-mentioned lines and concrete policies in all the localities controlled by them under the unified leadership of the supreme organs of State created by the common accord of the two sides: the National Political Council of Coalition (NPCC) and the Provisional Government of National Union (PGNU). At the same time the two sides should continue negotiations and discussions with each other to find a correct solution to all problems concerning the two sides and the two zones of control in the spirit of equality, mutual respect, understanding and mutual compromise without any coercion or elimination of one party by the other, with the aim of creating favourable conditions for the reconciliation, concord and unity of the nation."

Assessing the work of the first session, in his message sent on May 28, 1974 to Prince Souphanouvong, H.M. the King Sri Savang Vatthana said: "All the resolutions taken by the National Political Council of Coalition aim at bringing concord to the entire Lao people, creating an atmosphere in which equality can be achieved and making the Lao citizens throughout the country conscious of their responsibility. Briefly they enable the entire Lao people to enjoy the same rights and share

the same duties."

The second session of the NPCC held from December 4 to 23, 1974 continued the discussions and made improvements in the resolutions taken at the first session and amended or abrogated some provisions in the existing law in order to bring them into line with the present situation in Laos.

After a thorough re-examination of this document and renewed discussions, the Provisional Government of National Union, presided over by Prince Souvanna Phouma, unanimously adopted the 18-point political programme on December 25, 1974.

From now on, this programme takes its place as a national document of the Kingdom of Laos, a compass which will guide all the activities of the PGNU and of all patriotic-minded Lao eager to build Laos into a peaceful, independent, free, unified, democratic and prosperous country.

The successes gained by the PGNU and NPCC in the implementation of the Vientiane Agreement and its Protocol and the achievement of peace and national concord have been warmly welcomed by all sections of the Lao population. Many mass organizations have sent statements requesting from the Government an early execution of the 18-point program and the temporary regulations on democratic liberties and the dissolution of the "Vientiane National Assembly."

In the zone under the control of the Vientiane side, where the ultra-rightist authorities are still using intimidation against the inhabitants, causing injustice and corruption, the masses have risen against them — for instance in the mutinies at Ban Houei Sai in October and December 1974 and the rebellion of the students, public servants and people at Thakhek in January 1975.

American Imperialism Still Clings to Its Neo-colonialist Designs

Though the Vientiane Agreement and Protocol have been signed the US imperialists have not yet given up their neocolonialist designs in Laos. There are still American and Thai military advisers remaining in Laos under many aspects to take command of their Lao henchmen and recruit more mercenaries and "local troops" (as at Saythani district, Vientiane province). The "special

forces" formerly set up by the Americans have not been disbanded; on the contrary many of their units have been incorporated into the rightist army. American war planes based in Thailand continue to fly over Laos.

Many Thai army units remain in Laos. Besides those incorporated with the Vientiane army, many others, stationed near Vientiane along Road No. 13 and by the "spe-

cial forces" units, maintain their initial Thai formation. Thai officers become commanders of units of the Lao rightist army; many of them have been captured in recent operations to encroach upon the liberated areas, in gambling houses or in riots in the capital city.

These Thai officers have worked closely with Lao rightist officers either in Laos or in Thailand, in their attempts to sabotage the activities of the PGNU and NPCC.

The Thai armed forces are still deployed in strength along the Thai-Lao frontier. They have crossed the Mekong River on several occasions to encroach upon Lao territory and disturb the life of the Lao people or shoot indiscriminately at the positions of the patriotic forces.

Prodded by the Americans, on January 13, 1975, the Saigon authorities flew 38 sorties to bombard the liberated area of Sesan in Attapeu province.

With the backing of the imperialists, the Lao ultra-reactionaries, represented by Sisouk Na Champassak and Sannanikone, have frantically opposed the Vientiane Agreement and its Protocol, the PGNU and the NPCC.

The military commanders under the orders of these cliques have many times violated the cease-fire and launched operations to encroach upon the liberated areas in the provinces of Savannakhet, Sayabouri, Vientiane, Champassak, Siphandone and Khammouane. Their planes have flown reconnaissance missions over the liberated zone and dropped commandos and spies on many localities. On November 22 and 23, 1974, they bombarded the villages of Don Nhay, Na Coong Khan, Dante, Kengdang, Huoingua (Phu Vieng district, Savannakhet province) and they have bombed many localities in Upper and Central Laos.

They have deliberately delayed the planting of markers so that only 13 marking poles have been erected.

According to a *KPL* report, a source in the Vientiane side has revealed that the ultra-rightists are laying plans for the return to Laos of Phoumi Nosavan, now living in exile in Thailand. They are also considering sending Phoumi Nosavan's armed units and the CIA-paid "special forces" at present undergoing training in Thailand back to the country where they will coordinate with

the ultra-rightist army in sowing disorder and eventually attempt to engineer a coup d'état in Vientiane or Savannakhet. With this end in view, in November 1974, many units of the ultra-rightist forces were dispatched to the Vientiane area in order to combine action with their units at Chinai-mo. They included two battalions stationed at Muong Moi, Xieng Da and Na Leng landing place on the Mekong River who were sent on the plea of "relieving the Vientiane garrison". Two other battalions, dressed in civilian clothes, were sent to mingle with the civilian population within the city in order to carry out spying activities and to provoke all possible disorder and confusion.

Now and then, on the flimsy pretext of "resisting demonstrations", the rightist elements confined their troops to barracks and kept them on alert as a means of creating tension in Vientiane.

Many war planes were sent from Savannakhet to Vientiane supposedly for "repair". In fact they had received orders to be fully loaded and ready to "take off at a moment's notice."

Following the decision to dissolve the "Vientiane National Assembly" by the PGNR, Sannanikone and Sisouk Na Champassak set up the "Vientiane Side Front" later changed into the

"Combined Action Committee of the Vientiane Side" with Sisouk Na Champassak as Secretary-General. Through this they hoped to rally the leading pro-US reactionaries and a number of high-ranking officers of the ultra-rightist wing to oppose peace and national concord. They spread rumours that the military were opposed to the new government and that some army units of the Vientiane side might stage a coup d'état.

There have been reports that the reactionaries are strengthening their forces and recruiting support from the US and Bangkok governments for a "separate government" in South Southern Laos as a counterpoise to the PGNU.

A number of rightist elements who hold portfolios in the PGNU, have refused to implement correctly the 10-point programme of action which was unanimously approved by the Government Council in April 1974. They are refusing to execute the government's decision to hand over some ministries to the patriotic forces and only grudgingly cooperate with the latter.

With regard to the 18-point political programme some of these elements have acted in a preposterous manner. For instance they demanded the deletion of the passage saying: "The pro-

tracted and valiant struggle of our people against the colonialist forces has won great and glorious victories." In addition they proposed to remove all sentences and words alluding to imperialism, neo-colonialism, the US, Thailand and the national liberation movement. They wanted to annul Article 4 of the political programme which stipulates that "democratic elections shall be held to consolidate the organs of state power at village, district and provincial level." They also wanted to strike out the passage which prohibits ownership of an acreage of land beyond the farming capacity of its possessor.

Such outrageous demands show that they want to deny the victory of the Lao people's national liberation struggle, to maintain the old administrative structure in the areas under their control and to continue the feudal system of land ownership in order to serve the ends of the imperialists and the most reactionary comprador bourgeois, bureaucrats, militarists, and landlords. It goes without saying that these demands have been rejected.

After the return of Mr. Phoumi Vongvichit, Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister, from the UN, the ultra-rightist elements spread the story that the government had not approved the speech delivered at the General Assembly.

FACTS AND EVENTS

When Will DRVN-Thailand Relations Be Back to Normal?

THERE was a time when the relations between the DRVN and the Kingdom of Thailand were very close. It was during the years immediately following World War II. The DRVN had its representation in Bangkok and the two countries stood together among the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist nations in Southeast Asia, doing their utmost to support each other.

Then, in Thailand, the situation changed. The shadow of US imperialism fell over this country exposed both to US economic penetration and to

military occupation by GIs and the USAF squadrons. Thailand became an instrument in the hands of Washington used to oppose the independence movements of all nations in this region, from Korea to Indochina. The role played by Thailand during the years of the Indochinese people's resistance to US aggression was not a glorious one. It was from military bases in Thailand that US aircraft took off to sow death in North and South Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos. US weapons, stockpiled in Thailand, were transported to US hench-

men in Saigon, Phnom Penh, and Vientiane. Thai youths were recruited as mercenaries to fight in South Viet Nam and Laos for US interests. An ever more ferocious dictatorship weighed heavily on Thai society.

US neo-colonialism was a disaster for the peoples of Southeast Asia, including the people of Thailand. The heroic struggle of the Thai people at last overthrew the dictatorial militarist yoke of the US puppet Thanom-Prapas clique, opening new prospects for Thailand's development. Coming after the conclusion of the Paris Agreement on Viet Nam and the Vientiane Agreement on Laos, this constituted a new victory of the national liberation movement in Southeast Asia.

The Thai government has expressed the desire to reestablish relations with the DRVN. However, until now there has been virtually no progress in this

In fact the document had been read through, page by page, by Premier Souvanna Phouma when, on his way to New York, Mr. Phoumi Vongvichit had visited him in France to show him the speech. But this attempt of the reactionaries ended in failure. After listening to the Vice-Premier's report on the activities of the Lao delegation at the U.N. General Assembly, the Government Council, at its meeting early in November 1974, gave its unanimous approval to the activities of the delegation, including the speech of Mr. Phoumi Vongvichit.

