

# VIETNAM COURIER

Sept. 1974

MONTHLY

New series



## Our Monthly

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## Comment

■ *The Lessons in  
Nixon's Downfall*

**E**VERETT Alvarez Jr. was the first US pilot captured in North Viet Nam. He was shot down on August 5, 1964, exactly ten years ago, when Johnson launched his aero-naval war against the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

Following the signing of the Paris Agreement, he was set free and went back to his home town of Santa Clara in California. But he no longer found the same America as on the day in June 1964 when he left for Viet Nam. Instead of a quiet, peaceful town, he saw a Santa Clara boiling with "rebellious" activities. In his absence, Alvarez's mother, an ordinary housewife in the Mexican tradition, had taken part in many meetings to condemn the war of aggression in Viet Nam. She had also developed a keen interest in the history of South East Asia. Alvarez's young sister had become a true militant, both in the anti-war movement and in the struggle for the rights of Mexican-born Americans. Alvarez's wife had left

him and remarried, and he asked himself bitterly if her desertion had not been prompted by the contempt she might have felt at his participation in an unjust, immoral war which had caused the death of so many women and children.

The US army paper "Stars and Stripes" which carried this story did not, however, analyse the causes of the "rebellious" mood which the US pilot found in his home town on his return. Economic and financial difficulties, two successive devaluations of the dollar, growing dissent in the country, the continuous dwindling of the United States' position and influence in the world, the ever-widening "credibility gap" — all these ailments of the United States were further aggravated by the Viet Nam war.

Besides, it was a losing war as far as Washington was concerned. Johnson thought the air strikes against the North would bring the Vietnamese people to their knees and save Yankee neo-colonialism in the South

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from complete defeat. But after three years of air war, he had to call a halt to the bombing and back out of the presidential race.

Nixon learnt nothing from Johnson's failure. Swimming against the tide in a political climate hostile to the continuation of the war in Indochina and hence feeling an increasing menace to his office, Nixon resorted to dishonest methods to secure his re-election in 1972. Watergate gave his opponents a good opportunity to topple him. However, one of the underlying causes of his downfall must be found in his neo-colonialist policy.

Nixon has left the American political scene, but the Nixon doctrine remains the cornerstone of the new Administration's foreign policy, Gerald Ford himself has let it be known. Assurances have been given to Nguyen Van Thieu, in a message from the new President of the United States, that the US policy toward Saigon remains unchanged, that Thieu will continue to receive the necessary

military and economic aid from the US. Henry Kissinger, who has been retained as Secretary of State, made no bones about it saying that the Paris Agreement — of which he was the chief negotiator for the American side — constitutes a political and juridical basis for US involvement in South Viet Nam.

Thus, the deck is cleared for Nguyen Van Thieu to renew his warlike statements and his acts of war. In fact, he has ordered his troops to "exterminate the communists" hiding in Saigon-held areas — in other words, to put down the popular movement by means of a ruthless "pacification" campaign. He insulted members of the Third Force, calling them "traitors to the nation" and "elements more or less akin to communism." On August 6 and 7, 1974, he ordered his air force to make savage bombings of Loc Ninh, Bu Dop and Xa Mat — populated centres in the area controlled by the Provisional Revolutionary Government. This action must have received the approval of Washington, which on August 9 sent reconnaissance planes over the DRVN, including Hanoi and Haiphong. The same day, the aircraft-carrier Ranger was cruising within 100 kilometres off the coast of Binh Dinh province (South Viet Nam).

All these acts and threats of war, however, did not help the Saigon army to ward off the heavy blows inflicted on it in various places, especially in the coastal plains of Quang Nam and Quang Ngai (Central Trung Bo). Immediately after the signing of the Paris peace agreement, Thieu mustered four divisions of his regular army, eight regiments of rangers, 90 battalions and 80 companies of regional forces, not counting police and para-military forces, to launch a large-scale operation aimed at wiping out the

"leopard spots" and strengthening his hold on the region. Since July 18, 1974, the liberation forces, swinging into counter-attacks, have meted out due punishment to the usurpers and recovered many areas grabbed by the Saigon side. Some military sub-sectors used by the Saigon administration as jumping-off points for land-grabbing operations and "pacification" raids have also been overrun by the liberation forces. During these clashes, Saigon troops lost much of their punch and more and more of them deserted or refused to fight.

On the political plane, there can be seen in Saigon and other towns of South Viet Nam a resurgence of activities by the Third Force, notably of the "Popular Organization to Urge Implementation of the Paris Agreement" and of the "Committee for Reception of Political Prisoners Belonging to the Third Force." In a statement to a French paper, Mrs Ngo Ba Thanh, President of the "Women's Movement for the Right to Live" and a founding member of the above-mentioned organizations, openly held the United States and Thieu responsible for the present state of war, the encroachments on the territory of the PRG, and the crackdown on the opposition, especially those belonging to the Third Force.

Finally, on the international plane, a new diplomatic success had just been recorded by the South Vietnamese patriots: the Kingdom of Sweden has agreed to the establishment in Stockholm of a Delegation General of the PRG.

Let all these events serve as timely warnings to the new President of the United States who would do best to abandon his warlike posture and keep out of the ruts travelled by his unfortunate predecessor.

August 25, 1974

VIET NAM COURIER

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are very grateful to all our friends who have sent us books, magazines, documents and other equipment of value to us in our work. This material aid is not only indicative of the political and moral support we receive from our friends in many countries, but also gives us invaluable encouragement.

Viet Nam Courier

Vietnamese Studies

Foreign Languages Publishing House

46, Tran Hung Dao Street,  
Hanoi

# The Lessons in Nixon's Downfall\*

*Excerpts from the Nhan Dan editorial of August 15, 1974*

THE recent succession of events in the United States marks a period fraught with difficulties and crises in this country. The nightmare did not begin with the Watergate affair. It originated in the deep involvement of successive administrations, headed by Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, in intervening in the internal affairs of South Viet Nam and then in intensifying and expanding their war of aggression to the whole of Viet Nam and Indochina.

This long and costly war hastened the decline of US imperialism in all fields—economic, financial and military. It is a basic cause of the serious chronic inflation in the United States and the continuation of the financial crisis there, which led to the depreciation of the dollar in the capitalist money market. It has greatly weakened US military might. As a result, the balance of military forces between the Soviet Union and the socialist countries on the one hand and the United States on the other has changed in a way unfavourable to the latter, and US influence has greatly decreased in the international arena.

This war has deeply divided the United States. The defeats and difficulties the US aggressors encountered in the war further aggravated political and social contradictions in the United States and led to a serious crisis in ideology and morale, which is epitomized in the widening of the credibility gap over recent years.

Throughout Nixon's presidency, the nightmare grew worse. Deceit, tricks, and threats became the highest principle of the actions of the man in power in the United States. Nixon promised to end the Viet Nam war while intending to prolong, intensify and expand it. However, all Nixon's ruthless and perfidious moves in the war were frustrated by the Vietnamese people's unyielding and heroic struggle. The Paris Agreement on Viet Nam confirmed the bitter defeat of US imperialism in its war of aggression in Viet Nam and Indochina, and the heaviest responsibility lay with Nixon. *This defeat constituted the fundamental and profound cause of Nixon's downfall.*

Since the signing of the Paris Agreement, the United States has sunk deeper into an overall crisis. Its difficult, unsolvable problems have become much more serious and complicated. Having suffered the most prolonged economic crisis ever after the Second World War, the United States is once more falling into a recession. The current serious rate of inflation is greatly disturbing capitalist circles—they see it as a threat to the survival of the United States.

Over the past 20 years, the rate of inflation has been the highest ever. The amount of State loans, the discount ratio and interest rates are unprecedented in the history of this country. The credibility gap has widened. And it was in this context that the Watergate affair, at first a crisis only involving the Nixon administration, quickly developed into a constitutional crisis, then an institutional crisis and finally into a crisis involving the whole of American bourgeois democracy. Watergate, however, was only one indication of the rottenness of US society. A year after the signing of the Paris Agreement, Nixon quickly deteriorated into a political corpse to be discarded without regret by the Republican Party to avoid defeat in the Congressional elections this year and in the campaign for the presidency in 1976. Nixon has resigned, but the US is still facing the same kind of difficulties and is still in an impasse. Nevertheless in his August 12 address to Congress, President Gerald Ford pledged to remain *in the rut left by the Nixon Administration*. He intends to follow Nixon's economic and financial policies, which have completely failed to stop recession and check inflation. In the domain of foreign affairs, he declared that he would continue to pursue the Nixon doctrine and his foreign policy, which he claimed he had "fully supported over the past five and a half years."

With regard to Viet Nam and Indochina, G. Ford declared his determination to see to the observance of the Paris Agreement on Viet Nam, the cease-fire and negotiated settlement in Laos and an early compromise settlement in Cambodia. But, within only a few hours of his assuming the presidency, G. Ford had talks with the Saigon representative in Washington, who was also received by Kissinger on the same day. On August 13 in Saigon, the US representative also had talks with the Prime Minister of the Saigon Administration. During these meetings, the US assured the Nguyen Van Thieu junta of its continuing military and economic aid. And the strength of this is that the Ford Administration is bent on continuing the US neo-colonialist war in South Viet Nam, by providing US military advisors, US weapons, and US dollars. Under the Ford Administration, the policy of the US remains unchanged: it intends to continue its military involvement in Viet Nam and Indochina in violation of the Paris Agreement on Viet Nam.

The new US administration has not as yet learnt anything from the failures and mistakes that were the cause of Nixon's downfall.

\* *The title is ours* — Ed.

# The Disintegration of a Myth

In 1938, when Hitler planned to invade Czechoslovakia, he brandished the threat of bombing the country flat and the Bénéš government knuckled under. Compared with the power of the US Air Force at present, Hitler's aircraft were mere playthings. Within the last 12 days of 1972, more than 100,000 tons of bombs were showered on North Viet Nam and from 1965 to 1972, no less than 7,800,000 tons were dropped on the whole of Indochina, twice as much as the total used by both sides during World War Two.

Before bombing Viet Nam, however, the ruling circles in Washington wanted to play the same trick as Hitler. They reckoned that, even if the DRVN did not immediately give in to their threats, it would have to do so within from two to six months (according to *The New York Times* of June 5, 1967 and *The Pentagon Papers*).

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Nothing of the sort happened. Neither the surprise blow of August 5, 1964, nor the repeated bombing in the following years, nor the use of B-52s and laser-guided bombs, could dam up Vietnamese resistance. The first to be dumbfounded by this resistance were the first captured US pilots. They had been promised an air promenade and assured that anti-aircraft defence was non-existent and that the people would be panic-stricken. When they flew over the DRVN, however, and at whatever altitude, they were greeted by intense ground fire. And when they were hit and baled out, landing in peaceful ricefields, they were immediately surrounded by frail and tiny, but determined women peasants. These seasoned pilots of the USAF, some of whom were to become cosmonauts, were either veterans of the biggest air force of the world or else felt perfectly safe due to the fact that they were manning solid aircraft at very high altitudes. Consequently it was a big shock to them when they all met again in the "Hanoi Hilton." Another surprise: this small country whose industrial production equals 1/2,000th of that of the United States (according to a report by Robert S. McNamara delivered to the US Senate) has not been "bombed back to the Stone Age." True, it has suffered great damage, but its economic life has not been crippled, its rice-fields continue to grow lush and its small factories and workshops scattered throughout the villages and mountains continue to ensure the production of those a thousand and one things that are so necessary for daily life. The

following figure suffices to show the magnitude of the US failure in this respect: the price of one kilogram of rice throughout North Viet Nam in 1974, ten years after the first bombings, remains exactly the same as in 1964, i.e. 40 cents (0.40 dong).

With regard to education, North Viet Nam has continued to make headway, as shown by the following figures concerning school enrolments:

	1964-65	1972-73
General education	2,666,280	4,882,400
Higher education (1)	26,300	53,000

The threats by the Washington ruling circles came up against a wall. The DRVN was surrounded on all sides by US air bases: Guam, Utao, the Philippines, Okinawa, the 7th Fleet. Yet, it did not give in. The most modern equipment and techniques were applied: F-105s, F-5s, F-111s, B-52s, etc. But the US Air Force was confronted by an adversary who was prepared to give tit for tat. Massive destruction of industrial centres, hydraulic works, dikes, etc., terror bombings of villages, residential sections of towns, and other civilian targets, simply did not work. The Vietnamese people stood firm and continued to send to their brothers and sisters in the South all necessary aid.

In the end, it was the almighty United States of America that could no longer bear the cost of the operation (*Newsweek*, January 8, 1973). After several years of escalating the war, the US had not suffered heavy material damage as had the DRVN, but it had become a nation torn by dissension and distrust, with an army haunted by its setbacks, a devaluated dollar, and a drastically affected international position. Washington finally had to call off the bombings.

Thus the facts have proved that the United States is not invincible, that the US Air Force is not an "absolute weapon," that a small country in our era can successfully resist the most savage aggression. The myth of the invincibility of the US, of air power being the decisive factor, has collapsed. This collapse cannot but bring about a new balance of forces in the world and hence a completely new international situation.

N.K.V.

(1) These figures do not include under-graduates and post-graduates studying abroad.

# Nine Years of US Aero - Naval Escalation Against the DRVN

August 5, 1964 - January 26, 1973

(Brief Chronology)

## 1964

*August 5:* Under orders from President Lyndon Johnson and on the pretext of an alleged attack by DRVN torpedo boats on the US destroyers *Maddox* and *Turner Joy*, Seventh Fleet aircraft bombed Hon Gay, Vinh, Ben Thuy, the Lach Truong area (Thanh Hoa province) and the Gianh river-mouth. US Air Force Lieutenant Everett Alvarez -- the first American pilot to be captured in North Viet Nam -- was fished out of the water and taken prisoner in Ha Long Bay.

## 1965

*February 7:* On the pretext of reprisals for an NFL armed forces' attack on the American garrison Holloway at Pleiku, Johnson ordered that US planes attack the urban centre of Dong Hoi and the Vinh Linh zone, thus beginning a systematic war of destruction against the DRVN.

*March 15:* For the first time in North Viet Nam, a US jet fighter was shot down by rifle fire -- by the militia of Dien Hung commune (Nghe An province).

*March 20:* Official authorisation by the US Department of Defense of the use of napalm bombs against North Viet Nam.

*March 31:* The 100th American plane, an AD6, was shot down over the DRVN in Ha Tinh province.

*April 3:* Baptism of fire for the young Viet Nam Air Force in a

dog-fight with US Air Force planes.

*April 4:* 37 American planes were shot down in a single day, 30 of them in Thanh Hoa province.

*April 7:* In Baltimore, Johnson tried to justify the US acts of war by advancing the myth of aggression from the North against South Viet Nam, and proposed "unconditional discussions." The proposal was rejected by the DRVN Government.

*April 20:* For the first time in North Viet Nam, militia women of Le Ninh (Quang Binh province) brought down an AD6 during a night air attack.

*May 13:* Temporary halt to the bombing of North Viet Nam (up to May 18 inclusive), with an ultimatum that the US would intensify its attacks if the DRVN Government did not respond to "unconditional discussions."

*July 26:* Missiles used for the first time by the Vietnamese, downing three US "Phantoms."

*August 29:* The 500th American plane was shot down over Nghe An province.

*November 15:* The International Tribunal against US War Crimes in Viet Nam was founded on the initiative of Bertrand Russell.

*November 25:* General Curtis LeMay, ex-Chief of Staff of the USAF, threatened that the US would "bomb North Viet Nam back to the Stone Age."

