

Vietnam courier



VOLUME 18
A MONTHLY REVIEW

● POLITICS

● ECONOMICS

● CULTURE

● SOCIETY

• EDITORIAL OFFICE:

46 Tran Hung Dao,
Hanoi, SRV.

• DISTRIBUTED BY:

Xunhasaba,
32 Hai Ba Trung,
Hanoi, SRV.





Zao militiamen after guard duties

Young Thai girl and ban flowers



ETHNIC MINORITIES IN NORTH VIETNAM

Photos: VNA



Young Lao girls grinding rice



H'mongs on the way to Tam Duong market (Lai Chau province)

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Front Cover: Young Zao girl

Photo: NGOC BAO

Vietnam
Courier

1 — 1982

OUR MONTHLY COMMENT

1981 is drawing to an end, a year full of trials for Vietnam, but through these trials we stand up as a steadfast and firm State.

Let us remember the storms which began to assail the Vietnamese in 1978

1978 was the third consecutive year with big natural calamities, a year of floods resulting in heavy losses: 3 million tons of food. US aid in South Vietnam had run dry in 1975. The country still bore many unhealed wounds of war. Pol Pot's military attacks in the south-west became blatant and larger in scale. China bared her policy of hostility against Vietnam: she concocted the story of "ill-treated and ostracized Hoa people" to disrupt Vietnam, withdrew her experts, cut off her aid and attacked Vietnam early in 1979.

Vietnam's help to Kampuchean patriots to eradicate genocide and wriggle out of Beijing's control was construed as an aggression. The Vietnamese leaving their country (among them many of Hoa descent) owing to Beijing and Western propaganda or hard post-war life was distorted as a sign of human rights' violation.

At that time the Carter US Administration shifted to a policy of creating tension in the world and found in the Chinese rulers a new prop in its attack against the forces of socialism and national-liberation movements of which Vietnam is the symbol in Southeast Asia. Under the influence of Beijing and Washington a campaign was launched to isolate Vietnam in the world arena to the utmost degree. The good relations set up by Vietnam with the ASEAN countries began to freeze. Most Western countries and Japan curtailed every economic co-operation with Vietnam. Many international organizations, including the United Nations of which Vietnam had become a member, also toed this line under US pressure and naturally the impending normalization of relations between Hanoi and Washington was also postponed.

The difficulties at home and abroad seemed to frustrate all that was brought by the 1975 resounding victory liberation of the South and national reunification.

However, having gone through many difficulties since the August 1945 Revolution, Vietnam calmly dealt with the situation. The people closed ranks around their leaders, determined to achieve the goals of the nation: to defend their independence and build socialism in all circumstances. We took persevering and resolute steps. At home, we mobilized all forces to maintain production, redressed our shortcomings in economic management, strengthened our national defence and ensured order and security. Abroad, we tightened our special relations with neighbouring Laos and Kampuchea, and did our utmost to help Kampuchea so as to boost the recovery of this suffering and heroic nation, together with the other socialist countries and all people of good will in the world. Step by step a reality appeared in Southeast Asia which nobody can deny — the group of Indochinese countries sharing a common political ideal. Vietnam's foreign policy so far orientated to the community of socialist countries is all the more impelled in the new circumstance, the all-round co-operation with the Soviet Union firmly ensuring the existence and growth of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The happenings in Vietnam and Kampuchea have gradually awakened realist minds and repelled hostile manoeuvres. The slanderous allegations about Vietnam's violation of human rights have come a cropper. The flow of "boat people" has greatly decreased and would cease but for US measures to induce them to leave by sea; meanwhile we have correctly carried out our co-operation with the UNHCR allowing people to leave according to law and order. Very recently, the US charge supported by China that Vietnam used toxic chemical in Laos and Kampuchea has also failed when the group of UN experts in charge of the investigation reported that there are no grounds for that accusation.

We have time and again affirmed that the situation in Kampuchea is irreversible, and this has been born out by the realities of life. So many "rainy season counter-attacks" by the Khmer Rouge have come to nothing and these Pol Pot remnants would be no more had not it been for Thailand's protection. The administration of the

People's Republic of Kampuchea is being consolidated. This recovering country has a Constitution, an efficient State apparatus, and will gradually develop a fully fledged economic structure.

Several conferences of the three Indochinese foreign ministers have successively put forward many initiatives to settle the tension and instability in Southeast Asia the origin of which has to be found in the Chinese rulers' policy of expansion and hegemony. The sincerity of the Indochinese countries for good relations with the ASEAN countries has been more or less understood by many circles in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, Beijing and also Washington's moves to incite confrontation or maintain the tension in Southeast Asia have prompted many politicians in the ASEAN countries to ask themselves whether their wishes — peace and stability in the area — are served by these moves. Their concern increased when in 1981 US Secretary of State Alexander Haig visited Beijing and the Reagan Administration allowed China to buy dangerous lethal weapons, and when Zhao Ziyang refused to cut off China's ties with the Maoist rebels in the Southeast Asian countries.

While gathering the reactionary Kampuchean forces in exile with a view to opposing the Heng Samrin Administration, the ASEAN countries have certainly realized that China would not withdraw support for the blood-thirsty Khmer Rouge, whom they abhor. Anyhow these efforts at going against the trend of history and the interests of the Kampuchean people cannot materialize. Meanwhile, what can be done to ensure the interests of all Southeast Asian countries, for peace and stability in the area is precisely to advance toward a conference between the two groups of countries — Indochina and ASEAN — to sign the agreements proposed by the Indochinese foreign ministers.

Gone are the days when Vietnam was besmeared and driven into isolation. Our goodwill and our devotion to real human rights, peace, friendship and co-operation between nations are being recognized by public opinion at large, while signs have appeared of increasing changes in the attitude of many countries toward the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. 1982 will certainly confirm this good trend for the interests of Vietnam as well as of peace in Southeast Asia and the world.

25 December 1981

GOVERNMENT REPORT AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

IMPLEMENTATION OF 1981 STATE PLAN: INITIAL BUT VERY SIGNIFICANT UPWARD TREND OF ECONOMY 1982 PLAN: NEW PROGRESS PREDICTED

On December 21, 1981, at the second session of the 7th National Assembly, Vice Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Chairman of the State Planning Commission Nguyen Lam presented the government report on the implementation of the 1981 State plan and the orientation, tasks and targets of the 1982 plan. Following is the gist of his report:

1. On the implementation of 1981 plan

1981 saw the enforcement throughout the country of the new system of economic management consisting of the gradual abolition of the old system of administrative and non-profit accounting management and giving due attention to loss-profit accounting, implementating several new economic policies including the use of economic incentives such as the allocation of fixed quotas to each working group and farmer in the agricultural co-operatives (1); assignment of unchanged quotas for the remittance of food to the State over a number of years; readjustment of the prices of agricultural produce bought by the State; broadening of the autonomy of the factories; broadening of the piece-rate payment system; granting of bonuses for increased productivity in industry; broadening of the localities' autonomy in the field of export and import...

These policies have brought about initial results. Important successes have been obtained in many areas of agriculture. Food output reached the target of 15 million tons, 600,000 tons more than 1980, making 1981 the record year so far with regard to food output.

The area of short-term industrial plants was up by 1.8 % over 1980. In particular, soyabean output has doubled.

In stockbreeding, the increase was 4.5 % for the number of pigs; 2.7 % for buffaloes and 6.3 % for cows and oxen.

Food purchases by the State totalled 2.5 million tons (including rice and other foodstuffs converted into rice equivalent). Sizeable increases have been recorded in the purchase of many crops: 14 % for peanuts, 74 % for sugar cane, 15 % for tobacco, 2 % for jute, 4 % for reeds, 19 % for pigs, 26 % for fresh-water fish...

Industrial production has reached target and represents a slight increase over 1980. Production of local industries increased by 7%, small industries and handicrafts by 7%, electricity by 4.4 %, coal by 11.7%, tin by 2.7%, cane sugar by 33 %, canned food by 23%, cigarettes by 41.8 %.

The tempo of construction has been stepped up at key projects such as the Bim Son and Hoang Thach cement plants, the Lam Thao phosphate fer-

1. See Vietnam Courier, Nos. 2 and 3-1981,

tilizer plant, the Vinh Phu paper mill, the Hanoi and Nha Trang spinning mills, the service installations at the Vung Tau oil prospecting site...

Education, culture, health work, mother and child care and sports activities continued to make headway.

However, many industries and services still fall far below the targets under the 1981 plan, and the economic situation and the people's life still present many difficulties.

The cultivated area in the South dropped by 230,000 hectares compared with 1980, the output of subsidiary food crops dropped by 220,000 tons. Production of some essential goods such as textiles, garments, writing paper, sleeping mats, bicycle parts and medicines — has decreased. So has the whole of the State-run industrial sector. Exports reached only 88 % of the quotas and the trade deficit remains big. The plan for capital construction investments was only 90 % achieved and the ineffectual use of the construction funds drags on. The transport program was achieved by only 83 % in terms of tonnage and 78 % in terms of tonne-kilometres. The prolonged sloppiness of the transport service has adversely affected production and life.

With regard to the circulation and distribution of goods although substantial progress has been made in the purchase of food and agricultural produce due to the fall in the production of many essential goods coupled with bad management of the market, goods remain scarce, causing price fluctuation and more difficulties in the people's life. Some readjustments have been made to prices but the ineffectual organisation to enforce these readjustments has led to many negative developments.

II. Orientation and tasks of 1982 plan

In 1982 it is necessary to effect a real turn for the better of the economic-social situation and stay the downhill trend in some respects, while concentrating forces to develop production along with organizing better circulation and distribution in order to stabilize and initially improve the people's life, thus laying the groundwork for stronger development in the 1981-1985 five-year plan to be adopted by the 5th Congress of the Party.

The fundamental tasks of the 1982 State plan are:

To concentrate on developing agricultural production and to strive to boost further the production of consumer goods with a view to ensuring self-sufficiency in food for the whole society, meeting the essential needs of the people in clothing, study, medical care and transportation, and increasing exports; to reorganize production, capital construction and transport and communication; to continue socialist transformation in the South, consolidate and

improve the socialist relations of production in the North, to consolidate and strengthen socialism throughout the country; to consolidate national defence, ensure political security and social order and safety while continuing to discharge well our international tasks.

In order to achieve these fundamental tasks, it is necessary:

1. To uphold the sense of self-reliance: to build our life by the sweat of our own brows, to spend only within the limit of what we have and what we produce. The foremost task is to strongly develop agricultural production, especially food production, and to ensure the quotas of food remittance to the State; to boost the production of not only rice but also subsidiary food crops and vegetables and beans. The heavy industries (electricity, coal, engineering, chemicals, fertilizers) must do their best for agricultural production, for the production of consumer goods and exports. Special efforts must be made to increase the capacity of the transport and communication service.

2. To take important steps in the reorganisation of the economy according to an order of priority, firstly by concentrating materials, raw materials, energy, transport and capital on the production of food and foodstuffs. To reorganize capital construction in such a way as to ensure the balance between accumulation and consumption; and in conformity with the capabilities in materials and capital; to ensure the building tempo of the key projects of the State according to schedule, then the major projects of the services and localities. The organisation and activities of all branches must be streamlined in order to suit the capabilities and demands of the economy.

3. To take a positive and firm step in the rational use of the social work force, and redistribute the work force in each locality and on the national scale.

4. To boost exports is both an urgent and long-term strategic task. The State exercises centralised control over imports and exports, at the same time encourages all branches of activity and localities to promote exports in order to meet part of their imports, to expand economic relations with foreign countries first of all with the Soviet Union and the other countries in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, as well as with Laos and Kampuchea.

5. To continue socialist transformation in the South, to complete the redistribution of land in the Mekong River delta and on the basis of the new land ownership by the peasants, to accelerate the pace of involving them in collective production. To consolidate and improve the socialist relations of production in the North. To consolidate and strengthen socialism throughout the country through the continued transformation of private industry and trade, tighter

control of the market and improvement of the quality of the State-run economic establishments.

6. To practise strict economy in production, construction and consumption, first of all with regard to electricity, coal, fuel, materials, raw materials, and food. To reduce sharply all expenditure which is not urgent in order to concentrate on the most immediate needs, to reduce capital construction investments in order to devote more materials to production and housing, to reduce administrative personnel and spending.

7. To make wider application of technical progress.

8. To combine economy with national defence: to get the economy ready at all time to cope with war: the army has to take part in economic construction within the scope of its capabilities (in the production of food, in the building of roads and water conservancy works), to develop the capabilities of the national defence industry with a view to increasing the output of civilian goods.

9. To establish a new order in the domain of circulation and distribution of goods, to concentrate the management of goods in the hands of the State, to effect strict control over the distribution and rational use of food, equipment, capital, materials and goods, to carry out the principle of remuneration according to the amount of work done, to continue the readjustment of prices in a steady manner.

10. To continue effecting the switch from the mode of administrative and non-profit accounting management to a mode of management and planning along the lines of economic accounting and socialist exploitation.

Going into details of each branch of activity, the report underlines the following points:

- In agriculture, high-yield rice-growing areas will be formed to account for 33% of the total rice area in the whole country by the end of the five-year plan, and to produce 47% of the total rice output. In the coming summer rice crop these areas will cover 185 districts among the total of 411 districts in the whole country (63 among the 67 districts in the Red River delta, 27 among the 53 districts of Thanh Hoa and Nghe Tinh provinces, 15 among the 48 districts of the central coastal provinces, 47 among the 110 districts of the Mekong River delta). More investments will be put into these areas along with the implementation of a series of organisational, managerial and technical measures and new policies.

- In industry, the expansion of the production of consumer goods aims first of all to increase the supply of industrial goods for the farmers in exchange for farm produce in order to give a boost to agricultural production. It also aims to stimulate market operations in the country and contribute to

quickly expanding exports. In energy, bigger efforts are required to make fuller use of the capacity of the existing power plants and to quickly put into commission the gas turbine power plant in Thai Binh and Hai Phong, and to start drilling the first deep-sea oil well on the Southern continental shelf in co-operation with the Soviet Union. In engineering, a strong boost will be given to the production of labour tools and repair equipment for the different branches of the economy, to increase the production of machinery and equipment in the service of agriculture, communication and transport, exports and a number of consumer goods industries.