In the economic and financial field, although nothing to this effect had been said by the Lao government, USAID spread a report which was later retailed by the reactionary press in Vientiane and Bangkok, that the *kip* was about to be devalued and would drop from 840 to 1,000 or 1,200 *kip* to a dollar. Capitalizing on this situation, the local bourgeoisie withdrew a large amount of their bank deposits in *kip* to grab all the goods available in the market, to the total value of 8 million dollars. Then they used their power to stop the import of primary commodities so as to create an artificial shortage of goods, enabling them to sell what they had bought up at exorbitant prices. The *Bangkok Post* went so far as to hawk the

news that a dollar would be worth 1,400 *kip*, and this sent the market prices up by 50% on average within a week.

In order to save the population from loss as result of that fabricated devaluation, the PGNU took the resolution not to devalue the *kip* but to work out a comprehensive plan to overcome the aftermaths of the war and readjust market prices. The people were urged to accelerate production and the exchange of goods between various regions. On the other hand, the PGNU called for the assistance of friendly nations to restore and develop the national economy and thereby improve the living conditions of the people.

At a time when the entire Laos population are tightening their belts to rebuild the country, the Ministry of Finance, headed by one of the Vientiane side, without consulting any other members of the Government, made known his decision to triple the existing salaries of ministers and vice-ministers. This action has created difficulties for the Government; they have been presented with a *fait accompli* which is causing jealousy and disunity especially among civil servants. The unilateral decision was cancelled only after a strong protest by the representatives of the patriotic forces.

By these acts of economic and financial sabotage, the rightist elements want to create more difficulties and shift the blame for the high cost of living on the PGNU.

In the past two years, US neo-colonialism has continued to exert a disastrous influence on Laos by encouraging and fostering the reactionary forces, setting them against the Vientiane Agreement and its Protocol and hindering the activities of the NPCC and PGNU. But thanks to the determination of the Lao people to heighten their vigilance, defend peace and independence and achieve national concord, developments in Laos continue to be favourable for the Lao revolution.

It is high time that the US imperialists and their flunkies pondered over the warning of Prince Souvanna Phouma when he said on November 23, 1974 in a ceremony held at Pathat pagoda (Luang Prabang) that "those who do not want the restoration of peace and national concord should leave Laos as quickly as possible so that the whole people of Laos should have full scope to build their country freely in genuine peace and national concord."

January 1975
KY SON

connection. What is the cause?

The real reason is that the Thai authorities have not dared to look the facts straight in the face: the obstacle to the normalization of relations between the two countries lies in the Thai government's refusal to put an end to its policy of collusion with the US in its scheme of intervention and aggression in Indochina. Thailand still lets the US maintain its troops and military bases on Thai territory, transfer US weapons from Thailand to the US lackeys in Indochina, and encroach upon the security and territorial integrity of the countries of Indochina. Most recently, Thailand-based US planes have guided the Saigon air force in bombing the liberated areas of South Viet Nam. The Thai government continues to train pilots for the Lon Nol clique in Cambodia and the "special forces" in Laos.

The Thai government says that the military situation in Indochina requires the continued presence of US troops in Thailand. This allegation cannot cover up the fact that the presence of US aggressive troops on Thai territory actually encroaches on the Thai people's national rights and jeopardizes the security of the Indochinese countries.

As has been stressed in the DRVN Foreign Minister's notes to his Thai counterpart, the DRVN holds that the establishment of good neighbourly relations between the DRVN and Thailand is beneficial to the two peoples and to the cause of peace and friendship in Indochina and Southeast Asia, and would contribute to the creation of a zone of peace composed of independent states in this region. But these relations should be based on the principle of respect for each other's national rights and prohibition of the use of terri-

tory by foreign countries for direct or indirect aggression against the other. That is, bluntly, that Thailand should not allow the US to use its territory against the peoples of Viet Nam and other Indochinese countries.

If the Thai government shows, by practical actions, its desire to entertain relations of friendship and good neighbourliness with the Vietnamese people and the government of the DRVN, the DRVN side is prepared to meet the Thai side and discuss the normalization of relations between the two countries.

The position of the DRVN is clear. It is hoped that the new government in Thailand will actively work towards a restoration of the good relations between the two countries which, now as in the past, have a common struggle to wage against the designs of the imperialists

Gaining Ground From the Sea in Thai Binh Province

LIKE other more ancient villages scattered up and down the sea coasts of Viet Nam, Thuy Tan, a village in Thai Binh province, has its straight rows of filao pines, eucalyptus trees and coconut-laden palms mirrored in the still water of the canals, its lanes lined with brick houses and thatched huts. But other signs show that it is a new creation: it has neither the antique communal house nor the high steeple of a church and there are no thick groves of bamboo around its cluster of buildings. All its dwelling houses, gardens, school, infirmary, administrative offices, storehouses, its drying yard and fields have been neatly arranged for the convenience of the inhabitants' life and work.

We travelled to Thuy Tan on a plaited bamboo sampan in company with Mai Dang Gian, the Chairman of the village Administrative Committee. It was at the end of September and the sky was a limpid blue. Gian, a short wizened and business-like man over forty years of age, rowed us through a canal lined with coconut palms to an immense field of blossoming rush.

The drone of an engine could be heard.

"The rush processing team is trying out a tractor to make it ready for the harvest", Gian said to us. "We've just inaugurated an electric transformer station to supply power to about twenty rush-splitting machines; together with the twenty other hand-operated ones we've got, that will mean we'll have enough to reap a bumper rush crop."

When he was a boy, Gian had heard the history of his native village — now the settlement lies eight kilometres inland but a century ago it was part of the broad expanse of the sea.

The formation of his village had been too far back for him

to have witnessed it but he was able to see the expansion of the foreshore lying outside the protecting levee. Each time the tide receded, a wide swampy area covered with reeds and shrubs lay before him, on which he pastured his buffaloes and ran about to catch crabs and fish until the tide was high. He saw that the foreshore grew wider and wider until it spread as far as the eye could see. Once a question came to his head: "Since the village is short of land why don't the people pool their efforts to build a dyke and protect the foreshore from the invasion of the sea? Then we could use these hundreds of hectares of fertile soil for cultivation."

The question remained unanswered. At that time the country was under the rule of the colonialists and feudal landowners; the peasants had been completely stripped of their lands.

Twenty years passed by, and it was only in 1960 that Mai Dang Gian's dream began to come true. Under the land clearing programme carried out all over the country, the local people's power worked out a plan to gain ground from the sea. Thousands of youth were mobilized from all the villages in the province to build levees to keep out the sea. Earth had to be carried from four or five kilometres away. Then the work done by thousands of men in one day would be swept away by the sea in one night. How frustrating! Without the help of machines, the tug-of-war between man and the forces of nature was a tough one. In a poor and technically backward country, torn by many years of war, it is natural that hard work still has to be done by hands. As all the workers were of one mind, they were able to get the upper hand of the waves; finally a levee nearly 5 kilometres long was built to protect 300 hectares of land from the invasion of sea water.

However, the difficulties were not over: who would be willing to leave their homes, gardens, ricefields (just wrested back from the landlords and redistributed by the revolution), their villages green with bamboo groves and banyan trees, their communal houses, to go and settle in an alkaline swamp overgrown with reeds? Who could guarantee that the new settlers would enjoy a better life than in their old village, the more so since they would have to start from scratch on previously uncultivated land constantly threatened by sea water?

On one day at the end of Autumn 1962, a team of twelve rural cadres and Party members, including Mai Dang Gian, left their homes for the foreshore. Their determination convinced about forty peasants to follow them within one month. A "land-clearing team" was set up with the Party cell as core and the settlers worked out a plan of work. But great difficulties and hardships had to be overcome before it could be carried out. The ground had to be levelled, weeds and reeds pulled up and the orientation of production outlined. The aim in the long run was to grow rush, but for the moment it was necessary to grow rice in order to solve the food problem for no plans had yet been made by the State to supply food to rush growers.

The first year was a failure. The rush and rice crops were devastated by a great typhoon which broke the levee and flooded the new fields with sea water. Many farmers including Party members left for their old homes. "It's labour lost," they said.

In 1965, they were hit by a protracted drought: plants withered in contact with sea water. This time forty households returned to their native villages; others were wavering. The atmosphere was very tense. Argu-

ments broke out in the Party cell and mass organizations. In the end, people came to the conclusion that it was necessary to stay where they were and start again from scratch. They settled down to the work of strengthening the levee, built roads, dug ditches, washed the fields and erected new huts. Cadres were sent to the villages to persuade those who had left to continue their work. Little by little their life began to improve. Surplus peasants from other villages joined the new colony in greater and greater numbers.

Encouraged and helped by the State, the settlers, from 1968 on shifted definitively to the growing of rush. Each year yields increased — 6.6 tons per hectare in 1968; 9 tons in 1969, 11 tons in 1970 and 12 tons in 1974 and so, as a consequence, did the peasants' incomes: 228 *dong* in 1968, 389 *dong* in 1970 and even higher in 1974.

The settlers have every reason to believe that rush is the most suitable crop to grow in alkaline and salty soils for, in addition to improving such soils, it yields an income higher than that of rice and is a necessary raw material for local handicrafts.

With its three thousand inhabitants, the new Thuy Tan settlement is fully qualified to become a village; it has a primary school and a junior secondary school attended by 800 pupils, many kindergartens, a meeting-

hall, a 12-bed infirmary with two assistant doctors and three nurses, a public address system and an electric network. All its houses are roomy and solidly built.