*December 1:* US planes bombed the port city of Haiphong.

## 1966

*January 31:* After a 37-day bombing halt beginning on December 24, 1965, Johnson ordered the resumption of bombing attacks on the DRVN.

*March 9:* Hubert H. Humphrey, US Vice-President, stated that no place in North Viet Nam would be spared from destruction by the USAF.

*April 12:* B-52 strategic bombers were used for the first time in raids on Quang Binh province (North Viet Nam).

*April 17:* The periphery of Hanoi was bombed for the first time by US planes.

*April 29:* The 1,000th US plane was shot down over Bac Thai province.

*July 17:* President Ho Chi Minh's appeal for the stepping-up of the struggle against US aggression: "Hanoi, Haiphong and other cities and enterprises may be destroyed, but the Vietnamese people will not be intimidated! Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom."

*October 14:* The 1,500th US plane was shot down over Nghe An province.

*December 2-14:* Hanoi and suburbs subject to repeated bombing and rocket attacks.

*December 27:* Admission by the US Department of Defense that US air raids over North Viet Nam had caused casualties among the civilian population.

## 1967

*January 28:* In response to Washington's talk of "reciprocity" in connection with the cessation of bombing of the DRVN, Minister for Foreign Affairs Nguyen Day Trinh stated that talks between the DRVN and the USA would be held only after unconditional cessation of bombing attacks and other acts of war against the DRVN.

*April 20:* Haiphong savagely bombed.

*September 19:* The first two B-52 bombers to be downed in North Viet Nam were shot down over Vinh Linh.

*November 6:* The 2,500th US plane, an F-105, was shot down over Hanoi.

## 1968

*March 31:* Johnson forced to declare a stop to US bombing north of the 20th parallel and to announce he would not be running for a second term of office.

*May:* Opening of preliminary peace talks between the DRVN and the USA in Paris.

*June 25:* The 3,000th US plane was shot down over Quang Binh province.

*October 31:* Johnson announced the total cessation of US air raids against the DRVN, admitted the failure of his war of escalation and agreed to the convening in Paris of a four-party conference for the settlement of the Viet Nam question.

*November 3:* DRVN Government's statement on the unconditional cessation of US bombing attacks on North Viet Nam. From August 5, 1964 to October 31, 1968, 3,243 US planes were shot down over North Viet Nam and 143 war vessels were sunk or set on fire.

(From 1969 to 1972, parallel to spying activities, the new

(Nixon) administration intermit- technical schools and 49 medical tently sent bombers, including establishments were destroyed; B-52's, to attack the DRVN, in- and there were 177 bombing cluding the peripheries of Hai- attacks on dykes and other water- phong and Hanoi. During this control works.

## 1972

*April 6:* On orders from Nixon the USAF resumed systematic and large-scale bombing attacks on the DRVN.

*April 16:* Massive US air raids on Hanoi and Haiphong. B-52's were used in the bombing of the port city. The victims included many civilians. Several foreign ships, including one from the Soviet Union and one from the GDR, were hit by bombs.

*April 20:* the 3,500th US plane was shot down over North Viet Nam.

*May 8:* Nixon ordered the mining and blockading of DRVN ports. Air naval attacks on the DRVN were stepped up.

*May 24:* USAF General Daniel James, a Pentagon spokesman, announced the sending of more B-52's to Indochina and the intensification of B-52 attacks on North Viet Nam.

*July 10:* The 4,000th US plane, a swing-wing F-111, was shot down over Vinh Phu province.

*August 8:* The DRVN Ministry for Foreign Affairs' statement on the destruction caused by the USAF in North Viet Nam from April 16 to August 8, 1972: 18 of the 23 provinces, 6 cities and 18 of the 21 provincial towns in North Viet Nam were attacked; Haiphong and Nam Dinh were partially destroyed and the cities and provincial capitals of Vinh, Hongay, Ninh Binh, Ha Tinh and Dong Hoi were completely destroyed. Hanoi was attacked 18 times; 60 general education schools, many colleges and

*October 11:* Massive air attacks on Hanoi. The buildings of the French Delegation-General were damaged by US bombs and Pierre Susini, the French Delegation-General, was seriously wounded (he later died while under treatment in Paris). The offices of the Indian, Algerian and Cambodian embassies were also hit.

*December 18:* Nixon ordered massive bombing by B-52's of Hanoi, Haiphong and other localities in North Viet Nam. American B-52 pilots were captured and imprisoned for the first time in North Viet Nam.

*December 18-29:* 500 to 700 US tactical aircraft and 130 to 150 B-52's flew over North Viet Nam on daily bombing missions, 353 places in Hanoi were hit (including 8 embassies). 81 US planes were downed, including 34 B-52's and 5 swing-wing F-111's. Hanoi succeeded in bringing down 23 B-52's, 2 F-111's and 5 other jets. Hundreds of American pilots were either killed or captured.

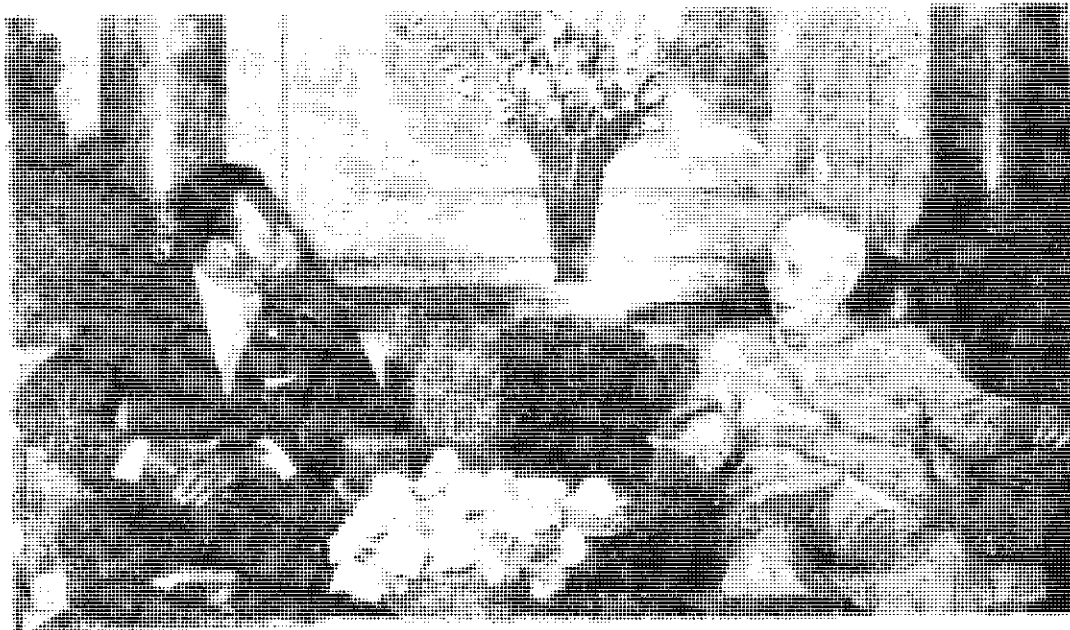
*December 29:* Owing to heavy losses in aircraft and pilots, the Nixon Administration was forced to stop bombing north of the 20th parallel.

## 1973

*January 15:* The US Government declared a stop to all acts of war — bombing attacks, artillery shellings, mining — against North Viet Nam.

*April 6, 1972 — January 15, 1973:* 754 US planes were downed over North Viet Nam and 125 war vessels were sunk or set on fire.

*January 27:* Signing of the Paris Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Viet Nam.



**A Government delegation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, led by Vice-President Miguel Eyegue Ntutumu, paid a friendly visit to the DRVN from August 18-19, 1974**

*Photos: Vice-President Miguel Eyegue Ntutumu being received by President Ton Duc Thang*

## *The DRVN Advances*

### **Results of the 1973 - 1974 School Year**

**I**N June 1974, North Viet Nam held its first post-war grade II and grade III final examinations. These exams marked the end of a year of effort by both teachers and students to improve the quality of education.

Some 400,000 students of the 7th form, aged 14, sat for the final grade II exams — an increase of 19% over the last school year. Examinations were organized in villages and towns.

58,882 students of the 10th form, aged 16-17, sat for the final grade III exams, and 39,296 of them, i.e. 66.7%, passed. Nam Ha, Lai Chau, Nghe An, Hanoi and Hoa Binh obtained the best results, despite the fact that their schools had been damaged by US bombing and their students had to

proceed with their studies in evacuation places. Students were examined in four subjects: literature, maths, physics and history. Nam Ha had the largest number of graduates classified as excellent (each with at least 32 marks — the maximum being 40 marks for four subjects) and of those classified as good (from 26 to 31 marks). Some graduates who received 37 or 38 marks were specially commended by the examiners' council.

After the graduation exams for the 10th form students of ordinary schools, the complementary education branch held general education examinations for industrial workers, civil servants, soldiers and members of the youth shock-brigades. In the school year 1973-1974, the complementary educa-

tion branch restored various full-time and part-time classes, opened up more general education schools for industrial workers and peasants and more schools for young people of ethnic minorities. Complementary education students in grades I, II, III in North Viet Nam numbered 350,000.

On July 9, 1974, nearly 60,000 students sat for entry exams into various universities — an increase of 50% over last year. These exams were held simultaneously in different provinces and towns under the supervision of the local authorities and of the universities. This year, for the first time, Vinh Linh, a zone adjacent to the demarcation line which was ravaged by US bombing during the war, organized university entry exams for local students.

# South Viet Nam: 301 Catholic Priests Condemn Corruption

*On June 18, 1974, 301 Catholic priests from almost every diocese in South Viet Nam made a "declaration against corruption, injustices and social vices."*

*The authorities tried in every way possible to prevent the document from being popularized. The press conference held at the Tan Chau Sa Church (in Tan Binh district, Gia Dinh province) on June 18, 1974 was suppressed by the police. However, the declaration won support from various sections of the people, including other religious sects. On July 2, 1974, the Saigon paper Hoa Binh (Peace) announced that 1,000 more priests had signed the declaration.*

*Below is a translation of the main body of the declaration:*

1. The current social vices in South Viet Nam, chiefly the corruption of certain responsible men, are spoiling South Vietnamese society and driving it into a tragic situation. The cult of selfishness and contempt for the interests of society were the object of a warning by the Standing Committee of the Viet Nam Catholic Bishops' Council in its September 29, 1973 letter:

"Corruption benefits only a few people, whereas it creates suffering for the majority. It renders all efforts at national construction useless, nullifies every national development programme, mocks at the sacrifices of those who devote themselves to the service of the country and undermines the people's faith in the authorities. In an underdeveloped country with a heavy defence burden, one can accept austerity. But one cannot accept a discriminatory austerity that is meted out only to the poor and powerless while others are using their authority to get rich by dishonest means."

Moreover, in its January 10, 1974 declaration the Catholic Bishops' Council further stressed:

"Corruption, especially that of responsible men, may result in the collapse of this country."

2. The cause of this sad state

of affairs lies in "political rotteness and an egoistic thirst for personal privileges" (1), which inclines some people to regard the holding of power as being synonymous with the right to make money by any means. This is ignoble and illicit, but it has become a way of life for some people. Consequently, authority is now gained by corruption and the leadership is largely in the hands of corrupted men.

The traffic in posts in administrative and military bodies has turned "social life into a ceaseless and merciless battle." "Crimes are committed everywhere, as if they had been organized into a profitable trade." (2)

Under the protection of the men in power, drug traffic, gangsterism, gambling, prostitution and smuggling are rife, and have depraved society. Looting, cheating and rape are also rampant. Individual security is constantly endangered.

The monopoly of legal political activities leaves various sections of society with only three alternatives: either to give in, join the opposition or remain passively indifferent. Friendly co-operation has disappeared and has been replaced by dishonest dealing and reprehensible complicity.

The constitution and legis-

lation have become useless ornaments as a number of men in Parliament and many top civil service personnel have become instruments of the regime.

In spite of its frail legal base, the State treats the people with contempt. It is constantly increasing taxes and issuing more and more banknotes so as to make good its deficit of hundreds of billions piastres--the result of its own wasteful practices. This has led to rising prices, the continual devaluation of the piastre and the decline of the national economy.

3. The "mafia" in the government, in collusion with speculators, has gained control of rice, fertilizers, insecticides, fuel and pharmaceutical products. This has given rise to artificial shortages and rising prices, which are causing hardship to the poor while profiting the rich.

The policy of "economic embargo against the adversary" is affecting the people, who have to buy rice at high prices while this staple food is constantly being smuggled to the other side. The people have lost billions of piastres through such corruption and speculation. Tens of thousands of people in Central Viet Nam have had to eat banana roots, cactus

and seaweed instead of rice; and many people, sometimes whole families, have starved to death.

The increase in taxes on fuel has led to soaring increases in the cost of living and total or partial stoppages in industrial, agricultural and fishing activities. The hoarding of fertilizers and insecticides has driven the peasants into a very difficult situation.

The everyday lives of the people have considerably worsened. The unemployed receive no assistance, and are growing in number. People whose means of livelihood are uncertain are naturally extremely anxious about their future. And, of course, others are also worried about the rising prices caused by the irresponsibility of the authorities at all levels. Famine menaces the entire people.

4. The slogan of anti-communism is used by corrupted men to silence public opinion. Any citizen can be charged with having contacts with or supplying the communists. Moreover, if anyone dares mention a truth that happens to displease the authorities, he may be accused of sapping the fighting spirit of the army—when, in fact, it is corruption that destroys comradeship-in-arms and undermines the army.

One of the causes of such vices is the concentration of too much power in the hands of only certain individuals, and the fact that this power is exercised by military men, from central down to village level.

Over the past 25 years, the anti-communist policy, which has been promulgated by force of arms, has proved to be completely ineffective and has only brought suffering and death to the people.

Peace, a profound aspiration of the people, can never be brought about under present conditions, when corruption and injustice are rampant.

(1) *Pope Paul VI's address to 3,000 Catholics at the Piazza San Pietro on Sunday February 3, 1974. (Retranslated from Vietnamese)*

(2) *Op. cit.*

## FACTS AND EVENTS

# Democracy — Saigon Style

**J**ULY 14, 1974 was chosen by the Saigon administration as polling day for its provincial and municipal elections.

On August 5, 1974, however, Tran Thien Khiem, Prime Minister of the Thieu regime, was obliged to annul all election returns in the provinces of Bien Hoa and Quang Ngai and in the provincial capital of Cam Ranh, and to temporarily postpone the "legalization" of election results in the provinces of Quy Nhon and Phu Yen. He also had to dismiss Colonel Lam Quang Chinh, Governor of Bien Hoa province, Lieutenant-Colonel Lam Thanh Huu, Mayor of Cam Ranh, Colonel Hoang Dinh Tho, Governor of Binh Dinh province, and a number of other officials in the above-mentioned areas. At the same time, he had to promise to "continue wide and deep investigations" in some other places.

Earlier, on July 27, 1974, the so-called "Election Council of Quang Ngai province" was forced to declare the annulment of all the initial election results in the province because a four-day check had given concrete evidence of fraud in as many as 40 polling-booths. The Saigon paper *Cong Luan* (Public Opinion) on July 20 disclosed that "the nationalist group in both houses of the Saigon Parliament is preparing for the publication of a 150-page White Book on these fraudulent elections."

