

Cole Black, Lieutenant-Commander, the leader of a squadron of F.8 planes operating over North Viet Nam said, "Your gunners have gained the respect of the American fighter pilots in the manner in which they defend their country. They stand steadfast in the face of bombs, rockets and cannon fire. They are indeed an eager and tenacious group of fighting men."

Captured Lieutenant James Rey has expressed a great admiration for the Vietnamese fighters. Our peasants, he said, have become first-rate A.A. shots, and handle their guns with efficiency and accuracy under bombs and rockets.

The same thirst for knowledge in order to best serve the country is seen in all branches.

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The Vietnamese people's force has been forged over the centuries in their struggle against foreign aggression for independence and freedom. As early as the 13th century, the strategist of genius Tran Quoc Tuan had stressed: "To resist aggression the main thing is not to have a large effective strength but seasoned troops; the number of fighters is not so important as their fighting spirit. No invader can hold out if we all are of the same mind."

Well over one thousand years before the discovery of America by Vespucci and Magellan, Viet Nam was already a sovereign country having a common language and a brilliant culture. Before the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, its territory already lay from parallel 23°22 to parallel 8°30.

The Vietnamese people have fought more than twenty wars against foreign invaders, half of which were national-liberation wars.

In the 13th century, they defeated nearly one million of the most dreadful invaders ever known in the world, under the command of Gengis Khan's grandson. In the 15th century, they engaged in a ten-year guerilla war and succeeded in ousting the Chinese feudalists who had carried out a cruel policy of extortion and racial integration. At the end of the 18th century they put to pieces a 200,000-strong army of the Tsings in less than a week's time. They vanquished the French colonialists at Dien Bien Phu thirteen years ago, and are at present victoriously confronting the most powerful of the world imperialisms.

For having suffered in their recent history under a foreign rule lasting eighty years, the Vietnamese people know the price of independence and freedom. In order to safeguard the achievements of the August 1945 Revolution, they waged an eight-year Resistance War against the French colonialists backed by the American imperialists. Their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity are recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements.

In the past decade while sabotaging the general elections stipulated in these accords so as to prevent the reunification of Viet Nam, the United States has occupied the South of this country. The Vietnamese have at the same time built in the liberated North, a splendid work of peace and faith.

They have not a short memory. They still bear in mind that deprived of independence, they had lost one-seventh of their Northern population during the 1945

famine, and lived as slaves from generation to generation. Without independence and freedom, their compatriots South the 17th parallel, have been subjected to guillotine, toxic chemicals, gases and concentration camps disguised as "prosperity zones", "strategic hamlets", or "new-life hamlets". Stripped of its independence and freedom, North Viet Nam would lead a miserable life, the children of her peasants and workers could not go to school, her scientists would be made to serve foreign masters.

In the D.R.V.N. the love of independence and freedom is embodied by the unfailing attachment to the socialist system which has made the worker and the peasant the collective masters of the factory and of the ricefield, and done away with the exploitation of man by man. There is no more social basis of any importance that can be used as a tool for the invader. Individual ownership of the means of production has disappeared, socialism has born its fruit. All strata of the population realize that by safeguarding the independence and freedom of their fatherland, they defend their own destiny. They think so and do so with success.

French intellectuals * have noticed, "On one side, the huge war apparatus of the United States, the economic and material means at its disposal, on the other, the peasants and workers who, with arms in hands, successfully resist because they struggle for independence and freedom."

* Sponsory committee of February 21 (February 4, 1967 declaration).

organizing and mobilizing force which has led them from victory to victory in revolutionary struggle for nearly forty years past. The Party's line which has always proved correct and efficient, is readily embraced and strictly carried out by the broad masses. In the conditions of the U.S. war of destruction against North Viet Nam, the Party has advocated an ingenious political and military strategy, a new orientation in economy, a close co-ordination between the struggle against aggression and socialist construction, between fighting and production, between the development of the economic potential and the promotion of defence capabilities. This line has brought conspicuous effects over the past two years thanks to the hard, intelligent and creative work of a numerous army of Party members and cadres whose presence in all branches of activity enhances the fighting spirit of the entire people.