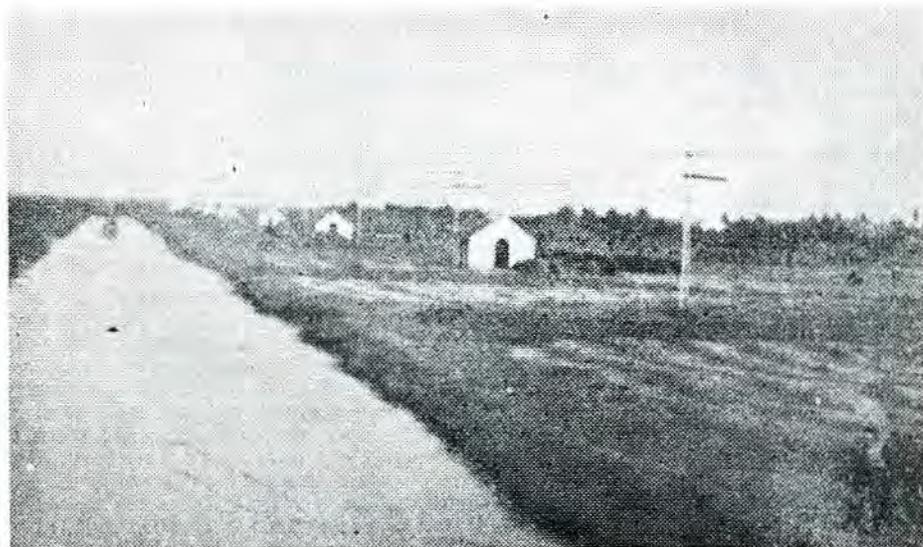
The boat took us to the levee. Gian invited us to walk on top of it and have a look at the sea. The ebbing tide had laid bare an immense marshy area. Pointing to some green shrubs in the east, he said: "By 1980, we shall build another dyke beyond those shrubs. This will give us an area double the present one."

The shore of Thai Binh, about forty kilometres long, is cut by three river mouths, Cua Ba Lat, Cua Tra Ly and Cua Song Hoa, all mouths of the Red River. During the rainy sea-on, the flow of the Red River is 32,500 cubic metres per second and its waters carry about 3.5 kilograms of silt per cubic metre. The huge volume of water emptied every year by its various branches is turned back by marine currents and the silt is deposited along the sea-coast. In this way the coastline of Thai Binh is gradually advancing into the sea forming a fertile area of the size of a village (about 500 hectares) every ten years. Two-thirds of the province has been formed by silt. History has it that, in 965-967, Ky Ba village, now part of Thai Binh town and about forty kilometres inland, was then a seaport.

For many centuries, the reclaiming of the foreshore and the clearing of virgin lands in the hinterland were sporadically practised by individual farmers or influential landlords or, in the 13th to the 16th centuries, by princes and mandarins. As a result the work of reclamation by drainage was slow and it was not until the thirties of the 19th century that it began to be regarded as the business of the State. The impetus for this was provided by the great poet, strategist and statesman Nguyen Cong Tru (1778-1858). (1) Nguyen Cong Tru mustered poor people from many localities to reclaim the foreshore of Thai Binh and Ninh Binh provinces and set up the new districts of Tien Hai and Kim Son. Thus within two years under his guidance, 40,000 *mu* of fertile land had been put under cultivation.

However Nguyen Cong Tru's policy of giving the land to those who had cleared it was rejected by the royal court. Fleeced of their property, the peasants once again turned to a wandering life and again the land lay fallow. After the "colonization" of Viet Nam by the French the situation grew even more serious. For instance, in the twenties of this century over one thousand peasants of Tan Boi canton, Thai Thuy district (at that time Thai Ninh district) on the Thai Binh

(1) See *Viet Nam Courier* N° 14, July 1973, p. 15.



A rush processing workshop of the Thuy Tan farming cooperative

coast, spent 1,40,000 Indochinese piastres and a whole year of hard work to build a sea wall, giving them 1,500 *mu* of fertile land for cultivation. But in 1938, with the protection of the then French Senior Resident, two brothers of a bourgeois family in Hanoi brazenly seized that land. The peasants, finding themselves turned into tenant farmers, left the land and land reclamation in the canton returned to being disorganized and sporadic in character.

After the victorious war of resistance against the French, North Viet Nam has embarked on economic restoration and development, and Thai Binh, an entirely agrarian province, poor in land but dense in population (800 per square kilometres in 1955, the highest density in North Viet Nam), was faced with many problems among them the need to push ahead with the policy of land reclamation. This was stressed in the economic development programme drawn up by the Thai Binh Party Committee. The results of this programme have been good: within the last ten years, through the construction of seventy kilometres of dykes, Thai Binh has wrested from the sea nearly two thousand hectares of fertile land. On this land four new villages and an agricultural farm have been set up, and thousands of hectares of salt marshes have been drained. After 1970, with the establishment of the Provincial Economic Committee, this work of reclamation was intensified. A reclamation programme was drawn up and has begun to be implemented.



In this region of the foreshore, rush is the main agricultural product. Although these alkaline-salt swamps may be said to be the natural habitat of rush, this does not mean that it does not grow on those soils lying deep in the hinterland usually reserved for rice. In fact the total land planted with rush in North Viet Nam reaches an area of three or four thousand hectares.

The origin of rush-growing in the province of Thai Binh is unknown, but according to the inhabitants of Hoi village, Hung Ha district (North of Thai Binh), the plaiting of rush mats was introduced into that locality as early as the 15th century. Thus rushes were already growing at



Rush mats for export

that time, but, according to the documents of the provincial agricultural service, their cultivation as a crop dates back to no more than seventy years ago.

In Thai Binh province itself 2,000 hectares are reserved for the planting of rush, and this supplies a flourishing local industry. About fifty different kinds of rush mats are made and 150 other articles for home needs and for export. Each year, millions of rush mats from Thai Binh are exported — in 1972 seventy enterprises turned out 1.7 million mats and millions of square metres of rush rugs — to the Soviet Union, China, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Poland, the Lebanon, France... Rush mats of all kinds were exhibited at the Leipzig and Hong Kong fairs, and twenty-six different varieties were found suitable for export. The rush mat is a central item in the house of all Vietnamese families. From his womb to his tomb, it can be said that every Vietnamese sleeps on a rush mat.

In Thai Binh we met an aged man who had returned from New Caledonia; we found his story very moving. After long years living in a foreign land, he managed to buy a pair of rush mats from his native country. His children, born abroad, were at a loss to understand how that slender plant growing on marshy flats along the seacoast could make such beautiful mats! For him, it was the first time after many decades living far from the country that he could lie on a rush mat. That night he could not sleep. He remembered the days when he was the same age as his children, how his father would get up so

early, wearing nothing but a rush cloak fastened round the waist with a jute rope and go to the field to work for the landlord. Toiling alone to rear him and his sister (his mother was dead), one day his father collapsed and died. The body of the old man was wrapped in a torn rush mat (In Viet Nam to be buried in a mat was a sign of extreme poverty). After Tet, he and his sister followed their fellow villagers to Hai-phong where they embarked a ship going to New Caledonia. The only thing they had to remind them of their native land was a rush-plaited bag which had contained a few rags for their own use.

As a roofing material, in place of thatch and tile, rush has proved to be a most resistant plant withstanding even fierce storms, lasting up to thirty years and keeping houses at an even temperature in all seasons.

Rush is also used in light industry for the manufacture of non-absorbent paper, cement bags and cardboard.

In such a densely populated province as Thai Binh, the growing of rush and making of rush articles is an outlet for the employment of tens of thousands of people especially those under and over the age to do farming work.

In the delta, especially in a province like Thai Binh with its fairly advanced rice-growing techniques a single hectare more can make an enormous difference. However rush will not encroach upon the rice-planting areas; on the contrary by enriching these alkaline and salty soils of the seacoast it will enable thousands of hectares to be eventually given over to rice. Meanwhile its culti-

vation will be extended to meet the requirements of home consumption and export.

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The growing of rush on the foreshores is made possible partly thanks to the forest of mangroves which protects rush from the battering of the waves, at the same time retaining and accelerating the deposit of silt. We read in the local paper an article by an agricultural engineer speaking of the high value and utility of mangroves, a seaside plant up to now unknown to most people in Viet Nam. According to the author, one hectare of mangrove will yield after ten years three thousand cubic metres of firewood which can be made into an excellent charcoal (one kilogram of mangrove wood produces 7,000 calories). The fishermen in Thai Binh told us that in the past foreign merchant ships use to call at our ports to collect mangrove berries and wood—but for what purposes, nobody knew. Finally a man from Thai Binh who ventured to Hong Kong to earn a living, reported that the mangrove wood fetched by those ships flying the Union Jack was in great demand in Hong Kong for domestic heating as it produces little smoke.

An article which appeared in 1928 in the review "Indochina", published in Indonesia revealed that mangrove wood gives a high quality pulp (46% starch) for the making of paper.

The Institute of Food, Hygiene and Epidemiology has just published an analysis of the food composition of the mangrove berry, disclosing that the fruit is second only to rice and maize in starch content (48%).

The Economic Service of Thai Binh province had made an experiment which showed that pigs fed on mangrove meal increased weight as much as those fed on rice bran. As a single hectare of mangrove gives about twenty five tons of berries Thai Binh, with its tens of thousands of hectares of coastal areas, could easily become a great supplier of animal feed.

The mangrove berry also contains a high percentage of tannic substance indispensable for the chemical industry.

In addition mangrove flowers are considered by bee-keepers to be as sweet as other fragrant flowers. Every year from May to July, thousands of swarms of bees would fly to Thai Binh from various directions to suck their pollen. Now the province possesses only a few thousand hectares of mangroves, yet the flowers are enough to feed about 2,500 swarms of bees. In the last two years, the State bee-keeping enterprise in Thai Binh has collected over 20,000 kilograms of honey.

On these swampy coastal districts, the mangrove has formerly grown wild. But in recent years Thai Binh has stepped up its cultivation; today looking down from the air or across from the sea, you will see

in front of the green line of filao pines and coconut palms a wide expanse of mangroves stretching from Tra Ly to Ba Lat.

Even when Nixon was blockading North Viet Nam's coastline with his mines in 1972, four tree-planting teams and thousands of co-op members braved the danger in order to plant mangroves over 1,000 hectares on the bare islet of Vanh in the mouth of Ba Lat River.

