

Vietnam courier



A MONTHLY REVIEW



POLITICS



ECONOMICS



CULTURE



SOCIETY



● Editorial Office :
46 Tran Hung Dao
Hanoi, SRV.

● Distributed by:
XUNHASABA
32 Hai Ba Trung
Hanoi, SRV.

VOLUME 15

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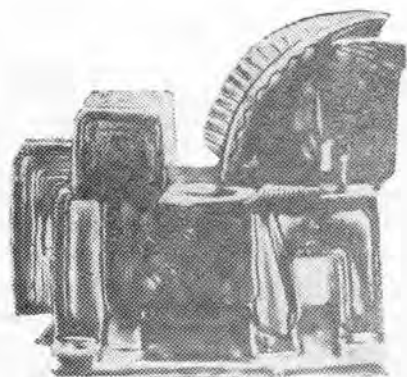
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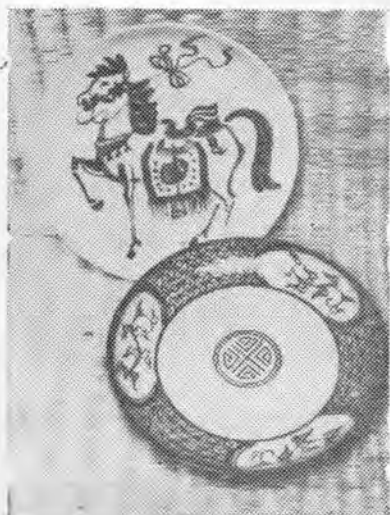


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OUR MONTHLY COMMENT

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Front Cover:

Students of the Ha Lam Coal Miners' School.

Photo: Minh Dao

Vietnam courier

THE Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique and the Chinese authorities had made special arrangements for three British and American journalists to visit Kampuchea, hoping they would paint a picture of Kampuchea favourable to the regime. But during the visit one of the journalists was shot dead in the stringently controlled compound in Phnom Penh, and the two others, who had themselves narrowly escaped from death, wrote articles to confirm what was known to everyone: the Phnom Penh regime was a bizarre one going beyond all imagination.

Only a few weeks later, this barbarous, odious, and universally cursed regime collapsed under the powerful attack of the patriotic forces led by the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea. It collapsed so rapidly because it was not supported by any section of the people. The Peking authorities have repeatedly stated that the small band of followers of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary would continue to wage a "people's war" against the People's Revolutionary Council which has assumed the functions of government in Kampuchea. These statements amount to nothing but boasting and attempts at deception, since it is obvious that a "people's war" cannot be waged without widespread popular support!

The People's Republic of Kampuchea has been founded. As a result, a new era has opened up for the good-natured, heroic and resourceful people of Kampuchea, the worthy successors of the famous Angkor civilization.

Social life is gradually returning to normal; family life is restored and human dignity is once again respected. A three-year nightmare has ended at last!

We understand the tremendous difficulties which this suffering country now faces: everything has been thrown into confusion; the cities have been deserted and abandoned; many branches of activity are at a standstill; production decreases; over two million people have been killed; intellectual and professional strata have been virtually liquidated.

The international community has an obligation to come to the aid of the Kampuchean people now, particularly since the new government of Kampuchea has voiced its desire to live in friendship and peace with all nations in Southeast Asia and the world. The policy of international cooperation pursued by the People's Republic of Kampuchea proved to be genuine straight away after the founding of the new republic by its declaration of readiness to participate, as soon as convenient, in the work of the Mekong River Committee in which the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary regime had stubbornly refused to take part during the past three years.

Kampuchea has stretched out its hand in friendship and has met with goodwill in return. Many States have recognized the new Kampuchean Government. Many international and national organizations have warmly welcomed the birth of a truly independent and free Kampuchea. In particular, the support of Asian and African countries has been outstandingly manifested by the welcome which the 7th (enlarged) Conference of the Presidium of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO), meeting in Hanoi from 13 to 15 January 1979, extended to the Kampuchean people's legitimate representatives.

It is easy to understand that Peking was unhappy with the obvious bankruptcy of the set-up it had created in Kampuchea, which had become symbolic of the hegemonism of Chinese foreign policy. The imperialist forces in the West, new-found allies of China, have also changed their tune. Having previously condemned the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary regime as a violator of "human rights", they now put forward this regime as a champion of Kampuchean independence and freedom! As a last desperate effort, a certain person who had been both an enemy and a victim of the former genocidal fascist regime in Phnom Penh was brought to New York to "represent" that regime, a political corpse even this person could not and dared not defend. Of course, such a gross interference in the internal affairs of the Kampuchean people has been resolutely rejected by the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council, the

only genuine and legitimate representative of Kampuchea, as well as by broad sections of world public opinion.

For its parts, the SRV maintains a very clear position, which was reaffirmed by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong in his welcoming speech to the AAPSO Presidium Conference:

"Vietnam is a socialist and a non-aligned country having a geo-political position on the Indochinese peninsula and in Southeast Asia. This position requires that the Socialist Republic of Vietnam entertains good neighbourly relations and many-sided cooperation with the above-mentioned countries on the basis of mutual respect and confidence, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and readiness to enter into negotiations and settle all disputes by peaceful means.

"The main danger in this region lies in the policy of the imperialist countries and international reaction who are trying to divide the Southeast Asian countries, to set them against one another in an attempt to carry out their schemes of domination and expansion. To cover up this intention, they are making extremely tendentious distortions of the situation in Kampuchea in order to attack the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and sow doubts about her attitude to the situation in that country. That is the reason we deem it necessary to affirm once again our unswerving policy with regard to the Southeast Asian countries and our determination to live up to our pledges by concrete deeds: to develop relations of friendship and cooperation in the economic, cultural, scientific and technological fields with our close neighbours, thereby making positive contributions to peace, stability and prosperity in this important region."

We Vietnamese rejoice in the success of the Kampuchean people in remaking their betrayed revolution. The frontier between the two countries, which provided a pretext for the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique to stir up a bloody conflict with Vietnam, has become once more a frontier of friendship. From now on, the two countries will go hand in hand on

(Continued on page 32)

**Kampuchean
People's
Revolutionary
Council
Formed**

THE Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council was instituted on 8 January 1979.

It consists of:

President: Heng Somrin,
Vice-President, in charge of the Ministry of National Defence: Pen Sovan,
Member in charge of the Foreign Ministry: Hun Sen,
Member in charge of the Ministry of the Interior: Chia Sim,
Member in charge of the Ministry of Information, Press and Culture: Keo Chanda,
Member in charge of the Ministry of Education: Professor Chan Ven,
Member in charge of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Affairs: Doctor Nu Beng, and
Member in charge of the Ministry of Economy and Popular Welfare: Mok Sakun.

*
* *

On 12 January 1979 the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council issued a declaration on the foundation of the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

KAMPUCHEA'S EIGHT IMMEDIATE POLICIES FOR LIBERATED AREAS

According to the Kampuchean News Agency (SPK), the Central Committee of the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea on 1 January 1979 made public the following eight immediate policies to be applied in the liberated areas of Kampuchea:

1. Complete abolition of the division of the population into three categories practised by the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary reactionaries; prohibition of all discrimination between the people. All Kampuchean citizens living in the liberated zone, without distinction of social strata and ethnic nationalities, wherever they were born and whatever their employment in any of the old regimes, and even having relatives now working for the reactionary Pol Pot — Ieng Sary administration and army, are equal, have the same political, economic and social rights and duties and are united by mutual understanding and assistance. According to their ages they should participate actively in production and in the activities of the revolutionary armed forces and act as eyes and ears of the revolution and enthusiastically join the revolutionary mass organizations.

The people may return to their families and live at their birthplaces or in any locality they wish. The former city-dwellers who now desire to return to the liberated urban areas will be allowed to do so when the overall situation in the country permits.

2. Abolition of all the old administrative, coercive and secret police organizations and building of a form of self-management administration in all localities called People's Self-Management Committees.

Each People's Self-Management Committee is elected by the people and composed of those who have suffered at the hands of the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique, who have rendered meritorious service to the revolution or elders trusted by the villagers. A committee has the task of managing all work in its locality, to educate, encourage and organize the local population strictly to carry out the eight policies for the liberated zone, maintain and boost production, organize the local militia force, ensure social order and security, defend the village, guard against and detect in time the spies infiltrating the revolutionary organizations, prevent the enemy's counter-revolutionary propaganda from sowing division among the people and revolutionary forces, wholeheartedly care for the people's material and cultural life, their health, cultural and political education, and organize healthy cultural and artistic entertainment for the people.

3. In the economic fields, to ensure by all ways and means that the people have enough food, clothing and housing; immediately organize solidarity agricultural production teams and ensure timely ploughing, harrowing, planting and harvesting on the present cultivated land, ensure normal living standards for each individual and each family. Unprincipled scrambling for land, gardens and orchards is forbidden. The fruits of production will be divided according to the amount of work done, and assistance given to the aged, sick, disabled people and orphans without support.

To maintain the organization and operation of factories, farms and timber yards. Workers and public employees will hold meetings to elect managerial committees to manage and maintain normal operation of factories, farms and timber yards in their localities.

4. Disabled revolutionary fighters, families of fallen combatants, families having rendered meritorious service to the revolution and families having relatives in the armed forces of the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea will be given priority care in their material life as well as in their cultural and political education. Children of fallen combatants and of families having rendered meritorious service to the revolution will be duly cared for and educated. The families and relatives of those massacred by the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary reactionaries will be helped to improve their living conditions.

5. To build general primary schools for children from seven to ten years of age, and to eradicate illiteracy. To organize crèches and kindergartens in the solidarity production teams wherever required by the people. Women in childbirth will have fully-paid maternity leave one month before and one month after childbirth. To organize a local public health network and make full use of traditional medicine. To preserve historical and cultural relics, and respect national customs and habits especially of the ethnic minorities.

All citizens enjoy freedom of movement in the liberated zone.

6. To ensure the people's freedom of religion; to repair pagodas and temples according to the needs of the people and the practical conditions in the localities.

7. Those who formerly worked in the enemy administrative apparatus and armed forces, and now abandon their offices or units to return to their families and villages in the liberated zone will be welcomed. After the People's Self-Management Committees have inquired into and confirmed their true desire to return to the people, they will be issued certificates and will enjoy all citizen's rights.

Those who return to the revolution with exploits will be warmly welcomed and given certificates of merit by the People's Self-Management Committees for future proper commendation. Individuals or units who mutiny or rise up against the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique will be registered for commendation. Those of them who want to join the revolutionary armed forces will be welcomed, those who wish to go back to their families will be issued permits and helped in their journeys home. Those who were wounded in the struggle against the enemy will be given medical care.

With regard to enemy troops who are captured or surrender, they are considered as children of the people who had been deceived or forced to work for the enemy. Therefore, after five days of re-education they will be allowed to go back to their families, or if their families are not in the liberated zone, assigned work in production teams together with local people. Those who refuse to mend their ways or were seriously imbued with reactionary viewpoints will have to undergo re-education. All acts of reprisal against, and all forms of torture and corporal punishment of prisoners of war and those who have given themselves up are strictly prohibited.

8. Foreign officials and military advisers who have been working for the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary regime in any form and who cross over to the revolutionary forces will be welcomed and well treated; those who surrender or are captured during the fighting but who show true repentance will be humanely treated. Those who oppose the revolution will be duly punished. The People's Self-Management Committees have the obligation to ensure their safety and take them to special and secure areas designated and managed by higher-level authorities.

KAMPUCHEA'S FOREIGN POLICY

On 26 December 1978 the Kampuchean News Agency (SPK) published a statement on the foreign policy of the NUFSK Central Committee. The full text of the statement follows:

FOLLOWING the complete liberation of Kampuchea the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique of traitors, betraying the national interests, imposed an extremely barbarous regime — a new type of slavery — on the Kampuchean people, threatening Kampuchea with extermination. This runs counter to the general trend of progressive

mankind. They have adopted an extremely reactionary and warlike foreign policy, provoking conflicts and border wars against neighbouring countries in the service of the Chinese authorities' great-nation expansionist schemes while trying to conceal the crimes they perpetrated against the Kampuchean people. They have stained the beau-

tiful image of Kampuchea before the world, with its famous Angkor civilization and tradition of peace. They have become enemies of the Kampuchean people and Peking's instrument to undermine peace, friendship and stability in Indochina and the whole of Southeast Asia. They are completely unqualified to represent the Kampuchean people in international relations.

The National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea was founded on 2 December 1978. This is the logical development of the Kampuchean people's struggle to save themselves from extermination and to build a really peaceful, independent, democratic, neutral, non-aligned and socialist Kampuchea, thus contributing to the consolidation of peace and stability in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world. The National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea has won broad sympathy and support from public opinion in many countries.

After many years of the ravages of war and savage massacres, unparalleled except in medieval times or under Hitler's fascism, by the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique, the people's lives have been reduced to utter misery. The Kampuchean people have no greater aspiration than to live in peace, independence, freedom, happiness and in friendship and co-operation with all countries, near and far.

The legitimate and sole representative of the Kampuchean people and their aspirations, the NUFSSK, will persistently pursue a foreign policy of independence, peace, friendship and non-alignment as stated in its 2 December 1978 Declaration. This policy comprises the following concrete points:

1. To carry out an independent and sovereign foreign policy and to resolutely defend the national independence, sovereignty, neutrality and territorial integrity of Kampuchea within its present borders. To oppose with determination all foreign aggression and interference in Kampuchea's internal affairs, from whatever direction and in whatever form. Kampuchea's internal affairs must be settled by Kampuchean people themselves.

Not to join any military alliance, nor to allow any country to set up military bases in Kampuchea, nor to introduce military equipment into Kampuchea, nor use Kampuchea as a springboard to interfere in or invade other countries.

2. To maintain its policy of peace. To put an immediate stop to all acts of provocation, armed conflicts, the border war, and all acts designed to provoke enmity with neighbouring countries being undertaken by the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique. To conduct immediate negotiations with these countries so as to settle all problems of bilateral relations on the basis of equality, friendship, mutual understanding and mutual respect.

To restore the traditional friendship and solidarity between the peoples of Kampuchea and Vietnam, to re-establish friendly relations with Laos, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries. To stand prepared to sign treaties of friendship and cooperation with these countries on the basis of

mutual respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political system, non-aggression, and non-interference in any form in each other's internal affairs, direct or indirect.

3. To strengthen solidarity and be prepared to develop friendly relations and cooperation with the socialist countries, national independent countries, the national liberation movements, the democratic movements and international organizations on the basis of mutual respect for each other's independence and sovereignty.

To make active contributions to the unity and the growth of the non-aligned movement and to firmly support the struggles of other countries for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress and against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, expansionism and hegemonism. To stand ready to establish normal relations with all countries without distinction of political and social systems, and according to the five principles of peaceful co-existence. To welcome aid from all countries and international organizations without political conditions attached.

To highly value friendship with the Chinese people, and be ready to establish normal relations with the People's Republic of China on the basis of respect for each other's fundamental national rights, to firmly oppose the Chinese authorities' schemes and acts of interference in Kampuchea's internal affairs and their assistance to the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary reactionary clique in opposing the Kampuchean people and neighbouring countries.

4. To respect the Charter of the United Nations, and be willing to keep all Kampuchea's international commitments except those violating Kampuchea's fundamental national rights and contrary to the NUFSSK's policy of independence, peace, friendship and non-alignment.

On behalf of the entire Kampuchean people, we call upon the governments and people of Southeast Asia, the governments and people of other countries and all national and international organizations in the interests of peace and justice to give their support and sympathy to the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea and help call a halt to the bloody repression of the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique, thus contributing to the consolidation of peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

The Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique's barbarous and warlike regime is hated by the Kampuchean people and cannot avoid complete collapse. No reactionary force, however crafty or brutal, can save it. The future of Kampuchea belongs to the Kampuchean people fighting under the glorious banner of the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea.

*Kampuchea liberated zone,
26 December 1978*

**The Central Committee
of the National United Front for
the Salvation of Kampuchea**

INTERVIEW WITH ROS SAMAY*



Prime Minister Pham Van Dong receiving Ros Samay.

