

«The Robot Poet,» by Cham Van Biem

«...An engine, with some modifications, may have a memory and even some reason. We can use it to replace a translator and a writer...» from To Quoc, issue No 41.

I— What is justice? and who can proclaim it in this region of the world?

It is the beginning of the year 2000... The tremendously important story about the art of writing is headlined on the front pages of all papers...

Cong Thuc's editorial entitled «Welcome To Mechanical Artists!», begins:

«Due to the application of the most modern inventions of nuclear science, construction of a mechanic writer has been completed. This marvellous invention will satisfy the growing artistic demands of mankind. The works produced by this mechanism will be up-to-date, will illustrate exactly the policies of the party and resolve all the complexed problems of human life.

«...This engine can produce from seven to eight thousand lines of verse per second. Such a result could only be obtained by the works of thousands of artists working unceasingly for some hundreds of years...

«Because of its «human knowledge» (Nhan Van) characteristics, we have given it a skin. It looks like a young man, strong and handsome... The only difference from a real young man is that it can neither move, nor smile and speak, and especially it doesn't know what a romantic love is...»

Cong Thuc concluded:

«We, real men, must cooperate with these robots, try them in other fields, so as to increase the reconstruction power of our atomic era...»

One year after the announcement of this happy news, the rank and file of robot writers, poets and playwrights are up for sale. Cadres in charge of the literary field, managers of firms, companies, collective farms, compete to buy these wonderful new products... Real artists are set aside.

Ao Huyen (Black Dress), a musician, is sent to study the methods of manufacturing «nuoc mam» sauce; Lap The, (Cubism), a painter, is transferred to the State-Owned Trade Company; Trong Trang (Purity), a woman writer, is now a nurse; May Nuoc (Cloud and Water), a poet, becomes a fortune-teller..., preaching class doctrine to those who are still superstitious. Dang Van Cay, a well-known writer, is compelled to sell his works along with tires and inner tubes of cycle at Cho Gioi (a market where clearance sales are held). Sale of tires is being encouraged and the tires and inner tubes are free of taxes. But the writings of Dang Van Cay are taxed four per cent, for they are considered as useless products. Few are they who are willing to spend money for his works. «Your writing is so insipid. They are not as useful as my sandals!» said some difficult characters. Kinh Kha, a producer, has been transferred to the fisheries service. Swimming fish often remind him of his actors moving to and fro on the stage. Alas, all that is now but a memory!

The artists hate these new comers who sow disorder among their ranks. But we must confess that these robots are really up-to-date, their memory surprising, and moreover, their conduct is perfectly satisfactory, at least much more satisfactory than any real artist in this world..

## II — Why Lang Quang is jealous!

On the Con En collective farm, there lived a certain young poet named Linh Quang. He produced a great volume of poems delicated the farm from the day it was established. Some of his poems have been memorized. In general, his works are rather famous for their popular and lovable character, and he has, accordingly, won the sympathy of many.

But where there are qualities, there should be deficiencies, so goes the saying. And the deficiencies of our poet rested in his frequent violations of regulations. He often left his office just for a ramble or to go fishing with old Mr. Hay Ruou (Drunkard), and the two men used to talk politics or other related topics and philosophical matters. He was also often seen in the company of some other young men, talking of future, of what will probably happen in the world and in the universe. Sometimes, he plunged

into some feverish study on the frequent crying of women and children, the relations between the former and the latter. He once acted as private secretary for some old women who wanted to have some letters written to their children, who were far away. Moreover he was a symbol of disorder: His papers and books were scattered everywhere, his hair disordered, his collar was never buttoned, and, to add a horrible finishing touch to the picture, his works were produced at random, for our poet never followed exactly a plan drawn in advance for creating his works. A most serious affair was that he had fallen in love with Miss Duyen, a girl cadre at the farm, without having previously reported to his superiors. The above matters filled Comrade Nghiem Van Tuc, head of the internal affairs committee, with anxiety and dissatisfaction. Tuc often criticized the poet's acts and accordingly called him Lang Quang, just to joke (Lang Quang means Undecisive, going here and there, wasting time uselessly). The people on the farm called him by this nickname.

The head of the farm, being experienced, and understanding completely the saying «There is no man without fault», treated the poet generously and appreciated his talents. That is why he continued to encourage him, and bought his work while robots were being much sought after by others. He often said «There are still places where robots are not yet sold. The absence of robot artists has not affected the progress of the cultural movements there. Comrade Lang Quang is still capable of serving the farm.»

«Work produced by robots cannot be compared with those of real artists,» he often said.

Nghiem Van Tuc, for his part, always opposed his opinions, and claimed that a robot would be useful at the farm. Tuc did not know what culture or art was. He merely believed that the possession of a robot writer would be of much help to him: Greater volume of work done, easy to manage and the result would be that his status at the farm would be guaranteed — lots of work done, and still plenty of time to avoid regulations.

His first attempt was in vain. He changed tactics, and reorganized his men to launch a campaign against the head of the farm. They unanimously passed a resolution accusing the head as a protectionist, particularist, a mistruster of modern

techniques, who lacked the will to improve the farm. Their resolution also asked that a robot writer be bought to serve the farm or else they would submit their demand to a higher level. The head of the farm was compelled to accept the demand, but he decided that the real poet would still be retained as a reward of his past works.