The mangrove forest on Vanh islet is spreading farther and farther into the sea and will retain the silt carried by the Red River. In the not too distant future, the belt of land so formed will link the islet to the mainland. In 1974 alone, an afforestation team of Tien Hai district planted 600 hectares of mangrove around the islets and the haughs of the Red River.

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"By 1980, Thuy Tan will have an area double the present one." This parting word uttered by Mai Dang Gian gave us food for thought all through our return trip from studying the Thai Binh coastline. The acreage of farmland will increase not only at Thuy Tan but at other villages and districts. This means that for the good of the economic development of this heavily populated province every possible resource whether from mangrove, rush or rice will be tapped.

MAI QUANG

FACTS AND EVENTS

Cambodia : New Arms, New Crimes

AMONG the US war gadgets recently put to use in Cambodia, there is a new type of bomb, the CBU-55, which absorbs oxygen and destroys life within a radius of 32 metres around its point of impact. Bombs of this type have been dropped along the banks of the Mekong.

In a statement to denounce this new crime, the RGNUC Ministry for Foreign Affairs has stressed that "in its savage war against the Cambodian people the Ford-Kissinger Administration is thus unleashing an escalation of horror in its crimes of genocide and is using Cambodia as a field for the experimentation of new extermination arms."

Efforts are now being made by Washington to get Congress approval of an additional military aid of 222 million dollars and a "food aid" of 100 million to the Lon Nol clique. Congress approval

of this demand will open the way for the introduction into Cambodia of death engines perhaps even more horrible than the CBU-55.

To cling to its desperate position US neo-colonialism is making careful studies for the production of new arms of the most deadly possible kind. These arms will not only be used against the Cambodian people, but against all the peoples of the Third World.

Peace and justice-loving people throughout the world should redouble their activities in the struggle for an end to the US war of aggression, to demand respect and recognition for the fundamental national rights of the Cambodian people as expounded in the March 23, 1970 five-point statement of the Cambodian Head of State Norodom Sihanouk.

Who is Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh ?

(By Thieu Son, a Saigon writer of the Third Force, published in Paris on January 2, 1975 in *Mien Nam di toi* (South Viet Nam Advances), organ of Vietnamese residents in France.)

PRIOR to 1965, Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh was not yet known to the general public or only in a rather modest way. Now and then, reading the Saigon magazine *Journal d'Extreme Orient* I came across articles signed "Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh" dealing exclusively with culture but with a deep content and written in a very elegant style. Many Saigon intellectuals highly appreciated her French writings. I was interested in finding out who she was, and after detailed inquiries, I learned that she was a daughter of Dr. Pham Van Huyen. Her maiden name was Pham Thi Thanh Van, and she was married to veterinary Doctor Ngo Ba Thanh, former Director of the Saigon Fishery Service. She holds three Doctorates in Law from France, the United States and Portugal. Multilingual, she was a professor at the Saigon University's Faculty of Law, and every year she used to go to France to teach for a few months at a university run by UNESCO.

Not until 1965 did she fully make her public appearance when the Mobilizing Committee for Peace, in co-ordination with the Movement for National Self-Determination founded by lawyer Nguyen Long, held a press conference at the *Thanh The* Hotel and invited her to help as interpreter. I need not recall here the repressive actions taken by the Saigon administration against the above organizations.

I only want to recall that after her first release from jail, Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh engaged very actively in the struggle movements in Saigon, especially the

movement of students, and was many times thrown into prison. Her husband lost his post as Director of the Fishery Service and she herself lost her professor's chair at the Faculty of Law and also her post as lecturer at the UNESCO university in Paris.

Students and other young people look upon her as their eldest sister, and many male politicians in Saigon feel ashamed at the example of courage given by this woman.

One day, I was invited to an interview she granted at a friend's house where I met many old friends of mine such as lawyers Nguyen Long and Tran Ngoc Lieng. This was at first intended as a secret interview by a foreign TV company. Before the interview, we suggested that her name be withheld for security reasons. "What's the use of this interview if my name is withheld?" she stormed. Then she told her full name, and said how many times she had been jailed for her fight for peace and for condemning the dictatorial and warlike Saigon administration. Her bravery is something I could not hope to imitate!

She succeeded in winning the cooperation of the Buddhist nun Huynh Lien and the Monk Superior of Ngoc Phuong pagoda in Gia Dinh province, where they often held teach-ins, meetings and cultural activities. Large numbers of people crowded these get-togethers, among them many field policemen. She always invited me to such gatherings. Each time, I slipped into the pagoda through the police cordon, my heart was



Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh at a press conference

throbbing, for I was one of those most terrified of going into jail.

One day, the press reported that the National Front for Liberation had sent to the Paris Conference a certain lady named Pham Thi Van (Foreign Minister Nguyen Thi Binh's private secretary — Ed). The National Police Headquarters summoned Mr. Ngo Ba Thanh and asked him whether his wife was at home. Although his answer was affirmative, they did not believe him and demanded that she should go to them. Only when they actually saw her would they believe that the NFL woman simply had the same name as

hers. They hurried to voice their regrets. "No need to apologize," she snapped. "I just want to ask you, gentlemen: for what reason did you arrest me the previous times? Was it because I struggled for peace? Mr. Thieu himself recently declared that he, too, was attached to peace. Why don't you arrest him?"

Embarrassed, the police chiefs entreated her to say nothing more, and politely invited her to go home.

Each time she went into jail, the prison authorities wanted her to enjoy special treatment, and tried to keep her away from other women whom they dubbed "Viet Cong." But she always insisted upon being detained among the latter, in order to share all their hardships. She joined them in singing and gave classes and before long had won their hearts. Sometimes, she was separated from them and confined alone. When I was in Chi Hoa, she was jailed together with Miss Tran Thi Lan. Every night, however, they both managed to communicate with the other rooms to bolster the morale of other prisoners. Even when she was left alone after Tran Thi Lan was taken to Thu Duc, we still heard her communicating to us every night.

One day, Lieutenant-Colonel Duc, director of the Chi Hoa Centre, summoned her to his office. At the sight of a picture of Nguyen Van Thieu, she struck it with her sandal, smashing both

the frame and the glass into pieces. Scared out of his wits, Lieutenant-Colonel Duc entreated her to cool down and quickly cleared the mess, for fear of being sacked if the incident was reported to his superiors.

Later, the same prison director told a dear friend of his: "Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh is an upper-class intellectual. She's got all she needs to lead a life of plenty. Now that she chooses to struggle and has to go to jail for that, she is not acting in her own interests, but for the sake of the nation." These words from a prison lord showed that he was not a bad man at all! Unfortunately, he is now imprisoned in Chi Hoa for being bribed into letting prisoners escape!

At first, Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh collaborated with lawyer Tran Ngoc Lieng in forming the Progressive National Forces and in regularly publishing the review *Hoa Giai* (Reconciliation). Then, by her own she founded the Women's Movement for the Right to Live, and later on, adhered to the Front for Peace. Of late, together with her friends, she has founded the People's Organization for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement.

She has not only participated in all these movements but is their most active and most courageous member, and so deserved to be considered a leader of the Third Force.

Because she stood firm on her position, she went on a hunger strike in protest against her release to the Provisional Revolutionary Government (in early 1973-Ed)... In view of her high prestige at home and in the world, the US forced Mr. Thieu to set her free in Saigon. Since then, she has been very active in all struggles.

She suffers from chronic asthma, and often seemed to be breathing her last when she got fits of it. She told me that she had to take hydro-cortison. She said, "I know it's toxic, but there's no alternative."

Affected by sickness and this toxic medicine, and thrown into jail time and again, she keeps on involving herself in the struggles for peace. The sacrifices she has been enduring are so great that nobody can deny them. As far as struggle is concerned, she is leaving me far behind. Her husband is a very kind man, and he loves her very much. He brought her food and other necessities when she was in jail. She has more than once made him weep, but it is thanks to her that his name is known over five continents.

In my opinion, he should be proud of having a wife like her. And the Vietnamese nation also is proud of having such a daughter worthy of the two Trung Sisters and of Lady Trieu (Vietnamese national heroines — Ed).

THIEU SON



Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh urging the Chairman of the Saigon Lower House to go into the street to meet the people (Sept. 1974).

"Agrarian Reform" in South Viet Nam

FOR centuries, the central problem in Vietnamese society has been the agrarian question.

Before the August 1945 Revolution, the agrarian situation as regards ownership of land in South Viet Nam was as follows:

— Land owned by local landlords (about 1.5 million hectares), French settlers (about 775,000 hectares) and religious communities (mainly

Catholics)	2.3 million ha	65.7%
—Communal land	0.255 —	5.7%
—Land belonging to peasants	1.0	28.6%
	3.5 (1)	100

The August 1945 Revolution distributed to the peasants almost all the communal lands and 650,000 hectares confiscated from the landlords. Meanwhile, land rent was fixed at 10-15% of the crop.

Under Bao Dai and Ngo Dinh Diem: Maintenance of Landed Proprietors

During the first resistance war, the Bao Dai government dealt with the agrarian question in the French-controlled areas in four decrees dated June 4, 1953:

Decree No. 19: defining the ways to take back land already allotted but lying fallow or illegally rented out.

Decree No. 20: fixing land rents.

Decree No. 21: fixing the limits of landed property.

Decree No. 22: defining the rights of those who received incomes derived from farmland.

These measures, which were drafted at a time when the French expeditionary corps was suffering heavy defeats, were purely demagogic moves. Dien Bien Phu swept from North Viet Nam both the French expeditionary corps and the puppet government with its "agrarian reform."