VIETNAM COURIER: Allow us first of all to join the entire Vietnamese people in welcoming you and the delegation of the Kampuchean Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee led by you to the 7th (enlarged) Conference of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization Presidium. We take this opportunity to express our boundless joy at the great victory of the Kampuchean revolution, which put an end to the nightmare of genocide in Kampuchea and also to the atrocious border war between our two countries, the double disaster caused by the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary neo-Nazis. A new era has obviously been opened for the progress of the land of Kampuchea and for the strengthening of fraternal links between the three countries on the Indochinese peninsula.

ROS SAMAY: May I express my heartfelt thanks to the editorial board of Vietnam Courier for their good wishes, and also to the Vietnamese people, the closest friends and dear companions-in-arms of the Kampuchean people, for their hospitality. We have just successfully remade our betrayed revolution. 7 January 1979 marked the true liberation of our country after nearly four years under the rule of the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique, the darkest period of our national history. Millions of our compatriots perished during those years, having either been killed or died of starvation, disease and exhaustion in labour camps. The catastrophe weighed down still more heavily on our nation since the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique started the border war with Vietnam and escalated it with every passing day. Now everybody knows that the guiding hand be-

hind that clique is Peking's expansionism and hegemonism. Our people have learnt precious lessons in the spheres of both internal and external relations. We wish to have a life of happiness and plenty; we need peace and stability to build socialism. We wish to live in solidarity and assistance with the fraternal peoples of Vietnam and Laos and also to establish good neighbourly relations with all other nations in Southeast Asia.

VIETNAM COURIER: As early as the middle of 1978 the world's attention had already been brought to a massive deployment of the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary army when 19 of its 23 divisions were stationed along the border with Vietnam. Informed circles predicted a large-scale invasion of Vietnamese territory from Kampuchea, just when the Peking authorities were conducting a co-ordinated action by intensifying their provocations on the northern border of our country. Vietnam Courier had itself anticipated that, in exercising their right of legitimate self-defence and of pursuit of the enemy up to their staging base as is recognized by international law, the Vietnamese army would smash the invading divisions and destroy their staging bases while the revolutionary armed forces and people of Kampuchea would seize the opportunity to rise up and overthrow the reactionary administration. Nevertheless, we did not imagine the spectacular speed of the victory of the Kampuchean revolution.

ROS SAMAY: Barely 37 days passed from the founding of the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea on 2 December 1978 to the liberation of Phnom Penh on 7 January 1979. However, the struggle of our people did not begin with the birth of the Front. Rather, it was this struggle that led to the founding of the Front when the movement reached its climax after the insurrection of 26 May 1978 in the Military Zone 203 had spread to the whole country. This struggle, as I said in an interview with the AFP correspondent in Hanoi, started as soon as the new slavery in the guise of socialism was imposed on our country. In September 1975 a popular uprising in Northern Siem Reap was bloodily crushed and a whole village of 300 inhabitants was completely wiped out. Many other uprisings followed in 1976 and 1977 in Battambang, Koh Kong, Kandal, Kompong Thom, Mondulhiri, Stung Treng and Kratie. At the same time, mutual suspicion among the ruling clique had led to ever more bloody purges during which tens of thousands of political cadres, military commanders and troops were killed. Not only did the people hate the butchers, but even those employed by the regime were in disarray, waiting for the first opportunity to flee or to go over to the people. In such a situation, stationing of forces by the reactionary command showed, as we have seen, a rare carelessness and stupidity. By sending 19 of their 23 divisions to the areas bordering Vietnam, they left their rear almost undefended. In their large-scale attack on

* Mr Ros Samay is the Secretary-General of the Central Committee of the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea.

Vietnam's Tay Ninh province on 23 December 1978, they lost the better part of three divisions. By breaking the spine of the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary army at the border, the Vietnamese army had created very favourable conditions for the Kampuchean revolutionary forces to overthrow the brutal fascist regime supported by Peking. The spectacular victory of the Kampuchean revolution — to quote your own words — was a logical development because the butchers had completely lost control of the situation while their masters, in their passive position, had wavered in the face of difficulties and placed them in the hands of destiny.

VIETNAM COURIER: *Peking has allied itself with imperialist and other reactionary forces in launching a concerted campaign of vilification against the young People's Republic of Kampuchea. They think, or at least they try and make out, that a guerrilla war against the new regime has been initiated by the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique. What do you think of this campaign?*

ROS SAMAY: The recent victory of the Kampuchean revolution was achieved almost without bloodshed because large sections of the counter-revolutionary regime's army had already disintegrated. In Kompong Cham province, for instance, two battalions of this army fled into jungle and gave themselves up to a women company of the NUFSA Army, and after a few days of political education they turned their guns against the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary regime. The revolutionary army entering Phnom Penh did nothing more than fire into the air for intimidation purposes and the enemy garrison of less than 6,000 men either fled or surrendered. The only corpses found in the town were in public offices and factories. These people had refused to flee along with the reactionaries and had been disposed of so that they could not talk. Ieng Sary escaped in a convoy which evacuated Chinese embassy personnel via Thailand. They have escaped popular justice thanks to the assistance of a foreign country. Now a band of criminals whom the people despise hope to rely on popular support to launch a war against the people's administration. How ridiculous! As for the objectives of the present anti-Kampuchea campaign, we should not lose sight of the fact that it was the reactionary forces in the Peking ruling circles, together with the imperialist and colonialist forces, who put the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique into power to enslave the Kampuchean people and to carry out their expansionist policy in Southeast Asia. They will continue to oppose the Kampuchean people. But they will struggle in vain.

VIETNAM COURIER: *The mass murderers in Kampuchea remind one of the Nazi war criminals and the Nuremberg tribunal. Take for instance the case of Eichmann, who was responsible for the massacre of eight million Jews and who was finally sentenced by a Jewish tribunal. We presume that the people's administration of Kampuchea may also have thought of setting up an international tribunal in Phnom Penh to try the butchers of millions of Kampucheans. Because their crime is not only one of genocide against the Kampuchean people but also a "crime against humanity" as defined by international law.*

ROS SAMAY: That is actually what we are thinking of and we are preparing dossiers to try the principal perpetrators of genocide in our country. Of course, we will distinguish these men from the executors even though there are many among the latter who have lost all human character. Our preliminary investigations show that some of them have bashed the skulls or cut the throats of 200-300 persons and swallowed dozens of human gall-bladders. When the revolutionary army entered Kompong Cham, these monsters herded tens of thousands of people into the jungle intending to slaughter them all. Fortunately the people showed the revolutionary army the way so that they could come and save the victims in time.

VIETNAM COURIER: *In the immediate future, we can see that new Kampuchea will have its hands full: the lives of each family and an entire society have to be reorganized and much must be done to provide food, clothing, housing, education and medical care for the population.*

ROS SAMAY: Indeed a lot remains to be done in a short time. At the grassroots our people have elected their own self-management committees to run everyday affairs. A difficult problem has been caused by indiscriminate displacement of the population from one area to another by the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary regime. Now after liberation, everyone is eager to return to his or her homeland or to know who remain among their relatives. Some fell into minefields laid by the enemy to control movement of the people. The provisional administration is calling on people to be patient and to wait a while. First of all, we have to organize relief for the famine-stricken areas and to bring in quickly the overripe paddy in the fields. We are forming mutual aid production teams to tackle this job. In Kampuchea the farmers grow only one rice crop a year. They are allowed to keep enough rice to last themselves a year and the rest should be delivered to the State.

We immediately re-established family life. However, everything is lacking, even bowls and cooking pots. Under the Pol Pot regime people in many areas had to make some kind of basket out of sugar palm leaves to receive rice soup handed out at the community kitchens. This container let most of the soup pass through the gaps between the leaves. Nevertheless, in many places people managed to hide some household utensils either by burying them or by throwing them into ponds. Now they are digging them up. Disease is rampant due to malnutrition, overwork, fear and other factors. But those who suffer most are still the women. Most of them had only one pair of trousers to wear during field work as well as for sleeping in, wet or dry. They were also worked the hardest up to late into the night, having to stand waist-deep in water even while menstruating, and allowed no time for rest even in childbirth. Therefore gynaecological diseases are widespread. To provide each of them with one more pair of trousers would already be a problem, to say nothing of giving them medical care.

VIETNAM COURIER: *What about those who were driven out of the cities and resettled in the countryside? Are they allowed to return to their former places of residence, and how many have returned so far?*

ROS SAMAY: As the eight-point internal policy of the NUFSK states, those formerly living in the towns will be allowed to return when conditions in the whole country permit. Their houses had been looted and many were left uninhabited throughout these four years and are now in bad disrepair. Some overall preparatory work is necessary. We will approach this work cautiously and in a suitable manner.

VIETNAM COURIER: *And what about religion and the national minorities?*

ROS SAMAY: The Kampuchean people are fervent Buddhists, Buddhism having been our national religion for many centuries now. In the last four years the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique have destroyed most pagodas and temples and either killed the monks and nuns or taken them away for forced labour. We are resolved to abolish the forced labour system and will help the remaining priests, depending on the situation in each locality, to resume their religious practice. In addition to Buddhism, our country has from 100,000 to 150,000 Moslems, most of them of the Cham ethnic minority. The Cham were most barbarously oppressed by the old administration, their religion was banned and they were hunted like animals. Their sufferings were even greater than the majority of the people. We shall work out a policy on national minorities, but I think the general measures to be put into effect for the entire people, as spelt out in the eight-point internal policy of the NUFSK, already provide for complete equality among the fraternal nationalities living in the Kampuchean homeland.

VIETNAM COURIER: *Such an amount of work obviously requires a large contingent of cadres, including both political and technical workers. But as everybody knows, most of the veteran political cadres of the Kampuchean revolution have been murdered by the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary clique. The same has happened to teachers, doctors and engineers. How do you envisage a solution to this crucial problem?*

ROS SAMAY: It is true that our biggest problem now is the shortage of cadres. When the 1954 Geneva Agreements on ending the war in Indochina were implemented, the armed forces and political cadres of the Kampuchean revolution regrouped in northern Vietnam. Later they returned to the country and made a decisive contribution to the victory of the anti-US resistance in 1970-1975. Nearly all of them have been murdered. So, the number of remaining cadres of the Kampuchean Communist Party can be counted on the fingers of both hands. On the other hand, we do not lose sight of this principle: cadres emerge in the midst of the mass movement. In practice, we can look to the working masses and the soldiers of the revolutionary army for a supply of cadres.

Naturally, careful selection is necessary and the masses themselves will help us in this work. In some grassroots units, thanks to the information supplied by the people, we have discovered and removed some opportunists with very doubtful backgrounds who succeeded in passing among the good cadres. Even more scarce are technical staff, especially teachers, doctors and engineers, because most of these people had perished at the hands of the anti-intellectual butchers. We are trying to seek out the surviving intellectuals but we know that few of them remain. We can't train an adequate contingent of technicians overnight. The revolutionary administration is calling on overseas Kampuchean to return and put their skills to use in service of their homeland and of the people. At the same time we shall immediately start training a contingent of teachers in order to re-open the schools as quickly as possible. Concerning the skilled workers and professionals in other fields, we shall rely on our own efforts while asking for assistance from the fraternal and friendly countries, Vietnam in the first place.

VIETNAM COURIER: *We are sure that Vietnam will do its best to meet to the largest possible extent the needs of fraternal Kampuchea. We also are confident that other socialist countries, the Third World countries and all peace- and justice-loving peoples in the world will stand behind the Kampuchean people and will give them steadfast assistance, both material and moral, to help the glorious land of the Angkor civilization advance towards socialism.*

ROS SAMAY: We are optimistic about the future of our country because we are confident in our people, confident in the forward trend of our times and in international support. This is a very important encouragement for us. Only two weeks after its proclamation, the People's Republic of Kampuchea has been recognized by fourteen nations in four continents. At the very 7th (enlarged) Conference of the AAPSO Presidium, the voice of the Kampuchean people has been listened to with special sympathy. The conference's resolution on Kampuchea and the appeal for solidarity with Kampuchea made in its General Declaration have given us added moral strength. Many delegations have invited us to visit their countries and offered scholarships for Kampuchean trainees. Right now I can already visualize a peaceful, independent, neutral and non-aligned People's Republic of Kampuchea advancing to socialism shoulder to shoulder with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, with the support and encouragement of the people of the world. Our country will strive to develop its active role to make a worthy contribution to peace, stability and prosperity in the whole of Southeast Asia.

I take this opportunity to express the profound gratitude of our people and homeland to our brothers and friends in all continents. Also on this occasion I would like to convey our best wishes to the readers of Vietnam Courier.

Recorded by VU CAN

AAPSO PRESIDIUUM MEETS IN HANOI

AFTER many years of intense activity in solidarity with the Vietnamese national liberation struggle, the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) held the 7th (enlarged) conference of its Presidium in Hanoi from 13 to 15 January 1979.

The speeches of the delegations from many countries and international organizations centered on major issues of the struggles of people in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the rest of the world for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress. The conference showed particular interest in the report of the delegation of the Kampuchean Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Committee on the uprising of the people and revolutionary armed forces to topple the Pol Pot—Ieng Sary clique and liberate Phnom Penh and the rest of Kampuchea.

The conference unanimously adopted a General Declaration and 23 separate resolutions on major international issues.

The General Resolution called on all the forces of the movement for Afro-Asian solidarity and the national liberation movements to enhance their anti-imperialist solidarity, a crucial condition for achieving victory. It also called for strengthened alliance with world socialism and the international democratic movement.

The Resolution on Kampuchea, a resolution of historic significance, states: "The 7th AAPSO Presidium warmly welcomes the great victory of the Kampuchean people which has opened an era of genuine independence, peace, democracy and prosperity in Kampuchea, an era of developing relations of friendship and co-operation based on equality, and mutual interest between Kampuchea, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries, which will contribute to maintaining peace and stability in this region and in Africa and Asia.

"The 7th (enlarged) AAPSO Presidium Conference strongly condemns all interference in the internal affairs of Kampuchea and all forms of such intervention. The 7th AAPSO Presidium expresses its fraternal solidarity with the heroic Kampuchean people and calls on Afro-Asian

Solidarity Committees, peoples and governments of Asia and Africa, national and democratic forces, and peace-loving and progressive forces the world over to extend maximum material support to the people of Kampuchea for them to build a new life in independence and freedom."

The Resolution on Vietnam says:

"Vietnam has unswervingly pursued a foreign policy of independence; sovereignty; peace; friendship; respect for other countries' independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-interference in other countries' internal affairs; co-operation; equality and mutual benefit. The Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization highly appreciates the Vietnamese leaders' visits to various countries of Southeast Asia, South Asia and Africa as well as Vietnam's signing of diplomatic documents of co-operation and friendship with various countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, etc. Those diplomatic relations have made a positive contribution to consolidating and strengthening solidarity among the Asian and African peoples and between the Afro-Asian peoples and those in other continents.

"The meeting condemns the Chinese authorities for their actions directed against Vietnam's sovereignty and threatening her independence, including violations of her airspace, territorial waters and borders, using the Pol Pot—Ieng Sary clique to make war against Vietnam and slanderously accusing Vietnam of expelling Hoa people as a pretext to cut all aid to Vietnam.

"The 7th meeting of the AAPSO Presidium appreciates the goodwill of the Vietnamese and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and their initiatives made to settle the differences with the People's Republic of China through peaceful negotiation between the two countries, in the interests of them both and of Afro-Asian solidarity and world peace.

"The meeting hopes that Vietnam's correct, fair and reasonable policies will soon be fully put into effect.

"Over the past three years, the Vietnamese people and the

Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam have made outstanding efforts on the economic, cultural and social fronts. The atrocious and protracted war of aggression and US neo-colonialism, heavy natural disasters in two consecutive years and the cutting off of all Chinese aid have intensified the difficulties for the Vietnamese people.

"The (enlarged) meeting of the Presidium of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization calls upon:

— National AAPSO Committees to strengthen their fine traditions of solidarity with Vietnam over the past years and organize various actions in support of Vietnam: lectures, photo exhibitions, film shows and publication of books and magazines introducing Vietnam's achievements in various fields and her home and foreign policies.