So, ten days after, Nghiem Van Tuc went to the provincial department store to purchase a robot writer, Serial No III.

The evening ceremonies for the presentation of poet No III were celebrated with solemnity. The hall of the club was decorated with colorful lamps and flowers. Beautiful dresses were worn for the occasion. «The Robot Poet» was much talked of before dinner, especially among the fair sex.

«I saw him when he was brought in. How handsome he is. Although he is only a mechanism, an artificial man, I was seized with confusion when he stared at me,» said one of the girls. Miss Duyen was among them. To display her knowledge about this poet, she talked endlessly of him, having read an article on robot writers published in Cong Thuc. Nobody paid any attention to Lang Quang. The poor artist walked about among the crowd. He didn't want to talk to anybody nor did anybody want to talk to him. The compliments addressed to the new-comer filled him with despair. At the beginning of dinner, a ceremonious speech was delivered by Nghiem Van Tuc . . . It is with the greatest joy that we welcome our new friend in the farm. It is our wish and our confidence that, with his electric soul, he will propagate among us a breath of life, and he will advance us toward the realization of our objectives...» So ran the speech.

Paraphrasing the serial number of the poet, Nghiem Van Tuc said «In analysing the serial number of the poet, we shall find that the number indicates that our new friend has three outstanding qualities: First in speed; first in precision; first in discipline. So I should like to propose that from now on we call our new friend Ba Con Nhat (Three Firsts).

Returning to Lang Quang, Tuc smiled pleasantly and expressed his hope that the real poet will follow the example set by the mechanic poet, especially in all that concerned the status of the farm.

After the speech, Tuc joined his hands on his chest and sat down gravely, glancing at the group of women cadres, saying to himself: « Certainly some of the girls admired the majestic tone of the author of the speech! »

The veil which covered the face of the new comrade was then taken off, according to schedule.

All the people present rose, clapping their hands, drinking to the health of the new poet, calling out greetings and complimenting the grace of the still figure.

Buttons on his back were turned and the sound of starting motors in his stomach was heard. His eyes twinkled, and in a fraction of a second, a piece of paper, on which was printed a speech, slid out of a little slot at the back of his neck. Lang Quang was designated to read it, for it was written in verse.

After the last verse had been recited, thunderous applause followed. Some of the girls hopped about for a while. A mother, moved by the speech, ran to Ba Con Nhat and kissed him on the forehead. A young man whispered into the ear of Lang Quang, begging him to lend him the speech to learn by heart.

During dinner, the wonderful speech was the main topic of conversation. Some long-bearded old men repeated a few poetic passages that they thought to be the most interesting:

« ... It's the time of joyful golden days,

« Red flags flutter, and the beating of drums,

« ... Untold laborers build a bright future,

« Enthusiasm reigns over the farm and the march toward progress continues... »

Meanwhile, Nghiem Van Tuc was nodding his head and smiling at the girls...

Lang Quang was as silent as a tomb, curling himself up in a chair, suddenly seized with an inferiority complex. Formerly, he was the center of attraction. He was asked to recite poetry. He won acclamations for his lyrics. Every eye was on him. Smiles were on the lips before him. Alas, how he suffered from these happy memories... But what was worse for Lang Quang was that Miss Duyen seemed to have had a change of heart. During dinner, she kept staring at the mechanic poet. She occasionally dropped her sticks or her glass... It seemed that she has fallen

in love with the handsome new poet. Lang Quang was seized with a jealous fit.

III — The electric soul of Ba Con Nhat.

Every day, mornings and afternoons, poems from the back of Ba Con Nhat's neck were broadcast over a loudspeaker. These poems were entitled, «Return of the Harvester», «Electricity», «Water», «Rabbit Hutch in Spring», or «Summer Field», or «Cooperative In Autumn», and the like. The opening words were always: «... Joyful golden days ...» and then, «Red flags, ... beating of drums... laborer's hands...» The poems ended with a few encouraging words, for example, «Enthusiasm... steady progress...»

Speaking of duty, the «poet» always reminded us that: «You can give up drinking and eating for a day, but you cannot leave your glorious ploughs...» Of love: «You may love each other all your life, ... but don't get so passionate that you lose your job...»

Such were the poems of poet Ba Con Nhat.

The electric soul of Ba Con Nhat kept broadcasting these monotonous and insipid sentiments among the members of the collective farm. Verses such as: «We can help eating and drinking for one day,...» were recited by every little cowboy...

One Sunday afternoon, Lang Quang went for a walk with Miss Duyen. He took the occasion to propose to Duyen, but the girl did not let him utter a word. She recited two well-known verses from Ba Con Nhat: «It seems that you love each other passionately,... be awake, and stick to your jobs...» Lang Quang sighed deeply in despair.

Time sped by, and it was soon harvest time. The crop was successful and a meeting was organized at the farm to mark this happy event. In the twinkling of an eye, a lengthy poem of 1500 verses was produced by Ba Con Nhat, entitled: «The Song Of the Crop». The ideas were the same in other previous poems, such as «Song Of Successful Weeding,» «Song of Successful Shooting», «Song Of Successful Development Of the People's Inventiveness»... The same words were there, «Happy... Joy... Golden ears of rice... Everywhere songs and red flags,... We have forgotten to eat and to sleep, but could we forget our

crop?... » And in the conclusion : « Enthusiasm,... Steady progress..., Worker, peasantry, and intelligentsia are united... »

Thunderous and prolonged applause often followed the declamation of these poems.