After the Geneva Agreements, Ngo Dinh Diem, instigated by the Americans, continued and surpassed the work begun by Bao Dai. His "agrarian reform", raised to the rank of *State policy*, was made concrete in the following decrees:

Decree No. 2 of January 8, 1955 recalling *Decree No. 20* of 1953 and dealing with the level of land rents, with a small amendment on the rates of land rents, now fixed at a minimum rate of 15% and a maximum of 25% instead of a single rate of 15%;

Decree No. 7 of February 5, 1955, replacing *Decree No. 22* of 1953 and fixing the conditions of ex-

ploitation of private lands and communal lands left fallow;

Decree No. 57 of October 22, 1956, defining the conditions of the actual "agrarian reform": each landowner was allowed to own a maximum of 100 hectares, the remaining being "expropriated" and indemnified at "current prices", that is compulsorily sold at current prices to a third person or to the State which would resell it to those who were in need of land. That measure was only applicable to rice-growing areas and not to land used for industrial crops or other economic or extra-economic activities. 10% of the value of the land was paid to the landowners as compensation in cash, the remaining 90% in twelve-year treasury bonds. Each peasant family which received "expropriated" lands was entitled to buy only 5 hectares at the most, the price of which, calculated on the basis of the indemnity paid by the State, had to be handed over within six years. These lands could not be resold, mortgaged or rented for a period of ten years.

That "agrarian reform" was carried out in two stages:

— Legalization of the relations between landowners and peasants (*Decrees Nos. 2 and 7*) by defining the system of tenancy on private lands or communal lands left fallow with a fixed rate of land rent.

— Limitation of the size of large estates while helping landowners to sell their surplus land.

In their essence, Ngo Dinh Diem's decrees on "agrarian reform" did not go any farther than those of Bao Dai, the supplementary dispositions and amendments dealing only with details. They were simply a Vietnamese version of the reformist "agrarian reforms" already applied in the Philippines, Formosa and in other Southeast Asian countries. In South Viet Nam, that "agrarian reform" was not just a big step backward, it had a definitely counter-revolutionary character aimed at demolishing the gains made by the peasant masses. Whereas Bao Dai's "agrarian reforms" was nothing more than an empty promise thrown out in a completely desperate situation, that of Ngo Dinh Diem was a reactionary manoeuvre aiming on the one hand to make a frontal attack on the peasants in order to deprive them of the fruits of the August 1945 Revolution and maintain the monopolization of the land by local landlords and French and American settlers; on the other to carry out a demagogic and deceitful propaganda among the peasant masses in order to consolidate the puppet regime.

The reaction of the injured peasants was not slow in coming.

From 1959 onwards, the concerted uprisings followed by the foundation of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation swept away "strategic hamlets", "agricultural settlement zones", "prosperity zones", and liberated four-fifths of the national territory. A new agrarian reform was set in action and by the end of 1965 the NFL had distributed 1,650,000 hectares among the peasants, who possess 50% of the the land under cultivation (or 72% of ricefields or 70% of the land, occupied by large landowners). In the liberated zone, the land rents which are still maintained are fixed at 5%.

The general offensive launched in 1968 by the liberation armed forces shook the Saigon regime to its roots.

By the end of 1968, over 2 million hectares of land had been

(1) 3 million hectares in Nam Bo and 500,000 hectares in Trung Bo.

distributed to the peasants, or 80% of all arable land. Distribution was continued after the Paris Agreement of January 27, 1973 with 155,000 hectares allotted in 1973.

Almost all the landlords fled to the towns; with the NFL land

distribution, the liquidation of the feudal landowners as a class and as the social basis of the puppet regime in the countryside has now been achieved. The reactionary rural administration has been shattered. The regime has lost its main support in the countryside.

Nguyen Van Thieu and the "Land to the Tiller" Law

Something had to be done to retrieve that situation, to create a new social basis, a new framework for the regime, a new rural administration to stiffen and contain the peasants, relying on a new stratum of peasants who would have more or less close relations with the landlords who had taken refuge in the towns. That work could not be achieved without giving some reassurance to the owners expropriated by the NFL by regulating the land question to their advantage.

The "pacification" carried out by the US and satellite troops introduced at the end of 1965 aimed among other things at "winning the hearts and minds" of the peasants, a campaign waged by means of dollars, bombs and toxic chemicals.

The "Vietnamization" of the war requires the solution of the problem of "on-the-spot supply"; "feeding the war by the war"; calls for intensified agricultural production which is also needed for the post-war economic restoration and development, with increased export of agricultural produce as its linchpin.

Hence the agrarian question came up again for discussion, the main goal being to dispute with the NFL for the peasants without whom "pacification" could not succeed.

These are the fundamental reasons for the great importance attached by the Americans to a new "agrarian reform."

After the PLAF general offensive in 1968, "agrarian reform", considered to be an indispensable condition for the new "pacification" begun in 1969, was approved by Nixon at the Midway conference on June 8, 1969. Thieu was promised a financial aid of goods worth 40 million dollars for the three years 1969 to 1971, starting with 10 million paid in 1969. At Midway, Thieu declared that "the agrarian reform is the central task of the State, the existence of the nation depends on it."

On March 26, 1970, Law No. 003/70 was thus promulgated under the label of "land to the tiller." It was composed of six chapters and twenty-two articles laying down various provisions for the "beneficiaries."

As regards the landowners:

— Private lands which were not brought under direct cultivation by their owners and communal lands were to be expropriated and distributed (free of charge) to the peasants.

— Landowners had the right to keep a maximum area of 15 hectares and to hire farm hands to work their lands.

— Only the lands under rice and dry crops were to be expropriated. Land belonging to religious communities, land reserved for different kinds of ancestor worship under five hectares in area, land grown to industrial crops and perennial fruit-trees, land reserved for industrial installations, salt marshes, ponds and lakes, building areas, grassland, land belonging to ethnic minorities, land reserved for agricultural experimentation stations, lands of public interest, and land reclaimed (after the promulgation of this law) were unaffected by this law.

The expropriated landowners were to receive compensation paid according to the following principles:

1. The rates of compensation should be 2.5 times the average annual income of the expropriated ricefields over the last five years.

Landlords Become Compradore Capitalists

The lands left in the possession of the landowners (Article 5, Chapter II) are not negligible. The compensation paid for "expropriated" lands (Chapter III) is more advantageous than that accorded by Diem's decrees, and the compensation rates are more stable than the old ones fixed at the "current price" of land which

2. 20% of the compensation should be paid to the owners immediately after the expropriation has been carried out. The balance of 80% will be paid over eight years in 10% treasury bonds; these bonds can be sold to a third person or converted into shares and bonds of national, joint or private enterprises.

As regards the peasants:

— Each landless peasant household is entitled to receive (free of charge) an area amounting to:

1. three hectares in Nam Bo;
2. one hectare in Trung Bo;

— The beneficiaries of this free distribution of land are classified in the following order of priority:

1. Active tenants;
2. Fathers, mothers, wives and children of those who "died for the Fatherland", upon request;
3. Demobilized soldiers (or those in the course of demobilization), civil servants or political cadres on pension (or those in the process of retiring), upon request;
4. Soldiers, civil servants and political cadres who formerly engaged in agricultural activities, upon request;
5. Farm labourers, upon request.

— The system of tenancy is abolished.

— Communal lands are also allotted free to the peasants.

— The expropriated lands allotted to the peasants should be formed directly by the latter for fifteen years. They cannot be transferred to a third person without administrative authorization and, during the first year, they are exempted from all dues and taxes. A frenzied propaganda campaign was launched with such slogans as "revolution in the countryside", "property to the peasants", "economic and social equality for all", in order to try and prove that Thieu's "agrarian reform" was more "revolutionary", more "progressive" than Diem's.

is very frequently subjected to temporary fluctuations.

Fifteen hectares instead of one hundred: at first sight, this looks bad for the landowners. In fact, the one hundred hectares granted by Diem's "agrarian reform" had been already transferred as part of the inheritance to the members of the family (wives,

children...), so much so that rarely does a new piece of land reach the 15 hectares stipulated in Article 5 — the trick is played and the estate, though scattered, remains intact. Frequently the landowners who fled to the town lost their lands a dozen years ago and had had no chance to get them back. This is a golden opportunity for them: on presentation of land titles which agree with the land register they are duly given compensation.

The landowners have become more realistic. Frightened by the PLAF general offensives in 1968, they feel that "half a loaf is better than no bread". In their confrontation with the peasants, they have come to understand that the time for "all or nothing" is definitely over, and that they must save only what can be saved. Besides, the compensation paid by US aid and budget subsidies (estimated at about 450 million dollars in all), opens up the possibility for them to engage in commercial and industrial activities which will be carried out under the umbrella of the urban *compradore bourgeoisie*: agricultural loans, hydraulics, selling and renting of tractors and other agricultural machines, sale of chemical fertilizers, etc. Hard cash, profits from business, revenue derived from treasury bonds, are much better value than land rents which never come. A new peasant class — of rich peasants — born from this new situation, will serve as a social basis and support for the regime.

The result of this agrarian policy has been the essential preservation of land appropriation by the landowners under a new form. The interests of the landlords are to be safeguarded but their class, which is a major obstacle for the capitalist development of the countryside, is liquidated, paving the way for the implantation of neo-colonialism. The system of tenancy is abolished by Chapter I, Article 2, Clause 2, but the landowners have the right to hire workers to farm their lands (Chapter II, Article 5, Clause 1). It is just the substitution of the direct exploitation of the peasants by the utilization of the labour force of agricultural workers for the exploitation of tenants and sub-tenants by land rent. In his book "The Postwar Development of the Republic of Viet Nam: Policies and Program", David E. Lilienthal wrote that where agricultural

development requires important investments and modern management, a clear-sighted employer of labour can replace the backward and conservative landowners. The outmoded feudal relations of production will thus be replaced by more advanced capitalist relations of production. The form of exploitation changes, but the domination of landowners — or rather of rich peasants — remains. This change is necessary for it is in line with US neo-colonialist policy while at the same time it safeguards the interests of the feudal landowners. The abolition of the system of land rents as an impediment to the expansion of the rural market made possible by the rise in the purchasing power of the peasant masses is an indispensable condition for industrial development and thus for foreign investments.

