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The Independence Palace

VIETNAM'S CONSTITUTIONAL ANNIVERSARY

By Trong Nhan

Saigon, April 1st. 1971. - Last April first, the Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam marked its fourth anniversary. Despite trials and tribulations, it has proved a stabilizing influence in the nation's political scene and put an end to the political crises which plagued the country from 1964 to 1966, a period which brought South Vietnam perilously close to total collapse. At home, some political scandals have shaken the Constitution to its very foundations while abroad the enemy has put forth an international propaganda campaign, especially in America, by insisting on the overthrow of the present administration in favour of a coalition government with communist participation.

Later this year, the strength of the Constitution will again be tested in the coming elections for the Lower House in August and the presidential elections two months later. The enemy will no doubt make a strong bid to create chaos and confusion and push their candidates, disguised as nationalists, in the hope of getting a foothold in Vietnam's parliamentary structure.

Among the more memorable events during the past four years, was the case of Deputy Tran Ngoc Chau. He was tried and convicted to ten years in jail for having secretly communicated with the enemy while a member of the Lower House. Defenders of Deputy Chau claimed the Constitution had been violated since under the law a deputy can be arrested only when caught in the act. Mr. Chau's relations with the enemy, they claim, was not a crime committed in flagrante delicto. However, they lost their case.

Another test of the Constitution's strength was the "austerity tax case" of 1969. The administration had levied a series of heavy taxes as part of a new austerity program. The Supreme Court declared the new taxes unconstitutional since they were said to have transgressed Article 39 of the Constitution which states that only the Legislative can decide on tax matters. The decision was held and the new taxes were canceled.

Parliamentary proceedings have always been a prime target for communist infiltration since through democratic processes totalitarianism often gains by peaceful means what it cannot conquer by force. Deputies Ngo Cong Duc and Pham The Truc openly favoured Hanoi's demand for a coalition government in which the communists would participate. This stand was a direct violation of the Constitution which states that the Republic of Vietnam is opposed to communism and prohibits any activity in favour of it. Although Deputy Truc fled the country, Deputy Duc remains in office, continues his opposition to the government and support Hanoi's cause through his own newspaper. Deputy Truc who fled Saigon, obviously expected Hanoi's standards of justice to be applied to him by the Saigon regime, in which case he would have been executed within 24 hours.

Some political and religious factions in the country refused to accept the results of the 1967 presidential elections. They demanded the formation of a provisional government with communist participation i.e. a coalition government. The most influential of these groups is the An Quang militant Buddhist section. However, last year, this faction decided to participate in the Senatorial elections and scored a significant victory. Once again, democracy and the Constitution survived another hurdle.

Early this year the government demanded that all publishers in the country submit names and biographies of their employees. The Saigon press considered this demand as restricting freedom of the press as promulgated by the Constitution and vigorously opposed it. The press won its case.

The most recent constitutional dispute concerned a new presidential election law presented by the government which required that presidential candidates must have the backing of 40 deputies and senators, or 100 elected members of the prefectural, provincial or city councils. The objective of this new law is to cut down the large number of presidential candidates and narrow the number down to those with substantial following. Although the Lower House approved this change, it was thrown out by the Senate as contrary to the spirit of the Constitution.

Abroad, the international communist propaganda apparatus exerted enormous pressures through riots, demonstrations, mass rallies, and protest marches to overthrow the Saigon regime and replace it with a communist-led coalition government. Hanoi widely proclaimed that a cease-fire could only result from the establishment of a coalition government, and banked heavily on the assumption that the war-weary people of South Vietnam would accede to Hanoi's demand. For example, South Vietnamese Deputy Ho Huu Tuong proposed changes in the Constitution which would facilitate the formation of a coalition government. Unarmed communists, he claims, should be permitted to carry out their activities. The government of South Vietnam put this proposition to a test and offered the Viet Cong to participate in a free general election. The communists refused, proving once again that Hanoi dares not compete in a free democratic election contest.