Lang Quang could not contain his anger and resentment. He sprang up, holding his head high, and expressed his opinion : « Always the same ideas, the stale words, repeated a hundred times. I wonder how you can acclaim these insipid poems? »

These words filled Nghiem van Tuc with rage. After a brief consultation with his closest associates, he launched a heavy attack on Lang Quang : « Comrade Lang Quang has a partisan spirit...he is jealous of the success of Ba Con Nhat, » said one. « Comrade Lang Quang spoke ill of Ba Con Nhat... Lack of constructiveness in his criticism of Ba Con Nhat... Too proud to appreciate the qualities of others... » said others. Nghiem Van Tuc walked to the podium, gave complete evidence to show that Lang Quang's criticism was not well founded, and, that he accordingly underestimated the artistic taste of the people, and caused a rift between real and artificial creatures.

Tuc proposed a contest between Lang Quang and Ba Con Nhat, firmly believing that Ba Con Nhat would win; and that it could be a splendid opportunity of humiliating Lang Quang. This proposal won the support of the majority. Mis Duyen expressed her opinion that « if Lang Quang lost, she would break all relations with him », « pointing out that shes could not accept the hand of a loser, reactionary, anti-progressist... »

Lang Quang smiled sourly and accepted the challenge with the artificial man who was so blindly venerated.

The next day, a holiday was granted to all the members of the collective farm to be present at the contest organized at the hall.

Nghiem Van Tuc was assigned to serve as head of the board of examiners. He sat in the middle of the room with his hands folded on his chest, in the grave manner of a high official. Lang Quang sat on his left, wearing a pitiful looks. Ba Con Nhat was on his right, proud and defiant. « Spring » was the title of the poem to be composed by the adversaries. At the ringing of a bell, the whole room was plunged into deep silence. You could hear a pin

drop...; only the scratching of pens was heard...

Our poor Lang Quang had not yet arrived at the fifth stanza when Ba Con Nhat finished his last, the three thousandth. The outcome of the competition was all too evident. Lang Quang sweated mightily, his face turned pale, he grinned and writhed as if in pain. He was again assigned to declaim the wonderful verses of the winner. These were quite familiar to the people of the kolkhoze :

«...It was in spring, and the garden,  
Was wonderful with its blooming buttercups,  
Roses had foretold the coming of spring.  
Unknown laborers build a bright future,  
Prosperity and happiness for everybody,  
Smoke of factories streaming out,  
Everywhere signs of progress,  
Workers, peasantry and intelligentsia were united...»

.....

Meals and sleep are forgotten,  
But life and the country and the clouds will not be forgotten...

Nghiem Van Tuc stood up ponderously, ended the meeting and strolled out of the hall, glancing at his admirers among the girl cadres.

IV — Three reasons to die and three reasons for being humiliated.

After that, the relations between Lang Quang and Miss Duyen were broken off.

He suffered a demotion. With an active propaganda campaign, Nghiem Van Tuc succeeded in humiliating him and his work.

One day, as an experiment, Lang Quang signed Ba Con Nhat's name to one of his own poems and recited it over the loud speaker. The poem was immediately acclaimed by all the people of the collective farm. After he revealed the truth, he was called a boaster. But «Maybe he was getting at the truth, the poem is just fair...» said others. Nghiem Van Tuc, for his part, highly criticized him for having signed the other's name after that, Lang Quang was so abused by the groups directed by two

« mechanical » men; Nghiem Van Tuc and Ba Con Nhat, that his dissatisfaction and anger soared.

One afternoon, Lang Quang caught sight of Miss Duyen walking toward the club. He followed her and he soon found her kneeling before the robot poet, asking for a love poem by pressing the buttons on his back. A short poem slid out :

«... Listen to me! O dear, don't forget your duties,  
Hold fast to your position,  
I'll love you all my life, etc., etc.»

Duyen pressed this poem on her breast. Her look met the ardent glance of Ba Con Nhat.

A horrible idea sped through the mind of Lang Quang. He took out his penknife and approached her. Duyen turned toward him and he felt a little confused at her smile. To keep up his courage, he declared gravely :

«There are three reasons to put you to death: First, you have courted the robot poet, and thus have lowered his morale. Secondly, you were unfaithful. And finally you have helped to kill me, the heart of society, man.»

Duyen replied: «I don't regret my death, I only regret that my murderer is a coward :

«You had to bow to the robot poet, the real man...  
You cowardly forged his name...

You attempted to murder an unarmed girl with a penknife...»

Lang Quang burst out laughing and turned away, his face in his hands. (Duyen still loved Lang Quang but she was trying to educate him).

Several days later, Lang Quang asked to be transferred to other work. He became an ostler. But at night, one often heard him reciting his poems :

«... In loneliness I groan  
... The singing of the birds,  
The joy in the heart,  
I still sing  
The stories of life,  
I still believe that I'll be understood...»

## V — Conclusion

A robot is... a robot, and the possibilities of it are limited. The people of the collective farm became annoyed at the repeated ideas and words of Ba Con Nhat's verses, and, on the other hand, interest in the lyric poem, full of love and of life, of Nguyen Linh Quang (Lang Quang) began to revive.