The introduction of the capitalist mode of production in the countryside in place of the feudal mode of production has a double aim. In the immediate future it allows a profitable use to be made of rural manpower and the efficient introduction of modern techniques into agriculture so as to intensify production to meet the war needs. Besides, the swelling of military expenditure as a result of the "Vietnamization" of the war requires a higher and higher tax revenue, an important part of which should come from the development of agricultural production. In his "Ten-year plan for postwar economic development" mapped out in cooperation with David E. Lilienthal, Vu Quoc Thuc advocated a "heavy taxation on landed property" (Chapter V — Taxes) and a "conversion of rice cultivation into industrial crops to obtain the greatest possible tax return" (Vietnamese version). According to the Saigon paper *Dien Tin* of June 22, 1974, Chau Kim Nhon, the Minister of Finance, stated at a press conference on June 15, 1974 that the rural sector would have to supply 50 billion piastres in tax in 1974 as against 5 billion in 1973. In the long run, that policy will create favourable conditions for the development of a *compradore capitalism* in the countryside which will itself encourage investments and the exploitation of the agricultural potential by American capital.

The agricultural development favoured by the introduction of a capitalist mode of production

implies the use of modern techniques, the absence of a heavy industry to supply agriculture with equipment, chemical fertilizers, insecticides, etc., causes the peasants to become tightly bound to the *compradore bourgeoisie*. The consequences of that dependency can be immediately seen in the petrol and chemical fertilizers crisis in Western Nam Bo: 50% of the areas until now planted with the new IR rice strains giving a high yield but requiring a great quantity of fertilizer are lying fallow as a result of the lack of chemical fertilizers. In addition the use of imported tractors is very expensive, it makes a great difference to the production cost of a crop and at the same time is greatly prejudicial to the preservation of the cattle herd which constitutes the main draught force in the country: the number of buffaloes in South Viet Nam had fallen from 848,000 in 1963 to only 636,000 in 1971. To be economically profitable, a farm should have an area large enough to enable its owner to cover most of his own needs and have enough money to spare so that he may trigger off a process of "saving-investment-production". An estate of *three hectares* cannot meet that condition for the modernization of agriculture, but it can be fulfilled by one of *fifteen hectares*, a medium-sized estate, which, with three harvests a year, will amount to *forty five hectares of crop land*. Hence the owners of three-hectare properties tend to become bankrupt as a result of *indebtedness* and have to turn themselves into farmhands (this is provided for in Article 15, Chapter IV, which allows the resale of land) and this will lead to the capitalist concentration of land. That concentration is thus both an important condition and a premise of the implantation of the capitalist mode of production in agriculture. Thieu's "agrarian reform" is thus the initial step of that process, designed to liquidate an agrarian economy based on feudal exploitation by abolishing the "land rent system" and its corollary, ground rent, and replace it by an agrarian economy of small proprietors which will move *spontaneously* towards a capitalist agrarian economy. Thus it constitutes the transition period and meets the need of setting up a capitalism which will be dependent on foreign capitalism and maintained in the orbit of US imperialism.

The Peasants Remain Exploited

It is in this way that the interests of feudal landowners who become industrial or commercial capitalists or who exploit land are safeguarded and that the peasants' interests are injured while they are being protected by "law". "Land to the tillers", "Land to the peasants", these catchwords are attractive but the reality is quite different. Only the "peasants" who "have the dollars to pay for modern techniques" can afford to possess land, that is those who are attached to local or foreign capitalists. The others, less fortunate, cannot resist capitalist concentration and will be doomed to pauperization and proletarianization. Whether they are tenants or farmhands, they remain exploited people. The feudal landowner of yesterday or the agricultural boss — exploiter of today — their names change according to the form of exploitation but they are exploiters all the same. It is in this way that the US neo-colonialist ambitions must be understood. There lies the essence and fundamental objective of Thieu's "agrarian reform" and its difference with Diem's "agrarian reform". Here, too, is its apparently "progressive" or "revolutionary" nature. Moreover, they did not wait long before "making the peasants sweat". In this connection the following news item carried by the Saigon paper "Dong Phuong" on September 23, 1974 is significant: "Owing to the shortage of petrol, the hydraulic pumps in all the provinces in Trung Bo have come to a standstill. Capitalizing on that crisis, the rich peasants have set up old-style irrigation installations worked by men or animals (norias, water-wheels) to *sell water* to the peasants, by taking from them a share in the 8th-month crop, the average sharing rates being 30 or even 50% in some regions, rates legalized by the notables of the village or district administration, who have partly 'financed' the deal." That patent collusion between the administration and the landowners at the expense of the peasants is seen in other fields: price, loans, collection of paddy.

The March 26, 1970 "agrarian

reform" provides for the distribution of about one million hectares of land to 800,000 peasant households. According to the information of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform, quoted by *AFP* on May 23, 1973, 714,131 hectares were "expropriated" up to March 26, 1973, from 84,901 landlords who received 41,380 million piastres in compensation (about 80 million dollars), the balance to be settled in the same year 1973. In a speech delivered at Vung Tau on March 26, 1974, on the occasion of the 4th anniversary of the promulgation of the "agrarian reform" law, Thieu announced that 1.3 million hectares had been allotted to 800,000 peasant households and that another one million hectares would be distributed in 1974.

But what is the land which has been distributed to the peasants?

If one takes into account the 1,698,020 hectares of land reserved for 84,901 "expropriated" landlords (15 hectares being left to each of them for rice cultivation and 5 hectares for ancestor worship), 300,000 hectares for industrial crops, 305,000 hectares belonging to landowners in Trung Bo who had less than 15 hectares each, 220,840 hectares taken from French settlers and reserved for the establishment of agricultural colonies, hardly more than 1,000,000 hectares remains to be distributed. However, that one million hectares in practice already belonged to the peasants. To distribute to the "beneficiaries of agrarian reform" what they already possessed is just a bluff and Thieu is nothing but a swindler. If there are truly lands to be distributed these are simply the lands seized from the peasants who had received them from the NFL.

So who are the real beneficiaries of Thieu's "agrarian reform"?

Owing to US military operations, 4.5 million peasants have taken refuge in urban centres. Almost all the 1,200,000 men in the puppet regular army, the 500,000 in the militia and 200,000

in the police forces are of peasant origin. Those who remain in their villages were penned up in concentration camps during the mopping-up operations. Thus it is mainly the "peasants" or rather agents who form the rural backbone of the Saigon regime who profit by this "agrarian reform": the village authorities, members of Thieu's "Democratic Party", officials of the militia and the Phoenix pacification brigade, every kind of police spy. Thieu himself (and his family) has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of his "agrarian reform": according to the Indictment No.1 of the "Committee for the Struggle Against Corruption", he has appropriated more than one thousand hectares of fertile land in various provinces. The same thing has happened with the "expropriated" landlords, who live mostly in the towns and under the protection of the Saigon army, their lands having been expropriated in the NFL agrarian reform. For them, "expropriation" is a windfall: 714,131 billion piastres for 714,131 hectares of "expropriated land" (100,000 piastres per hectare), or about 140 million dollars paid by American and Vietnamese tax payers. This is no more nor less *gangsterism brought to the level of a State policy*.

French or American colonialism, old or new, has always used agrarian policy as a lever, sometimes an effective one, to turn the peasants away from the revolutionary struggle, to compete with the revolutionary movement for their support by granting them some short-term interests against a later return. From Bao Dai and Ngo Dinh Diem to Nguyen Van Thieu the essence of that agrarian policy has not changed whatever the label stuck to it. After the failure of Bao Dai's agrarian reform carried out under French auspices, that of Ngo Dinh Diem was made at the instigation of the Americans from a position of strength, when the peasant movement was experiencing "the gloomiest days of its history" but it also ended in

fiasco. Thieu's "agrarian reform" was carried out after the setback of the "local war" despite the intervention of half a million GIs. It was launched to serve the "Phoenix" pacification operations, the backbone of the "Vietnamization" policy. Vu Quoc Thuc himself said that "the essential (of that policy) is to keep hold of the population." It is also to "scoop out the water in order to catch the fish".

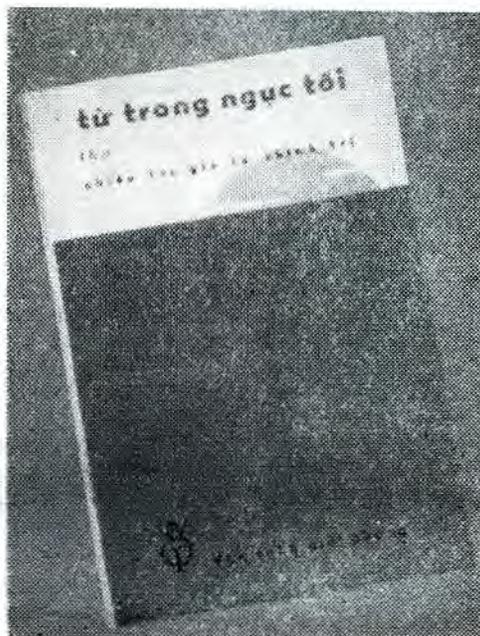
In fact "the Americans have not spent such a huge sum of money without any ulterior motive, it is not by chance or out of pity that they have given the (Saigon) administration this exceptional favour. Since 1970, the Americans, who lost the war despite the deployment of an expeditionary force half a million strong, have acknowledged the necessity of launching a counter-offensive on the political front by means of an agrarian reform with the hopes of drawing the peasant masses to their side." (The Saigon paper *Doc Lap*, April 4, 1971). But how can that hybrid US-puppet "agrarian reform" succeed at the height of the war at a time when no census can be made of the land, when the rural population is constantly being moved about from one region to another, when hundreds of thousands of young people are being pressganged into the army and vast numbers of peasants forced into paramilitary organizations? The only result is that "thanks to agrarian reform in the countryside, the peasants have become brothers fighting each other." (The Saigon paper *Tin Sang*, March 27, 1973). Certainly, Thieu's agrarian reform is approved by a certain class made up of the urban bourgeoisie feudal landlords, civil servants, militarymen, backward peasants, "northern regroupées", reactionary Catholics... But as it is directed against the toiling peasants, it is, like Diem's agrarian reform, strongly opposed by them.