Immediately after July 14, 1974, Saigon press described the feelings of the population living in Thieu-controlled areas toward the said elections as "indifference, coldness, disgust, disappointment and frustration." But, in spite of the people's indifference to the elections, Nguyen Van Thieu is concentrating his efforts on trying to get rid of opposition factions, whether pro-US or not, so that he may rule the roost as the undisputed placeman of the US

neo-colonialists in South Viet Nam. As reported by Saigon papers, it was Thieu himself who ordered his executives at all levels to fix the number of members of his "Democratic Party" to be returned at the local elections (*Dong Phuong* (Orient) and *Dan Luan* (People's Opinion) of June 15 and 26).

And that was how he obtained the results he desired. Of the 478 newly elected members of the Saigon Parliament, more than two-thirds are members of Thieu's "Democratic Party," and of the nearly 1,000 candidates, no fewer than 70 per cent were "Democrats" (*Dien tin* (Telegraph) of July 17).

A "Democratic Party" member recently revealed Thieu's scheme in this election campaign when he said: "With the maximum majority as described above, in 1975, if the presidential election is organized under the old law (Thieu's 1971 law on presidential elections stipulates that each presidential candidate must be approved by 40 deputies or senators, or 100 members of the Lower House), only the Democratic Party can get the required number of people to present candidates." (*Dien Tin* of July 17, 1974)

Tran Thien Khiem's pretended "fairness" in declaring the cancellation of the results of fraudulent elections in some places gives us further proof of the real nature of the Saigon regime's so-called "democracy." It is only window-dressing and can hardly camouflage proceedings a thousand times more fraudulent!

Only if the people in the Saigon-controlled areas conduct a persistent and many-sided struggle to set-up in Saigon a government that scrupulously respects the Paris Agreement can an end be put to all kinds of fraudulent elections in South Viet Nam.

# Saigon Schools under the Thieu Regime

CONFRONTED by the ever-growing protest movement launched by students in the summer of 1971, Nguyen Van Thieu appointed Ngo Khac Tinh, a pharmacist and a relative of his, Minister of Information, as head of the Ministry of Education. His declared aim was to better the "education apparatus, which is now cumbersome, expensive and of no real use" (Saigon Univer-

sity Professor Ly Chanh Trung in his "*Bot Bien va Song Gam*" — Sea Foam and Roaring Waves), and to take certain remedial measures. At the time, the Saigon paper *Hoa Binh* (Peace) sarcastically remarked: "Education is like a pernicious disease, treated by half a dozen doctors. It has now been handed over to the pharmacists, but one wonders if there is any remedy left that can cure it."

School) and each year they enrol only about 1,000 of the 4,000 who apply for admission. And it is very common in the Saigon-held areas for there to be as many as 70 pupils per class.

The present situation with regard to public schools means that the Thieu regime has no alternative but to increasingly leave the education of children to private schools. And sometimes the children attending these private schools have to travel from 2 to 12 km to get to them. Such schools are mushrooming in all urban centres in the South. After all, they have become remunerative enterprises. Several people with no knowledge of pedagogy or education have managed, by bribery, to obtain permission to open schools; they then simply hire headmasters, supervisors, teachers and office boys. Apart from a few who do have some real knowledge of education, but who serve as a core for propaganda purposes, the teachers in these private schools are of poor quality because they are recruited for two main reasons: they know the tricks involved in keeping children at school and they are prepared to accept low salaries. Consequently there is much animosity between these teachers and those at public schools. Teachers from public schools consider their colleagues in private schools to be unqualified and mercenary, and to be

## The Situation in the Schools

THE published lists reveal that Saigon is not short of educational establishments. Apart from the public schools and those run jointly by State and private interests, there is a variety of private schools run by religious sects or by various bodies and individuals: the Bo De School (primary and secondary) and the Van Hanh University under Buddhist control, the Minh Duc Higher Education Institute and the Dalat University run by the Catholics, the Cao Dai University at Tay Ninh, the Hoa Hao Higher Education Institute, the National Army School (for the children of soldiers), the Trung Thu School run by the Police, etc.

It could appear at first that the Saigon authorities are very concerned about education. But this

is not the case. At present, in the Saigon-held areas, the percentage of illiterates among the population swings between 35% and 50% (*Song Than*, September 11, 1973). The shortage of educational establishments, chiefly for primary and secondary education, remains serious. The money used by Saigon for education in 1973 represented less than one-tenth of its war expenditures, in spite of the fact that the Paris Agreement had already been signed. In the school year 1972-1973, the number of children attending public primary schools increased by 151,000 (or 6%), whereas the number of classrooms only increased by 2,233 (or 4%). In Dalat, which is regarded as a cultural centre, there are only two public secondary schools (the Tran Hung Dao Boys' School and the Bui Thi Xuan Girls'

making money "on the backs of the pupils." And teachers from private schools call public school teachers "crumb pickers" and "caged birds."

There is not only a shortage of educational establishments but there is also discrimination in connection with the various educational branches. So far the technical and professional branches have been neglected, if not forgotten. In the school year 1971-1972, there were 86,649 students enrolled at universities, while at technical colleges there were only 999 enrolled (i.e. 1.24% of the university enrolment). In an article entitled "Examining the Draft of the 1974 Education

Budget" which appeared in *Dien Tin* on November 20, 1973, Nguyen Huu, an engineer, criticized the mistakes made by the Thieu administration: "To seek to raise total national output by from 6% to 9% a year, when students doing technical or professional courses represent only 1.24% of the university enrolment, and when only 0.58% of the national budget is earmarked for their education, is to go on a wild goose chase. It may therefore be said that there has been no preparation for post-war education, by setting aside money for this end. Everything remains within the framework of a war machine."

#### A Reactionary Curriculum

IN 1970 - 1971, the Saigon Ministry of Education worked out what it called an "up-to-date program" for secondary education, which it claimed was "an initiative aimed at keeping abreast with the constant progress being made in ideas and science." Natural sciences and social sciences have been "modernized"—to the particular detriment of the social sciences. The students have been waiting a long time for educational reforms, but they have been disappointed as the so-called "up-to-date program" introduced in 1971 is neither new, progressive, nor national; on the contrary, it bears a retrograde, deceitful and reactionary character which is quite unacceptable when our people are still struggling for independence, freedom and national sovereignty" ("Concerning a Critical Viewpoint" by Nguyen Van Trung, a professor of Saigon University).

This retrograde, anti-national character is clearly reflected in the content of textbooks for secondary and primary schools. Literary texts are replete with propaganda about the puppet

army and administration, praise for the US "ally," exhortations to join the army, eulogies on the president of the Republic of Viet Nam and such deceitful policies as the so-called agrarian reform, and descriptions of luxury living. Students are inculcated with false ideals and with a strong aversion for the revolution, the North and socialism. Revolutionary literary works, which reflect the long tradition of struggle against foreign aggression, have been discarded, while the works of Tu Luc Van Doan<sup>(1)</sup> and existential novels that have a depraving effect on the minds of readers are highly praised. In the study of Vietnamese literature, such patriotic writers as Phan Chu Trinh, Nguyen Thai Hoc, Huynh Thuc Khang and Ngo Duc Ke are purposely omitted. And in history textbooks, those patriots who cannot possibly be ignored are either misrepresented or else presented in a negative light.

Worse still, historical facts are distorted, the role of the masses is minimized, and popular wisdom is treated with disdain. National cultural works are looked down

upon, while the invaders' civilization is constantly praised in order to justify the aggression of imperialism, and especially of US imperialism. In 1965, the year when the first American troops were introduced into South Viet Nam, bringing with them the P.X. civilization, Nguyen Phuong, a history teacher at Hue University, wrote on the history of the Lac Viet: "The Western Han dynasty was a conqueror concerned more with expanding its territory than with imposing severe restrictions on the conquered peoples. Consequently its policies were rather liberal. Moreover, its representatives were humanists and did their best to educate the people instead of exploiting them" (*Bach Khoa*, April 15, 1965) (2).

(1) Tu Luc Van Doan was a writers' group that was established in 1932 and that included such writers as Nhat Linh, Khai Hung, Hoang Dao, etc. It was representative of the romantic literature of Viet Nam in the period between 1930 and 1945 and it published the review *Phong Hoa* which later became *Ngay Nay*. At this time, the resistance movement against French colonialism for national independence was fiercely repressed by the enemy. Many uprisings were drowned in blood, such as the *Bac Son* insurrection (September 1940) and the *Nam Ky* insurrection (November 1940). The Vietnamese revolution required that the entire people should be mobilized, but the works put out by Tu Luc Van Doan were love stories, that dealt only with and exalted individual desire.

(2) In 111 B.C. the Western Han dynasty sent hundreds of thousands of troops to invade the South. The territory of Viet Nam (then called *An Lac*) passed from the hands of the *Trieu* into those of the Western Han dynasty, and was divided into three *quan* (districts): *Giao Chi* (present-day *Bac Bo*), *Cuu Chan*

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As for the August 1945 Revolution, as the authorities could not ignore it, they distorted the facts by saying that the Indochinese Communist Party and the Viet Minh Front "used the people as tools" and "made use of the achievements" of other parties. In fact the truth is that a number of parties, such as the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang and the Dai Viet (now stooges of the Americans in the Saigon-controlled zone), sought the support of the Chiang Kai-

shek clique to oppose the Vietnamese revolution.

Reactionary textbooks expounding mystical and pessimistic ideas and the unscientific methods of teaching adopted in Saigon schools have done much harm to school children in South Viet Nam. In general, the practice is to use the cramming method of teaching. As a result, most pupils on leaving school got their brains stuffed with confused, often distorted, learning.

that sales of home-made goods have steadily declined.

Top men in the economic and financial fields, such as Pham Kim Ngoc, ex-Minister of Economy, Ha Xuan Truong, ex-Minister of Finance, Nguyen Hai Binh, ex-General Director of the Taxation Bureau, Vu Khac Dung, the "father of VAT," etc., were all trained in the USA to become tools of Washington. They have replaced French-educated functionaries and have been given key posts so that they can carry out the "Vietnamization" program in the economic and financial fields.

### The Americanization of Schools

THE Americans, on taking over from the French, concentrated their efforts from as early as 1954 on carrying out three programs: to send South Vietnamese students to America to study; to dispatch delegations of educational personnel to the US for in-service training; and to assist South Vietnamese educational establishments. The Michigan State University Group — which is in close touch with the CIA — came to help Ngo Dinh Diem build the Republic of Viet Nam. This group, besides helping Saigon draft a constitution and organize the police force, also assumed the task of reforming education. In 1957, the Ministry of Education of the puppet regime and the Michigan State University signed an agreement concerning American help in reforming higher education in certain educational establishments. Shortly afterwards, another delegation from this university was sent to Saigon to work as advisers to the National Institute of Administration — an establishment based on the French model, which was founded in Da Lat in 1954 but which has since been transferred to Saigon — in the reforming of its educational program and organization. Two other universities followed suit: Ohio University (OU) and Southern Illinois University (SIU). The delegation from SIU to Saigon worked as advisers to the puppet government on the training of primary school teachers while that of OU helped the teachers' colleges of Saigon, Hue and Can Tho train secondary school teachers. In June 1966, the SIU delegation submitted to the Saigon government a secondary general education program which was to be adopted by 11 schools the following year (*Tu Tuong*, May 1972). Under the same program, Saigon University

and the Thu Duc secondary school were also directly assisted by SIU. In addition, many other US universities have received CIA money or entered into contracts with the Pentagon in order to carry out studies to promote US neo-colonialism in South Viet Nam. In 1969, Missouri — Rolla University became an adviser to the Saigon Engineers' College, and Florida University began to give aid to the College of Agronomy, Forestry and Animal Husbandry. These two colleges later became dependent upon the US in matters of organization and curricula. The USAID has also frequently invited US educational experts to South Viet Nam to study and give advice on the reform of Saigon higher education, in accordance with Washington's directives.

Thus the "Americanization of schools" program has been implemented step by step.

The Saigon National Teachers' College is now completely in the hands of the Americans: almost all its teachers have been trained in the US; the education program has to be approved by the Americans; and the "Viet Nam — USA" textbooks, written by Americans and printed in Australia and New Zealand, are provided free.

In Saigon and the other cities of South Viet Nam, the discrimination against so-called "home-educated intellectuals" who have been trained in Viet Nam in favour of "foreign-educated intellectuals" who have graduated from schools in foreign countries, especially the USA, is very much talked about. In many ways this discrimination resembles that against home-made goods: the competition from foreign goods, especially those from the US that are flooding the market, has meant

In August 1973, during a well co-ordinated campaign aimed at denigrating French-educated intellectuals and lauding those trained in the USA, the Saigon Ministry of Education made two decisions: one was to put the American Master of Arts and Master of Science degrees (the equivalent of the French "licence") on an equal footing with the 3rd-level doctorate of Saigon and of Western European countries; the other was to start using US-type tests (1) in matriculation examinations. University lecturers were extremely indignant about these decisions and saw them as "a preliminary stage in opening the way for US-trained intellectuals to control Viet Nam universities." (Professor Tran Nguyen Lan, in *Dien Tin*, September 15, 1973.)

It is clear that an American invasion of education is taking place in South Viet Nam. What

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(Northern Trung Bo) and Nhat Nam (Central Trung Bo). As Han historians have admitted, Han mandarins and troops caused great losses to our people in lives and property. Their basic mode of exploitation consisted of forcing our people to pay tribute to them in the form of precious national products. Consequently our people often used to rise up against them.

(1) These tests consist of 300 questions on a variety of subjects. Each question is accompanied by five "answers" marked A, B, C, D, E, only one of which is correct. The candidate is allowed about twenty seconds per question to work out the correct answer. All examination papers are marked by a computer.

Minister of Education Ngo Khac Tinh has called the training of a "generation of new Vietnamese" is simply an effort to form pro-American intellectuals who will be loyal to the US. However, the Americanization of schools has not been as easy as was expected because people in South Viet Nam are well aware of the truth of Professor Ly Chanh Trung's

warning: "If we let the Americans supply South Viet Nam with the type of 'freedom' that is manufactured in the USA and labelled Coca Cola or Pepsi Cola, then we shall have a Pepsi Cola regime, a Pepsi Cola administration, a Pepsi Cola education system and a Pepsi Cola culture." (Professor Ly Chanh Trung, *Sea Foam and Roaring Waves*.)

launched a campaign in support of those they know to be dissolute young men. Consequently, although they failed to gain full control of the Students' Representatives' Council, they were at least able to restrict its influence.

Coercive and repressive measures have constantly been taken against the school and college students' movement, especially at the time of the change-over from the US "special war" to the "limited war." In 1971, the police rounded up school and college students to press them into joining the army, and hunted down those suspected of participating in anti-government activities. In Saigon, Thieu ordered his troops and police to encircle the headquarters of the General Students' Association and to occupy Minh Mang University. Tear gas was used.

However, the students' movement continued to develop. Campaigns against the militarization and Americanization of schools, the arrest of school and college students, the "professor-adviser" system, more time being given to English lessons than to Vietnamese(1), etc., spread from one school to another. The campaign to boycott and denounce the "hippie festival" — a product of US culture, organized by Thieu and his wife themselves in May 1971 — involved hundreds of thousands of school and college students. The campaigns against increases in school fees and in the price of textbooks were turned into demonstrations against US imperialism and its stooges: 4,000 students from the Phan Sao Nam school and over 10,000 from the Bo De school joined in the protest marches. In July 1973, school and college students, together with their parents and some teachers, strongly protested the beauty contest, organized by the Ministry of Education and authorized by Thieu, which was held to chose candidates for the Miss World contest in Tokyo. The *Dien Tin* of July 5, 1973 strongly criticized the contest and called it "the strangest examination in the history of examinations organized by the Ministry

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(1) In many schools — other than language schools — six periods a week are devoted to English lessons and only two to Vietnamese.