Finally, Ba Con Nhat was thrown into the waste paper basket at the request of everybody in the collective farm, and the place of the real poet was restored.

The farm came back to life. The verses of Linh Quang were again learned by heart.

**Latest news:** The same thing has happened in other places, and the people chosen the same way.

## Hanoi Thoi Moi, December 6

Excerpt from a talk by Truong Chinh, deposed chairman of the Lao Dong Party, but apparently as influential as ever as a party theoretician.

... In Hungary, the leadership met difficulties because it could not adequately understand and satisfy the main elements of the people's aspirations, and had let the difficulties of the people drag on for too long a time, so when democratic freedoms were extended, confusion became unavoidable. On this point, we realize that while it is hard to seize power for the revolution, it is still harder to maintain this revolutionary power.

Simultaneously with the development of Democracy, it is necessary to strengthen the legal code, and to assure its application. This demands of the people a respect for the law. Only with this condition will we be able to correctly maintain democracy and to avoid such annoying phenomena as indiscipline or restriction on democratic acts.

Premier Pham Van Dong delivered a talk on democracy and freedom before six hundred intellectuals on the night of November 30. The Premier stated :

« We practice democracy to concentrate the intelligence of

the masses toward developing the people's democratic regime, to advance toward socialism. To attain this goal, the carrying out of democratic freedoms must go together with order, discipline and centralization. It is necessary to develop democracy and centralism to their highest degree. These two works do not contradict each other, but, on the contrary, are inseparable. The various opinion must be centralized to form a conclusion, and various forces must be centralized to accomplish the mission. A correct centralized leadership is a necessary condition for the development of democracy. However, this centralized leadership must be founded on democratic development.

## **Nhan Dan, December 11**

### **«Democratic Principles Should be Maintained Firmly» by Quang Dam**

Nhan Van Number Five concentrates on the question of democracy and dictatorship. It's serious mistakes must be exposed.

#### **The Hungarian Lesson:**

One article says that «the main cause of the Polish and Hungarian events lies in lack of democracy, not lack of dictatorship.»

Polish and Hungarian events must not be mixed up. The Polish movements were internal party ones, while in Hungary, reactionaries, helped by their international colleagues, gained ground among the people. International reactionaries took advantage of the so-called Hungarian question, but now, of course, truth has won out. The true Marxist must impute the events to Rakosi. Hungary did not act autocratically enough toward her enemies, and allowed reactionaries to mingle with literary men, newspapermen and students. Imre Nagy was two-faced, and encouraged the reactionaries instead of shutting them up.

#### **On the struggle for thought :**

Nhan Van said: «The struggle for thought cannot be carried out with the help of dictatorship. Opposition must not be repressed by law».

That is trying to erase the boundaries between ourselves and our enemies. The same principle must be found anywhere: Democracy toward the people, dictatorship toward the enemy. Our freedom of thought is sacred, and was won after courageous battles and sacrifices. The freedom our enemies enjoyed through generations was based upon the bones of our people, and as long as that freedom exists in the South, we will never cease hating it. No Marxist would define dictatorship in the field of thought as forcing the enemy to think as we do. And as long as enemies are enemies, they will strive to destroy our regime, so we should prevent them from doing it. Mao said: «...deprive the reactionaries of their right to express themselves...» The work in this field must be thorough.

Owing to differences in comprehension, leaders' opinions may differ from the masses', one social stratum's from another's, resulting sometimes in fierce internal struggles. But we cannot afford to allow factionalism. To refrain from applying dictatorship discriminately is tantamount to widening democracy for our enemies.

Freedom of creation:

Nhan Van is for the «Blooming of Hundreds of Flowers», bad and good being up to the people to choose. But literature, being a powerful weapon, should not be in the reactionaries' hands. Ours is always in direct opposition with the enemies' freedom, and we must destroy theirs. Besides, malodorous and poisonous flowers cannot be admitted in our garden...

## **Hanoi Nhan Van, December 13**

### **«Criticism, Self-criticism, and Newsmen's Responsibility».**

... The press holds a very important place in the democratization of our people's life, as well as in the criticism and self-criticism movement. To deserve this glorious mission, our newspapers must be fully aware of the purpose and object of criticism and self-criticism. Now, all activities of mankind aim at reforming nature and society, and to make our life happier and more

progressive. The long and hard struggle of our people also aims to make our fatherland independent and united, so as to develop our economy and our culture, and to gain freedom and happiness for us. So, each of us is conscious of his purpose in the struggle. The press must be used as a means of propaganda, agitation, organization and education, to help the people carry out the above-mentioned objectives. Like the press, criticism and self-criticism also have a clear aim in view. Their objectives consist of revealing the mistakes and shortcomings committed by the party and the government through their activities, in carefully analyzing the causes and circumstances which have determined them, and in finally proposing appropriate measures to overcome them, so as to favor the activities of the party and the government.