Me Lelio Basso, an Italian deputy on his return from a visit to the D.R.V.N. has made this conclusion: "This is the war of the entire Vietnamese people who unite to defend their right to life and with an inexhaustible energy defend themselves against the aggressors' material force.

"Should the American leaders be wiser, they would have learnt the lesson of experience and found out other solutions. But their stupidity is still greater than their criminality and more time will be needed to overcome it.

"Victory for the Vietnamese people is certain ; U.S. solution has proved impossible."

PEOPLE'S WAR AND PEOPLE'S AIR DEFENCE

“American pilots admitted that North Viet Nam A.A. fire was heavier than that in Korea and in some locations equal to any concentration encountered in World War II” (*Air Force*, April 1966).

“One officer said the amount of anti-aircraft fire doubled between last fall and this May. Since May, he added, it has tripled” (*A.P.*, October 29, 1966).

The defence extends its links from the South China Sea to the peaks of the Truong Son Range through the Red River delta. It is ensured by the A.A. gunner, the pilot of the people's air force, the fighter of the people's navy and missile units, as well as by the factory workers of the self-defence force and the peasant militia.

The entire people, men and women, old and young, rise up and fight shoulder to shoulder together with the air defence shock forces: artillery, aviation and missiles.

They continue the traditions of people's war as expressed by President Ho Chi Minh in his December 20, 1946 appeal at the beginning of the Resistance War against the French colonialists (1946-1954): “Men and women, old and young, regardless of creeds, political parties or nationalities, all the Vietnamese must stand up to fight the French colonialists to save the fatherland. Those who have rifles, will use their rifles; those who have swords will use their swords; those who have no swords will use spades, hoes or sticks. Everyone

must endeavour to oppose the colonialists and save the fatherland."*

In their struggle against American aggression, the Vietnamese people now dispose of jets, missiles, and A.A. guns. But they still keep sticks, pikes and shovels which have all their efficiency in the pursuit of rangers, in the capture of U.S. pilots, even when the latter are propped by choppers and fighter planes. The militiaman's rifle has many a time proved dreadful for Thunderchiefs and Phantoms.** According to *U.S. News and World Report* (August 8, 1966), a cartridge hitting a supersonic plane has an effect similar to that of a steam-hammer stroke. The more up-to-date and complex the plane, the more vulnerable it becomes: a tiny hole, a simple friction, can be fatal to it.

The North Viet Nam air defence uses in combination weapons of various ranges and develops different stages of fire.

To avoid radar detection, missiles, long-range A.A. guns and eventual interception by the people's air force, the American pilots skim over the surface of the sea and rivers and mountain slopes. But then they expose

* Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works* (Foreign Languages Publishing House—Hanoi 1961), tome III, page 81.

** On March 17, 1965, for the first time in North Viet Nam, the militiamen of Dien Hong village, Nghe An province, shot down an A.4 with their rifles; on October 18, 1965, those of Phu Le, Ha Tinh provinces, an F.4 with two rifle-bullets, etc. Till February 7, 1967, 98 U.S. aircraft were downed in North Viet Nam by the militia and self-defence forces armed with rifles.

themselves to the rifle-shots of hundreds of thousands of peasants, workers, fishermen and others who fire at them from bushes, ricefields, factories and small boats.

No tactics of the U.S. pilots could foil the vigilance of the North Viet Nam air defence, which is the most sophisticated ever put to the test of combat.*

Charles Graham Boyd, piloting a F.105, captured in Vinh Phuc province on April 22, 1966, confessed: " I was ordered to take off from Korat airbase, Thailand, for an attack on the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. As I was approaching the target at 2.30 p.m. I was met by heavy ground fire. My evasive action to avoid being hit was unsuccessful. My plane was disabled and instantly plummeted toward the earth. I bailed out. On the ground I met a crowd of people running towards me with arms in hands. I was frightened and escape was impossible. I surrendered immediately."