— AAPSO Committees, Afro-Asian governmental bodies and mass organizations and the people of Asia, Africa and the world to strengthen their solidarity with Vietnam and wholeheartedly support her endeavours in reconstruction and national defence, and firmly to oppose any international reactionary force which threatens Vietnam's independence and sovereignty.

— National AAPSO Committees, international organizations and the people of the world to condemn all hostile actions and slanders against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the shining standard-bearer in the struggle for independence, freedom, international solidarity and human rights; a symbol of resolute opposition to imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and the hegemonism and expansionism of international reactionary forces.

"The US Government must fulfil its obligation in healing the wounds of war and contributing to post-war reconstruction in Vietnam.

"The Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization demands that the United States immediately rescind its trade embargo and stop all discrimination against Vietnam and normalize relations with Vietnam at an early date and without any pre-conditions."

HOANG SA AND TRUONG SA — VIETNAMESE TERRITORY

In 1974, following the signing of the Paris Agreement on Vietnam and US troop withdrawal from Vietnam, the Chinese authorities, working hand in hand with Washington, attacked and occupied the Hoang Sa (Paracels) archipelago in order to carry out their scheme of expansion into Southeast Asia.

On 29 December 1978, a spokesman from the Chinese Foreign Ministry made a statement that the Truong Sa (Spratley) archipelago also belonged to China.

HOANG SA AND TRUONG SA are the Vietnamese names of two archipelagoes which were discovered generations ago by the Vietnamese and mentioned by the Vietnamese geographer Do Ba in his Map Collection published early in the 17th century. They were called Paracels and Spratley respectively by 16th century European navigators. It is to these same archipelagoes that Peking now gives the Chinese names of Sicha and Nancha.

Both lying east of the Vietnamese coast in the Eastern Sea (or South China Sea) south of the Chinese island of Hainan and west of the Philippines, these archipelagoes are composed of very scattered groups of islets, reefs, and sandbanks (Truong Sa covers an area of about 160,000 sq.km). All are composed of coral. Their interest, of course, does not stem from their size: Phu Lam (or Woody Island), largest island of Hoang Sa, has only an area of a few square kilometres; Thai Binh (or Itu Aba), largest island of Truong Sa, is less than one kilometre square. Rather, their importance stems from their biological and mineral resources (chiefly the phosphates in which the soil is rich and the oil beneath the surrounding continental shelf). Neither is their geographical position a small consideration. To the eyes of the Peking reactionary circles, in the present circumstances, the islands must seem two areas of high strategic value for their hegemonist and expansionist schemes in Southeast Asia.

This is the obvious explanation why Peking is making such insistent claims about the Hoang Sa and the Truong Sa. This contention, however, is of relatively recent date, compared to conflicts about other islands, for instance

about the Falkland near Argentinian Patagonia, or about the three islets at the entrance of the Beagle Canal near Cape Horn, which both go back hundreds of years or more. Peking's objective is to demonstrate that the Hoang Sa and the Truong Sa have been Chinese territory since time immemorial. Their arguments: the Chinese first discovered these archipelagoes; they exploited them through intensive labour and exercised their sovereignty during various feudal dynasties. Peking refers to a vague statement by Chou En-lai on 15 August 1951 that "like the Tungsha and the Chongsha islands as a whole, the Sicha and Nanwei islands have always been Chinese territories" and to many similar statements. They also invoke the visit of an official Chinese mission to the Hoang Sa islands in 1909 or the annexation of these islands in 1921 by the Kwangtung provincial authorities. Chinese archaeologists were sent to some of the Hoang Sa islands to unearth historical relics that might establish traces of ancient Chinese inhabitants of this region.

Regarding the "discovery", "claims of ownership", and "exercise of sovereignty" by the Chinese, the Vietnamese people and international law will have something to say at an appropriate moment. For the time being, we only say that People's China is not entitled, historically or geographically, to lay claim to the Hoang Sa or the Truong Sa. The occupation of the western group of the Hoang Sa archipelago in 1974, a real act of betrayal towards friends in the midst of their harsh struggle for the total liberation of South Vietnam, was no more justified than the occupation of the eastern group of this archipelago some twenty years before.

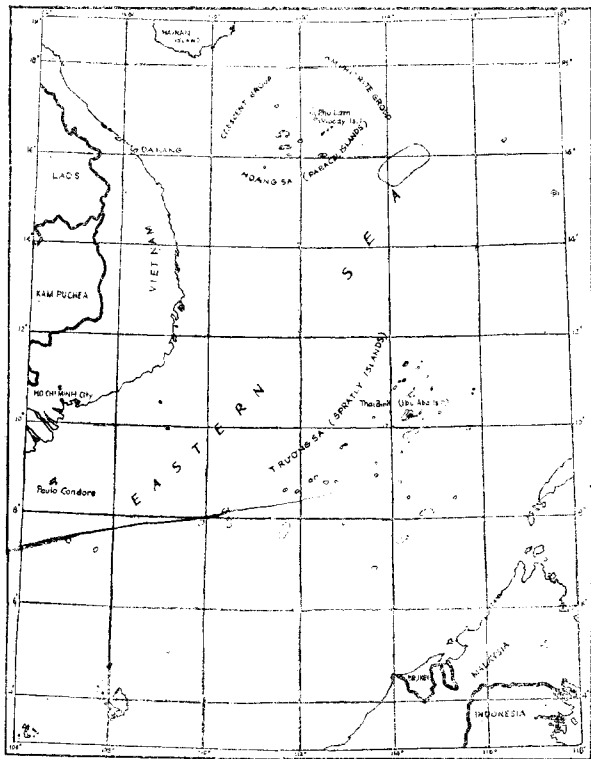
On 30 December 1978, a spokesman from the SRV Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement making it clear that both Hoang Sa and Truong Sa are Vietnamese territory: "The Government and people of Vietnam are determined to defend the integrity of their territory. Any foreign exploration, survey, exploitation or occupation of the Truong Sa and Hoang Sa archipelagoes and of the contiguous sea areas, as defined in the SRV Government's Statement of 12 May 1977, is illegal."

As for Vietnam, it has solid arguments to affirm that the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa are an integral part of its territory.

In fact, Annam (ancient name of Vietnam) discovered the Hoang Sa and the Truong Sa long ago and organized the exploitation of these islands as early as the 17th century, at the time of the Nguyen lords. Many documents of the ancient Court of Annam, for instance the *Dai Nam nhat thong chi* (Annals of Unified Vietnam) and the *Hoang Viet dia du* (Geography of the Empire of Annam), both published at the beginning of the 19th century, are only part of the proof. Foreign missionaries and navigators of that time gave additional evidence in travellers' tales and memoirs. For instance, in his book *Univers, histoire et description de tous les peuples, de leurs religions, moeurs et coutumes* (The Universe, history and description of all peoples, or their religions, habits and customs), published in 1838, Monseigneur Taberd wrote about Cochinchina (a territory at that time under the control of the Nguyen lords of Annam and made up of southern Vietnam and part of central Vietnam):

"We will not enumerate the principal islands belonging to Cochinchina; we will only remark that, for over 34 years now, the Paracels archipelago, called by the Annamites (Vietnamese proper — *Tr.*) *Cat vang* or *Hoang Sa* (yellow sand), a veritable labyrinth of small rocky islands or sandbanks, which navigators have reason to be afraid of, have been occupied by the Cochinchinese.

"We do not know whether they have set up an establishment there, but it is certain that Emperor Gia Long has decided to add this particular feather to his crown, because he thought it fit to go



Map of Vietnam edited in the 19th century by the institute of History of the Nguyen dynasty. (The latinized words "Spratly" and "Paracel" are added to the original map for the reader's convenience — Ed.)



and take possession of it personally. And it was in 1816 that he solemnly hoisted there the flag of Cochinchina."

It was actually under the reign of Gia Long that the Hoang Sa were taken into possession and placed under the sovereignty of the Empire of Annam until the arrival of the French. When the French conquest had been completed, France, in the name of Vietnam, occupied both the Hoang Sa and the Truong Sa. On the Hoang Sa, as early as 1895, Governor General Paul Doumer ordered the construction of a meteorological station and a lighthouse. These projects were not, however, put into practice until very long afterwards. Then, in 1932, the Hoang Sa were established as an administrative unit annexed to Thua Thien province. Later, they were divided into the Crescent Group and dependencies (the Western group) and the Amphitrite Group and dependencies (the Eastern group). Then a garrison of Vietnamese guards was installed to protect the islands. The Hoang Sa, now called Dinh Hai commune, were annexed to Quang Nam province in 1961. With regard to the Truong Sa, in 1927 France sent a reconnaissance mission to these islands on board

the SS "De Lanessan". In 1930 came the official taking of possession by the flag-ship "La Malicieuse". France gave notification of having taken possession of both the Truong Sa and the Hoang Sa in 1933, after operations carried out by three French ships. Following annexion of the Truong Sa to Ba Ria province, a meteorological station was installed on Thai Binh island (or Itu Aba).

The archives of the World Meteorological Organization still contain records of activities of the meteorological stations set up by the French on the Hoang Sa, Phu Lam and Thai Binh islands.

In 1951 at the San Francisco Conference, the Vietnamese delegation's affirmation of Vietnam's rights over the Truong Sa and the Hoang Sa met with no opposition. When France pulled out its expeditionary corps, the Saigon Government dispatched a contingent of South Vietnamese troops to relieve the French unit stationed on the Hoang Sa. Saigon also created an adequate administrative structure on the Hoang Sa and the Truong Sa.

So, long ago, Vietnam discovered, controlled, and exploited the Hoang Sa and the Truong Sa archipelagos. It actually

exercised its sovereign rights there, either directly, or indirectly through France acting on its behalf.

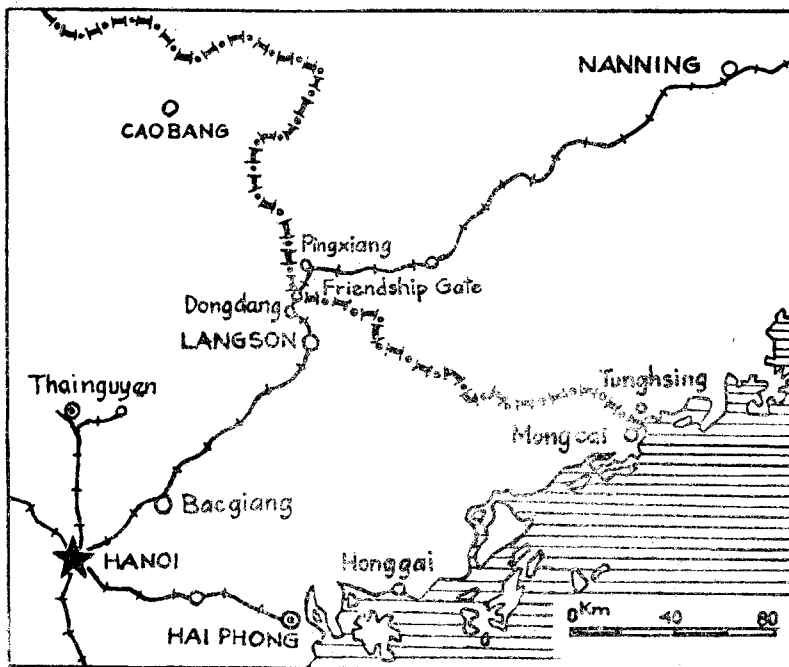
Of course anyone can see that the question of the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa which now confronts Vietnam, People's China and other parties is complicated, as are all territorial contentions. The improvement or the deterioration of the relations between the countries concerned will depend on the settlement of this question.

In his Statement of 30 December 1978, the spokesman of the SRV Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed once more that the Truong Sa and the Hoang Sa archipelagos are integral parts of Vietnamese territory. Although determined to defend the territorial integrity of their country, the Vietnamese Government and people, in keeping with their traditional policy of peace, friendship and cooperation, stand for the settlement of all disputes or disagreements with other countries concerned peacefully and in a spirit of conciliation and friendship.

It is a stand to which we will hold fast, but also one of undeniable goodwill.

THANH THUY

China Unilaterally Cuts Railway Link with Vietnam



ON 22 December 1978, the External Relations Department of the Chinese Railway Ministry sent an official message to the SRV General Department of Railways notifying it of China's decision to stop transporting passengers and goods on the international railway to and from Vietnam. The Chinese side explained that this was necessary because "the portion of the border railway on Chinese territory up to the link-up point is in serious disrepair". On 26 December 1978 the International Co-operation Department of the Vietnamese Ministry of Communications and Transport sent a reply to the Chinese side.

The Vietnamese made two proposals: firstly, that China should let Vietnam know how long it would take to repair the portion of track which it alleged was in disrepair, so that Vietnam might itself arrange repairs; and secondly, in waiting for the repairs to be made, discontinuity in the transport of passengers and goods on this international railway should be avoided by the Chinese side guaranteeing this transport up to Pingxiang (the Chinese station nearest the border) while Vietnam would guarantee the transport up to Dong Dang (the Vietnamese sta-

tion nearest the border), and the two sides would use lorries to cover the distance between the two stations as had been done previously. The message also affirmed Vietnam's territorial sovereignty over the 4.6 kilometre section of railway from the centre of Dong Dang station to the Vietnam-China border (that is, including the 300 metres of railway from the link-up to the Chinese frontier which China in its message of 22 December 1978 had claimed to lie on its territory).

In its message dated 31 December 1978 to the Vietnamese railway service, the Chinese side not only refused to discuss these two proposals from Vietnam but also slanderously charged Vietnam with "hampering and undermining fundamental repairs undertaken by China" and declared that "all train services on this portion must be suspended". In the same message the Chinese side once again made the preposterous claim that the portion from the link-up to the Vietnam-China border is on Chinese territory.

What is the truth? The railway portion from the link-up to the Vietnam-China border lies between border posts 19 and 20 on Vietnamese territory. It runs through Bao Lam commune, Van Lang district, Lang Son province. While helping Vietnam

to restore this portion of railway in 1955, China, intending to eat into Vietnamese territory, pushed the link-up 300 metres into Vietnam past the historical border between the two countries.

On 31 December 1974 the SRV Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a note to its Chinese counterpart proposing that China readjust the link-up point to make it conform with the historical border. But the Chinese authorities answered evasively, saying that the matter would be taken up at the border negotiations between the two governments. At the end of June and in early July 1978, at the request of the Chinese, Vietnam agreed to let them repair this portion of track. The Chinese side took this opportunity to erect a number of constructions on this portion in the same style as those on the section of the railway on Chinese territory, obviously intending permanently to usurp some of Vietnamese territory. But China was prevented from putting its scheme into practice by energetic protests by local people in Bao Lam commune, Van Lang district. As a result, China has found one pretext after another to prevent normal running of trains on this portion of railway.

On 11 April 1978, at the 20th Vietnam-China border railway conference, the head of the Chinese delegation again asked if his country might repair this portion. The head of the Vietnamese delegation replied that, pending the readjustment of the link-up, the Vietnamese side would agree to let the Chinese carry out normal repairs to this portion as had been done so far, but China should not build any new projects on this portion.

It is now clear that while the Vietnamese side have shown utmost patience and a very co-operative attitude aimed at ensuring normal operation of the international railway, the Chinese side have sought one pretext after another to cause trouble and finally they have unilaterally declared suspension of the train service on this portion while still stubbornly clinging to their secret intentions to usurp part of Vietnamese territory.

The Vietnamese side demand that the Chinese side quickly restore normal operation of the international railway service between the two countries.

RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLES, RIGHTS OF MAN

DACHAU, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Nagasaki. Japanese atrocities in occupied Asia. What extreme ferocity capitalist regimes in crisis could reach: the Second World War made this so clear.

Anguished humanity cried out in unison: Never should such crimes be allowed to happen again!

Other crimes followed: Constantine, Madagascar, Haiphong. Thousands of people were massacred in a matter of minutes. Colonialism showed all its ugly features. Then came the endless Indochina war — French at first, then American. The highest technological achievements and all the resources of the social sciences were used in an unprecedented experiment in genocide, ethnocide and ecocide.