...The press has the right to criticize the mistakes and shortcomings of the party and government's organs, as well as their cadres or agents. Indeed, it is difficult to avoid the errors in judgment of method of criticism, but newsmen must acquire a high sense of responsibility and not indulge too freely in their weapon. Criticism through papers must always aim to make a handsome contribution to unifying the people, and consolidating the relations between the party, the state and the large masses, so as to ease the activities of the party and the government. Before criticism or self-criticism, it is necessary to make a thorough inquiry into the subject, and to have a general and objective view of the subject to be treated, and to not let oneself be enticed by personal considerations. It is only under these conditions that criticism and self-criticism can reach their noble purpose.

We approve such criticism and self-criticism, because the more they develop, the more they benefit the common cause of our people.

The party and the government are ready to encourage such a movement. Our party and our people are determined to support such constructive criticism and self-criticism, and to oppose anyone who attempts to prevent a true movement of criticism and self-criticism.

However, our press will also oppose resolutely those who take advantage of democratic freedoms, of criticism, and self-

criticism, to sow division and dissention, to deny the party's leadership, and to distort the truth, with a view to putting obstacles in the path of our people's revolution. If the press adopts such a line of action, it will not accomplish its true mission, and thus criticism and self-criticism would not be justified.

Tolerating such a press and such criticism is tantamount to maintaining a permanent danger for our people and our regime. It will be also a dishonor to our revolutionary press. Under the people's regime, the press enjoys a great honor, but also a no less difficult responsibility. We newsmen, worthy of our name, unite to increase our sense of responsibility, to take a positive part in the defense and the development of the people's regime, of the economic restoration, and the cultural development in the North, and finally to carry out national unification. We will resolutely contribute to enlarge the democratic activities of our people, to develop the Democratic character of our press, and to fight against the noxious tendencies within the movement of broadening democracy.

## **Hanoi Nhan Dan, December 13**

« Hanoi Press Expresses Its Views Toward Nhan Van. »

From *Cuu Quoc* (National Salvation) of December 9:

In addition to tendencies and viewpoints relative to cultural and political problems, the One Hundred Flowers Blooming, freedom of thought and creation, democracy and dictatorship, all matters which still require more discussion, all *Nhan Van's* readers clearly realize that this paper committed a regrettable mistake in not emphasizing, in any of its five issues, the achievements of our people. *Nhan Van* merely distorted the truth, exaggerated the facts, made up stories, sowed doubts and pessimism in our regime, our party and our government, and finally created an atmosphere of mistrust and division within our ranks, between soldiers and the army, between the people and the authorities, between the members and non-members of the party, and even between leaders and the masses...

### **From Tien Phong (Vanguard) of December 12 :**

We realize more and more that Nhan Van built up nothing constructive. On the contrary, it caused noxious effects. As they do not know whether the criticisms made by Nhan Van and The Fall Selection, according to their tendencies, were true or not, many youths became confused and mistrusted the leadership of the party, and the government. They even had doubts about the benevolent nature of our regime!

Many youths and students who have been criticized on several occasions because of their dissolute habits are now exploiting the broadening of democracy and the issue of such publications to echo their opinions, loudly shouting « democracy » and openly sowing disorder in schools, organizations and society, causing more trouble for the leading committees.....

### **From Thoi Moi, of December 12 :**

Simultaneously with the broadening of democracy, there have appeared wrong currents and erroneous concept about democracy and dictatorship. In particular, in its fifth issue, Nhan Van asserted that dictatorship could not be administered in the spiritual struggle, nor could dictatorship by legislative and administrative powers be used to prevent or repress all opposing tendencies.

By such reasoning, we fear that our colleague fell into the argument of out-dated bourgeois democracy. We are fully aware of the meaning of opposing tendencies. Could the achievements of the revolution and the people's democratic regime be held if these « opposing tendencies » were not submitted to the dictatorship ?..

### **From Hanoi Hang Ngay of December 12 :**

The danger consists in stigmatizing our whole regime through those scattered and untrue facts. Through the Tran Dan affair, Nhan Van slandered the leadership of the army to attack military discipline. Through the suicide of a girl forced to marry against her will, it criticized the humanitarian aspect of our regime and, in fact, of the leadership. Through the quarrel between Nguyen Binh and Nguyen Van To, it denounced the Central Press Service, and even

our policy securing freedom of the press. Finally, in discussing application of discipline, Nhan Van criticized the enforcement of our legal code.

We do not protest against criticism and denunciation of shortcomings and mistakes, even those committed by the top leading committees. Yet, criticism must rest on concrete proof, and must be conducted with a constructive, and not a libellous aim. It must also stress the shortcomings simultaneously with the difficulties encountered by the responsible authorities and organs. It is time to openly warn the « anarchists » and the ill willed people, that our regime allows only the maintenance of the freedom of creation, and not of sabotage...

### **Hanoi Nhan Dan, December 13**

**Excerpt from a resolution of the student body of  
Nguyen Trai School.**

To the Hanoi Administrative Committee :

Recently a number of articles published in Nhan Van have inspired panicky rumors among the students of Nguyen Trai School, and have had a tremendous influence on them.

After reading Nhan Van, a number of us lost confidence in party policy, became worried, and developed troubles and misunderstanding in connection with military discipline, organizations, and with the cadres of various branches. Some students said: « Since there is a general movement of critical attack in our society, as indicated by Nhan Van, then there should be a similar movement in the schools against the board of directors, the professors, and against the school regulations which—as a very small number of students felt—have restricted our freedom ».

