

Vietnam courier

4

1982

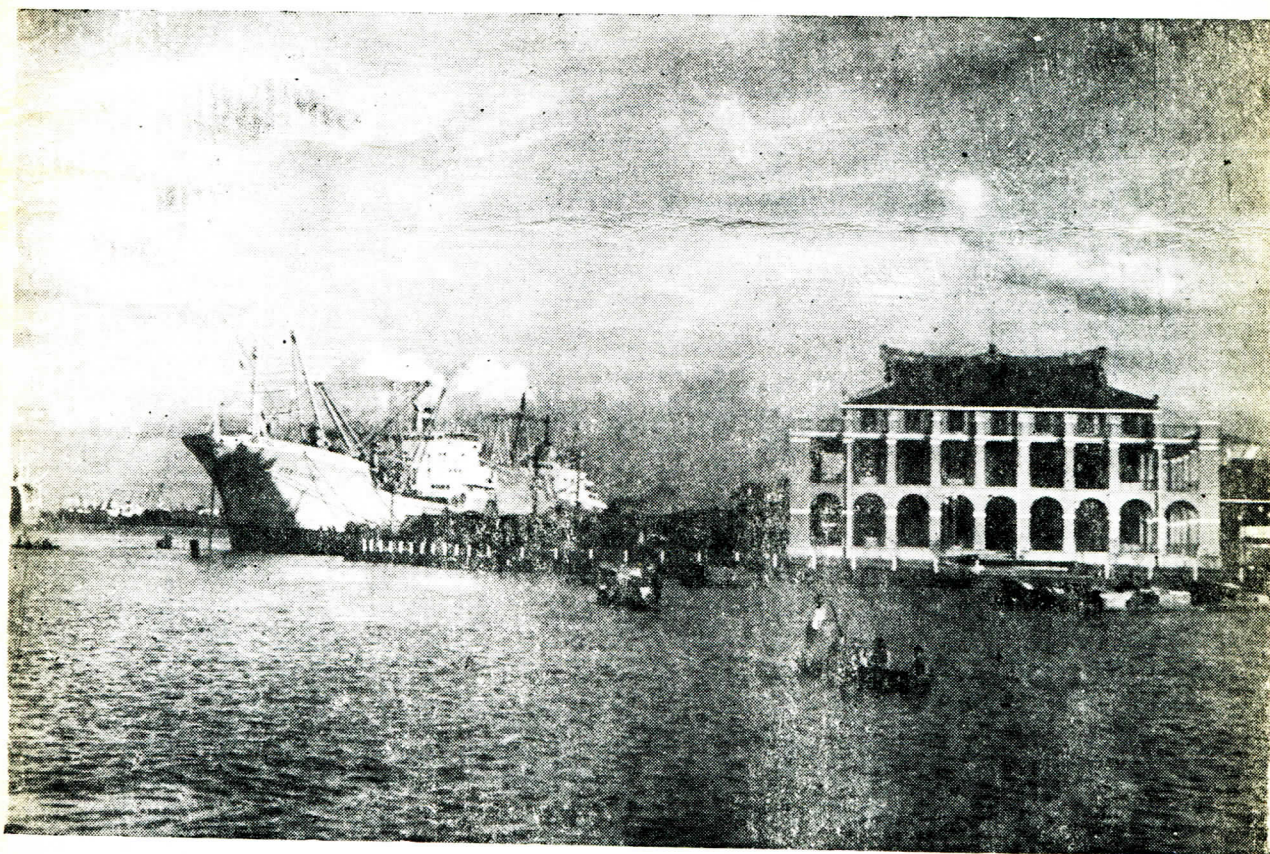
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HO CHI MINH CITY AFTER LIBERATION

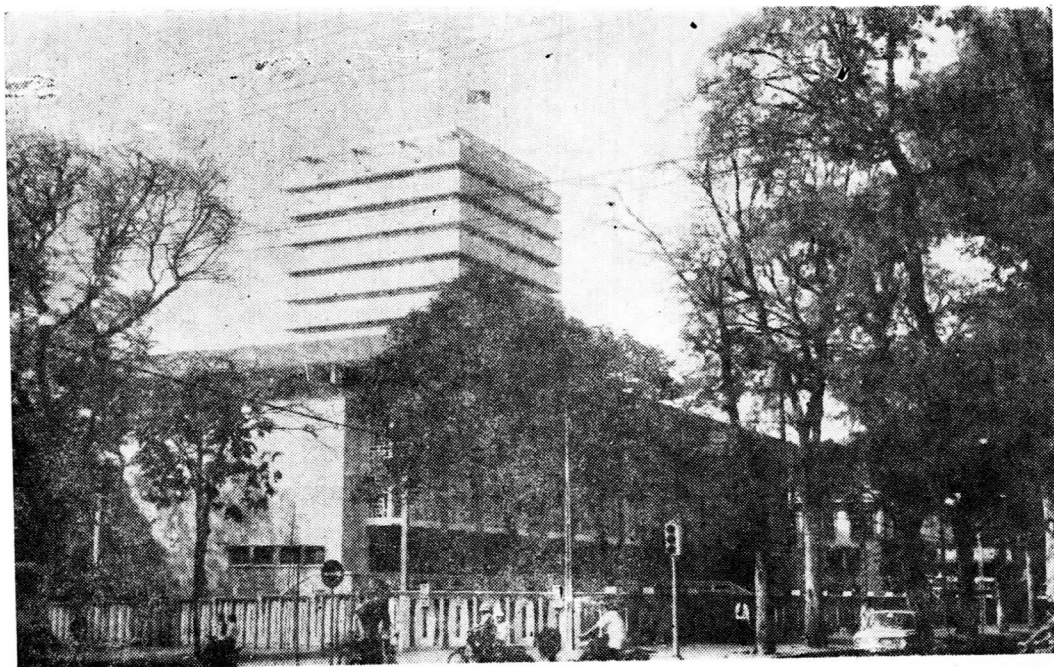
A street in the centre of newly-liberated Saigon.

Photo: HOANG DIEM



Ben Thanh, the biggest market in the city.

Photo: VAN BAO



The Municipal Library.

Photo: VO AN NINH

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Front Cover :

Nha Rong, Saigon's harbour, witnessed the departure of President Ho Chi Minh in 1911 to find the way of national salvation.

Photo: VO AN NINH

Vietnam
COURIER

4 — 1982

On 28 December 1981, i.e. nearly one month before last New Year's Day lunar calendar (25 January 1982), the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry proposed to its Chinese counterpart that both sides should "not carry out any hostile armed operation or firing in the border area of the two countries" for ten days during Tet. In fact, the situation on the Vietnam-China border was calm during Tet although Vietnam's proposal was turned down by the Chinese side. UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar expressed his pleasure at this "positive" development which might contribute to peace and security in the area. In a message to Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong he sincerely hoped that the two sides would "endeavour to maintain the state of peace beyond Tet", and firmly believed that the maintenance of peace and stability along the border between the two countries would contribute to creating an atmosphere favourable to a solution agreeable to both sides for their pending problems.

The UN Secretary-General's message immediately received a warm response from the Vietnamese side. On 31 January 1982, Prime Minister Pham Van Dong sent the Secretary-General a message hailing his initiative which conformed to the reiterated proposal by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to China that the two sides end hostile armed operations in the border area and embark upon negotiations to solve all problems in the relations between Vietnam and China. The message also informed the Secretary-General that on the day before, 30 January 1982, Vietnam had sent a similar proposal to China suggesting that the talks it had unilaterally broken off since March 1980 be resumed for a third round as soon as possible in the first half of 1982 in Beijing or Hanoi at its choice.

Once again, Vietnam's attitude in an ardent and sincere quest for peace and normal relations with China was clearly and irrefutably expressed.

Conversely, the Chinese side's "peace-loving" statements were exploded. The situation on the Vietnam-China border during Tet was calm and this was acknowledged by the UN Secretary-General.

But on 11 February 1982 China sent a note to Vietnam alleging that during Tet the Vietnamese side "had made up to 44 armed provocations in the border area of the two countries". This was another piece of slander.

With regard to Javier Perez de Cuellar's proposal that the two sides "endeavour to maintain the state of peace beyond Tet", the Chinese side has so far turned a blind eye. One does not wonder at China's evasive attitude having followed its deeds: indeed, over one month later, a fairly serious event took place at sea. On 2 and 3 March 1982, the Chinese side sent nearly 40 ships and armed boats into Vietnamese waters from East Ron to North Con Co, Binh Tri Thien province, from 4 to 10 miles from our coast, to carry out espionage and provocative activities and hamper the peaceful work of local fishermen.

Turning its back on the peace proposals from Vietnam and third parties interested in peace and stability in this area, Beijing obviously wants to maintain a tense atmosphere and capitalize upon it by refusing all arrangements with Vietnam for peaceful co-existence — for its ulterior motive is to wage a multiform war of sabotage and "bleed Vietnam dry", in collusion with US imperialism.