- In capital construction, to concentrate investments on the following major projects so that they might be put into commission in 1982 or 1983 at the latest: the Pha Lai thermoelectric power plant (first group of alternators), the Bim Son and Hoang Thach cement plants, the Nha Trang and Hanoi spinning mills, the La Nga sugar mill and the saw mills at Buon Me Thuot, Gia Lai - Kontum and Song Be.

The following main targets of the 1982 State plan have been adopted by the National Assembly:

Percentage increase over 1981:

- Gross national product : 4 per cent;
- National income : 5 per cent;
- Agricultural output value: 8 per cent;
- Industrial output value (including small industries and handicrafts) : 5 per cent;
- Total investments in capital construction: 6.7 per cent;
- Exports value : 45 per cent;
- Work productivity in State-run industries: 5 per cent;

Absolute figures of the main targets:

- Total food output : 16 million tons;
- Area of industrial crops: 714,000 hectares;
- Number of pigs : 11 million;
- Electricity : 4,035 million KWH;
- Coal : 6,300,000 tons;
- Cement : 962,000 tons;
- Textiles : 260 million metres;
- Paper : 55,000 tons;
- Cane sugar : 200,000 tons;
- Fish : 600,000 tons, including 420,000 tons of sea fish;
- Enrolments in general schools: 12,510,000;
- Enrolments in universities and colleges: 35,000;
- Enrolments in secondary vocational schools: 47,200;
- Technical workers to be trained: 53,800;
- Number of hospital beds: 199,000.

WORKING CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTERS OF SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

AT the initiative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Kampuchea, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, a working consultative meeting of the deputy foreign ministers of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Republic of Cuba, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Bulgarian People's Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Mongolian People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic and the Hungarian People's Republic, was held in Vientiane, capital of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, on December 18 and 19, 1981:

Kaysone Phomvihane, General Secretary of the Lao People's Democratic Republic government, received and had a cordial conversation with the participants.

Phoumi Vongvichit, Political Bureau member of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and Vice-Premier of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, delivered the opening speech.

The participants in the meeting noted that the present international tension clearly shows the existence of two lines in world politics. The aggressive imperialists, particularly the United States, are striving to turn back the wheel of history and prevent the easing of tension,

in the hope of reviving the cold war period. They are intensifying the arms race and trying to impose the theory that nuclear war is "acceptable", obviously wishing to break the strategic balance which has been established, and to gain supremacy.

These acts and plans which are dangerous to peace are meeting with resistance from the firm foreign policy for peace of the socialist countries, and from a broad movement of the forces of peace, national independence, democracy and social progress in the world. The participants declared that their countries fully support the important proposals on key international problems made at the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The new initiatives of the Soviet Union which stem from its concern for peace and were put forward by L.I. Brezhnev during his visit to the Federal Republic of Germany have tremendous significance.

The participants in the meeting expressed their satisfaction at the adoption by the United Nations of the Declaration on the Prevention of Nuclear War and its resolutions aimed at checking the arms race which is in keeping with the vital interests of nations.

The participants in the meeting welcome all efforts of governments and peoples of Asian countries aimed at building a relationship among nations in Asia based on the principles of respect for

each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-violation of each other's national frontiers, equality, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, renunciation of the use of force or the threat of force, and settlement of contentious issues entirely through peaceful means, and development of reciprocally beneficial co-operation. They reaffirm their pledge to do all in their power to contribute to the early application of these principles to the relations among Asian countries.

The concrete proposals for negotiation among all concerned countries in the Far East, the readiness to discuss all questions relating to the situation in Afghanistan on the basis of a program put forth by the government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, the initiatives of the Mongolian People's Republic on the signing of a treaty of non-aggression and renunciation of force in the relations between the countries in Asia and the Pacific, and lastly the constructive proposals of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Kampuchea and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam with regard to the member countries of ASEAN and China actually follow this direction. Moreover, the constructive policy of peace of India is making a great contribution to the maintenance of international security.

The hegemonistic policy of the Chinese ruling circles in collusion with the US imperialists and other reactionary forces against the peoples of the three Indochinese countries, and their gross interference in the internal affairs of other countries in Southeast Asia have strained the situation and threatened peace and stability in this region.

The military co-operation between Washington and Beijing constitutes a real threat to the nations in Asia. The US Administration, encouraged by Beijing, is continuing with its policy of intervention and penetration by different means in the Asian continent.

They hypocritically try to justify this policy because of the necessity of launching a fight against the "danger of the Soviet Union and Vietnam". But as the only big power which has never made war in Southeast Asia, the Soviet Union should not be regarded as a threat to anyone in this region. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has never made war against the ASEAN States, and does not have the intention of doing so.

The participants in the meeting resolutely condemned the slander campaign, mounted by the United States and other reactionary forces against Vietnam and the Soviet Union, claiming that these countries have used chemical weapons. This campaign is designed to divert growing protest by public opinion in the world against the undeniable consequences of toxic chemicals used by the United States in Vietnam and other parts of the Indochinese peninsula. Their charge are made to hide the fact that the United States is stepping up the arms race and manufacturing and stockpiling chemical weapons.

The only correct way to guarantee peace and security in this region is for the forces of hegemony and imperialism to put an immediate end to all acts of aggression and intervention. To preserve peace and security in Southeast Asia, the countries in the region should consult and agree with one

another on regional matters on the basis of equality, mutual respect, non imposition and without interference from outside.

It is important to adopt a realistic attitude, cast aside anything which might divide the Southeast Asian countries, and continue dialogue to seek a mutually agreeable basis on which to carry out peaceful co-operation.

On behalf of their respective governments the representatives of the Republic of Cuba, the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Bulgarian People's Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Mongolian People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic, and the Hungarian People's Republic, declared constant support for the three Indochinese countries in their struggle to consolidate and safeguard their independence and sovereignty. They reaffirmed their readiness to give all necessary assistance to the Indochinese countries in socialist construction. At the same time they acclaimed the consolidation of the solidarity and fraternal co-operation between the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Kampuchea and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, as well as between the three Indochinese countries and the Soviet Union and other countries in the socialist community. The foreign policy pursued by the three Indochinese countries is a factor for peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

The fraternal socialist countries unanimously support the constructive proposals and the good faith of the three Indochinese countries as well as the statements of the Lao, Kampuchean and Vietnamese foreign ministers in connection with peace and stability in Southeast Asia and on a regional conference between the Indochinese countries and the ASEAN states.

The participants in the meeting spoke with great satisfaction of the Kampuchean people's success in the construction of a new Kam-

puchea which has been saved from the genocide of Pol Pot. They declared opposition to any interference in the internal affairs of the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

Matters related to Kampuchea can only be solved by the people of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the only authentic and legal representative of the Kampuchean people. Kampuchea's seat at the United Nations must be given to the People's Republic of Kampuchea. As for the UN resolution on the so-called "Kampuchean problem" and the decisions of the self-styled "International Conference on Kampuchea", passed without the consent of the representative of the Government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, they are at variance with the Kampuchean people's will and their aim is to help the genocidal Pol Pot gang to stage a comeback in Kampuchea. They are illegal, immoral and, therefore, invalid.

The consultative meeting of deputy foreign ministers held in Vientiane took place in an atmosphere of fraternal friendship, solidarity, one-mindedness and complete mutual understanding. The Lao People's Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Republic of Cuba, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Bulgarian People's Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Mongolian People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic and the Hungarian People's Republic declared their desire to continue and strengthen co-operation and consultation. They affirm their readiness to promote friendly relations with all countries in Southeast Asia and exchange views with them in order to help turn this region into a zone of peace, friendship and co-operation, and contribute to the maintenance of peace in Asia and the world as a whole.

Vientiane, 19 December 1981.

INDISPENSABLE MEASURES TO DEFEND SOCIALISM IN POLAND

DEVELOPMENTS in the past year and particularly in the last few months have confirmed that the crisis now taking place in Poland is a counter-attack of reactionary forces both inside and outside Poland aimed at negating the socialist gains of the Polish people and breaking an important link in the socialist community. This offensive has been brewing for a long time according to "piecemeal" tactics and perfidious covert and overt manoeuvres. Capitalizing on the difficulties faced by the country and errors committed in economic management which have incensed some strata of the population, the reactionaries, under the cover of "rejuvenating" socialism, have launched an all-out attack against the leading Party and the people's republican regime. This anarchic state has been created by the counter-revolutionaries as a cover to topple the revolutionary government and to set up a reactionary administration. There is no denying the fact that this serious crisis has been plotted by the anti-socialist forces including the extremists within the "Solidarity Trade Union", as well as the ringleaders of the notorious counter-revolutionary organizations morally and materially backed by the imperialists and other reactionary forces.

Their acts are not to defend the interest of the workers and trade unions nor are they aimed at "stabilizing the situation" or bringing about a "renewal of socialism", but are aimed at abolishing the socialist regime in Poland and countering the revolutionary cause of the Poles. Unmasked, they are more dædrevil. After their meeting at Radom, the leaders of the "Solidarity Trade Union" held another conference at Gdansk in which they charted a line of confrontation and issued an appeal calling for a general strike to be staged on December 17, to pave the way for the setting up of a government at their beck and call. Meanwhile, the reactionary KPN (Polish Alliance for Independence) aims at overthrowing the people's power.

Any conscious person can see that the urgent measures taken by the Polish Government, headed by Comrade W. Jaruzelski, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, President of the Council of Ministers, Minister of Defence, are necessary for Poland to get out of the present scrape. For over one year, the reactionary forces, including the leaders of the "Solidarity Trade Union", have committed heinous crimes against the Polish people. Comrade W. Jaruzelski has said that his country is on the verge of collapse; in fact the economy is sinking, social order has been disrupted, the people's life is hard; this disaster has been created by the reactionaries. If they succeed in fomenting a general strike and uprising to seize power, Poland, as the Military Council for National Salvation has pointed out, would be faced with a civil war followed by a coup d'état leading to the overthrow of the people's republic and the loss of national sovereignty. Their attempt, if successful, would not only cause tremendous sufferings to the Polish people and threaten the existence of Poland as an independent State, but jeopardize the interest and security of the socialist community. We must stay their hand and foil their intention! These are the urgent measures taken by the State Council of Poland. To deal a heavy blow at the reactionaries is the correct path to get Poland over the crisis.

The Vietnamese people wholeheartedly support the measures applied by the Polish Government headed by Comrade W. Jaruzelski. Recently following the developments in Poland with great concern, we strongly condemn the anti-socialist forces who are opposing the revolutionary cause of the Polish people. We agree that these measures are most necessary to save Poland from this dangerous situation.

The struggle of the Polish people to bring their country out of the present predicament is still fraught with difficulties and hardships. We Vietnamese people and communists will always stand at the side of the Polish communists and are firmly convinced that the revolutionary cause of the Polish people will be safeguarded and Poland will continue to march steadily forward.

Excerpt from Nhan Dan's editorial
December 15, 1981

THE BANNER OF PEACE

AFTER a decade of détente, mankind entered the eighties with deep anxiety as the world situation again becomes highly explosive. The U.S. and NATO militarists are taking up an adventurist course in an attempt to upset the existing balance of strength, to acquire superiority over the Soviet Union, to encircle the socialist countries and to repulse the forces of national liberation and socialism. This dangerous political and military policy is being carried out by the Reagan Administration which represents the industrial military complexes. The United States has greatly increased its military budget, spent huge sums on war preparation, created a critical situation and "hot spots", crudely interfered in the internal affairs of other countries and widely resorted to acts of terrorism. Due to the US reactionary strategy, tension is mounting in Europe, where the two world wars started. This is the centre of confrontation between two sizeable opposing armed forces. The arms race started by the United States and the NATO countries, specifically the deployment of the new medium-range missiles in Western Europe and the U.S. decision to produce neutron arms — the type of arms the Pentagon has prepared mainly for European battlefields — further adds to the risk of a military conflict which is fraught with unpredictable disasters.

However, the militarists can never make a correct assessment of the people's reaction in various countries, above all the European countries. Demonstrations and marches of hundreds of thousands of people have been going on in Western Europe for over a month now against the arms race and in support of disarmament. A widespread campaign for peace is growing with unprecedented support and strength. It is no wonder, then, that Reagan, under the circumstances, put forward a four-point proposal. The Washington officials and the authorities of some of the US allies took their cue and joined

in singing Reagan's praises for his 'program for peace'.

Hawks cannot turn into doves! Anyone, who is well informed can see clearly the US insincerity and the substance of Washington's proposal. The détente process in Europe and the world in the seventies is the result of the Soviet Union's indefatigable efforts. The continual Soviet proposals for peace have all been aimed at promoting the détente process. However, as is known to everyone, these reasonable proposals have not been met.

Reagan's song of peace is proved false. Facts show that Washington is seeking military superiority, instead of peace. Reagan's offer to stop the U.S. deployment of medium-range missiles in Western Europe in exchange for the Soviet removal of its missiles from the Western side of the Urals bears evidence of the U.S. scheme. The core of the US proposal is for the Soviet Union to undertake a unilateral disarmament while keeping intact the US and NATO countries' huge arms deposit containing hundreds of missiles stationed on land and warships and hundreds of aircraft carrying nuclear bombs, all with targets set on the Soviet Union and its allies.

No wonder the Soviet Union cannot accept such a plan! In the meantime, public opinion notes the goodwill embodied in the Soviet proposals, which are positive initiatives on disarmament concerning the armed forces and conventional weapons as well as the strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. These proposals are fair and acceptable to both sides. The Soviet good will

also manifests itself in actual deeds: the Soviet Union has, contrary to all previous normal practices, unilaterally reduced its strength by twenty thousand men and one thousand tanks in Central Europe. In his recent visit to the Federal Republic of Germany, Leonid Brezhnev left no doubt about the Soviet Union's genuine desire to seek an appropriate solution acceptable to all sides and in the interests of world peace and security. To facilitate the coming Soviet-American dialogue and to create a favourable atmosphere the Soviet Union has suggested that while the negotiation is going on, neither side will deploy new medium-range nuclear arms or modernise those already stationed here.

If the other side agrees to the suggestion, the Soviet Union may unilaterally withdraw some of its medium-range nuclear arms from its European territory. President Brezhnev stressed: "In general, the Soviet Union's aim is to turn Europe, eventually, into a non-nuclear zone — regarding both medium-range and tactical nuclear arms. This may serve as a real 'zero solution' which is fair to all sides".