And so, despite political crisis of various dimensions, the Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam remains in force. The coming elections this autumn will prove to be the next hurdle to overcome. Many political analysts in Saigon fear that Hanoi will attempt to enter a number of sympathizers, skilfully playing their role as nationalists, as candidates for the Lower House.

The present Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam is the second in the history of the Republic. The first, promulgated in 1956, was abolished after the November First Revolution of 1963 which overthrew the late President Ngo Dinh Diem. During the four years which followed the fall of Diem, the people of this nation witnessed numerous coups, violent political, religious and student demonstrations in which many of the leaders genuinely considered themselves the spokesmen for the majority of the people. Pseudo-political parties were formed with the aim to overthrow the government and "strengthen" democracy and the hand of Hanoi was often found manipulating the strings of students, religious and political groups.

The 1967 Constitution has managed to stabilize the political life of South Vietnam to a considerable degree and what's more, many politically conscious Vietnamese now appreciate the value of a document which legally prescribes the limitations of power of elected government institutions and also the limitations of power of those who may wish to eliminate democracy from the land.

POINTS OF VIEW

Viet-Nam for the Vietnamese: By Brig. W. F. K. Thompson

"The Viet-Nam war is a people's war—in the South as much as in the Communist North; a war in which victory must be sought in the political and economic as well as in the military sphere.

'Vietnamisation' means not just the substitution of South Vietnamese for American forces, but the building of a society from the roots up that expresses the characteristics and aspirations of the Vietnamese people. It is nothing less than a revolution, in many ways more radical than any attempted by the North Viet-Nam Communists.

But success in the political and economic spheres depends on military success. And the Vietnamisation of the shooting war is now undergoing its most stringent test in Laos.

Within the next few weeks we should know how the South Vietnamese have fared. I would have preferred to have had such a crucial test deferred a little longer. Unfortunately, the American withdrawal is timed to meet the demands of politics rather than the realities of the war.

The only disquiet I feel centres around the South Vietnamese military tactics—which depend on fixed artillery bases on hilltops throughout the battle, relying on supply by helicopter. Thus, in attacking the North Vietnamese Army's lines of communication, the South Vietnamese expose their own to being severed by the anti-aircraft fire of infiltrated NVA forces.

Certainly the South Viet-Nam Forces have already shown a new confidence and fighting spirit. The top leadership has been weeded out and invigorated, and the young officer entry is well spoken of. There is still a good deal of dead wood at the intermediate level, but such officers have been posted where little harm can be done.

Bigger army

A measure of the challenge posed to the military by the decision to Vietnamise the war can be gathered from statistics. In 1967 the South Vietnamese Forces numbered 624,000. Today the total is nearly 1.2 million.

The Army (ARVN) has a regular strength of 414,000. In addition there are 283,000 in Regional Force companies and 253,000 in Popular Force ('Home Guard') platoons, whose role is to relieve the Regular Army as much as possible by retaining control of pacified areas. Both the Navy and Air Force have been expanded too.

The role played by American front line forces is dwindling rapidly, except in the provision of air support, which must for some time continue to be crucial.

Morale among U.S. military and civilian advisers is higher than I have ever known it. The prestige of their jobs has been enhanced, for they are in the front line of the Vietnamisation policy.

Morale in the South Vietnamese Forces is equally high. They are reconciled to having to fight with less massive fire and air support and are developing tactics more suited to their national character and means, to rely on the rapier rather than the bludgeon.

So Vietnamisation of the war is going well in the military sphere, and providing the Americans do not prematurely run down their air, logistic and technical support there is no reason why this should not continue.

On the political front, for the past two years President Thieu's policies have met with general success in nearly every sphere. Barring a serious military setback, he is likely to be re-elected with a substantial majority next November. To ensure this Thieu needs to win the support of the peasants, who form 80 per cent of the population, as well as of the Forces, bureaucracy and urban population.