Never should such horrors be allowed to happen again! If no international body is yet empowered to impose the respect of law on imperialist and reactionary forces, at least let moral condemnation of such actions be clearly expressed!

It is in this context that the problem of human rights has been raised before humanity's conscience.

It is not surprising that the Convention on Human Rights should say in its first article: the first of all human rights is the peoples' right to self-determination. Then in its Article 2: The peoples' right to have free disposal of their resources. People who are the most threatened in their most basic rights are the members of deprived, colonized and enslaved nations.

None of this is outside the Vietnamese people's experience. For more than a century, a Vietnamese peasant's plot of land could be robbed by a French plantation owner or his hut set on fire without his being able to raise a single protest. His daughter could be raped by a Japanese, American or South Korean soldier and he could make no complaint. In rubber plantations or coal mines, overseers wielding bludgeons and whips rained blows on the backs of workers, men and women. The least protest would send the protester to prison and torture, death through exhaustion and disease, in the hell of Poulo Condor or Lao Bao.

The Vietnamese people stood up to claim independence. The answer they got was a deluge of bombs, napalm, defoliants, and also films, slogans, propaganda themes, drugs — chemical or moral poisons that sought to destroy the sense of all national and human values in the Vietnamese. All this in the name of the "free world", of "freedom".

At present, Vietnamese people still live in the midst of ruins and do not eat their fill. There are not enough medicines for the sick and not enough decent clothing for all the children. Each man and woman, each family still bears bleed-

ing wounds from a long and cruel war and prolonged and inhuman colonial occupation. But in the less than four years since liberation we have indeed travelled a long way!

Thousands of villages and hamlets, of town and city quarters have been reborn from their ruins. Fifteen million school children attend classes every day. As many as in France. Of course the schools are much less beautiful but the figure testifies to the efforts devoted by the regime to the future of its children, and this even in the remotest corner of the highlands. In the South where formerly doctors were solely concerned about their private practice and where all kinds of tropical diseases were rampant, a health network now extends to towns and villages, checking malaria, typhoid and dysentery. Crèches and kindergartens multiply, set up in villas formerly owned by Americans or rich merchants. Tens of thousands of prostitutes and drug-addicts have been returned to normal life thanks to the help given by revolutionaries who, immediately after their release from prison, have given themselves up body and soul to social and political activities.

But neither the Vietnamese people nor their leaders would be content with those accomplishments. They want for the 1980's a school system in which all young people would receive secondary education. They seek to set up the necessary institution and legislation to effectively enforce the right of the people to be "collective masters of society", as advocated by the 1976 Party Congress — the right to participate in the direction, management, and building of all aspects of the new society. Nobody thinks that a proper solution has been worked out, but everyone believes that a trail has been blazed which, thanks to the necessary research and experiments, will make possible a resolute advance to the future.

1978 has been a year of hard trials for Vietnam. The pair of pincers wielded by Peking — Kampuchean attacks along our southwestern frontier, daily incidents provoked by Chinese troops on the northern border — tightens. Within the country Peking strives to use the Chinese community to sow trouble. Also natural calamities have happened. But Vietnam stands fast. While facing aggression and floods its people have pushed forward the building of a new society. This has been possible because the Vietnamese, freed from foreign rule and from the fetters of the past, have been able to develop to the full their capabilities for initiative and creation. To all our friends who wonder about the destiny of our country, we can say with assurance that our cadres and leaders, like the whole of our people, draw their strength precisely from that constant concern for humanity which has always inspired the Vietnamese revolutionary movement.

THE VIETNAMESE CHALLENGE

NGUYEN KHAC VIEN

THE end of April 1975.

The revolutionary forces were tightening their grip around Saigon. Was it to be an attack on the town or negotiation? Washington had deployed several aircraft carriers off the Vietnamese coast; Paris sent its ambassador to go to and fro between the two parties, hoping to persuade the revolutionaries to negotiate. A top-ranking delegation came from Peking to Hanoi to dissuade the Vietnamese from launching an offensive against Saigon. Washington's threats, the manoeuvres of Paris and Peking's pressure were all ineffective: Saigon was liberated.

Has liberated Vietnam become a paradise since 1975? No one has said so, least of all the Vietnamese. Or is the country now one huge "Gulag?" That's a slander unworthy of anyone's slightest attention. Nor is the truth to be found halfway between the two extremes. The real Vietnam can in no way be described as half- "Gulag" half-Paradise.

Let's be more concrete. Vietnam is a former colony, conquered by the French in 1859, then occupied by the Japanese from 1940 to 1945, followed by the American presence in the South from 1954 to 1975. Plunged into war in 1939, Vietnam has still not really left it, while the rest of the world has, since the end of the Second World War, accomplished a technical and scientific revolution which has changed material conditions of life beyond recognition.

Vietnam has inherited a debt from this past which is a considerable burden in addition to those difficulties confronted in common with other underdeveloped countries.

Another fact is that the Vietnamese people led by their Communist Party not only defeated their enemies in battle at Dien Bien Phu and Saigon but still managed to create, in spite of the bombing, health and education systems which are the envy of the whole Third World. Vietnam has received prizes and congratulations from UNESCO and the World Health Organization for this great task. Already the country has 15 millions attending school (including kindergartens) out of a popula-

tion of 50 millions. Thus everything shows that all Vietnam needs is a few decades of peace and the socialism that the Vietnamese people wish to construct from the ashes of feudalism and colonialism can become a reality.

Those who were defeated at Dien Bien Phu and in April 1975 have not lost their power since their expulsion from Vietnam and bear their grudges still. Their rancour is even more bitter now that Vietnam categorically refuses to become integrated in the world economic order which the "trilateral" consisting of the USA, Japan and Western Europe is attempting to instal. The imperialist system finds Vietnam's existence to be more and more embarrassing; such a poor country overwhelmed with difficulties yet so insistent on remaining independent, defies the multinational giants and governments used to calling the tune in underdeveloped countries.

Since no one could succeed in imposing their will on Vietnam by military means, other ways are now sought to shut the Vietnamese up. The 1970's have seen the setting up of the Washington-Peking axis. Kissinger didn't visit China merely to organize ping-pong matches. Since 1971 the Chinese leaders have expressly been advising their Vietnamese counterparts to give up the liberation of South Vietnam. When the Vietnamese refused to give way, Washington sent the famous B.52 bombers to deluge the country. In 1974 the Chinese armed forces backed up Peking's political pressure by dislodging the South Vietnamese forces from the Hoang Sa Islands (Paracels). This had the obvious agreement of the American fleet which had till then prevented any attempt by Chinese naval forces to take back Chinese islands, even those nearest to the mainland.

In addition to the USA Vietnam now has a new adversary of some stature; after 1975 the Peking leaders with Washington support tried every way to break Vietnam which is still the major obstacle for Chinese ambition. If this barrier is removed, they will have an open route to Southeast Asia.

But apparently the situation is not as difficult as it was thought. The same Vietnam that defeated the American forces has its Achilles' heel, the South, where if we are to believe some sources, almost the whole population is opposed to the revolutionary regime. So the first step taken by the Chinese leadership was to increase the incidents on the northern border, thus forcing Vietnam to maintain a strong military presence in the area. On the southern border, Peking had faithful servants in the shape of Pol Pot, Ieng Sary and their followers, ready to carry out the most inhuman orders. So Chinese advisers sent Pol Pot's divisions, magnificently equipped with Chinese weapons, against Vietnamese territory. To complete the picture, the Hoa community (people of Chinese origin) was stirred up to provoke trouble in Vietnam's interior.

On top of all this came the floods and typhoons of the summer of 1978. Vietnam lost 3 million tons of rice, 6 million people saw their homes and gardens submerged, hundreds of bridges and other constructions were swept away. Held in the vice of Chinese military pressure, harrowed by internal problems, ruined by natural disaster, the country appeared to be locked in catastrophe. A foreign observer in Hanoi in December 1978 was confiding to whoever would listen his opinion that Vietnam was about to sink without trace.

Pol Pot's Chinese advisers thought the time had arrived. They thrust most of Kampuchea's army against Vietnam. In a short time they had been wiped out and the few Pol Pot troops remaining behind disbanded. The Kampuchean popular forces took advantage of the opportunity created by this gap: Phnom Penh, abandoned by Pol Pot, was liberated with almost no fighting.

A hotbed of war is eliminated.

An atrocious genocide has been stopped.

The world is divided regarding this event. Firstly some celebrate together with the Kampuchean people the end of a haunting nightmare; with the Vietnamese people the end of a war which risked spreading at any moment; and with all the peoples of Southeast Asia the disappearance of a source of trouble which was a threat to the security of the entire sector. On the other hand some line up

along the Washington-Peking axis to become the defenders of Pol Pot and, suffering from real or feigned intellectual myopia, ignore Peking's aims and actions to complain of Vietnamese aggression. The Vietnamese would be mad after 30 years of war and all the ensuing disasters to jump once more into war to conquer Laos or Kampuchea, let alone the whole of Southeast Asia. In such a delirium the Vietnamese might perhaps take no account of the likely reactions of the surrounding billion of Chinese and millions of other Asian peoples nor of the whole world's hostility.

In the 19th century and at the beginning of the twentieth, French colonialists referred to Vietnamese patriots as "pirates". After 1930 the phrase was "agents of Moscow". The Americans coined the phrase "Viet Cong" to which they gave a pejorative connotation. Now that Vietnam has been liberated, Vietnamese leaders are simply dubbed criminals (Editorial of *Le Monde*, 5th October 1978). The entire imperialist mass media has joined forces to put the blame on Vietnam.

Progressive people of good faith can see the problem in a different light. 50 million Vietnamese are part of the billions in the Third World who have stood up to end their slavery, so as to build for themselves and their children a truly human existence. Though they themselves may be relatively wealthy, these progressive people feel solidarity with the Vietnamese people. They know that though the Vietnamese are like anyone capable of faults and errors, the major obstacle to their progress towards future peace and well-being is the intentions of those in whose interest it is to keep the Third World in endless subjection. Let us just remind the latter of these few lines by Pablo Neruda:

If New York shines like gold,

And if there are buildings with 500 bars,

I write that they were built

With the sweat of the sugar plantations.

The banana groves are a green hell

So that in New York they may sing and dance.

I would only add:

So that they may lecture on human rights.

A TRUE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

A. RUSCIO

DEFENDERS of "human rights" in the Western press variously describe Vietnam as a huge concentration camp, a hell on earth and a nationwide prison. Where is their evidence and how was it

checked? None of them can say. During my own stay in Vietnam I have had the chance of meeting many witnesses of the Vietnamese policy of national reconciliation. The unadorned evidence is given below.

Thieu regime." He answered, with expert knowledge: "That's a lie. I have witnessed the two regimes and can compare. As far as I know, there are 40 in a cell here at most. Less than half the number under the Thieu regime."

Visit to Chi Hoa

CHI HOA is a sinister name. Under the old regime, thousands of patriots and revolutionaries were jailed and tortured there. Some were even murdered. At the height of the repression, 8,000 people wallowed in the dirt and excrement, crammed in 80 or 90 to a cell. My comrade Jean Pierre Debris, who was imprisoned there for two years, has often told me about its conditions and the violence and torture. He has spoken to me also of his Vietnamese comrades who died at Chi Hoa. (1) I visited that prison on 19 November 1978. Now it is former butchers and war criminals who are detained there. They numbered 1,750, according to the prison authorities. To this should be added 1,700 common convicts. This total of 3,450 persons is a far cry from 40,000 claimed by Doan Van Toai. (2) Of course, a simple battle of numbers might gloss over the differences between the different solutions advocated. It must also be taken into account that a figure given by a prison administration is not in itself sufficient evidence. I could, however, see for myself during my visit to the prison and interviews with the prisoners, that there were never more than 35 in a cell. And many cells were empty. I asked to meet the worst criminals detained at Chi Hoa.

On meeting Nguyen Van Ve I thought I was facing a slimy

kind of snake. He had a keen but hunted look and a treacherous smile. The very image of a collaborator. A police lieutenant under the French, he started to work for the Americans as early as 1954. He was in charge of Chi Hoa prison (the very place he is now detained) for six years, then of Poulo Condor (the most notorious prison of former Indochina) for eight years. Fourteen years in charge of the most sinister prisons in the whole country! This man had sent thousands to be tortured. Perhaps he had himself been party to those tortures. How many of his fellow-countrymen had died so?

I asked him whether he knew that he had been lucky to be spared, and told him that if he had been in France in 1944 he would have faced the firing squad. Yes, he knew that. But he regretted nothing. He had only been a civil servant, he said, simply obeying his superiors. Anyhow, he added, he had not suffered any ill-treatment since his arrival. He knew of no prisoner in his cell who had been tortured or beaten up. "Nobody called me names or insulted me," he said. "Hygiene was good and the food was all right". I said to him, "In the West they say that prisons here are more crowded than under the

Also at Chi Hoa I met Vo Van Cham, a Thieu minister from 1969 to 1975 (in the middle of the war). He was responsible for "rallying forces", that is, more precisely, attempts to divide the revolutionary forces by all means possible: terror, corruption, blackmail. In other words the "psychic-war", directly commanded by the CIA. Cham said, "I worked with Eugene Bable, an assistant of Polgar, one of the CIA bosses closest to Kissinger. I attended courses for psychological formation. In fact Bable was in charge of our outfit, supplying us with all we needed, materials and money." As such, Vo Van Cham was one of those responsible for implementing the policy of "Vietnamization". Cham confirmed what Ve had told me: "I have been here since 11 June 1975. I have never been tortured or beaten. The food rations are quite acceptable. We are in good shape." In good shape. The phrase sounded bitter to my ears as I remembered the human skeletons who were kept in the jails under the former regime.

(1) See his book written in collaboration with another detainee, A. Menras entitled "Rescapés des bagnes de Saigon, nous accusons" Editeurs Français Réunis, 1972.

(2) A Vietnamese refugee in France

Visit to Nam Ha

ON December 1978 I visited the re-education centre of Nam Ha, in the Red River delta, less than 100 km south of Hanoi. Over 600 people have been here since 1975, only fifty or so having been released.

The houses are of brick. The scrupulously clean rooms resemble military dormitories. Fifty people to a room exactly. Of course, in those conditions life must be at its simplest. Each person has a mat, two blankets, and some have a few personal possessions. That's all. A member of the centre's administration explained that clothes, soap, toothpaste and other everyday necessities were supplied by the centre. The officers of the centre had the same living conditions.

In the centre was a yard with a volley-ball court. On the wall were posted the 20 points of the centre's regulations alongside some political slogans. We heard singing and as we entered saw twenty or so people giving a rendering of "Viet Nam tren duong chung ta di" (Vietnam is advancing on the right path), a revolutionary song.

Next stop was a lecture-room. Some fifty "students" were there, most of them elderly, but some also very old. My first impression was of their complete passivity. Forbearance. They stared at us without hatred, but at a distance. No smile. We talked to one who seemed to speak without conviction in a monotonous voice. A lesson learned too well? Their current political course was "Vietnam, a four-millennia-old nation".

The infirmary was a rather large building. There were very few medicines (still unfortunately true of all medical establishments in Vietnam). The physician, an officer of the centre, was assisted by two of the people undergoing re-education who had been doctors under the former regime.

In the lecture-room there were some newspapers: the Party's daily *Nhan Dan*, the Army's daily *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, the weekly newspaper of the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, and some illustrated reviews.

On the whole, the centre did not look like an extermination camp. We came across only one or two armed soldiers. The surrounding wall was not very high. The buildings were spaced out. The centre was clean and had even some flower beds. Also, it should be said that the centre was not isolated in a lonely area, but in the thickly populated delta region. The last village we drove through to reach the centre was less than one kilometre away.

I met some people who were being re-educated. The discussions were held in Vietnamese, but I had an interpreter and a Japanese colleague who was with us speaks fluent Vietnamese.

Below is the text of my interview with former Lieutenant-Colonel Le Thuan Hoa, who was the military and administrative head of the 2nd district of Saigon.

Question: When did you arrive at the centre?