Not only does it want to maintain tension in its relations with Vietnam but also to create tension in Vietnam's relations with the ASEAN countries. It was not fortuitous that on 2 March 1982 Xinhua reported from Bangkok that villages on Thailand's border had been destroyed by Vietnamese artillery. This is an out and out fabrication with the obvious intention, like so many Chinese reports and allegations in the past, of causing a confrontation between Thailand and Vietnam so as to "fish in troubled waters" and even to "sit on the mountain and look at tigers fight".

It is regrettable that the ruling circles in Bangkok continue to avert their eyes from the truth about the problem of relations between Vietnam-China and the ASEAN countries. While many personalities in other ASEAN countries, including some in Thailand, have realized that the threat to those countries does not come from Vietnam but from China, the Bangkok rulers still cling to the "Kampuchea problem" to provide proof of Vietnam's "ambitions" with regard to Thailand and Southeast Asia.

In their Vientiane meeting on 16 and 17 February last, the three Indochinese foreign ministers solemnly reiterated that "the presence of Vietnamese troops

in Kampuchea is no threat to Thailand's security", and reaffirmed their support to the proposal by the People's Republic of Kampuchea about the establishment of a demilitarized zone under international control so as to ensure security for the Kampuchea - Thailand border area.

The Thai Foreign Ministry has issued a statement rejecting this proposal, arguing that Thailand is not a party to the conflict in Kampuchea but a victim of the losses and damage due to Vietnam's action in Kampuchea!

This reasoning springs from an utterly incorrect premise. No one can say that Thailand has no part in the armed clashes on Kampuchean territory along the border with Thailand. It is precisely with Bangkok's connivance that the Pol Pot remnants chased out by the revolutionary forces in Kampuchea have found "sanctuaries" in Thailand, not only to avoid being disarmed but also to be sheltered in "refugee camps" set up close to the border between the two countries and to be re-equipped with Chinese weapons channelled through Thai territory with the Thai authorities' leave. Beijing and Pol Pot recruiters can freely operate in the refugee camps to replenish Pol Pot forces. All this constitutes a gross violation of international law — both on neutrality and on refugees.

The Bangkok rulers reject the proposal by the three Indochinese foreign ministers for the establishment of a demilitarized zone under international control on the Kampuchea-Thailand border because they firmly believe that even without such a demilitarized zone Vietnam will not invade Thailand. On the contrary, the setting up of a demilitarized zone would only hamstring Thailand's collusion with China and the United States to create an unstable situation on the border with Kampuchea and keep open the "Kampuchea dossier" so as to denigrate and harass Vietnam.

With the latest signs of Beijing's negative attitude in relation to the UN Secretary-General's proposal to help settle the problems between Vietnam and China, we hope that Bangkok will catch up with the trend of a number of ASEAN countries in seeing through Beijing's designs for Southeast Asia and will acquiesce to the goodwill of Vietnam — a neighbour whose greatest hope is to join hands with Thailand to build peace, stability, friendship and co-operation in Southeast Asia on the basis of respect for the independence and sovereignty of each country in the area.

25 March 1982



TOWARDS THE FIFTH PARTY CONGRESS

HO CHI MINH ON PARTY ORGANIZATION

Editor's note: At each of its congresses the Communist Party of Vietnam has devoted much time to discussing organization besides planning national defence and construction. In this connection Ho Chi Minh gave many valuable instructions, which are gathered in a book entitled *Ho Chi Minh ve xay dung Dang (Ho Chi Minh on Party Organization)* (Su That — 1980). The main points of the book are summed up in the following article.

The Party Must Look into Everything

People of hasty opinions often think of the ruling party only in terms of power and privileges, and fail to see its great responsibility to history and the nation.

It is the Party's responsibility to provide leadership in building socialism, "making the country strong and prosperous, the people happy" as Ho Chi Minh put it.

It is its responsibility to defend the country's independence and security from enemy sabotage and aggression.

Ho Chi Minh says: "The Party has much work to do, to build factories and co-operatives so that workers and peasants may live in comfort, to make the country ever stronger and the people ever richer. It must also cope with nature." He points out: "The Party must be called to account if salt

is in short supply. It must be called to account if people cannot eat their fill or clothe themselves decently. It must be called to account if children are not properly educated. The Party must see to everything, even the most basic articles in the pantry of each household."

So much to be done. Keeping the country safe from enemies and natural elements, planning each advance, seeing to the well-being of the entire people. This is leadership of the whole society, all-embracing, all-seeing leadership, a great responsibility which requires the devotion of the Party as a whole and of each level of organization, each member. Ho Chi Minh makes it a rule that each member "must work very hard and must be a model in any job". He strongly criticizes people "who are in the combat ranks of the Party,

but who lack revolutionary ardour and a sense of responsibility, and who do not try to improve themselves but just drift along with time, like the unmotivated."

Leaders Are also Loyal Servants

In his last testament Ho Chi Minh says that the Party must try to be a worthy leader and also a loyal servant of the people. As the leader the Party is required to be equally good at policy-making, planning and organizing. Such capabilities are difficult to acquire overnight because, as Ho Chi Minh puts it, "socialist revolution will bring about the most profound, most difficult changes to build a new society—one which has never been seen in the history of the nation—and to turn a poor, backward country into a country with a developed economy and culture and a happy life."

Party members are generally inexperienced as far as socialist construction is concerned. So, "to avoid groping in the dark, to make fewer errors, we should draw from the experiences of fraternal countries and apply their lessons creatively." At the same

time the Party must organize the "study of Marxism-Leninism, especially for key cadres". In this way it can sum up its experiences and correctly analyze the particular conditions of the country, thereby gradually gleaning a knowledge of the laws governing the transition from a small-scale economy to a large-scale socialist economy, and being able to plan accordingly.

Party members, at the same time, must raise their cultural standards in other fields, in science and technology, in economic management, etc. Ho Chi Minh says, "The Party requires each cadre, each member to be proficient not only politically but professionally as well. There is no such thing as leadership pure and simple."

Speaking of the Party as a whole, good leadership means serving the people well, because "the Party has no other interests than class interests of the people and the nation." As far as Party members are concerned Ho Chi Minh emphatically maintains that "one joins the Party to serve the people, not to govern them". There are still people who "lord it over their areas, behaving as if they were minor kings", and who "have no regard for their superiors while treating their subordinates in an authoritarian way and browbeating people with their mandarin manners".

"The are also comrades who practise favouritism. They bestow posts on relatives and friends without bothering to know whether or not these people are qualified, their main concern being that their relatives and friends are well placed".

Such people have done great harm to the prestige of the Party and the interests of the people. They are utterly unworthy of the name of the Party.

Strong Organization, Strict Discipline

The more responsibility it assumes, the more the Party will have to strengthen its own organization and enforce discipline. It must be a monolithic bloc based on complete unity, which is the greatest asset of the Party and the nation as a whole. Members from the top echelon to the grassroots must safeguard unity as jealously as they would the apples of their eyes. Ho Chi Minh says, "Our Party is numerous, but in action it is as one. This is because it is disciplined. Our discipline is Spartan, that is strict and voluntary."

Unity and discipline are the strength of the Party. They are a means to carry out all Party resolutions. Yes, for unity and discipline to be maintained, broad democracy must be observed and criticism and self-criticism must be practised within the Party. The Party must firmly combat negative practices: anarchism, factionalism, parochialism, disobedience, etc.

The strength of the Party is also determined to a great extent by quality. Ho Chi Minh, addressing a meeting of Party cadres in Ha Tay province fifteen years ago, declared, "The Party does not force membership on anyone. To join it means to take on oneself the responsibility of a member. If you think you cannot serve the people and revolution wait some time before joining it, or don't join it at all."

"Quantity is not the main concern of the Party, though quantity in itself is a good thing. A Party member is valued for his or her quality."

By quality Ho Chi Minh means the synthesis of all the qualifications and obligations mentioned in the Party Statutes. He insists that Party organizations "choose members with the utmost care" and "promptly expel all corrupt members".

Collective Mastery through Mass Motivation

The Party also draws its strength from that of the State apparatus, which is led by the Party itself, and from that of the people, who place their trust in it.

"Without popular consent nothing can be achieved;

With popular support nothing is too difficult."

This motto, put forward by the leadership in Quang Binh province, was warmly approved by Ho Chi Minh, a great believer in the resourcefulness and capabilities of the masses. He used to remind Party members to constantly keep in touch with the people and emphasize the fact that as "collective masters" they "have their parts to do and can speak their minds". He strongly criticized any forms of retaliation and arbitrary judgement.

Ho Chi Minh entirely approved of the movement of "self-evaluation of merits", which emerged in the provinces of Quang Binh and Thai Binh and other places in 1966—1967. "Through this movement people of merit will be known and so will people of demerit. This is true democracy. This is a very good form of criticism and self-criticism. Through it the masses are educating themselves. They are also educating the cadres, because among the latter, besides comrades who match their words with deeds, there are those who prefer to have other people work for them. 'Self-evaluation of merits' is also a very good way to detect potential Party members and cadres. This way cadres will never be in short supply and Party organization can be carried out successfully."

