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L'HUMANITE INTERVIEWS NFLSV'S NGUYEN HUU THO

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[Theo Ronco interview with NFLSV Central Committee Chairman Nguyen Huu Tho]

[Text] Our special permanent representative in Hanoi, Theo Ronco, was able to talk the day after Ho Chi Minh's funeral with Nguyen Huu Tho, chairman of the NFLSV Central Committee Presidium and chairman of the Advisory Council attached to the South Vietnamese PRG. Nguyen Huu Tho granted him the interview that we publish here.

HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR ON MICROFILM

Question: Leading an NFLSV delegation, you, Nguyen Huu Tho, have just attended the funeral ceremony of President Ho Chi Minh. Can you tell L'HUMANITE readers how the South Vietnamese population reacted to this irreparable loss?

Answer: During the last hour of his life, the thoughts of President Ho Chi Minh were for South Vietnam, a South Vietnam that he has not ceased to follow in its development: The struggle for the liberation of the south and for national reunification were close to his heart. For him, the south is "blood of Vietnamese blood and flesh of Vietnamese flesh." He shared with the south its times of gladness and its times of difficulty. He greatly appreciated the contribution of the population of the south to the national cause. He had complete confidence in the fellow countrymen and fighters of the south, that piece of land that he nicknamed the "iron bulwark of the fatherland." The South Vietnamese of all generations from the mountainous regions to the delta will always remain grateful to President Ho Chi Minh, the leader who evinced for them infinite love and indescribable affection. The news of his passing deals us a cruel blow. The heart of 14 million South Vietnamese seems to have stopped beating. What an irreparable loss! How much the population of the south regrets not having been able to end its national liberation struggle victoriously during his lifetime in order to greet him on this very soil. In order to be worthy of his grand work and to realize his wishes, the population undertakes to continue along the path that he has marked out, to unite as a single man, and to spur on the war of resistance with the determination to fight and to overcome in order to force the Yankees to withdraw completely, to cause the collapse of the puppet administration and army, to free the south, to defend the north, and to progress toward the peaceful reunification of the fatherland.

Question: The NFLSV's message of condolences addressed to the DRV authorities affirms: "President Ho Chi Minh is no longer with us, but he will always remain in our heart." What does this mean in concrete terms for South Vietnam?

Answer: President Ho Chi Minh devoted his entire life to the independence and freedom of his fatherland. He pointed out the way to victory for the Vietnamese people. He led them to the triumph of the August 1945 Revolution which gave birth to the DRV. He was the founder of the powerful people's army and the guide of the resistance of our people--conqueror in the French colonialists' war of aggression. Guided and encouraged by President Ho Chi Minh, the population of the south has inflicted defeats on the neocolonialism of the American imperialists, who are becoming increasingly engulfed in the mire of their war of aggression.

Independence and freedom for the fatherland and happiness for the people--such are the aspirations dearest to the heart of President Ho Chi Minh. He said: "I have only one wish, a passionate wish, and that is to insure that our fatherland recovers its complete independence, that our people enjoy their freedom, that our fellow countrymen have enough to eat and to clothe themselves, and that all can do their studies." Loyal to his teachings and to his historic testament, the South Vietnamese population will continue to follow President Ho Chi Minh's path with complete confidence in all our people's strength of unity. The south will be freed and Vietnam will be reunited.

Question: Everybody knows that in 1954 you were chairman of the South Vietnamese peace movement and you now hold the offices of NFLSV Chairman and Chairman of the Advisory Council attached to the PRG. Could you briefly explain the reasons behind your own development?

Answer: Like all our people, all the patriotic intellectuals of the south and I myself aspire to live peacefully in independence and freedom. This is why after the resounding victory of Dien Bien Phu and the signing of the Geneva agreements on Vietnam in 1954, a certain number of intellectuals and myself started a movement of struggle for peace, independence, and freedom and for the implementation of the said agreements.

However, on the order of the United States, Ngo Dinh Diem on the one hand sought to sabotage the Geneva agreements and on the other launched fascist terror campaigns against all people who supported peace and reunification. Moreover, still at American instigation, he undertook a unilateral war meant to destroy the revolutionary forces and to liquidate the patriots and all those who demanded the correct execution of the Geneva agreements.