A still more important fact: it is closely bound to the "Vietnamization" of the war, that is it runs counter to the national interests.

NGUYEN XUAN LAI

Poets from Hell

A collection of poems written by political prisoners: From the dark cell.



ON the first days of November 1963, just after Diem's downfall, patriots discovered several underground concrete shelters a few kilometres south of Hue, in an estate belonging to Ngo Dinh Can, one of Diem's brothers. They pulled out three men, three living corpses. These were the survivors of a group of twelve detainees held there from 1960 for having struggled against Yankee domination.

"The men from hell have returned among the living", said the Saigon daily *Chuong Mai* (Morning Bell) some time after that discovery. It was found then that the French had built those shelters to hide weapons under the Japanese occupation. Ngo Dinh Can had turned this sector into his private estate forbidden to the public; and these shelters had been fitted up to keep revolutionaries believed to be irreducible.

The full story of these men became known to us only afterward, through... a collection of poems. Nam Trung, the author of the poems, was not a poet at all before his detention. Pent up in these secret dungeons, he did not think, in the first days, that he would survive. But not long after news of the concerted uprising of 1960 reached him. At once his hope revived. With his comrades, he waged a new struggle, the struggle for survival.

They knew that the enemy, too, did not want to make them die brutally. For American-trained people, to beat to death a captured revolutionary is too old a game. One martyr gives rise to ten others. Tortures must be so combined as to make the detainee suffer as much as possible, to bring him up to the threshold of death, then to revive him, several times on end.

The anguish of seeing the tortures return, the hope of coming to life again during the pauses,

the promise of the most primary satisfaction, the deprivation of the senses shut up in cells without light cut off from all the noises of the world, all that, going on for months, for years, ended by breaking the morale of the most hardened. From a militant, the enemy hoped to make a man "rallied" to their side who would sing the praises of American generosity and fling abuse at the communists or, better still, would set about torturing his own brothers-in-arms.

For Nam Trung, the problem was one of survival in order to win that battle, to deny the enemy that victory, to prove to his torturers that the revolution is invincible on any battlefield. He must do everything to keep his heart and mind serene, lucid.

To this end, in between two torture sessions, he would... compose verses. He had no pen, no piece of paper. His verses, he engraved in his mind and recited them to other detainees who learned them by heart. The Vietnamese language, each syllable of which can be modulated on six different tones, lends itself fairly easily to poetic expression. And at all times, prisoners have composed poems to fill up their days.

"At least one of us must survive." This verse, like so many others, spells out the grim determination of these men to win. Day after day, their life was translated into verses, and their poem, once recited, was learned by all. For each stanza of ten verses, the author tied a "ring" round a finger with strings from his worn sandals.

A light is forever shining at the bottom of these dark cells:

*At the bottom of these tombs
We live with the people,
With our homeland, with our
brothers
The enemy, death,
We look them in the face
Peace reigns in our hearts.*

One day, by dint of climbing to the ceiling of his cell, he managed to catch a glimpse of some bushes, a square of grass, and above all, a patch of sunlit sky, in the far distance. He was filled with immense joy:

*Life remains wide open
You cannot bury us
Joy follows us down to the bot-
tom of our graves.*

Ha and Thao had died of cold. Tuan collapsed amidst repeated

convulsions. Giang and Cu had breathed their last, their bodies swollen by oedema. It doesn't matter, one after another may die, but the poem continues, there will always remain one to perpetuate the memory of common struggles and thus record this ultimate defeat of the traitors and the torturers.

Of course, the detainees of Hue were not the only ones to compose poems. As the prisoners return, the harvest of poems becomes more abundant. One of them, escorted to jail by a band of thugs, likened himself to a laureate of the mandarins' examination of the old days, triumphantly returning home:

*The well paved road is covered
with flowers
The lackeys bustle about
The laureate, in parade garb,
returns to his home village.*

The classic scene of torturers powerless to make the detainees speak in spite of the most atrocious cruelty is rendered in a few lines:

*Those cretins stare at you
With their bloodshot eyes
Electric shock, pincers burnt
red-hot
Squeeze from you just one word
"Don't know!"*

No sophisticated poetry. It is daily life and its trials, it is the heart that speaks, of ten clumsily for they are not at all poets by trade.

*Phu Quoc (1) shakes with anger
and pain
A comrade fell just when the
tide was turning
Endless waves roll onto the de-
sert island
Shouts rise from those who de-
mand revenge.*

In the midst of hell, it is optimism, the sense of life, that dominates. On the eve of Tet a detainee writes to his fiancée:

*The ocean rolls its rumbling
waves.
Echoing the waves that roll in
my heart*

Humour is not lacking. Detainees whose heads had been shaven compare themselves to bonzes:

*Rows of pagodas covered with
US sheet-iron
Barbed wire coils to pen up
bonzes and nuns.*

In spite of tortures and privations, the detainees preserve a sense of humour:

*By the second week, one has
started to like this life*

*Crossing one's legs, one recites
"Kieu" (2) to greet spring
Leading actors and stars have a
good time
Swollen faces, clothes in tatters.
Even small details are interesting:
Squatting, I measure my royal
bed with my fingers
One metre fifty by sixty centi-
metres
To lie down, it's enough to fold
one's knees
I've looked it over well: a
window shutter*

*Everyday, our rice so salted
becomes bitter
Today, rice without salt: what
bliss!
Viscous algae float in the drink-
ing water.*

Although the detainees saw their comrades succumb one after another, their hearts were always filled with confidence in final victory:

*I write these lines by your inert
body
No sobs, tears flow only in our
hearts
You'll rise into the sky, you'll
be a star
Lighting our path through the
long nights.*

For a small number of detainees, freedom returned with the signing of the Paris Agreement. In February 1973, on the northern side of the Thach Han river, in Quang Tri province, one of them rediscovered his loved ones and the liberated zone:

*Like a child approaching an un-
known town
Like a man strayed into the
Valley of Immortals wave after
wave
I feel assailed by a thousand
emotions
My entrails tie and untie.
A look, a single word, how we
thirsted for them!
And here is a sampan, a jerry-
landing, a bamboo twig
Everything becomes our flesh
and our blood
Hunger and thirst, days slip by,
at last, I return.*

Over 200,000 political prisoners are still detained by Thieu in his jails. Let us not forget them!

H.V.

(1) Prison island off the western coast of South Viet Nam.

(2) Masterpiece of Nguyen Du, one of the greatest poets of Viet Nam.

People's Militiawoman

(Continued from page 9)

she shouted: "Keep cool! Try to cling to one of the boards or a piece of bamboo so as to get back to shore."

Hurled farthest from the boat, Nham had nothing to clutch on to. However, she managed to join her companions. An army boat came in time to collect the exhausted girls.

After the exploit she was admitted in the Party.

Dozens of bombs and mines were blown up. Every time the boat and raft were damaged, Nham and her team-mates repaired them. The more experience they gained, the greater feats they performed — but the difficulties and trials also increased. Some of the girls asked to give up. But Nham would not give herself a breather.

All the deeply-embedded bombs had been destroyed except one dropped in the swamps at the river mouth. How could it be de-activated while guaranteeing safety during the operation? The question tormented her.

The next day, she got up very early and started to cut down bamboo and prepare all the necessary things. Then she carried

them to where the bomb had fallen.

Calf-deep in mud, she struggled desperately to get close to the bomb. The mud made it impossible to dig a shelter. She remained unprotected. Suddenly the earth shook violently: the bomb exploded. Nham was hurled into the air together with a mass of mud and water and lost consciousness. Hearing the explosion, the seamen rushed up and saw her lying inert, deep in the mud, her eyes half open.

She was taken to a military hospital. The villagers, who respected her greatly, brought in plenty of food. Her exploit was officially brought to the knowledge of the whole commune. But after her recovery, she received a sharp criticism from the Party cell for having engaged alone in that dangerous venture. Questioned on the motive of her act, she said: "I was afraid that my request would be turned down by my superiors if I made a report beforehand. So long as the bomb was not destroyed, I was uneasy at the thought that it would cause dangers to our countrymen. It was a bomb of a new type, I wanted to learn some experience from its destruction and I was ready to sacrifice my life if necessary."

New Exploits

Before the bombing halt in late 1968, Nham had de-activated two improved 1,000 lb. bombs. She kept some explosive from them and made a shovel from the remnant of a winglet.

1972. Only one month after the resumption of the bombings in North Viet Nam, dozens of improved bombs were dropped on the river mouth. With a more and more reliable technique, Nham destroyed them all, one by one, save one lying at the landing stage compelling people to cross the river at another landing stage five kilometres upstream. Nham

thought of the packet of explosive and a gleam of joy flashed through her mind: she would destroy the enemy with their own weapons. She waited until her father went to the field and then she ground and pulverized the explosive into a fine powder. The sound of the pestle and the acrid smell of gun-powder attracted the curiosity of her mother who had gone blind a few years before.

"I'm just crushing earth to mix with the dung so that I can manure the azolla, mama," said Nham to reassure her.

She spent the whole afternoon in making several parcels wrapped up in brown paper and tied with bamboo strings. Though she acted without the knowledge of her parents, she did not conceal her scheme from her superiors and they gave her the green light. As the bomb was of a new type and her means of destruction was also new, she made up her mind to work alone at her own risk.