THE PHAN



TOWARDS THE FIFTH PARTY CONGRESS

SECRETARY OF A SEASIDE VILLAGE

It was late at night at Dam Ha, a seaside village in Quang Ninh province. There were only three of us — the mistress of the house making a shirt for her grandson, her husband listening to the late news broadcast, and me sitting on a chair outside enjoying a fresh breeze from the sea.

The old woman put her sewing aside and told me, "You should go to bed now, having cycled the whole day." Then, turning to her husband she said: "Turn down the lamp. Duong may need it for a smoke if he drops in later."

The wind was blowing in gusts through the open door.

"Should I shut the door now?" I asked the old man.

"No. There've been no burglars around for years. Besides, we need fresh air and Duong may drop in any moment."

Later I was roused from sleep by the voice of the woman.

"Is it you, Duong?" she asked softly.

"Yes."

"What kept you out so late?"

The lamp was turned up a little and I heard the bubbling noise of the water pipe. It was some time before the visitor answered. His

voice was indistinct because he was exhaling smoke at the same time. "Been to the pier."

Softly I rolled over on my side and peered out through the mosquito net. A man in his fifties with a dark complexion and prominent cheekbones was sitting by the water pipe. His bloodshot eyes were staring at the lamp.

"Has your eldest son written to you lately?" the woman asked from within her mosquito net.

"Just got a letter from him. He's been promoted company commander."

"It's a rough place where he lives. I used to go to that island on my boat. No water, no fish, no salt."

The woman continued, after a while, "I heard you seized quite a number of those packages floated in by the Chinese."

"A dozen of boxes of biscuits and about twenty cans of meat. No need to waste them. I'll hand them over to the police come morning."

The pipe bubbled anew then the man picked up a stick leaned against the table, and rose to go.

"Must be off now. You've a soldier staying with you? Must be a

robust lad to sleep so soundly. Used to sleep like a log myself in the army."

The man blew out the lamp and headed for the door.

*
* *

Discharged in 1959 as a veteran of the "nine-year war" (!), Dang Duong returned to his village only to find that poverty was still there. People were scraping along, as they had done year after year, by wresting meagre rice crops from exhausted fields, scouring the jungle for edible roots, or combing the beach for clams. That year famine was threatening a large part of the population. The diet consisted solely of a thin rice porridge with a handful of sweet potato leaves.

Duong was first nominated deputy-head and then head of a production team, and the first thing he did was reorganize the whole thing for higher efficiency. Later Duong was trusted with a greater responsibility, the charge of the village militia and police.

Much trouble was made then by ethnic Chinese and some Chinese-born Vietnamese who would

gang up to grab other people's land. Duong and his militia had to be constantly at hand to restore order. Once, in 1966, several hundred trouble-makers held a demonstration in support of the Chinese "Great Cultural Revolution". They put up a five-star flag and portraits of Mao and discussed his teachings.

In 1978, during their flight to China, those elements not only took all their belongings with them, but also stole other people's property. Again Duong and the militia had their hands full, patrolling the village day and night.

Duong was next elected chairman of the co-operative, and his main concern was the welfare of the members. How to do away with famine? Although there was sufficient arable land in the village, as many as 3,600 square metres for each inhabitant, the soil was exhausted and was not suitable for paddy.

Moreover, crops were completely at the mercy of nature. Only in years of very heavy rains, which would entail all-engulfing floods in low lying regions, could farmers get something from their fields. Otherwise the land would be parched and crops ruined. Duong launched a daring plan: to bring water from the mountains. For almost a whole year everyone, even school children and fishermen, were mobilized to build canals and ditches, and when the

project was completed all the fields were irrigated. Duong's next move was to enforce a system under which each household had to contribute a fixed amount of organic manure to a soil-improving programme. Thus Duong would spend whole days in the fields, inspecting everything, with as much care as he had inspected his troops during the war.

The rice ration increased every month, from five to seven kilograms, and eventually from 20 to 22 kilograms.

In 1971 Duong was elected secretary of the Party committee.

* *

Dam Ha became fairly prosperous. A two-storey school was built with all the classes from the primary to senior-high levels. There were also 13 crèches and kindergartens, and a 15-bed dispensary. All the houses were made of brick, and famine had become a thing of the past.

I called on Duong at his house near the main road and asked him to speak about himself.

"There's not much to say," Duong said evasively. "Sorry. Must go now, he said hesitatingly, picking up his hat and stick. "Must discuss to Team No. 9's combat plans."

Knowing that Duong was not a man to part with information readily, I followed him out. We

walked along the wide, fir-lined road, past haystacks from which ducks and geese, disturbed by our footsteps, would waddle away in fright. Somewhere a film projection was going on.

We ran into a patrol and Duong was recognized instantly although it was very dark.

"Night, Duong. You don't have a light?"

"I don't need one," Duong replied.

"You're out all the time. Hasn't your missus ever complained about that?" asked a giggling girl.

"She's stopped complaining, seeing she can't change me. Now, stop talking. It's forbidden on patrol. The soldier here can confirm the rule."

After the patrol had vanished into the night Duong spoke again. "I've asked the army to form joint patrols. Greater security. Better public relations too."

"You're staying with the Truongs?" Duong added.

"Yes. They must feel a bit lonely with all their children living in the town."

"Nope. Very good company for each other. Not many couples, even young ones, could be as good as those two, I should say. The man's past eighty now, but he can work as hard as any young man. Only trouble is that he can't cook. Entirely dependent on his wife for that. We've about one hundred people of over seventy now. Very good at tree-planting, they are."

"I'd a look at the dispensary this morning," I said. "It looked much more imposing than the office of the people's Committee."

"That's right. Other people have made the same remark. But, a dispensary's more important than an administrative office, if you ask me. For the moment we've nine middle-level physicians and nurses. They don't have much to do. People've learned how to keep themselves fit. So their job consists mainly in dispensing medicines, and not many people need that either."

That fitted the picture I had had of the village — the private wells of clear, cool water, the

roomy houses which all faced the sea, and the clean stables and pigsties. The roads were well kept although it was in the rainy season.

A full moon was emerging from behind the mountains and we could see our way now. We had arrived at the house where I was staying.

"When we can spare a moment I'll show you round," Duong promised and shook my hand with a firm grip. "You can see the production teams, or the sea, as you wish."

I told Duong with regret that I was leaving for the island. "In that case you'll see my son," Duong said with obvious pride.

In the house everything was the same as it had been last night: the old woman sewing by the lamp, her husband listening to the news by the battery radio.

"Duong said we'd have electricity and I've seen poles put up everywhere," the woman said, looking up at her husband. "Do you know how soon?"

"I don't know," replied the husband. "But Duong's never failed to keep his word."

I knew why people had placed such trust in the Party secretary.

NGUYEN NHU PHONG

1. *The war against the French (1945-1954). The term was first used in South Vietnam.*

Just Published:

VIETNAM VERSUS THE POLICY OF BEIJING

This essay by Truong-Chinh, Political Bureau member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, President of the Council of State, appeared in the daily Nhan Dan on February 17, 1982, on the occasion of the third anniversary of Vietnam's victory over the Chinese war of aggression (February — March 1979).

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THE PATH I FOLLOWED

NGUYEN KHAC VIEN

The 5th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam is at the end of March. We asked Dr Nguyen Khac Vien for his reflections and thoughts on this occasion.

Editor

My work gives me frequent opportunities to meet foreign visitors, some of whose conversations take a very animated turn. In fact problems like the presence of Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea, our present policies towards China or ASEAN are no longer that difficult to explain, but when it comes to economic and social problems, things are a lot more complicated. In such cases, I have always been in favour of dialogue, even questions of a personal nature. One day someone asked me:

"You are the son of a mandarin, educated at a bourgeois university. How is it that you became a member of the Communist Party?"

"It is true. My father was a top mandarin of ministerial level. All through my childhood I studied at French schools, I took my degree in Paris and I lived in France for 26 years. My cultural background is therefore completely French, that is to say, bourgeois, in the original meaning of the word, which has no pejorative connotations. Naturally the awakening of my political consciousness was a long process. To cut a long story short, this is what happened.

"I never had to go without food but while growing up I bitterly resented the humiliation of being colonized, of having 'lost my native land' as we say in Vietnamese. I was obsessed with the question of reconquering this lost land.

"Then I began my medical studies in Hanoi and in the hospitals I saw at first hand the utter misery of our people. Hence the

second question: how to establish a society in which such terrible misery no longer existed?

"In France I made many French and other foreign friends. The third question was how to reconcile the fight for my own country with the feelings which linked me to people of goodwill the world over.

"In studying medicine I had been initiated into scientific methods. So the fourth question was for my political and social involvement to follow the spirit and method of science.

"In joining the Communist Party I found the answer to my questions."

"So you found the way by reading Marxist works?"

"It wasn't as simple as that. My awareness came about after long years of action, coupled with real experience as well as theoretical study and reflection."

"Now that the fight for national liberation is behind you, and the country, surrounded by difficulties, is practically in an impasse, do you still maintain your conviction?"