The peasant farmers' interests are pacification, land reform and rural development. The urban voters' interests are control of inflation, industrialisation and measures to ease the economic impact of the rundown of the American Forces. Then there are problems like the introduction of an efficient tax system, recodification of the law—and, of course, elimination of corruption.

So far as the peasant farmer is concerned, provided he is in an area not directly involved in the shooting war, he is probably more prosperous today than he has ever been. The success of the pacification programme has relieved him of double taxation (by the Government and by the Viet-Cong), and enabled him to get his produce to market or hold it off in safety for a higher price.

Rural development cadres and village officials are trained at the national training centre at Vung Tau, where farmers also go for courses in improved farming techniques. People's common activity groups are being formed in the villages as a step towards self-defence, and the promotion of community projects such as schools and maternity clinics. Villages now receive funds direct from the central Government.

Dearest of all, perhaps, to the peasant's heart is the ownership of land. In March, 1970, President Thieu signed the 'Land for the Tiller' Act, which in the course of a three-year programme will transfer 2.5 million acres of privately owned land to the actual tillers. This Act, together with a special scheme for the mountain tribes, will benefit six million people. The former owners are being compensated at a somewhat ungenerous rate.

This is additional to the distribution of French and other land previously in Government hands.

The rural economy is also being helped by the introduction of high-yield rice, the diversification of crops and establishment of fisheries. The combination of some of these actions may raise long-term economic problems, but they appear to be immediate political winners.

The rate of inflation was over 66 per cent in 1966, and was then held at between 30 and 34 per cent for three years. Last September a number of monetary reforms were carried out, the most important being the revaluation of the dollar against the local currency and the raising of Bank Rate. Between then and now prices have risen only 4 per cent and it is hoped to keep the figure down to 10 per cent in 1971. Control of inflation is essential if corruption among officials is to be moderated.

In the United States the impact of Vietnamisation on the economy is being taken seriously not

only by the State Department but by the Pentagon, which has recently appointed an Assistant Chief of Staff (Economics) to its Military Aid Staff in Saigon. His task is to study the effects of withdrawal of military personnel and suggest remedies, such as more 'in country' purchase of aid commodities.

So long as the South Vietnamese Forces are held at their present size there will be no serious unemployment problem except in a few special areas in the north, such as Da Nang, whose refugee-swollen population is said to be 50 per cent employed by the Americans. The substitution of economic growth for American aid is highly desirable, not least as a measure to check corruption.

Trained workers

South Viet-Nam is fortunate in that, despite a very high birth rate, she is well placed to be self-sufficient in food and an exporter of many horticultural products, including hard-woods, sugar, animal feeding stuff and sea food. It appears that these are the areas in which President Thieu would like to see the economy develop, but the urban population has greatly increased as a result of the war and people are unlikely to go back to the land.

One most important spin-off of Vietnamisation is the very large numbers receiving technical training in the Forces. This should stand the country in good stead in developing industries to create urban employment.

In each phase of this war, action in the military, political and economic spheres must be kept in the right balance. If military success continues, the time may not be far distant when the most important war-winning step will be the development of the economy — which can be achieved only by the reduction of the number of men under arms.

How far or fast complete Vietnamisation of the war should go is hard to say. Those who advocate a rapid American pull-out should realise that if you Vietnamise the war you Vietnamise the strategy. They should also realise that, unlike the United States, Saigon has no interest in the preservation of the Hanoi Government.

*(Daily Telegraph, London, March 8th, 1971,
by special permission.)*

Vietnamese Legend.

THE ORIGIN OF THE MOSQUITO

Adapted by George F. Schultz

There was once a humble farmer named Ngoc Tam who married a young woman named Nhan Diep. They were very poor but in excellent health; thus, it seemed that they were destined to enjoy the happiness of a simple life for many years to come. Ngoc Tam worked hard in the fields while his wife engaged in the rearing of silkworms. Although the latter often dreamed of a life of luxury and pleasure, she cleverly hid these desires from her husband. Ngoc Tam loved his wife but he was neither very demanding nor very discerning, supposing her to be quite content with her lot.