### Secret Agents Posing as Students

As mentioned above, the Saigon administration has shown little concern for the building of schools. In fact its main interest has been in repressing the school and college students' movement. The slogan "Organize the school pupils," which has been mentioned by Nguyen Van Thieu so often in his instructions to the education service, has been and is being lived up to in South Viet Nam. In almost all schools and institutes, public or private, there are pupils' unions or Boy Scouts' groups that are led by Saigon agents posing as students. In addition, either roving song groups and or art clubs have been set up in schools to debauch the youth. Over recent years, these groups and clubs, that have such evocative names as *May Chieu* (Evening Cloud), *Song Bien* (Sea Waves), *Hoang Hon* (Dusk), *Toc May* (Dark Hair), *Anh Den Mau* (Coloured Lights), etc., have mushroomed in Saigon, Da Lat, Vung Tau, Da Nang and other cities.

One of the aims of the education program is to set up a network of school and college students acting as secret agents so as to suppress the school and college students' movement and to eventually control the schools. These agents fall into two categories. The first category consists of school and college students who are paid to work as informers in students' unions and Boy Scouts' groups. They are paid by the job, granted a short-term deferment of military service and given access to code in order to contact their superiors. The second category comprises professional secret agents who are sent to work in schools. Some of them are commissioned officers of the secret service while continuing to pose as students. Since 1972, a large number of officers graduating from the National Police Institute

has been sent to work in schools; Their tasks are to recruit informers on the spot, establish a network of control over schools, infiltrate students' representatives' organizations (such as those representing faculties and the Executive Committee of the General Students' Association) and to carry out various short-term tasks as required by the administration.

Their methods vary according to the particular situation in each school. In faculties where there is no check on who attends lectures and where the number of students is large enough to facilitate infiltration, they are able practically to control the students' representatives' councils by organizing elections and choosing candidates. They often manage to do this in the Saigon faculties of law, literature and science. They start by arresting all students who work actively for the students' movement or who have some progressive influence on their comrades, and who want to stand for election. Then, without regard to school regulations or to the tradition of democratic discussion, they work to get control of the elections. On election day, they go the college concerned bearing students' or voters' cards and vote either once or as many times as is necessary.

In faculties where admission is by examination and the number of students is small enough for them all to know each other, it is difficult for the secret agents to buy over students and consequently to select candidates of their choice and organize elections. That is why in such cases they have to resort to arrests and threats. In 1972, during the election campaign for the Students' Representatives' Council of the Saigon Faculty of Medicine, they threatened candidates who were the slightest bit progressive and

## Crocodile Tears

**A**T a press conference in Saigon on July 7, 1974, Colonel William Tombaugh, head of the US delegation to the Four-Party Joint Military Team, claimed that the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam "lacked goodwill" in the search for Americans missing in Viet Nam, provided for by Article 8b of the Paris Agreement on Viet Nam, and branded our attitude as "inhumane." Shortly afterwards, both the Washington and Saigon propaganda machines made a fuss about the matter. A delegation, allegedly from an American youth organization concerned for the 1380 Americans missing in action in Viet Nam, and Montgomery, a member of the US House of Representatives, were issued visas to

go to Indochina to inquire about the problem.

It is all rather reminiscent of the psychological warfare ploy of the US concerning "prisoners of war." The US spent much time and effort and many dollars in its attempts to make the "POW" matter the focal story in the Viet Nam issue. To this end, it sent a cosmonaut, and later a billionaire named Peros, around the world to brand the DRVN as "inhumane." Then under the pretext that the "POW" issue had not been settled and so on, it suspended the Paris Conference on Viet Nam.

But it was not long before the whole world was aware of who

was humane and who was not. Whereas the stain on the honour of the US resulting from the Son My (My Lai) massacre was still fresh, the American pilots captured by the DRVN while they were committing crimes were all returned—and in good shape—to the US government.

The graves of American militarymen who died while carrying out the war of aggression in North and South Viet Nam are being cared for by the authorities and people in both zones. Recently, the DRVN allowed representatives of the US to visit the graves of GI's and even returned to the US the remains of 23 Americans killed in action.

It would be illogical, however, for the US to expect the Vietnamese people to settle the problem raised in Article 8b of the Paris Agreement the way the Americans wished.

It should be pointed out, first of all, that Article 8b is part of Article 8 of the Paris Agreement and that Articles 8a and 8c relate to the return of captured military men and civilians. The Nguyen Van Thieu administration, rigged up by the US, still continues to detain and barbarously torture hundreds of thousands of civilians in South Vietnamese prisons. Yet both the US and Nguyen Van Thieu keep claiming that "there isn't one political prisoner in South Viet Nam." Is this "humane"?

Throughout two decades of struggle for independence and freedom, large numbers of cadres and combatants of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation and of the PRG have been murdered, beheaded, disembowelled or tortured to death by Saigon soldiers and police as well as by US expeditionary troops. Where are their graves and their remains now? At a hundred-odd meetings of the Four-Party Joint Military Team, the US and Saigon have stubbornly rejected all re-

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## "Go and Ask the Americans!"

**"G**O and ask the Americans!" This was the reply given to the families of soldiers in the Lon Nol army by an officer at the Phnom Penh Veterans Office on August 13, 1974. Their husbands, their brothers, had lost their lives on the battlefields and they had been promised regular monthly allowances. But six months had passed and they hadn't received anything. It brings to mind the demonstrations in Phnom Penh by the Lon Nol soldiers in active service who were demanding pay arrears.

The officer at the Veterans Office told the soldiers' families that the office "had no more money." It's not hard to work out the reason why: the death allowances and the soldiers' pay packets have found their way into the pockets of the corrupt Lon Nol officials.

But what is the height of cynicism is the fact that the officer said without a qualm: "Go and ask the Americans!" It is reminiscent of the statement by the

Vientiane Defence Ministry spokesman in Laos in Aug. 1972 when he was asked by journalists about the offensive in the rainy season that year against the Plain of Jars region: "We have no idea. Go and ask the Americans!"

Ask the Americans about everything! The same words that were to be heard in Phnom Penh and not so long ago in Vientiane must be often uttered in Saigon as a similar situation exists there: with US dollars, the Americans are paying a bunch of henchmen to procure local manpower for slaughter in the interests of the monopolies across the Pacific. Thus, everything is decided by the Americans. Their henchmen are paid to enlist mercenaries but they get even more money by pocketing part of the soldiers' pay. And they know that their American masters will turn a blind eye to their actions.

After all, the Americans must ensure that their puppets remain loyal to Washington.

## Armed Uprisings by Ethnic Minorities along the Truong Son

### PART I

THE Truong Son mountain range runs from the North to the South Viet Nam and is like the spine of Indochina. From the 17th parallel southward it is bordered on the east by the coastal plains of Southern Trung Bo (from Quang Tri to Binh Thuan) and on the west by the rugged Tay Nguyen (Central Highlands) with their high peaks such as A Tuan (2,500 metres) and the Mother and Child Mountain (2,051 metres). The Vietnamese territory west of the coastal provinces is commonly known as the Truong Son Ridge.

The Truong Son Ridge is closely related to the Central Highlands — geographically, ethnologically and historically. The Truong Son Ridge and the Central Highlands as a whole are inhabit-

ed by about 800,000 to 1,000,000 people of more than 30 ethnic minorities of the Mon-Khmer and the Malayo-Polynesian language groups. The population along the Truong Son Ridge makes up about a third of the total population of the Central Highlands. The Ridge can be divided into two geographical zones: the highlands with their rugged mountain peaks and the lowlands with their small rivers and valleys sloping down to the plains. The highlanders still practise the old slash-and-burn method of cultivating rice and maize; the lowlanders grow their rice in submerged fields. In both zones, farm implements are still rudimentary, crop output is very low, and the people lead precarious lives.

### Undaunted

The continual battle against wild animals and the repeated tribal wars of the past have had their effect on the inhabitants of Truong Son. In order to protect themselves, their hamlets and their rice and maize plots, they have armed themselves with primitive weapons, dug pits, laid booby traps, fenced off their rice plots, etc. In particular, they have had to fight for their survival against brutal exploitation and aggression by the feudalists and the French imperialists from as early as the 18th century. Consequently, the ethnic minorities along the Truong Son and the majority of the other nationalities in the Central Highlands have repeatedly risen up in arms to resist the forcible requisition of wealth and man-

power, exorbitant taxes and usurpation of their lands for the building of military posts. The tradition of resistance is particularly strong among the Ka Tu people in Quang Nam province, the Kor in Southern Quang Nam and Northern Quang Ngai and the H'Re in Quang Ngai and Northern Binh Dinh. However, all these armed uprisings invariably ended in failure, due to the fact that these ethnic minorities fought on their own, without co-ordination, without a clear policy and, most importantly, without close alliance with the *Kinh*, the majority people living chiefly in the plains.

In accordance with their "divide and rule" policy, the French colonialists always played

off one minority nationality against another and, in particular, always sought to create friction between the ethnic minorities and the *Kinh*.

But things changed radically following the birth of the Indochinese Communist Party. Right from the outset, the Party made it clear that its policy was to "unite all nationalities in the country on the principle of equality and mutual assistance in order to fight for the common goal of freedom and happiness" (1). Through the activities of the communists, the revolution gradually made its influence felt in the areas inhabited by ethnic minorities.

In 1936, the French colonialists started building a number of detention camps along the Truong Son Ridge to imprison revolutionary fighters, especially cadres of the Indochinese Communist Party. It was from these prisons, however, that the idea of uniting all nationalities to fight the imperialists and regain independence and freedom emanated and spread to the tribes living in the thickest jungles of the Truong Son. At the end of 1936 and in

(1) *Political Program of the Indochinese Communist Party* (1930). *The Party Program of Action* dated June 1932 said: "Down with the imperialists' policy of division and sowing hatred among the nationalities. Oppose land appropriation and the usurpation of forests. Abolish all forced labour by the feudalists, big and small. Drive away all feudalists and tribal chiefs who have sold themselves to the imperialists. Elect peasant committee." (*The Party documents on the Nationalities Policy*, Su That, Truth Publishing House, Hanoi, 1965, page 5.)

early 1937, under the influence of the communists detained at Tra Ke camp (West Phu Yen). Sam Bram, a tribal chief of the Bahnar people, launched a resistance movement against the French colonialists, which had both the violent character of an armed uprising and the mythical features of a religion. Following the example of the Bahnar, the other ethnic minorities along the Truong Son Ridge also staged uprisings. In 1937, there was a series of armed attacks on French garrisons from Quang Nam to Binh Dinh provinces. Bloody repression ensued. However, the Bahnar and Sedang peoples withdrew to Voa Mona, northeast of the provincial capital of Kontum, and managed to maintain their resistance there for six months. Meanwhile, a section of the Kor nationality in West Quang Ngai, under the impact of the local revolutionary movement, also founded a resistance base, in thick jungle. The movement lasted until the August Revolution of 1945, in spite of enormous difficulties due to encirclement by the enemy.

During the various periods of activity by the Indochina Communist Party, many grassroots revolutionary organizations were set up in the mountain regions. The patriotism of a number of people from various ethnic minorities was aroused. In the Western part of Quang Ngai, revolutionary militants detained at Ba To camp managed to convince members of the H'Re ethnic minority of the need for revolution. On March 11, 1945, two days after the Japanese fascist seized power from the French in Indochina, revolutionary cadres led the masses in the capture of the enemy post in the district capital; they founded the people's power, organized a guerilla team, and set up a resistance base. From Ba To, the insurrection movement spread rapidly to the whole of Quang Ngai and other provinces. By mid-August 1945, the Kor, the H'Re and all other ethnic minorities along the Truong Son Ridge and throughout the Central Highlands, under the leadership of the Indochinese Communist Party and in close unity with the Kinh in the Viet Minh Front (Front for the Independence of Viet Nam) had, victoriously carried out the general uprising, aimed at seizing power and establishing the people's power in all villages, districts and provinces. Thanks to correct

leadership and the policy of unity among all nationalities, the ethnic minorities along the Truong Son Ridge and in Central Highlands, for the first time in their history, experienced independence and freedom.

In April 1946, in preparation for the long war of resistance against the French colonialist, a "National Union" Congress was convened in Pleiku and was attended by delegates from all the ethnic minorities along the Truong Son Ridge and throughout the Central Highlands. The Congress took as its guideline the letter sent on this occasion by President Ho Chi Minh to all nationalities living in Viet Nam. The letter said: "Today, Viet Nam has become our common country... This nation and this government are our common nation and government. That is why all nationalities must be closely united in order to defend our country and support our government." (1)

By early 1946, the French colonialists had already reconquered most of the Central Highlands. But the Truong Son Ridge was either in the hands of the resistance government (from Quang Nam to Phu Yen) or else formed resistance bases for the coastal provinces (from Khanh Hoa to Binh Thuan). Along the Truong Son Ridge and in some other areas of the Central Highlands, the various ethnic minorities were united and organized to carry out a war of resistance to defend their villages and crops — and a large number of tribal chiefs and village elders took part in the fighting.

Noteworthy is the fact that quite a few cadres of minority origin, many of them members of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, were trained during that particular period of the patriotic war.

In spite of the rigours of war, life in the free zone was far better than it had been in the past. The people from ethnic minorities no longer had to work for, and pay taxes to, the landlords and their French masters, and their right to the ownership of land was guaranteed by the resistance government.

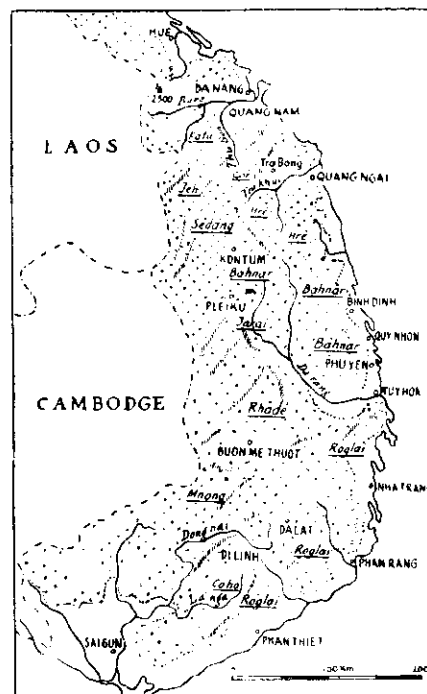
From 1950 onward, with the favourable development of the war of resistance, the people's armed forces went deeper and deeper into the French-held areas

along the Truong Son Ridge and in the Central Highlands to carry out agitation work and set up revolutionary and guerilla bases. Some of these bases remained quite firm, such as "Soap Dui" in Kontum, "Sisteu" in Pleiku, "Deleya" in Darlac. In 1954, at about the same time as the Dien Bien Phu campaign most of Central Highlands were liberated (2). Here, the policy on nationalities was proclaimed and initial steps were taken to put it into practice.

All the gains of the revolution and the war of resistance, especially the initial results arising out of the policy on nationalities of the Viet Nam Workers' Party and the DRVN government, have left the ethnic minorities with deep and lasting impressions and have led them to the conclusion that they must unite with the Kinh, and continue to carry out the revolution if they are to achieve self-liberation.

(1) *Appeals of President Ho Chi Minh*, Su That (Truth) Publishing House, Hanoi, 1958, Vol. I, p. 168.

(2) See "The Fifth Interzone during the Dien Bien Phu Campaign" Viet Nam Courier, No 25, June 1974.