Answer: In 1975.

Question: Do you hope to be freed soon?

Answer: I have committed many crimes. It will be some time before I have admitted them all. Besides, the present political situation in Vietnam is difficult. There are problems with Kampuchea and China who have started a war.

Question: What are you doing here?

Answer: Before, I only knew how to make war. Here I've learned a skill, I'm a brick-layer.

Question: What is life like here?

Answer: It's not bad. We work 8 hours a day, do some sport, we walk and we read.

Question: As an example, could you tell us what you are reading at the moment?

Answer: "A moving comradeship: Marx and Engels."

At this, I could not help smiling. This former lieutenant-colonel, once in charge of the repression in central Saigon and now moved by the fine friendship between Marx and Engels.

Question: Have you had any news from your family?

Answer: Yes. My wife and my son are in Saigon. My wife is working and my son is studying agricultural engineering at the University.

We also spoke with ex-Senator Ngo Van Ham, a member of the Economic and National Defence Commission of the Senate under Thieu. We met him at the infirmary. He had been a physician and was now assistant to the head of the infirmary.

Question: Do you often communicate with your family?

Answer: I receive letters quite regularly. My wife's latest letter, dated 21 October, got here on 9 December. But my family have never visited me here although they have the right. The Saigon to Ha Nam journey is too long and too costly. I also have a son in France, studying medicine at Montpellier. I have heard from him as well. I hope that he will return to Vietnam to take part in national reconstruction once he has finished his studies.

Ex-General Huynh Van Cao, a senator of the former Saigon regime.

Question: What did you do on the day of liberation?

Answer: My family was panic-stricken. My eldest son and I stayed in Vietnam while the other members of my family left for the United States or France. I don't know where they are as yet.

Question: What are you doing here?

Answer: I am helping repair houses.

Question: What about the political courses?

Answer: I'm getting along quite well. I've always been interested in political discussion.

Question: Have you suffered, or noticed, any victimization or persecution?

Answer: Never, absolutely never. Not even insults. I know

that this happens in other prisons in the world. But here, never.

Le Thuan Hoa, Ngo Van Ham, Pham Ba Hoa, Huynh Van Cao and others are still detained. I was also able to talk with many people who had been set free after some days, months or years on the centre.

Meeting the "Re-educated"

IN Ho Chi Minh City I met five former senior officers, two former ministers, and two former high-ranking administrators. In Hanoi, I met a former high-ranking leader of a reactionary political party and a former bishop. All of them had been inmates of re-education centres. Their evidence all agrees.

"We used to rise at five o'clock, which is the usual time in Vietnam. Morning exercise to start with. Then manual work, mostly agricultural labour. Political courses took place in the afternoon." (Nguyen Thai Giang, ex-major). "Although not plentiful, the food was acceptable." (Duong Thanh Son, ex-colonel, brother of General Minh, the last Head of State of the Saigon regime). "I've never suffered any persecution." (ex-major Nguyen Thai Giang). "I've never been picked upon or had any harsh treatment and I've never witnessed such acts. I've never heard about them either." (ex-colonel Duong Thanh Son). "At the centre I lead a quite acceptable life. For example, as an old man, I am exempt from hard manual labour. I do the housework in the straw huts." (Hoang Co Binh, former President of the Committee for the Defence of North Vietnam under the Diem regime and leader of the National Renovation Party under Thieu.)

At my request, I was allowed to meet Nguyen Van Thuan, a nephew of the late President

Ngo Dinh Diem, and former bishop of Nha Trang. (1) Under the Saigon regime he had been one of the leaders of the pro-American wing of the Church. In 1971, at the Congress of Asian Bishops in Manila, he was the only churchman to demand that a clause should be inserted in the final resolution supporting the "fight against atheistic communism". Early in 1975 he suggested setting up three divisions of Catholic volunteers against the National Liberation Front. The "Caritas", of which Nguyen Van Thuan was national president, helped herd the population into "strategic hamlets". This accorded with the plans Washington had worked out to cope with the people's war: to drive peasants out of the countryside and resettle them, often forcefully, in strongly defended hamlets seething with government agents. The patriotic fighters wanted to live among the people like fish in water. So Washington and Saigon hoped to drain the water away. Although not successful, this policy proved deadly. Peasants who refused to cooperate were very often killed.

Nguyen Van Thuan was also criticized for being too involved in the choice of military chaplains. For all these reasons, he was the only Vietnamese bishop to attend a re-education centre after liberation. He spent two years in a centre near Nha Trang. He confirmed once again our ample evidence on life in these centres. Conditions are austere, but quite acceptable, the food is in

sufficient quantity and the manual work is not too heavy. He added that, although there was no collective religious practice in the centre, all the Catholics had the right to pray. He has not been hit by any measure aimed at preventing religious activity.

Nguyen Van Thuan has been free for six months. He has been allowed to practise his religious calling once more. It was among his congregation in the parish of Giang Xa, 50km from Hanoi, that I met him. Some days later, I saw him in Hanoi among his congregation at the funeral of Cardinal Trinh Nhu Khue.

Should I now reach some conclusions? I do not think so. I am just giving the facts as I know them. I do not want to describe life as ideal for all the former puppet officials. On the contrary, I should think this new life must have seemed very hard for most of the "re-educated". In the main they were very rich and led an easy life. Suddenly they have been compelled to live on the same rations as Vietnamese peasants, and to sleep on mats in very simple straw huts. They were used to giving orders and being obeyed immediately. They have had, without any time to adjust, to cultivate the land, to work with their own hands, and to obey the centre's officers, who are not all very flexible. They have undeniably been humiliated. They had devoted their lives to preventing the victory of the Vietnamese Communists. Now, every day they have to read the prose of *Nhan Dan*, which they undoubtedly find indigestible (when it is not the story of the fine friendship between Marx

(1) In 1976-77 Vietnamese anti-communist refugee's circles in Europe spread the news of his death. They claimed that "the body of His Eminence Thuan was seen in a hospital in Ho Chi Minh City." This statement was as untrue as many other pieces of "information" which stemmed from the same circles. On 17 February 1977, an official spokesman of the Vatican denied the rumours concerning the death of Nguyen Van Thuan (See *Le Monde*, 19 February 1977).

and Engels). Some of them were perhaps expecting to face a heroic death at the hands of Communist executioners. Not to grow vegetables.

But after all, that former Chief-of-Staff, that former Minister of National Defence, those colonels and generals still exist. They are still alive. Many of them are now even citizens of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The evidence is consistent and seems incontestable: no persecution, no tortures, no excessively

hard life. Those who have the least knowledge of their problems can't see the comparison of these centres to concentration camps except as story-telling or ill-will. Nguyen Van Diep, Thieu's minister in 1974-1975, said to me, "The expression *Vietnamese gulag* bears only ill-will. You see, it was not to put a whole nation in concentration camps that so many sacrifices were made over the past twenty years. The expression gulag does not reflect at all the reality of Vietnam."

blood of the vanquished, this simple fact would in some eyes have cleared the interventionists of all their crimes.

The second advantage of a policy of revenge would have been Vietnam's deprivation of the contribution of millions of its people to national reconstruction. Vietnam, thus torn apart, would have been unable for a long time to rise up and make the smallest stride forward. How could Vietnam have secured the voluntary and often even enthusiastic participation of many people I have met, who were not on the side of the victors in 1975, by rejecting, ill-treating or despising them?

A True National Reconciliation

I did not find among the Vietnamese any traces of hatred for the former executioners. That seems impossible to us, but I affirm that it is true.

On leaving Vietnam the Americans left behind a time-bomb. They hoped to tear apart the fabric of Vietnamese social and family life. Every Vietnamese person had some school-fellows, some old girl- or boy-friend or some relatives, perhaps close ones, in the opposite camp. I have many examples of this.

Le Quang Chanh, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRG, now Vice-Chairman of the People's Council of Ho Chi Minh City, sat through lessons in the same high-school, in the same class as the Thieuist general Pham Ha Thanh.

In the family of "Big Minh", the last Head of State of the former regime, there were two senior officers on the puppet side (General Minh and Colonel Duong Thanh Son whom I have met) and a senior officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Duong Thanh Nhut, in the army of the North (The Vietnam People's Army — Tr.).

Should revenge have guided the policies applied? While of course morally reprehensible, such a course would above all have been political suicide. Such a policy would have amounted to slicing apart each family, each social group, each village,

and, in some cases, each individual. It would have given rise to resentment and disaffection. In the end to tragedies. The new power, in refusing this course, has definitely shown rare humanism and has thus attained one of the peaks of political wisdom.

In spite of what they said, reactionaries in all countries hoped and waited for a bloodbath. Witness their jubilation at the atrocious Kampuchean drama.

A bloodbath would have given them a double advantage. Firstly, to provide a justification after the event of all foreign interventions of the past thirty years. Every one. You must agree, they would say, that we French had good reason to reconquer southern Vietnam as early as 1945, to force Ho Chi Minh to go to the jungle in 1946 and to support the colonial war, from the Socialist Party through to *Le Figaro*. And, they'd continue, you must see that we Americans had good reason to protect, by our bombs and napalm, the freedom of this poor people. We told ourselves that only our presence could preserve Vietnam from Communist barbarity. All that we have predicted has come true. And the poor Vietnamese people are paying for the blindness or bad intentions of progressive people round the world. Implying: next time, look twice before supporting an anti-imperialist struggle. If the victorious Vietnamese had regrettablely stained their hands with the

Vietnam of 1975 is often compared to the France of 1944. That comparison carries only part of the truth. In both cases, there was liberation from foreign domination. But in 1944 France had known "only" four years of Nazi presence. Despite the prestige of Pétain in 1940-42, collaboration was not a mass phenomenon. When the "collabos" had been expelled from the national community reconciliation was an easy job in the end. In Vietnam, the foreign domination had lasted for more than one century! There were even families with a tradition of collaborating with foreigners. Without even mentioning militant, active, direct and political collaboration, some manifestations of compromise with the French, and with the Americans, were of mass nature. (1) It should be made clear that no Vietnamese family was completely innocent of such practices.

Basing the new policy on revenge would be to discard millions and millions of Vietnamese who, while not all torturers, were at the very least not patriots. It would be to base a whole strategic line on resentment. On the past, and not on the future.

(1) *It must be remembered that in 1975 (in southern Vietnam — Tr.) there were over 1 million troops and 300,000 police out of a population of just over 20 million. Including their families and assuming an average of 4 persons per household, a figure of 5 million people involved in collaboration is obtained: one South Vietnamese out of every four!*

SPRING AND RURAL FESTIVITIES

PAST AND PRESENT



Pilgrims to the Hung Kings Temple in Vinh Phu.

ONE could say without exaggeration that Spring is the season of festivities for people in the Vietnamese countryside.

*The first month, people enjoy Tet at home
The second month is devoted to gambling,
and the third to festivities.*

(Vietnamese folk song)

Thus festivities last from the first to the third months of the lunar calendar (that is up to late April by the solar calendar — dates in this article follow the lunar calendar). In other words, they last the whole Spring in northern Vietnam. This also means that Spring festivals end one agricultural cycle to open another.

Perhaps the Autumn festival was the first to make its appearance for the Viets when they settled in the Bac Bo plains and uplands and only knew how to grow one crop of rice a year. For

a single annual rice crop, the two months just before harvest when the rice starts to ear are a brief respite from the back-breaking work the rice needs for earlier stages of growth. So it was natural that the Viets' festivities would be concentrated in these autumn months, the 8th to the 10th by the lunar calendar.

The Spring festival was not to become popular until the introduction of the Chinese lunisolar calendar, based on the apparent motion of the sun as well as the lunar cycle, and until new farming methods allowed the introduction of an additional harvest in the 5th lunar month. This new crop would start to ear in the 3rd lunar month, leaving two spring months relatively work-free for people to enjoy themselves.

A Vietnamese ethnographer who went to study life in Vinh Phu province, where the Viets first settled, describes rural festivities there as mostly taking place in the first and eighth months, and less frequently in the third, second and sixth months — the slackest months for the Vietnamese peasants in that area.

Having grown up in small-scale feudal agricultural villages, Vietnamese festivities are of course very much based on the agricultural rituals of the rice-growing civilization which appeared very early in northern Vietnam, some historians say in the first millennium B.C. Thus Spring festivals usually relate to the hope for a bumper harvest, such as the customs of "welcoming the Rice God" or the "procession of the Rice God". But some of their elements are survivals from tribal society initiation rites for example. Some customs are evidence for early religious beliefs, such as cults of the sun or of fertility. They later came under the influence of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, which have all added elements to these rural festivities. As certain classical ethnographers rightly state, that is a "total fact". Wherever such festivals are found, they always have some feature of which the origin is not yet known.

Based as they are on religions and other beliefs, festivities usually take place at "holy centres" of the village, for example the communal house, the pagoda or the temple. This gives each its name of communal house, pagoda or temple festival (*hoi dinh*, *hoi chua*, *hoi den*). Some festivities involve all the inhabitants of one village and so are called village festivals (*hoi lang*). But other festivities gather together the people of a larger district and are called regional festivals (*hoi vung*). Further, there are cult places such as the lime grottoes, temples and pagodas in Huong Son, Ha Son Binh province, where festivals are held all Spring long and become a great place of pilgrimage. There are also several festivities in which spirit mediums

participate including the *Phu Giay* festival (Ha Nam Ninh province), the *Den Song* festival (Thanh Hoa province). These too attract devotees from all over the country.

Still, however they take place, most Spring festivals are village festivals. Rural Vietnamese society under feudalism and even during French rule, in spite of the oppression and exploitation of mandarins and despots and the later huge class differences, still required some social cooperation in the struggle with nature. Land would have to be reclaimed, an irrigation system built for the village, and piracy and foreign aggression had to be coped with. In this context, the individual peasants working their separate plots would feel a need to unite and come together as members of a social community. Village festivals usually draw in the entire population, whether as performers carrying out rites, vying with one another in talent contests, singing, dancing or just as spectators. Although most of the villagers can only be onlookers, they are related to the performers by family ties or as member of a *giap* (organization of young men in a village). The other young men exhort the wrestling teams and boat-racing teams of their *giap*.

That is the reason why village festivals are usually linked to the cult of the guardian spirit of the village to represent the community feeling of the population. So an indispensable rite in the festivities is a procession led by a symbol of the guardian spirit, which could be a tablet bearing his name or a record of his services drawn up by the feudal Court. This religious aspect gives a mystical character to a number of rites in the festivities, which only those villagers fully understand.

After the August 1945 Revolution and particularly since the movement for agricultural cooperativization in the countryside, Vietnamese peasants have gone through many social and economic changes now reflected in changed ways of thinking and feeling. With progress in farming techniques, the rhythm of production has been speeded up. The agricultural calendar now provides not just for two rice crops a year, but for three or even four which overlap. Since the old Spring and mid-Autumn crops have been superseded, the sacred meaning of Spring festivals linked to the beginning of a new production cycle has been lost.

In addition, the cultural life of peasants in co-operatives differs from that of former times. Village festivities are no longer the only form of recreation for farmers who would once have had back-breaking work the whole year round and seldom ventured outside their bamboo fence around their village. Now their outlook has been broadened by introduction to many cultural and artistic activities brought by the new life: cinema, song and dance, theatre, etc. However, traditional cultural forms which have grown up over many centuries have become a stable pattern of tradition whose loss would certainly create a gap in their cultural life. This promotes the renewal of the community spirit inherited from past generations still needed in the new life, despite the abolition of exploitation and class differentiation.