One day, Nhan Diep was suddenly taken away by death. Ngoc Tam was plunged into such deep sorrow that he refused to leave his wife's body, opposing its burial. He then sold all his property, bought a sampan, placed his wife's coffin aboard it, and sailed away.

One morning, while drifting aimlessly, the young widower found himself at the foot of a verdant, flower-covered mountain, which perfumed the entire countryside. He went ashore and discovered a thousand rare wildflowers growing beneath trees loaded with wonderful fruit. Enchanted, he continued to climb the side of the mountain; on reaching the summit, he began to feel quite giddy.

Suddenly, he observed an old man with flowing white hair standing in his path. The old man's face was wrinkled and sunburned but beneath his bleached eyebrows his eyes sparkled with the gleam of youth; he supported himself on a bamboo staff. Looking into the old man's eyes, Ngoc Tam recognized him to be the Genie of Medicine, who travels through the world on Mount Thien Thai, teaching his science to mankind in an effort to rid the earth of disease. Ngoc Tam threw himself at the genie's feet.

"Having learned of your virtues, Ngoc Tam," said the old man, "I stopped my mountain here. If you wish, I am willing to admit you into the company of my disciples."

Ngoc Tam thanked the genie profusely but said that his only desire was to remain with his wife. He added that he could not conceive of living longer without her and therefore begged the genie to bring her back to life.

The genie looked at Ngoc Tam kindly and compassionately.

"Why do you cling to this world of bitterness and gall?" he asked. "The rare joys of this life are only a snare. How foolish of you to entrust your destiny to a weak, inconstant creature. However, I shall grant your wish although I fear that you will regret it in the days to come."

On the genie's order, Ngoc Tam then opened his wife's coffin. He pricked the tip of his finger and let three drops of his blood fall on Nhan Diep's body. The young woman opened her eyes slowly, as if awakening from a deep sleep. Quickly she regained her strength.

"Never forget the devotion you owe your husband," admonished the genie. "May

you both be happy!"

During the voyage homeward, Ngoc Tam rowed day and night, so eager was he to reach his native village again. One evening, he put in at a harbor and went ashore to buy some provisions.

While he was absent, a large vessel came alongside the wharf and the owner, a wealthy merchant, noticed Nhan Diep. Struck by her exceptional beauty, he engaged her in conversation and invited her to partake of some refreshments. As soon as she was on board his vessel, he gave the order to cast off and sail away.

Ngoc Tam searched for his wife for an entire month before locating her aboard the merchant's vessel. She answered his questions without the least hesitation but refused to return home with him; she had grown accustomed to her new life and it suited her completely. For the first time, Ngoc Tam then saw his wife in her true light. In a flash he felt all love for her vanish and no longer desired her return.

"You are completely free," he told her. "Only return the three drops of blood I shed to bring you back to life. I do not want the least trace of myself to remain with you."

"Are three drops of blood so important?" asked Nhan Diep scornfully. "I will gladly return your blood."

Pleased at being set free so cheaply, the faithless wife seized a knife and pricked the end of her finger. But as soon as the red blood began to flow, she turned pale and sank to the ground. A moment later she was dead.

* *

Even after she had lost her life a second time, the frivolous Nhan Diep could not become resigned to leaving the world and its pleasures. She returned in the shape of tiny insect and followed Ngoc Tam relentlessly, hoping to rob him of the three drops of blood that would restore her to life as a human. Day and night she pestered her husband, buzzing around his head incessantly, protesting her innocence, and begging his forgiveness. Later, when her race had multiplied many times, the tiny insects were called "mosquitoes". Unfortunately for mankind, Nhan Diep's descendants continue the search for three drops of blood.

Note. - Vietnamese folklore and mythology have many etiological or "origin" stories purporting to explain how various creatures came into existence or why certain things are the way they are. The story told above is an attempt to account for the first mosquito and explain why these obnoxious insects are forever pricking the skin of human kind.