For more than 60 years, the Soviet Union has been making tireless efforts in the interests of peace. History will testify to the correctness of the Soviet peace program for the safeguarding of peace and security in the world, above all in Europe.

Nhan Dan editorial
November 26, 1981.

THE FOUR PREVIOUS NATIONAL CONGRESSES OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM

The First Congress: held from 27 to 31 March 1935 in Macao, attended by 15 delegates including 12 official ones. At this congress, the Party was able to unify its organizations to lead the revolutionary movement, after a period of being fiercely oppressed by the enemy. The congress set forth immediate tasks for the entire party, i.e. to consolidate and increase the party; to mobilize and rally the masses in the struggle to oppose the imperialist war. The congress elected a central committee to lead organizations throughout the peninsula. (The Party was then called the Indochinese Communist Party).

The Second National Congress: held from 14 to 19 February 1951 in Vinh Quang commune, Chiem Hoa district, Tuyen Quang province (now Ha Tuyen province). Attending the congress were 191 delegates including 158 official delegates, representing 740,000 party members from the Indochinese countries. The congress decided that the Party would work legally with a new name: The Vietnam Workers' Party. revolutionary parties would be organized for Laos and Kampuchea separately. (After the August Revolution, our party had temporarily gone underground because of the country's complicated political situation). The lines put forth by the congress constituted the basis for uniting the entire party and people in our resistance war against the French colonialists and the US interventionists and led to the great victory at Dien Bien Phu, restoring peace to Indochina and completely liberating North Vietnam. The congress elected a 29-member central committee with Ho Chi Minh as its president and re-elected Truong Chinh as its general secretary. The Political Bureau comprised 7

full members and one alternate member.

The Third National Congress: held from 5 to 10 September 1960 in Hanoi. 576 delegates including 252 official ones attended. The congress adopted orientation and tasks both for the revolutionary movement in the North and in the South, and for the first five-year plan (1961-1965). A central committee comprising 47 full and 31 alternate members was elected. It re-elected Ho Chi Minh as its president and elected Le Duan as its first secretary. A 13-member political bureau (in which it were full members) was elected, as was a seven-member secretariat. Thanks to the correct lines of the congress and the clear-sighted leadership of the Party's Central Committee, our people won great victory in the struggle against the US imperialists for national salvation and in the cause of socialist construction in the North.

The Fourth National Congress: opened in Hanoi from 14 to 20 December 1976. 1,000 delegates representing 1,500,000 party members in the country attended the congress. The congress passed a resolution to change the name of the Party from "The Vietnam Workers' Party" to "The Communist Party of Vietnam". It worked out a general line for the socialist revolution and for the building of a socialist economy in the new period. It adopted the orientation and tasks of the second five-year plan (1976-1980), and elected:

— a central committee of 133 members including 32 alternate ones, with Le Duan as its general secretary;

— a political bureau consisting of 14 full and 3 alternate members, and a nine-member secretariat.

The first conference of the Communist Party of Vietnam was held on February 3, 1931 in Kowloon, Hong Kong under the chairmanship of Comrade Nguyen Ai Quoc representing the Comintern. By its historic implications, it has the significance of a founding congress.

The first conference of the Party Central Committee, also chaired by Nguyen Ai Quoc, was held in October 1930 in Hong Kong. It discussed and adopted the Political Thesis on the Democratic Bourgeois (National People's Democratic) Revolution drafted by Tran Phu. It also adopted a resolution on the situation in Indochina and the urgent tasks of the Party, and decided to change the Party's name to the Indochinese Communist Party. The conference elected the full Central Committee and appointed Tran Phu as General Secretary of the Party. It also decided to convene a Party Congress.

The period that followed saw the most bloody repression of the Indochinese revolution by the French imperialists. Many members of the Party Central Committee were arrested and a large number of Party grassroots were broken. Hence, the projected Party congress was postponed to an unspecified date.

In 1934 the Overseas Leading Committee of the Party was set up with the task of unifying the various Party organisations inside the country, restoring the organisations destroyed by the enemy and building new ones, as well as training cadres and preparing for the Party Congress.

In early 1935 we were appointed by the Party Committee for Central Vietnam (then called Annam by the French) to attend the first national congress of the Party. Our delegation included Comrade Chac Ke (born Vo Nguyen Hien) and myself as full delegates, and two alternate delegates one of them serving as guide for the delegation.

We started out from Phu Dien, now in Nghe Tinh province, and went westward to the border with Laos where we crossed into Thakhet, then Pakhinhoun. Travelling further across Laos we entered Thailand at Thatouthen, then made for Udorn. The trip from Thatouthen to Udorn took ten days during which we disguised ourselves as Thai coolies to sidetrack enemy spies. From Udorn we rode a bus to Korat in the guise of

REMINISCENCES ON THE FIRST PARTY CONGRESS

Chinese tourists. This trip took another day. It took us another day and night to go by train from Korat to Bangkok. Between Bangkok and Hong Kong were five days of sailing aboard a steamer.

Before we boarded the steamer for Hong Kong, the Party organisation in Thailand had looked after everything we might need on our trip: passports and visas, fares, clothes for disguise, and banknotes of both Thailand and the Kuomintang regime in China. Each member of our delegation was provided with two suits and some 150 Baht (Thai currency).

We arrived in Hong Kong in the latter half of March 1935. Hong Kong is a British concession and the preparatory committee had chosen it as the venue for the congress because of its large and cosmopolitan population which would allow us to dissimulate our identity without much difficulty.

At the rendezvous we saw that many other delegations had arrived before us. The delegation from North Vietnam should have comprised three members whom I knew only by their aliases: Comrade Nong, Comrade Hoang and another who could not attend due to illness. The delegation of South Vietnam (then known as Cochinchina) also had three members. The Lac delegation had only one delegate who was addressed as Comrade Xo. The Overseas Leading Committee of the Party comprised comrades Ha Huy Tap, Phung Chi Kien and another whose name I did not know. (1)

All preparations for the congress having been finished, we were only waiting for the arrival of Nguyen Ai Quoc representing the Comintern, and Le Hong Phong, in charge of the Overseas Leading Committee of the Party.

But as everything was moving toward the opening of the congress,

an unhappy incident occurred: H.C., the intendant of the congress, having committed a wrong-doing and fearing disciplinary action, took flight.

Deciding to take no chances, the Overseas Leading Committee of the Party moved the congress site elsewhere. The delegations broke up into small groups and, disguised as gamblers, moved to Macao, a Portuguese concession, about two hours from Hong Kong by steam boat.

We moved to a plush two-storeyed hotel in Macao. The ground floor was a fruit stand. In front of the hotel was a large courtyard serving as both a play and exhibition ground.

The congress was held on the second floor, in two rooms of about 40 square metres connected by passages.

The congress opened two days after we moved to Macao because time was too pressing to wait for comrades Nguyen Ai Quoc and Le Hong Phong any longer.

Regulations on secrecy were strictly observed throughout the congress-sitting. No one was allowed to leave their working and bed room. Speeches and discussions had to be made in low voices so as not to arouse suspicion. Everyone had to eat, sleep and wash at prescribed places, all communications with the outside and all purchases had to be made through designated persons...

The delegates were served two meals a day which consisted of rice and a kind of thin soup made of vegetables and a little fish. Meat was served only at the dinner to celebrate the success of the congress. As for sleeping, two or three delegates slept in a bed. Some simply lay on the floor.

But the harsh living conditions did not deter the delegates from joining in lively debates and working very diligently to keep to schedule.

As was later recorded in the Party's history, the first congress was held from March 27 to 31, 1935. This included three days of meeting and another day devoted to rest and celebration. After the congress the delegates attended a short political course focussing on the situation and immediate tasks of the Party. This course lasted three days, if I remember well.

There were in all 15 full and alternate delegates representing communists in all the three countries of Indochina. The congress heard the political report of the Overseas Leading Committee of the Party and the reports of the delegates from the regional Party committees. The congress documents had been prepared and mimeographed beforehand. The documents of the congress laid down three essential and immediate tasks of the Party, namely to consolidate and expand the Party organisation, win over to the Party more mass support, to oppose the imperialist war and support the Soviet Union. A wide range of questions was brought up for discussion at the congress, especially the founding of the Anti-Imperialist Front. Some argued against such a front, contending that it was not necessary since we already had the Association of Workers, the Association of Peasants and other mass organisations. But the majority view was that even though we had founded such mass organisations, an anti-imperialist front was indispensable since only such a broadly based organisation could rally all patriotic forces in Indochina to effectively organise a revolution against the French colonialists and their agents. The debates were at times very heated but in the end the congress unanimously adopted a resolution on the founding of the Anti-Imperialist Front...

The congress adopted the political resolution on the situation and immediate tasks of the Party, the resolution on the mobilisation of workers, peasants, youth and women, the resolution on the propaganda among the peoples

REMINISCENCES

ON THE SECOND PARTY CONGRESS

THE Second Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam was held in February 1951 in a jungle area in Vinh Quang (now Kim Binh) commune, Chiem Hoa district, Tuyen Quang (Ha Tuyen) province.

The building of the facilities at the congress site and also security work was entrusted by the Central Committee to Le Tat Dac (ex-Minister of the Interior, now retired) who was also a member of the preparatory committee. I was assigned the construction of the congress site by Uncle Ho and Comrade Pham Van Dong.

*

The assignment came to me rather unexpectedly but not as a complete surprise. In April 1948, in his letter to the 1st national congress of architects held in Than Son, Vinh Yen province (now Vinh Phu), President Ho Chi Minh had

already laid down for us architects the general line for construction work. He wrote: "Of the four questions vital to the people's welfare, housing and communication are as necessary as food and clothing, hence architecture is also a very important question. We must think of building right in the resistance and continue to build after we have won."

After discussing President Ho's letter and adopting a resolution on the tasks and program of work of the Vietnam Association of Architects, the congress elected an executive committee of the association of which I was the first general secretary. After that I was made head of the Building Department of the Viet Bac inter-zone (northern resistance zone during the anti-French resistance—Editor). My task consisted essentially in directing construction work in the resistance zone according to the policy and program of the Party Central Committee and the Government then based in Viet Bac. In May 1950, President Ho's private

secretary fetched me and took me to the President.

I arrived at a central office set up in the "security zone"—the headquarters of the resistance movement. That day President Ho was presiding over a cabinet meeting. I saw many ministers I had known personally. As I arrived the meeting was in recess and the cabinet members were having their dinner. President Ho dined at the same table as Prime Minister Pham Van Dong. They were having their tea when I came in.

The President led me to his office and asked:

"The Central Committee and I have decided to entrust you with building the meeting hall for the Party congress. Can you do it?"

"I can, President."

He again asked:

"What do you think is most important in this work?"

After a moment's reflection, I ventured:

of ethnic minorities and the work of the anti-imperialist front, on the agitation propaganda among enemy troops, on the self-defence organisation, on the Red Relief Organisation, etc. The congress also passed a Manifesto and a Constitution of the Party and a Statute of the mass organisations, as well as electing a central committee of the Party.

The congress adopted messages addressed to the Executive Committee of the Comintern, and letters to communist parties in the Soviet Union,

France, Thailand, India, etc. After the congress we returned to Vietnam by another route, this time passing by Lungchow in China and Cao Bang province in Vietnam. The Central Committee of the Party assigned to the head delegates the task of safeguarding the main and official documents of the congress. The head of our delegation hid these documents in his underclothes. There was no incident on our way home.

It was very regrettable that comrades Nguyen At Quoc and Le Hong

Phong could not attend the congress. Furthermore, the congress was held before the 7th congress of the Comintern and therefore failed to see either the danger of fascism and world war, or the possibilities of rallying the masses into a vigorous movement against fascism and war for peace, freedom and a better life. Nevertheless, the congress had the merit of strengthening the confidence of Party members and the entire people in the Party, restoring the organisational unity of the Party and putting the revolutionary movement in the three Indochinese countries under the unified

"President, as I see it, to ensure secrecy is the most important thing."

The President nodded:

"Right. You must see to it that the congress site can be seen neither from the air, the ground nor from any side."

Thus the president outlined the essentials of my future work.

The President then asked Comrade Pham Van Dong to give me concrete instructions. I was told the number of delegates in the country and from fraternal parties to attend our congress, so that I could reckon the necessary housing space. The Prime Minister gave me very detailed instructions and stressed: "We must see that the delegates meet and live as comfortably as possible."

*

To build the congress site as requested by the President and the Central Committee I went to Chiem Hoa for a first hand assessment of the potential site. This was a large and dense forest area which was however dotted by some clearings. To ensure secrecy of the site these clearings had to be shielded from view. On the other hand, too thick a foliage would make the air too stifling for the delegates.

Construction of the congress site started in July 1950. First, we sent a team to recruit manpower from among the population in the sur-

rounding villages. We made it a point that every job from felling the trees to sawing and transporting logs, bamboo and leaves was done according to a strict time schedule in order to get the highest work efficiency and save materials. No tree was felled unless needed.

Then we scoured the area and recruited a dozen or so skilled carpenters together with some of the women most experienced in making plaited bamboo walls.

In designing the lodgings and congress hall we agreed among ourselves that they must suit the weather conditions of the highlands while at the same time retaining the grace of the houses in the plain.

There was no major problem as far as the building space was concerned. But we had to choose a place spacious enough for the meeting hall which also had to lie at a convenient distance for the delegates. To shield the place from aircraft we retained all the big trees to serve as pillars for the meeting hall. The roof was covered by a kind of large-leafed creeper kept in place by rattan stems which thus provided a complete cover on all sides of the hall. Inside the meeting hall, apart from the podium of the presidium and the seats of the delegates we also designed a balcony for the unofficial delegates and the press.

The windows were hung with gauze in lieu of glass.

The delegates lodgings could accommodate each 10-12 persons. In the centre of the room was a set of bamboo furniture and a stove patterned on the style of the highlanders for the tea service and heating.

The congress site also included many other houses: one for President Ho and others for the Political Bureau. A row of others was reserved for the foreign delegates. There was also a memorial house in honour of the comrades who had given their lives for the Party and the country, an exhibition room for revolutionary pictures and literature, a dining room for the delegates and another for the service personnel and the guard unit. There was also a house reserved for the press: journalists, photographers, cameramen..., living quarters for the service personnel and the guard unit, as well as an infirmary and warehouses.