"I am perhaps as well placed as anyone to judge the difficulties which you mention, as I travel extensively within the country, meet people from all walks of life and have to cope with such difficulties in my own family. I believe, however, that in spite of the pressures and attacks from outside our country will make it. This is hardly an easy matter for

many other third world countries. Nevertheless the Washington-Beijing alliance is a force to be reckoned with."

"But Vietnam has a strong army."

"Not just that. An army is strong only to the extent to which its rear forces, i.e. the political and social regime, are strong. I think our regime is strong enough to resist any storms."

"Even so there are many people who complain and protest."

"That's true. Many people, for one reason or another, are not happy. They would like some policies and some people in charge to be changed but I have never noticed any political opposition, I mean anyone who thinks that a party other than the Communist Party would do better. If it were to come about that the Communist Party ceded power to another party, in 24 hours the country would be an American or Chinese colony once more and society would collapse."

"So you think that the Communist Party is infallible?"

"The problem is not whether a party is infallible and never makes mistakes. The problem is whether a party can recognise its mistakes and put them right. In 1956 our Party publicly admitted its mistakes with regard to agrarian reform; since the end of 1979 many adjustments have been made especially to the economic policy laid down by the 4th Congress."

"If you had your life over again, what would you do?"

"Next year I'll be 70. From the moment I became aware of what had to be done my life has been dedicated to the Party and the communist ideal. If I were 20 once again I certainly wouldn't choose a different path from the one I've followed and which led me to the Communist Party."

March '82

THE SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE

Ten years ago, the famous "Shanghai communiqué" was issued after a week-long visit of US President Richard Nixon to China (February, 1972).

Both the United States and China had put so much hope in this "peculiar wedding". Exulted Nixon: "We have been here a week. This is the week that changed the world," to which Zhou Enlai responded: "Your handshake came over the vastest ocean in the world—25 years of no communication."

"If Mao Had Come to Washington"

Under this title, eight months after Nixon's China trip the US magazine, *Foreign Affairs*, in October 1972 published an article which, for the first time, disclosed a classified document from the US national archives. It was a message dated January 9, 1945, from Major Ray Cromley, acting chief of the US military observer mission in Yenan, forwarding to the headquarters of the US General Wedemeyer in Chungking the proposal of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai that they go immediately to Washington to meet the then US President Theodore Roosevelt. The top secret message wrote: "Mao and Zhou will be immediately available either singly or together for exploratory conference at Washington should President Roosevelt express desire to receive them at the White House as leaders of a primary Chinese party. 'The aim of the proposed trip, as revealed by a report of John S. Service, political officer in the Dixie Mission, following

many "frank talks" with Mao and Zhou, was:

— First, to persuade Roosevelt to mitigate his support to Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kaishek) and to divert part of this support to Mao and Zhou;

— Second, to ask for American arms and other munitions on the model of Tito in Europe;

— Third, to acquire for themselves US backing before the Soviet army entered Manchuria in its pursuit of the Japanese, which was the last thing they wanted to see.

And the author of the article commented testily: "Should the trip have taken place, our history, our present and our future, would have been different. We might not have come to Vietnam."

All this implies that 27 years before Nixon went to China, world history might have taken another course as a result of Mao's proposed trip from this side of the Pacific to the other.

If human society evolved according to the whims of a number of individuals, the regret of the above-cited article would not be without some foundation. The period 1935-1945 in the history of the Communist Party of China saw the first dominance of Maoism in the party beginning with the *Zunyi* conference. In those years Mao and his followers retained all power and completely controlled the party's domestic as well as foreign policies. They decided to take the country through the democratic revolution of the Chinese bourgeoisie (also called "new democratic revolution" in Mao's program). The American army officers, writers and journalists sent by Washington to work beside the Communist Party in that

period in Yenan quickly and easily found out that these were "special type of communists" who showed open hostility to the Kominern and the Soviet Union and who had an unconcealed admiration and fear of anything American, and who placed all their hopes in US imperialism after the war ended. If John Reed, the great American journalist with his reportage "Ten Days That Shook the World" helped progressive people in America understand the Russian October Revolution better than Edgar Snow who was also an American journalist and a bosom friend of Mao, with his book "Red Star over China" made broad hints to the rulers of the United States about the essence of Mao's brand of Marxism. American intelligence agents repeatedly transmitted to Washington the signals emitting from Yenan and urged the American government to give special attention to Mao and his group.

John S. Service quoted Mao as saying: "We can risk no conflict with the United States." Mao, according to Major Cromley, "would grab intellectually anything about the United States that anyone could tell him".

In fact, the Chinese leaders then in Yenan had more than once told the American representatives that after the war only the United States could give China substantial aid in its modernization program, that to rely on this big power would help China escape from the special influence of the Soviet Union.

However, the first attempt of Mao and his followers to join hands with the imperialists during the Second World War failed. The immediate cause was President Roosevelt's determination to play

only one "China card" during and after the war and that was the "Jiang Jieshi card". But there was another and more basic reason for this failure. It was determined by the world balance of forces and the international conditions of the liberation struggle of the Chinese people at that time. The Soviet army was on the point of smashing Hitler's army in its last refuge in Europe and switching its attack to the East to crush the Japanese land forces. In the eyes of the world peoples, including the Chinese, the role and prestige of the Soviet Union, as the liberator of mankind from the Nazi danger, was incomparable.

To unite with the Soviet Union, to rely on the moral support and great material aid of the Soviet Union to defeat the Japanese aggressors and rebuild the country was an objective demand of the Chinese revolution which corresponded to the trend of history and the aspiration of the broad masses of the Chinese people. As past masters in pragmatism, Mao and his followers declared their policy of "definitively tilting to one side", siding with the Soviet Union and honouring it as the elder brother. This enabled the Marxist-Leninist forces to regain supremacy in the Chinese Communist Party and take the democratic revolution in China to victory. Thus, China entered the period of the socialist revolution.

Meeting between Two Brands of Anti-Communism

However, even during the years when they publicly declared this policy the expansionist and hegemonistic tendency of Mao's faction was already making itself felt quite clearly in its compromise with the French colonialists and its unsuccessful attempt at compromise with the US imperialists, aimed at limiting the victory of the Vietnamese people at the Geneva Conference on Indochina in 1954. This can be seen also in the wide circulation in the same year of the "Map of China" which included Vietnam (designated as Annam), Mongolia, Korea, parts of India and the Soviet Union and

other vast territories in Southeast and Central Asia.

As it is, the history of China and the world has not evolved in the way desired by Chinese expansionism and hegemonism. The "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" personally launched by Mao in 1966 plunged China into unprecedented chaos and disaster. Then the plan to take China quickly to the status of the biggest world power through barrack-type communism also proved an illusion. Neither has the attempt to hold sway in the international communist and workers' movement under the ultra-leftist banner fared any better. So the desire to materialize the longstanding ambition of the Great-Han doctrine by relying on the United States and joining hands with it was revived in the heads of the Beijing rulers.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union and the socialist community as a whole had grown by leaps and bounds and the three revolutionary currents of the era were developing. Battered down on the Indochinese battlefield, US imperialism was weakening and becoming more and more isolated. Nixon, as the representative of the most bellicose forces in the United States, quickly saw the possibility of colluding with Chinese expansionism to take the United States out of the "tunnel without an end in sight", and to shape the US counter-revolutionary strategy against the world revolution, first of all against the Soviet Union.

Walter Lippmann, the famous American columnist, noted very judiciously in the *International Herald Tribune* on October 11, 1971: "Only Nixon, among the present politicians, could bring about such a reversal of the policy of the United States and he has done it in the best tradition of Anglo-Saxon policy... In the case of Nixon, this has become all the more striking since he has fully revealed himself as a fanatical and unscrupulous anti-communist. For all that, what is happening at present is well in the order of political evolution...". He wrote further: "If this reversal of the United States policy has not aroused a general outcry that is

because it is effected under the auspices of the avowed anti-communist who is Nixon." (1)

In conjunction with Nixon, Beijing spared no effort to assuage the fears of the ruling class in America about this "marriage with the devil". On the theoretical plane, from regarding US imperialism as their most dangerous enemy and the Soviet Union as their closest friend, they put forth the concept of two superpowers, putting the United States and the Soviet Union on the same footing. This had a double aim: to prepare the ideological ground in the country, and to signal the partner on the other side of the Pacific that Beijing was moving irrevocably toward reversing its alliance. On the practical plane, Beijing had long undertaken a hostile policy toward the Soviet Union. In March 1969 it deliberately provoked a border conflict with the Soviet Union, unscrupulously using the blood of the two peoples to demonstrate to Washington that it had always "matched its words with deeds" and was really desirous of definitively joining hands with the United States.

Then, Nixon came to Beijing under the banner of the worst brand of anti-communism, in order to give a hand to the reactionary ruling circles in China in carrying out their own brand of anti-communism camouflaged under the Maoist doctrine.

Mao's Confessions

In connection with Nixon's visit to China in early 1972, at his meeting with Vietnamese leaders in June 1973, Mao Zedong said: "Your victorious fight forced Nixon to come to Beijing".