HANOI'S NON COMMUNIST TRADE HITS NEW LOW

By Tchang Kam Wang

Hong Kong, April 1st. 1971. - European and Japanese businessmen are becoming increasingly reluctant to pursue investment and trading ventures in North Vietnam. Trade and financial sources in this city indicate that many business houses in Japan and Europe are critically re-examining their projected investment proposals and in a number of cases cancelling or postponing trade agreements with the North Vietnamese. Hong Kong's leading financial daily, the WAH KIU YAT PO, comments as follows on the problems of Hanoi's trade relations with non-communist nations:

"The future of non-communist trade with North Vietnam appears to be in doubt as a result of increasing military pressure on Hanoi. The international business community predicts further difficulties for companies trading with North Vietnam. The security situation in Hanoi is now so uncertain that the North Vietnamese Government has been forced to postpone scheduled visits to Hanoi by a number of foreign businessmen. Representatives of at least ten firms have recently had to cancel their trips.

Hanoi cited the "political situation" as an excuse for cancelling some of the businessmen's visas but gave no further explanation for these actions. Returning travellers have speculated that President Nixon's recent disavowal of any intention to invade the North may have convinced Hanoi of the contrary. The current travel ban might be an effort to conceal military activity in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. Whether or not this travel ban is lifted in the near future, it has served to underscore the difficulties of doing business with Hanoi, and is merely the latest in a series of setbacks for North Vietnam which may have wide repercussions for that country's trade relations with the non-communist world.

In Tokyo, Japanese businessmen are re-evaluating their investment plans for North Vietnam. Japan is by far the largest non-bloc trader with Hanoi and several large Japanese firms had planned major capital investments in North Vietnam. The Japanese have now concluded that the very real possibility of renewal of American bombing in North Vietnam precludes any meaningful Japanese capital investment. The Japanese have also noted that plans for this year's North Vietnam-Japan bilateral trade will remain at the same level as 1970 -- about 7.2 million U.S. dollars.

Japan is not the only country experiencing new obstacles to any meaningful trade relations with Hanoi. Entry visas for North Vietnam, hard to come by in the best times, are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. Hong Kong trading firms are finding it hard to do business with Hanoi, and are pessimistic about the future. Commercial representatives in both Hong Kong and Japan have complained about the shoddy quality of goods produced in North Vietnam. In addition, there has been a noted decrease in free world shipping into Haiphong, probably due to the fear of a resumption and expansion of American bombing. In Europe, financial circles in Paris, Brussels and Zurich have postponed investment plans and the Belgian firm SODEXIM, which serves as a European broker for trade with North Vietnam, is said to be considering implications of these latest developments. Other countries which trade with Hanoi, such as Britain, West Germany and Italy, may not be far behind in re-evaluating future commercial ventures involving North Vietnam. European governments trading with Hanoi feel that a decision to resume the bombing of North Vietnam will result in losses. Against

this possibility, it is not worthwhile for them to risk their money.

What this newspaper failed to mention is that aside from the possible threat of hostilities on North Vietnamese soil, the vast and cumbersome bureaucracy of Hanoi has grown so corrupt that it is virtually impossible to get anything done without being subjected to endless rounds of bribes, kickbacks, delays and numerous other frustrations. As one prominent Tokyo businessman on a recent visit to Hong Kong said; "If you think it's difficult dealing with the Chinese in Peking, you should try those people in Hanoi!".

NEWS IN BRIEF

PRODUCTION IN VIETNAM BOOMING

Saigon, April 6, 1971. - The rice production situation in Vietnam was described as "growingly improved", sources from the Land Reform Agriculture and Fishery Development Ministry said.

The sources said, the 1970-71 harvest season netted the Vietnamese peasants 5,651,000 tons of rice -- an increase of 536,000 tons or 10.5 percent greater in output as compared to the 1969-1970 production.