To the correspondent of the French review *Express*** in Da Nang, Captain Dean Cruss of the 13th Tactical Squadron admitted that the North Viet Nam air defence is dangerous with its 35-85mm shells. He said that he was very afraid of rifle-shots and that he had the impression of being lost in a cloud of steel, for countless rifle-shots were directed at him, especially when he flew at 200 metres from the ground to deliver rockets.

The Americans make much noise about their infra-red-ray detection machines which are said to allow

* Brigadier General G.B. Simler, Deputy Director of the U.S. Air Force Operations.

** December 12 - 18, 1966 issue.

them to spot a man two kilometres away through fog or darkness. But how can they aim at hundreds of thousands of moving targets formed by soldiers, workers, and peasants sheltered in skilfully camouflaged trenches and defence works.

In many cases the aggressors lost hundreds of tons of bombs and several planes in attacking a sham bridge or a false A.A. battery emplacement made of earth and bamboo.

The Vietnamese people's resourcefulness and vigilance have deceived the most treacherous calculations of the American air tacticians who have constantly changed their combat methods, using various types of aircraft, mounting sneaking strikes by small groups combined with massive raids, lightning and sham attacks, flight at different altitudes to dodge long-range missiles and shorter-range A.A. guns, harassing observation posts by scattered formations while purposely concentrating on the main objective from several directions, etc.

In this resistance against U.S. escalation, the moral strength of a man fighting for the defence of his fatherland remains the primordial factor. It has governed our thinking and military art.

It enables the soldier or the militiaman to parry the surprise effect of the best supersonic planes. The peasant is not intimidated by the explosions of bombs and the whiz of jets skimming over his village.

Each man, each unit, each arm, each region contributes to the defence effort. The people and the army

fight shoulder to shoulder, help and comfort one another, in combat as at leisure time.

When an A.A. unit comes to a place, hundreds of people, men and women, old and young, even children, gather to haul artillery pieces, build up defence works and camouflage them. If a gun sinks into the mud, the people living nearby come up with shovels, spades, sand, bamboo, even door panes and bed-planks to pave the way. The case of Dao Thuc in Vinh Linh province is not an isolated one. He helped an A.A. unit erect an emplacement. Props being missing, Thuc hurriedly went home and brought a column of his own house. As the soldiers refused his offer, he insisted: 'Take it and start work at once. Should the enemy come before our job is done, it would be a catastrophe for us all.'

The population vigilantly mount guard to help the troops watch over the sky and sea spaces. In fighting, it is they who supply the fighters with provisions, contribute to ensure the transportation of munitions, and give first-aid cares to the wounded. They form combat groups and U.S. pilot-capturing teams.

Trained by the army to handle sophisticated weapons, they, too, replace wounded gunners. The invincible force of people's war springs from the unity of the people and the army.

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People's air defence combines offence and defence.

Through twenty years of war, the Vietnamese people have learnt that with strict passive defence measures,

they can limit human and material losses to the greatest possible extent.

Village H. in Ha Tinh province, with an average of 2.8 bombs dropped on each inhabitant, lost one person only in 1965. Village L. in Vinh Linh, which had engaged 40 anti-aircraft combats and received 1,000 heavy bombs, sustained the same losses. Hit by 300 bombs and over 300 rockets, Hoang Dieu in Thai Binh, with a population of 5,000 suffered no more than 5 casualties. In the coastal Ky Anh village of Ha Tinh province where 230 families lived on an area of five square kilometres, there were two persons killed — a fifty-year-old woman and a three-year-old child — as a result of 1,720 air and naval attacks, 5,600 bombs and shells had been delivered.