This was an admission of a truth known to the whole world. But Mao did not mention the real goal of Nixon's trip. That truth was spelled out in the Shanghai Communiqué. A few declarations of China's "revolutionary position" and a few words of formal support for the anti-US fight of the Vietnamese people whose homeland

was burning under the trail of bombs dropped by order of their interlocutor were not convincing.

The American press was quick to point out a glaring fact: while everyone knew that the bulk of the 8,000 or so American troops stationed in Taiwan were taking part, directly or indirectly, in the Vietnam war, the vague commitment of the United States formulated in the Shanghai Communiqué to progressively "withdraw its forces and military installation from Taiwan as tensions in the area diminish" could only mean that the United States would withdraw all its forces from Taiwan if the people of South Vietnam stopped their fight for national independence, freedom and the reunification of their homeland. This was also implied in the explanation given by the representative of the Beijing authorities to the Vietnamese side later: "To normalize Sino-American relations, to ease tension in the Far East, it is necessary first of all to solve the Vietnam and Indochina problem. We did not ask for a solution to the Taiwan question first. This should be the second step" (2). The Shanghai Communiqué is, in a nutshell, the result of a bargain in which Beijing committed itself to support the American presence in South Vietnam in exchange for US withdrawal from Taiwan. This is a complete sell-out of the five principles of the Bandung conference in 1956 in the name of which Beijing now pledged "peaceful coexistence" with the imperialist ringleader in order to oppose the Soviet Union and Vietnam, to oppose socialism and national independence in Asia and the rest of the world.

It is necessary to see clearly the position of the Vietnam question in the context of Sino-American collusion in order to understand why they spearheaded their attack on this peace-loving people. This question has been the topic of an analysis by Truong-Chinh in a long article (3) in which he systematically outlines Beijing's schemes and acts against Vietnam from the past to the present, and cha-

racterizes the reactionary nature of the present ruling circles in Beijing who are practising "post-Mao Maoism" or "Maoism without Mao": "Obviously Vietnam has always been a factor of paramount importance in Beijing's global strategy in general and more particularly in its strategy of pushing southward over the past several decades. In the eyes of the reactionary rulers in Beijing an independent, unified, socialist and increasingly prosperous Vietnam would be a major obstacle to China's policy of expansion in Indochina and the rest of Southeast Asia". What has been object of the bitterest rancour of Chinese expansionism and hegemonism is also what US imperialism has attempted to get rid of through the biggest war it has ever conducted in its history of expansion and aggression. That is why "just as the defeat of the US and its henchmen in southern Vietnam in 1975 was also the failure of China's scheme of dividing Vietnam permanently and turning it into a buffer and dependency of China, Beijing's defeats in its aggressive wars on Vietnam's southwestern and northern borders in 1975-1979 were also defeats of the US plan to stage a come-back in Indochina and Southeast Asia in the 'post-Vietnam' period". (Truong-Chinh, op. cit.)

Washington's "Come-back" Road

The reactionary Beijing rulers' hostility toward Vietnam at present is a direct continuation of the southward drive policy of the successive Chinese emperors in the past. Coincidentally, the Vietnamese people's fight to regain independence and freedom since the birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945 took place just in the period when US imperialism, after World War Two, sought to reimpose its hegemony on Asia and the whole of the Pacific. The total victory of the Vietnamese people on April 30, 1975 completely

closed this chapter of the history of US imperialism. Long before this debacle, aware of its incapacity to hold the monopoly of this region, the US had looked for a "new formula" for US-Chinese cooperation in Asia, Nixon and his associate, Kissinger, were assigned the job of charting a way to enable US imperialism to withdraw from, and at the same time to stay in Vietnam. They were also the first messengers of Washington to open the bridge into mainland China.

According to the American authors Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb in a book on Kissinger published in 1974, during the first Sino-American contact in the summer of 1971 Kissinger tried to convince Zhou Enlai that the US goal in Vietnam was to "prevent Hanoi from occupying the whole Indochinese peninsula and making of it virtually a pro-Soviet bastion at the very gates of China" (4).

Thus, in the eyes of Nixon and Kissinger, the American war of aggression in Vietnam to contain China as conceived by previous presidents had become an American war aimed at damming Soviet "expansion" in Indochina jointly with China. The nearer the Vietnamese resistance war moved to its complete victory, the closer became the goals of Sino-American rapprochement on the Vietnam question.

First, both wanted to oppose Vietnam in the framework of the counter-revolutionary global strategy against the Soviet Union, socialism and the struggle of nations for national independence.

Second, both are motivated by the same rancour against the independence of the Vietnamese but for different reasons: the United States for being thrown out of Vietnam and Indochina, forced to retreat in Southeast Asia, the very places where it was trying to stage a comeback, and China, for refusing to accept an independent and unified Vietnam emerging as an outpost to block its expansion to the South.

Third, both are pursuing the same policy of a revanchist character, to weaken Vietnam or, in the words of Kissinger in an article in January 1969, "to make Vietnam so exhausted that the very goal of thirty years of war would be compromised". In other words, both wanted to make Vietnam pay a prohibitive price for its independence in the hope of discouraging other nations from taking the Vietnamese road in resisting them. That was actually the motive behind the barbarous air blitz of the Nixon-Kissinger clique on Hanoi and other areas of North Vietnam in December 1972.

Fourth, while opposing Vietnam both wanted to use Vietnam as a card in their mutual bargain.

Thus, the heritage of the American policy toward Asia left by the Nixon-Kissinger team consists in regarding Vietnam and the whole of Indochina as an important factor in the relations of the United States with China and implicitly recognizing China's influence in this part of the world.

After a short period of hesitation, the Carter Administration accepted this policy, especially since Brzezinski, who took over from Kissinger at the US National Security Council, became the key policy-maker at the White House. A few years before, Brzezinski had disdainfully and openly sneered at Kissinger's performance on the Vietnam issue. Yet, once comfortably installed in his predecessor's post of presidential security adviser, this notorious anti-communist could not find any other miracle than to continue and push ahead with what the other had done. Prompted by Brzezinski, the Carter Administration refused to normalize relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, decided to play the "China card," and made the Vietnam issue contingent to the strategic alliance which it planned to establish with Chinese expansionism and hegemonism. Soon, Washington became a mouthpiece of Beijing on the Indochinese issue, imitating like a parrot China's allegations about Vietnamese "small hegemony" in

service of Soviet "big hegemony" and about Vietnam being a threat to Southeast Asia and even to China. Brzezinski was the first to give a name to the type of war conducted by the Pol Pot clique, henchmen of Beijing, at the southwestern border of Vietnam, calling it a "proxy war" between the Soviet Union and China.

In May 1978 Brzezinski visited China. The two sides agreed to normalize relations between the United States and China as from January 1979. On May 20, 1978, at the reception hosted by Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua in his honour, the security adviser of the US President declared his appreciation of Beijing's determination to "oppose all efforts of any country to establish world or regional hegemony". This was nothing new since it had been stated in the Shanghai Communiqué six years earlier. What is new is that Washington and Beijing were no longer evasive in the identification of the target of their strategic alliance.

In December 1978 when the genocidal Pol Pot regime was on the verge of collapse, the *New York Times*, which usually reflects the views of the US State Department, said that this event must be considered a loss of China to the Soviet Union and consequently it destroyed the balance of forces in this part of the world. On December 25, 1978 the same paper reported the view of US officials in these terms: "Hanoi, with Moscow support, is obviously trying to dominate an area regarded by the Chinese as being of vital importance for their national security." Only a few days before the two countries formally established diplomatic relations the US openly recognized China's right to regard Indochina as its zone of influence and supported the expansionist and hegemonistic policy of Beijing with regard to this area. What happened thereafter is known to all. Deng Xiaoping went to the United States to win Washington's approval and support before launching an aggressive war

against Vietnam on February 17, 1979.

And now, what is the Reagan Administration's policy? In January 1981, testifying before the Senate Commission enquiring into his appointment as Secretary of State, Alexander Haig gave a very brief but also very clear answer: "China's punitive action against Vietnam has had a stabilizing effect on the region."

On February 27 last, exactly ten years after the publication of the Shanghai Communiqué, Haig again reasserted that the United States had no intention of normalizing relations with Vietnam. On the contrary, he stressed the importance for the United States to develop a better relationship, with Beijing in view of China's strategic importance.

So, an ultra-reactionary and very silly policy is being handed down from one president to another. As has been rightly remarked by Truong-Chinh in his book, "We Vietnamese are determined to defend our beloved socialist homeland while fulfilling our international obligation toward the fraternal Lao and Kampuchean peoples in defeating all aggressive schemes and acts of Beijing. We should make no mistake that the dangerous and immediate enemy of our people at present is the reactionary Maoist group in the ruling circles of China, and that the fundamental and long-term enemy of the revolution of our country and the world revolution is imperialism headed by US imperialism."

DIEU BINH

1. Retranslated from the French.
2. *White book of the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry: Truth about Vietnamese — Chinese Relations during the Past Thirty Years.* October, 1979.
3. See "Vietnam Versus the Policy of Beijing" published by Vietnam Courier.
4. Retranslated from the French.

ENCROACHMENT UPON VIETNAMESE TERRITORY: A CONTINUING POLICY OF CHINA

Successive ruling circles in China have in common the fact that they have left no stone unturned to encroach upon Vietnamese territory along the frontier.