All was perfectly covered by the thick canopy of the forest, even at night when the whole site was lit by electricity.

The alleys in the congress site were so designed as to preserve the natural grace and picturesqueness of the forest. The covered alleys were well camouflaged by

(Continued on page 31)

leadership of the Central Committee, as well as preparing the necessary conditions for advance in the future.

An account by Ba Doc, recorded by The Tap.

1. According to an account by another delegate to the congress the following persons attended the First Party Congress:

- Ha Huy Tap, alias Nho, representing the Overseas Leading Committee;

- Ngo Tuan, alias Ba Doc, and Vo Nguyen Hien, alias Chac Ke, delegates from Central Vietnam;

- Vo Van Ngoc, alias Xu, and Nguyen Chanh Nhi, alias Ba Tay, delegates from South Vietnam;

- Nguyen Van Xo, alias Lao, delegate from Laos;

- Ngo Van Anh, also known as "Whitehaired" Tang;

- Hom

- Sin

A woman delegate, Luong (alias Mai), of the North Vietnam delegation, could not attend due to illness. The other two delegates from North Vietnam—Hoang Dinh Rong and Bui Bao Van—reached Hong Kong after the congress had broken up.

FOUNDING OF THE VIETNAMESE UNIFIED SANGHA

ON November 4th, 1981, a national conference was held in Quan Su pagoda, Hanoi, to form the Vietnamese Unified Sangha. 160 bonzes and delegates of numerous sects and Buddhist schools from all over Vietnam attended. Among them the sects of the four great Vietnamese Buddhist schools were represented: the North, the South, the Mendicant bonzes and the Khmer Sangha. Two-thirds of the bonzes and delegates came from the southern provinces.

The Venerable Thich Tri Thu, who took the chair at the conference, stressed that this was the first time in the bi-millenary history of Vietnamese Buddhism that such a congress, gathering representatives of all the schools and sects of the whole country, had been held. (Buddhism was introduced into Vietnam in the 2nd century A.D.). In his report, the Venerable Thich Minh Chau, director of the Buddhist Studies Institute in Ho Chi Minh City, recalled the various attempts which had been made for some fifty years to unify the Buddhist community. Until now these efforts had failed because of the crucial fact that the country, enslaved by foreign domination, was not in itself unified, and furthermore, imperialism had sowed discord within the community, using certain leaders to try

and lure the Buddhist community into anti-nationalism. Numerous delegates stressed the tradition of the Buddhist communities which always participated actively in the defence of national independence and the building of Vietnamese culture. From the 10th to the 15th century, Buddhism was the State religion, and even if since then, it no longer had this official position, nevertheless it was still an essentially national religion, in the sense of a harmonious integration of the Buddhist teachings and beliefs into the national culture.

The conference unanimously welcomed the total liberation of the country on April 30th, 1975, and the north-south reunification as being fundamental historical conditions for the unification of the Buddhist community. The program of building socialism conforms fully to the aspirations of the believers, and the charter worked out by the conference after four days included three main slogans:

"Safeguard the teachings of Buddha"

"Safeguard national independence and identity"

"Build socialism"

The conference also worked out a plan of action and elected:

— A Superior Doctrinal Council (*chung minh*) headed by the Venerable Thich Duc Nhuan.

— A Central Administrative Council headed by the Venerable Thich Tri Thu.

The plan of action comprises six points:

— National unity, unity between the believers of different sects and schools.

— Promotion of an authentic Buddhism.

— Training of bonzes and bonzesses, education of believers.

— Active participation in the defence of the country and building socialism.

— Working to finance the activities of the Unified Sangha.

— Develop fraternal relations with the Buddhists of other countries, with the aim of safeguarding peace.

The founding of the Unified Sangha does not prevent different sects and schools from continuing to follow their own teachings and liturgies. This diversity is inherent to the Buddhist community, as well as the patriotic tradition. In the frame of the reunified and independent Vietnamese nation the Buddhist community, freed from numerous obstacles, will certainly make new developments.

The conference launched an appeal for the defence of peace, particularly in Southeast Asia, against the bellicose actions of American imperialism and the Beijing leaders.

NGUYEN KHAC VIEN

LAO CAI APATITE

IN late summer 1955, one year after Dien Bien Phu, a group of mine researchers left Hanoi to go up the Red River towards the Chinese border. It was led by former Major Nguyen Van Lang in command of the Da Nang-Hoa Vang front at the enemy's rear, during the anti-French resistance war before regroupment to the North in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreements. The group was composed of many demobilized military cadres untrained for the job. It also included 13 Soviet experts coming to help the Vietnamese people rebuild their war-torn country with the mission of carrying out research and design in the Cam Duong apatite mine near Lao Cai town and rapidly training Vietnamese technical cadres and specialized workers to co-operate with them and to carry on their work in the future. A friendship soon developed among these comrades-in-arms.

When the research group reached Bach Hac, 80 kilometres from Hanoi, a violent typhoon broke. The great bridge spanning the Lo River linking Bach Hac to Viet Tri had been wrecked during the war. As to the ferry, it could not function during the storm. In fact group leader Nguyen Van Lang could use his mission order to demand a crossing but he was responsible for the safety of the friendly experts and his party. The

Soviet friends tried to persuade him: "What? Did you hide yourself in your trench at the front during a storm? Lets' go, we are not afraid of storm. Should our car be bogged down we are ready to push it." However, Nguyen Van Lang replied: "Well now we are not at the front. Our leaders did speak about a front of production but I understand it as a rhetorical word. It is my belief that you will help me carry out my command. Let us return to Hanoi." On their way back the group soon realized the correctness of this decision as they saw trees falling all around and a lot of houses unroofed. Later on, the Soviet friends understood Nguyen Van Lang better: he was firm but attentive to others' advice and eager to learn, sincerely co-operating with his friends in the spirit of internationalism.

Once the storm ended the group set off again. The car reached Yen Bai, now chief town of Hoang Lien Son province. After the war petrol was scarce and the friendly experts continued on horseback while the Vietnamese cadres had to foot it. At that time the North-Western border area was rife with bandits and commandos left by the French. An infantry battalion of the People's Army opened the way, followed by a host of porters carrying supplies and equipment. The con-

voy trod on the rail track along the Red River cut off during the war of resistance and now invaded by reeds. They reached Lao Cai town after ten days, then crossed the Red River and followed a path up to Cam Duong, a village of Tay highlanders, after another day.

More than thirty years ago, the local people while burning the forest to make clearings discovered a very hard brown stone which gave a blue flicker when baked—ghost stone as they called. Informed by the village authorities, the colonialists took a sample of the stone for analysis. Only ten years after did the French carry out an investigation and a small-scale exploitation. It was not until 1938 that Cam Duong mine officially went into operation. Late in 1940 the Japanese fascists who occupied Indochina seized the mine and used the apatite to extract phosphoric acid for making explosives, until they were defeated in the Second World War.

Immediately after the war of resistance against the French ended, a Japanese company offered the Vietnamese Government a tender for the Lao Cai apatite mine with favourable conditions for Vietnam. What would the precious ore be used for? Would it be again used to serve the war industry? Meanwhile the apatite could be used

to make superphosphate, thermophosphate and many other fertilisers urgently needed to develop agriculture. So the Vietnamese Government decided to keep the Lao Cai apatite for home use, for peaceful use, even though Vietnam did not have the know-how to exploit it. Then the Soviet Union came to extend the necessary material and technical aid.

* * *

The research revealed that apatite layers in Lao Cai ran from the border with China into Vietnam over 50km in length, 10 km in width and tens of metres in depth for first-grade ore and hundreds of metres in depth for second, third and fourth-grade ore. This immense basin of calcium fluorophosphate, which could not be compared with Morocco's Khouribga was, nevertheless, rated by experts as among the first in Southeast Asia.

Since late 1955, parallel with research work, production at the Cam Duong mine was restarted by hand, and by 1958 with mechanized equipment it had already reached 200,000 tons — equivalent to the total production under both French and Japanese rules. In 1963 with a 90% mechanized production line it achieved a record of 929,000 tons. Between 1956 and 1965, about 5 million tons of ore were extracted a part of which went into the making of fertiliser in the Lam Thao superphosphate plant also built with

Soviet help, and another part into export to socialist countries.

In those prosperous years, the Cam Duong mine enrolled up to 8,000 workers both for exploiting ore and for building new works. A big iron bridge (Lang Giang bridge) across the Red River, 12km south of Lao Cai town, served to carry the ore together with another rail track linking the mine to the Lao Cai — Hanoi railway line. On well-cut stopes, sturdy miners used pneumatic hammers and drills to hew the ore layers while huge excavators scooped the ore and poured it into tip-up trucks which carried it to grinding plants. They did not use pickaxes and chisels to extract the ore nor baskets to carry it to collecting points as their fathers had done under imperialist rule. However, they did recover the 60cm-rail tracks with their vans which had been the pride of colonial technique although they were but toys beside modern equipment. The question was to use every available means to obtain maximum production.

The U.S. air and naval war of destruction against North Vietnam launched in 1965 dealt a heavy blow to the Cam Duong mine though this enterprise lay in a corridor out of bounds for the U.S. air force. U.S. bombs unceasingly fell on Yen Bai, a strategic communication centre more than 100km from China's border as the crow flies. The trains carrying the apatite to the Lam Thao superphosphate plant did not run as

easily as before and the plan itself which was heavily attacked had to reduce its production. The trains carrying the apatite to Hai phong met with more difficulties until the port itself was blockaded and deserted by ships of many countries. This compelled the Cam Duong mine to decrease its production and move half of its cadres and specialized workers to the coal-mining area

After the United States signed the 1973 Paris Agreement taking to withdraw her troops and end her war acts against Vietnam, Cam Duong buckled under to recover and develop its production. Workers transferred to the collieries were recalled. In implementation of the agreements reached, the Soviet side supplied more drills, excavators, grinders and conveyance equipment. With the liberation of South Vietnam, Lao Cai apatite went into the development of agriculture in the Mekong Delta. Reunified Vietnam required 1.5 million tons of apatite and the target of 21 million tons of food set by the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam to 1980 was based for an important part on the production of apatite fertiliser. To help Vietnam achieve her plan many Soviet experts were sent to Cam Duong to design, with Vietnamese experts, an ore-processing plant for 1.5 million tons each year. The groundwork of the plant was done but the Chinese aggressors made havoc in the Lao Cai apatite area and in the development program for this area as well.

On February 17, 1979, 160,000 Chinese troops launched five prongs of attack against the northern districts of Hoang Lien Son province, not to mention a host of civil carrier forces intent on pillage. After more than one week's fighting a detachment occupied the Cam Duong mine removed many machines, rail cars and tracks to China, then destroyed all production bases, from power system to workshops. Another grave consequence was that many rice-growing areas in the Red River and Mekong deltas were deprived of phosphate, one kilogramme of which could bring about five kilogrammes of paddy. By devastating the Lao Cai apatite area Beijing struck at the Vietnamese people's ballies.

After dispensing the staff's families and removing part of the self-propelled equipment to the south the self-defence forces of the mine operating in co-ordination with the regular forces steadfastly fought the Chinese aggressors at Ngoi Bo on the right bank of the Red River and checked them at 20km from the border. Across the river, on the Lao Cai-Hanoi railway line front, the enemy's main prong of attack was also broken at Pho Lu at 30km from the border after three weeks of combat. The third prong on National Highway 12 could not advance more than 20 kilometres. The self-defence forces of the mine then mustered all their strength

and prepared to use guerilla tactics at the enemy's rear when the aggressors withdrew.

Thus ended the "one-month war" which left ghastly sequels for Cam Duong. The enemy had destroyed all workshops, water system, power system with the Lao Cai power plant—the main power supply of the mine, ore conveyance system, transport roads, rail tracks, bridges and sluices, including the Lang Giang bridge across the Red River, public amenities and workers' housing. From all the production bases of the mine and Cam Duong town built over a quarter of century there remained only heaps of rubble, concrete fragments and iron scraps..

Production recovery began immediately after the aggressors withdrew to China. By the end of the year production reached 100,000 tons, and doubled the next year. This was achieved by tremendous efforts. To cite one instance, the pontoon bridge across the Red River to carry the ore in place of the Lang Giang bridge could only be used in the dry season and had to be removed with each heavy rain for fear of being swept away.

After more than ten years of separation Nguyen Van Lang who had directed the building of the mine was now appointed to look after its recovery. A second generation of workers has appeared, sons of the pioneers of yore for the most part, full of determination and energy, and more able surely than their predecessors in both general

knowledge and technique for having been trained in the socialist school. They play the key role in this difficult recovery. Like their predecessors they see that the land of Lenin is extending a helpful hand. They are operating brand-new excavators, drills, scrapers, grinders and heavy-duty lorries with Soviet names. Together with Soviet experts, the technical cadres of the mine, including many experienced engineers after more than a decade of work, are planning a development programme for the mine up to the year 2,000.

The exploitation of Lao Cai apatite is of crucial importance for the Vietnamese people, particularly in the present difficult stage of development. The rice plants hungry for phosphate in the Red River and Mekong deltas need apatite. The production of 1.5 million tons of apatite each year is in sight. The question is to stay the bellicose hands of the Beijing expansionists and prevent them from devastating again the Lao Cai apatite area as they did in early 1979.

LE DAN

ERRATUM

In the Vietnam Courier No. 12-1981, in the 3rd line of *Our Monthly Comment* "... opposed a 50-million dollar project to finance an irrigation..." please read "opposed a 5-million dollar project to finance an irrigation..."

We apologise for this error.

VIETNAM COURIER



FOR THE PROTECTION PRESERVATION, RESTORATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF HUE

APPEAL BY Mr AMADOU MAHTAR M'BOW
UNESCO GENERAL-DIRECTOR

Editor's note—Amadou Mahtar M'Bow made this appeal in Hanoi on November 26th, 1981 at a meeting where, together with the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, UNESCO launched an international campaign for the protection, preservation, restoration and development of Hue.

Hue, in the centre of Vietnam, was for a long time the historical capital of the country. Caressed by the waves of the Perfumed River, surrounded by wooded hills, embellished by luxuriant gardens, and traversed by canals, the city is a masterpiece of urban poetry.

