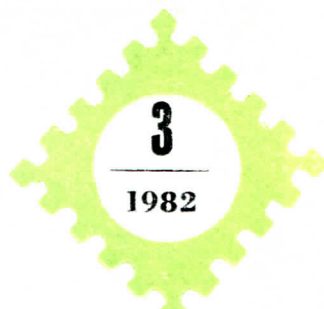


Vietnam courier



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MEDICINE IN VIETNAM

1. Seeing off a baby at the Hanoi
Obstetrical and Gynaecological Hospital

Photo THU HOAI

2. Patients at the Tam Diep Ortho-
paedic Hospital

Photo VAN HIEN

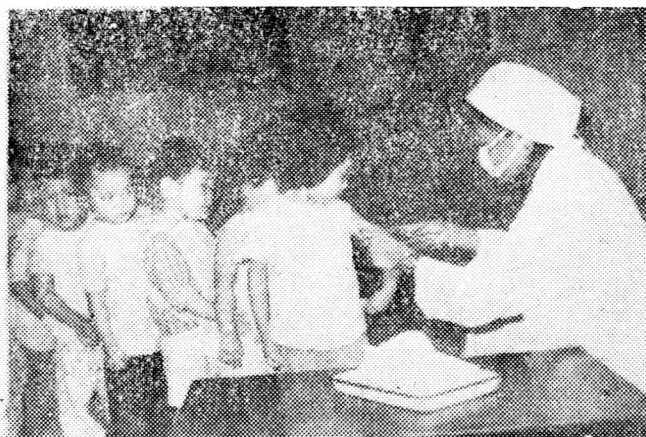
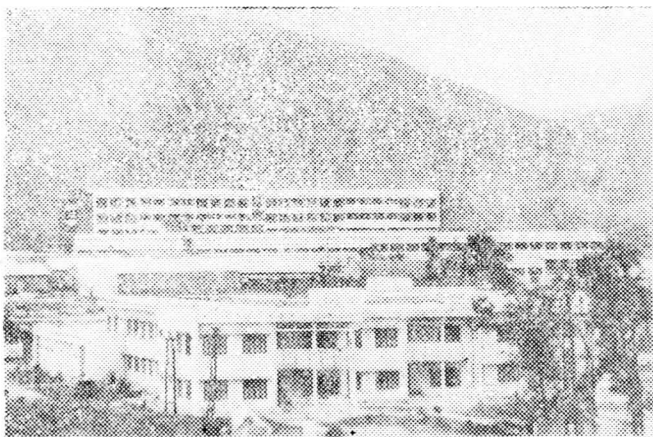


3. The polyclinic in Uong Bi (Quang Ninh province)
built with aid from the Swedish government.

Photo CAM BINH

4. An Innoculation session in a crèche

Photo VNA



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Front Cover :

A Hanot "outdoor sports club" for active old people.

Photo : NGUYEN TAN

**Vietnam
courier**

3 - 1982

OUR MONTHLY COMMENT

ON January 23, 1982, after two months of consultations with their Chinese patrons and despite a Thai deputy foreign minister's trip to China to persuade Beijing, the Khmer Rouge answered by rejecting the "loose coalition government" formula put forward by Singapore on behalf of the ASEAN countries to replace the government led by Kheun Samphan, so as to retain Democratic Kampuchea's seat at the UNO. Long aware that the world abhors Pol Pot and his genocidal regime, in November 1979 the Beijing rulers told him to keep out of the limelight and let Kheun Samphan lead the Democratic Kampuchea government. Nobody was taken in by this since Pol Pot remained at the head of the Party and the army. Late in 1981 a rumour about the dissolution of Pol Pot's "Communist Party" and Democratic Kampuchea's abandonment of socialism was also recognised as a farce.

Although they do not support the revolutionary government in Phnom Penh, the ASEAN countries do not want the Chinese expansionists to have a bridgehead in Kampuchea from which to intervene and later on rule the roost in Southeast Asia. So they took great pains to persuade China into letting the Khmer Rouge enter a "broad front" with Sihanouk and Son Sann. It was not until September 4, 1981 after much bargaining that the three reactionary Khmer groups agreed to meet in Singapore. Then, under the pressure of the ASEAN countries, chiefly Thailand and Singapore, they had nearly ten meetings in which to haggle about the composition of a "coalition government", since both China and the ASEAN countries

want their proxy in the driving seat. The "loose coalition government" was a recent initiative of the ASEAN countries after which each Kampuchean faction would retain its armed forces and organisational structure while recognizing a three-man leadership with Sihanouk as president, Son Sann as prime minister in charge of foreign affairs, and Khieu Samphan as vice-premier. Fearing to lose control over foreign affairs and their seat at the UNO to ASEAN-sponsored Son Sann, China and the Khmer Rouge turned down the ASEAN proposal.

It should be remembered that the contradiction between the ASEAN countries and China had been already laid bare in July 1981 when the "International Conference on Kampuchea" encouraged by the ASEAN countries, the United States and China met in New York. At that time, the ASEAN countries demanded that all Kampuchean factions be disarmed and a provisional government be established pending general elections. This means that the Khmer Rouge would be disarmed and the so-called Khieu Samphan government would be also neutralized. However China resolutely opposed this proposal and demanded that the Khmer Rouge institutions be absolutely respected.

China's policy on Kampuchea is easy to understand. If Beijing obstinately refuses to cut off its relations with the Marxist rebel groups in the ASEAN countries, how can it withdraw its support of the Khmer Rouge—the most fanatic Maoist group in Southeast Asia?

Siding with China against the Indochinese countries for the last three years, the ASEAN countries have learnt an important lesson: China plays fast and loose in this area to their detriment. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Bin Mohamad openly rejected Beijing's policy of advocating friendlier relations with the Southeast Asian countries while supporting the subversive and sabotage activities of pro-Beijing groups in these countries. Speaking of the "coalition government" proposal for Kampuchea after the Khmer Rouge's rejection of it, the Malaysian Prime Minister threatened to withdraw his support of the group. Perhaps now the ASEAN countries understand that to give a hand to Beijing in destabilizing Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea can lead to a conflict, which runs counter to the ASEAN countries' requirement to live in a peaceful and stable Southeast Asia, a sine qua non for them to develop their economy, do roaring trade and attract capital and technology from developed capitalist countries?

Indonesia and Malaysia are two countries whose statesmen quickly and clearly recognized that China is the main danger to peace and stability in Southeast Asia. A trend is growing in Indonesia not to meddle in the Kampuchea problem which "only concerns Vietnam and China". A high-ranking personality in Jakarta has said that Indonesia does not regard the presence of Vietnamese armed forces in Kampuchea as a threat to Indonesia's interests, and that China does have ambitions in Southeast Asia on account of Beijing's support for the Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea.

In Thailand ruling circles people began to speak openly of a Chinese threat. Without naming China, general Sayud Kerdphol, Commander-in-chief of the Thai armed forces, has said that a big power is supporting the Thai Communist Party and inveigling Thailand into a "near-war situation" with a neighbouring country of different political beliefs.

We Vietnamese are glad at those new perceptions in the ASEAN countries, although we understand that these countries still nurture some illusions by banding with the United States and China of pressing Vietnam into yielding. What we have affirmed is now realized by some ASEAN countries, the gist of it being that the present crisis in Southeast Asia is not the disagreement between ASEAN and Indochina, but the policy of aggression and intervention of the Chinese rulers against the three Indochinese countries.

The proposals of the three Indochinese countries on a dialogue between the two groups of countries in Southeast Asia, reiterated at the Vientiane Conference of the three Indochinese foreign ministers, and the new proposals made at this conference with regard to Thailand, "front-line" state of the ASEAN countries, constitute irrefutable proofs about the goodwill of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea vis-à-vis the ASEAN countries in general, and Thailand in particular.

25 February 1982

FIFTH CONFERENCE OF INDOCHINESE FOREIGN MINISTERS

NEW PROPOSALS MADE TO THAILAND

THE fifth conference of the Lao, Kampuchean and Vietnamese Foreign Ministers was held on 16 and 17 February 1982 in Vientiane, Laos. An important joint communiqué was issued on this occasion.

The conference, said the communiqué, reviewed the continuing stabilisation in Kampuchea; the growing special relationship between Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea; the positive role of Laos, as a representative of the three Indochinese countries, in strengthening the mutual understanding between Indochina and ASEAN; the development of all-round co-operation between the Indochinese countries on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and the world socialist community on the other. Preparations for the first summit conference of the three Indochinese countries to be held later this year were reviewed and given new impetus.

As for the world situation, the communiqué pointed out that the tension now threatening peace is caused by the warlike and interventionist policies of the imperialists and expansionists and hegemonists who aim at encouraging the arms race, restoring an atmosphere of cold war against the Soviet Union and the socialist countries, and trying to thwart the

revolutionary struggle of other nations. To defend peace, to block the plans of the US in collusion with the Beijing expansionists and aggressors and other reactionary forces are the primary task of every nation in the world.

Regarding relations between the Indochinese countries and China, the communiqué said:

"In order to safeguard their respective national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as peace and security in Southeast Asia and the world, the Lao, Kampuchean and Vietnamese peoples are determined to struggle against the policy of aggression and intervention of the reactionary Beijing authorities colluding with American imperialism. However the Lao, Kampuchean and Vietnamese peoples consistently treasure their long-standing friendship with the Chinese people and wish to restore normal relations with the People's Republic of China on the basis of respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, of mutual non-aggression and non-intervention in each other's internal affairs, on an equal footing and on the basis of mutual benefit, good neighbourhood relations and of the setting of disputes through peaceful means

"World opinion shows great concern for the normalization of relations between the three Indochinese countries and China, considering it an important factor for peace and stability in Southeast Asia. The Lao People's Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Kampuchea and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam once again state their wish for a positive response from the Chinese side to the proposal dated January 28th, 1982 of the three Indochinese countries concerning the signing of treaties of peaceful co-existence with the People's Republic of China.

"The Lao People's Democratic Republic and the People's Republic of Kampuchea wholly support the good will proposal of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam put forward in the note dated January 10th 1982 and addressed by the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry to its Chinese counterpart concerning the termination of military hostilities in the border line regions between the two countries and the rapid holding of the third round of Vietnam-China negotiations with a view to ensuring peace and stability in the borderline regions and discussing problems of interest to both parties. They express unreserved support for the January 31st, 1982 message of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Pham

Van Dong, welcoming the United Nations Secretary General's initiative proposing that Vietnam and China prolong the state of peace in the borderline regions beyond the Tet period."

The conference examined the relations between the three Indochinese countries and Thailand. The communiqué continued:

"Having fought for centuries for their own independence, the three peoples of Indochina respect the independence and sovereignty of other countries. In spite of the Thai authorities' former and present policy of hostility towards the three Indochinese countries, the latter's peoples value their friendship with the Thai people and wish to establish relations of good neighbourliness with the Kingdom of Thailand for the sake of each country and of peace and stability in Southeast Asia. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea welcome the results of the visit undertaken to the Kingdom of Thailand in November 1981 by the Lao Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister, Phoune Sipaseuth, and totally support the policy and goodwill of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in its relations with the Kingdom of Thailand. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the People's Republic of Kampuchea once more solemnly declare that they respect Thailand's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"The presence of Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea results from an agreement between the Governments of the People's Republic of Kampuchea and of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam so as to deal with the threat from China's hegemonistic expansionism. Once this threat is removed, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea will agree on the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea.

"The presence of Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea in no way threatens Thailand's security. The three countries of Indochina are prepared to examine and support any initiative, from whatever quarters, that contributes to stabilizing the situation along the Kampuchea-Thailand border on the basis of respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. They are also prepared to discuss with Thailand all questions of common concern. These contacts may be undertaken directly or indirectly, bilaterally or between the three Indochinese countries and Thailand. Such contacts bear no relation whatsoever to the question of a mutual *de facto* or *de jure* recognition. Depending on the results of these contacts, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea will agree on a partial withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. The three countries of Indochina once more stress the fair and reasonable nature of the proposal of the People's Republic of Kampuchea concerning the creation of a demilitarized zone under some form of international supervision so as to ensure security in the Kampuchea-Thailand border region."

The communiqué stressed that at present the Indochinese countries are doing their utmost so that, together with other countries in the region, they may build new relations on the basis of the principles of peaceful co-existence between states of different socio-political regimes. At the 36th General Assembly of the United Nations, the Lao Foreign Minister, on behalf of the three Indochinese countries, put forward a 7-point proposal aimed at gradually turning Southeast Asia into a zone of peace, stability and co-operation. The communiqué denounced the policies of the American imperialists who, in collusion with China and other reactionary forces, are

undertaking a hostile policy of blockade and encirclement toward the Indochinese countries and reactivating American bases in Thailand, strengthening their military presence and organizing bilateral and multilateral military manoeuvres in the region, thus jeopardizing the sovereignty and security of the countries in this zone. The communiqué denounced Beijing's goading the ASEAN countries and Indochinese countries into confrontation in the hope of sowing division between these two groups of countries and thus pave the way for them to realize their dreams of hegemony and expansion in the region: "It is obvious that the essence of the crisis in Southeast Asia is not because of the differences between the ASEAN and the Indochinese countries, but because of the aggressive and interventionist policies of the Beijing ruling circles against the three Indochinese countries".

In such circumstance, the communiqué went on, the Indochinese countries hail the trend of the ASEAN countries in favour of dialogue with the Indochinese countries with a view to eliminating the fundamental causes threatening peace and stability in Southeast Asia, and discussing regional issues on the basis of equality, mutual respect and non-imposition of views. The communiqué said: "If the ASEAN should not yet be ready to take part in a regional conference as proposed by the Indochinese countries, Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam are prepared to hold contacts with the ASEAN countries, directly, or indirectly, bilaterally or multilaterally, so as to discuss and together find a solution to questions related to peace and stability in the region. Such contacts can in no way be linked to the question of a mutual *de facto* or *de jure* recognition."



From the Fourth to the Fifth Congress of
the Communist Party of Vietnam

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENTS IN FIVE YEARS (1976-1980)

Culture and Art

FROM 1975 onward, the country has had a unified system of socialist culture; neo-colonialist culture in the South has been abolished step by step and replaced by a revolutionary culture; cultural and artistic forces have expanded from the central to grass-roots level. The number of books increased from 50.6 million in 1976, to 76.4 million in 1980 and the 272 public libraries of 1976 had increased to 427 by 1980. The Central Library had 750,000 books in 1976 and 844,000 books in 1980, and the local libraries had respectively 4,120,000 and 8,060,000 books.

In stage arts, the number of theatrical troupes at central and local levels increased from 136 in 1976 to 167 in 1980, and the number of theatre goers from 31,941,000 in 1976 to 38,787,000 in 1980.

In motion-pictures, 98 films were produced in 1976 and 128 in 1980. The number of film-projecting teams rose from 924 in 1976 to 1,121 in 1980, and that of movie goers from 198,643,000 to 264,992,000 in the same year.

Mass artistic and cultural movements have developed everywhere, in villages and hamlets, factories, offices and schools. From 3 cultural houses in the provinces and 3 in the districts in 1976, these numbers rose respectively to 11 and 45 in 1980. Popular theatrical troupes increased from 7,704 in 1976 to 12,526 in 1980.

Mobile information-propaganda teams greatly expanded in number at grass-roots level; from 187 teams at district level in 1976, they rose to 294 in 1979 and 1,320 in 1980.