In 1884-1885, the Qing dynasty waged an undeclared but fierce war against France in Tonkin and the Eastern Sea in an attempt to annex Bac Ninh, Bac Giang, and the region on the left bank of the Red River and the basin of the Thai Binh River.

Unable to carry through their scheme by war, the Qing put political, economic and diplomatic pressure on France in the delimitation of the frontier and planting of markers, compelling it to accept the shifting of boundary marks deep into Vietnamese soil, and to let China occupy the Vietnamese territory of Giang Binh-Paklung, north-east of Mong Cai, and the cantons of Bat Trang-Kien Duyen, north of Hoanh Mo, Dao Luong in Cao Bang, Tu Long in Ha Giang... Along the northern frontier, the Chinese tried to occupy vantage grounds in such a way that the French Lieutenant Kenette commanding the Cao Bang garrison declared: "We must admit that in the commission of delimitation of the frontier, the Chinese have an uncanny ability to chart a frontier line to their advantage; they set up posts everywhere to hold control of almost all communication lines; the delta of Annam (Vietnam) is virtually placed under their sway."

Ten to fifteen years after signing the frontier delimitation pact between the French and the Qing (1887-1895), in the field survey to draw up the official map, the French authorities remarked that a number of boundary marks had disappeared or been shifted by the Chinese and the frontier was moved to the Vietnamese side at many points. On the cause of this situation, Fauchon, director of the Indo-chinese Geographical Service, said on October 16, 1948: "In an anarchic and impotent China, chiefly in 1900, the initiative of the Chinese chiefs of post and mandarins has played an important role: it can be said they are the originators of the shifting of boundary marks almost all along the frontier between Tonkin and the Chinese province of Guangxi.

Under Jiang Jieshi's rule, the Chinese continued to encroach upon Vietnamese territory at many points of the borderland, notwithstanding the juridical provisions clearly defined in the 1887-1895 pact. In a note sent on September 10, 1947 to the counsellor of the French High Commissioner in Saigon, Fauchon turned down the Chinese claims, saying: "The pretensions of the Chinese authorities are absolutely unacceptable; the most perfidious intention of their map makers is equal to their sheer ignorance of facts when they think that the territories they encroach upon are theirs."

In 1957, after the triumph of the revolution in the two countries, to build up friendship between the two peoples and to show their sincere desire to make the Vietnamese—Chinese border a frontier of peace and friendship, Vietnam suggested that the two countries strictly maintain the *status quo ante* on the frontier left by history and mentioned in the pact signed in 1887—1895 between the French and the Qing. In 1958, the Chinese agreed with the Vietnamese proposal, but regrettably enough, their words were not matched by their deeds.

Whereas Vietnam scrupulously observed the provisions of the pact, the Chinese authorities clung to the expansionist policy of the feudal dynasties. Flouting the agreement reached by the two countries in 1957-1958, they used the words "to maintain the status quo" as a pretext to legalize over 60 points on Vietnamese territory occupied by various Chinese reactionary administrations after the delimitation of the frontier. Meanwhile they legalized 90 new points they had taken from Vietnam between their seizure of power in 1949 and February 17, 1979, as mentioned in the March 15, 1979 memorandum of the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry.

In 1956, the Chinese occupied the islands east of the Hoang Sa archipelago and 15 years later, in 1974,

(Continued on page 18)

Southeast Asia as a historical and cultural zone has long been an object of scientific study serving different aims, from different standpoints. A number of Western scholars stubbornly denied the existence of a Southeast Asian civilisation by setting up theories on emigrationism and "circles of culture". They considered Southeast Asia as nothing but a zone of contact between the two great civilizations of India and China, i.e. Southeast Asia from a cultural point of view is no more than an enlarged "Indochina". They looked on big countries as lenders and on the small ones as borrowers in matters of civilization, and thus Southeast Asian civilization is but a borrowed one. Meanwhile aggressors do not spare any effort in their attempt to distort history, to sow division and advocate their policy by making use of such high sounding words as "cultural mission", "defence of human rights", or shamelessly proclaim as the Beijing rulers do that they "teach others a lesson."

It is no coincidence that when many archaeologists in the world confirm the date of Dong Son—a convergence period of the greatest importance in Southeast Asia in the middle of the first millenary BC—some US archaeologists have tried to stir up Thailand with the words: a six-thousand-year civilisation forgotten! Many scientific problems in linguistics and ethnology have been examined so as to extol one people at the cost of other peoples in Southeast Asia. One naturally asks oneself: Have these scientific facts any relation with the so-called "pan-Thaism" and

"pan-Malayism" forged by imperialists to sow division among the peoples in Southeast Asia?

Recently, the Beijing hegemonists echoing the arguments of the Western bourgeoisie combined with the old pansinism of the Northern feudalists, have striven to prove that all the culture of the "barbarous" southern peoples, beginning with bronze drums, is borrowed from China, that Southeast Asian peoples are of Chinese origin and that Vietnamese is but a Chinese dialect,

country. The discovery of similarities between neighbouring countries, and a study of their good points will complete our knowledge and contribute to strengthening friendship and mutual respect and to the struggle against chauvinism and narrow-minded nationalism engendered by imperialists and international reactionaries.

The Department for Southeast Asian Study, under the Vietnam Social Sciences Committee, is a scientific research body in charge

HOW SOUTHEAST ASIA IS STUDIED IN VIETNAM

that when the Khmer civilisation of Angkor began to flourish Vietnam was merely a colony of China.

Natural, human and historical relations between Vietnam and Southeast Asia are numerous and reveal many similar features. A deep knowledge of Southeast Asia is of major importance to research on the origin, traditions, and the historical characteristics of Vietnam and its heritage.

Research on Southeast Asia will contribute to strengthening the international collaboration between Vietnam and Southeast Asian countries, enhancing national pride and the spirit of being masters of our

of studying Southeast Asia together with other departments.

Owing to the fact that the object of our study embraces many sciences, many countries and has to synthesize the general problems of each, we have to strictly limit the sphere and methods of investigation. Our program involves:

1. Projects corresponding to the tasks of the section and based on the latest scientific results.
2. Building up materials and documents for these projects.
3. Training and organizing a group of able and competent cadres.

What are these projects? They are:

a) The problem of the existence of an old Southeast Asian civilisation different from the civilisations of India and of China.

Using information from many sciences: geography, anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, ethnology, folklore... we shall try to reconstruct this old Southeast Asian civilisation, one of the cradles of humanity and of cultivation, a neolithic workshop, a copper furnace, and with a sea-faring tradition... was it wet-rice agricultural civilisation consisting of three elements: plain, sea and hill, the major element of which was the plain? Is Dong Son culture the first and greatest point of convergence of prehistorical Southeast Asia?

A series of scientific problems: Southeast Asia, as an independent geographical entity from the geological, climatological, zoological and botanical points of view; as a centre of formation of "Homo sapiens", where Man probably went through the development process without passing by the northern Mongoloid bridge, characteristic with an Austro-Asiatic culture in its specific features (in the ethnological sense) having had a Proto-Southeast Asian language system different from the Tibeto-Chinese family and a process of formation of language families through genetic relations and contacts between mainland and insular Southeast Asia; as a native land of rice with its technique of cultivation and its own wet rice culture in connection with the revolution in the late neolithic through the bronze age; having had a proper commune organization and its own village culture, having sea-faring traditions and maritime cultures within the South-

east Asian complex... Many theoretical problems are put forth and compared with Chinese and Indian civilisations to reestimate the formation processes of these civilisations and their inter-relations.

b) The formation of ancient Southeast Asian nations and the establishment of traditional cultures of the countries in their contacts with Indian and Chinese cultures, the process of building and defending the country in connection with the struggle against Chinese feudal expansionism.

Concrete problems are as follow: the leap of Southeast Asia after the Dong Son convergence, a series of ancient nations was born without passing through slavery; the formation of countries and traditional culture in every aspect (language and writing, literature and arts, architecture and religion...); the importation of Indian civilization and the relay-role of Southeast Asia in its continuation; differences in the influences of China and India on Southeast Asia; the process of Chinese feudalism and the struggle for independence of Southeast Asian countries with victories, especially those of the whole of Southeast Asia over the Great Mongol empire in the 13th century; the "revival" of Dai Viet after a thousand years under Chinese domination...

c) The invasion of old and new colonialisms in Southeast Asia and the schemes of the Beijing hegemonists in connivance with imperialism to undermine revolution in Southeast Asia even now.

Southeast Asia, and above all Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea are best qualified to sum up the essence

of old and new colonialisms especially the US imperialists' neo-colonialism and their inevitable failure before the attack of the three revolutionary currents. Many problems can be studied in the light of the new situation when Maoist reaction has been unmasked, when Maoists overtly collaborate with the US, Japan and other imperialists, and other reactionary forces in the world to destroy the revolution in Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea.

d) The awakening of the Southeast Asian peoples under the light of Marxism-Leninism, of the Great October Revolution, the birth of true Marxist-Leninist parties, and the high tide of the national liberation revolution; a century of union and glorious struggle and progression to socialism of the three Indochinese countries; the setting up of a Southeast Asia of peace and friendship between the countries and the peoples of different social regimes.