Its first builders wanted to set it in the sublime scenery which stretches from Mount Royal Screen to Belvedere Hill and Tam Giang and Cau Hai Lagoons. That was why they chose a subtle architecture in which each element is inspired by nature. Hue is art joined to nature, as additional beauty.

The old City in the heart of Hue is an example of structural balance whose harmony is so natural that one forgets that it was created by man. On the banks

of the Perfumed River, to the south, the tombs of the kings of the Nguyen dynasty are laid out. Built by the most skilful workers and artisans of the country these groups are so many original variations on the same theme. Each tomb, in its uniqueness, is a paradigm of landscaping, and each strikes a different chord in the soul of the visitor. The Gia Long Tomb, laid in a vast natural park, gives an impression of strength and serenity. The Minh Mang Tomb is full of solemnity, while the Tu Duc Tomb conjures up a sweet dream.

The symbolic organisation of its different spaces makes Hue a city of successful harmony, an architectural synthesis—religious, secular, ancient and modern—in which the old and the new cities coexist happily.

In addition to being an architectural model, Hue is a spiritual centre and a seat of culture where Buddhism and Confucianism have deeply coloured local traditions and given rise to highly original religious, philosophical and ethical thinking.

It is in this city whose inhabitants are all reputed to be born poets, that classical music and folk music have developed. The cradle of a great many artists, a centre of theatrical creation, the ancient capital of Vietnam was also once a hub of literature and science. Medicine and astronomy came to life there and for a long time, the influence of her scholars has been felt far beyond the walls of the city.

But this city, which boasts a millenary history, and which is one of the highest expressions of Vietnamese creativity, is today threatened in some of its most characteristic elements. It is both worn by time and the destruction caused by one of the most cruel wars in history.

Almost all the buildings inside the Citadel, in the Forbidden City, were burnt down by a fire in 1947, and the fighting which took place in 1968 destroyed a number of the monuments in the southern part of the city.

In this monsoon region a permanent danger is posed to many buildings which have already been damaged by typhoons. Wind and rain disfigure decorative element, ruin colours, and undermine the wooden framework, while gardens and ponds are overgrown by weeds.

Hue must be saved, for Vietnam, as a symbol of this country's cultural identity, and for the world as well, as an integral part of the indivisible legacy of humanity.

The Vietnamese government has for years made great efforts to save the city. It has created a committee for the preservation of historical monuments and has launched projects for the protection, undertaken indispensable archival work, and has prepared plans for restoration and reconstruction.

It also intends to give the city a radiance worthy of its prestigious past. Hue will not only become a vast museum testifying to past history; it will be given an opportunity to develop its cultural life to the full.

These actions, however, are limited and will not be sufficient to save Hue. The very expensive programme is beyond the means of a country cruelly tried for decades, and which, at present, has to cope with innumerable problems of economic rehabilitation. Therefore, the international community is called upon to join forces with the Vietnamese people in order to save the city of Hue for posterity.

That is why I invite, in accordance with the resolution adopted by the 20th session of the UNESCO General Conference, the governments of all member countries, international, governmental and non governmental organizations, public and private institutions, financial bodies, and the peoples of different countries, to take part, through voluntary contributions of all kinds, in the protection, preservation restoration and development of the city of Hue.

I invite UNESCO national committees and all people of good will, to set up in each member country a national committee whose function is to make the public aware of the problems of Hue and to collect necessary assistance.

I invite all museums, art galleries and libraries to organise exhibitions and displays on Hue, the proceeds of which will go to a special fund established to finance a campaign for the benefit of the city.

I invite all intellectuals, artists, writers, historians and sociologists, and all those whose work is in information—journalists, reporters, and members of the press, radio, television and cinema—to motivate the public in all countries on the problems of Hue, and to help in saving it.

I invite all Vietnamese, wherever they are in the world, to contribute to the success of the Campaign for the Protection, and Development of Hue.

I hope that contributions will be proportional to the great task undertaken: to preserve an urban environment so steeped in history, bearing the imprint of a profound harmony, and to safeguard the living treasure of the soul of the city for the happiness of people who live there as well as for the pleasure of those who visit it.

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On 25 November 1981 at a press conference held in Hanoi's International Club Mr M'Bow outlined the main points of the joint Vietnam-UNESCO plan of action for the conservation and restoration of the Hue monuments: to restore or reconstruct 15 monuments in the Royal Palace and 2 royal tombs; with a budget of 4 million dollars U.S; using 700 Vietnamese craftspeople, technicians and experts with the collaboration of international technicians and experts and in a fixed period of time from 1981-1986.

Gardens in Hué

VISITORS to Hue cannot fail to be impressed by the extraordinary restfulness of the city. With the exception of a small business quarter on the left bank of the Perfumed River, the whole old imperial capital city is bathed in a serene atmosphere. There is very little dust and noises are muffled. Even the proverbial summer heat of the central coast seems to relent there. Houses and public buildings are all screened by trees along the banks of the well-known Perfumed River crossing the city

Hue can be rightly described as a garden city. Even the central areas are reminiscent of the country: wherever one looks there are gardens upon gardens, lush, fruit-laden all the year round.

Climatic and soil conditions in Hue are favourable to plant species from both the north and the south, be it the southern mangosteen and rambutan, or the northern mandarin and jujube. Moreover, Hue seems to be the natural watershed for plant life. North of it mangosteen does not bear fruit and mandarin is rarely seen south of it. Native fruit are well known throughout the country. Lotus seeds from Tinh Tam (Serenity) Lake are incomparable, and choice longans which, in the past, appeared only on the Kings' table, are much sought after. As for grape-

fruit, they outdo in taste and flavour any other variety, even the Doan Hung variety in the north and the Bien Hoa variety in the south. A recent survey, jointly conducted in four city wards and suburban villages by the Municipal People's Committee and the Hue College of Agriculture, shows that the average area of a garden is 1,810 square metres of which 73 per cent is given over to perennial trees, and the rest to vegetables and subsidiary food crops. Each garden grows an average of ten jackfruit trees and eight butter-and-egg trees, in addition to banana, jaboticaba, pineapple, orange, carambola, lemon, grapefruit and sapodilla. Tea is also grown in great quantity, but since the plants are small they take up little room.

Gardens in the city proper cover around four hundred hectares and give around 2,500 tons of fruit a year; which account for about half of the income from garden produce. A cropping pattern has been established over the years. The most common species inside the city are longan, jaboticaba, milkfruit, and sapodilla. Other areas specialize in jackfruit, pineapple, tamarind, mandarin, tea, pepper, mangosteen, mulberry, litchi, plum, and pot plants.

Even in villages outside the suburbs, gardens have the same

characteristics, while there the orchard area is much greater than inside the city. A family at Tien Noi hamlet owns a garden of about two thousand square metres which is girdled by bamboo and rattan, and half of which rotates rice, maize and manioc. The other half is for fruit trees among them five coconut trees, many banana groves, a couple of jaboticaba, jackfruit trees, one tamarind tree, and one guava tree, which are all easy to grow. There are also flowers—floating hearts, poincianas, and daisies—which, on the first, fifteenth and thirtieth days of the lunar month, were offered to one's ancestors. It is difficult to say with any exactitude how much an owner can earn from his garden. Those interviewed only gave approximate figures of on-the-spot sales, which vary according to rise and fall in prices, and did not mention consumption by their families, which depends on the size of each household and its living standard. However, estimates in 1980 put income from garden produce per family between 4,000 and 5,000 *dong*. The owner of the garden at Tien Noi said he got about 2,500 *dong* that year, not to mention the income from chickens and pigs, which lived in the garden. Besides, he could sell his bamboo once every three years for about 500 *dong*.

Gardening, therefore, receives great attention from the municipa

COMPETITION FOR CHEO SINGERS

A national competition for Cheo (1) in Cheo. The question was to develop the stories logically and choose, from among the hundreds of established airs, the most appropriate ones.

The performers were in very good form and executed with assurance even the oldest, most difficult airs.

The event proved that Cheo was still a developing art, in which changes are being made for better styles. In impersonating Thi Kinh, Xuy Van, Chau Long and other traditional characters singers adopted different ways of punctuation, phrasing, and modulation to make old stories more appealing to the audience

The jury agreed that the new styles in singing had greater appeal. It also acclaimed the invention of new airs. The adoption of folk songs in a play on the western highlands and a duet in a play by the troupe from Hai Hung province were cited as two successful innovations.

Whatever their degrees of success, all the plays staged at the competition were laudable efforts at exploring an unlimited horizon.

TRUNG DONG

What was also evident was that both historical figures (Duong Van Nga, Nguyen Phi Y Lan) and contemporary people (soldiers, agricultural co-operative members, forest workers) can be successfully portrayed

1. A form of traditional opera as distinct from Tuong and Cai Luong.

and provincial authorities. A "Garden Economy Committee" has been set up to help the provincial party organisation and People's Committee in policy-making for this branch of production.

Already many subjects have been discussed, but it is agreed that gardening is of great importance to the local economy. Gardens not only add to the beauty of the city and benefits the environment, they provide vegetables, fruit, animal fodder, medicinal materials, flowers, firewood and materials for export production. Bee-keeping and mushroom cultivation are two other by-products.

Hue cuisine is a byword in Vietnam. Housewives can prepare many different dishes from home-

grown produce which cost almost nothing, but which are very tasty and nourishing, and are such a pleasure for the eye to behold.

However, to quite a number of people gardening is still more a hobby than a profitable way of making a living. To them a garden is a status symbol, not a useful source of income, and they rate plants and trees according to their rarity and originality rather than their economic values.

The local authorities, therefore, are concentrating on zoning for specialization and on gearing gardening, animal husbandry, apiculture and mushroom raising, which are fairly new lines. A vast program is afoot to improve existing gar-

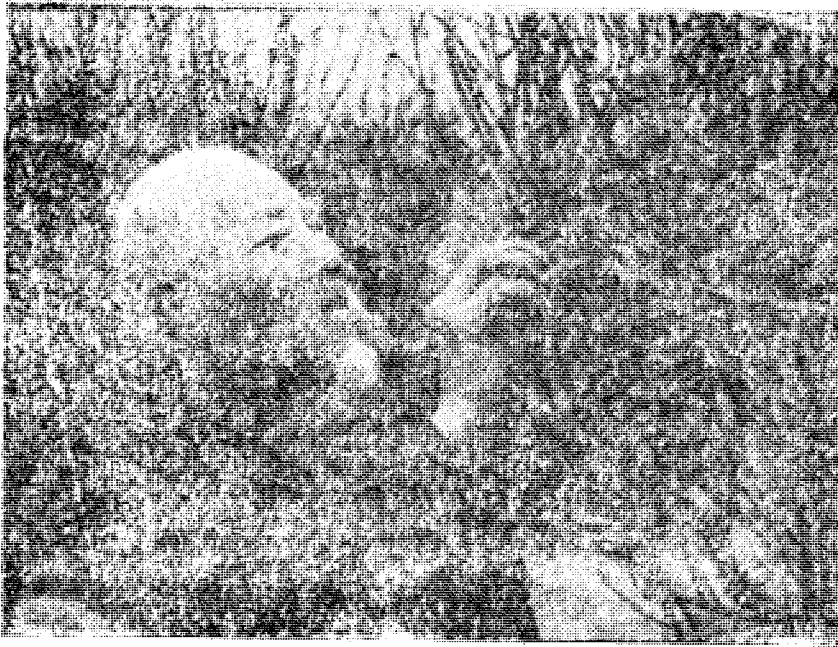
dens, open new ones in unclaimed or war-devastated areas, introduce new varieties and techniques. The program also provides for supplies of insecticides, fertilizers, and the tapping of outlets.

Hue inhabitants, zealous guardians of traditions, are making great efforts to modernize their city while preserving its classical beauty. Their gardens, through this development program, are expected to acquire still greater economic and cultural significance

PHAN QUANG

Traditional Vietnam

CUSTOMS DURING THE LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVAL



TET (Lunar New Year Festival) is the most bustling, animated and jubilant festival of the Vietnamese people, the first and foremost holiday in Vietnam.

At this time the harvest season is over, so everybody is free to rest and play after a year of hard work and to greet the new year's coming, with its promises and hopes.

In the first place, Tet is a family festival. Wherever they go or whatever they do, every Vietnamese wants to be at home during the three days of Tet to see their relatives, pray to their ancestors, look after their family's altar, graves, areca-nut tree, well, etc.

Even in the thick of the war of resistance against U.S. aggression

an anti-aircraft gunner on duty or a volunteer girl mending a road in the Truong Son range would observe Tet. They turned their thoughts to their family and native place, and the unit where they worked always tried to create for them a warm atmosphere by preparing decorations, food and recreation congenial to a family.

Preparations to celebrate Tet and greet the new year thus comprise many meaningful and interesting activities

Praying to the Kitchen God. Tending graves.

The opening rite of Tet is sending the Kitchen God off to heaven on the afternoon of the 23rd of the twelfth month (lunar calendar). In the country-side when iron tripods and kerosene

cookers were unknown, people used tripods made of clay mixed with rice husks. Every year before the 23rd of the twelfth month they bought new ones. These blocks were not to be slighted because they personified the Kitchen God who knew everything about the family. On the 23rd of the twelfth month the Kitchen God went to heaven to report, and seek the King of heaven's favour for the family. The cult of the Kitchen God may be a symbol of a mythical ancestor, a vestige of the cult of fire and a rite of purification by fire.

From the 20th to the 25th or 26th of the twelfth month people tend graves. Bringing offerings, (incense, flowers, boiled rice and fowls) to one's relatives'

graves and tending them before asking one's ancestors' souls to spend Tet with their offspring comes from a noble philosophy: to think of the spring when drinking its water.

Planting a nêu tree

Between the 23rd and the 30th of the twelfth month, people in many places, in the plains as in the mountains, plant a *nêu* tree. This is a bamboo pole planted in front of the house with a few things dangling from its top.

According to folk-legend, it is a Buddhist belief to prevent ghosts and devils from coming to harm people. In truth, it is a symbol of a cosmic tree receiving sunbeams and spring air.

Tet decorations: parallel sentences, folk pictures

"Fatty meat, pickled scallions, red parallel sentences, *Nêu* tree, firecrackers and green rice cakes."