This sort of thinking does not display the spirit of constructive struggle. On the contrary, Nhan Van's effect will lead us into excessive democracy, defiance of organization, discipline and order, and into an improper attitude toward professors. Worse still, when a person commits mistakes and his friends

criticize him, he will retort that they are judging him inconsiderately and falsely, or he will repeat the thesis of Nhan Van: Why should we bother replying, when you are determined to accuse us?

For this reason, many of us have no longer dared to offer sincere criticism of our friends' mistakes. Among the articles and drawings used to promote study, order and discipline in the school, we now see a number of articles and drawings having a truculent, sarcastic and bitter attitude, identical to that of Nhan Van's. This evil attitude has brought disunion to our school, but the students who had this attitude, after re-examining themselves, have freely admitted their mistakes. In consequence, we feel it necessary to state the following views:

«The influence of Nhan Van has been completely bad, and has done great harm. It gave a bad impression of our regime and our cadres and undermined the authority of the party and the struggle for national unification.

«We demand that the authorities take definite measures against Nhan Van. The souls of the young students are still as pure as a white page inscribed with beautifully bright pictures of our regime, our future and our happiness. We want to be given healthy thoughts and are determined to oppose anything which stands in the way of our advancing steps.»

*Hanoi, December 12, 1956.*

*The executive committee of the Students Association  
of Nguyen Trai School*



**Hanoi Nhan Dan, December 17**

**« Open Letter From the Comrade Workers of Xuan Thu  
Printing House. »**

To all organizations, groups, enterprises, workers union of state-owned and private enterprises, and army units :

We, the entire staff of the Xuan Thu Printing House, were exceedingly grateful when we received your letters encouraging and supporting us in taking the decision to stop printing the paper Nhan Van. These letters gave us more confidence in the success of our struggle.

We have received many letters from various organizations, groups and enterprises. Your approval proves that the actions of the working class are always in accord, aiming at protecting our regime and our people's democratic government.

This approval also shows that our struggle is just, and in accordance with the aspirations of our people. We firmly believe that the Hanoi Administrative Committee and the government will approve our resolutions as well as yours.

We promise you all to struggle harder in order to protect the accomplishments of the revolution, which our people obtained at the expense of their own blood and bones.

*The entire staff of the Xuan Thu Printing House*



# HO'S DECREE ON THE PRESS

**Broadcast: Hanoi Radio's «Voice of Vietnam.»**

Hanoi, Dec. 15.— President Ho Chi Minh yesterday signed a decree defining the nature, tasks, rights, and activities of the Press in the Vietnam Democratic Republic. The decree has been issued, following a government decision in agreement with the Standing Committee of the National Assembly.

As stipulated by Article One, the decree aims at ensuring the people's freedom of expression in the press and at the same time preventing any misuse of this freedom to harm the struggle for peace, national unity, independence, and democracy of the country.

Regarding the nature of the press under the democratic republican regime, the decree points out: «The press under our regime, no matter whether it belongs to a public service, a political party, a mass organization, or to private individuals, is a tool of struggle for the people. It must serve the interests of the country and the people, safeguard the people's democratic regime and support the government of the Vietnam Democratic Republic.»

The decree clearly provides for the guarantee of the people's freedom of expression in the press. «All the press,» the decree says, «enjoys liberty of expression and is not submitted to censorship before publication. A government decision should be taken in case of emergency, imposing indispensable temporary censorship.»

«The press has the right of reflecting the aspirations and

opinions of the people towards various state organs and mass organizations, of making suggestions on the building and realization of the government's policies,» the decree adds.

To ensure correct use of the freedom of expression, the decree stipulates that the press must abide by the following obligations:

One—not to carry propaganda against government laws; not to entice the people to refrain from abiding by, or to oppose, the government laws and political line; not to publish articles aimed at opposing the people's democratic regime and the people's power, at sowing discord between the people and the government; between the people and the army, not to provoke opinions or acts detrimental to public security and order;

Two—not to carry out propaganda detrimental to the consolidation of peace, the realization of national unity, and to the completion of Vietnam's independence and democracy; propaganda having the effect of weakening the unity and fighting spirit of the people and the army;

Three—not to carry out propaganda sowing discord among the people in the country and hatred among peoples of various countries, causing damage to the friendship between the Vietnamese people and friendly people; not to carry out propaganda in favor of chauvinism, imperialism, and war;

Four—not to reveal state secrets.

Five—not to carry out propaganda in favor of prostitution and depraved culture.

The December 14 decree is warmly acclaimed by all the Hanoi daily papers today.

Thoi Moi editorially writes: «We unanimously hold the view that the people's freedom of expression is fully guaranteed, such as the liberty of voicing in the press their aspirations and constructive proposals to state organs, mass organizations etc... it is precisely because of its aims of ensuring the freedom of expression of the overwhelming majority of the people that the issuance of the decree of the President of the Vietnam Democratic Republic at this present juncture is indispensable.»

«The decree has clearly defined the democratic rights of the people in the field of expression in the press. At the same time, it reflects the dictatorship of the people's democratic power

towards those who misuse the people's freedoms so as to cause harm to the popular masses.»

Commenting on the same decree, Nhan Dan says: «The fundamental point stipulated by the new decree on the press is the freedom of expression of the people. The population of North Vietnam enjoys freedom of expression and other democratic liberties. This is a result of the entire process of struggle and sacrifice carried out by the entire people, including the journalists.