## Diem and the Ethnic Minorities

In July 1954, Diem's troops began to occupy the Truong Son Ridge. Since they had to concentrate their efforts on stamping out the revolutionary movement in the plains, they were not yet able to extend their rule to the remote mountain areas. Diem was only able, in fact, to control a number of lowland areas, chiefly around the district towns and capitals and along the major lines of communication.

However, when the US neo-colonialists replaced the French colonialists in Saigon, they were quick to realize the strategic importance of the Truong Son Ridge, as well as of the whole of the Central Highlands. The latter, in fact, overlook Southern Indochina, with its strategically important communication lines and its abundant natural resources, most of them yet untapped. The Central Highlands also had great potential as a source of supply of army recruits and, in view of the fact that they were inhabited by a variety of ethnic minorities, they could be used as a bastion against the revolution.

Ngo Dinh Diem, once a high mandarin of the Hue imperial court, after being installed by the Americans continued his long-standing policy of bribery and cajolery on the one hand, and primarily, repression and terror on the other, in his attempt to win the ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands over to his crusade against the revolution. The "denounce the communists" campaign was launched in the Highlands in late 1955 and early 1956. Initially Diem used US dollars and surplus goods in his attempts to buy the allegiance of the tribal groups in the Central Highlands, and especially that of the tribal chiefs and other men of note. He hoped that, in this way, he would be able to make them repudiate the revolution and denounce cadres of the anti-French war of resistance. But this method didn't work and so he resorted to terror tactics. In the mountain area of Quang Ngai province, for instance, in early 1956, the chief of Son Ha district ordered the summary execution of 58 civilians in the village of Re because the villagers refused to "denounce the communists." In a similar program, in Nuoc Bon hamlet, Son Ha village, all male inhabitants were slaughtered in a bid to "weed out the

communists" as the local agents of Ngo Dinh Diem put it. And the grisly happenings in West Quang Ngai shocked the civilized world: an agent of Ngo Dinh Diem cut off the ears of all his victims and made a collection of them after letting them dry in the sun, so that he might later provide "hard evidence" of his "exploits" to his superiors (1). Mr Khanh, a former resistance member, was arrested and stabbed to death instead of a buffalo during a so-called ritual "oath-taking" ceremony held by the local Diem administration to compel the members of the Kor ethnic minority to swear allegiance to Ngo Dinh Diem.

In addition, Saigon applied a policy of brazen discrimination against, and brutal exploitation of, people of ethnic minorities. When they set up their local administration in the Central Highlands, as there were no local

agents available, the Diem regime had to appoint as agents men of the *Kinh* from the plains with records of bloody crimes against the people during the war of resistance and former traders who had cheated the ethnic minorities out of their wealth. These agents not only oppressed and exploited the minority peoples ruthlessly but also treated them with contempt. The term *moi* (equivalent to, and even more contemptuous than, the American English "nigger" — *Ed.*) used derogatorily by the French to refer to members of the ethnic groupings in the Central Highlands had been abolished by the resistance government but was used again by Diem's agents, who also administered arbitrary fines and beatings. The old customs of the minority peoples were trampled underfoot. During their

(1) *Wilfred Burchett*: *La Seconde Resistance, Viet Nam 1965*, Gallimard, Paris 1965, p. 56.



*Nup, an  
army hero  
of the  
Bahnar  
ethnic  
minority*

raids and round-ups, Saigon troops, paying no heed to the beliefs and superstitions of the ethnic minorities, destroyed their altars, beat up their old people and raped their women. All the innovations that had been introduced through the painstaking efforts of the resistance cadres such as drinking only boiled water and moving stables and pigsties far from dwellings, etc., were simply forbidden. Schools were closed down. People who refused to discard books and newspapers were accused of "collaboration with the communists" and literate people were blacklisted as "Viet Congs" and imprisoned.

The Saigon administration even banned the carrying of weapons for self-defence. Such traditional arms as spears, knives and crossbows, which had been handed down through the family, were confiscated. As a result, in some places, people were left with no form of protection against wild beasts (1).

The local officials of Ngo Dinh Diem also used their power to

extort money and to purchase local forest and agricultural products at dirt-cheap prices, such as cinnamon in Tra Bong and Tra Mi and *ras* oil in Ba To and An Lao. In many places they also set up co-operatives to monopolize the sale and purchase of these products (2).

The ethnic minorities along the Truong Son Ridge who had begun to realize the significance of independence and freedom and who, over the years, had managed to regain control over their forests and villages, found such policies of the Diem regime intolerable. They had heard news of the implementation of the policy on nationalities of the DRVN government in the Tay Bac and Viet Bac Autonomous Regions (in North Viet Nam) over the *Voice of Viet Nam* Radio and through other sources and this had strengthened their confidence in the ultimate triumph of justice. And the deeper this confidence, the greater their love for the revolutionaries who had been their benefactors and who were now being hotly pursued by the Diem clique.

refused to co-operate. Everywhere the people of ethnic minorities provided the same protection and care for the former resistance cadres as they would have provided for their own brothers and sisters. One villager who was captured and interrogated by Diem's agents chose death rather than reveal secrets of the revolution to the enemy. All the Ka Tu people in Ben Giang district, west of Quang Nam, boycotted the "denounce the communists" farce. Later, when 1,064 former resistance cadres fled from the plains to take refuge in Ben Giang, they were given shelter and food by the families there throughout 1955 and 1956. Such acts of dedication to the revolution were also common among the Raglay minority people in the western part of Ninh Thuan province. A Raglay woman exhorted at gunpoint to reveal revolutionary cadres' hide-out, jumped to her death in a ravine, rather than betray the revolution. With their own hands, a mother and father killed their own son when the latter was about to tell the enemy where a cadre was hiding in their home. As a result of such dedication and the increased activity of the local cadres as well as of those coming from the plains, the revolutionary bases in the mountain regions were not only preserved but continually strengthened.

For all its brutal repression and deception, Saigon could only establish its rule in the district capitals and townships and in a

### The Revolution's Influence Strengthens

Confronted by Saigon's white terror which had engulfed the plains, all the former resistance cadres and other patriots, now empty-handed, fully realized the strategic importance of the Truong Son Ridge and the Central Highlands. They came to the conclusion that, in the rugged terrain of these high plateaux, as long as they could win the support and perhaps the participation of the local people, they would be able to build a firm base for protracted resistance as they had done during the patriotic war against the French colonialists. Thus, while Diem was concentrating his efforts on "pacifying" the coastal areas, former resistance cadres went to the mountains and strictly applied the "three together" slogan: eat together, live together and work together with the people of ethnic minorities. Through constantly informing people about the ideal of independence and freedom and through describing to them the happy lives they could one day lead, as well as through their practical everyday work, before long the revolutionary cadres had won the hearts and minds of the ethnic minorities. They soon succeeded in setting up several patriotic organiz-

ations and in training many local people to become cadres. And these cadres were to become the nucleus of the ever-growing movement against the brutal rule of Ngo Dinh Diem.

Unlike the situation in the plains, the "denounce the communists" drives conducted by Diem in the mountain regions did not yield the results he had expected. The mountaineers refused to report former resistance cadres, not only because their affection for them had remained unchanged, but also because it was a long-standing tradition of the mountaineers never to do anything harmful to others unless their own interests had been prejudiced by them. Thus, in most cases, the people of ethnic minorities refused to "denounce the communists" whether they were *Kinh* or people of their own stock. In Tra Bong district, for instance, not a single former resistance cadre was betrayed, in spite of the succession of "denounce the communists" drives and even though these cadres continued to live among the villagers. In many other mountain areas, the "denounce the communists" campaign had the same fate—the people just

(1) About Diem's attitude toward ethnic minorities, Bernard Fall wrote: "In the case of the mountaineers, the Saigon regime has much to apologize for... The mountaineers were not given even the semblance of local self-government, were often illegally deprived of their ancestral lands, and until very recently were provided with fewer schools and less adequate health services than under the colonial administration" (Bernard Fall, *The Two Viet Nams*—F.A. Praeger, Publishers, New York, 1966, p. 281).

(2) A kilogram of cinnamon cost only five piastres at the plantation but 360 piastres in Da Nang city. The local Diem administration imposed several fines which had to be paid in kind, that is, in cinnamon. During raids and round-ups, Diem agents looted large quantities of cinnamon from the people under the pretext that it was "communist cinnamon."

number of lowland villages. But even there its rule was far from absolute. Many of its administrators were in fact double agents: they worked for Diem for money while at the same time continuing to carry out the instructions of the revolutionary organizations in their localities (1). Saigon could not extend its rule to remote villages, especially in the rugged mountain areas. There was practically no administration in these areas and, as from 1954, the people there organized their own lives — thus forming the embryo of the future people's power. According to a report of the National Front for Liberation Committee in Central Trung Bo, there were in all more than 100 villages of this type along the Truong Son Ridge and in the Central Highlands after 1954. These villages later became revolutionary bases, inviolable bastions of the revolution.

Obviously, Diem had failed to establish a political and popular base in the regions inhabited by ethnic minorities. The few agents he did manage to recruit from among the minority peoples were soon denounced and boycotted by their own people and finally had to dissociate themselves from the Diem regime to avoid being punished by them. Throughout the region inhabited by the Ka Tu people, there were only one or two real Diem agents. And

within the district of Tra Bong, there was only a handful of them. In To Lo area, with a population of more than 2,000 there was not a single traitor.

Meanwhile, and ever since 1954, the revolutionary forces had grown increasingly strong. In the Central Highlands, revolutionary bases began to be established not only in the remote areas bordering Cambodia but also most of the towns and cities, like Pleiku, Ban Me Thuot, Da Lat, Djiring. Along the Truong Son Ridge most young people joined the revolution and were trained to become cadres for their villages or districts. In some areas, by the end of 1957, most leading bodies at district level were staffed by cadres chosen from amongst the ethnic minorities. Most tribal chiefs and village patriarchs sided with the revolutionaries — for example, Quanh Hieu (Ka Tu minority), Pho Muc Gia (Kor minority), Pho Nia (H'Re), Ma Quan (Bahnar), etc. These tribal leaders who participated in the anti-French resistance commanded great respect among their people and their allegiance to the revolution meant that its influence was able to be considerably strengthened among the ethnic minorities.

To counter the "denounce the communists" campaign and other acts of terror perpetrated by the

Saigon regime, the people of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands waged a widespread, many-sided political struggle: arguing with Saigon's agents, sending deputations to lodge complaints, staging marches to district and provincial capitals to urge the Saigon administration to comply with their demands and so on. Also, as they were practised in unarmed combat and hunting they were very ready to take up arms. It was traditional for each household and each hamlet to have some kind of self-defence organization. Moreover, community life in the villages and hamlets has endowed many of these people with a considerable

(1) About these "two-faced" administrators, Jacques Doyon, a French journalist, noted the following in dealing with the mountain regions in South Viet Nam: "Some of the old persons who were regarded by families as patriarchs sometimes played the role of semi-official go-betweens. They jokingly said that they had two heads, one for each side. But here, too, the peasant did not place the two sides on the same footing. The guerillas were the winners in this battle for influence because they lived in close relations with the peasants, knowing their world and knowing everybody." (Les Viet Cong, De Noel Paris 1968, pp. 69-70)



Children in the Central Highlands making bamboo spikes to help fight the American aggressors

capacity for organization (in some tribes, like the Kor or the Ve, the whole hamlet lives in a single long communal house divided into apartments called "kitchens," each "kitchen" corresponding to one household).

All these factors combined to encourage the tribesmen in the central Highlands to take up arms against the oppressors. The ruggedness of the mountain region was their natural ally in their offensive as well as defensive actions, in attack as well as in retreat. This explains the repeated clashes between the tribesmen and Saigon troops. In late 1954, Saigon troops were badly mauled when they ventured into some remote western villages in Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces. In October 1955, at Kim Son village, West Binh Dinh, an elderly man of the Bahnar minority stabbed to death a Saigon lieutenant in command of a land-grabbing operation. Often the minority peoples set traps and dug pits in the roads, allegedly to prevent wild beasts from destroying their crops, but actually to bar the way of Saigon raiders. Another ancient custom in this area is for the family, or even the whole village or tribe, to take vengeance whenever a member of the family or tribe is murdered. This custom of "vendetta" was fully revived, so as to legalize the punishment of Diem agents. Unable to bring the revolutionaries to their knees, the Saigon administration reported to the most brutal punitive measures.

Stringent measures of control were enforced in an attempt to separate the people from the revolution. In the plains, Diem set up concentration

camps, which he dubbed "prosperity zones." In the mountain areas along the Truong Son Ridge, he founded "montagnards' camps." From mid-1957, the people from remote villages and then those living in heavily populated areas were forced at gunpoint to go and live in such camps, which were centered around communication arteries and district towns. Most of the Raglay people in the North Western part of Ninh Thuan province were herded into Camp Brawn (named after an American "advisor" who had built the camp) on Highway 1 from Saigon to Hue, and Tam Ngan camp on Highway 2 from Phan Rang to Da Lat. The rest of the Raglay people were compelled to settle in smaller camps at the foot of the mountains. In Quang Nam province, the Diem authorities founded 44 new villages along a corridor between the mountain area and the plains. In Binh Dinh province, they ordered the population in Vinh Thanh and Van Canh villages to leave their mountain homes and settle along Highway 1.

The Saigon administration also ordered a strict economic blockade of the mountain regions, banning or restricting to the minimum trade between the plains and the mountain areas in such vital necessities as salt, cloth, metal farm implements, etc. As a result, some tribes were driven into a state of near starvation. The To Ho tribe in West Phu Yen had to go without salt for a whole year — all they could do was burn elephant grass and eat its ashes to get whatever small quantity of salt they yielded. The Ka Tu people in the mountain region of Quang Nam had to use the old method of digging holes

in the ground with a stick to sow their rice. In Tra Bong district, Quang Ngai province, nearly all trade activities came to a halt, the local people having to buy their rice by bowl and salt by grains.

Then, to cap it all, the Diem administration launched large-scale military operations for "pacification" and looting purposes. The Truong Son Ridge was one of the prime targets of the "unilateral war" waged by the Diem regime.

The combination of these measures by the Diem regime drove the tribes along the Truong Son Ridge, whose lives were already so precarious, to the brink of extinction. They were forced with only one real alternative in their struggle for survival: they couldn't bow to Saigon's will — they had to rise up in arms. Georges Chaffard, a French student of Viet Nam, was right when he wrote: "They [the Diem army — *Ed.*] have installed an iron regime to punish the tribes for their pro-Viet Minh sympathies. Barbarous methods have been employed which are reminiscent of those used by the Americans against the Red Indians in the 19th century. The Kor, like all the other ethnic minorities, after having bent their backs, were the first to revolt" (1). In fact, the population along the Truong Son Ridge were the first to revolt against Ngo Dinh Diem's rule.

(To be continued)

TA XUAN LINH

(1) Les deux guerres du Viet Nam, *De la Table Ronde, Paris*, 1969, p. 227.

## Crocodile Tears

(Continued from page 14)

quest by the military delegations of the PRG and the DRVN for help in the search for revolutionary fighters missing in the war, for PRG delegates to be allowed to visit graves of fallen revolutionary fighters, and for monuments to be erected in honour of the unburied dead. Is this refusal also "humane"?

Moreover, the US is reluctant to fulfil its obligations under Article 21 of the Paris Agreement with regard to the healing of the

wounds of war inflicted upon the North Vietnamese people by the US air force.