One of the six Tet novelties, parallel sentences bring pleasure to one's eyes when entering a house during the festival.

The parallel sentences constitute a literary form particular to the East, an artistic work with a profound meaning and fine words. Spring is always the season of new hopes. These hopes are materialized in New Year's greetings and songs in praise of Spring. These are also solemnly materialized in parallel sentences hung on both sides of the altar, on the walls, between two pillars voicing thoughts about society, life, Spring days, hopes, happiness, feelings, or an educational precept, a guide to action.

Today parallel sentences are still in vogue.

Folk pictures

Folk pictures, conventionally called *Tet pictures*, bring a flavour of Tet and Spring to every home.

Our people like Tet pictures firstly because these are greetings in sharp lines and vivid colour, simple, unaffected and evocative, akin to the variegated natural beauty of their native land and daily life.

Moreover, folk pictures faithfully reflect traditional scenes of life, thus materializing our ancestors' dreams, hopes, aspirations, views on human life and concepts of beauty, truth and good. They usually represent such animals as fowls, pigs, buffaloes, natural landscape, festivities in the Vietnamese countryside of yore and portraits of national heroes.

Flowers, mandarins and displaying a tray of five fruit

Peach-blossom is a gorgeous symbol of the Vietnamese Spring. This flower is not as fragrant as chrysanthemum, peony, narcissus or orchid, but people like it, for its pink or red colour symbolizes freshness and optimism. A branch of peach-tree blossoming on New Year's Day portends a merry year for the family. The red colour of peach also symbolizes the sun and the warm spring air.

And to make peach blossom on the New Year's Day at the right time, requires a consummate skill in grafting, clipping, plucking off leaves and boosting buds.

Chrysanthemum, sea flower, peony, narcissus all contribute their perfume and colour to Vietnam's traditional Tet. Chrysanthemums symbolize a modest, discreet and secluded way of life. They were considered by the 15th century poet Nguyen Trai to be more precious than gold because they symbolize a rich soul.

Peony, regarded as the king of flowers, is a big beautiful, red, purple or white flower, fragrant like a rose.

Narcissus, a fairy in the water, evokes the pureness and vitality of Spring with its white petals, yellow pistil, sweet scent, a peculiar perfume: fragrant but delicate, familiar but pure and noble.

The custom of arranging narcissi has gone beyond a family aesthetic pastime to become a *contest of narcissi* at Tet at a number of well-known communal houses and pagodas in Hanoi and Haiphong.

Unlike Hanoi, people in Ho Chi Minh City like to arrange plum flowers and yellow plum blossoms prevail in flower markets.

Our ancestors arranged not only flowers but also fruit, mandarins in particular.

Mandarins are planted in pots, preferably in eel-skin (brownish) glazed earthenware pots made at Huong Canh, Tho Ha, Que, Quao... near Hanoi and famous for their jars. What is beautiful in mandarins is their many even fruit with their glossy, yellow, thin skins, their light-green leaves, their upright stems and hard branches. Displayed in the centre of the house, mandarins symbolize our people's joy at a bumper harvest and a life of plenty.

The custom of arranging flowers and mandarins usually goes along with the displaying of five (or eight) fruit: a branch of green bananas, a grape-fruit or shaddock, some oranges, a few mandarins, a citrus fruit known as "Buddha's hand", some persimmons; on a tray with a pedestal or a big plate so as to look well-arranged and attractive.

From time immemorial, flowers and fruit constitute indispensable offerings to the gods and one's ancestors. However, the custom of displaying a tray of five fruit soon moved out of pagodas and temples to become a custom of our entire people. Ours being an agricultural people Tet is also an occasion to end the agricultural season and the offering of five fruit to one's ancestors therefore symbolises the family's prosperity.

Personal adornments to greet Spring:

Together with the custom of embellishing one's house with parallel sentences, Tet pictures, flowers and fruit, our people also adorn themselves to greet Spring and put on new, beautiful and smart clothes during the three days of Tet.

One of these fine customs is that of washing one's face with coriander water and washing one's hair with vetiver water to cleanse one's body and purify one's soul.

Coriander is a kind of condiment to be eaten raw, both as flavouring and dressing ingredient for Tet meals. After fructification, the whole plant is boiled to give a fragrant water to wash one's face with. Dropping a towel into a basin of smoking coriander water, one feels completely renewed.

To wash their hair to greet Tet, women use water boiled with vetiver root. Originally a material to make joss-sticks, it is also planted in one's garden to be used to perfume and soften the hair. Hair washed with vetiver water on the eve of Tet keeps fragrant until the fifteenth of the first month of the new lunar year.

Going to market

A market is not merely a place to exchange, buy and sell goods, it is also, particularly in the highlands, a place to meet friends and relatives impart news... Hence a market day is a day of economic and cultural life, a day of rest and recreation for the peasants who toil all the year round and need a change in atmosphere and environment.

In the plains, markets are held near a landing stage, at the entrance or exit of a village, outside

a citadel on a large open ground, under the shade of tall trees.

In the mountain, markets are the rendezvous of boys and girls, the festivals of Nung-Tay "sli" and "luon" tunes, melodious songs, flute performances and dance executions with multicoloured clothes and parasols of the H'mong and Thai minorities.

Hanoi flower-market is held once a year day and night during several weeks in the latter half of the twelfth month (lunar calendar).

Hanoi flower-market sells all kinds of flowers, mandarins, ornamental plants, gold fish... but it can be rightly called peach-blossom market. It used to be organized along Hang Luoc Street, the former bank of To Lich river.

Ceremonies to greet the New Year

In the afternoon of the last day of the lunar year our people give offerings to their ancestors as a year-end-rite, then wait for New Year's Eve.

New Year's Eve is a sacred moment when Earth and Heaven communicate with each other as tradition has it, the last night of the old year before the first day of the new year comes. For most people in the world following either lunar or solar calendar the transition mark between the old and the new years is solemnly observed for it brings a new fate, a new happiness.

In the past, on New Year's Eve there was a custom of singing greetings.

A dice-band comprising about fifteen children carrying a bamboo tube with a few cents inside would go from house to house and sing greetings to the family and relatives. Wherever they called the child coming first emptied the bamboo tube on the ground and the band sang some verses.

When they finished the house owner gave them a few brand-new cents to bring them luck for the new year.

In the countryside a communal year-end ceremony was held on New Year's Eve. It started at the

Hot hour (11 p.m.) and lasted until the Ty hour (12 mid night), the opening of Tet. To this end an altar was erected in the yard of the communal house, sometimes in front of the watch tower, and offerings of incense, votive, paper, flowers, fruit and alcohol were solemnly presented amid a din of drum and gong beating, fire-crackers, etc.

New Year's Day customs

The new year begins at midnight. Firecrackers keep bursting but it is "dark like the night on New Year's Eve". In many places it is taboo to do any thing until morning comes.

In the past our people regarded New Year's Day as a most sacred occasion with a bearing on personal happiness and family affairs. Therefore they were intent on spending the three days of Tet in a merry mood.

One keen expectation was to have as firstfooter a virtuous and amiable man who fared well in his business.

In Nam Ha province some first-footers brought with them a jar of water, which portends that money will flow like water. The hosts carefully kept the jars like treasures and wished their guests the best of luck while entertaining them solemnly. People in deep mourning, of bad conduct or bad business, or stupid, would be jinxes putting the evil eye on the host's affairs throughout the year.

Together with the custom of firstfooting was that of wishing good luck for the new year according to which grand-parents and parents gave children some brand new money. Guests calling at a house also did the same to the owner's children and youngsters visiting somebody were treated alike following a Vietnamese tradition of care for the old and the young.

Another custom is that of first outing, that is to go out for the first time. A propitious hour and direction should be chosen in advance. To this end one should ask for the advice of seers who divine it in their calendars before Tet.

Writing for the first time also required a propitious day and hour - this being considered important for scholars and officials

Flowered or scarlet paper were used for this matter. Many people made a poem on this occasion.

Still another custom was that of *buying luck and selling blunder*. In some places symbolic Tet market days were held to get rid of bad luck and blunder, and to bring good luck, success, happiness and wisdom, like Dong market (in former Ha Nam province), Phu Gay market (in former Nam Dinh province). Each person tried to sell something rapidly — the old year's blunder. For the buyer, everything bought was luck. From Nghe Tinh province down to South Central Vietnam there was a similar custom: people sold rice, sweetmeats, toys... without caring for profit, or went shouting, "Who buys blunder?". Some people combine their first outing with buying luck and selling blunder. That was the naive and spontaneous aspect of folk belief but most of these customs have fallen into disuse.

Three days of communion with one's ancestors. Paying courtesy visits. Filial piety, family feelings. Ties between master and disciple in Tet and Spring days.

Vietnam's traditional folk belief has it that anniversaries should be held every year to commemorate the dead. Besides, on New Year's Day every family should present offerings to its ancestors.

Many rural places kept the custom of paying respects to one's family ancestors on New Year's day. Bringing food, betel or joss-sticks with them, family relatives gathered in a house, bowed before their ancestors' altar, then discussed family affairs, particularly the anniversaries in the year, and reviewed the happenings to each and every member of the family, lending mutual help in case of need.

The cult of ancestors is truly Vietnam's traditional religion.

The custom of burning incense, a fine and respectful custom in Tet days, is a widespread and long-standing one. Archaeological research has discovered incense burners in Vietnam dating to time B.C. The scent of incense blending with the atmosphere helps the communion between heaven and earth, man and gods.

The custom of firing crackers is also a wide-spread one symbolizing our people's joy to greet Tet and Spring. The report of crackers is meant to drive away evil spirits, it dispels people's worries and

makes them ready for new happiness.

In the "distinguished" families of yore, after presenting offerings to the family's ancestors and the god of the soil, children gathered around their grandparents and parents then bowed in respect and said their Tet greetings with many returns of the day in gratitude for their birth and upbringing. After that, grandparents and parents reminded their children to live together in unity, taught them some moral precepts "to be studious, well-behaved, deferential to elders, yielding to younger"... and gave them a little money to bring them luck for the new year. With peasant's families the custom was less rigid.

In a big family, members have to allot among themselves the task of paying respects and courtesy calls which should all be done in the first day of the New Year with relatives on the father's side.

The second day of the new year is devoted to visiting relatives on the mother's side: families of one's grandmothers' mother and wife.

On the third day of the new year, all disciples whatever their age and standing would call at their former master and bow in respect to his ancestors. (Previously they met to extend him material aid if he needed). A patient, albeit recovered for a long time, would also call at his physician. Generally speaking, Tet is an occasion to requite someone's help by paying courtesy visits and presenting gifts.

Next come the visits to one's friends and neighbours. During the three days of Tet, people receive guests without minding about time, offering tea and betel then alcohol, cakes and meals. The guests should be courteous, drink a little alcohol and eat a few dabs of pastry even if they refuse a meal. Merriest of all is to share a Tet repast.

On the third day, people used to hold a ceremony to see the ancestors off by burning votive objects on the altar. Some rich families held it on the fourth day, inviting their relations to attend the ceremony and share a meal. So ended Tet.

Tet dishes

Everyone has original dishes for New Year's day, without which the festival would lose much of its flavour.

Glutinous rice cake: This number one Tet dish goes along with fatty meat and pickled scallions. Our ancestors regarded it as a crystallization of the best things of the land.

It may have a savoury or sweet filling. The glutinous rice must be fragrant, white and pounded carefully. Wrapping it requires great dexterity which varies with localities. Glutinous rice cakes should be cooked during a whole night (12 hours). In the night of the 29th or 30th day of the twelfth month (lunar calendar) an atmosphere of Tet prevails among those watching the pot of glutinous rice cakes boil while chatting. Once boiled the cakes are soaked in cold water. Dexterous women then compress the cake to get a pretty form and a compact content. The cakes are wrapped with a fresh arrow-root leaf, tied with a red string for a better preservation and prettier presentation. Gastronomy recognizes that glutinous rice cakes are highly nutritious owing to an adequate combination of vegetal and animal proteins (green beans, meat, fat) with other nutrients like lipids, sugar, vitamins and mineral salts.

Preserved fruit: Apart from glutinous rice cakes and other sweet cakes, preserved fruit is a much appreciated Tet dish. It is a product of Vietnamese fruit processed in a Vietnamese way. While Europeans have jam, we have many kinds of preserved fruit made from lotus seeds, ginger, peanuts, coconuts, gourds, persimmon, bananas, lemons, mandarins, oranges, tangerines, etc, served separately or in groups of five or ten preserved fruit.

Bean pastry: it is a rare treat to be invited to eat a bean pastry with a glutinous rice cake when one pays a Tet call at a house. Bean pastry is one among a score of other Vietnamese pastries, but to taste it on this occasion increases its relish. It was originally made in pagodas to be eaten with sacrificial glutinous rice cookies. Prepared from green beans and treacle, it must be cooked from morn till night, then put out on plates or moulds lined with banana leaf and powdered with sesame, attractive to both the eye and the palate.

After VUONG HAO TU

Vo An Ninh

PHOTOGRAPHER PAR EXCELLENCE



VO An Ninh, whose fame as a photographer spread far and wide right at the time of French occupation, is now 76 years old. In Ho Chi Minh City an exhibition of his works was packed for days on end. Vo An Ninh is the oldest in his trade, and his was the first individual photographic exhibition in the country.

Vo An Ninh's love of photography began at the age of sixteen, when he spent all his savings — 32 piastres, or 320 francs — on a Zeiss Ikon, Y 45.143, which has been his inseparable companion ever since. His first pictures were of a picnic by students of Buoi College, and of rural scenes. A friend of his, To Ngoc Van, decided that he had some "talent" and advised him to adopt photography as a means of self-expression.

At a competition held by the Hanoi Fine Arts College in 1935 Vo An Ninh won first prize for a picture of rafts on the sea at Sam Son. As the first Vietnamese photographer to have won such a prize, and on a local theme at that, Vo An Ninh won great admiration, even from the French. The following years, from 1936 to 1938, he successively got top prizes in Hue and France.

In February 1937 Vo An Ninh had a serious road accident, a French army lorry hurled him into the air, and one of his feet was crushed. He spent three months in hospital and there was little hope that he would ever be able to resume his activities. Yet, dedication to his calling and love of the country combined to heal

him, and Vo An Ninh set to work again with unabated zest.