Nevertheless, in the past five years, cultural and artistic work has not met the social requirements. The number of theatre-goers has increased but that of readers has fallen. The quality of artistic and cultural performances was not high. The cultural vestiges left by neo-colonialism, bad habits and superstitions which had been eradicated nevertheless at times made a re-appearance.

Science and technology

Between 1976 and 1980, we recorded many achievements in science and technology.

The contingent of scientific and technical workers has increased: the number of cadres who graduated from university and postgraduates rose from 145,900 to 245,000, that of cadres of secondary level from 356,500 to 529,400, and skilled workers from 1,054,000 to 1,689,000.

Among the cadres with a higher education level, there were 3,426 doctors and candidate-doctors. Among 23,000 cadres teaching at universities, there were 76 doctors and 1,935 candidate-doctors.

After the liberation of South Vietnam, about 30,000 cadres who had graduated from universities under the old regime have continued to work in various branches of activity.

Attention was paid to the training and fostering of cadres from university: 45 schools and research institutes have selected 200 post-graduates and have given 71 others the title of candidate-doctor. For the first time the State conferred the title of professor on 83 cadres and of associate-professor on 347 others.

In the last five years, 60 new scientific bases were set up, bringing their number from 65 in 1976 to 125 in 1980. At present, the scientific and technical information branch is organized in a special system of 3 institutes, 6 centres, 60 information offices from the central to grassroots level covering 25 provinces and municipalities. Thus, in these five years 56 new information offices have been established and the number of cadres increased by 300. These efforts have resulted in the accumulation of 2 million titles of books, 180 titles of local periodicals totalling one million copies, and 4,000 foreign reviews.

With regard to the application of technical progress, from 230 in 1976, the number of subjects founding their application in production amounted to 381 in 1980. Technical progress has been applied to 70 new animal and plant strains, 21 new products and 185 new industries; it has contributed to the development of industry, agriculture, forestry and fishery and has played an effective role in the replacement of imported materials.

Medecine

In the last five years, the medical branch has recorded many achievements in the expansion of the prophylactic and therapeutic network. Compared with 1975, by 1980 the number of hospitals had increased from 1,396 to 2,396, rest-homes from 86 to 93, rural maternity-homes from 6,565 to 9,034 and hospital beds from 142,000 to 198,000.

Keen attention has also been paid to traditional medicine: institutes and hospitals specializing in treatment by traditional methods have been set up in many provinces and towns. At the end of 1980, 6,500 specialists of traditional medicine were working in the State sector, a 50% increase over 1975.

Thanks to the development of traditional medicine, the health service in Vietnam has recorded many achievements in the treatment of diseases by acupuncture and massage. Many efficacious recipes for traditional medicines have been widely popularized.

Besides importing drugs, the health service has prepared medicines from medicinal plants grown in the country and launched a widespread movement for using traditional medicines. From 2000 hectares in 1985, the acreage grown to medicinal plants reached 4500 hectares in 1979; their production increased from 130 tons to 4100 tons. The proportion of these plants used as pharmaceutical products increased from 9.3% in 1975 to 29.3% in 1980. In 1979 alone, the purchase of local pharmaceutical products amounted to 22 million dong or nearly 3 times more than 1975. At present, all over the country, there are 2000 communes and 51 districts growing medicinal plants.

Nevertheless, the development and use of traditional medicine have met with some difficulties owing to the fact that the preparation of these drugs is not up to standard and in some localities antibiotics and tonics are lacking.

Physical education and sports

From small beginnings, physical culture has spread to the districts and developed in many branches. The number of people taking part in the movement, including old and retired public servants, is growing day by day.

According to the statistics released by the Physical Education and Sports Service, people following the physical training programmes numbered 850,000 in 1976 and 2.4 million in 1980. There were 2 million athletes in 1976 and 3.2 million in 1980. The number of swimmers rose from 1.2 million in 1976 to 2.2 million in 1980 while that of marksmen and women was 11.4 million in 1980.

Attention is being paid to training a large contingent of athletes. The number of sports teams (soccer, volleyball, basket-ball, table tennis) increased from 20,000 in 1976 to 23,000 in 1980, that of players from 227,000 to 289,000, that of coaches from 1,212 to 1,400 respectively.

In the last five years, there have been 471 athletes belonging to the "champion" category and 2,224 to the first category. These athletes increased respectively from 66 and 343 in 1976 to 135 and 650 in 1980.

From 2,500 vanguard units in 1976, the physical education and sports branch had 3,508 such units in 1980.

To create favourable conditions for physical training, attention is paid to building and repairing sport grounds and gymnasiums, and manufacturing sports articles. These articles are made by State-run factories and co-operatives in Hanoi, Ha Nam Ninh, Ho Chi Minh-city, Quang Nam-Da Nang, and include leather balls of all kinds, nets, rackets and football boots; typical is the Ninh Hiep handicraft co-operative in Hanoi which makes about 2,000 pairs of football boots in a year.

Childcare

By October 1, 1981, there were 1,208,189 children tended by 157,927 baby-sitters and nurses in 45,843 creches and kindergartens throughout the country. Compared with 1976, the number of creches rose by 32%. 6220 in the agricultural sector and 5,089 in the office and factory sector; the number of children tended in creches totalled 561,535: 413,203 in the agricultural sector and 148,332 in the office and factory sector. The number of baby-sitters and nurses rose to 90,175: 68,014 in the agricultural sector and 22,161 in the office and factory sector.

In the past five years, 7,763 new creches have been built including 1,480 according to conventional models, and 5,568 existing crèches have been repaired or transformed. In 1979, 1000 creches on the borderland destroyed by the Chinese invaders and 2,693 others hit by flood and typhoon were restored. In the South, though the education of children began only in mid-1977, there are at present 3,500 creches and kindergartens.

57.5% of baby-sitters and nurses have finished secondary schooling, 60% of them are young and 68.3% have received professional training. In 1976 there was only one secondary nurse training school run by the Central Committee for the Protection of Mothers and Children, and ten basic schools run by the provinces; at present they number 2 and 30 respectively.

Because of difficulties met in organization and supply of foodstuffs, only 42% of crèches could provide meals for the children in 1976; this ratio rose to 55.8% in 1980 though the food problem remained. In Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh-city, Hai Phong and such provinces as Thai Binh, Hai Hung, Long An, Phu Khanh, this rate rose to 80%, with a different diet given to each age bracket.

The education of children in creches is a new and tricky problem. In 1976, only a small number of creches (attending to the education of 250-300 children each) were run on an experimental basis. In 1981, these creches numbered 50.1% of the total including 14% teaching according to the program of the Central Committee for the Protection of Mothers and Children. Many creches have made toys and teaching aids with their own means.

Prophylactic and curative hygiene, health care and security for the children have been properly attended to in the last five years. With the co-operation of the health service, many creches have organized regular medical check-ups and vaccination drives for the children and kept a health report look for each of them.

At present, there are all over the country 4,000 vanguard crèches, 8,423 "excellent" baby-sitters and nurses, and 243 creches recognized as "socialist labour" units. In the past five years, 36 creches have been decorated with "labour" orders.



VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST FIGHTERS

Comrade To Hieu (1911-1944)

COMRADE To Hieu was born in 1911 in the village of Xuan Cau, Van Giang district, Hung Yen province (now Hai Hung). While still a young school-boy he began to be conscious of the national liberation movement and participated in the school-strike and the mourning for Phan Chu Trinh movement (1). Then he joined the Vietnamese Kuomintang, a political, patriotic and anti-French organization of that time the majority of which was petty-bourgeois.

In 1930 comrade To Hieu was sent to Saigon to continue activities and he was arrested there by police and was tortured brutally in Catinat prison. Being faithful to his nation and people he never confessed. They sentenced him to 4 years in prison and exiled him to Poulo Condor.

On Poulo Condor, he met communist fighters and recognized the truth of Marxism-Leninism. There he was admitted to the Communist Party.

At the end of 1934, he was released. After returning to Hanoi he was arrested again and tortured by the secret police and after being released he was watched carefully. Fearlessly he continued to participate in the revolutionary movement and rebuilt the Party organizations.

In 1936, he was appointed to the Standing Committee of the Party in Tonkin. While devoting himself to the revolutionary cause, he contracted T.B. as a result of the cruel regime and torture in prison. Although aware of his serious illness which could not be cured in the difficult conditions of revolution he never lost his optimistic spirit, and fought with

disease while continuing his revolutionary activities.

In early 1939, he was sent to Hai Phong. Together with other comrades, he led many workers' struggles for freedom, democracy and the improvement of living conditions.

The French colonialists searched for him very carefully. In September 1939, while working in the cement factory he was arrested. They put him into jail, shackled his feet firmly, and gave him only a thin blanket even though the weather was bitterly cold.

After being kept in Hai Phong, they exiled him to Son La. His health deteriorated day by day but he still fulfilled the duties of secretary of the prison party cell. He used to say: "I can't live one day without working for the party". To protect his health the cell decided not to let him take charge of the secretariat and gave him the work of writing training documents. He wrote three books about the work of mobilizing and educating workers and puppet soldiers and clandestine work. He was in charge of publishing the *Suoi Reo* magazine which was secretly distributed to prisons.

In early 1944, he was seriously ill and by March of that year he was completely exhausted. Knowing that he could not live much longer, he dictated to one of his comrades a last letter to his cell. Each day he could read only a few lines but he completed his task. In the letter he analyzed the situation in the world and our country, showing the victory of revolution and exhorting comrades to keep up the spirit of fighting for the people and the Party to the end.

On March 7th, 1944, he died.

Comrade Luong Khanh Thien (1903-1941)

LUONG KHANH THIEN laid down his life for his nation and for the communist ideal on September 1st 1941 at Kien An town. Before being shot, he defiantly looked at the enemy firing squad and shouted revolutionary phrases, showing his confidence in the victory of communism. He was 38 years old.

He was born and brought up in a poor family in Me Trang hamlet, Liem Chinh commune, Ha Nam (now Ha Nam Ninh) province. By 1925, he was a student at the practical industry school in Hai Phong. Through his contact with working people, and their harsh living conditions, he developed an early class consciousness and a hatred of the employers and the French colonial regime. In this same year, he enthusiastically took part in the students' campaign to demand the patriot Phan Boi Chau's freedom (2). When the campaign was suppressed by the French colonialists he called on his schoolmates to take part in a school-strike. Because his activities were known to the secret police he had to leave Hai Phong for Nam Dinh (now Ha Nam Ninh).

In Nam Dinh, he worked as a fitter in the textile factory, and went on with his revolutionary activities. Together with some young workers he set up a "Mutual aid" association that was in charge of helping those who were ill or in difficulties. This association grew more and more. But the owners of the factory and the secret police soon found out its leaders and he was sacked.

He returned to Hai Phong in 1928 and worked for the silk factory. He joined the revolutionary movement there, and later, he became a party member of the first cell in Hai Phong. After that he and other party members organized other cells in many factories such as the silk, bottle, the electric station, and Hai Phong port... Thanks to the party cell, many "Mutual aid" associations were founded and many workers' struggles occurred, forcing the employers to increase salaries, reduce working hours and not to beat the workers. As the workers' struggle developed more and more, the French colonialists watched the communists. So the Party decided that Thien should go into hiding.

After the unification of communist party organizations (3 February 1930), he and other communists did their best to build revolutionary bases in Tonkin. But in the middle of 1930, he was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment, then deported to Poulo Condor island.

In 1936, the Popular Front came to power in France and this had a strong repercussion in Vietnam. Thanks to the people's movement to release political prisoners, he was freed. He went to Hanoi and was appointed to the Party Committee in Tonkin. While in Hanoi, he used to go to poor workers' districts to build party cells. He also opened many classes that trained cadres to guide "Mutual aid" Associations, Workers' Unions and the Democratic Youth, enabling the workers' and youth movements to develop everywhere.

After the coup-d'etat against the Popular Front Government in France, reactionary elements returned to power and World War II broke out. Thien was appointed to lead B sector, which comprised Hai-Phong and four nearby provinces. In 1940, he was secretary of the Party Committee of Hai Phong,

but in September of that year he was arrested again.

No amount of enemy torture and bribery could break that dedicated communist's will.

Ly Tu Trong—a young communist (1913–1931)

LY TU TRONG'S family was a revolutionary one in Ha Tinh province (now Nghe Tinh.) To avoid the terror of the imperialists, they had to flee to Thailand and Ly Tu Trong was born there. At about 9–10 years old, the revolutionary organization sent him to China. He studied and lived with those comrades. In 1928, he was living in the offices of the Vietnam Revolutionary Youth Association (former organization of the Communist Party of Vietnam), at the same time as studying, he did liaison work, bringing documents from Quangzhou to Kowloon to be sent back to Vietnam.

In autumn 1929, Ly Tu Trong returned to Saigon–Cho Lon. His duty was to mobilize the youth and pioneers, and he also continued to be liaison member of the Nam Ky (Cochinchina) Party Committee and the Central Committee of the CPV situated in Saigon–Cho Lon. Our Party, right from its very foundation, has had close relations with the fraternal parties. When ships docked in Saigon port, it was an occasion to exchange letters, documents, books, reviews... Ly Tu Trong took charge of exchanging documents.

Having a clever, calm, and nimble wit, he escaped many arrests which seemed unavoidable. On his duties, he used to cycle, naked to the waist, wearing only a pair of shorts, with the documents close to his body. Once, because the pack of documents was rather large, he had to wrap them in a mosquito-net and put it behind the bicycle. Passing along a street, a French policeman who was on patrol, called him and demanded

to check his pack. He calmly stopped and pretended to open the pack, but in reality, he tried to prolong the time. Impatiently, the French policeman jumped out off his bicycle and went to open the pack himself. Immediately, he took the policeman's bicycle and cycled away as quickly as possible. Another time in the night, policemen were running after him. He ran through some working class districts then joined the homeless people sleeping in the street, pretending to be asleep too. Thus he escaped from the clutches of the police.

February 2, 1931, was a Sunday, and the workers didn't go to work. On that day, the Party decided to organize a meeting in commemoration of the Yen Bai uprising (3) in Saigon–Cho Lon. Ly Tu Trong took charge of scouting and defending his comrades who were attending the meeting held in the Saigon stadium. While the revolutionaries were delivering their speeches, denouncing the barbarous crimes of the imperialists and the feudalists, appealing to their compatriots to join the struggle, the police and the secret police intruded. Inspector Legrand came, ready to capture the comrades who were carrying the hammer and sickle banner and the one who was speaking. Immediately, Ly Tu Trong shot at him. The first shot missed and, Legrand ran after him. While running, he fired the second shot, and so ended the life of the infamous inspector.

Ly Tu Trong was captured and imprisoned in the police post in Catinat Street. After one night of torture, he was unrecognizable: his eyes swollen, his cheek cut, a bruised forehead and a bloody face. The secret police tried to force him to give information on the revolutionary bases and the revolutionary soldiers—his comrades. The Head of the police section of Cochinchina interrogated Trong himself. But all their activities brought no result.

VIETNAM'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY : A NEW STEP TOWARDS SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

IN April 1981, a new National Assembly, the 7th since the inception of an independent Vietnam in 1945, was elected on the basis of the Constitution adopted on December 18, 1980.

One of the first things the first session of this Assembly had to do was to work out and adopt appropriate laws on the organisation of the highest bodies of the State including organisation of the National Assembly and the Council of State (these laws were adopted on July 3, 1981).