More serious still is the fact that the US has increased its aid in aircraft and bombs and shells so that the Nguyen Van Thieu army can conduct daily attacks on liberated areas under PRG control. In addition, US reconnaissance planes have not yet completely stopped hostile acts against North Viet Nam. The war of aggression against Viet Nam, fostered and directed by the US, is still going on.

As a Vietnamese delegate asked the above-mentioned American

youth delegation at Tan Son Nhat airport, "Is it logical for us Vietnamese to go looking for US troops' bodies while US bombs are still being showered upon us?"

In reality, Washington pays little heed to the thousand or so Americans missing in action in a war into which the men in the Pentagon threw millions of GIs. The US psychological warfare claim about the Vietnamese people's "lack of humanitarianism" is only aimed at diverting public opinion from the continued and ever-deeper military involvement of the US in Viet Nam.

# The "Nine Dragons" Delta

## A Land Blessed by Nature

ONCE upon a time, a small dragon travelled all the way from what is today South Viet Nam to Tibet, looking for its mother. It went over mountains and through forests, removing all obstacles in its way and gouging out a wide path. The soil, mud and vegetation it stirred up formed a vast delta.

Rising in Tibet, the 4,500 kilometres-long Mekong River travels through Laos and Cambodia before reaching South Viet Nam, where it fans out into several branches and flows into the China sea through nine mouths — whence its name "Cuu Long" or "Nine Dragons." The thousands of millions of cubic metres of silt carried by it over a period of sixty years could cover the entire surface of Nam Bo with a layer of soil one metre thick. And, in fact, the accumulation of this alluvium causes the land to advance seawards about one hundred metres a year at Ca Mau Cape, and the annual floods ensure extremely fertile soil in the fourteen Mekong Delta provinces.(1)

The Mekong Delta is an immense plain of 40,000 square kilometres spreading from the Vam Co Dong (the river flowing between it and the eastern part of Nam Bo) to the Ca Mau Cape, and from Cambodia to the China Sea. The delta has been very much favoured by nature and the peasants there fear neither flood nor drought. After rice has been transplanted and has struck, there is nothing else to worry about. Even without fertilizers and irrigation the peasants are

still able to harvest an average of two tons of rice per hectare per crop. If all the fallow land was farmed (and there are half a million hectares of such land in the Plain of Reeds alone), and up-to-date farming methods were used in order to raise the yield to 5 tons per hectare (which is not only possible but has in fact been achieved in many areas with two crops a year), the Mekong Delta could easily provide 40 million people with 300 kilograms of rice per head each every year.

Fish are very plentiful there, particularly when the Ton Le Sap overflows. In the flood season, one can catch fish for one's meal in the time it takes to cook a pot of rice. And merely by scooping the water out of a submerged boat one can collect half a basketful of fish. When the waters subside, it is even possible to catch fish by hand. All sorts of fishing methods are used including bownets, square dipping nets, dams. When the fish are caught, most of them are either kept in fish ponds, salted or sun-dried so as to ensure provisions for the dry season.

The Mekong Delta also has vast green orchards that provide a variety of fruits that are in great demand throughout Indochina, and even abroad: mangoes, "Siamese" custard apples, lucumas, mangosteens, coconuts, durians, water melons, etc. In My Tho, Can Tho, Vinh Long, Sadec and Long Xuyen, there are green plantations on both banks of the Mekong River. Ben Tre

alone provides half the supply of coconuts for the whole country — its coconut plantations stretch for twenty or thirty kilometres. As it is impossible for men to carry large numbers of coconuts on their backs, when the fruit are picked, they are thrown into the canals; they are then carried downstream until they are stopped by dams and collected by people in boats.

Salt is also available in the delta. High quality salt is produced in Bac Lieu and Tra Vinh, whose annual production reaches hundreds of thousands of tons. In addition, the mangroves growing along the seacoasts enable the inhabitants to make a charcoal which is greatly appreciated by the Hong Kong international market.

Two regions deserve to be dealt with in greater detail: the U Minh Forest and the Plain of Reeds.

Lower U Minh (Bac Lieu) of 1,000 square kilometres and Upper U Minh (Rach Gia) of 900 square kilometres were formerly covered by virgin jungle; it used to be dark there even in the

(1) 7 provinces in Central Nam Bo: Tra Vinh, Vinh Long, Sa Dec, Ben Tre, My Tho, Tan An, Go Cong, also called the region of Tien Giang (Bassac, the eastern branch of the Mekong) and 7 provinces in Western Nam Bo: Bac Lieu, Rach Gia, Ha Tien, Soc Trang, Can Tho, Long Xuyen, Chau Doc, located in the basin of the Hau Giang (Trans Bassac, the other branch of the Mekong).

## A Glorious Tradition of National Struggle

daytime, hence its name "U Minh" (semi-darkness). But the energetic and persevering Vietnamese pioneers who went there in the 17th century managed to extract surprisingly abundant resources, from the waters and from the land. Tasty fish are abundant there. The surface of the earth consists of a thick layer of extremely fertile humus that has accumulated over the centuries. In the second month of the lunar year, when everything is dry, one only has to strike a match in order to obtain a burnt-out clearing in which gourds and vegetables such as maize, sweet potatoes, cassava roots and pumpkins can grow in next to no time. Similar crops are planted in the years following, until all the humus is exhausted and then rice is grown. As well as crops, U Minh provides plenty of firewood, timber, honey and game. The innumerable beehives to be found there provide a delicious honey, the colour of green tea, from the pollen of the whitish flowers of the *tram* (cajuput) which grow there abundantly. There are also hundreds of thousands of wild birds in U Minh: pelicans, storks, crows, cormorants, sparrows, hawks, etc. In the evenings they fill the jungle with their deafening, cacaphonic cries. U Minh is a natural aviary and people there can pick up eggs or catch fledgelings as they could in their own poultry yard.

"The Plain of Reeds" was the name given by the French to the large basin of 700,000 to 800,000 hectares that lies between the provinces of Tan An, My Tho, Sa Dec and An Giang. The Vietnamese call it "Dong Thap Muoi" — the Plain of the Ten-Storey Tower — because the patriots who fought the French colonialists from 1861 to 1867 erected a ten-storey tower there in memory of their chief, Doc Binh Kieu, who died in battle. In the wet season, from May to October, the waters from the flooding Mekong turn the plain into a sea, 2 to 3 metres deep and teeming with fish. When the waters recede the soil is covered with a layer of fertile alluvium which is sometimes two metres deep. The flora there consists mainly of rushes, reeds and grass. But this is also the land of "floating rice" — its growth keeps pace with the rising waters and consequently the ears of rice are never submerged, and of "ghost rice" which grows spontaneously without the intervention of man.

**H**OWEVER, this land favoured by nature, this rice granary, this sea teeming with fish, this immense orchard, was "poor." The people living there were deprived of everything. Rice, fruit, fish, game and honey all belonged to the French colonialists, mandarins and landlords.

But the situation changed radically after the August 1945 Revolution. Over 550,000 hectares of land were allotted to the poor peasants. And the people in the delta once more became masters of the wealth of their native land. Such was the outcome of nearly a century of struggle.

Right from the beginning of their aggression, towards the middle of the 19th century, the French colonialists, like the American imperialists about a century later, realized that this region was of decisive importance in the conquest of South Viet Nam, and that they must get hold of it at any cost.

But both the French and the Americans set themselves an impossible task. While the eastern part of South Viet Nam is crisscrossed by a network of roads, the Mekong Delta has countless waterways throughout its swampy lands and these constitute natural obstacles for infantry and

motorized units. From Saigon to Ca Mau there is but one road, 450kms long; it runs through Cho Lon, My Tho, Vinh Long, Can Tho, Soc Trang and Bac Lieu and terminates at Nam Can, the southernmost town in the Indochinese peninsula. Another important communication line is Road No.8, which joins Road No.4 at Sa Dec and leads to Ha Tien after passing through Long Xuyen and Rach Gia. There are also local roads that are considerably shorter and of less importance. All these lines of communication can be submerged in the flood season and so are quite vulnerable.

But is it not the vast swamps, the numerous canals, the immense U Minh Jungle and the Plain of Reeds that brought failure to the French and the Americans. Certainly these natural obstacles were very important strategic elements, but the essential and decisive factor that caused the defeat of the aggressors was, in both cases, the grim determination and great courage of the population, the descendants of those proud pioneers who rebelled against the exactions and oppression of the Nguyen Kings and preferred to leave their native villages and homes and go south in their search for new land and freedom. They travelled



On the Tien Giang River

thousand of kilometres, up hill and down dale, and then had to turn to and work hard to clear virgin land infested with wild beasts and snakes. They transformed their new land into ricefields and orchards; with the sweat of their labour they forced nature to yield its riches. Consequently, it was only natural that they should immediately react when the aggressors came to try and rob them of the fruits of their labours.

For more than three centuries, each generation has shaped and passed on to its offspring the fine traditions of courage, solidarity and the dignity that is inherent in freedom. The French and the Americans have discovered this fact to their own cost.

*There will be no more Vietnamese to fight the French*

*Only when there is no more grass in the Plain of the Ten-Storey Tower.*

and

*The forest of U Minh is the place where enemy soldiers come to lose their lives and their officers their epaulettes.*

These popular verses reveal a great deal about the struggle conducted by the population of the Mekong Delta against the aggressors, both French and American. In fact, for more than a century, these Vietnamese have written many a glorious page in the history of our country, and have produced heroes who are still remembered by the Vietnamese people. One of them, Nguyen Trung Truc (whose original name was Nguyen Van Lich), came from a poor fishermen's family in Tan An. He began fighting the French straight after their arrival and he helped to inflict resounding defeats on the aggressors: the sinking of the gunboat *Espérance* in 1861, the capturing of the Kien Giang military post at Rach Gia in 1868 after a lightning attack. But he was eventually forced to withdraw to Hon Chong, and then to Phu Quoc Island, where he continued to fight for some time. However, the French forces were more powerful and Truc was finally captured and taken to Saigon. The French colonialists tried to talk him into surrendering and going over to their side, but he replied proudly: "I am Lich, the man who set fire to your *Espérance*. The die is cast for me. As I haven't managed to save my country, all I ask of you now is

that you execute me as soon as possible."

Another hero from the Mekong Delta was Thu Khoa Huan (1), who, some time between 1872 and 1874, was deported for having taken part in popular uprisings. On being freed, he immediately joined in the fight against the colonialists. But unfortunately

he was captured again soon after and beheaded. However, posterity will always remember this great patriot, who declared at the scaffold:

*The chief never surrenders; his head must fall*

*But he is fearless, only his enemies tremble.*

### The Bastion of the First War of Resistance

THE Mekong Delta was also the staging base for the insurrections of 1930-1931 and 1940, and then for the resistance war against the French colonialists they came back in 1945.

On September 23, 1945, there were several disturbances in Saigon. The French used their return to disarm the Japanese as a pretext for abolishing the people's power that had been established after the August Revolution. But it wasn't until after one month of bloody street fights, and in spite of constant reinforcements from France, that they were able to break through the encirclement and rush on Road No. 4 so as to conquer the provinces in the centre and west of Nam Bo. Times and again the population of the Mekong Delta assaulted the aggressors. Armed only with spears, stakes and flintlocks, they fought heroically against the colonialists, who were armed with machine-guns, artillery and armour.

Whereas "The human torch" Le Van Tam (2) aroused great admiration and enthusiasm among the inhabitants of Saigon and the eastern region, the exploits of Le Binh and his commando units were constantly talked about in the Mekong Delta. On October 25, 1945 the French took Can Tho, an important city on the banks of Hau Giang River (one of the two main branches of on the Mekong River) that was known as the Western capital. They told the local population:

"Our army has been victorious in World War II. How can you, who have only spears as weapons, hold out against our cannons?"

Two weeks later, Le Binh and eight of his comrades, including a woman, disguised themselves as traders and went to the market of Cai Rang, a district capital. Soon after, a pistol shot was

heard: Le Binh had injured Captain Rouant. The French and puppet soldiers fled in panic. Le Binh's comrades hurled hand grenades and shot and stabbed the enemy troops. A few minutes later they gained control of the market place and began to storm the enemy's command post. After an hour's fighting, Le Binh managed to hoist the gold-starred red flag on top of Cai Rang post, but he was soon killed by enemy strafing and four of his comrades-in-arms died in hand-to-hand fighting. The arrival of enemy reinforcements brought an end to the engagement, but twenty French soldiers had been killed.

In revenge, the colonialists riddled the corpses of Le Binh and his comrades with machine-gun bullets and threw them into the river. But, in commemoration of these heroes, the local inhabitants named the Cai Rang market "Le Binh" and dedicated the following verses to their memory:

*You who go to the Le Binh market*

*Remember that it is soaked with the blood of our heroes*

*Who swore never to live under the same sky*

*As the cruel and ferocious French pirates.*

In February 1946, after taking the province south of Hau Giang and the provincial capital Bac Lieu, the French attacked Ca Mau, the last resistance base in

(1) His real name was Nguyen Huan Huan. "Thu Khoa" was the title given to the scholar who graduated with honours at the triennial literary composition in the old days.

(2) Le Van Tam, a boy of 14, soaked his body with petrol and ran into an enemy fuel depot, setting it on fire.



*Coco palms  
in  
Can Tho  
province*

the Mekong Delta. Vu Duc, who was in command of the 9th zone, personally organized the defence of Phuoc Long. But our forces were weak and could not check the advance of the enemy; they were forced to take refuge in Tan Hung, where they continued their resistance for five months (from February to June, 1946) so as to enable the leading bodies to prepare for a protracted resistance.

Having fulfilled this mission, they split into small groups and went to various provinces to organize guerilla warfare. The Plain of Reeds and the U Minh Forest proved to be excellent resistance bases. About one year later, early in 1947, our armed forces were strong enough to deal hardly blows to the enemy. After having taken Ca Mau, the colonialists had erected posts all over the place. Their gunboats that patrolled up and down the rivers were constantly harassed by our guerrillas. But what damage could rifles and carbines do to thick armour? The enemy used to provoke us by saying such things as: "The Viet Minh are requested not to scrape the paint off our ships!"

But their scoffing was short-lived. In 1947, in Bac Lieu province, they suffered three bitter setbacks: at May Gioc, on the Tho Mai Canal in February, at Muong Dien in mid-May, and at Cai Ngang on the Ganh Hao River in June. At Muong Dien, a barge, 60 metres long, carrying arms and ammunition, was blown up by a mine and the two escorting platoons were annihilated. The colonialists hurriedly evacuated the Tan Duyet post (near the battle site) and within three days they had abandoned the whole defence system at Tan Thuan, Cai Keo, Rau Dua, Kanh Xang, Huyen Ke, etc. The inhabitants of the liberated zones, with flags unfurled, used hundreds of boats to collect the war booty. The site of the wreckage of the barge began to resemble a beehive: thousands of people worked there day and night to build two dams, each 7 metres high and 30 metres wide, on either end of a 200 metre-long section of the rivers, which was soon emptied. All the arms and ammunition that the barge had been carrying were retrieved by our combatants.

After the Muong Dien incident, the enemy soldiers doggedly refused to go farther than the security zone around the town of Bac Lieu and even staged protest strikes on their ships.

The inhabitants of Bac Lieu erected other dams across waterways to hinder the movement of enemy boats and provide relative security for the province's free zone. During the war of resistance, up until the Dien Bien Phu victory in 1954, 72 dams, one 120 metres long, were built in the Ca Mau district alone. With such a defence system, the sabotaging of roads and the activities of our armed forces, which harassed the enemy day and night and compelled him to go on the defensive, between 1947 and 1954 the colonialists were only able to launch two offensives, both of which were repulsed.