The whole people are mobilized to build underground shelters and communication-trenches. Underground shelters can be seen everywhere on road-sides and river-banks, in the rice-fields, and on the mountain slopes, under the bed and in the kitchen. There are individual foxholes and collective shelters, shelters against napalm, steel-pellet and fragmentation bombs, emergency and reinforced shelters. One made of earth and bamboo according to established norms can protect a family from a 100-kilogram bomb exploding ten metres away.

A widely known song says :

*“ Our home protects us from wind and fog,
The underground shelter preserves our blood and bone.”*

Underground shelters receive daily cares and are constantly consolidated and improved.

They are connected by a network of zigzag trenches serving as communication-lines for the transportation of supplies, movement of militiamen and the evacuation of the population, cattle and property.

For a population of 400,000 Ha Tinh province has 355,000 foxholes in gardens, 190,000 along road-sides, 150,000 underground shelters inside houses, 165,000 collective dug-outs and 2,000 kilometres of communication trenches.

The Vinh Linh zone, numbering 60,000 inhabitants, has dug such a lot of trenches that, placed end to end, they are as long as the highway from Hanoi to the 17th parallel.

At the alarm-signal, people jump into the nearest undergrounds, move along trenches to get at safe dug-outs outside the place under bombing. In areas most exposed to air raids, the people correctly appraise the danger of attack, for they recognize the various types of U.S. aircraft, know the fore-running signs of an assault, the pilots' feints, and manage to shelter themselves accordingly. Even the cattle and the poultry are trained to find trenches themselves.

Densely populated places are evacuated. Townfolks go to the countryside, populous villages split into small hamlets, large factories into workshops, schools into classes with an appropriate number of pupils. Old people and children come to live in co-operatives less subject to air attacks while the remainder stick to their villages and lands to take part in fighting and production.

In their fields the peasants work in separate teams and in each team they avoid flocking together. Economic and defence centres are ceaselessly on the move.

First-aid teams, trench-clearing and fire-fighting teams courageously operate during the bombings.

Foreign visitors who have seen hard-hit regions are surprised by the limitation of losses caused by the U.S. air force and the calm of the people facing it.

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The economic and social structure of the D.R.V.N. has established firm bases for people's war. The peasant can for days or months participate in passive or active defence work without bothering about his living. He is paid for it by the co-operative.

If the house of a worker or an agricultural co-op member is damaged or destroyed by a bomb, his factory or co-operative will come to his aid by supplying him with building material and manpower to repair or rebuild it.

The evacuation of the urban population to the countryside and the dispersal of the rural population do not pose great problems thanks to the collectivization of land, cattle and farming tools. The newcomers get a job and enjoy an income in proportion to the work they have done.

When a young peasant joins the army, the co-operative takes care of his family: his wife receives a suitable job, his children are confided to the kindergarten or an infant school. If he dies when performing his duty, the co-operative will look after his family.

The army is recruited easily. Peasants and workers, conscious of their duty towards their fatherland and organized in paramilitary formations, pass smoothly to the ranks of the army.

Walter Lippmann says that though the American military superiority far surpasses that of the old powers of the world, the U.S.A. is not able to compel such a small country as Viet Nam to act in accordance with its will. The reason, he adds, is that the technically backward peoples have invented a method of conducting war that surprises and defeats armies equipped with a superior technique (*Newsweek*, June 20, 1966).

Confronted with people's war, the U.S. air force has shown all its weaknesses and foibles. The Vietnamese people have found out its Achilles heels.

U.S. AIR FORCE ACHILLES HEELS

After the Second World War and, in particular, following the failure of the Korean War, the White House and the Pentagon have arrived at the conclusion that American ground troops cannot launch major operations without air support, and that should the meteorological or any other factor hinder the action of the air force, they would have to stop their offensive or fall back to the defensive or even withdraw.

