

# NOTE ON QUANG BINH-VINH LINH

The provisional demarcation line along the 17th parallel, stipulated by the Geneva Agreements, coincides with the river Benhai; north of this river, Vinhlinh district (capital: Hoxa) spreads over fifteen kilometres and is inhabited by about 70,000 people. The demilitarized zone runs three kilometres north and south of the river; Hienluong bridge on National Highway no.1 joins the Northern to the Southern zone.

Quangbinh province lies north of Vinhlinh up to the 18th parallel, with an area of about 9,000 square kilometres and a population of nearly 500,000. A mountain ridge, Hoanhson, separates Quangbinh from provinces more to the north. South of Hoanhson, the territory of Vietnam narrows down and looks wasp-waisted on a map, the distance between the Lao border and the sea being not more than fifty kilometres on an average. Mountain spurs reach almost the seashore, and the small coastal plains, hemmed in between dunes and forest, are often but a few kilometres wide. The geographical situation of Quangbinh-Vinhlinh explains why the enemy has concentrated his attacks on this region; besides, the length of the coast (about 150 kilometres) facilitates naval attacks and commando raids from the sea. The narrow width of the plains, where the villages are concentrated, renders them more vulnerable to air bombing.

The coastal plains are not very fertile and are constantly under the threat of both the sand and the sudden swellings of the rivers which flow down the slopes of the Truongson range. Thus agriculture in Quangbinh-Vinhlinh is less productive than in other provinces. Nearly 30,000 people make a living from sea-fishing, and their boats have often been attacked by enemy planes and ships.

Off the mouth of the river Benhai is Conco, a small island of about four square kilometres. Enemy planes and ships crossing the 17th parallel to conduct hostile action against North Vietnam have to pass before this island,

which becomes a real lookout post of the D.R.V. And so Conco has been repeatedly attacked.

One can say that Quangbinh - Vinhlinh contains every geographical and economic disadvantage, which exposes it to daily air and naval attacks. But it has also a major trump: for seven years, from 1947 to 1954, its population victoriously fought against the French expeditionary corps, and many battles were waged on its territory. Many of those who now lead the anti-American resistance, especially Party cadres, were already active at the time of the anti-French resistance.

The setting up of socialist structures (agricultural and fishing co-operatives) has been carried out swiftly and involves over 95% of the population. Thus, it is a battle-hardened population, led by an experienced party and working in socialist structures, which has faced enemy attacks. This human and social factor is the decisive element which has offset all geographical and economic disadvantages.