Such an increase, according to the sources, mostly resulted from the expansion of cultivated land from 2,340,000 hectares in the 1969-1970 to 2,520,000 in 1970-1971.

Meanwhile, the sources added, the number of acres reserved for the cultivation of IR-8 rice was reported having increased 156 percent, from 203,000 hectares to 520,000 hectares.

The authorities also envisaged an expansion to 750,000 IR-8 rice cultivated hectares in the coming crop.

Secondary crops were also reported as booming from 7.7 to 37.5 percent in the past two years. Rubber production from 27,650 tons in 1967 also made an increase of 29,780 tons in 1970 while sugar cane production leaped from 321,445 tons to 442,125 tons.

Besides, peasants enjoyed a ten percent increase in profit as compared to that of 1969 for their production of fruit, coffee, tea, banana and soybean.

Officials of the Land Reform Ministry said that the production situation was reported as "satisfactory" not only in the field of agricultural activity but also in the field of fishing, animal breeding and forestry exploitation.

In fishery, there were 40,324 more fishermen and 6,259 more fishing boats operation throughout the country in 1970. At the same time, sea products last year yielded 577,450 tons as compared to 463,844 tons in 1969.

Meanwhile, the number of domestic animals also got a higher mark with 228,200 pigs and 2,002,000 chickens more than the previous year.

Besides, the quantity of forestry products estimated for 1971 is about 700,000 cubic meters as compared to 406,000 cubic meters last year.

According to the Land Reform officials, agricultural production in Vietnam was markedly increased in the past two years thanks to the help of the Agricultural Development Banks. In 1970, peasants and fishermen were granted VN\$ 6.715 billion worth of loans while the 1969 ADB loans only reached VN\$ 4.614 billion.

"Production on the agricultural field will be much greater next year as the 1971-ADB loans to the farmers has reached the VN\$ 9 million mark, the sources added.

RVN NAVY RELIEVES US FORCES FROM RIVER PATROL MISSIONS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY

Saigon, April 2. - The Vietnamese Navy Friday started assuming patrol missions on all rivers and canals throughout the country, relieving the US Navy from such responsibilities thenceforth.

The relieving ceremony was held at Nam Can, (Ca Mau) with Vietnam Navy Commander Rear Admiral Tran Van Chon and Rear Admiral McManus representing the US Armed Forces Command in Vietnam presiding.

At the ceremony, the commandership of a river patrol operation dubbed "Tran Hung Dao IV" launched in Ca Mau was transferred from Capt. Eugene I. Finke to Lt. Commander Nguyen Van Tuyen, thus ending the river patrol mission of the US Navy in South Vietnam.

Operation Tran Hung Dao IV was launched in June, 1969 covering an over 2,000 sq-kilometer area in the southermost of Ca Mau peninsula.

This is one of eight operations being conducted by the Vietnamese Navy to prevent the Communist infiltrations of troops and weapons by sea and river into the Mekong river Delta.

According to Rear Admiral Chon, the RVN Navy with its high sense of duty has done its best to soon replace the US Navy in the safeguard of RVN rivers and territorial waters.

Following the withdrawal of all RVN Armed Forces units and administrative agencies from Ca Mau area after the 1968 Tet Red offensive, the American Vietnamese Joint Navy Command decided to launch Operation Tran Hung Dao IV from its floating posts at Cua Lon river. The operation aimed at substantiating the presence of the RVN authorities in this most remote part of the country and at helping the carrying out of the pacification missions and the resettlement of inhabitants in the area.

On Sept. 1, 1969 a RVN Navy base was constructed in the area, reestablishing the government's control over Ca Mau.

The operation destroyed many enemy facilities and units at the locality and successfully helped over 9,000 inhabitants re-settle at Ham Rong 1 and Ham Rong 2 hamlets.

Rear Admiral Tran Van Chon, on this occasion, presented 21 medals to outstanding Vietnamese and American Navymen.

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