Johnson declared before the Congress that, without air supremacy, the United States would be only a "play boy", a tightened, strangled and powerless

prey, a good prey for any yellow dwarf armed with a penknife *.

It is natural that with such a conception of the role of the air force, the Americans have been trying by all means to build up ultra-rapid planes capable of fighting in all weather conditions. Aviation has become the main strength of the U.S. armed forces, their trump card. American propaganda has ceaselessly boasted of the "U.S. air supremacy".

Towards the close of 1966 the U.S. air force in Indochina amounted to 35,000 men and 3,500 aircraft—one and a half times the number of aircraft mobilized for the Korean War and one-fourth of the U.S. fighter planes, not to mention 13 civil aviation companies for military transport.

The escalation war against North Viet Nam relies mainly on South Viet Nam and Thailand bases and on 12 out of the 17 U.S. aircraft carriers. The United States even mobilizes "aces" (many of them have shown their abilities in Korea) who are credited each with 1,500 or 2,000 hours' flight. Despite this great display of forces, they are meeting with ever greater difficulties day by day.

First of all, the pilots' morale.

Major James H. Kasler, captured on June 29, 1966, confessed that he had been haunted by the fear of being shot down any time on a raiding mission over North Viet Nam. With 20 sorties per month, 35 every

* After Bertrand Russell, *The Forum*, Canadian students' organ, September 12, 1966.

two months, he said, his death was postponed one week after another. It is worthy of note that Kasler had been consecrated "Hero of the U.S. air force" in the Korean war and praised by the press as an extremely brave pilot, having an "accurate eye" and immune from danger.

Another airman captured in Hai Duong province on the night of September 10, 1966, shared Kasler's feeling. He said that he used to shudder each time he had to attack North Viet Nam because of its powerful gunfire, one that he had never met before. If the veterans are afraid, he added, young pilots naturally lose their confidence. Captains Turner and Neiscruck of his squadron No. 433, got a punitive sanction and were sent back to the U.S.A. for their refusal to carry out their missions over North Viet Nam. Before leaving for Viet Nam, Kasler belonged to Wing No. 33 based in Florida. Most of the 175 pilots here, from 20 to 25, who were captains on duty for more than five years, had tendered their resignation for fear of being despatched to this country. Almost all the American pilots dreaded to cross the 21st parallel because of the intense defence groundfire.

Johnson's blatantly unjust aggression against a sovereign country thousands of miles far from the U.S.A., which has never done any harm to the American people, really shocks more or less honest pilots. According to Charles N. Tanner's declaration, Lieutenant-Commander Tom Ewall's wife (VF 154) threatened to divorce him if he carried on his duty in Viet Nam. Neither flashy arguments such as: saving "the honour of the United States", the "military honour of the

United States army" or "living up to the United States commitment towards its ally to repel aggression", nor unstinted wages and bounties, medals and orders lavishly distributed, have been able to raise the morale of the U.S. expeditionary force. The deadly riposte met in the D.R.V.N. has opened the eyes of many pilots who had believed in an easy adventure. Confusion is increasing in proportion to the U.S. setbacks in the two zones of Viet Nam.

According to *U.P.I.* (February 4, 1967) and other American news agencies, 700 military pilots in 1965, 904 in 1966 (700 of the U.S. air force and 200 of the U.S. navy) sent in their resignation for fear of serving in Viet Nam.

With such a state of mind, no technical innovation nor tactical improvement can possibly yield substantial results. American militarymen are right, without finding the true reason, to complain that their bombs and rockets have not given the desired effect.

Political factors have no lesser impact on the activities of the U.S. air force in North Viet Nam and of the U.S. expeditionary troops as a whole in Viet Nam. The Johnson-McNamara-Dean Rusk clique realize that frenzied destruction is more and more condemned by the world's peoples. Therefore, while stepping up escalation they tremble and sound public opinion, which deprives their military action of the surprise element and goes counter to the principles of U.S. air force: massive and unexpected attack. The North Vietnamese people have not been taken unawares and have calmly, gradually and firmly prepared for war.