Vo An Ninh is not only an artist, but also a historian in his fashion. In 1936, influenced by the French Popular Front, he felt that important events were taking place right in Vietnam and that it was his responsibility to record them with his camera. The mass rally of tens of thousands of working people in Hanoi on May Day that year almost overwhelmed him with its strength, and the pictures he took that day set the course for his future activity — art news photography.

In the historic year of 1945, Vo An Ninh, in a series of invaluable photos recorded the terrible Japanese — caused famine which took

two million lives, and the August Revolution itself. The weekly *Trung-Bac Chu Nhat* gave full coverage on its first and fourth pages to his photos of the takeover in Hanoi and Saigon. Vo An Ninh was the only news photographer (he was working for *Vi nuoc*) to make a scoop with his pictures of President Ho Chi Minh on the French battleship Dumont Durville returning to Cam Ranh in October 1946 after an official visit to France. In early 1950, Vo An Ninh made several trips to Saigon. An album of 60 pictures taken of the huge anti-US demonstrations in that city during those hectic days is still edifying. The two US destroyers, the USS 786 and 880, clearly shown against the backdrop of Saigon harbor, were the first proof of US intervention in Indochina.

Many, indeed the major part, of Vo An Ninh's works are landscapes, and the 37 black-and-white photos at the Ho Chi Minh City exhibition constitute but a very small part of what he has put out over the years. His landscapes all bear the light touches of ancient paintings, but the impression they leave is deep. *Hanoi's Outskirts at the Approach of Autumn* conveys very well the first feeling of chill with a woman carrying a pair of baskets on her shoulders and, behind her, a row of bare, mist-shrouded arjun trees on a freshly ploughed field. In *Buffaloes by Lotus Pond* the countryside comes alive with cowherds and their animals, with sunshine glinting on lotus leaves. *Mui Ne*, a stock sand-and-wave theme, is a great success with all the hallmarks of Vo An Ninh: two big patches—the waves, black, the sand, white—form a great contrast and yet a harmonious whole in the pitiless glare of morn-

ing sun in summertime. *Nam Trieu Rivermouth* with its big sails standing out against a smooth, glossy sea and a limpid sky has all the beauty of a painting.

Vo An Ninh has a special eye for mountains. In *Pines* he manages to capture sunshine on branches in the middleground and gives a great strength to his vertical composition. *Sapa*, with pines in both the foreground and background and a pyramidal composition, gives a feeling of both lightness and solidity. *Spring in Hoang Lien Son*, *The Town of Sapa*, *Ban Gioc Falls*, *Outpost At Chi Lang*, etc. are other incomparable works of art.

Vo An Ninh has travelled the length and breadth of the country. He has made as many as 50 visits to Huong Pagoda, each time seeing the famous scene in a new light. For him Huong Pagoda is the embodiment of the beauty of Vietnam. In his 15 visits to Cuc Phuong National Park he has made friends with all the seven chief custodians there. Once he spent almost a week on the top of Hoang Lien Son, the highest mountain in Vietnam, waiting for the right moment to take pictures of clouds. Even in Ha Long Bay, a much frequented place, Vo An Ninh's originality shows through. Regardless of the handicap of his lame leg he managed to get to the top of Bai Tho Mount and took his pictures from that precarious perch. His *Bo Nong Grotto* remains a wonder not only to his public but to his colleagues as well.

To test his strength, at the age of seventy Vo An Ninh accompanied a geological team to the northernmost part of the country. One winter night sitting by a roar-

ing fire at an altitude of two thousand metres, Vo An Ninh confided to his young friends, "I wish I could make a trip to the southernmost tip of the country." One of the men jokingly cupped his hand on Vo An Ninh's knee-cap and shook it lightly. "No" the old man protested. "You should test this," he added, removing the man's hand from his knee and placing it on his chest. Seven months later, after South Vietnam had been liberated, Vo An Ninh went to Ca Mau and, from there, journeyed to the islands of Con Dao and Phu Quoc, to Ha Tien, Tien Giang and Hau Giang. His pictures were as full of vitality as ever.

At the Ho Chi Minh City exhibition one admirer asked Vo An Ninh, "Are there any places you haven't seen, or which have disappointed you?" "I've never been to the Hoang Sa Islands", Vo An Ninh said without hesitation. "I missed an opportunity some twenty years ago. Now the Chinese are there. If I cannot see those places, my colleagues will". "On the other hand", Vo An Ninh continued, "Sapa is the place I've visited most assiduously. Unfortunately I've never been blessed with the sight of snow there, although I missed many Tets in Hanoi for that very reason. At times it did not snow, and when it did at all, it was too light. During the particularly severe cold spell in 1976 there was a good fall. I heard it on the radio while I was in Hue, but when I arrived I was too late".

At 78 Vo An Ninh is as tireless as ever. He continues to roam the country in search of beauty, in the company of his old Zeiss Ikon.

PHUONG HA

**Book
review**

THE JOURNEY OF A BRITISH HISTORIAN

THOMAS Hodgkin is a historian *engagé*. He makes no secret about it. In the preface to his latest book, *Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path*(1) he says in conclusion:

"All historians, I believe, must be somewhat *engagés*."

For those who have known this Emeritus Fellow of Oxford as an expert on Africa, the question springs to mind: "What road has brought him to the revolutionary path of a Southeast Asian country?"

Thomas Hodgkin's option for the Vietnamese people, to whom he dedicates his book, is the logical outcome of his intellectual journey and no doubt the natural result of his anti-colonialist ethic. For nearly half a century he has been greatly interested in the national liberation movements in the Middle East, India, and especially Africa. He has taught in Africa, Europe and North America. From 1962 to 1965 he was Director of the Institute for African Studies at the University of Ghana and wrote three books, besides a number of articles on African history: "Nationalism in colonial Africa", "African Political Parties", "Nigerian Perspectives".

The last-named book, an anthology of historical texts, has become a classic in its field as well as an excellent reference work. According to the *Times Literary Supplement*, "it is a first rate introduction to the literature available on Nigeria's past". Published in 1960, the year of the Nigerian declaration of independence, it covers a period from time immemorial to the end of the 19th century and British domination. The full documentation on the social, political, economic, religious and intellectual planes reveals a cultural heritage of unimagined richness. A quotation

from Calif Muhammed Bello reveals much about the author's communion with black people's history:

"The soul continues to be ennobled in the study of the history of this generous age, especially when there is added to it the history of the strange and wonderful events which have occurred in this land before".

How far this is from Rudyard Kipling's bitter quip: "East is East and West is West..."

In the 1960's, events in Vietnam "sent to the barricades" — the expression is David Marr's — Thomas Hodgkin and many other Western intellectuals. In fact he was prepared for this by the atmosphere in his own family. His wife, Dorothy Crowfoot, was awarded the Nobel prize for her work on the structural analysis of biochemical substances such as vitamin B12, and participated in medical aid for the Vietnamese people, which brought about their first journey to Vietnam in 1971, and the awakening of his interest in our history. His mother was active in the British-Vietnamese Friendship Association. His daughter, Elizabeth, worked with the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Hanoi, and his sister-in-law, Mary Cowan, made adaptations of Vietnamese poetry and was a contributor to the English edition of *Vietnamese Literature*(2).

But it was Thomas Hodgkin's second journey to Vietnam in 1974 which made him decide to work on the history of our country. He collected documents, visited temples, pagodas, citadels, communal houses, dykes, lakes, battlefields of ancient times, museums, towns, villages, and above all talked to people from all walks of life: historians, social scientists, writers, workers, peasants.

What struck him first was, as is the case with many other people from the West(3), the Vietnamese people's "historical consciousness". "The Vietnamese are, I believe, the most historically minded people in the world. True, all peoples who have been involved in prolonged and difficult struggles for national liberation — Greeks, Bulgars, Poles, Americans and Irish, for example — have acquired well developed forms of historical consciousness. But in the case of the Vietnamese the special difficulties of the struggle, the intensity and duration, combined with certain characteristics of Vietnamese history, have given rise to a particularly powerful and active interest in and enjoyment of their national past, at all levels, from peasants to prime ministers... The purpose of understanding the past is to be better equipped to transform the present... For the Vietnamese, all history is contemporary history" (4).

Indeed, Thomas Hodgkin reproaches Western writers on the history of Western Africa with a lack of "historical sense". Says he: "Probably they assumed that these were... somewhat static societies" (5).

In order to place Vietnam's contemporary history in proper perspective, he studies its past, both immediate and remote, showing deep insight.

An article he published in *Race and Class*, one year after his second trip to Vietnam, looked at the lessons of the Vietnamese revolution (6). The author raises, among others, the problem of the constants of the Vietnamese revolution which, in his view, are the following: frequent floods and typhoons, foreign invasions, the growing of wet rice, building and maintenance of river dykes, the need for effective centralized power with a view to water control, and above all the village as the cell of

society, communal land, stimulating respect for the collective life and fostering ideas of solidarity and mutual help". Another noteworthy constant is the nation-class dialectical relationship embodied in the two themes of national resistance and peasant insurrection. Each in turn dominates. In any event, the relationship between these two components — nation and class — is of major political importance. We shall examine later the central theme of the article: an analysis of the causes leading to the victory of the August Revolution of 1945, which put an end to 80 years of French colonial rule.

In another article, published in the *Oxford Review of Education* (7) in 1976, Thomas Hodgkin poses this question: When and why did the literati become revolutionaries? He attempts an answer by comparing the Vietnamese scholars imbued with Confucianism to the West Sudanese mallams marked by Islam. Several common reasons lie behind the fact that in the two countries intellectuals have embarked on the road of revolt:

1. In the pre-colonial period, there lived in the countryside a social stratum composed of literati detached from the administration and bound to the people, with whom they shared misery and aspirations.

2. Both Confucianism and Islam are liable to certain interpretations which are favourable to anti-colonial ideology.

3. There took shape a tradition of peasant revolt with scholar participation.

It was in the confrontation with Western imperialism that differences emerged between the Vietnamese scholars and the West Sudanese mallams, although both were patriotic. The latter lacked a strong national consciousness while the Vietnamese nation had been formed at a very early date. Besides, the politico-military problem of organizing resistance to the foreigner and the ethical problem of opting either for resistance, emigration, or collaboration, were conceived by them in Islamic terms. The Muslim ideal was, and remains, very powerful, shared by princes, intellectuals working in the administration, and mallams alike. In Vietnam, on the other hand, the Confucian ideal was disintegrating. That difference

led to grave consequences concerning the revolutionary path followed by each of these two peoples.

In *Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path*, Thomas Hodgkin comes back to the questions he posed in his 1975 article (8): "How was the August 1945 Revolution in Vietnam possible? What was the character of the Revolution? How can it be explained historically? These are large and difficult questions leading to other questions. They are the themes of this book." (9)

Why did he pick that theme! The author gives the following reason: "It was possibly the most important event in World history since the October Revolution in Russia... It was the first revolution which succeeded in overthrowing the power of a colonial regime. It occurred at a moment in history when the Second World War was ending — a fortnight after the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima. Thus, the August Revolution marks the beginning of a new epoch — the watershed when the age of colonisation begins to give way to the age of decolonization. It is at the same time a moment of critical importance in Vietnam's history. It is the point of vantage from which one can look backwards over two millennia of struggle against foreign aggression, state building and popular insurrection, and forwards over thirty years of restored independence, socialist construction and resistance to the panoply of modern imperialism — and beyond that to the coming centuries of advance towards communism..." (10)

Those parallels call to mind Jules Michelet when he made "a critical projection, on an analysis of the present, of cultural patterns inherited from the past, and again a projection on the past of questions raised by the present: historical objectivity is born of this double anachronism, of this pre-dialectical synchronism." (11).

Like Michelet, Thomas Hodgkin could say, at least concerning the history of Vietnam: "My thoughts most often originate in my heart. It makes my spirit fruitful".

One must give him full credit for the scientific accuracy and objectivity of his investigations. Having patiently collected serious and plentiful documentation, he examines the history of Vietnam in Cartesian fashion:

"How was the August Revolution, the work of the Communist Party of Vietnam, possible?"

The author gives eight direct causes, for the period between 1939 and 1945:

1. The establishment of the Viet Bac revolutionary base and other bases in the mountain region of north Vietnam.

2. The gradual building up of the Liberation Army, which existed in embryo in the first units of National Salvation troops in 1941.

3. The mobilization of the people by the Viet Minh National Front from May 1941 onward.

4. The close relationship between the Party and the national minorities, in Viet Bac in particular.

5. The effective strategy of the Party, which refused all collaboration with the Japanese and other imperialists, and laid emphasis on the education of cadres.

6. The terrible consequences of the famine caused in north Vietnam by the French-Japanese alliance, during which two million people died of hunger.

7. The choice of the favourable historical moment (the result of the exacerbated contradictions among the imperialist powers and the weakening of the French and the Japanese) for launching the general armed insurrection.

8. The personal ability of Ho Chi Minh, his genius.

The historian, however, does not content himself with those direct causes, which in his view supply only a superficial answer. He goes deeper into the problem by posing other questions: What kind of a party was the one which led the August Revolution of 1945? How had it developed since that its birth in 1930? Why was it that party and not some other bourgeois party which gave leadership to the national movement? How did it link Marxism to nationalism? What was its social composition and its relationships with other social strata? What roles were played by the national minorities, the Buddhists, the Christians? What were the characteristics of the French colonial regime? Those of the anti-colonial movement as it evolved from the 19th to the 20th century?

However, in order to understand the colonial period (1858-1945) one must examine the pre-colonial days. Hence another series of questions: What was the politico-social regime of the Nguyen? Why and how was that dynasty defeated by the French? How was the French implantation carried out? How had the Nguyen defeated the Tay Son peasant insurrection? In order to understand the last phases of the monarchical State, one must examine the evolution of the royal regime since the country's liberation from the Chinese yoke in 939 and, before that, the traditions of struggle since the beginnings of Chinese domination. Going still further back, one must study the characteristics of the first Vietnamese State, the period of the Hung Kings the founders of the country, the Bronze Age and the Dong Son civilization (thousands of years before the Christian era).