In the face of this situation, there was no other way for the South Vietnamese population than that of rising en masse to overthrow the Ngo Dinh Diem administration and drive the American imperialists from its country. Having answered the call of President Ho Chi Minh, I myself and patriotic intellectuals waged the struggle together with all our fellow countrymen. We have grown with the continual development of the revolutionary movement in South Vietnam. During the 15 years that have elapsed, the South Vietnamese population has always evidenced perfect unity in its struggle against American aggression and for national salvation. It has fought heroically and has suffered innumerable sacrifices and privations; it is being strengthened as the battles go by and is not ceasing to win increasingly greater victories in all spheres.

The South Vietnamese population, together with its People's Liberation Armed Forces, has persistently foiled the aggressive plans of the American imperialists. In particular, since the beginning of the spring of 1968 which was marked by lightning offensives and a general uprising, the army and the population of the south have dealt mortal blows at the Americans and puppets, winning great and unprecedented victories in all spheres and causing the struggle for national salvation to enter a new phase along the path toward complete victory.

Question: In this context, what is the significance of the establishment of the PRG and what is its influence in the cities today?

Answer: When great military victories were recorded, millions of South Vietnamese--from countryside to city--rose to release the pressure together and to recover their right to be the masters of the country and to organize throughout southern territory the election of revolutionary committees at all levels: commune, district, province, provincial center, city, and village. With the formation of the PRG of the South Vietnamese Republic, one is present at the completion of the system of revolutionary power at regional and central level which is in conformity with the aspirations of the South Vietnamese population and with the realities of the situation in South Vietnam. All the strata of the South Vietnamese population are finding their worthy representatives in the holders of this revolutionary power. This power is the highest expression of national unity in South Vietnam; it is waging a resolute struggle against the American aggressor and the traitors in his pay in order to proceed toward the formation of the provisional coalition government, which would organize truly free elections with a view to the creation of the constitutional assembly and the formation of a final coalition government in South Vietnam.

Such is the inevitable development of the South Vietnamese revolution, a development which reflects great national concord and assures the interests of all strata of the population, of all political and religious tendencies, and of all the nationalities in South Vietnam, including the people who support peace, independence, and neutrality in South Vietnam and who for political reasons must reside abroad.

Question: Do you think that there have been any fundamental changes in U.S. policy toward South Vietnam since Nixon became President?

Answer: So far, the Vietnam policy of President Nixon remains unchanged: The United States is still continuing and is even intensifying its war of aggression, perpetrating numerous fresh foul crimes against the Vietnamese people. They are still preserving the Thieu-Ky administration, a cruel and corrupt administration, as the instrument for achieving American neocolonialism and the "de-Americanization" of the war, aiming to use the puppet army as the main force under American command. The United States still cherishes the illusion of being able to end the war in a position of strength. This is why at the Paris conference they are still refusing by tortuous means to respect the national basic rights of the Vietnamese people and the South Vietnamese population's right to self-determination. The "gradual withdrawal" of American troops is only a ruse intended to appease public opinion and to prolong the aggressive war in South Vietnam. Mr Nixon has broken his promises to put an end to the war in Vietnam, promises made precisely during his election campaign. After 8 months at the White House, he has fully justified by his acts this remark made by Senator Frank Church on 27 May 1969 about his peace plan:

"It is still the same wine that is coming from Mr Johnson's vineyard, but it has been put into a bottle with a Nixon label on it."

Indeed, Mr Nixon has made Mr Johnson's war his own, as American opinion has made clear on many occasions. It is precisely for this reason that the United States is suffering heavy defeats and is the object of more vigorous condemnation than ever on the part of public opinion.

Question: You know France well; do you think that its people can contribute effectively to the triumph of your just cause and, if so, in what form?

Answer: The French people and the French communists have always given their approval and unceasingly increasing support to the Vietnamese people's just and patriotic struggle against American aggression.

The French Government, for its part, has made efforts to contribute to reestablishing peace in Vietnam and to creating favorable conditions enabling the NFLSV delegation, which has now become the South Vietnamese Republic's PRG delegation, at the Paris conference on Vietnam, to continue its work. On this occasion on behalf of the South Vietnamese population, the NFLSV Central Committee, the South Vietnamese Republic's PRG, and the Advisory Council, I wish to sincerely thank the French people and the FCP.

I am convinced that the French people and the FCP will continue to work toward the re-establishment of peace in Vietnam on the basis of the logical, reasonable, complete 10-point resolution of the South Vietnamese Republic's PRG. May the militant solidarity and friendship between the Vietnamese people and the French people be consolidated and developed further every day.