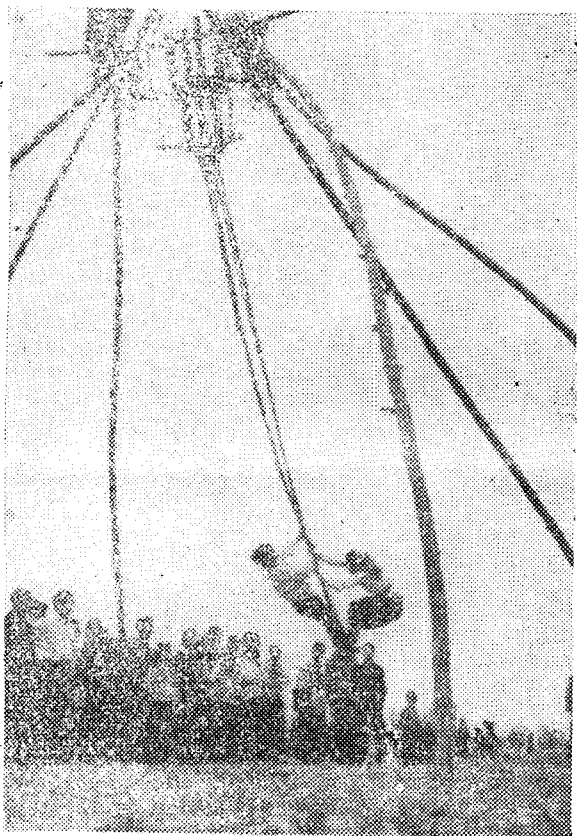
Alongside the upheavals of social revolution, folk festivals have themselves undergone many changes. In general, the rituals of earlier times no longer fit in with life in the countryside and are becoming forgotten. Sometimes when dying-out village customs have been restored the negative aspects of superstitious practices have also been revived, for example wasteful spending and drawn-out rituals which have a bad effect on production. On the other hand, at the request of the local people and guided by cultural and artistic workers, a number of suitable and well-known village festivities have been revived to enhance the cultural life for the community of cooperative farmers. Although the organizers are still local people, the festivals have an impact beyond the village. Religious elements are discarded one by one, leaving only a core of their historic significance, artistic and recreational aspects and friendly competition.

Nowadays, people still throng to listen to the famous *quan ho* folk songs during the Lim festival (*hoi lim*) in the village of the same name some 20 kilometres north of Hanoi. Likewise with other well-known village festivities. They flock to Co Loa (north of Hanoi) to hear the *hat ong*, or to hear the *hat xoan* at the festival in the temple dedicated to the Hung Kings (*hoi den Hung*) in Vinh Phu province or to the festival at the Tay Son temple (*hoi den Tay Son*) in Nghia Binh province in order to listen to the *hat bai choi*. During the Spring festivals all these folk songs are performed. They are sung in alternate verses by the local young boys and girls, which they find a good opportunity to choose their future partners.

In a number of areas folk games have recently been revived during Spring festivals. In the past, the villagers of Dam (southwest of Hanoi) held boat races as a religious rite to pray for rain. Nowadays, the young people of the village row boats decorated with dragon heads and pennants in five traditional colours (blue, red, white, purple and yellow). Although it has simply become a sporting contest between production brigades, the game is no less thrilling.

Since 1975, Hien Quan village has restored its Spring festival including the well-known game of *hat phet*. A *phet* is a ball cut from a stump of bamboo and painted red. The young men of the village line up on both ends of the yard in front of the communal house. Each of them tries to hurl the ball with a bamboo stick 1 metre long and shaped like a golf club. Points are scored by getting the ball into a hole on that team's own side of the yard. When this is achieved the referee throws a second ball to the players. The game ends once three goals are scored. During the match, people beat drums and gongs, and call on the teams. Legend has it that the game was already played under the Two Trung Sisters (1st century A.D.) but some researchers date it further back to the story of two rival clans struggling for the sun.

And when the countryside rings with the drumbeats accompanying wrestling contests, tugs of war



Swing

and games of shuttle-cock at the beginning of Spring, bamboo swings are set up for boys and girls to compete with each other. Though in other parts of Asia swings are still linked to religious rites (the cosmic swing believed to carry the universe eternally to and fro and usually associated with rain, fertility and renewal of nature) in Vietnam swinging has for long been nothing but a game. This ubiquitous symbol of Spring festival has been described by many poets and writers :

*Four poles are deftly set up
Some swing while others look on...*
(Ho Xuan Huong)

The Spring festival also provides an opportunity for the young people of both sexes to compete at housework: cooking rice, making rice cakes, cloth weaving and making clothes. Many of these have disappeared as a result of the great changes in social life, but local people still remember the rules of these games and the happy atmosphere in which they were played.

As for rice cooking alone, there are as many as three contests:

In Tu Trong village (Thanh Hoa province), unmarried girls competed with one another in cooking ordinary rice and steaming sticky rice. The competitors might run to hundreds. Each girl sat on a sampan on a pond with the necessary equipment for cooking the rice, but she had to use wet straw and fresh sugar cane residue as fuel. She had also to cope with the rolling of the craft, the wind over the pond and the inevitable drizzle of early Spring. It was not only speed which would decide the winner, but also the quality of rice resulting.

In Chuong village (Ha Son Binh province) girls competed to boil rice in the yard of the communal house. At the same time they had to carry in their arms and soothe a crying 6-month old baby while keeping a toad from jumping out of a white circle drawn on the ground approximately 70 cm in diameter. Meanwhile, mischievous boys tried their best to make the baby cry and the toad jump out.

In the same village there was also a rice-cooking competition for boys. Each of them sat in a sampan without oars, having all the necessary equipment with them. When ordered, they had to paddle the craft by hand towards a place they had chosen on the opposite bank of the pond. They would stay in the boat while cooking on a fire lit on the shore. The difficulty lay in keeping the sampan upright and stopping it drifting away while guarding the fire against wind and splashes of water. The clumsy ones would capsize amid laughter from the spectators.

Mention should also be made of the village festivities related to hero cults. In many villages, guardian spirits are the ghosts of men of letters or heroes with brilliant exploits in the struggle against foreign aggression. There are legendary heroes like Genie Giong (1), but also many figures from history. Here, village festivals provide an opportunity to remember one's forebears' struggle against foreign aggression and to uphold their tradition. It's not surprising that some Spring festivals have become commemorative occasions for the whole country, such as the *hoi den Hung* in Vinh Phu province in the third month of the lunar calendar, which is considered an ancestors' anniversary in gratitude for the founding of the country by the Hung Kings.

Still based in the nation's fine traditions, the Vietnamese countryside, which is now undergoing constant changes, can select from the past healthy traditions to enrich present-day cultural life.

THE HUNG

(1). A legendary figure, a three-year old child who by a miracle suddenly grew into a man to defeat invaders from the North.

Socialist Transformation and Development of Industry and Commerce in the South

1978 saw a large step forward in socialist transformation and development of industry and trade in the cities and provinces of the South. Basically, major private businesses have been turned into State enterprises, joint State-private ventures, or other non-capitalist forms.

Large and Small Industry and Handicrafts

One thousand five hundred large and medium scale enterprises were taken from private management and transformed into 650 State-owned or State-private enterprises. The 130,000 people now employed by them account for 70% of the staff before transformation. Of these, 64 are now working as directors of local enterprises and more than one hundred are section leaders in centrally-run factories. The value of the output of these new enterprises is almost 70% of the total produced by the whole of the South, and in 1978 they recorded an increase of 9.2% over 1977. Their products, more varied than before liberation, include hand-operated farm tools and other agricultural implements, insecticides and pesticides, silicates, electric accumulators and transformers, heat-resistant bricks, cement, bricks and tiles, glassware, macaroni, vegetable oils, canned foods, alcoholic drinks, tea, leatherware, plywood, paper pulp and newsprint.

Small industry and handicrafts have been reorganized into 350 cooperatives, 3,500 production collectives and about 4,000 solidarity or production teams. Two hundred and thirty-three thousand people, or 46% of the working population, are engaged in these various trades. Productivity was generally higher in 1978 than in 1977. In Ho Chi Minh City, output value in 1978 was up by 50% compared with the previous year.

COMMERCE

Sixty thousand households (26% of the total) who were dealing in materials and industrial goods controlled by the State were ordered to stop operation. Thirty thousand other households carrying on the same kind of business (13% of the total) were asked to sell their stock to the State. Ten thousands of this second group were classed as capitalist.

Forty-two thousand traders have been shifted over to productive activities, with more than 7,000 switching to agricultural production, almost 5,000 to handicrafts, and more than 3,000 brought into the socialist trade network.

Some 700 private rice mills have come under the management of city or provincial administrations, or become State properties or joint ventures with the State.

Meanwhile, the socialist trade network has been extended rapidly. The Supply Service has opened 200 more shops to sell specialized materials and equipment, and the Home Trade Service has set up 17 first-grade companies and 205 second-grade ones, and almost 2,000 stores staffed by more than 50,000 shop-assistants. At the same time, consumer and marketing cooperatives have been set up in 92% of the communes in the plains and the uplands, employing 25,000 people.

Also in 1978, State purchases increased by more than 24% in farm produce, and by 9% in industrial goods. Retail trade was up by 12%.

TRANSPORT

There are now 15 State enterprises and 46 joint State-private enterprises specializing in road haulage, operating more than 16,000 vehicles (76% of heavy vehicles in use in the South). There are also 199 transport cooperatives which run almost 20,000 smaller vehicles.

The State has also taken over 17 private-owned cargo ships, and set up five State enterprises and four State-private enterprises for river transport having between them a fleet of more than 500 craft. Also, 25 river transport cooperatives which have been set up in 11 localities operate another 500 or so craft.

So that this transport can be kept in good repair, Ho Chi Minh City now has an extensive network of mechanical engineering comprising nine joint State-private enterprises and five cooperatives.

CONSTRUCTION

Ten State enterprises and joint State-private enterprises are producing building materials, mainly bricks and tiles. The bigger ones have an average annual output of seven million units. The smaller ones can each turn out from two to three millions a year.

One hundred and fifty private construction firms have been transformed. Eight State enterprises and 15 joint State-private construction companies have been set up. Of the 16,000 construction workers some 10,000 have been provided with jobs. One State enterprise formed by seven private construction companies, and four joint State-private ones, have played a considerable part in restoring Vietnam's North-South railway and the road network. State Construction Company No. 9, formed by 131 private companies, has undertaken the construction and repair of many major irrigation works.

The Mong Cai Porcelain Factory Faces Up to Hard Times

THE Mong Cai Porcelain Factory is situated on the Bac Luan river, bordering on China, and next to the Bac Luan bridge.

Because of its geographical position, very near the Vietnam—China border, everyone must be anxious about its safety, especially at a time when the Chinese authorities are stepping up their provocative acts in the frontier areas.

However we felt relieved when we visited the factory, in these last days of the year, and saw for ourselves the continuing atmosphere of activity by both cadres and workers.

As usual, the gate of the factory is wide open daily to welcome the workers from all parts of this province. The factory pumps are working day and night, bringing in water for its various workshops and white smoke continues to issue from the factory chimneys.

The Director of the Factory receives us in his spacious room on whose walls are graphs showing the daily work of various workshops, furnaces, and machines. A board next to us reads: "The machines are working smoothly." The factory's electricity network has been completely re-established. Some pumps on the Bac Luan riverside destroyed by the reactionaries from the other side of the river have been replaced by new ones. The new machines are carefully protected by members of the factory's self-defence unit.

The talk has just begun when the Director's telephone rings. After the call he told us: "We are very lucky. A new batch of porcelain has just come out of the furnace. Let's go and have a look."

We all go along. Looking at the trays of finished products taken out of the furnace, we cannot help but admire their beauty, with the traditional artistic features of the Mong Cai Porcelain Factory. Indeed, from the smooth white enamel to the elegant shapes, with their designs in various colours, they are characterized by both tradi-

tional features and modern traits, and should prove very attractive to consumers.

The Mong Cai Porcelain Factory was built in an area where there was a large community of Hoa people. That is why for many years the staff and workers in this factory were mainly Hoa — approximately 70% of the total number of the work-force in fact. Prior to March 1978, more than 90% of technicians entrusted with the main technical processes such as heating, moulding, and mixing colours were Hoa. Early in 1978, when China published her policy of "solicitude" for overseas Chinese, a certain number of Hoa left their jobs and went to China. In April and May 1978, when China used loudspeakers to urge the Hoa in Mong Cai to leave Vietnam for China in order to "build up the Fatherland", rumours also spread among these people that "the Fatherland calls on the Hoa to repatriate to build up the country. Those who refuse to do so are traitors". It was also rumoured that those Hoa who wished to return to China must hasten before China closed the frontier.

Such propaganda disturbed the minds of the Hoa who had been working peacefully for many years at the Mong Cai Porcelain Factory. Enticed, coerced and threatened by bad elements among the Hoa, the number of people who left their jobs to go to China increased day by day. In just the first few days of May 1978, more than 500 workers of the factory left for China. In some workshops, almost all the workers left. There were 37 technicians for furnace heating altogether but 36 deserted; 17 workers from the moulding group also joined together to leave for China. Almost all foremen quit. Leading cadres in the technical section and laboratory also abandoned their posts.

This situation posed serious trials for the factory.

Immediately after the mass exodus of the Hoa, the Provincial Party Committee and the People's Committee of Quang

Ninh province, especially those of Mong Cai district, tried to create favourable conditions for the factory to enlist new workers right in the district and in the district capital of Mong Cai. In addition, cadres were sent to all parts of the province and to other places to seek renowned porcelain craftsmen, collect documents and learn from their experience in order to reorganize production and open courses for the training of technical workers. Consequently, after only a short period, a new contingent of technical workers, very young, active and full of creative spirit, has been trained.

In former days, technical workers were dispersed in various workshops. There were always difficulties with management and the quality of the products varied considerably. With the reorganization of production those new technical workers are concentrated in the heating workshop, and preparations have been made to establish a new technical section. Even in the months when manpower was lacking (April — August 1978) the factory was able to maintain its production, producing nearly 500,000 units every month.

Since the beginning of September, and particularly in October, as soon as production was stabilized the workers of the factory have ceaselessly stepped up their production. They can work two furnaces a day reducing the heating period from 5 days to 3 days.

Under the slogan "Take on more jobs, work more hours", the factory is resolved to work against time to make up for the losses due to the departure of Hoa workers for China, and an emulation movement has been launched to successfully fulfil the 1978 yearly plan the aim of which is to produce about 30 million units.

By their actual deeds the workers of the Mong Cai Porcelain Factory have foiled the scheme of sabotage of the reactionary forces.

V.T.

Climatic Evolution in Vietnam

1978 promised a record winter crop and for the first time Vietnam expected to attain the level of 16 million tons of food per annum. This was to be the first stage towards attaining the target of 21 million tons set by the Fourth National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam for 1980, the last year of the 2nd Five-Year Plan (1976-1980). However, natural disasters of unprecedented dimensions struck hard at agricultural production from North to South: heavy flooding in August and September in the Mekong delta and typhoons accompanied by torrential rains in September and October in central and northern Vietnam.

The climatic fluctuations in Vietnam in 1978, however, cannot be regarded as exceptional and the possibility of still heavier disasters cannot be ruled out. In the immediate future one question is crucial: how to make reliable projections of the trends of climatic variations in our country.

In spite of the scarcity of historical documents, it can be asserted that over the many millennia since the foundation of our country climatic conditions in Vietnam have seen many changes.

Some remote indications of the climatic conditions of our country can be found in the legends: the legend of the God of Water raising the water level in his battle with the God of the Mountain, the legend of King An Duong building the spiral citadel which had to be rebuilt again and again after being destroyed by evil spirits. These legends have the same significance in that the climate of our country in the epoch of the Hung Kings, i.e. about 3,000—4,000 years ago, went through violent perturbations. Heavy rains and violent storms were frequent. On the other hand, judging from the costumes worn by the figures of Dai Viet (name of ancient Vietnam) people engraved on the bronze drums, and the boat which reappears time and again as a motif in ancient decorative designs, one may infer that the climate of Vietnam in those days was much warmer than today.

At about the beginning of the Christian era, the climate seemed to cool off. In fact, a passage from the memoirs of Ma Yuan, the Chinese general of the Han dynasty sent to conquer and rule over Vietnam in the first century A.D., described Hanoi's West Lake as "covered with heavy fog and icy cold vapours". Many entries in the *Dai Viet Su ky* (Annals of the Dai Viet) speak of "fur jackets" and "goose feather mattresses". Referring to the miserable existence of the population under Chinese feudal rule the chronicle says: "Even in the biting cold people were forced to dive into the sea to find mother-of-pearl and coral."