The "4000 years of Vietnamese history", the backdrop of the August Revolution of 1945, are marked by the constant presence of a number of themes. Thomas Hodgkin re-examines and goes deeper into the ideas he put forward in his article "The Vietnamese Revolution and Some Lessons": the village and its egalitarianism, its relative autonomy (12), the existence of an intelligentsia bound to the people, the formation of the nation at an early date, hence a strong national consciousness, the revolutionary tradition resulting from the peasant insurrections, the role played by the scholars, the solidarity binding the sixty or so minority nationalities to the Viet majority people, the interdependence of Vietnamese history with world history (relations with other Southeast Asian countries, Chinese and Indian influence, implantation of European imperialism, liaison with the Marxist International, support from socialist countries and progressive forces in the world), victory of Marxist ideology over Confucianism and the bourgeois ideal, the cult of the heroic founders and defenders of the country.

Of the ten chapters of the book, six are devoted to the period preceding the French conquest (1858) and four to contemporary history (1858-1945).

Although a newcomer to the field of Vietnamese history, reading neither Vietnamese, the *nôm* demotic script, nor classical Chinese, Thomas Hodgkin nevertheless succeeds in mastering Vietnamese historical material, turning

to good account the results of recent research and acquainting himself with problems which have preoccupied Vietnamese historians for the last three decades, by carefully studying documents in French and English and especially through his contacts and investigations in Vietnam. His book is full of original reflections which testify to profound historical intuition.

The choice of the central theme of his work—explaining the August Revolution of 1945 by the historical past—is evidence of his scholarly perspicacity. In the history of Vietnam he rightly distinguishes the following periods:

207 B.C. to 43: Early phase of Chinese sovereignty.

43-939: Period of full Chinese occupation.

939-1010: Period of post-liberation conflict.

1010-1428: Early feudal period (Ly and Tran dynasties).

1428-1788: Later feudal period (Late Lê dynasty).

1788-1858: Revolution and counter-revolution (the Tay Son and the Nguyen)

His concern for nuances is apparent in this division. Thus, in his opinion, the period of Chinese domination began with a phase of relative autonomy (207 B.C. to 43) and then entered a phase in which, following the Trung Sisters defeat, the Chinese grip was tightened (43-939 A.D.). The first feudal period was different from the second, of which a phase, which went from 1788 to 1858, is studied separately, owing to its impact on contemporary history. In the context of ancient Vietnam, Thomas Hodgkin believes that the notion of feudalism is more relevant than that of "Asiatic mode of production" for the period 1010-1858. He sets great store by the traditional cultural values, especially the cultures of Dong Son, Thang Long, and the 18th century. In that spirit he considers poetry to be an important source of documentation on ancient history, faithful to what he wrote in the Introduction to *Nigerian Perspectives* in 1960: "There is also poetry. As Vico remarked, man is naturally a poet before he develops historical and philosophical forms of expression."

One might regret that he does not give his views on the economic and social regime of the Van Lang-Au Lac-Chinese occupation period, which lay between the primitive commune and feudalism. One might wish for a deeper analysis of the evolution of our ancient economy, an agricultural and mercantile economy, which should be the necessary basis on which to explain the political, social and cultural structures and changes. In fact one must say the same with regard to Vietnamese historians, whose work in this field has barely begun.

Some errors of detail can be pointed out. *Ho Chinh* (page 18) is a name for the village elder, not for the chief of each of the 15 *bo* of Van Lang. On page 27, there is an account of a revolt by Muong people in the mountains of Ha Tinh in the 8th century. In our opinion, the date of the differentiation of the Viet from the Muong ethnic groups remains a moot point. In historical documents, the Muong in the 8th century merely designate the administrative divisions or areas of settlement of mountain-dwelling peoples.

Ly Nam De (page 26) did not withdraw to Hung Hoa (a name which appeared only at a later date to designate a place in the northwest) but to Khuat Lao (in present-day Vinh Phu) mountain area.

Emperor Quang Trung made his triumphant entry into Thang Long on the 5th, not the 7th day of Tet.

The spelling of some proper names should be corrected: Van Thang Vuong, not Van Thong Vuong (page 3); Tran Khanh Du, not Tran Khanh De (page 5); Vu Trac Oanh, not Vu Trac Danh (page 8).

Those minor blemishes, however, in no way detract from the great merit of *Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path*, a work of science and faith. Says the author in his preface: "I believe in truth—and if my admiration and love of the Vietnamese have led me into error, I hope my readers will correct me."

We think, on the contrary, that his book will help correct many errors on Vietnam which have

been, intentionally or unwittingly, spread by some Western historians.

HUU NGOC and
PHAN HUY LE

1. Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path, *The Mc Millan Press Ltd* 1981.

2. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi.

3. Susan Sontag: *Journey to Hanoi—July 1969*. "Here history is an immediate interest, the understanding of which ensures survival. History is lived and felt—it has nothing in common with the abstract exercise so often undertaken by Western intellectuals."

4. Thomas Hodgkin, "The Vietnamese Revolution and Some Lessons", *Race and Class*, XVI, 3-75.

5. Thomas Hodgkin, Nigerian Perspectives, *Oxford University Press*, 2nd edition, 1975.

6. "The Vietnamese Revolution and Some Lessons" *op. cit.*

7. Vol. 2, "Scholars and the Revolutionary Tradition: Vietnam and West Africa."

8. "The Vietnamese Revolution and Some Lessons" *op. cit.*

9. Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path.

10. "The Vietnamese Revolution and Some Lessons" *op. cit.*

11. G Seebacher, *Histoire littéraire de la France, Tome V, Editions sociales, Paris* 1977.

12. "The Vietnamese Revolution and Some Lessons" *op. cit.*

Reminiscences...

(Continued from page 13)

rattan and creepers so that they could not be spotted from above.

By damming a rivulet we created a temporary reservoir from which water was piped through lengths of bamboo to wooden platforms serving as wash stands for the delegates.

Simple but clean and hygienic toilets were built with bamboo and leaves.

The service personnel also grew a luxuriant garden of onions, custard apples which put out beautiful yellow flowers right on the congress opening.

All the other service also did their best to carry out to the letter the principle of simplicity and economy with regard to money, manpower, materials, etc., laid down by President Ho and the Central Committee...

To ensure maximum comfort for the delegates as warranted by the circumstances, we also organised the pumping of water by hand for the delegates. This job was attended to by a section of the service personnel itself.

In implementation of President Ho's instruction, all of us gave particular attention to the security problem and strictly observed the slogan of "Three No's": see nothing, hear nothing and know nothing. The congress site was guarded by a battalion of the regular army. We also built a large air-raid shelter on the ground as big as a hillock covered with trees. It was connected to the lodgings by an intricate system of communication trenches. Also to ensure complete secrecy, no one except a selected

number of party members entrusted with food supply, was allowed to leave the congress site throughout its sitting, including the carpenters from the surrounding villages.

On the other hand, anyone who wished to enter the congress site had to go through a reception house and a series of guard posts, in addition to being provided with a special permit from the "Marxist Study Group" signed by a competent comrade. We also took precaution against forest fires and arson.

All these measures proved very worthwhile: not the slightest incident happened throughout the period of the congress sitting.

President Ho never lost sight of our work. Twice he sent representatives to the construction site. Later he personally came to inspect the construction. He paid attention not only to the congress hall but also the lodgings of the delegates and of the service personnel. He not only met the leading cadres but also went to several families of building workers to enquire about their living conditions. He detected reddish marks on the bark of some trees and instructed the security service to inquire into the matter. At first, we also suspected these to be some secret signs made by enemy spies but we later learnt from our own investigation and from local patriarchs that these marks were caused by a special kind of insect in the area.

President Ho came to inspect our work at a moment when we and the carpenters were making furniture for the congress. Seeing the simple, modest but stylish sets of furniture made of bamboo and timber, especially the chairs

made of sawn and unpolished timber, the President said: "That's very good. They are both beautiful and inexpensive."

On another occasion, he sent for me and said: "Could you find for me a beautiful place at the congress site to receive our foreign delegates?"

I took the President to a place by the stream near where we had built a temporary dam to make an artificial pond. The President looked quite satisfied with the choice. It was a spring day. He sat on a log beneath the canopy of green palm leaves through which filtered the warm sunlight. Uncle Ho's shadow was mirrored in the limpid water. The sight has left an indelible memory on me.

*

By dint of great effort and thanks to close collaboration and mutual assistance we overcome all difficulties and completed the congress site after more than half a year's work.

The congress delegates highly appreciated our work. Many delegates, when asked to comment, said that the building style of the site was a happy combination of simplicity and comfort, of the traditional and modern characters.

For me personally, my greatest reward was that I was invited to attend the congress as an unofficial delegate. This was a great honour in my revolutionary activities.

(An account by Architect
Hoang Nhu Tiep, recorded by
The Tap)

CHRONOLOGY

November 16 — December 15

November

16. Speaking at the debate of the UN General Assembly Committee I on November 16, Vietnamese Ambassador Vo Anh Tuan rejected and denounced as a sheer fabrication the United States claim that chemical weapons had been used by the Soviet Union and its allies in Kampuchea, Laos and Afghanistan in recent years.

— Opening in Hanoi of a conference of outstanding mothers of 1981: 250 mothers from all parts of the country attended.

17. Signing in Hanoi of a plan for co-operation in book publication and distribution for 1981-1985 between Vietnam and Czechoslovakia.

— Signing in Moscow of a protocol on co-operation in musical exchange for a five-year plan period between Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

— Signing in Berlin of a plan of co-operation for 1981-1985 of the Ministries of Higher Education and Vocational Training between Vietnam and the German Democratic Republic.

19. The State Commission for Science and Technology organized a symposium in Hanoi on how to economise on energy and materials for production.

20. A trade protocol for 1982 between Vietnam and Hungary is signed in Budapest.

21. An international seminar in solidarity with the Indochinese peoples was held in Havana under the auspices of the Afro-Asian-Latin-American Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AALAPSO) from November 19 to 21. Mrs. Melba Hernandez, general secretary of AALAPSO, expressed strong militant solidarity and all-sided support for the three Indochinese peoples' just cause.

24. Signing in Havana of a co-operation in radio and television between Vietnam and Cuba for 1982-1984.

— Discussion held in Hanoi on scientific and technical co-operation between Vietnam and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization).

25. The first conference of the Judiciary is held in Hanoi to study and to discuss the functions, tasks and organization of the juridical offices from central to regional levels.

27. The Vietnamese Council of State ratified the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 18, 1979 and signed by the Vietnamese Government.

— The Soviet Union presents Lenin's Complete Works published in Vietnamese to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

— The Vietnamese Council of State decides to confer the Gold Star Order on Souphanouvong, a Political Bureau member of the Central Committee of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, President of the Lao People's Supreme Assembly and Chairman of the Lao Front for National Construction.

28. The economic co-operation delegation of the Swedish Government led by Gosta Edgren, Deputy Director General of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), paid a visit to Vietnam from November 19 to 28.

30. The Forestry Ministry held a seminar in Ha Nam Ninh to review 20 years of carrying out the *Tet Tree-Planting* movement in response to the late President Ho Chi Minh's appeal.

— The daily *Nhan Dan* together with the Agriculture Ministry organizes a seminar on "Sericulture and the problem of clothing" to discuss the growing of silkworms, and relevant policies.

December

1. Signing of a treaty on goods exchange and payment between Vietnam and Poland for 1982.

2. Signing in Hanoi of a program on cultural co-operation between Vietnam and Iraq for 1981-1983.

3. Publication of a decree on the examination and settlement of citizen's complaints and denunciations adopted by the Council of State on November 27, 1981.

5. Le Duan sends a message of congratulations to Heng Samrin, newly elected General Secretary of the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee.

6. The Party Branch of the Vietnamese Armed Forces held a conference of the leading cadres to study the documents to be presented by the Central Committee of the Party at the 5th Party Congress.

7. The Permanent Committee of the CPV of Hanoi holds a conference of the leading cadres of the whole city to study the documents to be presented to the 5th Congress of the Party.

8. Hanoi: Symposium on apprenticeship and on professional orientations under the leadership of the General Department of Professional Apprentices.

9. The Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPV issues a directive on preparatory conferences at all levels and on the election of delegates to the 5th Congress of the Party.

10. The 2nd conference of the Vietnamese Association of Blind-persons is held in Hanoi.

11. At the invitation of the U.S. Committee for Scientific and Technical Co-operation with Vietnam, Professor Nguyen Ngoc Tran, Deputy Director of the State Committee for Science and Technology, and Professor Vo Tong Xuan of Can Tho University, paid a visit to the U.S. from November 20 to December 11.

12. Mr. Galal Magdi, U.N. Equipment Fund Executive Secretary, visited Vietnam from December 10 to 12. A basic agreement was signed with the Vietnamese Government.

— The Ministry of Education and the Educational Division of the Trade Union organize a conference to sum up the initiatives and experiences in building a contingent of good and exemplary teachers from 1976 to 1981.

13. The Permanent Committee of the CPV of Ho Chi Minh City held a conference of the leading cadres of the whole city to study the documents to be presented to the 5th Congress of the Party.

14. The Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions issues a statement welcoming the timely and necessary measures of the Polish Council of State and expresses the close solidarity and strong support of the working class and people of Vietnam towards the Polish working class and people in their struggle to safeguard the fruit of socialism in Poland.

15. The first National Competition of Traditional Renovated Theatre organized by the Ministry of Culture was held in Nam Dinh (Ha Nam Ninh province) from December 12 to 15 with about 200 artists competing.



MINORITIES' STUDENTS

AT TAY NGUYEN UNIVERSITY

A corner of the Tay Nguyen University built after the total liberation of South Vietnam.



Forestry students during a course on forest exploitation



Students of Pedagogy learning the Ede language

Photos: VNA



Sapa (1963)

SOME OF PHOTOGRAPHER VO AN NINH'S WORKS

2. Con Dao sand (1977)

3. The famine of 1945 in North Vietnam



3



2

**Vietnam
courier**

**Le Courrier
du Vietnam**

**НОВОСТИ
ВЬЕТНАМА**

**El Correo
de Vietnam**

Báo đối ngoại

TIN VIỆT NAM

Ra hàng tháng bằng các ngữ Anh, Pháp, Nga, Tây ban nha

Tòa soạn: 46 TRẦN HUNG ĐẠO, HÀ NỘI

ĐÂY NỘI: 53998

In tại Hà Nội

Chi số 12462