At its second session on December 29, 1981 the National Assembly adopted two new legislative documents. There were:

- Regulations on the National Assembly sessions, and

- Regulations on the National Assembly deputies.

The 1980 Constitution, the above-mentioned legal documents and the activities of the National Assembly in 1981 prove that the Vietnamese State under the leadership of the Communist Party has made serious efforts to materialize that which all Vietnamese aspire to and also one of the main goals of the Communist Party: the realisation of the

people's right to collective mastery and the establishment of socialist democracy in Vietnam.

The National Assembly, the highest organ of power

The Vietnamese State is now 37 years old but most of this period passed in war when the country had to concentrate all its energy and resources on the fight against foreign aggression. It is understandable that in such conditions the institutionalization as well as application of the working people's right to collective mastery met with many restrictions. Accordingly, even though the National Assembly was defined in the very first Constitution as "the highest organ of power", it was unable to fully play such a role.

Today, Article 82 of the new Constitution clearly stipulates: "The National Assembly is the highest representative body of the people and the highest organ of power of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

"The National Assembly is the only organ vested with constitutional and legislative powers.

So the French colonialists sentenced the young communist to death, although he wasn't yet 18 years old.

The trial of Ly Tu Trong was one of the greatest trials of the 1930-1931 period, as people said, "the trial which had to spill lots of ink". Ly Tu Trong, the first Vietnamese communist who was presented before the Great Court of the French colonialists, maintained a dignity which frightened the enemy. The lawyer who defended him had begged the judge "to be generous" because the convict was still under age, and had acted without any reflection. Trong denied this saying, with self confidence: "I didn't act without

reflecting. I understood what I was doing, I am still under age, it is true, but I am clever enough to understand that the only road of the Vietnamese youth is the revolutionary road".

In Spring 1931, Ly Tu Trong sacrificed himself for the revolution. Before going to the guillotine, he sang the Internationale "Rise up, the wretched of the earth..."

1. Phan Chu Trinh was a patriotic intellectual, and the first democrat in Vietnam. He died in Saigon on March 24, 1926. His funeral was considered a national event and mourning for him became a movement which was supported by people in the

whole country, especially young people and the students.

2. Phan Bot Chau, an intellectual revolutionary of the armed struggle against the French in the 1900-1925 period, was captured and sentenced to penal servitude for life by the French colonialists. But thanks to the mass struggle, the Governor of Indochina, Varenne, had to 'amnesty' him, and let him go under surveillance in Hue city. He died on October 20 1941.

3. The Yen Bai uprising broke out on February 9-1930, organized by the Kuomintang headed by the patriot Nguyen Thai Hoc. It was defeated, but it gave a strong impetus to the revolutionary movement at that time.

"The National Assembly decides fundamental domestic and foreign policies, the targets for economic and cultural development and the principal regulations concerning the organisation and operation of the State apparatus and on the social relations and activities of citizens.

"The National Assembly exercises its role of supreme control over all the activities of the State."

In strict implementation of the above-mentioned stipulations, the 1980 Constitution, like all the previous constitutions, did not accept the theory of the separation of powers of bourgeois constitutions. Instead, it says that the National Assembly shall elect and has the right to dismiss all leading organs of the State including the Council of State, the Council of Ministers, the president of the Supreme People's Court and the president of the Supreme People's Organ of Control. Furthermore: "The National Assembly examines the reports on the work of the Council of State, the Council of Ministers, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Organ of Control."

The Council of State

In the 1980 Constitution, a new organ was created among the leading organs of the Vietnamese state: the Council of State. This meets both the need to enhance socialist democracy and to increase the efficiency of the State machine.

Under the 1959 Constitution, the National Assembly shall elect the president of the Republic who is the representative of the Vietnamese State both at the national and international levels. The Assembly shall also elect its Standing Committee to look after its work in between sessions.

Under the new Constitution, the National Assembly elects the Council of State which is its highest permanent operational organ and at the same time assumes the role of collective chair of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which represents the State in both domestic and foreign relations.

As a replacement for both the Standing Committee of the National Assembly and the President of the Republic as under the 1959 Constitution, the Council of State assumes the tasks and power of both these offices including the following:

"While the National Assembly is not in session, the Council of Ministers, the Supreme People's Court, the President of the Supreme People's Organ of Control, shall report their work to the Council of State by decision of the Council of State or at the request of these organs" (Article 25 of the law on the organization of the National Assembly and the Council of State).

"The Council of State shall issue ordinances on its own initiative or on the proposal of the State organs, political parties, social organisations and those persons stipulated in Article 86 of the Constitution" (1) (Article 27).

— In particular, the Council of State shall issue resolutions to direct the activities of the People's Councils at all levels, amend or annul inappropriate resolutions of the People's Councils in the provinces or cities directly responsible to the central government or corresponding organs, and to dissolve those People's Councils if they do serious harm to the interests of the people (Articles 25 and 32).

The Commissions of the National Assembly

The structure of the National Assembly has been markedly reinforced under the new Constitution.

The law on the organisation of the previous national assemblies also provided for the setting up of a number of commissions of the Assembly. But, these commissions did not operate on a regular basis and consequently played a limited role in public affairs thus causing people to think that the National Assembly was really operating only during its two regular sessions a year.

The law on the organisation of the National Assembly and the Council of State adopted on July 3, 1981 provides the following in its Article 45:

"The National Assembly shall set up the following standing commissions to assist it and the Council of State:

1. The Law Commission
2. The Commission of Economy, Planning and Budget
3. The Cultural and Educational Commission
4. The Scientific and Technical Commission
5. The Health and Social Affairs Commission
6. The Commission for Young People and Children, and
7. The Foreign Relations Commission.

"The National Assembly shall set up other standing commissions when it deems necessary."

The standing commissions of the National Assembly have the following tasks and powers:

1. To verify the reports, draft laws, draft ordinances and other drafts of the National Assembly or the Council of State.

2. To submit draft laws, ordinances and other drafts to the National Assembly and the Council of State.

3. To study and make suggestions to the National Assembly and the Council of State on questions pertaining to the areas of responsibility of the commission.

4. To assist the National Assembly and the Council of State in exercising the right to supervise the observance of the Constitution and laws; supervise the operations of the Council of Ministers, the Supreme People's Court, the president of the Supreme People's Organ of Control and the People's Councils at all levels" (Article 47).

In implementation of their tasks and powers, the standing commissions have the right to undertake on-the-spot investigations and inquiries on necessary questions, to ask any members of the Council of Ministers and other interested persons to present or supply relevant documents, to question the Council of Ministers and members of the Council, the Supreme People's Court and the President of the Supreme People's Organ of Control. The standing commissions of the National Assembly also have the right to propose that the Council of State put a draft law, a draft ordinance or an important question to public referendum. (Articles 50, 53 and 54).

With permission from the Council of State the standing commission may set up sub-committees to assist them. Members of these sub-committees may not be deputies to the National Assembly (Article 52). This enables the Assembly to elicit the contribution of outstanding citizens or specialists, to the common affairs of the country.

The law on the organisation of the National Assembly and the Council of State provides that the standing commissions work out their own programs of action. Practice over the past year shows that this has been put into effect and the commissions have been holding their monthly meetings regularly. It can be seen through the activities of the standing commissions as well as of the deputies (see below) that the National Assembly is functioning in close co-operation with its deputies and in close coordination with its highest permanent operational organ which is the Council of State.

Legislative function of the National Assembly

A primary task of the National Assembly and the Council of State as well as of the various commissions of the National Assembly is to make laws. One of the most noticeable shortcomings of the previous national assemblies lay in the fact that they seldom made or passed laws. For instance, the 6th National Assembly (1976-1980) only passed the new Constitution and its corollary which is the law on the elections to the National Assembly.

Also with a view to materializing the working people's right to collective mastery, the new Constitution broadens the range of the organs and persons entitled to submit draft laws (see Article 86 of the Constitution cited in Note 1). In addition to the political parties, all mass organisations: the Fatherland Front, the Federation of Trade Unions, the Organization of Collective Farmers, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union and the Women's Union, have this right, which means that they are effectively taking part in State affairs.

When an organ or person entitled to legislate submits a draft law, this draft must be studied and discussed at the concerned commissions of the National Assembly including of course the Law Commission. The results of the deliberations shall be submitted to the Council of State pending the convening of the National Assembly and to the National Assembly when it convenes...

When the National Assembly meets, the draft law shall be brought up for discussion to the groups of deputies (2) before being subjected to general debate and voting at plenary meetings. Through such discussions the draft receives many constructive suggestions on amendments and is usually adopted in unanimity.

At the National Assembly session held in December 1980 to adopt the new Constitution, Truong-Chinh, Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Commission and now President of the Council of State, stressed the necessity of enhancing the law-making process and working out a program for legislation in the coming years. In addition to the law on the organisation of the National Assembly and the Council of State, the law on the organisation of the Council of Ministers, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Organ of Control (which were adopted in its very first session in July 1981), it is necessary to draft a series of laws, on military service, on nationalities, land, labour, democratic freedoms, civil and penal codes, Laws on civil and penal procedure and in particular, laws on the economy.

At its second session (December 1981) the 7th National Assembly adopted two laws: the law on military service and the law on officers of the Vietnam People's Army. Some other laws are being

drafted and will be submitted to the plenary meetings of the forthcoming sessions of the National Assembly. Also in the past year, the Council of State issued an important ordinance on the people's complaints.

Deputies of the National Assembly

All the legal documents adopted since 1980 such as the Constitution, the law on elections to the National Assembly, the law on the organization of the National Assembly and the Council of State, the regulations concerning deputies of the National Assembly have brought out more clearly the role of the deputy of the National Assembly as "the representative of the people" and of the National Assembly as "the highest representative organ of the people, the highest organ of State power" (Article 1 of the Regulations concerning deputies of the National Assembly).

To enable the deputies of the National Assembly to accomplish their tasks and fully exercise their right as members of the highest representative organ of the people supervising the activities of all State organs, the legal documents have provided for special prerogatives.

As in other countries, deputies of the National Assembly cannot be arrested or prosecuted without prior approval of the National Assembly (or the Council of State when the National Assembly is not in session). In the event of a deputy being caught in flagrante delicto and taken into temporary custody, the organ concerned must immediately report to the National Assembly or the Council of State for a decision.

However, because in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the deputies of the National Assembly are not professional politicians but mostly ordinary working people, more specifications are needed:

"A deputy of the National Assembly cannot be dismissed or forced to quit their job or otherwise subjected to any other administrative disciplinary measure without the approval of the Council of State" (Article 28 of the Regulation concerning the deputies of the National Assembly). Furthermore the head of the organ or unit where the deputy works has the responsibility of creating conditions for him to discharge his duty as deputy of the National Assembly, making necessary arrangements when the deputy has to temporarily suspend his professional occupation (Article 32 of the said Regulations).

The activities of a deputy are not confined to his participation in the sessions of the National Assembly or in the discussions at the standing commission of which he is a member but are also carried out daily at his place of work, either separately or together with other deputies in the same locality.

A deputy is entitled to attend the meetings of the People's Council in his constituency (even though he might not be a member of the Council). He then has the right to speak but not to vote. This is another way to help the deputy keep in touch with reality and the aspirations of the local population.

Under any circumstances a deputy has the right to submit his suggestions to the State organs on all questions pertaining to the common interest, to receive complaints of the people and study and convey these to the State organs concerned. The latter and persons responsible must study and reply and if they are so requested must take necessary and timely measures to end any law-breaking acts. When a deputy goes to meet the responsible person

at a State organ or a mass organisation, the latter has the responsibility of duly receiving him.

The delegations of the National Assembly may organise "meet the people" sessions in order to enquire into the situation and gather the opinions of the masses. The local People's Council has the responsibility of providing the necessary facilities such as meeting rooms and transport and defraying the cost incurred by these "meet the people" sessions of the National Assembly delegations, and appointing cadres to attend to these meetings. A delegation of the National Assembly may ask the representative of the People's Committee State organs at the central as well as local levels, or the Fatherland Front committees and the mass organisations at the provincial level or cities directly under the central authority or corresponding level, to come and report on the situation or supply documents on questions of its concern.

The above provisions have been strictly implemented by many delegations of the National Assembly and local State organs during the past year. The Hanoi delegation has held regular meetings on every Thursday of the first and third week of the month. At each of these meetings the delegation listened to from 13 to 17 suggestions of the electorate. These suggestions have been quickly transmitted to the responsible organs for consideration and answers. Many issues raised by the electorate have been solved with the supervision and control of the deputies of the National Assembly. A small instance: the population of the Tan Mai residential quarter in Hanoi recently reported to their deputies that thanks to the latter's intervention there has been a marked improvement in electricity supply to their quarter.

Of course, at each session of the National Assembly the deputies can discuss and vote on any issue listed in the agenda of the session, and propose the inclusion of new issues or submit draft laws in the order of the draft laws agreed upon by the Council of State. In addition, the deputies can question the Council of Ministers or any member of the Council, the president of the Supreme People's Court or the president of the Supreme People's Organ of Control.

When the National Assembly is in session, the deputies can send their questions to the chairperson of the Assembly. The body or person to whom the questions are directed must answer before the National Assembly at this session. In case some time is needed for investigation the National Assembly shall decide on the time for an answer before the Council of State or at the next session of the Assembly. When the Assembly is in recess the questions shall be sent to the Council of State which will send them to the body or person to whom the questions are directed with a clear request for a reply at a prescribed date. If the plaintiff is not satisfied with the answer he may propose that the chairperson of the National Assembly or the President of the Council of State bring the question up for discussion at the National Assembly or the Council of State.

Last year's sessions of the National Assembly witnessed a serious implementation of the deputies' right to question leading bodies and persons, and enough time was devoted to replies by the latter.

A deputy of the National Assembly not only has rights but also duties, because after all he is held responsible before his electorate, the working people who have elected him and who are collective masters of the country.

That is why, all the legal documents mentioned above provide that the deputy is answerable before

the electorate, must keep in close touch with them and submit to their supervision, strictly observe the regime of regular meetings and reports to the electorate about his activities and those of the National Assembly, and answer the requests and petitions of the electorate. The Regulation on the Deputies of the National Assembly stipulates in Article 23: "The deputy of the National Assembly must, periodically or at the request of the electorate, contact the electorate to listen to their opinions and aspirations. At least once a year the deputy must report to his electorate on the implementation of his mandate. The electorate may either directly or through the Fatherland Front ask the deputy to report on his work for them to give observations on it."

The Law on the Organisation of the National Assembly and the Council of State further stipulates: "The deputy may be dismissed by his electorate if he proves unworthy of the trust of the People." (Article 66) The Regulations on the Deputies of the National Assembly add: "The National Assembly examines and decides cases when a deputy is judged no longer worthy of his mandate by the electorate and his dismissal is suggested by the Council of State, or the Central Committee of the Vietnam Fatherland Front or the local committee of the Fatherland Front." (Article 6).

More than a year has passed since the new Constitution was promulgated and the 7th National Assembly began its tenure. The new organisations and structures are being put into regular operation to ensure fuller exercise of the working people's right to collective mastery through the National Assembly, the highest representative organ of the people and the highest organ of State power. The concept of collective mastery—involving both rights and duties—is being institutionalized. Regulations and provisions to this effect are being put to experimental application in the realities of the new stage of the revolution.