From the 3rd and 4th centuries to the end of the Chinese domination in the 10th century, the climate grew warmer and warmer. Historical records of this period speak of local products plundered by the aggressors and taken back to China, such as aniseed, cinnamon, rhinoceros elephant tusks, which only exist in warm regions. One detail is worth special notice: a royal ordinance for costumes specifies that court mandarins must wear "satin and double linen robes in winter and thin silk gowns in summer" while "athletes should wear only loin cloths and leave their chests bare". This means that in winter the climate was much warmer than today.

Under the Ly dynasty (12th to 13th centuries) there was probably another wave of cold weather. In the royal ordinance on costumes for mandarins, mention was made of "fur or sheepskin jackets" usually worn in very cold regions. In this period mention was also made of a snowfall in the capital of Thang Long (present-day Hanoi) and ice was observed in many places including the Bac Bo (North Vietnam) delta. History book also said that a king of the Ly dynasty ordered the erection of a copper tower to collect what he called the "heavenly pearl water to be used as eternal life preservative". It may safely be assumed that this refers simply to snow flakes or hoar frost falling during exceptionally cold nights.

The climate warmed up somewhat under the Le dynasty (15th-18th centuries). Under the reign of King Le Hien Ton a royal decree prescribed silk and hemp jackets for the costumes of mandarins from the 10th to the 2nd months of the lunar calendar and satin and cotton costumes from the 3rd month onward. Many serious floods and droughts were also recorded during that period. The king issued many decrees reminding administrative mandarins in the provinces of the need to take good care of water conservancy and to take precautions against droughts and floods.

In the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, cooling off occurred once more, which was the common climatic tendency in the northern hemisphere during that period. Many recorded phenomena deserve our attention:

The surface of the Sword Lake in the centre of Hanoi was frozen many times. A king of the Le dynasty issued a decree exempting the population from forced labour during the winter months. Other abnormal climatic phenomena were also observed: heavy rains in autumn and winter, prolonged droughts in summer, hail, etc. Literary writings in that period mentioned many products of the temperate zone such as peaches, plums and pears; and such climatic phenomena as ice, snow and hoar frost. Records of daily life mention fur and double texture linen jackets, warming pans and cotton quilts. At court a mandarin was put in charge of weather forecasts and prediction of natural calamities.

The climate remained cold until the late 18th century and early 19th century. A detail worth mentioning is that the invading troops of the Chinese general Sun Chih-yi, though used to the cold weather in the North, still had to slip into sleeping bags with one end tied up over their heads to shelter against cold in their sleep. And the fighting elephants of King Quang Trung during their attacks on Sun Chih-yi's garrison in Thang Long (Hanoi) had to be protected from cold with plaited straw mantles.

Not until the latter half of the 19th century did the climate gradually become warm and stable. From then on climatic fluctuations were less and less frequent. Thanks to successive bumper crops the economic picture improved markedly and this situation lasted into the 1950's.

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* *

The present climatic period in our country can be considered as tending to warmth and stability, which is also the general tendency of the climate in the northern hemisphere. Measurements taken since the beginning of this century, though still scanty, have given quite a clear picture of the overall situation: the temperature has varied between 5 degrees Celsius (coldest) and around 40 degrees Celsius (hottest); rainfall has varied from 1,200 to 2,000 millimetres per year; almost no snow, ice or frost (except in a few mountain regions); heavy storms occurred less frequently (from 10 to 12 years apart).

It can be shown by graphic representation of the beginning of the cold and hot seasons in Hanoi — taken as typical of the climate of the Bac Bo delta — that the winter has been shorter while summer tends to lengthen. This situation might have lasted until the early sixties.

Thus, compared to previous centuries there has been a rise of temperature by 3-5 degrees Celsius, the hoar frost limit has moved several latitudes to the North and the cold season has shortened by from one to two months.

As well as becoming warmer, the climate has also grown more humid. Rainfall has increased, along with an increase in the frequency of floods, while the incidence of drought has decreased.

An increased tendency to climatic variation can be observed since the years 1955-1960, as shown in the perturbations of the normal climatic situation in the country. Following are some of the most striking examples:

— The winter of 1954-1955 saw unusually bitter cold: the temperature dropped to 2.7 degrees Celsius in Hanoi and 4 degrees Celsius in Vinh, the coldest recorded in northern Vietnam in the past 100 years. The hoar frost limit extended to latitude

19° north. Hoar frost was even found in many areas of the Red River delta.

— Record rainfall was measured in September 1963 in Thanh Hoa, reaching up to 731 millimetres a day and far surpassing national records for many years.

— Heavy storms occurred in many places and in rapid succession. In 1955 a great storm struck the Bac Bo delta with a wind velocity exceeding 50 metres per second in coastal areas.

— 1964 and 1973 each saw eleven storms, two of which were big typhoons with a wind velocity exceeding 45 metres per second.

— Very hot summers and very cold winters happened successively. The winter in 1966 was two months longer than usual, lasting until the end of May. In the winter of 1968 the average temperature dropped 5-6 degrees Celsius below usual for that time of year, but the weather warmed up again soon. On the other hand, there was almost no winter in northern Vietnam in 1973, while the summer was particularly hot with average temperatures reaching a peak for the past 100 years.

— In 1971 the level of the Red River surpassed the record for the previous 100 years.

— In summer 1978 storms and floods occurred in most areas of central, southern and northern Vietnam.

The rains in September 1978 were exceptionally heavy, in many places making a record for the century.

Without doubt, the recurrence of these climatic phenomena which can be regarded as abnormal over the whole of Vietnam, is inseparable from the general situation described by climatologists as "climatic fluctuations of a global character in the period tangent to a centennial-cycle climatic change" often spoken of during the past decade.

Recent climatic surveys tend to confirm the hypothesis of a tendency towards a warmer climate of the Earth. Data from practical measurements indicate a lowering of the average temperature in the northern hemisphere since the fifties, but this can be explained by the thawing of the polar glaciers (polar glaciers have absorbed heat from the atmosphere during their thawing). In other words, the climate will tend to be warmer in the near future when the climatic balance is re-established.

It is expected that by the year 2,000 the average temperature in the northern hemisphere will be about 0.4 degrees Celsius higher than the average in the middle of the century.

There are other grounds to explain this tendency toward warmer climate, such as increased energy use and the accumulation of carbon monoxide and other by-products of atmospheric combustion. The eruption of volcanoes also plays a certain role in this process. On the other hand, the gradual release of energy may also bring about a change in the relationship between local climatic factors and cause abnormal changes. But among the causes of climatic changes there remains an unknown factor: changes in the nature of the sun. Supposing that there will be no discernible change in the sun in the next decades the tendency towards warmer climate will remain.

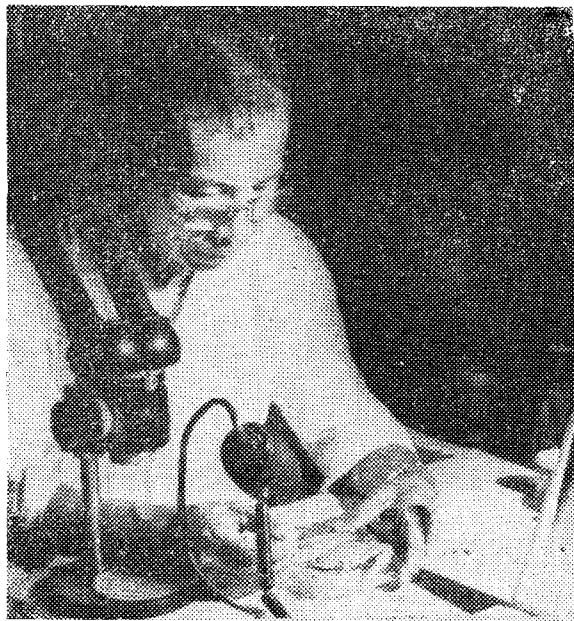
Centennial-cycle climatic fluctuations on a world scale are reflected quite clearly in our country. Therefore it can be predicted that the few decades to come will be a warm period in the centennial evolution of the climate of our country. The dry monsoon in winter will gradually weaken as a consequence of the weakening of the cold centres in the North. Accordingly, winter will become shorter and less cold and summer will be longer. The wet monsoon in summer will be carried farther to the north to push back the zone of perturbation to higher latitudes. Rainfall will also diminish, except in a number of rain centres of a topographical character. Distribution of rain will also be more uneven and the likelihood of drought is higher. At the same time, as a result of the thawing of the polar glaciers, sea level may be higher than at present, which would increase the danger of coastal regions becoming more swampy and more exposed to water logging if the sea dikes are not properly raised.

On the whole, it can be expected that the climate of northern Vietnam will go through more periods of difficulty than that in the South. A gradual change towards a warmer and drier climate remains the prevailing tendency.

PHAM NGOC TOAN
General Department of
Meteorology and Hydrology

THE OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE

Studying varieties of crabs.



I N 1961 an oceanographic station was set up in Haiphong, the biggest seaport of northern Vietnam. It later became the Oceanographic Institute and, in March 1976, was moved to Nha Trang and incorporated into a similar institution set up under French rule in 1923.

The Nha Trang Institute, in the 20 years before the revolution in August 1945, could only provide descriptive data concerning natural conditions of the sea and the life in it, which were insufficient for comprehensive study. From 1946 to 1954, the years of the war against the French colonialists, very little progress was made. In the two decades of the US—puppet regime, from 1954 to 1974, the institute limited its activity to local biology and ecology only.

With the liberation of the South the institute was transferred intact to the new administration, together with all the

carefully stored specimens, a library of 50,000 books and reviews including a century-old 40-volume *Challenger*, and all the works done by the institute since 1925.

The present institute is composed of six departments specializing in physics, chemistry, geology, biology, experimental work, and surveying. Together with two lesser institutions—an oceanographic station for the Bac Bo (Tonkin) Gulf, based in Haiphong, and a similar station for the most southern reaches of the coastal waters located in Rach Gia—the institute covers the whole of Vietnam's sea and adjoining international waters. Its immediate task is to help evaluate the riches of the sea for rational exploitation and efficient protection, and to help in professional training and in scientific dissemination.

Since its establishment in Nha Trang the institute has conducted

a series of research projects including physical, chemical, and biological investigations concerning the coast of Phu Khanh and the Binh Long gulf in Nha Trang, studies of some special fishes found between Da Nang and Vung Tau, and a study of the chemical composition of a number of algae. The institute has also classified 1,631 species of fish, 638 algae varieties, 6,398 species of seabed animals and 20 species of sea serpents, and conducted different experiments concerning sea-pikes, algae, mussels, etc.

An oceanographic conference, the first of its kind in Vietnam, was held by the institute in August 1977 to define a course for future development. At present, the institute is working on standardized programmes for surveys, and preparing for the overall investigation of the region between Thuan Hai and Minh Hai provinces.

RUSHES AND RUSH MATS

RUSH mats are articles of common use in Vietnam. Rushes are also used as packaging bags for industrial goods, salt, fish, and articles intended for export.

Over the past years, especially since the conference on rushes convened by the Prime Minister's office in January 1970, the full importance of this material has been grasped and much progress has been recorded in the growing of rushes and weaving of mats in the northern provinces. The reclamation of land, the building of dikes, the extension of areas under rushes and the intensive cultivation of this plant have been carried out continuously; over 40 per cent of the area planted with rushes bears two crops a year, even three in some places.

In 1978 the area planted with rushes is up 42%, the yield 24.5%, output 64.7%, and sales to the State 104% compared with 1970.

In the southern provinces, before liberation, the growing and weaving of rushes almost died out due to the competition of plastic mats. Now, more than one thousand hectares have been restored to cultivation. But they are scattered in many localities, from Quang Nam—Da Nang to Minh Hai, and annual output is only just enough to make about one million mats, most of them produced privately. As demand in the South is growing,

rushes, jute and mats have had to be brought in from the North at great expense.

To meet the increasing demands of both home consumption and export, rush output must surpass one hundred thousand tons by 1980. Thai Binh, Ha Nam Ninh and Thanh Hoa provinces are actively expanding areas under cultivation by reclaiming land from the sea and opening up virgin territory, refraining from reducing areas planted with food and other crops while practising intensive cultivation and crop multiplication. To this end, rush fields are planted, while the necessary irrigation and drainage are carried out. Experience in recent years shows that while new areas are developing, others have become unproductive due to bad water control and the proliferation of weeds. As a result low yields are obtained over large areas.

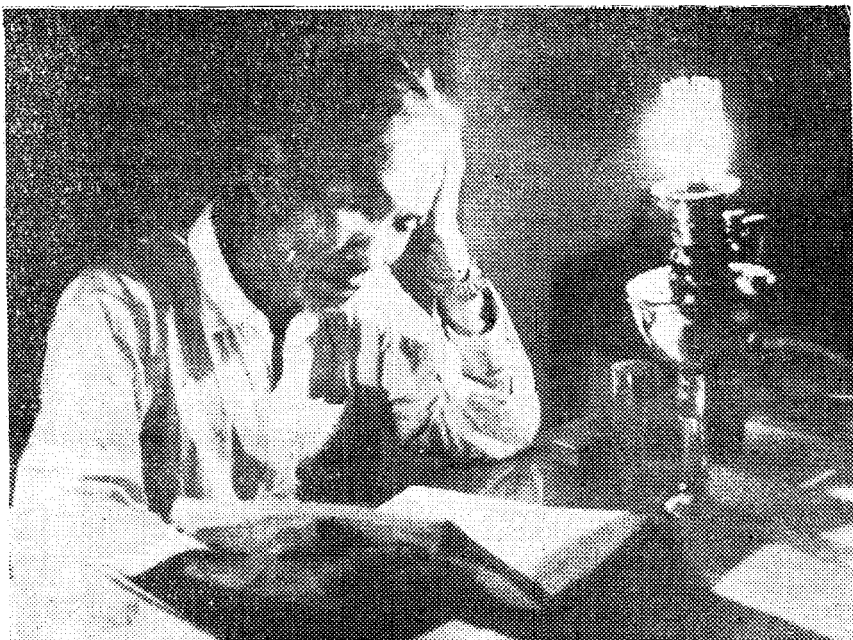
Together with the movement for cooperativization and reorganization of agricultural production, more attention has been paid to the planning of areas to be put under industrial crops in general and rushes in particular, both in the North and in the South. Only by organizing specialized cooperatives and production brigades can we perform intensive farming and obtain increased yields as well as good-quality rush.

As far as mat weaving is concerned, all the provinces where rushes are grown have organized weaving cooperatives producing for both home consumption and export, mostly in the coastal areas, towns, and areas with little arable land; each cooperative has from 50 to 150 looms either concentrated in one place or dispersed in peasants' homes, but all conforming to norms and plans regarding raw materials and finished products. At present, more than 7 million mats are produced annually. Although this satisfies quantitative needs, the quality and variety of the mats still leave much to be desired.



Rush mats for export.

THE COMMON
FOLK OF
VIETNAM



A RURAL MEDICAL WORKER

VISITORS to Quynh Luu district in Nghe An province find it easy to visit the home of an ordinary person: assistant doctor (*) Tran Quang Chu, head of the medical committee of Quynh Giang commune. He is much loved by the local people. Chu is now over fifty, of small stature, thin, and with greyish hair. He speaks with a slow and even voice, but his eyes are bright, pensive and mild. During the US air war of destruction against northern Vietnam he was in charge of a medical station in the Cau Giat township, Quynh Luu district. As the township lies near a bridge of the same name, it was a key target of the USAF and was subjected to more than 400 bombing attacks. Working together with him were five nurses and a first-aid team of 45 members. They were able to give first-aid to

nearly 4,000 persons and operate successfully in 60 serious cases.

"Like all other medical workers," Chu said, "I tried to perform field-operations, very much needed during the war. I was given a short-term training course for operation on flesh wounds. I am sure surgeons in other countries are trained in much better conditions and much longer. But it was impossible for our country to do this at that time. Every day, American planes bombed population centres and communication lines at random. Casualties would have been very heavy if we lacked an effective first-aid network."