On the other hand, an army of aggression facing a well-led people's war cannot solve the contradiction between the concentration of forces for offence and their dispersal for defence. The U.S. aviation does not escape this law. Though numerous, it has to spread thin in many parts of the world in accordance with the American global strategy. Towards the close of 1966, 3,500 aircraft, mustered not without difficulty, had to be used on three theatres: South Viet Nam, North Viet Nam and Laos.

In Laos it is not easy to mount operations against the liberated region owing to the inextricable jungle and to the fact that villages lie too far between.

In South Viet Nam, the results, given by air action, are not in proportion to the invested effort: hundreds of aircraft are needed to open the way for the wavering ground forces, and some dozen to relieve a post encircled by a score of guerillas. Logistics immobilizes an important part of the air force, for everything is carried by air: clothes, provisions, even water. At the Pleiku battle, late in 1965, a brigade consumed 600 tons of airborne fuel, provision and munitions in one day.* Guerilla warfare in South Viet Nam, brought to a high degree of development, swallows an increasing number of aircraft and pilots, and often causes them serious damages.

In North Viet Nam, U.S. escalation aims at economic centres, scattered and small in size. The farther it is stepped up, the more the U.S. air force has to disperse,

* At Dien Bien Phu, maximum air transport per day: 200 tons.

something which augments its sorties and reduces its striking power.

On the whole, the Viet Nam theatre greatly deprives the tactics and technique of the U.S. air force of their efficiency. Let us remind that the American global strategy had originally foreseen massive reprisals by nuclear warfare. Reduced to the defensive by an unfavourable change in the balance of forces, the United States has adopted the "flexible response strategy" with three types of warfare: "special warfare",* "limited warfare"** and "general warfare". This new strategy, perfected under the Kennedy administration by General Maxwell Taylor, Joint Chief of Staff, met with notable difficulties in execution. The war machinery, the aviation in particular, has been too deeply engaged in the way to nuclear warfare from the point of view of organization, equipment, training and division of theatres. American experts find that, having involved the bulk of its officers and industrial potential in the preparations for a balistico-nuclear war, the U.S.A. has become less able than it was only twenty years ago to conduct a limited war***.

The American air force has been badly prepared for the Viet Nam war theatre, chiefly owing to the failure of "special warfare" which resulted in the massive

* Neo-colonialist war of aggression using local puppet forces against the national-liberation movement.

** Waged by an American expeditionary force.

*** Lucien Barnier in the *Nouvelle Revue*, September 20, 1966.

sending of G.I.'s to South Viet Nam and war escalation against North Viet Nam.

The strategic conception of the U.S. aviation was conceived for large-scale engagements. The problem was to concentrate on strategic air offensives, surprise attacks of a decisive character in a short time against the enemy's strategic objectives so as to annihilate sizable parts of his military and economic potential.

Therefore, the U.S. air force is caught unawares on the North Viet Nam theatre where the targets small in size and often moving have been scattered from the delta to the mountain. It happened that many air planes had been mobilized to attack a ferry boat, a noria, a bamboo bridge or some transport bicycles. Results do not tally with losses. Many a pilot have protested against such perilous raids that pay little*. The people's air defence with its multiple, flexible and extemporized tactics, nonplus the American pilot. The U.S. air force cannot find the proper ground to make use of its strength and satisfactorily answers to its many questions, among others, these: massive or small-size attacks? Which would be the safest flight? The tactics of the U.S. air force having proved inadequate, the aeronautical technique, far from giving its full efficiency, sometimes causes costly troubles. For instance, the too high speed of an aircraft can be a nuisance: a supersonic "jet" cannot take a good aim at a small and moving target. A propeller

* *The Insiders Newsletters*, cited by *A.F.P.*, October 31, 1966.