Many promising aspects have emerged. Of course, mistakes and shortcomings will also become apparent, but they will certainly pave the way for further improvements and an ever better realisation of socialist democracy in Vietnam.

February 1982
NGUYEN HOANG

1. Article 86 of the Constitution stipulates: "The Council of State, the Council of Ministers, the chairperson of the National Assembly, the Council of National Defence, the Council of Nationalities, the various commissions of the National Assembly, the National Assembly deputies, the Supreme People's Court, the president of the Supreme People's Organ of Control, the Vietnam Fatherland Front, the political parties, the Federation of Trade Unions, the Organisation of Collective Farmers, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union and the Women's Union, have the right to present draft laws to the National Assembly."

2. Each group of deputies comprises one or several delegations of one locality (province, city directly under central authority and corresponding administrative unit) formed by the chairperson of the National Assembly, with the consent of the delegation heads, in order to facilitate the debates during a National Assembly session (Article 8 on the procedures of the National Assembly sessions).

TWO DEFENCE-RELATED LEGISLATIONS

THE second session of the Seventh National Assembly on December 30, 1981 adopted two major legislations—the law of Military Obligations and law on Officers of the Vietnam People's Armed Forces. These were made public by the Council of State on January 10 this year.

Law of Military Obligations

Requirements of the armed forces in their present process of modernization have rendered obsolete the former Law of Military Obligations adopted in 1960 and amended in 1962 and again in 1965. The new law is different in many points:

— Age limits for NCO's and men: the new limits are from 18 to 27, instead of 18 and 25. To avoid induction of minors it is stressed that new recruits must be fully eighteen years old. The two additional years are calculated to cover all youths including university graduates, most of whom are 25-year-olds. The upper limit for reservists is now 50 instead of 45. The intention is to enable all able-bodied, professionally qualified citizens to serve in the back line.

— Service term for NCO's and men now is three years instead of four; but it is four years for the Navy and technical branches of the armed forces on account of longer training. The shorter term meets the demand of the people; it also favours modernization in that it reduces the time required for building a big reserve force. Moreover it encourages young people to join the armed forces by giving them the assurance that when discharged they are still young enough to pick up their studies, learn a trade, or build a family.

Term for NCO's and men who are university graduates covers only two years. This is because such people, thanks to their education, will be more receptive

to military technique and because they have already received some training at school.

For women, military service is not compulsory. But professionals, medical or otherwise (specifications to be made by the Council of Ministers), will have to be registered as reservists in peace time. They will be called to training and may be accepted by the armed forces if they volunteer to join up. The upper age limit for those reservists is now 40 instead of 45.

— Pre-service preparations: young people, in secondary schools and universities, will receive training in politics, military technique and tactics, and physical education. It will take only two or three month's follow-up training in the army to make university graduates corporals. After serving their time these people may be made reserve officers.

— Postponement and exemption: postponement is applicable to:

1. People who have to work to support their parents, sisters, wife and children unable to work or too young to work to support themselves;

2. The only remaining sons of families of fallen combatants;

3. People who are studying at secondary schools, vocational schools, colleges or universities. These will be called up at the end of their studies whether or not they have qualified for graduation; and

4. People engaged in research projects sponsored by the State, and who cannot be replaced in these undertakings.

All these cases will be reconsidered annually and if the subjects no longer qualify for postponement they will be called up. If postponement is still applicable at the end of the 27th year the subjects will be transferred to the reserve force. Physically unfit people may benefit from

postponement or exemption accordingly.

The new law does not grant exemption to only sons because the family planning movement, now taking place in the whole country, will make only sons a common feature (only sons used to be exempted out of respect for the old custom of perpetuating a family by a male heir.)

Law on Officers of the Vietnam People's Armed Forces

The new law replaces the old one promulgated on April 29, 1958. It contains strict provisions concerning the selection of qualified citizens to be made into officers of good morale, health, and education and high competence in organization, command and management, with stress on youth.

The new law specifies seven kinds of officers: commanding, staff, medical, veterinary, juridical, administrative and logistics; and two categories: active-service officers and reserve officers.

There are now 11 ranks instead of 13: four for general officers, three (formerly four) for field officers and four (formerly five) for company officers.

Duration of service for promotion is also shortened. It used to take four years or more to go up one rank. Now it is only two for the lower ranks and three or four for the upper ones. There is no time limit for the promotion of general officers.

The elimination of two ranks and reduction of service duration for promotion are designed to encourage lower age brackets. The same consideration results in the following age ceilings: company officers: 38 (active duty) and 45 (reserve); majors: 43 (active duty) and 50 (reserve); lieutenant colonels: 48 (active duty) and 55 (reserve); colonels: 55 (active duty) and 58 (reserve); brigadier-generals and rear admirals: 60 (active duty) and 63 (reserve).

Officers who have served their term but who have not reached retirement age, or who have reached the age limits for their ranks without being able to go further, will be given preferential treatment to transfer to administrative agencies or social organizations. In case of difficulty in assignment and after 20 years of continuous service they can retire.

There is no age limit for lieutenant-generals and rear-admirals or officers of higher ranks. However they will be retired if good health or competency is lacking.

VIETNAM'S ETHNIC MINORITIES— PAWNS IN BEIJING'S GAME?

EARLY in 1979, when the one-month war that Deng Xiaoping labelled the first lesson for Vietnam came to an end everybody knew of the ignominious defeat of eleven Chinese army corps—600,000 strong, namely one-quarter of the strength of the Japanese Emperor's forces which occupied the Chinese mainland from 1937 to 1945. In addition to that Beijing suffered other failures on the political field, including its attempt to win over the ethnic minorities in Vietnam so as to use their terrain as a springboard and the peoples themselves as agitators, thus paving the way for its invasion later. These ruses are by no means new to us; for years the Beijing authorities have used them to harass India, Burma and many other Asian countries.

Behind the Mask of Friendship

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, with a population of fifty-three million, is composed of fifty-four ethnic groups. Of these the Viet account for eighty-five per cent (the overwhelming majority). The rest, about 7,000,000 in all, belong to the ethnic minorities: 1,200,000 Hoa (Chinese-origin); 800,000 Tay; 660,000 Khmer; 650,000 Thai; 620,000 Muong; 550,000 Nung; 400,000 H'mong; 300,000 Zao; 180,000 Giarai; 160,000 Ede, etc. These are the most important ethnic groups.

In the six provinces lying along the China-Vietnam frontier, which

is 1,460km long, there are some twenty ethnic groups. Some of them speak the Viet-Muong and Mon-Khmer languages, but the larger part the Tay-Thai, Meo-Zao, Han and Tibetan-Burmese languages. Those who speak these four languages come from Southern China and Tibet and migrated to Vietnam over the centuries. As for the Tay, they have lived on this land since before the time of Jesus Christ. The Thai came here in the 11th century; the Zao the 13th century, the H'mong (formerly called Meo), the 17th century and the Nung, the 18th century. The migrations from China lasted until a short time ago when the country plunged itself into bloody unrest with the "cultural revolution of the proletariat" unleashed by the great "helmsman" Mao Zedong.

In addition to the Hoa, a Chinese ethnic group within Vietnam, many others live on both sides of the Sino-Vietnamese frontier. Despite the fact that their nationalities are not the same, those on one side of the frontier have blood relations with people on the other side. They buy, sell or exchange goods at border markets without any customs barrier. On solemn occasions such as the Tet festival, the people on the borderland of the two countries often paid visits to each other, they always met whenever they had an important event like festivals, weddings, funerals, house-warming parties, etc. according to the customs of both countries. When

people's power was established in both countries, the China-Vietnam frontier became a border of friendship. Tran Nam Quan (Gate for controlling the South) under Chinese dynasties was turned into Muc Nam Quan (Gate for contemplating the South) and then more recently Huu Nghi Quan (Friendship Gate). All the bridges that cross the frontier were called Friendship bridges. Never had the people on the two sides of the frontier lived so harmoniously. Their children married regardless of nationality, and the number of Chinese youths who took Vietnamese girls as wives and stayed with them on Vietnamese soil was constantly on the rise.

Early in 1965 when the U.S. administration started its war of escalation against North Vietnam, Beijing declared its willingness to become a reliable rear area for Vietnam and moreover put forward a lot of measures to help Vietnam, including that of sending an army of pioneers to our country to make a system of "friendship roads" which link strategic points of the borderland and stretch down to midlands, the gates of the Red River Delta in general and of Hanoi in particular. That system of roads would link "front-line Vietnam" to "rear-area China". What a network of roads! And the behaviour of those Chinese who made it! With only rudimentary tools such as pick-axes, shovels, hoes, etc. and of course dynamite to get rocks from

quarries; but they worked so hard and so diligently. All their food — rice, meat, fish, canned foodstuffs, dehydrated vegetables — and even salt were brought here from China. As for spare food, they gave it to the local population; they even gave them medicines, shoes, sandals, clothes, mirrors, combs, reels of coloured thread, pieces of woollen strands for making tassels for towels and shirts. The commanders of these teams availed themselves of every opportunity to feast local officials. Along the roads under construction they set up resting stations for passers by to have a drink, a cigarette, and before resuming their journey, they were given, of course freely as the previous offerings, new issues of Chinese pictorials, pictures and later the notorious red books of quotations by Mao Zedong.

There was a time in some areas when Vietnamese minority people said to each other: "You're as good or as kind as a Chinese." It was not until early 1979, when Chinese troops crossed over the border and wantonly destroyed peaceful Vietnamese hamlets and went deep into our territory by that system of "friendship roads", that many people understood that the generosity and the pleasing smile of Beijing's men were really well-hidden and deep-seated machinations.

Economic and Psychological Warfare

The relationship between Beijing and Hanoi turned sour after the former failed in its attempt to export its cultural revolution to Vietnam and to coerce her into giving up her national interests to toe the Chinese line unconditionally. In 1972, knowing that they could not prevent an agreement on ceasing hostilities from being reached between the United States and Vietnam early in the next year, the Chinese authorities —

according to General Maxwell Taylor and some American papers they wanted to resist the U.S. to the last Vietnamese — get their redguards in all borderland provinces hang big banners which read: "Down with Southern revisionists." We are well aware that ten years ago the vociferous Chinese revolutionaries, after their "pingpong diplomacy", opened wide their doors to receive Henry Kissinger then Richard Nixon. The Vietnamese-Chinese relations worsened clearly when the Vietnamese revolutionary army liberated Saigon and smashed the puppet administration of Nguyen Van Thieu, an achievement that Beijing did not expect.

While at the South-Western borderland of Vietnam black-clothed divisions of the clique of Pol Pot — Ieng Sary — Khieu Samphan launched violent attacks against Vietnamese civilians, at the Northern borderland, simultaneously with the war of words from the loudspeakers from the Chinese side, many collecting shops were opened near the common frontier. The Chinese shopkeepers paid highly for what they bought from Vietnamese mountain people — water buffaloes, oxen, ploughshares, harrows, rice-strains, and vice versa they flooded the Vietnamese marketplaces with their popular consumer goods: reels of coloured thread, flowered materials, batteries and electric torches, vacuum flasks, alarm-clocks, lighters and flints, cheap jewelry, perfume, etc. The ruling circles in Beijing deliberately dealt heavy blows at Vietnamese agricultural co-operatives in mountainous areas where the ethnic groups live, encouraging malefactors and anti-socialist elements to steal socialist property to enrich themselves. Gradually these Chinese dealers bought up the roots of aniseed and cinnamon. For the aniseed, it takes more than ten years to gather aniseed fruit; and for cinnamon, twenty years; clearly what they wanted to do was to destroy

the forest of these two special kinds of trees in Vietnam. Furthermore they bought up mines, hand-grenades, rifles, sub-machineguns and machineguns, etc, the weapons with which most Vietnamese guerillas were then equipped. Inevitably, there were many traitors whose activities ran counter to the interests of the nation, and fell into the traps of the Chinese authorities — they became their henchmen. Some of them stayed on Chinese soil to serve the Chinese administration, others returned to their former hamlets or villages to carry out psychological warfare activities or simply to lay in wait for a chance to act.

Among the ethnic groups that lived along the China-Vietnam frontier, in addition to the Hoa, the Chinese authorities paid special attention to the H'mong, the Zao, the Giay and the Nung. The H'mong in Vietnam were ethnic brothers of the Meo in Laos; some of them had been organized into special forces under the command of General Vang Pao. Beijing was hatching a scheme to set up a Laotian kingdom whose territory would cover part of North Vietnamese territory, Upper Laos, Northern Thailand and Northern Burma, and Vang Pao was kept in Kunming with his men to carry out such a task. The Zao were homesick, they missed Chekiang, their legendary native province. As for the Nung and Giay, according to anthropologists, they were near relatives to the thirty million Chuang in an autonomous region of Kwansi province. The psychological warfare apparatus of Beijing was trying to persuade these two ethnic groups that they were offsprings of their Chinese ancestors so they had better repatriate together with the Hoa. "Mr Li Shiennien is the king of the Meo, Deng Xiaoping is the king of the Zao and Hua Guofeng is the Lord of the Giay," Chinese propagandists say. As for the Nung, they were not chosen by any king or lord in the ruling circle of Beijing,

but they were often reminded that they had two deep-rooted enemies: the Viet and the Tay.

In February 1979 while making an attack against our country, the Chinese command mobilized the renegades of the H'mong, Zao and Giay ethnic minorities and turned them into special gangs of bandits who, in their own national costumes, went pillaging mountainous hamlets and villages. Parallel to this, the psychological warfare apparatus of Beijing systematically spread a lot of misleading news. At first, there was the rumour that a hamlet of the Giay had started a riot together with a village of H'mong and one of the twelve branches of the Zao. Gradually it was rumoured that the whole of the Giay population, together with the five branches of the H'mong and all the twelve branches of the Zao had turned against the government. In some places and at times they managed to sow discord and confusion although they did not always succeed in their aims.

Love for the Socialist Homeland in spite of Ordeals

A multi-national state is always under the impact of opposite motivating forces: integration and antagonism. In feudal times, the Vietnamese multi-national state existed and effectively fought off great-Han expansionism. This was thanks to its promotion of integration and limitation of the tendency of antagonism, not by means of policies of systematic assimilation that Chinese monarchs had resorted to, but by its recognition of the right to self-determination of ethnic groups with their own customs and habits. That was the reason why in the history of this country, whenever Chinese feudalist authorities unleashed their war of aggression against Vietnam, all the ethnic groups always united with the Viet

ethnic majority to resist those invasions, especially those who were victims of the cruel policy of great-Han assimilation and had left their own homeland to settle down in another country where life was much easier for them. Some liturgical songs of the H'mong mention the pogroms that the Han carried out to repress their ancestors.

The Vietnamese socialist state, under the light of Marxism-Leninism and the historical experiences of their forefathers, has been following a policy of promoting the minorities on the basis of "equality, unity and assistance" with a view to making them catch up with the ethnic majority in political, economic, cultural and social fields. The Vietnamese socialist state has done a lot to improve the living conditions of ethnic groups, get rid of chronic famine and malaria which caused many deaths and infant mortality, eradicate illiteracy, devise scripts for various ethnic groups and help them preserve their traditional culture. Many ethnic communities that were on the verge of extinction are now reviving thanks to the just policy of the Communist Party of Vietnam on ethnic minorities.