Groups of "boat hunters" were organized, and terrorized the enemy. On April 21, 1949, "Glycine D.27," a ship 70 metres long, was put out of action, on the So Thuong River (Sadec) and over 200 enemy soldiers were killed. Two months later, on June 20, "Glycine D.28" which was carrying troops at the time, was sunk in Cai Lach, at a place where the river was 1,200 metres wide.

At Can Tho, the "boat hunters"—nicknamed "Neptune's generals"—of the 410th Battalion of the people's army, sank the enemy ships coming to the rescue of the Bay Ngan post, wiping out all the enemy staff of the Long Xuyen-Rach Gia sector, including the colonel commanding the sector, two deputy commanders and two staff captains, while they were making an inspection tour on the Cai Be river... The most brilliant exploit of these "boat hunters" was the Vam Cai Sinh victory at Hoa Luu village, Can Tho province, when 400 enemy troops and their ships were put out of action (March 1953).

In My Tho, the patriotic combatants turned boat hunting into a real art. Unlike other combatants they had no hunting teams armed with heavy guns, torpedoes and mines; all they had were "snipers" of a special kind armed with home-made bazookas. The following verse was composed by one of them:

*Alone with my fire-arms among  
the banana-trees by the side  
of the river,*

*My watchful eyes scrutinize the waters,*

*Sun, rain, hunger make life difficult, but they cannot shake*

*My resolve to pursue enemy ships.*

These combatants destroyed over fifty boats on the waterways crisscrossing Thu Khoa Huan's native land, thus creating a record for fluvial battles in the delta.

There were also great victories on land in the Mekong Delta. While in Eastern Nam Bo 65 French vehicles were wiped out in the La Nga battle on March 1, 1948, the Western battlefield was also able to boast the Tam Vu battle of April 19, 1948 during which a 105-mm gun was taken from the French for the first time.

Four months later, on August 4, 1948, at Soc Xoai, the enemy suffered a severe setback at the hands of the Rach Gia guerillas who destroyed 17 vehicles and captured a 90-mm gun. It was not until three days later that the French dared to drop troops to pick up their dead. Soc Xoai, Tri Ton and Ba The posts were all evacuated in the panic.

Meanwhile, National Road No. 4 and provincial roads were constantly sabotaged and bridges destroyed, including the one in Ben Luc, which was 500 metres long and the longest bridge on the Vam Co Dong, which was well defended.

By 1948, the people's army had become strong enough to storm posts defended by a whole company or to annihilate a whole battalion of the French expeditionary corps in a single engagement, as it did at Moc Hoa (August 14, 1948), La Bang, Cau Ke, Bay Ngan, Vinh Thong, Go Den, Bien Nhi, An Bien, etc. Many crack units came to the fore during these battles, and perhaps the most famous of them was the 307th Battalion, which was renowned for its hand-to-hand fighting and which sowed terror among the enemy troops.

Stress should be laid, of course, on the important, if not decisive, role played by the six million peasants in the delta who set up many guerilla units which were extremely skilful in their use of rudimentary weapons and war stratagems and which created a widespread

and complex defence network that relentlessly eroded enemy positions.

A number of people of Cambodian extraction, as well as some Catholics, and adherents of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai faiths, were taken in by the colonialists, who sought to "divide and rule." But, once enlightened on the just-

ness of the cause of the resistance, they joined the national union front. In fact, it was this militant solidarity between all sections of our population that turned the Thap Muoi Plain, the U Minh Forest and the Mekong Delta into an immense graveyard for the soldiers of the French expeditionary corps and for their dreams of conquest.

### The Mekong Delta vs. the GIs

THE American imperialists knew that, at whatever cost, they had to subjugate the six million peasants to whom the Revolution and the Resistance had given land and the right to live in freedom and dignity. But, far from disappearing, the revolutionary movement in the Mekong Delta has continued to grow and has adopted a variety of forms of political struggle and self-defence. At the beginning of 1960 a general uprising swept throughout the provinces and dismantled the whole apparatus of repression and oppression that the US imperialists had set up at the cost of billions of dollars and five years of strenuous efforts. It began on January 17, 1960 at Mo Cay, in Ben Tre province.

The enemy launched several mopping-up operations on a divisional scale and erected "strategic hamlets." In the Mekong Delta alone, over 3,000 of these hamlets were built, numbers of villages were razed and thousands of people were herded into camps and penned in by barbed-wire entanglements. The aim of the Americans was "to empty out the water in order to catch the fish," that is, to isolate the cadres from the masses. But it was all in vain. The resistance forces continued to develop and, three years after the "general uprising," they won, on January 2, 1963, a resounding victory at Ap Bac, a small hamlet in open country, 15 kilometres from the provincial capital My Tho and less than 6 kilometres from National Road No. 4: 450 men, including 13 American officers, were killed; 6 helicopters were downed and 15 others seriously damaged; and three M-113 armoured personnel carriers were destroyed. "Ap Bac" became a symbol, a name in history. It revealed how inefficient the "ultra modern" tactics so much vaunted by the Americans

(heliborne, amphibious, armoured, etc.) can be when employed in open country. Even the Pentagon admitted that "Ap Bac" marked a turning-point in the war, that it revealed the failure of the "special war." After the Ap Bac victory, the South Viet Nam NFL Central Committee launched a widespread emulation movement, and there were spectacular victories in Loc Ninh, Cha La, Thanh Phu and Hiep Hoa. Hard pressed by the Liberation forces, the enemy evacuated many sectors. Airfields were constantly bombarded (the Soc Trang and Can Tho airfields, for instance, lost more than 300 aircraft). From 1966 onwards, the Liberation Army was strong enough to defeat an enemy regiment at full strength. On October 19, 1968, at Go Quao, Rach Gia province after 18 hours of continual fighting, the Third Battalion of the 31st Regiment, plus a company of "rangers" and two other companies, were annihilated, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the same regiment were badly mauled, and 21 warplanes of various types were downed.

In the Mekong Delta, the Saigon troops found themselves in a critical situation. To help them out, the US imperialists early in 1967 sent to Long An and My Tho one brigade of the US 25th Division and two brigades of the 9th Division. It was at that time that "zones to encircle the Americans" were set up; and the guerillas displayed great ingenuity in making booby-traps, snares and mines of various kinds and in combining various forms of guerilla warfare, such as encirclement by crack "snipers," ambushes, surprise attacks, rocket bombardments, etc. The American troops were in a hellish situation, they could even be injured by a needle or by the

sting of a trained hornet. In the first seven months of 1967, 1,776 GIs were put out of action at Rach Kien (Long An province), 520 at Hiep Thanh, 1,115 at Binh Tinh, Nhat Tao, 1,229 at Binh Duc (My Tho province).

The US 9th Division was being eroded with every passing day and was being rapidly demoralized. The US 199th Infantry Brigade and a "marine" unit were sent to its rescue, but they were also badly mauled at Vam Co Dong and Vam Co Tay in April 1967 and there were 900 casualties.

The Seventh Fleet was also sent to the rescue, and it experimented for the first time with the tactics of "floating bases" and "attack craft" in its operation "Deckhouse 5" in the coastal region of Thanh Phu, Ben Tre province (January 1967). Frogmen were employed to explore the river beds and the whole operation was commanded by Westmoreland himself. But it resulted in two American ships being destroyed and over 600 Americans, including officers being killed. The "attack craft" were also used by the 9th Division, in co-ordination with the US Navy, in the attack on Can Giuoc, Nha Be, (June 1967), but once again there were over 600 American casualties. The third

experiment with "attack craft" resulted in an even greater defeat for the Americans: on September 15, 1967, 16 of their ships were either sunk or set on fire and 500 of their men were killed.

Thus, in less than a year after their arrival in the delta, two brigades of the US 9th Division were put out of action. As these losses could not be made up in time, the 9th Division was weakened; it lost its fighting spirit and was consequently unable to assist the Saigon troops, who were bogged down in the immense plain.

After the 1966-1967 dry season, the Liberation Army made the most of its past successes and began to launch operations of a larger scale. The "floating base" at Ham Luong was violently attacked: a dozen ships were sunk or damaged and thousands of GIs killed. In the spring of 1968, an American battalion was annihilated within seven minutes in the province of My Tho, that is, in open country. This lightning victory revealed the extent of the fighting capacity of the Liberation Army. American and Saigon generals each blamed the other for the setback. They were still seeking a way to respond to the new situation when the great Tet offensive of 1968 was launched. The combination of repeated attacks and the popular uprisings

in "strategic hamlets" compelled the Saigon troops to evacuate many bases and sectors in the delta. The US 9th Division promptly fled from the plain and, to key up the morale of the puppets, supplied them abundantly with arms and war materials.

In their efforts to "Vietnamize" the war, the American imperialists and their henchmen have tried every possible means of pacifying the Mekong delta. In violation of the Paris Agreement, they are still trying to gain control of the entire Mekong Delta. American militarymen, disguised as "civilians," are directing the encroachment operations against the liberated zone, and the napalm bombing of villages. The counter-attacks launched by the NFL are proportionate to the treachery and duplicity of the enemy's operations. Nguyen Van Thieu and his ilk are fearful that the ground is giving way under their feet. If, even with the assistance of the US Expeditionary Forces, the U. AF, and the 7th Fleet, they were not able to quell the revolutionary movement, now that they are more or less on their own, how can they possibly gain control of that immense delta in which the national revolutionary movement is so deeply rooted?

LE HUYEN and HAO NHIEN

*Guevillas in the Plain of Reeds during the anti-US war resistance*



## The Story of the American Monks in Laos

On June 5, 1974, in the large and well-known pagoda Ong Tu in Vientiane, there appeared two American monks: James William Shanon, expainter, aged 27, and Robert Henry Worky, an ex-marine of the same age, who had served for 14 months in Da Nang (South Viet Nam).

The appearance of these two monks after the date set for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Laos prompted the Laotians, and particularly the Buddhists, to look for an explanation. And the same conclusion was reached by both a conference of Vientiane monks and the local authorities: the two American monks hadn't entered the Lao monastery in order to ask Buddha to bless the Lao people with an early and just peace in genuine concord; their religious mantle was but a cover for their remaining in Laos

to command the sabotage activities against peace and national concord.

So the American agents were immediately sent packing. And the Ministry of Cults of the Provisional Government of National Union issued instructions that they were to be banned from all Lao monasteries. However, with the assistance of the ultra-reactionaries in Laos, they managed to gain entry into the Thoong Tat pagoda (near Lake Thevada, Vientiane) — but only to be promptly exposed by the local people, who at the same time discovered the truth about another American "monk" (Tom Barker, aged 20) who had been there for some time.

Much has been said about the Americans' manoeuvres to stay on in Laos in violation of the Vientiane Agreement of Feb. 21, 1973.

Lieutenant - Colonel Robert Gibson, Service N° 000.009.07, was arrested on June 20, 1974, while donning civilian clothes, for having shot and killed two Laotians in Vat Chan pagoda on the bank of the Mekong in the Vientiane area. Three American spies disguised as USAID personnel in Paksé, employed to entice people into concentration camps, were also exposed. Early in June 1974, 15 American officers were found training over 700 soldiers of the ultra-rightists in Vat Phou (Champassak province). On June 21, 1974, two American officers, together with some Thai officers, took part in a conference with the extremist army commanders of various Lao military zones at the headquarters of military zone III.

That American military personnel and spies should take religious cover so as to stay on in Laos and carry out their neo-colonialist designs is indeed an outrage. Washington has disregarded the fact that Buddhism is the State religion in Laos and whoever abuses it is violating the most sacred beliefs of the Lao people. Such actions will only sharpen the Lao people's vigilance and determination to safeguard the Vientiane Agreement.

(Continued from page 13)

of Education." It also stated: "In Western capitalist societies a woman's worth is often determined by her weight, the length of her legs and the measurement of her hips... We don't wish to sound pretentious, but we are well aware of the fact that Vietnamese society is quite different from the societies which attach supreme importance to personal enjoyment. Western countries can organize beauty contests, including those for naked women. Viet Nam cannot and must not imitate them."

The struggle assumed various forms: protest letters and statements, teach-ins, meetings, demonstrations, hunger-strikes, school and market-strikes, etc. "Education must have a national character" and "Autonomy for Vietnamese universities" were the main topics at students' seminars organized in the years 1971-1973.

In the course of these difficult but determined struggles, there

## Saigon Schools...

have emerged some outstanding sons and daughters of the Vietnamese people, worthy representatives of our patriotic youth who have a sense of national dignity: Le Quang Vinh, Nguyen Thai Binh, Huynh Tan Mam and others.

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Saigon education system runs counter to the revolutionary trend, social progress and national interests. The main reason for this does not lie in technical and professional problems, but in a deliberately oriented political and educational line. At present, in South Vietnamese cities, there are constant and heated discussions about education having a national character and drawing inspiration from national cultural traditions. This is a very inter-

esting topic, but it poses the problem of whether such aims can be achieved in Saigon society as it is at present. Professor Nguyen Huu Minh was probably expressing popular opinion when he said in his article published in *Dien Tin* of May 31, 1974: "Education must have a national character. But how can it when half of the money for it comes from foreign aid? Education must draw inspiration from national cultural traditions. But how can it when foreign advisers still cast their long shadows on our schools? Our aims will be realized only if we don't dodge the problem and are prepared to frankly state that, in order for our education system to have a truly national character, our society must first retrieve its national character."

NGUYEN ANH TRAM

# The Old Man

## *in Narcissus Corner*

I came to know about Nguyen Cong Tieu when I was still a schoolboy. For us, his name was associated with that of a plant, azolla. I had never seen him, never read his articles on azolla, never opened his review "Science." No, I knew him chiefly from the caricatures in the old review "Today": Mr Tieu sitting on a galloping tortoise; Mr Tieu, the "agricultural counselor" in a wide-sleeved robe, wearing a mandarin's hat with one winglet — meaning he was only a half-mandarin — such was the image of this scientist as it was presented to schoolchildren.

Now Nguyen Cong Tieu is 81 years old. I found him again in "Narcissus Corner" in Ngoc Ha, the land of flowers.

Azolla ponds, peach trees, longane trees, arecas, and mangoes. Always near him was his wife who seems to have looked after his work or his health all her life. Every morning, a friend or one of his grandsons acts as secretary for his work on science or poetry. By his side was a table on which one could see a few books and a little punch which enables him to write in spite of his blindness.

In a corner there was a small zinc coffer which is a wonderful story in itself. Once upon a time there lived a silversmith by the name of Nguyen Xuong who was an ardent lover of science. He admired Nguyen Cong Tieu and made the review "Science" his companion. He owned the whole collection of 232 numbers published over ten years, learned to make soap and other things by himself and he had become the "master of sciences" in his region. During the first resistance war, when the French came to his province, he put his collection into a cask and buried it. After victory, he learned that during the war Mr Tieu had lost virtually all his library — some seven cupboards of books and documents — so the silversmith had his son bring to Narcissus corner the whole collection of reviews as a token of his admiration and gratitude. The books are there now in that zinc coffer. Nguyen Cong Tieu has inscribed on it the words "Something will remain..." That was his reply to a line by some poet: "Nothing will remain in a hundred years' time."