All these areas of study reveal a Southeast Asia full of creativity and living spirit, but not a borrowed, stagnant, and dependent one.

In collaborating with other offices in Vietnam, especially the Department of Theory and History of Art of the Ministry of Culture and Information in studying Southeast Asian art and culture, we hope that the above-mentioned subjects will be analysed, with the aim of improving solidarity and co-operation between Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries and consolidating peace and stability in this region.

PHAM DUC DUONG

*Vice-director of the Department
for Southeast Asian Study*

To solve the food problem, attention must be paid to the Mekong River delta, a region with enormous potential in food production.

At the end of 1981, several conferences were held in Ho Chi Minh City on this subject: a scientific and technical conference for the exploitation of the delta; a conference reviewing the implementation of the decision of the Council of Ministers regarding this region; and a conference on agricultural transformation in the southern provinces. A symposium was also held by the Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City.

Each of these conference dealt with a particular subject but to exploit this region it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive study and simultaneously carry out work in many areas. Only by doing so can we turn the Mekong delta into an important granary and solve the food problem in the country.

Pros and Cons

For a long time, importance has been attached to the Mekong River delta. A catalogue published recently shows that from 1954 to 1975, there were 1,347 books by Vietnamese and foreign authors dealing with this region. Since 1975, other works have been added.

But at times, after the liberation of the South, we stressed the advantages offered by that region without paying heed to the difficulties, believing that the exploitation could be carried out easily; at other times, because of the difficulties encountered in practical work, we only saw the problems and thought that we could not do much.

The Mekong River delta has been extensively exploited for only a century, and little is known about it. Now a study of its riches and natural conditions is being undertaken by twenty thousand university level cadres with the help of

local cadres and inhabitants and some heartening results have been obtained. Nevertheless there is still much to be done.

So, what are the advantages of the Mekong River delta?

Of the agricultural soils, that of the Mekong River and its tributaries are the most fertile. This delta, the largest in our country, is 2.2 times bigger than that of the Red River; it accounts for 31% of cropland and 43% of ricefields in the whole country. According to investigations made by Vietnamese research institutes, the natural land in this region amounts to 4 million hectares or perhaps more. Before 1975, different figures were given, the lowest being 3.7 million and the highest 4.5 million. The land farmed at present totals only 2.5 million hectares; we can put 600,000 more hectares under cultivation: the area under rice is only 2 million hectares and if the problem of irrigation, crop multiplication and land clearing is solved, it will be possible to increase this area to 3.9 million hectares.

Generally speaking, the Mekong River delta is flat, mostly consisting of alluvial soil; the land along the Anterior River and Posterior River and between these two rivers represents one-third of the alluvial soil of the whole country.

It is rarely hit by typhoons; the average temperature is high; water is abundant; the difference of day-time, temperature and light between winter and summer is not as great as in the Red River delta.

The peasants in the Mekong River delta are quite conversant with the

production of rice on a commercial basis and very receptive to new techniques.

All this creates favourable conditions for land clearing, multiplication of crops and intensive farming.

However the difficulties are also very great. This has been substantiated by investigations and practical work carried out in the last few years.

In a total of 4 million hectares of natural land, 24.01% is alluvial soil, 17.5% is salted soil and 47.14% is alkaline soil. Most of the alkaline and salted lands lie waste and are thinly populated, chiefly in Long An, Kien Giang and Minh Hai provinces.

To bring manpower to the Mekong River delta is a strategic task to deploy all the farmland. However, to expand the planting area of this region, it is necessary to solve the problem of alkaline and salted soil. It can be said that alkaline soil is a "minefield", so to exploit it requires a careful investigation if we want to avoid failure. "We cannot yet transform alkaline soil, but we can make use of it in a scientific way," said Prof. Le Van Can, a well-known pedological expert.

The Mekong River delta has abundant rainfall (1,000 mm a year on average and 2,400 mm maximum). This rainfall is not so evenly distributed as in the North: 90% from April to November-December, and 10% from December to April-May. This is a major obstacle for the expansion of area by multiplication

PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE

DEVELOPING AGRICULTURAL MEKONG RIVER DELTA

of crops in the absence of appropriate irrigation works. This difficulty also influences the development of stockbreeding.

Socialist transformation — Stepping up the production of agricultural goods

For the economic development of the Mekong River delta, it is necessary to carry out the three revolutions with the scientific and technical revolution as the lynchpin. However, to introduce technical progress in agriculture, socialist transformation (that is revolution in the relations of production) and collectivization must be undertaken simultaneously.

In the last few years this work has achieved good results, but there also have been many shortcomings. There was a time when this collectivization was carried out at random, resulting in the instability and disintegration of many co-operatives. The remaining co-operatives have improved their consolidation.

At the end of 1981, there were in the South 176 agricultural co-operatives, 3,737 production collectives, over 30,000 transitional organizations such as production solidarity teams, work-exchange teams, small tractor collectives, water-wheel and pump operating teams, seed multiplication teams.

Some production collectives are thriving and their production has increased, but in general agricul-

tural transformation is proceeding slowly: at the end of 1981, only 90% of peasants with 7% of land had joined production collectives. Little attention was paid to the organization of transitional teams, which only attracted 30% of peasant households and 25% of land. Loan co-operatives and selling and buying co-operatives which were set up to help the peasants carry out transactions and contract loans in order to avoid the excessive interest rates of traders and money lenders were not developed; those in operation were prone to doing pure business transactions and had no collective spirit. According to preliminary investigations made in some regions in South Vietnam, some households are still landless and exploited by others.

In the Mekong River delta, middle peasants form the main class, accounting for 70% of households, 75% of farmhands. They have ample means of production: 80% of land, 60% of mechanical force, 70% of small machines, 93% of draught animals and 80% of agricultural products, including 77% of agricultural goods. They possess rich experience in production, a good level of technique which they are eager to improve, and a high labour efficiency, but they are easily swayed by the law of value on the market. Socialist transformation, the central task in the Mekong River delta, will be completed only with the joining of all the middle peasants in the co-operation movement.

Why is this socialist transformation so slow? Erroneous methods

of thinking, organization, management and procedure are the reason.

Erroneous thinking led to an incorrect attitude: rashness, arbitrariness in procedure and mistakes which were then corrected by a roundabout way, causing indecision and lack of promptness. The consequence of all this was delay in work.

The slowness in finding a method of organization and procedure suitable to the character and aspirations of the peasants in the South and the abandonment of the lower form in favour of the higher form of co-operation have impaired the enthusiasm of the peasants, particularly the middle peasants, to join agricultural co-operatives. Since the beginning of 1981, this error has been corrected.

There has been a time lag in the making of State policies regarding taxation, investment, loans to enable collective economy to make its superiority felt over private economy. This is another error which still needs to be rectified.

The form of "agricultural production contracts" comes from the North but it has been warmly welcomed by the peasants in the South as the latter are accustomed to the production of agricultural goods and most receptive to methods of business undertaking. With this form of contract, we can make the best use of manpower, land, technical materials, and bring the co-op members closer to their organization and encourage them to strengthen the new relations of production. Many peasants who had left their co-operatives are now joining them again and many private farmers are applying for admission.

The Mekong River delta is ideal for the production of agricultural goods. Over 80% of food products will be exported from the region. Here the distribution, transport and processing of agricultural products play a most important

role; if they are not satisfactorily solved, agricultural production will be hampered: hence the great responsibility of various branches in the exploitation of this region.

Steps and attitudes to take

In the past few years, agricultural production in the Mekong River delta has made substantial progress. Though investment in capital construction was not great and the region was hit by drought, flood, insects and the war along the southwestern border, positive results have been obtained in intensive farming, multiplication of crops and land clearing. Specialization of crops began to be carried out in each region and material and technical bases to take shape. The area reserved for multiplication of crops accounted for 38% of the total planting area. Rice production increased by 14% compared with 1976, the year of a bumper crop.

Industrial plants, particularly soya bean, have found their right place, not encroaching upon the area of ricefields. In 1981 it recorded a boost of 3.4 times over 1980. Animal husbandry also made headway.

In the last two years, after a period of difficulty, the collection of agricultural products has noticeably improved. Rice, sugar, eggs, meat, poultry, soya bean, groundnut, tobacco, have all been delivered to the State in greater quantities. The value of agricultural products and foodstuffs collected in 1981 was three times more than 1980.

Obviously great changes have been wrought in production as well as in the distribution and circulation of agricultural goods. Nevertheless we are not satisfied with them.

There are many errors which we can avoid. For instance, the supply of materials is not yet up to requirement, landing the local authorities in difficulties. In August 1981, only 47.3% of chemical fertilizers were made available, and were too late for the cultivation season. Phosphate fertilizer, badly needed in the Mekong delta, was not supplied in time or in sufficient quantity. Besides the shortage of materials, there is also lack of transportation means.