On 17 February 1979 when Chinese troops started their aggression against Vietnam they spread a rumour that the H'mong in Cao Bang province had rebelled. But reality repudiated their lie. One of the most telling blows dealt at them right on the first days of engagement was given by the H'mong. When Chinese divisions of infantry under cover of tanks' barrages crossed over the frontier to encroach upon the territory of Thong Nong district, the H'mong at Cao Thuong left their hamlets to evacuate deeply into the jungle and were unfortunately besieged in a valley. For four days on end they suffered a great deal from hunger, thirst and

the offensive stench of dead bodies, so the enemy troops thought that they were all dead. At last, under cover of darkness, the militiamen of Cao Thuong broke the encirclement of Chinese troops in a clever assault which made two Chinese prongs fire at each other watonly because each thought that the other prong was their opponents. In that skirmish alone over 1,000 aggressors were killed. During that time, at Phong Tho (Lai Chau province), the H'mong of Giao San village, in a three-day battle, wiped out 150 enemy troops.

Also in Cao Bang province, the militia of the Zao, Nung and Tay at Minh Tan village, Nguyen Binh district, bravely fought numerous Chinese divisions and in less than one month they wiped out 600 enemy troops and took 34 other prisoners. In Lang Son province in their co-ordination with the Tay, Viet and Zao and with the regular forces the Nung fought off the main thrusts of Chinese troops including a well-seasoned army of 200,000 strong. In Hoang Lien Son province, the Zao made a worthy contribution to the victory at Phiet Hamlet, where thousands of aggressors were put out of action.

There was no denying that the Chinese command and psychological war apparatus were very cunning. The point was that they underrated the love for socialism and their homeland of the Vietnamese ethnic groups and the ever-increasing tendency of integration among them. It was possible that they held that the socialist system in Vietnam was similar to that of China, namely just a hotch-potch of thoughts that have long since lost their main contents and turned into clichés.

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In the first Indochinese war, the French colonialists failed in their attempt to entice the ethnic

MORE

EVIDENCE

OF

POLPOT'S

CRIMES

RECENTLY, TBS Television and all the main newspapers in Japan revealed the story of the finding of the remains of the young photo journalist Ichinose Taïdo, affirming that he was killed by Polpotists.

After graduating from the Art School of the University of Japan, he went to take photos of the war in Vietnam and Kampuchea as a free lance.

In Autumn 1973, he entered the Pol Pot-controlled area. In November that year, he wrote to a friend, saying "if I stepped on a mine, it would be farewell forever to you". Afterwards, he travelled to Angkor Wat and no more was heard of him.

For 9 years, his parents and family were full of grief. Though they were sure that he was already dead, day and night they wanted to know how he had died.

In late January 1982, with the help of the government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, a group of Japanese cameramen, with TBS and DENPA News Television and Ichinose Taïdo's parents arrived in Siem Reap. There, they learned that Taïdo had lived in Thano Tatton village, Poradac commune, 10 km east of Angkor Wat. On February 1st, they went to Thano where they met two survivors who still remembered Taïdo. One of them, a 50-year old woman, recognised him as soon as she saw his photo. She related: "In late November 1973, Taïdo was captured by Pol Pot's soldiers and was brought to Thano Tatton. He was put in stocks at night and released to carry on his work during the day. But one week later, his camera was seized by the Khmer Rouge. Despair and fear prevented Taïdo from eating anything. One day he complained about his miserable condition, so, he was considered an opponent who had to be killed. Next day, seeing a Pol Pot soldier wearing Taïdo's shoes, we were sure that he had been killed. No one knew exactly where he was killed but many people in this commune knew where they had buried him."

Led by some people from the commune, Taïdo's parents went to a grass field 500 metres away. There, Taïdo's remains were uncovered. After washing the bones, and carefully examining the skull, it was confirmed that they were indeed Taïdo's remains and teeth.

Once again, the people of Japan and the whole world are reminded of the heinous crimes of the Pol Pot-Khieu Samphan clique, who are even now protected by the Beijing ruling circles.

NGUYEN QUY QUY

minorities to counter the Vietnamese revolution: they set up autonomous regions of the Thai, Nung, Muong and trained armed forces among them up to battalion level. In the second Indochinese war, the US imperialists went further: they established a "Tay Nguyen (Highland) autonomous republic" within a Federal Republic of Vietnam, and special forces of the montagnards under civil US training, backing and command. This also failed lamentably.

The Beijing expansionists wanted not only to apply outdated

experiences of Western imperialists but also to revive a number of corpses left by their predecessors after withdrawing from the battle field. As a matter of fact the father of a projected Meo kingdom in Southeast Asia was none other than Washington. Now the Beijing octopus wants to stretch its tentacles far beyond Northern Vietnam up to the Highlands to back FULRO (United Front of Oppressed Races), the organization gathering all reactionaries among the Gia Lai, Bana, Ede, Kohr, Cham and Khmer ethnic minorities etc. It was set up by

the French Deuxième Bureau and later transferred to the CIA. These bandits have clandestinely carried out sabotage activities in the Highlands. Of course it is erroneous to underestimate the schemes of Beijing to take advantage of the problems of minority peoples for its own expansionist designs. Nevertheless, the situation enables us to think that just as its predecessors failed in this respect, Beijing cannot achieve its aims.

LE DAN

REFLECTIONS ON THE FOOD PROBLEM IN VIETNAM

ALL our people are jubilant over the success obtained in our agricultural production in 1981. Major targets of the agricultural plan were fulfilled: rice production increased by 900,000 tons of paddy, the number of cattle and pigs surpassed the plan and the output of some industrial crops, especially soyabean, also went up. Food production was boosted, particularly in the Red river delta, Thanh Hoa and Nghe Tinh provinces and in the mid lands of north Vietnam. The highest output was obtained in the regions of fertile soil with the tradition of intensive farming and good managerial methods such as the provinces of Thai Binh and Hai Hung. Other provinces like Haiphong, Ha Bac and Ha Nam Ninh, have greatly contributed to the increase of food production in the country as a whole.

What usually leads a boost in food production? There are three fundamental factors: climate, material and technical progress, and the managerial structure.

Regarding climate, in the north the winter 1980-spring 1981 crop met with favourable conditions as the weather was quite warm and the rain fell early, but it was hampered by short spells of cold which checked the growth of rice seedlings in mid-December and the ear-developing of the rice plants late in the season and by rains resulting in the early lodging of the rice plants. At harvest time, rainfall was 1.3 times heavier than the corresponding period of the previous year. In the south, the water abated about one month later and sea water invaded a number of regions causing impediment to sowing.

In the north, though the 10th lunar month rice crop did not suffer from flood and typhoon, it did have a long spell of drought early in the season, weathered a storm when bearing seed, a spell of heat in August and met with rain in October causing early lodging in some ricefields. Immense areas in the north were devastated by planthoppers (up to 400,000 hectares in some period) causing a drop of 10% of output. In the south, some regions suffered drought, some others flood, and a downpour at the end of the season caused heavy damage to the crops in the Central Highlands and coastal areas of central Vietnam.

In the whole country, though the climate did not cause great difficulties for the growth of the plants, it was not favourable to farming work. Some parts of the country enjoyed good climatic conditions, some others not.

Insofar as materials are concerned, in 1981 fuel and nitrogen fertilizer were supplied in quantities far below the norms of previous years (60,000 tons of nitrogen fertilizer less than in 1980). Technical progress was applied to rice production such as building up of a national four-degree system of seeds, multiplication and utilization of pest-resistant strains, but this worked only to a limited extent and was not the principal cause of high productivity.

The main reason was the initial change in the managerial structure. Many policies adopted at the 6th plenum of the Party Central Committee held in 1979 were still applied, such as those regarding the best use of land, the determination of the quota of food delivery to the State, the distribution of food according to categories of workers, encouragement given to animal husbandry, and especially the contractual system in rice growing. Never had policies attracted such attention from a large number of peasants as this contractual system: just one year later it had been applied in almost all the co-operatives. In fact, this is a rational organization of labour linking the farmers to their final products and to the distribution of crops in consideration of the interest of the State, the collectives, and their personal interest. It encourages full exploitation of the potential of the agricultural co-operatives (the production collectives in the south), makes the best use of their work force, land and material and technical bases, and guarantees the execution of technical processes.

With the application of new managerial regulations, the farmers work more zealously and with a greater sense of responsibility. As the climate was comparatively favourable to the two rice crops, in 1981 90% of the acreage was sown in time and the rice fields were weeded three times (this work is highly appreciated as it was formerly neglected). The water supplied by irrigation canals to the ricefields farmed under contract was used more rationally as were nitrogen fertilizer and animal dung. Though

the farmers were handicapped by the shortage of materials, they were encouraged by the new contractual system to do the work entrusted to them better.

Thanks to the contractual method, the acute drought at the beginning of the season was quickly overcome and only minimal damage was recorded.

We are also delighted to see that in the development of industrial crops, soyabean was planted on a larger scale and at a quicker tempo. Formerly this crop was grown only in East Nam Bo and in the highlands of north Vietnam, now its cultivation expands to the Red river and Mekong deltas. From 38,000 hectares at the beginning, the acreage under soya reached 42,000 hectares in 1978, 48,000 hectares in 1980 and doubled this figure in 1981. It gives a yield of 0.65-0.75 ton per hectare, one ton in some localities and even 2 tons in some provinces of the Mekong delta. Soyabean is known for its high percentage of protein which is 2.5-5 times superior to that of maize. It is of short growth and is thus suitable for multiplication of crops, besides it can fix from 15 to 20 kilograms of pure nitrogen per hectare and per crop and if planted in rotation with other crops, is one of the best means of improving the soil. Growing soya paves the way for a solution of the problem of food for man, development of animal husbandry and export.

With the application of technical progress, including the use of new strains, soya can be planted in spring, summer and winter. It can be grown alone or together with other crops and does not encroach upon the acreage of ricefields.

In 1981, animal husbandry also made headway. Worth noting is that the herd of cattle, which had decreased in the last few years, began to rise again. This increase was thanks to the new contractual system and to the new policy which promotes the development of cattle rearing in all the three sectors (State, co-operative and family) and facilitates the slaughter of animals.

The provinces in the plains are badly lacking in draught animals: in the Red river delta each hectare of ricefield is tilled by 0.45 animal only; under the old contractual system, the problem of shortage of tractive force was solved by skimping the tilling work and protracting the farming season. Applying the new contractual system the farmers no longer accept delays or hasty work by specialized teams in charge of draught animals, but quarrel over draught animals with one another and compel their helpmates to overwork. Soon however the farmers realized their

mistake and began to take better care of the animals, increase their numbers and apply policies encouraging animal tenders.

The result is that all over the country the herd of cattle has increased by 1.7% in the Red river delta. In the provinces in the midlands of northern Vietnam, the herd of buffalo rose from 1.8 to 2%, and that of oxen from 11 to 18 %.

However the output of subsidiary food crops fell short of the 1980 plan. In other words, the acreage under subsidiary crops increased very slowly and their output tended to go down.

In the last few years, people in many regions held a simplistic view vis-à-vis the growing of subsidiary crops. They thought only of expanding the acreage without giving it enough care in preparing the soil and manuring—so the yield was always very low. As the business did not pay, nobody wanted to grow subsidiary crops. The yield of maize was only 1.1-1.2 tons per hectare instead of 3-4 tons as normal, that of sweet potato was 5 tons, that of manioc 7-8 tons instead of 15-20 tons. Without care the growing of subsidiary crops on sloping land only exhausts the soil, with the result that the yield in the following years is lower than that of the first year. Science has confirmed that to obtain 3 tons of maize per hectare (that is doubling the yield of an already planted field), it is necessary to fertilize the soil with 800-1000kg of animal dung, 200kg of nitrogen sulphate and 180-200kg of phosphorus. The same with other plants—sweet potato, manioc, potato—animal dung and chemical fertilizer are required to raise their yield.

To boost the production of subsidiary food crops we must make substantial investments in such links as processing, transport and distribution. But so far the state decision in this respect has not been observed by the parties concerned. Subsidiary crops contain a high percentage of water (80% for some tubers) and are thus difficult to store. It is necessary to sundry and process them at least by rudimentary methods to facilitate their storage and transport. If subsidiary crops are used only as local reserve food, attention is paid to them only in years of food shortage, they do not have a high commercial value and their yield can be raised to some extent only.

A major problem of food production in Vietnam is to solve the relation between rice and subsidiary food crops.

Rice is a precious cereal. Many archaeologists and agriculturists hold that rice was introduced to South-east Asia some 9,000 years ago. Vietnam was one of the first countries to grow it at such an early

date i.e. since the mesolithic era, some thousand years prior to the Hung kings period.

The ricefields are mainly set up on the alluvial soil of the delta. With the new relations of production (co-operativization and the contractual system) and the new material and technical bases, with the application of technical progress, the acreage under rice has expanded and its yield risen from one ton per hectare before 1945 to 2 tons at present. Applying the fruits of the green revolution, we can now replace the long-stem, long-growth rice strain by dwarf-stem, short-growth and higher-yield strains, and replace the uncertain 5th lunar month-crop by the high-yield spring crop. Between 1955 and 1980 the yield of the 10th lunar month crop increased by 15% only, but that of the spring crop by 50.60%, an increase of 0.6-1 ton per hectare over the 5th lunar month crop. In the south, the acreage reserved for crop multiplication increased from 100,000 hectares at the time of liberation to 600,000 hectares at present.

There are great possibilities to multiply crops and clear land as a means of enlarging the acreage of ricefields. 50.2% of land still only has one-crop fields. Furthermore investments must be made to build irrigation works and buy fuel to operate pumps to irrigate the ricefields in the dry season and drain water in the rainy season.

Meanwhile there exist immense areas on which to grow subsidiary crops (4 times the present area under these crops). Rice growing is more remunerative but a field which cannot be planted with rice or gives a low rice yield must be shifted to the growing of subsidiary crops.

At present, in the world, subsidiary food crops account for an important part of food production. The quantity of maize (360 million tons) harvested in the world in a year well nigh equals that of rice, 20-30% of which is destined for human consumption. With 700 million tons produced by 80 countries, manioc is the staple food of 300 million people. Potato which ranks after wheat is the second most important crop in Europe. Sweet potato grown in many countries is one of the main crops of Japan and second only to rice. In Vietnam maize is the most important crop in the northwest, Viet Bac and Central Highlands, sweet potato accounts for 30-40% of food in many regions of Nghe Tinh province. In some localities, manioc is the staple food. As has been said above, to boost the production of subsidiary crops, it is necessary to give them appropriate care and to solve the processing problem.

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In Vietnam the percentage of cropland is very low — 6.9 million hectares for 53 million inhabitants and 3.5 million to be converted into cropland while France has 54 million hectares for 54 million inhabitants, Thailand 32 million hectares for 45 million in-

habitants, Poland 31 million hectares for 33 million people, Rumania 23.7 million hectares for 31 million people, Bulgaria 11 million hectares for 9.1 million people etc. So in our country the acreage of cropland per head of population is among the lowest in the world. The expansion of acreage of food crop by land clearing is an actual possibility, but intensive farming is the principal means to boost production; this policy has not been fully grasped by many provinces. In these regions, food production does not increase in proportion to the expansion of acreage or the quantity of manure sprayed.

Regarding subsidiary crops, we have ample possibilities to develop intensive farming, as said above; but we have great possibilities to boost rice production too. In the provinces known for intensive culture such as Thai Binh, some co-operatives have a yield exceeding the target by 300 kg per hectare. If in the whole country an increase of 200 kg per hectare is recorded by this method, we can harvest an additional quantity of 1.5 million tons of rice, equal to the production of 700,000 hectares of cleared land, and this with less expenditure. Besides intensive farming is also a means to improve the soil, to avoid it being exhausted, a situation which has deteriorated to the point of becoming a danger to world agriculture in the year 2000, as predicted by scientists.