The Hanoi Hang Ngay (Hanoi Daily) also points out in editorial; «Our power is a people's democratic one built up through a long revolution and hard war of resistance. For this reason, the press has the task of safeguarding this regime, educating and mobilizing the people to implement all policies of the leading party and government. On the other hand, our press assumes the clear task of opposing all plots and acts aimed at destroying the fruits of the revolution.»

## **Hanoi Thoi Moi, December 18**

### **«Suspension of Paper Nhan Van»**

Order Number 610 of the Administrative Committee in Hanoi;

Referring to Decree No. 254, issued November 19, 1948, relating to the people's organization of all grades,

Referring to the decisions of the Government Council dated November 3 and 4, 1953, relating to the creation of the Hanoi Administrative Committee,

Referring to Memorandum No. 975, dated November 23, 1954, issued by the Ministry of the Interior, specifying the responsibilities of the Military and Administrative Committee,

Referring to the five propaganda disciplines of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam,

Considers that the Nhan Van, issues 1 to 5, published recently, contain many articles distorting the truth, slandering and sowing dissension, has impugned the people's democratic

regime and has, in practice, provoked many effects detrimental to the order and security of the municipality,

Decides :

One — To suspend publication of the paper Nhan Van effective from the issuance date of this decision, and to prohibit the circulation of the five issues of this paper immediately after the promulgation of this decision,

Two — The Secretariat Chief of the Administrative Committee of Hanoi is charged with executing the above decision.

The chairman of the Administrative Committee of Hanoi.

Signed: Tran Duy Hung

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## **Hanoi Vietnam News Agency, December 19**

In Morse code, to South Vietnam

### *Summary*

During the past two months, five issues of Nhan Van were published. All these issues sowed doubt about the nature of our regime, and about the leadership of the party and government. One finds that in the first issue there are six articles — nearly all of the issue — attacking party leadership, the army, the Arts and Letters Association, the Youth Union, trade cadres, and political cadres.

In the second issue, there are seven articles attacking the arts and letters leadership, security cadres, trade cadres, and health cadres.

In the third issue, there are six articles attacking party members, the party newspaper, and the trade organ.

In the fourth issue, there are eight articles attacking the Central Press Bureau, the State Trade Organ and its policy, such party activities as the education of cadres, party members, and the party newspaper.

In the fifth issue, there are five articles attacking party leadership in art, literature, and the press, party members, the party newspaper, and the Central Press Bureau.

In a word, most of the articles in the five issues of Nhan Van distorted the truth and Marxism-Leninism, causing the readers to become discouraged, pessimistic, and dubious of our regime and leadership. They aided the enemy to carry out counter propaganda and had a disastrous effect on the consolidation of North Vietnam and the struggle for national unification.

The evil political tendencies of Nhan Van which appeared in its first issue and grew more serious in subsequent issues, have caused a wave of indignation among Hanoi press opinion, cadres, and intellectuals. From the very first, Nhan Dan as well as other newspapers, fellow writers and readers voiced their criticism of the incorrect attitude and false content of Nhan Van.

Thoi Moi said: There are too few correct points and too many wrong points in Nhan Van.

Tien Phong, organ of the Vietnam National Salvation Youth Union, said, in its December 12 issue: Day after day, people see more clearly that Nhan Van is not constructive. On the contrary, it has created bad and injurious influences.

Cuu Quoc, organ of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, said in its December 9 issue: Nhan Van distorts the truth, makes mountains out of molehills, makes categorical statements on things that do not exist, and spreads doubt and pessimism about our regime, party and government, and creates an atmosphere of doubt and disunity in our ranks, between fighters and the army, between the people and the administration, between non-party members and party members, and between the masses and the leaders.

Despite many articles criticizing the press, many letters from units and individuals, requesting that private talks be held with those who had organized Nhan Van in order to correct their wrong attitude, Nhan Van refused to correct itself, but, in its later issues, went more deeply into slanders and distortions, and had even planned on publishing a sixth issue to attack the policy of the party and government. However, the organizers of Nhan Van were unable to continue to deceive the public.

The workers of the Xuan Thu Printing House refused to print Nhan Van. On December 10 they held a trade union meeting adopting a resolution requesting our administration to adopt a stand regarding this publication. On December 10, more than 500

workers of 30 private printing houses in Hanoi held a conference and drafted a resolution supporting the proposals of the workers of the Xuan Thu Printing House. They expressed hope that the Hanoi Administrative Committee would adopt a proper stand toward Nhan Van.

On December 13, responding to the Hanoi printing workers, thousands of workers of various strata of Hanoi people sent a petition bearing over 10,000 signatures to the Premier's office, the National Assembly Standing Committee, the Ministry of Justice, and the Central Press Bureau, proposing that the government adopt a timely and appropriate measure toward Nhan Van. The petition criticized this publication for slandering and distorting the people's democratic regime. This was followed by many petitions from a number of units, including state enterprises, private enterprises, construction sites, schools, hospitals, organizations, branches of the Labor Youth Union and of the Student Union, many groups of intellectuals and so forth, bearing tens of thousands of signatures. They were sent to the Administrative Committee, opposing Nhan Van's slanderous and distorting propaganda and requesting the Administrative Committee to adopt a definite stand.