\*.\*

When asked to speak about of

his life and work, Nguyen Cong Tieu took out a book from a small leather bag he always kept within reach: "A Short Biography of Vietnamese Authors." "They write about my life in newspapers and books," he said, "but what is said here is quite enough. Look at page 42..." There were indeed on that page a few lines marked off in red:

*The most industrious researcher in agriculture is Nguyen Cong Tieu; the first in our country to have studied the use of azolla as a fertilizer, in 'The Mysteries of Azolla' (1934) and 'Researches on Azolla' (1935). He has also published many studies on plants in 'The Wonders of the Universe' (1924).*

The old man's modesty could not satisfy my curiosity...

Nguyen Cong Tieu had been bred a country man in his childhood. By the end of the 19th century, few people from his village, Tra Bo, had seen the capital, though it was not so far from Hanoi. This land of unequal fertility produced "jackfruit and apples at one end of the district, river tortoises and water nuts at the other, and water melon and sweet potatoes in the centre."

Nguyen Cong Tieu learned Chinese characters till he was seventeen, then was attracted by what was a mystery at that time: how could the yield of rice increase markedly with the use of a small quantity of azolla as fertilizer? Azolla was rare and precious. It was known to raise the rice yield but no one knew why. People had to go very far to get some, and only one family in Thai Binh knew the secret of preserving it, which they kept jealously. The secret was handed down only to the daughters-in-law, on condition that they cut their hair and swore before the household god not to divulge it. Daughters were kept out of it, for "daughters will be other people's children," as the saying goes.

Nguyen Cong Tieu thought that if he was to solve this problem one day, he should first of all have his hair cut (he had been wearing it in a chignon in the old fashion), and stop this eternal reciting of the sentences on the Three Kings and the Five Emperors. Then he set about learning the *quoc ngu* (1) and took the pseudonym of Minh Nong(2).

That was a bold thing to do at the beginning of the 20th century. Besides, the "Western"

pen and paper for the study of the Quoc Ngu were rare and precious as gold. After finishing his primary schooling, Nguyen Cong Tieu went to the "College du Protectorat" in Hanoi where he graduated as a "bachelier of the new school" which opened to him the career of *tri phu* or *tri huyen* (3), or of a "mandarin physician." But he chose the Higher School of Agriculture and Sylviculture and in 1922 addressed his first study on azolla to the Pan-Pacific Congress held in Java.

The "Indochinese Council of Scientific Research," the ultimate goal of which was to exploit Indochinese resources to the utmost to enrich the "mother country," admitted the young researcher among its members. The French Government gave itself a good conscience by showing that it was also concerned about the "development of the natives under its protection." Nguyen Cong Tieu was not deceived, and in 1931 he inserted a "Note for Our Readers" into the first number of his review "Science," stating that "a man of science holds false fame in contempt," that he would "never keep his discoveries for his own profit, but would propagate them for the sake of the common well-being," and calling

on all his "comrades" to contribute to the review.

The note caused a great scandal among the colonial administration. It took a long time to explain exactly what was meant by "comrades" to avert the charges of communism...

Nguyen Cong Tieu spent years behind his microscope before discovering the "secret": the petiole of the azolla leaf is pierced with tiny holes through which something like a string of pearls juts out. This string is a microscopic plant of the same species as blue algae, which lives in azolla, fixes nitrogen from the air and transforms it to feed itself and feed its prop in organic nitrogen. When azolla dies, this nitrogen is transmitted to the young rice plant.

For long years Nguyen Cong Tieu set himself to propagate the benefits of his discovery which had created an inexhaustible source of natural nitrogenous fertilizer. Unlike the functionaries of his time, he used to go into the

- (1) *Vietnamese national script (in Roman alphabet).*
- (2) *Morning cock's crow.*
- (3) *District mandarins.*

*Nguyen Cong Tieu with his wife and youngest daughter.*



ricefields with his azolla seeds and made untiring propaganda for it. Most often his ardour met with the indifference of landowners and farmers. For the former the land rents were the same, with or without azolla: for the latter, a ricefield that was too productive might incite the landowner to give it to a higher bidder...

He nevertheless pursued his researches with vigour. He lost his sight when he was hardly fifty, while in full possession of his intellectual faculties.

But his fight was not in vain. Today there is no ricefield without azolla; it has its place in every peasant household and every farm co-op in Viet Nam. It is still difficult to evaluate fully the tremendous changes it has brought about in the Vietnamese countryside.

What Nguyen Cong Tieu calls "the second useful thing I have done in my life" is named "*Hoa Quoc Khanh*" (1). It is a flower of the narcissus family which includes nearly one hundred species.

During his trips around the world Nguyen Cong Tieu carried on a continuous search for plants capable of acclimatizing themselves to his country. It was on the shores of the Nile that he discovered the *hemanthus multiflorus* of which a specialist said in 1964: "It is like a parasol, 18 to 20 centimetres in diameter, round like a disk; it is bright red and marked with golden stamens, just the colours of our national flag. Its peduncles are linked to a long vertical stem, proudly erect. Because of its colours and its flowering period which coincides with our nation-

al day, it has been named *Hoa Quoc Khanh*."

Recounting this life, we can't help comparing it to that of Linne, that Swedish naturalist of the 18th century, who said: "If I have some talent, it is my duty to put it to the service of my motherland." If Nguyen Cong Tieu's researches have been diverse — studies on the "dyke-piercing" fish, tanning of hides, glass dyeing, distillation of perfumes, etc., — they have always closely related to the concrete problems of his country, and their results have contributed to the well-being of his people. He has lived and struggled with them so that, in a hundred years' time, something will remain...

TRAN LE VAN

(1) *National Day Flower.*

## BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

### REVIEW OF PHILOSOPHY (Tap chi triet hoc)

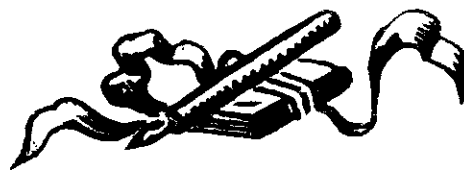
*Review of Philosophy* N<sup>o</sup>.1 appeared in 1973 soon after the signing of the Paris Agreement. Seven issues have since been published. The review deals with subjects concerning revolutionary developments in Viet Nam, the anti-imperialist struggle and socialist construction. The "building of the new man," among other matters, has also been the topic of many articles. The new ethics have been discussed by several authors. Criticism of currents of thought in foreign countries such as structuralism is appearing but this does not constitute a principal point of concentration. Analysis of the

realities of Viet Nam, including those in South Viet Nam, is preponderant. The current ideologies in Saigon are the subject of more or less elaborate studies and criticism.

Studies of the history of ideologies in Viet Nam and of national traditions are also frequently found.

It is certain that in the light of Marxism many problems appearing in the course of revolutionary development are exciting subjects. However, owing to the novelty of the subjects and the fact that most of the researchers are newcomers to the field (philosophy as a branch of science was non-existent under the colonial regime), the studies which have been made so far are still sketches and first essays.

Still, the review is interesting, with the problems it evokes for our reflection.



## CHRONOLOGY

(Continued from page 32)

and the Foreign Ministry of the DRVN issued statements strongly condemning the US for increasing military and economic aid to Nguyen Van Thieu in order to allow him to continue the war and undermine the Paris Agreement.

— The US House Foreign Affairs Committee tabled a report denouncing the Nixon Administration for increasing US military personnel in Cambodia to serve as advisers to Lon Nol's army, thus violating the US Congress resolution on the Cambodian issue.

— According to official American sources, on August 2, three more B-52's were brought back to the United States from Thailand, thus reducing the number of B-52's left in Thailand to 17. By the end of this year the US forces remaining in Thailand will be around 27,000 men and 350 tactical and support aircraft.

— The PRG of the Republic of South Viet Nam issued a statement condemning the Saigon administration for feverishly stepping up the so-called "programme for migration, resettlement and the opening up of new land and establishment of new economic centres," which is, in essence, a manoeuvre aimed at encroaching upon the PRG zone.

— Phnom Penh shelled heavily by Cambodian liberation forces.

5. 10th anniversary of the victory over the first US air attack on North Viet Nam after the "Tonkin Incident." Hanoi papers warned the US of its eventual failure, no matter what modern means of war it might use, if it continued to support the Saigon clique.

— Strong public pressure has forced Saigon's puppet Premier, Tran Thien Khiem, to announce the dismissal of a number of provincial heads, mayors and government officials, and the postponement of the "legalization" of election results in Qui Nhon and Phu Yen, and to promise to carry out investigations concerning the elections in other localities. Prior to this, on July 24, 1974, the "Election Council" of Quang Ngai province had to declare the annulment of its election results, as cases of fraud had been revealed by the population.

6. Signing of an agreement between the DRVN and Switzerland in Hanoi concerning assistance to be given by the Swiss Government in the construction of a plywood factory in the DRVN.

— Approval by the US House of Representatives of a reduction in US military aid to Saigon from one billion to 700 million dollars.

7. On August 6 and 7, 1974, Thieu's planes bombed the town of Loc Ninh and surrounding areas in hundreds of sorties, causing heavy losses to the population in men and property.

— The Liberation fighters in Quang Da province overran the Thuong Duc district centre and its military sub-sector (a starting point for encroachment operations), 40 km south west of Da Nang, wiping out the whole enemy garrison there and liberating 11,000 people.

8. The DRVN economic delegation, headed by Vice-Premier Le Thanh Nghi, Member of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee, returned to Hanoi after a friendship tour to several fraternal socialist countries.

— Souvanna Phouma, Lao Premier, signed an order relegating the premiership to Phoumi Vongvichit, Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister of the Provisional Government of National Union of Laos, during his absence abroad for medical treatment.

9. The USS *Ranger* was cruising off the coast of Binh Dinh province to support Thieu's acts of war there.

— Nixon's resignation. Gerald Ford assumed the presidency.

Two hours after Nixon's resignation, the American Chargé d'Affaires in Saigon called on Tran Thien Khiem to assure him that American policies toward the Saigon puppet regime would remain unchanged.

10. PLAF shelling of Bien Hoa air base. Five 5.F's were damaged and several pilots killed, enemy sources admitted.

— Saigon issued a statement praising Nixon's contribution to the US war of aggression in South Viet Nam. Thieu said at Vung Tau: "Mr Nixon's commitment to the Republic of Viet Nam has been far-reaching and systematic."

12. Gerald Ford's maiden speech, in which he declared that the US would continue to give military and economic aid to Saigon and Phnom Penh.

— Samdech Penn Nouth, Premier of the Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia, totally rejected the deceitful proposal by the Phnom Penh traitors for "unconditional negotiations" and reaffirmed the resolve of the Cambodian people to fight against the US aggressors and their stooges until Norodom Sihanouk's 5-point declaration of March 23, 1970, is fully realized.

13. Approval by the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee of a draft bill setting economic and military aid to foreign countries at 2.5 billion dollars for the fiscal year 1974-1975. The draft bill puts maximum aid to South Viet Nam at 1.28 billion dollars (700 million dollars in military aid, 420 million in economic and 160 million for the "Food for Peace" programme). Maximum aid to Cambodia is put at 347 million dollars and to Laos, at 100 million. (In the fiscal year 1973-74, aid to South Viet Nam was 1.57 billion dollars, Cambodia — 688 million dollars, and Laos — 127 million).

— Since the beginning of August, the Thieu administration has been scraping the bottom of the barrel in My Tho province. It has been enticing young boys of 13 or 14 to enlist by offering them a monthly pay of 6,000 piastres.

15. The Foreign Ministry of the Republic of South Viet Nam issued a statement strongly condemning the new US administration for its stubborn adherence to Nixon's policies.

# CHRONOLOGY

(July 16 — August 15, 1974)

## JULY

17. A large meeting was held in the liberated zone of Cambodia to welcome back the National United Front of Kampuchea delegation, led by Mr Khieu Samphan, Deputy Prime Minister, and Mr Ieng Sary, Special Advisor at the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, after its successful friendship tour to a number of friendly countries.

18. At a session of the US Senate Subcommittee on Refugees, Senator Edward Kennedy denounced the Nixon administration for granting aid to the Saigon administration in order to maintain the war economy and prolong the war in South Viet Nam.

— The Liberation fighters in Quang Nam province launched counter-attacks against Saigon land-grabbers and took complete control of the fortified positions of Nong Son — Trung Phuoc, annihilating two of Thieu's main-force battalions and liberating 13,000 people.

— In Vientiane, the Lao Patriotic Forces side criticized and condemned the Vientiane ultra-rightists for stationing and alerting their troops near the capital, despatching military police to reinforce Vientiane police in various quarters, using their hirelings for provocative activities against the headquarters of the Patriotic Forces' delegation and distributing slanderous leaflets against Princes Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong and other personalities.

19. The South Viet Nam PLAF shelled Da Nang airport, destroying or damaging 10 aircraft and 24 armoured vehicles, setting on fire 5 million litres of gasoline and killing 300 enemy troops, including 100 pilots and technicians.

— Seventh devaluation of the Saigon piastre since the beginning of 1974 (and the second in July). The present rate of exchange: 640 piastres to the dollar.

20. The Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia decided to nationalize all rubber plantations in the areas under its control as from July 20, 1974.

22. The Thieu regime despatched an additional 2,500 psychological warfare agents to villages and hamlets so as to tighten control on the population. On the same day, in a talk with 82 pro-government representatives, Thieu spoke of restructuring the "Democratic" party.

24. The first session of the Committee for Economic, Scientific and Technological Co-operation between the Soviet Union and Viet Nam was held in Moscow. The function of the committee is to study co-operation between the Soviet Union and the DRVN and Soviet assistance to the DRVN in the rehabilitation and construc-

tion of many major economic projects.

— The Vientiane side in the Provisional Government of National Union of Laos formed the so-called "Committee for Co-Ordinated Action of the Vientiane Side," with Leuam Insisiengmay, Vice-Premier (Vientiane side), as its president and Sisouk Na Champassak, Defence Minister (Vientiane side), as its secretary.

25. Statement by the spokesman of the Republic of South Viet Nam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the drafting by the Saigon administration of a joint agreement with any international geological survey company, for the exploration of natural resources along the continental shelf of Central Viet Nam and in the Mekong Delta, is illegal.

26. Tran Thien Khiem (Saigon Premier) and his cabinet were interpellated for 13 hours on end by 38 of the 154 representatives present at the hearings on the implementation of the Paris Agreement, corruption, etc. After the hearings, 23 Saigon representatives issued a statement demanding that the US and Thieu seriously implement the Paris Agreement and expressing "no confidence" in Thieu.

27. 300 Catholic priests in Southern Nam Bo held a teach-in in Can Tho to condemn the Thieu administration's corruption.

28. From July 1 to 18, 1974, the Americans and the Vientiane ultra-rightists flew more than 100 sorties over the Lao liberated zone. Meanwhile, on orders from the US, the reactionary Thai administration sent an additional 120 Thai troops to Paksan to reinforce the ultra-rightists in Laos.

29. The Saigon administration cancelled the Saigon—Loc Ninh regular liaison flight and refused to supply water to the PRG delegation as from July 29.

## AUGUST

1. An aircraft of Lon Nol's air force was hit when it was about to bomb Lon Nol's Palace.

— Owing to public pressure, Thai Premier Sanya Thammasak had to order the confiscation of the properties of Thanom, Praphas and Narong (valued at over one million pounds) but the three men were given 60 days within which to lodge an appeal for the return of those properties which they could prove to be "lawful" earnings.

— At a session of the Indian Parliament, Indian Foreign Minister S. Singh declared that India would recognize the PRG in the near future. Thieu's reaction to his statement was rejected by the Indian Foreign Minister as "valueless."

2. On August 1 and 2, 1974, the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of South Viet Nam

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