Intensive culture must go together with the delimitation of regions reserved for the growing of high-yield crops. These areas include 580,000 hectares out of 1,060,000 hectares under the winter spring crop in the north and 290,000 hectares out of 600,000 hectares under the same crop in the south. The productivity of high-yield ricefields should exceed the average rate by 400 kg per hectare in the north and nearly 700 kg in the South. In these two regions, one kilogram of nitrogen fertilizer has the efficiency of two kilograms of the same fertilizer in other regions if we manure the soil with 20 kilograms more of nitrogen sulphate per hectare while abiding by the five following conditions: keep water in sufficient quantity all through the cropping period; use a rice strain appropriate to each kind of soil; prepare organic fertilizers; give adequate protection to the plants; and apply the new contractual system.

Another point is to pay attention to the regions with a large acreage of cropland. In these regions, the rice yield is generally lower than in the regions where there is little cropland. Generally speaking, to increase the productivity of low-yield ricefields by 100 or 200 kg per hectare is easier and less costly than in high-yield fields.

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Boosting production goes hand in hand with thrift, so in our country thrift is a State policy.

We have not enough capital and material to invest in agriculture. Yet according to the data supplied by some research institutes, the investments we have made in irrigation, chemical fertilizers and fuel are not efficient enough to boost food production, and this efficiency can be 25-30% below norm. Beside improving management and applying technical progress with a right sort of investment, the best method is to practise thrift.

If the inhabitants of the whole country make a saving of say one kilogram of rice per month by eating subsidiary crops, this saving would be equal to the quantity of rice imported in 1981.

To protect production and storehouses is another method of saving. According to the FAO, rodents destroy about one quarter of food crop in the world, insect pest 15-20%. Three rats eat as much grain as a man. In our country, 20% of damage caused to the crop is by exposing it to the open air without adequate protection against sun and rain.

Rice, a food destined for people, is used to feed pigs at the rate of 1.5 million tons a year in this whole country, particularly in the Mekong delta. This is due to an old habit which continues even now and also to lack of processing methods and transport of subsidiary crops. With animal husbandry raised to a main line, it is necessary to think of finding food for animals when the country runs short of food particularly rice.

and growth of the population. This is the concern of the world's people and also of Vietnam. If the birth-rate in our country continues to rise, the yearly increase of 250,000-350,000 tons of food is only enough to keep the per capita ration at the present level if not at a lower rate.

Besides, the fight against natural calamities is a major problem. It is calculated that Vietnam could meet with a food shortage every three years. Particularly after the liberation of the South in 1975, bad harvests have occurred continuously up to the present time. The three natural disasters alone—flood, drought and pest—have caused the loss of crops from 23 to 53% in the hardest hit year. And no reserves can be made to cope with these calamities and emergency cases. That is why it is necessary to step up the production of crops against untoward happenings.

From the success of food production in 1981, we can draw useful lessons particularly on management according to the new contractual system. But to solve the food problem more efficiently, when the country is meeting great difficulties, it is necessary to make comprehensive calculations. If such methods as increased production of rice and subsidiary food crops and saving, together with such measures as birth control and combating natural disasters, prove to be efficient we can attain our goal of producing enough food for the entire people.

In settling the food problem, we must reckon with the relations between increase of food production

After HUU THO

Vietnam Advances

HO CHI MINH

CITY

MINH HAI

RAILWAY

RECENTLY, the Ministry of Transport and Communications together with some southern provinces held a conference to discuss and plan the building of a Ho Chi Minh-City-Minh Hai (former Ca Mau) railway, firstly considering the Ho Chi Minh City-My Thuan section.

It is necessary to build a railway system that runs through the Mekong river delta, linking Ho Chi Minh-City with the southernmost province of the country since the Mekong river delta, a big granary, will be exploited more and more. As a result, the requirements of transporting quantities of food out, and manufactured goods and raw-

materials in, will increase and the present transport facilities will be inadequate to cope with the new situation.

So far, in the south, a Ho Chi Minh-Loc Ninh railway has been built to carry sugar cane from Tay Ninh, rubber from Be river, and bauxite from the Central Highlands to the City. And in the very near future, a railway to serve the building site of the big Tri An hydro-electric construction will be put into use.

The conference discussed how to build these three railways simultaneously, i.e. how to mobilize the local labour forces working together with those of the State.

Tết 1982

A TALK WITH Dr NGUYỄN KHÁC VIỆT

Vietnam Courier: *You spent the Tet festival in Hanoi. What were your impressions?*

Answer: I spent the eve of Tet in Hanoi. From mid night to 1 pm was near the edge of Sword Lake with the people of Hanoi (and many foreign friends) while fire-crackers exploded on all sides. A huge crowd gathered, just for the pleasure of being together. On New Year's Day (1) I called on various relatives. On the second Day I was in a Muong village 80 km north west of Hanoi, spending Tet with its inhabitants. On the fourth day I was at Dong Ky about twenty-five kilometres from Hanoi to attend the Festival of Fire-crackers. On the same day I had an invitation to a festival at Lieu Doi village 60 km from Hanoi where I was to attend jousts and demonstrations of martial arts, a speciality of the village. For the sixth day I had an invitation from Co Loa village to attend a contest of shuttle-cocks (hit using the legs and feet). Unfortunately I had to resume my work and could not accept those invitations.

Vietnam Courier: *So you enjoyed the Tet festival in Hanoi and two different villages. Would you say that the tradition of Tet has been preserved in both town and countryside?*

Answer: Certainly. More than ever people want to celebrate this traditional festival of ancestors, of spring, of renewal, of reconciliation. For at least one month beforehand preparations were underway

in Hanoi and the villages alike. Tailors had a lot of work, so did the makers of fire-crackers or candied fruits. Each family, factory or office had its own celebration. In each house, however small, a place was reserved for the altar of ancestors on which, for at least three days, incense sticks were burnt, exuding a fragrant perfume. In the villages people visited their ancestors' tombs and the faithful thronged to the pagodas.

Vietnam Courier: *Were there any new elements in this celebration of Tet?*

Answer: I think the first new fact has a demographic character. You know that whatever their birthday the Vietnamese count their age from Tet. Thus you are 60 or 70 years old from this or that Tet. Therefore Tet is also a festival of longevity. In the past, people celebrated their 60th anniversary, or at least their children, grandchildren and friends came and wished longevity to those who were entering their sixtieth year. This year, I attended several feasts of longevity, not for 60-year-old relatives or friends, but for 70-year-old ones. Old age has thus been increased by ten years. One is reminded of the well-known verse: "Rare are those who reach 70 years". Today septuagenarians are no longer rare, many of them, and there are more women than men, are still active and look after their grandchildren or local affairs. In

Vietnamese society the image of the old has changed quite a lot.

Vietnam Courier: *In the past the festival of Tet lasted a whole month. Is that still so?*

Answer: If you count Sunday 24 January, government workers had three days of leave. Of course, for two or three days before and after the festival everything slows down. In town, therefore, Tet lasts about one week. In the countryside, there is a new fact. In the past, those who had the means celebrated their Tet for a whole month (for the poor there was in reality no feast). Tet fell in the dry season which was a slack period because rice-growing was then impossible. So the festivities could be prolonged. Today two new elements have appeared which modify working conditions in the countryside:

— The extension of irrigation which makes rice-growing possible all the year round;

— a new rotation of crops with the development of dry crops (sweet potato, potato, soya, peanut...) and the introduction of new shortgrowth rice varieties.

The dry season is no longer a slack season. On the contrary, more than ever, farming work is at full steam ahead because dry crops require more work for preparing the soil and for weeding, gathering and storing. You have to reconcile the work-tempo with the festivities.

Vietnam Courier: *How do people manage it?*

Answer: Some years ago, many over-zealous management committees of agricultural co-operatives drove people to the fields even on the second day of the first month, running counter to the tradition which allows at least three days of festivities. This "leftist" policy also wanted to suppress all traditional popular festivities which unfolded throughout the first month of the lunar calendar. For this spring festival those who worked far away came back to their villages, and temples, pagodas and play-grounds were full of people in their best outfits anxious to attend pirogue jousts, cock or buffalo-fights, theatrical performances etc. For a few days each of them felt proud to belong to this or that village.

Vietnam Courier: *And now?*

Answer: The restoration of peace on the one hand and a more realistic policy on the other have contributed to reviving these spring village festivals. National defence no longer suffices—there must be a lot of social and cultural activities to create a community spirit, and the joy of living needs to be expressed. In these village festivals popular creativity can have full play: here is a festival of fire crackers, there, puppet shows on the water: in one village, martial arts prevail while in another chess is played with boys and girls as pawns; this village boasts the best theatrical group in the region, that one the best choir. The movement has started and will certainly develop. Popular festivals answer a need, they are also the only means to prevent popular culture from being smothered by the development of mass media-radio and television.

Vietnam Courier: *What is the contents of these festivals? Isn't there a risk of reviving old superstitions?*

Answer: Each village had a guardian genie venerated in its dinh (communal house). The festival celebrated the joy of spring while providing an occasion to pay homage to the genie who was often

an historic figure, a patriot who had defeated the enemy, a pioneer or an inventor of a handicraft. In the past, common people thought that these genii had the power to heal diseases and grant the wishes of the disinherited. Little by little, with the spread of hygiene and education, these superstitions disappear but they are hard to eradicate, and those who recommend vigilance against them when village festivals are revived are not entirely wrong. Anyway it is economic and cultural development and not a few coercive measures which make superstitions disappear.

Vietnam Courier: *Could you tell us something about the festival of fire-crackers you attended?*

Answer: It took place at Dong Ky village 25 km from Hanoi, in former Bac Ninh province, a region with very deep-rooted traditions. The guardian genie of the village is a hero who victoriously fought against foreign aggressors and came back on the fourth day of the first month—the day chosen for the festival. Legend takes his exploit back to the Hung Kings period, four thousand years ago. Early in the morning, from neighbouring villages and Hanoi thousands of people throng to Dong Ky to attend the Fire-cracker Festival. You have to see for yourself the thousands of bicycles and motorbikes on the dikes, the children hanging like bunches to the branches of century-old trees which surround the communal temple, the multitude—a motley crew composed of old ladies in traditional costume chewing betel and also of youngsters clad in jeans and shirts of the latest fashion, to have an idea of the atmosphere. Everybody pushes to get a place in the yard of the communal temple for the fateful moment when the fire-crackers are being exploded. That takes place when the sun reaches its zenith, a survival of sun worship practised thousands of years ago. A number of families have the right, by drawing lots to participate in the contest, each of them

making, at their own expense, the string of fire-crackers or the big rocket, which will give the loudest burst. Everything is kept secret until the last moment. Then from the temple the fire-crackers are brought out, the biggest the size of a banana trunk. The heads of the family make deep bows while a score of youths with bare chests noisily hail the arrival of the fire-cracker, a golden paper dragon wreathed around it. Silence falls on the crowd when the fuse is lit. Everybody stops their ears and waits for the explosion. Boom! Bits of paper and bamboo fly everywhere and an acrid smoke fills the yard then people laugh and discuss the quality of the explosion. Five strings, five big fire-crackers: the winner receives a symbolic gift but popular belief has it that he will fare well this year, to compensate him for his expense. The crowd scatters for refreshments at the stalls set up for the occasion in the communal square. In the afternoon and on the two following days cock fights, chess, games, jousts and theatrical performances take place.

Vietnam Courier: *Wasn't there a different atmosphere in town and countryside compared with last year's Tet?*

Answer: Indeed. There has been a bumper harvest. In particular the practice of incentives has helped peasant households increase their income (2). In town the factory workers and government office employees have benefited from more flexible regulations. In other words, the measures taken since 1980 to improve the management of agricultural co-operative and enterprises have begun to bear fruit. Many people were able to spend more on their Tet this year. There were more flowers and fire-crackers than last year.

1. The first day of Nham Tuat (year of the Dog) coincided with January 25th 1982.

2. See Vietnam Courier Nos 2 and 3-1981.

CHI DAU

ON THE HANOI SCREEN



Le Van and Anh Thai as Mrs Dau and her husband
Photo: Fafim

THE film "*Chi Dau*" (Mrs Dau) from the Vietnam Feature Film Studio which was screened for the first time in Hanoi at the end of 1981 immediately drew wide public interest. This is the first film adopted from a novel of realist literature dealing with the Vietnamese countryside before the 1945 August Revolution. The script is based on the novel "*Tat Den*" (When the Light Is Out) by the writer Ngo Tat To (1).

Ngo Tat To lived in the darkest period of the colonial rule in Viet-

nam. He witnessed some of the most excruciating scenes of colonial and feudal oppression in the Vietnamese countryside.

During the period of the Democratic Front (2) the working people's struggle for a better life and democratic freedoms spread to the whole country. This gave Ngo Tat To a better chance to see more clearly the destitution and misery of his people and its cause. Together with other progressive writers of his time he participated in the progressive press with national

spirit, and the class struggle demanding the overthrow of the French and their agents. He began working on his major novel "*Tat Den*" in 1936 and he finished it in 1939. After the novel was published in Hanoi, the colonial authorities, alarmed by the wide popularity and the trenchant denunciation of the novel, ordered its confiscation and a ban on its circulation as well as on all press articles about it.

In his novel Ngo Tat To described the brutal and blatant acts of exploitation and repression of the defenceless peasants by the tyrannical local landlords as well as the latter's miserly practices and lechery. The story centres around the family of a poor peasant at the height of a collection of poll tax. By failing to pay a few piastres of poll tax for a brother — even though he has died and should have been written off the tax register — Ms Dau is forced to sell her litter of puppies and finally her daughter to the landlord, without, however, escaping from the despotic acts of the colonial and feudal repressive machine.

"*Chi Dau*" evokes the Vietnamese countryside in the years prior to the revolution when big families of wretched peasants were crammed in ramshackle huts, their faces ravaged by hunger, disease and fear. In contrast, the landlords and local mandarins lived in opulence and luxury, receiving *carte blanche* from their colonial mentors to exploit, beat up, imprison and torture the illiterate masses.

Pham Van Khoa, the film director, is also author of the film script. His intention is to re-create the image of the Vietnamese peasant woman, hardworking, kind-hearted and completely devoted to her husband and children, but driven into an impossible situation by the regime. That is the message of the novel "*Tat Den*" which the film makers have tried to bring home.

A BOOK ON "TYPICAL FOSSILS OF NORTH VIETNAM"

The heroine of the film, Chi Dau, is acted by Le Van, who is actually a ballet dancer. In spite of her age—she is only 21—Le Van accepted the role of Chi Dau, a young mother of three who has to shoulder the overwhelming burden of feeding an imprisoned husband and three small children while being subjected to the worst persecution by a greedy and lecherous pack of local tyrants. Her performance is outstanding and fine supporting acting make the film a moving experience.

Among a total of 10 films from the Vietnam Feature Film Studio realised in 1981 "Chi Dau" is the only one to deal with Vietnamese society before the revolution. It marks a new episode in the history of the Vietnamese cinematography, that of making films based on famous literary and historic works. This is a new area for Vietnamese film makers who have little or no experience with this genre, either in the theoretical or practical fields. This first venture augurs well for the future.