Tran Quang Chu and many other medical workers were trained in such circumstances. And step by step they have been given further training to improve their skills. Nearly 30 years ago, young Chu attended a three-

month course for the training of health workers to look after the health of his co-villagers. Later on, he was given the chance to take nine months off to finish two other courses necessary to become a nurse. Finally he was sent to the provincial medical school to study for three years before becoming an assistant doctor.

"I became an assistant doctor after fifteen years of work," Chu continued. "Some of my friends are now doctors."

He is now working together with 18 professional medical workers at the commune's health station and seven other part-time health workers in the various production brigades of the agri-

(*) This is a level between nurse and doctor at which prospective doctors work.

cultural cooperative. The health station is built on a large, flat plot surrounded by filao pine trees. It consists of a consulting room, an in-patient room, an obstetric-gynaecological room, a dispensary and a five-hectare plot for the growing of medicinal herbs.

"Every year we give advice and dispense medicines to 5,000 patients and give medical treatment to between 150 and 200 persons. Beside that, we have to send some 30 or 40 cases to the district hospital, as they are beyond our capacity. Quite high figures for a population of 3,600. However, they are the actual ones. Our food is still low in protein and working and living conditions are still inadequate although they are a vast improvement on the past."

Before the revolution, peasants worked as tenants of a big local landowner. They led a very hard life and many had to leave the village to earn their daily bread elsewhere. The family of young Chu was among those unfortunates. His father, a poor Confucian scholar, went to Son Tay province, some 300 kilometres from his native village, to earn his living both as a tutor and as a traditional physician. He later became a well-known acupuncturist. Meanwhile he taught Chu *Han* (Chinese) characters.

Chu was sent to primary school where he learnt some French. When he was in the second year of the primary school his father's financial resources were exhausted and the family had to return to Quynh Giang where Chu began work in the fields.

"My limited knowledge of French and *Han* did, however, help me quite a lot in my research work. I devoted part of my time to study both Western and traditional medicines, and tried to combine the two in

my work—a principle now advocated by Vietnamese medical teaching. With the knowledge of traditional medicine handed down from my father I found it easy to learn from experience and from traditional methods of treatment. In my commune as in the neighbouring communes we are prescribing mainly local medicinal herbs for our patients. This helps lessen State spending. For three years now we have been giving advice and treatment in our patients' homes. Revenue from the sale of medicinal herbs to the State amounts to 50,000 *dong* annually, and we keep aside 8,000 *dong* of that for the commune's expenses."

Recently Chu has been studying a model of hermetic septic tank from which methane can be obtained. Initial results turn out very promising and it is hoped that his work will help solve the problem of sewage disposal in the Vietnamese countryside.

"In addition to the treatment of diseases we have to participate in the campaign for prophylactic hygiene which is now our first priority. We have paid due attention to stamping out the dangers resulting from inadequate disposal of faeces and so far the model of the double septic tank for on-the-spot composting of excreta, introduced by the Ministry of Public Health, has proved effective and helped promote the movement to 'keep the village clean and fertilize the fields'. Relying on experiences from India and China, and with the assistance of the national Central Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology we are trying to construct a new system, which, we hope, will help us tackle the problem of human and animal waste and refuse. We have already collected samples of gas for lighting and a kind of purified fertilizer. Breeding grounds for flies and mosquitoes will be reduced. We hope the system will be com-

pletely implemented soon and bring benefits to our commune and elsewhere."

Quynh Giang, once the land of poverty, famine and illiteracy, has been completely changed. 85 per cent of the peasants' homes are now made of bricks. Plans have been worked out so that the remaining mud and bamboo houses will be replaced by bricks ones by the end of 1980. The commune has a school for first- and second-level general education staffed by 36 teachers, and five crèches looked after by 28 staff. On the whole its young people are graduates of the 7th form, the last year of second-level general education. There are 100 graduates from the 10th form, the last year of third-level general education, and 20 graduates from various colleges and universities who work as engineers, doctors and third-level general education teachers.

"Our medical workers have made their contribution to this great change. Diseases such as plague, small-pox, typhoid, poliomyelitis, malaria and trachoma have been eliminated. My own family has progressed together with the advance of our society. I have six children, four sons and two daughters. One of my sons was lost during the war of resistance against the US aggressors, the second is now a staff writer on a local paper in southern Vietnam, the third has just returned from the Soviet Union where he was trained as a mechanic, and the fourth is in uniform. One of my daughters is a cooperative farmer, the other a third-level general education student. Our society has created favourable conditions for my children's advancement. One thing I am sure is that they now enjoy much better conditions than I did as a child." Chu ended by saying, "I agree with the old Vietnamese saying 'If the children are better than their father, it is a blessed family.'"

LE DAN

CHRONOLOGY

16 December 1978 — 15 January 1979

December 1978

16. VNA: The Bai Bang paper mill (Vinh Phu province), being constructed with Swedish aid, now counts 34 completed building projects at the end of the first stage.

— The trade agreement signed on 8 November 1978 between Indonesia and Vietnam is ratified by President Suharto.

— **Signing in Hanoi** of three food aid agreements between Vietnam and representatives of the World Food Programme to assist the construction of the Phu Ninh irrigation works (Quang Nam—Da Nang province), the pine tree planting project in Da Lat (Lam Dong province) and the dredging of the To Lich river (Hanoi). The food aid delivered in 1979-1980 will be 35 million dollars.

19. The Vietnam National Committee for the International Year of the Child holds a conference on its activities for 1979.

22. Vietnam's UNESCO National Committee lays down the tasks for 1979 to implement the UNESCO General Assembly's resolution on support and assistance to Vietnam.

— The Chinese authorities unilaterally announce the suspension of all passenger and freight transport on the international railway between Vietnam and China.

23. Chinese troops intrude into various parts of Vietnamese territory in Cao Lang province. They ambush and fire at a Vietnamese patrol unit west of border-post 2 in Dao Vien commune, Trang Dinh district and capture four Vietnamese border guards.

The Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues a statement strongly protesting against these acts.

24. A Vietnamese Party and Government delegation led by Do Muoi, alternate member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam and Deputy Prime Minister, leaves Hanoi for Havana to attend the 20th National Day of Cuba.

26. The National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea Central Committee issues a statement on its foreign policy.

27. VNA: So far, Ho Chi Minh City has 109 co-operatives and 1,603 production collectives producing consumer and export goods.

28. President Ton Duc Thang and Prime Minister Pham Van Dong send a message of condolence to the Revolutionary Council and the Council of Ministers of the Algerian Democratic and People's Republic on the death of President Houari Boumedienne. A Party and Government delegation led by Deputy Prime

Minister Huynh Tan Phat leaves Hanoi for Algeria to attend President Boumedienne's funeral.

— A delegation from the Soviet Ministry of Fisheries led by Minister A.A. Ishkov, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, concludes its visit to Vietnam begun on 22 December 1978. An agreement on co-operation in fishing between the two countries is signed.

— After three days of attack, the Kampuchean revolutionary armed forces in Ratanakiri province have destroyed the Pol Pot—Ieng Sary army's fortified positions in many areas and liberated many townships. Popular uprisings and mutinies by soldiers of the Pol Pot—Ieng Sary army develop rapidly in Kompong Chnang and Kompong Thom.

29. The Vietnamese Sixth National Assembly's fourth session (sitting since 22 December) adopts resolutions on the following: the 1979 State plan; the 1979 State budget (10.5 billion *dong*); the general account for the 1977 State budget; redrawing the boundaries of Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and other provinces.

30. A spokesman of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejects the Chinese allegations about the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes and reaffirms that they are parts of Vietnamese territory.

— The Kampuchean revolutionary armed forces have completely liberated the provincial capital of Kratie.

— The first *dan bau* festival (the Vietnamese one-stringed instrument) is held in Hanoi.

31. The people and armed forces of Tay Ninh province smash the encroachments by the Pol Pot—Ieng Sary armed forces, putting three enemy regiments out of action and seizing 700 arms of various types.

January 1979

1. Vietnam and Columbia establish diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level.

— The NUFASK Central Committee publishes 8 immediate policies for Kampuchea's liberated areas.

— The Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs protests to the Chinese authorities against their continuously sending armed forces to encroach upon Vietnamese territory in the provinces bordering on China.

— VNA: By the end of 1978, there were 1,036,352 children attending crèches, an increase of 25 per cent over 1977.

3. *Nhan Dan*: Hanoi has finished building of first stage of the new port on the Red River.

— Signing in Berlin of agreements between Vietnam and the GDR on GDR material aid for Vietnam for 1979 — 1980.

4. SRV Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nguyen Duy Trinh, returns to Hanoi after concluding his friendship visits to 8 countries: Japan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand and Laos.

— VNA: The Kampuchean revolutionary armed forces have completely liberated the provincial capitals of Lom Phat (31 December 1978) and Stung Treng (3 January 1979).

6. The Government Council decides on the arrangements for the elections of all levels of the People's Councils for 1979. The elections will be completed before 31 May 1979.

— A government economic delegation of the Kingdom of Norway led by Minister of Trade and Maritime Transport Martin Olberg arrives in Hanoi to attend the yearly meeting of the Norway — Vietnam Mixed Economy Committee. A protocol on economic, industrial, trade and technological co-operation between the two countries is signed.

7. The Kampuchean people and revolutionary armed forces have completely liberated the capital of Phnom Penh.

8. Foundation of the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council with Mr Heng Somrim as its President.

— President Heng Somrim sends a message to the President of the UN Security Council saying that: "a meeting of the UN Security Council to hear the representative of the Pol Pot clique, a non-existent government, will be a crude intervention in the internal affairs of the Kampuchean people and a violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter."

10. The SRV Government recognizes the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council.

— The Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council issues a declaration on the foundation of the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

— Quang Nam — Da Nang province holds a conference to launch a movement for the implementation of the 1979 State plan. Deputy Prime Minister Le Thanh Nghi attends the conference and calls on the whole country to follow the example of Quang Nam — Da Nang.

12. Signing in Hanoi of an agreement on Soviet economic aid to Vietnam and a protocol between Vietnam and the Soviet Union on exchange of goods, and payment for 1979.

13. Opening in Hanoi of the conference of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) Presidium. 114 delegates from 37 countries and 9 international organizations attend the conference. Prime Minister Pham Van Dong calls at the conference and delivers a welcoming address. The conference calls for UN support to the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council.

— The SRV Ministry of Foreign Affairs protests against the Chinese authorities' repeated sending of armed forces to intrude into Vietnamese territory and perpetration of further crimes against the Vietnamese people in the provinces of Cao Bang, Lang Son and Hoang Lien Son.

14. VNA: Prime Minister Pham Van Dong sends a message to the UN Secretary-General and the Chairman of the UN Special Committee against Apartheid expressing high appreciation of the UN initiative for celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Martin Luther King's birthday.

15. At the UN Security Council, the Soviet Union vetoes a resolution giving an incorrect interpretation of the Kampuchean situation.

— A delegation of the SRV Ministry of Communications and Transport led by Minister Phan Trong Tue leaves Hanoi for a visit to the Kingdom of Thailand.

OUR MONTHLY COMMENT

(Continued from page 2)

the path towards the common goal: socialism, following the modes of their own choice. The consequences of the border war between the two countries will be removed through summit meetings between the two parties, where both will be able to tackle together the question of how to build and

strengthen many-sided relations of cooperation and friendship. And the pledges made by the Vietnamese, Lao, and Kampuchean peoples at the Indochinese Peoples' Conferences in 1965 and 1970, aimed at strengthening the special links between the three countries, will certainly be fulfilled, in the interest of each country as well as of peace and security in Southeast Asia and the whole world.

25 January 1979

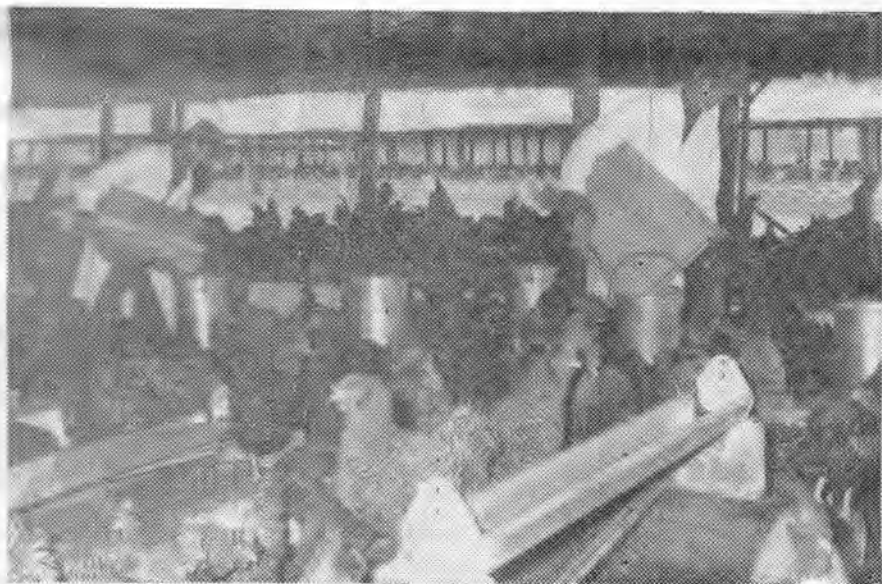
**THE ARMY HELPS TO CONSTRUCT
THE ECONOMY**



*At the coffee plantation of
Regiment 757 on the Central
Highlands.*



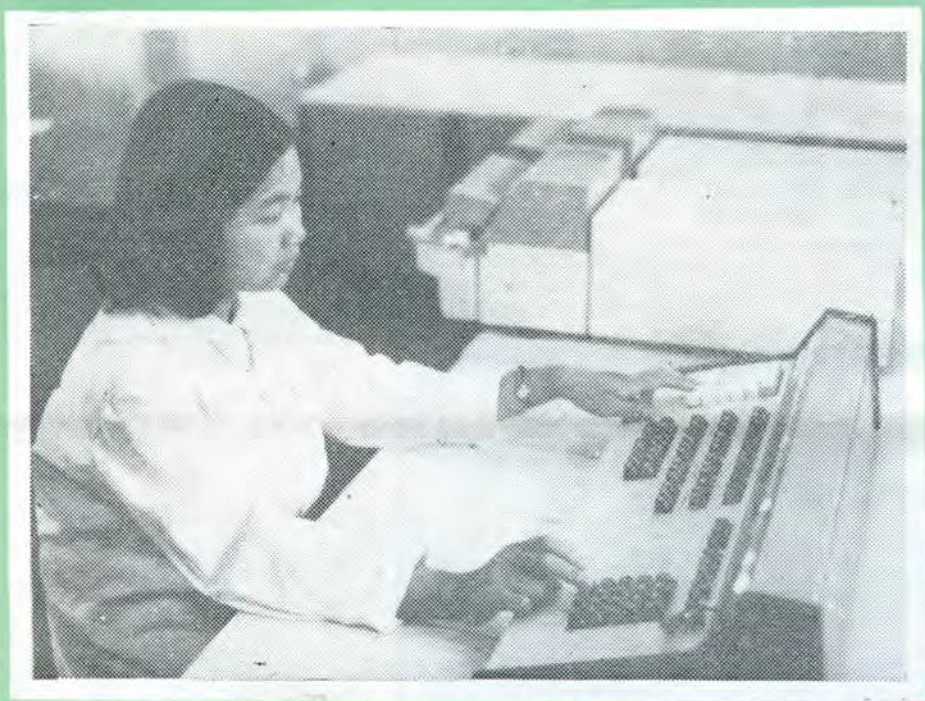
Building roads for the dam on the Da river.



*The industrial poultry
breeding centre of
Regiment 88, Quan Tien
Phong (Shock troop)
Division*

IN THE MINING AREA

*The Deo Nai coal mine
in Quang Ninh province.*



*Computers in use at the
Hongai Coal Enterprise.*

XUẤT BẢN BẰNG CÁC NGŨ:

- VIETNAM COURIER
- LE COURRIER DU VIETNAM
- НОВОСТИ ВЬЕТНАМА
- EL CORREO DE VIETNAM

BÁO ĐỐI NGOẠI TIN VIỆT NAM

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In tại Hà Nội. Chi số: 12462

Giá trong nước: 0,59đ