Complying with the aspirations and righteous submitted by various circles of the people, and in view of the fact that the five issues of Nhan Van had carried several articles distorting the truth, causing disunity and doubt, and disturbing the order and security of the city, the Hanoi Administrative Committee on December 15, 1956, issued a decree suspending Nhan Van, effective December 15, 1956, and prohibiting the circulation of all its issues, following the promulgation of the decree.

## **Hanoi Nhan Dan, December 21**

« Communique of the Arts and Letters Association. »

...In the moral struggle against Nhan Van, the Standing Committee has been mistaken in failing to direct this struggle

with order and cohesion, as a result of which the bad influence of Nhan Van still prevails. This mistake was manifested by Van Nghe (Arts and Letters), the official organ of the association, which failed to express its own view on the evil tendencies of Nhan Van, but published a number of readers' letters on the subject.

The standing committee hopes that the comrade artists and writers, including the editors of Nhan Van, will realize more clearly the disastrous effects caused by this paper, and will positively struggle against its dangerous tendencies...

### **Hanoi Nhan Dan, December 21**

#### **“Statement from the Executive Committee of the Normal School Students' Association about Dat Moi Magazine.”**

After reading the Dat Moi (New Soil) Magazine, Number 1, we must make a few corrections on certain points.

One—the opinions expressed in the magazine came only from a few students who had already left the school. The students of the Normal School, (humanity classes), do not consider these opinions as their own.

Two—during the last summer holidays, the students of the humanity classes of the Normal School began to criticize the shortcomings of the leadership of all levels with a frankly constructive attitude.

According to Doi Moi, Number 1, this criticism complied with that of Nhan Van and Selected Literary Works. We reject that assertion.

Three—at the beginning of this school year, the arts students proposed to the faculty that students who merely audit lectures be permitted to take examinations. One of these students was Phung Quan, but the students have never been bothered by the lack of concern for Phung Quan exhibited by the University's Department of Education and the Ministry of Education, as Dat Moi asserted.

Four—the leadership of the Collective life in the Vietnam

Students House, was not completely satisfactory last year. So, the students were forced to live restrainedly and mechanically. This is a result of the partisanship of a certain number of narrow-minded cadres, and a consequence of the mistakes of the Fifth Phase of the land reform.

In spite of this shortcoming, collective life in the Students' House always exerts a good effect on the students' study, thought and life. Dat Moi only pointed out shortcomings, it has thus stretched the truth too far.

Above are a few concrete points we bring to the attention of the public, to set the facts in their true light.

*Hanoi, December 18, 1956*

*Signed: The Executive Committee of the Normal  
School Students' Association.*

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**Hanoi Nhan Dan, January 31**

**« Let Us Score New Successes This New Year »  
by Truong Chinh**

(To think that the recent violence in Poland and Hungary, and in North Vietnam, was the inevitable consequence of mistakes committed by the leadership, is to be in favor of the Nhan Van group, and the rebels and rioters as well.)

... From the work of oppression against the reactionaries in Quynh Yen and Cau Giat, and the suppression of the paper Nhan Van, it is clearly seen that, if the people's democratic regime did not ceaselessly attack the anti-revolutionary forces, it would be overthrown by them, and if it did not patiently undertake the retraining of the backward elements, then backward thoughts would be resumed. So the extension of democracy must go hand in hand with the increase of dictatorship. With respect to a revolutionary power, the oppression against the anti-revolutionary elements becomes a necessity. In our regime, people cannot pretend that they are part of the masses, and that they can do what they like. On the contrary, any one who acts against the regime or commits mistakes must be punished by the law in accordance with the severity of the case.

While the paper Nhan Van attacked the party leadership, and while war and violence broke out respectively in Egypt and Hungary, a number of party members, not including the cadres and members having a sound ideological background, were so pessimistic that they only saw mistakes and forgot our exploits. They thought that the violence provoked by the reactionaries hiding themselves under religious cover, and the acts of the Nhan Van group in our country, like the Poznan and Hungarian affairs, were inevitable consequences of the mistakes committed by the leadership. Such thinking proves that they are in favor of the Nhan Van group, and the rebels and rioters as well, and that they are against the party leadership.

A number of other comrades, due to their dissatisfaction with their work, also profited from the criticism and self-criticism of the party to magnify our mistakes, for demagogic purposes.

Some other people consider themselves above the party organization, and superior to the masses, which thus affects the union within the party and creates doubts among the masses. Some party members even side with the dishonest elements to attack the party and approve backward viewpoints contrary to the policy of the party.

What is regrettable is that in the fact of this situation, some of our party echelons did not have a correct attitude, did not criticize and correct the errors of those comrades, and tactically permitted, or remained inactive when faced with their incorrect acts.

The study of the resolution of the Tenth Congress of the Party Central Committee, the one-month propaganda on the situation and the policy application in the various chief towns and the study of the party general policy in the country-side relative to the correction of mistakes, have brought about good results. Erroneous thoughts of the cadres, party members and the masses have been corrected. Conservative thoughts, complacency, pessimistic thoughts and doubts are beginning to be corrected. The ideological standpoint of a number of cadres, which, some time ago, was confused, is not well clarified and strengthened...

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