VU TRONG TRI

Notes :

1. *Ngo Tat To (1894-1954)* was a well known realist novelist of Vietnam. He is also the author of "Leu Chong" (Tent and Camp Bed) and "Viec Lang" (Village Affairs), the first dealing with the triennial examinations in feudalist Vietnam and the second with the deliberation of village affairs among the notables in ancient Vietnam.

2. *The Democratic Front (1936 - 1939)* was a broad mass organisation organised by the Indochinese Communist Party to undertake legal activities in the period of the Popular Front in France.

UNDER the guidance of Associate-Professor Duong Xuan Hao, 27 Vietnamese palaeonto-geologists have written a book entitled — "Typical Fossils of North Vietnam" — published in 1980 by the Scientific and Technical Publishing House for the Geological and Mineral Institute of the Central Department of Geology. This important work succinctly introduces all fossil-containing sedimentary rocks, from the Cambrian era (570 million years ago) to the Quaternary period (hundreds of thousands of years ago) and 654 species of palaeontologic fossils discovered in North Vietnam. The publication of this book is all the more significant as it falls in a year of several anniversaries including the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Geological branch and the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the palaeonto-stratigraphic branch.

All basic geological study — from the structure of a region to mineral exploration — begins with stratigraphy. Apart from the regions where the crust of Earth is formed by magma from the heart of the earth, the strata segment below the cultivable layer is always composed of various strata of rocks formed in the different periods of geological evolution of the region. When studying them for any purpose, geologists begin by classifying and comparing them with strata found in other regions to determine their age. This fundamental work helps to collate the most important data and consequently to solve many problems concerning geological structure. The law on the formation of useful ores and on the history of geological development of a region can also be determined. This is also the substance of stratigraphic study.

It is precisely through realizing the importance of geological work that the Central Department of Geology has paid attention to training palaeonto-stratigraphic workers. In this field we started from scratch twenty years ago. When they withdrew from our country, the French colonialists did not leave any geological force. Thus Vietnamese palaeonto-stratigraphic workers are all revolutionary intellectuals mostly formed at the socialist school who have served in the two wars of resistance. Responding to the call of the Party, they surmounted many difficulties to follow the scientific path. In the past twenty years, they have conducted field work undaunted with a knapsack on their backs and a hammer in their hand, splitting rocks in the hope of finding ores. Our palaeontologists have studied almost all the main sedimentary rocks in the country, and together with other geologists have detected many fossils, determined the age of the rocks and drawn up maps of the division of strata in each region to serve as basis for a nationwide geological study.

Illustrated with 123 photos of palaeontologic fossils, this 500-page book of typical fossils in North Vietnam testifies to the utility of our palaeontologist's work which introduces our readers to sedimentary rocks belonging to 8 geological families, 654 kinds of fossils, fauna and flora found in these strata, including 58 kinds discovered by Vietnamese palaeontologists. The book will serve as a guide and reference for geologists in Southeast Asia and the world, and as a document for the exchange of scientific data with other countries. For this purpose it includes in its final part a summary in English.

VU KHUC
Doctoral Candidate

Vietnam Advances

CHESS

IN

VIETNAM

CHESS has been played in Europe for almost ten centuries, but in Vietnam it has been known only since the beginning of this century.

The Vietnamese have long played a similar game, known as "generals' chess". This, in fact, is a war game, played with 16 pieces on each of the two sides, each piece moving in a different pattern, and the objective being to defeat one's opponent. This very popular game has captivated people of all ages. Players find in it a form of entertainment particularly suitable for logical minds.

People familiar with chess can easily discern similarities between it and "generals' chess" and affirm the superiority of chess in strategy and tactics, in defensive and offensive play, and in its scientific character. Even so chess was played by very few people, mostly in the towns, under French domination. It was not until the return of many Vietnamese students from socialist countries in eastern Europe in the 1970's that a new page was turned in the history of chess in Vietnam.

When they were studying in Cuba, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Hungary, and especially the Soviet Union, which boasts the strongest chess school in the world, these students were members of various chess societies and some were recognized masters.

Back in Vietnam they helped found chess groups in a number of districts in Hanoi whose membership grew quickly. This inexpensive sport has been found to be specially suited to Vietnam's post-war conditions. The first city-wide tournament was organized in Hanoi in 1978 with some 30 participants.

In December 1980 the Vietnam Chess Society was set up under the sponsorship of the General Department of Sports and Physical Culture, marking a higher stage of development. Chess began to spread to other urban areas.

Now players are preparing for further advances. Chess classes are being held in many provinces and cities for children from eight to nine years of age. More than 30 such classes are organized at basic

general schools and cultural centres in Hanoi.

The first national junior tournament took place in Ho Chi Minh City in August 1981, and the champion was Hoang Nam Thang, an 11-year old boy from Hanoi. At the tournament held for adults in Hanoi two months later Thang again proved his skills by winning fifth place. Again in Hanoi, a tournament for individuals was held from Nov. 25 to Dec. 5, with contestants coming from many parts of the country. After the eliminating rounds the 12 best players met in the finals, with Dang Tat Thang, a former student of Kishinev University, USSR, emerging as the first national champion. Dang Tat Thang had been in the Kishinev team, winner of a Moldavian championship, and is a master, first grade. The other Thang, the 11-year-old school boy, was placed seventh in the same tournament.



— Hoang Nam Thang. 11 years old, won the First National Junior tournament and was placed seventh in the First National Chess competition

Photo : PHAN SANG

A short story

by

KHUAT QUANG THUY

COMRADES - IN - ARMS

AFTER the liberation of the South Colonel Chuyen thought his workload would decrease and thus he would be able to serve a few more years. He could not foresee that work in the army would be so demanding in peace time. Moreover, his region was right on the Vietnamese-Kampuchean border, which was under constant Pol Pot harassment. As a result his hands were full and his health was heavily strained. There were whole nights when he had to stay awake trying to solve one problem or another. Finally his weak stomach "rebelled" and caused another haemorrhage, the third so far. His doctors said he should retire for good. He pondered over the suggestion for a long time and finally accepted it. He knew he was too old for the army now. What was more he dimly perceived his limitations which, he conceded, were tolerable during the war but would become too obvious and would constitute a big handicap in time of peace.

His son, Captain Vu Tuong, who, after fighting in the South, had gone to the Military Academy and was at that time working at the General Staff. It

had been almost ten years since he had seen his son, and what impressed him was that despite all the hardships Vu Tuong had not changed much. He was the same frail young man and looked more like a student than a soldier, which made the collar badges indicating his rank as a captain seem out of place. And despite the fact that Vu Tuong had received many decorations and certificates of merit and that both his superiors and the Party authorities had given him commendations for his intelligence, courage and competence, Chuyen still could not believe that his son had become fully mature and was equal to his tasks. He even suspected that favouritism had been involved somewhere since some of his transfer orders had been signed by his friends. His wife made no bones about that, claiming that her son's quick promotion was her handiwork. She had written to all of Vu Tuong's superiors, not caring if they knew her husband or not, requesting their protection for her son. This annoyed Vu Tuong, who wrote to her several times asking her to put a stop to her silly campaign. But the mother did not take any notice of her

son's reaction. A mother had to see to the welfare of her children, hadn't she? And what could she expect from her strict husband and her naive son, anyway? So, after his transfer to the General Staff, Vu Tuong told her jokingly, "Mum, what about writing to the Chief of the General Staff now?" And did she flare up! "Don't you make fun of me. Sure. I'll write and ask him to give you a dressing down. His wife's a distant cousin of mine, you know." This gave Vu Tuong and his father a good laugh.

Chuyen, however, did not find his son's rapid rise in ranks assuring, although he knew that his wife's manoeuvres had been to no avail, and that Vu Tuong had never intended to capitalize on his father's influence. Chuyen wondered if his son's success could be attributed to pure luck. The boy seemed to have a charmed life. He had seen action many times, but had never got a scratch worth speaking of. It was true that he had had a sound education, and education counted a great deal these days. Still, there was the lingering suspicion that his former fellow-officers had had something to do

with his son's meteoric advancement. Moreover, there was the current stress on rejuvenation and Chuyen recalled how often he had reminded his deputy in charge of personnel to act with caution and, consequently, had been charged with conservatism. Even now he maintained the view that the army was not a kindergarten, that young people were all right as far as courage was concerned, but it would be risky to entrust them with important matters.

With time, Chuyen's anxiety lessened: his son was doing very well in his new job. Then, out of the blue, Vu Tuong decided, following a trip to the northern border, to apply to a combat unit. "There's a good son for you," complained Chuyen's stunned wife. "Other people are pulling all sorts of strings to get a post in Hanoi, but our dear son wants to go away."

Just another whim, Chuyen thought. Perhaps he believed he could do anything. A staff officer to volunteer for a combat unit! What was he expecting, anyway? To be given a regiment with which to do whatever he fancied? Didn't he know that staff work was a thousand times easier than the command of a unit in the field? Still less than thirty years of age and already wanting to lead a thousand men! Phoo!

Chuyen decided to intervene. But for several days he could not manage to have a minute alone with his son. As soon as

Vu Tuong came home his mother kicked up a row and drove him out of his mind with her complaints.

Chuyen could not say he completely agreed with his wife. He thought she was acting unwisely. The question was not to keep their son in Hanoi and lobby for his promotion. What really worried Chuyen was of a more realistic character. It was Vu Tuong's capabilities. If he really could rise to difficult tasks, it was well and good. But suppose his enthusiasm was only temporary? What if he put up a poor performance and came a cropper? Chuyen wanted to have a good talk with Vu Tuong, not as father and son, but between comrades.

Chuyen threw the newspaper he had been reading on the table, got up and went out on to the balcony to his orchids which he had neglected because of the problem in hand, and which, despite the lack of care, were blooming. The white, virginal blossoms and their faint fragrance reminded him of the years he had spent as a camp commander on the Truong Son Mountains. His office had always been graced by a dozen plants of the rarest varieties which would cause the envy of collectors in Hanoi. How Chuyen missed the peace of mind he had had then. Perhaps that had been the best part of his life, when he had been at peace with himself and the world. Since his retirement his state of mind had been different. Despite his leisure he had never ceased to worry. The only moments he

genuinely enjoyed were the talks with Vu Tuong during which father and son reminisced about the war or discussed current events. So Chuyen would look forward to his son coming home from the office. He could not wait to hear Vu Tuong's footsteps on the stairs and his clear laughter in the room. Chuyen dreaded the prospect of long evenings without his son to open his heart to.

Today he was expecting Vu Tuong who had promised to come home with a guest he had often spoken about with generous praise. He was the commander of an infantry regiment which had distinguished itself during the Chinese invasion on the northern border. The guest, Chuyen was told, had served under him in Truong Son during the war. That made Chuyen even more eager to meet him.

Someone was hurrying up the stairs. Chuyen turned round and saw his wife at the door.

"Listen," his wife whispered urgently. She cast a look around as if trying to catch some eavesdropper. "I've thought of something which may help."

"Oh, please," Chuyen raised up a hand in protest. "None of your string pulling now."

"Don't blow your top," his wife insisted. "You should hear me through."

"Well, speak your piece and be done with it."

"I thought maybe we should get him a wife."



Illustration by

THANH CHUONG

"Are you serious, my dear?" Chuyen asked with an annoyed grunt. "He's asking for a transfer and you want him to get married! Do you think you can tame him this way?"

"Yes, if you give me a hand. I happen to know a girl who's

sweet on him. She's well educated, strong. We shall tell him that we do not object to his going, but he should get married first so that we would not feel alone when he's away. Once married he'll find it hard to leave his bride."

His wife chuckled with satisfaction, and Chuyen could not help smiling at her naivety.

"That won't do," he said. "You know nothing about our son. I'm afraid. He's not a man to place marital duties above everything else."

His wife shot him a mocking look. "You're overrating him. He's just a man like you. I almost got your demobilisation after the restoration of peace, remember?"

"That's different," Chuyen protested.

"What's different? I've made up my mind and you must help me."

"It's up to you," Chuyen gave in. "But I'm dead certain your scheme won't come off."

Meanwhile Vu Tuong was heading for home in the company of Major Tran Thang who had just come from the border. The two men were about the same age, but Tran Thang looked more mature with his deep tan and his heavy build. Whatever he did or said bespoke a man of great self-confidence.

"My father never thought I would be equal to my tasks," Vu Tuong was saying. "He's acting like a peasant who, even with one foot in the grave, refuses to give the property to his children."

"Don't be too harsh in your judgment," Tran Thang told his friend. "I know your father. He's a good, honest man,

a man of principle. He has a right to doubt our capabilities. But we're here to prove to him that we're as good as the next man."

Vu Tuong nodded in agreement. "Do you think I can be your deputy?"

"Why not?" Tran Thang stopped in his tracks. "You've got..."

"The transfer? Yes. They've assigned me to your regiment. Only I wonder what the Divisional Commander will say."

"He likes you, you know. Maybe he'll include you in his staff."

"No, not that, please," Vu Tuong protested. "I want to be with you, in your regiment. But that can wait. We're home now. I want to take father by surprise, although I'm sure he can place you right away. He still has a very good memory."

Chuyen was surprised, but in a different manner. He had been expecting an old acquaintance, but not Tran Thang, his former A.D.C. who had caused him such trouble. But Tran Thang had been well spoken of. Was he really as good as they said?

Tran Thang was embarrassed by his former commander's scrutiny. "Maybe you don't remember me, sir," he managed to say finally.

"Indeed I do," Chuyen said, "You're Tran Thang."

"Yes, sir," Tran Thang was relieved.

"I remember you well. But I don't know how you've come to know my son."

"It was during the Chinese invasion, sir. Vu Tuong was assigned to my regiment and we were cut off from our division. Our commander was wounded and I had to take his place. Thanks to Vu Tuong's assistance I was able to fulfil my tasks. So we became friends."

"I see Vu Tuong's spoken a great deal about you, but he's never mentioned your name. So the two of you wanted to pull this old man's leg, eh?" Chuyen laughed good-naturedly.

Infected by his host's expansive mood Tran Thang announced unguardedly.

"And we may be together again, for good this time."

"What?" Chuyen asked, suddenly serious. "What did you say? He'll be with you for good?"

"Yes, if he doesn't join the divisional staff. Hasn't he told you that?"

"Er... yes. But I thought that wouldn't be till a couple of months."

"He's received formal orders, sir."

Chuyen was dumbfounded. "No, that's impossible." He smashed his fist on the table. "Come here, Vu Tuong," he shouted.

"I'm coming," Vu Tuong answered from downstairs and, a moment later, appeared at the door. "You called for me, Dad?" he said, unsuspectingly.

"Sit down," Chuyen said, motioning to a chair. He himself got up from his seat and started pacing about the room, which reminded Tran Thang of his former commander's favourite posture during the daily briefings at the camp.

"What do you think of me, Vu Tuong? Am I perhaps too backward, too conservative? But am I not still your father?"

"What's the matter, Dad?" Vu Tuong was genuinely puzzled.

"What matters is your transfer. You've got it, haven't you?"

"Yes. Dad. I got it this morning, together with a one-week leave."

"Why didn't you tell me anything?"

"I did. I told you as soon as I applied for the transfer."

"Well, that's true. But I thought it would take some time. How could they make up their minds so quickly?"

"They had to, Dad. Things must be done this way, with speed."