She went out at nightfall, whispering in her mother's ears:

"I'm going to a Party meeting." But when she arrived at the end of the path, she turned back on her tracks. She took a leaf out of her notebook and sitting near her mother, in the dim light of a lamp she wrote a few lines to her parents, just in case she did not come back from the mission.

She read the paper again and again, then she laid it on the pillow near her mother. Once again she bade farewell to her and went out with her parcels.

She walked straight to the landing place, when she rolled up her trousers above her knees and headed for the bomb. There it was diving into the earth, only a part of its tail showing. A deathly silence. No living soul around, the village was very far. With infinite precautions, Nham moved the earth away round the bomb with her hands. Her vest was wet with dew and perspiration. Now and then, she laid her hand on the body of the lethal weapon trying to detect any inner movement. At midnight the bomb was laid completely bare. With her fingers, Nham sank a hole to lay the explosive. Then she went to her shelter. A moment to take breath... then a deafening explosion shook the river mouth. The earth fell in showers. The bomb disappeared leaving a deep crater ten metres in diameter. Brimming over with joy, Nham picked up the winglets and ran back home with them on her shoulders just as the cock was crowing. She threw them down on the yard in front of her house with a loud clatter — her father jumped out of his sleep.

"Bomb winglets, dad!"

Her mother, who had been impatiently waiting for her, heaved a sigh of relief. There was affection in her voice as she reproached her. "Another bomb! And you said you were going to a meeting!"

After MAI PHONG

CHRONOLOGY

(Continued from page 32)

workers employed in American enterprises demand payment of a "13th-month salary" and to oppose dismissals.

— The militia forces of the Hoa Hao religious sect opened fire on the troops sent by Thieu to disarm them. Earlier, on January 21, 1975, Thieu had issued a decree dissolving the Hoa Hao forces.

— The Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia Ministry of Information and Propaganda issued a statement strongly condemning the Thieu administration for its air raids carried out on many localities in Cambodian territory.

FEBRUARY

1. At Tan Chi Linh church (Saigon) a number of organizations publicized the "Indictment No. 2": Nguyen Van Thieu, a "product of war", a "dictator", and a "corrupt man", is responsible for the "social decadence", the "deprivation of culture and education", and must be dismissed. However, the Indictment shows an anti-communist tendency and does not say a single word about the formation of a government of national reconciliation and concord for the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

2. The Cambodian Liberation Armed Forces offensive against the Phnom Penh area and other fronts entered its fifth week. Enemy sources admitted that at least 6,000 Lon Nol troops had been killed and wounded since the beginning of the year.

— Laos: A solemn ceremony was organized by the Lao Government to receive the first delivery of goods as aid from the DRVN to Laos.

3. Grand meeting in Hanoi on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Viet Nam Workers' Party. At the meeting, Le Duan, First Secretary of the VNWP, gave an important speech.

— Thieu seized nine dailies and their printing works and arrested 19 journalists. Reason: those dailies had published the "Indictment No. 2".

— AFP: CBU-55s, a new type of bomb, were dropped for the first time on the banks of the Mekong River by the US.

4. The Rumanian Government economic delegation led by Deputy-Prime Minister G. Radulescu left Hanoi attending the second session of the Viet Nam — Rumania Committee for Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation.

5. In Saigon, General Duong Van Minh called the Thieu government "tyrannical" and demanded Thieu's "resignation" to "enable the people to establish the political structures indispensable for national reconciliation and concord."

6. The PRG Minister for Foreign Affairs Nguyen Thi Binh sent a note to the President

of the diplomatic conference on international humanitarian law in Geneva denouncing the US for resorting to illegal acts to oppose PRG participation in the Conference.

8. Establishment of diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level between the DRVN and the Republic of Togo.

— The DRVN and RSVN Ministries for Foreign Affairs issued statements strongly condemning the US for intensifying the war in South Viet Nam, illegally introducing many US air force personnel to South Viet Nam from Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea and rushing war material to Thieu.

— 50 opposition deputies demonstrated in front of Saigon "National Assembly" building. Many of them signed with their own blood a petition to US Congress demanding an end to US aid to Thieu.

9. *Chinh Luan* (a Saigon paper): "Field blockhouses have suddenly appeared at market places and crossroads. In the barracks and garrisons, the administration is launching a campaign for digging individual shelters and distributing firearms. This is the image of Saigon during the three days of *Tet*."

— 82 US Congressmen sent Ford a letter demanding an end to US aid to Thieu and Lon Nol.

— Special advisor to the RGNVC Vice-Premier's Office Ieng Sary paid a friendly visit to the DRVN.

12. According to Western sources Phnom Penh is suffering from a serious shortage of rice, fuel and ammunition. The US Command has had to double the number of US supply missions from Thailand to Phnom Penh.

13. Thailand: the newly elected National Assembly designated Seni Pramoj, leader of the Democratic Party, as Prime Minister.

14. Signing in Berlin of a protocol on the supply of goods from the GDR to the DRVN for 1975.

— On the occasion of the 14th anniversary of the unification of the PLAF of South Viet Nam, the PRG conferred on them the Order *To Quoc* (Fatherland) and a banner bearing the inscription: "Determined to fight and to win for independence, democracy and national reunification."

15. Samdech Head of State Norodom Sihanouk, Princess Monique Sihanouk and other distinguished Cambodian guests left Hanoi after having enjoyed *Tet* with the Vietnamese people.

— The representative of the DRVN Ministry for Foreign Affairs lodged a protest with the Indonesian Embassy in Hanoi against the Indonesian authorities' action on February 14 in allowing the pro-American clique of the so-called Anti-Communist League to make provocations in front of the DRVN Embassy in Jakarta.

21. Signing of an agreement in Warsaw on non-refundable economic aid from Poland to the DRVN for 1975.

CHRONOLOGY

January 16 — February 15, 1975

JANUARY

16. The RSVN Ministry for Foreign Affairs issued a communiqué on the setting up of a PRG liaison bureau at the UNO office in Geneva.

17. Establishment of diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level between the RSVN and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

21. Establishment of the Viet Nam—Cambodia Friendship Association in Hanoi with Deputy Prime Minister Phan Trong Tue as its President.

— 200 representatives of trade unions belonging to the Saigon Federation of Trade Unions convened an emergency meeting to discuss measures for the protection of the workers' interests.

— Thieu issued a communiqué banning *Tet* leave for all soldiers below the rank of major.

— Devaluation of the Saigon piastre from 685 to 700 piastres to the dollar.

— Ford called a press conference to slander the DRVN and urge Congress to grant an extra military aid of 300 million dollars to Thieu.

22. Establishment by the PRG of a Delegation General in India.

— Establishment of the Cambodia—Viet Nam Friendship Association in the liberated zone of Cambodia with Deputy Prime Minister Khieu Samphan as its President.

— On the occasion of *Tet*, the South Viet Nam NFL Central Committee and the PRG called on Saigon army officers, soldiers and policemen to oppose "pacification" and land-grabbing operations and to disobey Thieu's ban on leave by returning to their villages to enjoy *Tet* with their families.

— 9 Americans demonstrated in front of the American Embassy in Saigon to oppose the war and extra military aid to Thieu, and demand peace, the release of political prisoners and respect for the Paris Agreement. They were later expelled from Saigon.

— Thieu declared at the Thu Duc police school: "The South Vietnamese people do not lack men and a spirit of sacrifice. We only lack the means." He went on to ask the Americans "to keep their commitment."

25. Prime Minister Pham Van Dong received Archbishop Trinh Nhu Khue and Bishop Trinh Van Can on the occasion of the return of the delegation of the DRVN Catholic Church from the world episcopal conference held in The Vatican.

26. In Saigon Thieu arrested nearly 50 students belonging to various religions.

— 2nd anniversary of the signing of the Paris Agreement: Meetings and demonstrations were held in Saigon and other South Vietnamese cities and towns to demand Thieu's resignation

and an end to US intervention. Thieu unleashed his police against the demonstrators wounding many people. In the United States 3,000 people demonstrated near the White House to demand that Ford put an end to US involvement in South Viet Nam. In San Francisco, demonstrators broke into the Saigon consulate. In Washington, Senator Les Aspin published a US Congress document revealing that Ford had supplied Thieu with 26.6 million dollars worth of aircraft, 15.5 million worth of arms and 204.6 million worth of ammunition not counting expenses for reconnaissance flights.

27. On January 26 and 27, 1975 the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Viet Nam and the DRVN sent notes to their counterparts of the signatory countries of the International Act on Viet Nam, the members countries of the ICCS and other countries denouncing the US and Thieu's continuation of the war of aggression against Viet Nam.

— The RSVN Foreign Ministry issued a document entitled "For the Defence and Strict Implementation of the Paris Agreement on Viet Nam" to mark the occasion of the second anniversary of the signing of the Paris Agreement. The document includes many facts and data relating to the sabotage of the Agreement by the US and Thieu.

28. The Lao Provisional Government of National Union economic and technical delegation left Hanoi after their negotiations with a DRVN Government delegation.

29. Thieu told a *Washington Post* correspondent that the ARVN had lost 60 per cent of its fighting strength as a result of the US Congress reduction in aid. He complained that everything was in short supply and if the US Congress did not sanction the extra 300 million dollars aid for the ARVN, the situation would become disastrous.

— The US anti-war organization — the Weathermen — planted bombs which blasted 20 rooms in the US State Department in protest against the aid granted to Thieu and Lon Nol by the Ford Administration.

30. Laos: Formal handing over by the delegation of the DRVN Ministry of Hydraulics of the second hydraulic works built as aid to the Kingdom of Laos.

— A representative of the Lao Ministry for Foreign Affairs lodged a protest against Thieu's air raid on a locality in Attapeu province on January 13, 1975 with the Saigon Ambassador in Vientiane.

31. On January 17 and 31, 1975, US SR71 reconnaissance planes flew many missions over North Viet Nam.

— From January 29 to 31, 1975, 600 Saigon

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