"Yes, they must," Chuyen agreed half-heartedly. He went to the door opening on to the balcony and stood leaning against the jamb. He realised he had not done justice to his son. He had failed to see that Vu Tuong and his generation had done well in a war which even veterans like himself found very hard to cope with. Before taking up their guns these young people had been well prepared in morale and ideology for an encounter with a big, ferocious imperialism. So they knew what they were doing. Take Vu Tuong. He had always done what he wanted. After his graduation from general school he joined up instead of enrolling for university, as his mother wished him to. When he was assigned to a signal battalion through Chuyen's personal recommendation. Vu Tuong managed to get a commission in a combat unit. Now Chuyen wanted him to stay in Hanoi, but he insisted on going to the border. And there was Tran Thang, this youthful major. That he was now in command of a regiment was unbelievable.

Chuyen returned to his place and sat down. Now his heart went out to the young men. Had it not been for a new

enemy who was rearing his head menacingly just across the border they would have had peace now. Would they have to fight one war after another, as he himself had done?

"I think Vu Tuong and I will make a good pair, sir," Tran Thang said after a while.

"Yes, I think so," Chuyen agreed. "Who's your divisional commander, by the way?"

"Colonel Le Ngan, sir."

"Le Ngan? The former artillery bloke? I see. He's a good friend. Remind me to write him when you go, Vu Tuong."

"I wouldn't do that, Dad," Vu Tuong entreated. "You know I've been sufficiently humiliated by mother's manipulation."

"Be quiet," Chuyen exploded. "Do you think I liked that either I'll tell your commander not to pamper you. That's what I'm going to do. I'll tell him not to give you a regiment right away. You aren't fit for it yet, and it'd be a shame if you failed your duties."

Vu Tuong and Tran Thang looked at each other knowingly and broke into laughter.

"What's so funny?" Chuyen was quite angry now. "I'm not so old-fashioned as you may think."

"Oh no, sir," Tran Thang intervened. "The Colonel knew

everything about Vu Tuong. He told Vu Tuong that you were his friend and congratulated you for such a fine son. Yet he said there would be no favouritism, that he hoped Vu Tuong would prove to be a real soldier and not a sissy."

"That's Le Ngan all right" Chuyen too was laughing now. "So the old rascal hasn't changed a bit. And Vu Tuong, why didn't you tell me about it? What a fine son you are. Anyway, I'm glad that Le Ngan will take charge of you. He knows how to make a man of you."

The two young men looked at each other again, but they did not laugh this time. From downstairs Mrs Chuyen announced that dinner be served soon.

"Come." Chuyen ushered Tran Thang toward the stairs. "It's been quite a long time since we had a meal together. Remember the day we killed a deer? What a good time that was."

Chuyen sighed softly, and Tran Thang caught the old man's hand in his. He wanted to say something to show that he sympathized with his former commander, to thank him, perhaps. Failing to find the right words he silently followed his host down the stairs.

Hanoi, 1981.

CHRONOLOGY

(January 16 – February 15)

January

16. VNA rejects the slander of General Som Khattphan, director of the Information and Press office of the Thai army, that Vietnam and Kampuchea encroached upon Thailand's territorial waters.

18. The Vietnamese Foreign Minister issues a white book entitled "The Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagos—Vietnamese territory" showing documents, historical events and juridical evidence on the historical and real sovereignty of Vietnam over these two archipelagos.

22. At the invitation of the Vietnamese Council of State, Iraqi vice-president Taha Muhyiddin Maarouf paid an official friendship visit to Vietnam from January 19 to 22, 1982.

— The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR confers the Lenin order on Le Duan, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, and Truong Chinh, president of the Council of State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

27. Leaders of the Vietnamese Party and State send messages of condolence on the death of M.A. Suslov, Political Bureau member and secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee, deputy to the Supreme Soviet and chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission of the Soviet Union.

28. UN General Secretary sends a message to the chairman of the Council of Ministers Pham Van Dong expressing his wish for the peaceful solution to armed hostilities along the Sino-Vietnam border.

30. A delegation of the Communist Party of Vietnam headed by Nguyen Duy Trinh arrives in France to attend the 24th Congress of the French Communist Party.

— Vietnamese Foreign Ministry sends a note to the Chinese Foreign Ministry suggesting:

+ The two sides end all armed hostilities in the border area.

+ The third round of the Vietnamese Chinese talks unilaterally interrupted by the Chinese side in March 1980 be reopened as soon as possible.

— VNA rejects the information in the Chinese paper "Renmin Ribao" of January 30 which reported that from January 18 to 28 Vietnam had made armed provocations in areas bordering on Guangxi and Yunnan, China.

— Signing of a protocol on goods exchange and payment for 1982 in Tirana between Vietnam and Albania.

31. Vietnamese Chairman of the Council of Ministers Pham Van Dong sends a message to UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar welcoming his telegram of January 28.

— A delegation of the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions led by its president, Nguyen Duc Thuan,

pays a friendship visit to the Soviet Union. A protocol on co-operation between the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions and Central Council of Soviet Trade Unions was signed.

February

2. A conference on the re-distribution of workforce and population and the building of new economic zones is held in Hanoi to review the work done in 1976-1980 and prepare a plan for future years.

3. The Ministry of Forestry and the State Commission for Science and Technology launch the 1982 "Tree Festival" movement on the occasion of the Lunar New Year and in response to World Environment Day.

— In Vientiane the minutes are signed on the principles for co-ordination of economic and commercial activities between Laos, Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

5. VNA rejects the fabrication published on 4 February by the Thai newspaper "The National" which said that Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea had shelled Thai territory.

— The Chairman of the Council of Ministers issues a directive on encouraging contractual incentives and bonuses in every State fishery, forestry and agricultural unit.

6. Signing in Moscow of an agreement on film co-operation between Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

7. A resolution on improving communication and transport for 1981-1985 period is published by the Council of Ministers.

8. A conference to sum up the implementation of the 1981 state plan and discuss the plan for 1982 was held in Hanoi by the marine products branch.

9. A Soviet consumer's co-operative hands over non-refundable aid of clothing to Vietnam.

10. Marshal of the Soviet Union N.V. Ogarkov, member of the CPSU Central Committee, chief of the Soviet Armed Forces and vice-minister of Defence, pays a week's official and friendship visit to Vietnam.

— An agreement to give material aid to Vietnam in 1982 from the German Democratic Republic is signed in Berlin.

11. The Ministry of Culture and Information opens a meeting to review its activities in 1981 and discuss the plan for 1982.

12. A delegation of the Iraqi Women's Association pays a friendship visit to Vietnam.

13. Discovery in Lieu Doi (Thanh Liem district, Ha Nam Ninh province) of 3,000 folklore documents, songs, satires, legends and 1,000 verses on military art, offering many social science subjects to be studied.

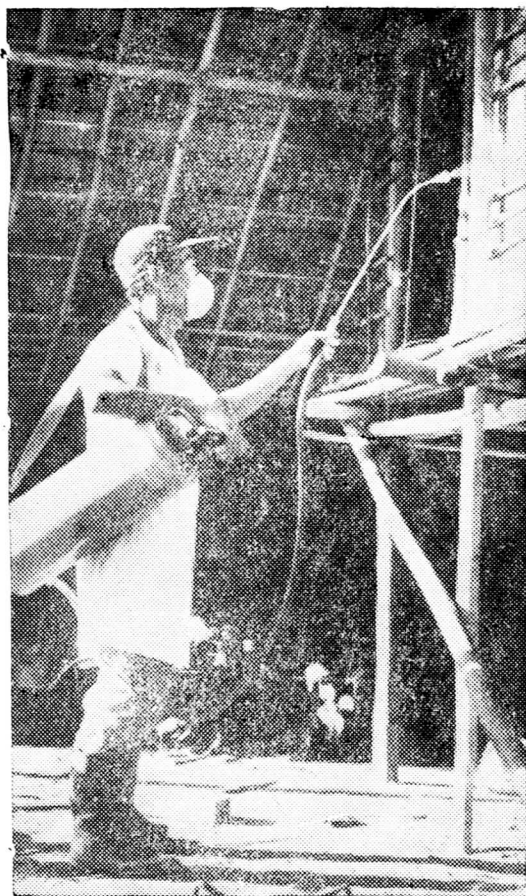
14. The first high-level banking conference of the three Indochinese countries opened in Phnom Penh on 12 February. A minute on co-operation and mutual assistance is signed.

15. The Indian External Affairs Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, pays an official visit to Vietnam from 12 to 15 February 1982.



1. In a local maternity ward

Photo: VNA



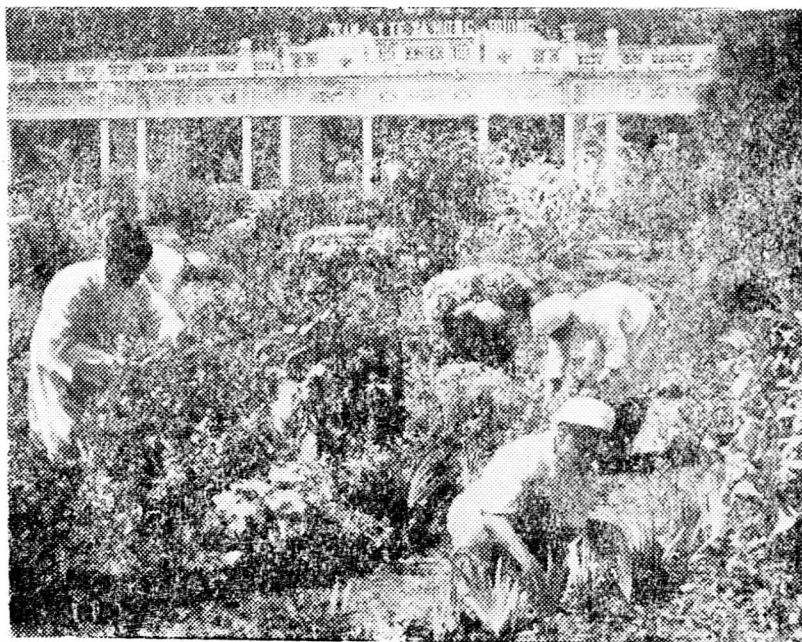
2. Spraying against mosquitoes and flies in people's houses

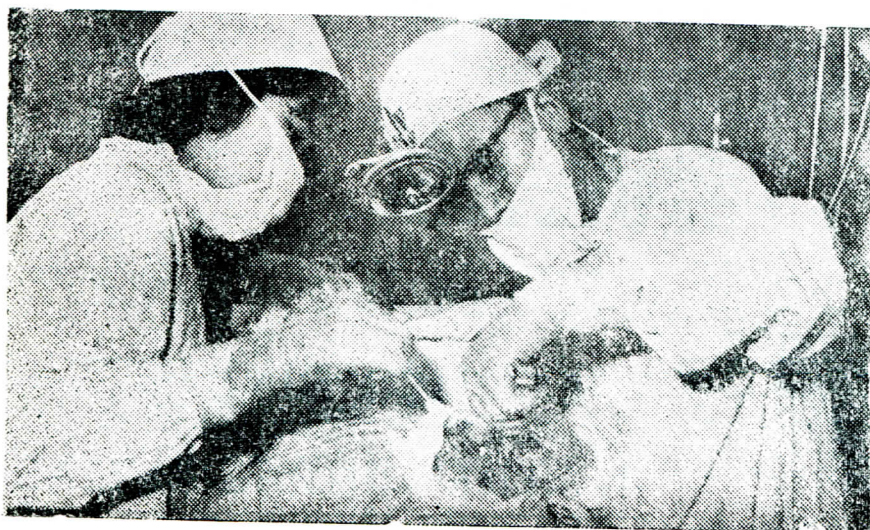
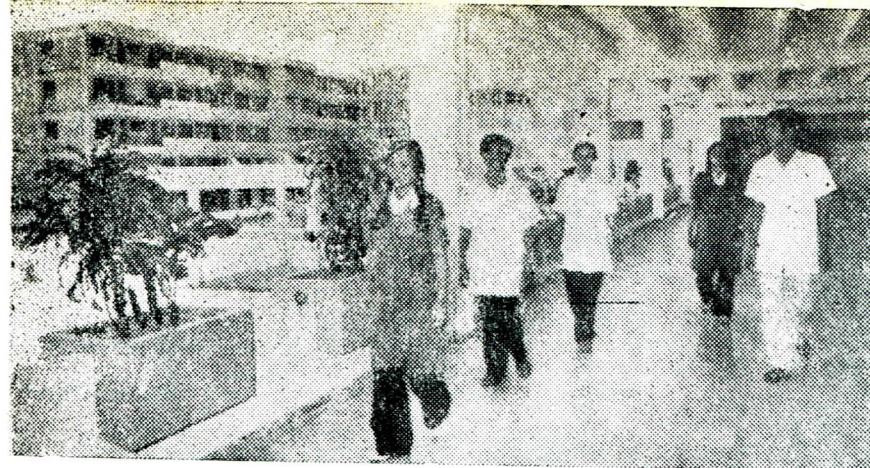
Photo: TOAN PHONG

MEDICINE IN THE RURAL AREAS

3. A garden of traditional medicine trees in a local dispensary

Photo: VAN HIEN





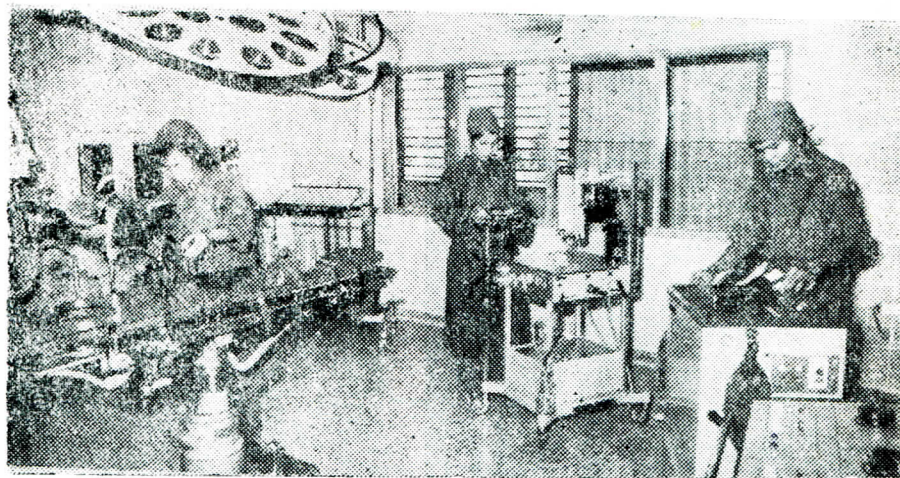
DONG HOI HOSPITAL

**A GIFT OF THE CU-
BAN GOVERNMENT
TO THE PEOPLE OF
BINH-TRI-THIEN**

1. The 450-bed Dong Hoi Hospital, with modern equipment opened on September 9, 1981

2. Using a high speed diamond drill for surgery

Photos: THU HOAI



3. Preparation for an operation

**Vietnam
COURIER**

**Le Courrier
du Vietnam**

**HOBOCTH
BETHANA**

**El Correo
de Vietnam**

Báo đối ngoại

TIN VIỆT NAM

Ra hàng tháng bằng các ngữ Anh, Pháp, Nga, Tây ban nha

Tòa soạn: 46 TRẦN HUNG ĐẠO, HÀ NỘI

DẤY NÓI: 53998

In tại Hà Nội

Chi số: 12462