However, many difficulties are of the objective kind or require a longer time for solution such as: fertilization of land mainly through irrigation, intensified but steady collectivization, introduction of new techniques.

The exploitation of the Mekong River delta should be guided by the following ideas:

-- To link immediate tasks with long-term projects of development, in order to turn the delta into an industrial-agricultural region, parallel with the building up of a new countryside;

-- To carry out a triple revolution of which the scientific and technical revolution is the linchpin; to link the development of the forces of production with socialist transformation (the establishment of the new relations of production must develop the productive forces). These two aspects are closely related and depend on each other. The district level plays a particularly important role in the carrying out of this co-ordination.

-- To link the development of industry and agriculture to the distribution and circulation of goods, to establish the relations between the delta and other regions, first and foremost with Ho Chi Minh City.

After HUU THO

ENCROACHMENT...

(Continued from page 13)

they seized those in the west, which were then under the control of the Saigon administration.

Even after their defeat in the war against the Vietnamese frontier provinces in February 1979, Chinese troops still occupy dozens of heights deep in Vietnamese territory.

Since then, they have continued to seize many heights along the Vietnamese-Chinese frontier and set up observation posts, blockhouses, battlefields, forming a combat line with these heights (which lie in the provinces of Lang Son, Cao Bang, Ha Tuyen, Hoang Lien Son). Step by step they broaden their encroachments. Most serious is that they have drawn up a new frontier map (a copy was captured during their war of aggression in 1979), which includes many parts of Vietnam: Trinh Tuong of Quang Ninh province, Mau Son of Lang Son, Suoi Lung, Lung Tang, Ta Moc of Cao Bang province. They encroached upon many points of Xin Man commune (Xin Man district, Ha Tuyen province) on October 15, 1980, and occupied Height 400 of Cao Loc district, Lang Son province, together with other points in Vi Xuyen district, Ha Tuyen province, in May 1981.

The repeated encroachments upon the Vietnamese borderland in the last three years make it clear why Beijing has turned down all Vietnamese proposals that "both sides shall refrain from opening fire, making armed provocations along the frontier, and begin the third round of Vietnam-China talks".

LE NHAN

VIETNAM COURIER

HA NAM NINH

PEOPLE

IN THE NEW

ECONOMIC

ZONES

Over the last 5 years, 10,535 families (85,749 people, including 55,690 farmhands) have gone to the new economic zones in the northern mountain areas, three southern provinces (Minh Hai, Lam Dong, Gia Lai - Kontum) and to some coastal and upland areas of Ha Nam Ninh province.

In that time, in the new economic zones, 66,210 hectares of new land have been cleared, of which 41,960 hectares have been harvested already; 768,200 cu. m. of canals, 250 km of road, including 58 km of dirt track, 49 fifteen- to twenty-bed medical stations, 81 crèches and 970 wells have been built, and 35 stores and buying and selling co-operatives have been organized. These material bases are a good beginning for the stability of people's living conditions so that they can mix well with the local people.

With the attention of local Party organizations, authorities and people, all the difficulties, privations and the first feelings of strangeness of the newcomers were overcome, and production bases—state farms, co-operatives and production teams—were built up. From being dependent on State supplies, they now produce a surplus and a growing contribution to the State. On Minh Ha State farm, the 1979 autumn crop was 620 tons more than 1978. Dong Hai State farm produced 1,600 tons of paddy more than 1978 and delivered 2,000 tons of paddy to the State. Song Doc State farm produced 157 tons more than 1978, and in autumn 1980, 250 tons more than 1979. In the 7th road area in A Dun Pa district (Gia Lai - Kontum province), three co-operatives and some newcomers' production teams are self-sufficient in food and have begun to deliver their quotas of paddy to the State after only one year. In the southern part of Di Linh (Lam Dong province) also after a short time, people from Nam Ninh district have stabilized their living conditions and begun to develop production. In the northern mountainous provinces, mostly in Hoang Lien Son, the newcomers have built agricultural co-operatives, joined state and forestry farms, as well as consolidating national defence, defending political security and social order.

Ha Nam Ninh province also paid great attention to re-distributing its labour force and to developing new economic zones in their own province: 984 families (5,032 people, including 2,082 farmhands) were moved to the coastal areas of Nghia Hung, Xuan Thuy, Kim Son and to the upland of Tam Diep mountain range. Early in the second five-year plan, Ha Nam Ninh reclaimed 600 hectares of land by building sea dykes in Nghia Dien (Nghia Hung district). 600 families (3,000 people) went to the western part of Nghia Dien to clear the land for 10 hectares of rice and 200 hectares of rush; 350 tons of rush have been harvested each year. In the newly cleared Thanh Lac Xuan alluvial area (Xuan Thuy district), 50 of the 250 hectares for rushes have already been cultivated. In future, the capacity of this area will be about one thousand tons a year. The new Kim Son area has cultivated more than 200 of its potential 300 hectares; it will give 1,600 tons of rush a year. In Yen Son and Mua Thu (Tam Diep district), from 200 hectares of rice and 60 of tea, 400 tons of paddy and about 12 tons of tea were gathered in the last spring crop.

The success in the redistribution of labour force has kept the population in Ha Nam Ninh at 2,636,600 in 1980—an increase of only 1% over 1976. In only five years, 6,000 hectares of field and 400 hectares of orchard were given by those leaving the province for new economic zones so that the average of land per capita was raised. In the years to come, Ha Nam Ninh will transfer from 20,000 to 50,000 people each year to the new economic zones outside the province.

Ho Chi Minh City — 1982:

THE RELEASING PROCESS

"Anything new?" Like the *quid novi?* of the ancient Romans, that's the question you're asked whenever you return from Ho Chi Minh City, the former Saigon.

How to view the changes that have happened from year to year? From what angle?

That of the impressions one gets as one walks its streets and visits its markets, where there is much more noise and animation than in any other city of Vietnam? As before, the engine noises of motor tricycles, lorries and buses start at four in the morning but as the day passes, one notes a new feature: the preponderance of bicycles in city traffic.

In shops and markets there still is an abundance of foreign-made articles: fabrics, transistor sets, cassette recorders, wines, electrical appliances, electronic gadgets... but there is more and more competition from locally-made goods.

Even more than those diverse impressions, conversations heard in various circles — government employees, intellectuals, businessmen — are significant. As in previous years, the "negative aspects" (in fact "negative" is an inadequate translation of the Vietnamese words *tiêu cực*, which carry both socio-economic and moral connotations) constitute a favourite theme. But a new phrase now is at the centre of conversations: *làm ăn*. *Làm* means to work and *ăn*, to eat. Put together they take on a whole range of meaning: to earn one's living, to do business, to run an enterprise, or lead an economic sector. Now *làm ăn* has overshadowed laments and plans to leave the country and occupies pride of place in the minds of both individual citizens and leading

bodies of government departments and undertakings.

Not that the people of the City (in popular speech Ho Chi Minh City is referred to simply as the City, not only in the countryside but in other towns and cities of the South as well) did not have enough *làm ăn* sense in previous years. But they were "blocked". The year 1981 was one of "release". The process will certainly take on greater impetus in 1982 and carry people along by its very irresistibility.

People, enterprises, government departments, were blocked, not only by the general atmosphere, but by the regime of "subsidies". Administrative subsidies: the culprit who put a brake on initiatives, sterilized capital, immobilized stocks, short-circuited import-export flows, resulting in a decline of production, a low level of wages and salaries, and an unbearable standard of living for cadres and workers — had finally been unmasked.

It was then that Resolution 6 was taken by the Central Committee and Directives 25 and 26 by the Government: the "release" began. Before that, although no law had prohibited private undertakings — commercial, handicraft, industrial — the general atmosphere was such that a pernicious character was attached to them. Many cadres thought that the sooner they disappeared, the better it was for the building of the new socialist society.

People with some capital, either in cash or equipment, hesitated to engage in business activities for fear of being labelled "capitalists". Administrative authorities at various levels were unwilling to grant the necessary permits for fear of favouring the rebirth of "capitalism".

It was generally thought that since the regime was a socialist one the State had to take upon itself all economic activities: at one time in Hanoi, even bamboo tooth-picks were made and sold by a State factory. The State had to control all the capital, merchandise, materials, equipment, and hold a monopoly over home and foreign trade so as to determine planned and unified prices and wages and salaries for all government departments and enterprises. All these had to do was to operate according to the plans worked out by superior authorities. The State would provide them with materials, equipment, and cash for salaries and wages while they would deliver all their products to the State trading service at pre-determined prices. That enormous machinery was to operate without a hitch to the great satisfaction of all and gratify that humanitarian and rational spirit which had conceived it.

In fact that system had functioned after a fashion owing to the state of war and the simplicity of the economic apparatus: up to 1975, the economy of North Vietnam had been made up of only two sectors: an almost totally collectivized agriculture and a State sector whose revenue came mostly from foreign aid.

In those circumstances, the peasants supplied food grain to the State out of patriotic duty and obtained a certain quantity of goods in return. Prices and wages and salaries were part of a distribution system of an egalitarian character aimed at satisfying the minimal needs of a nation at war, rather than a system of exchange based on real production costs, and this held for both internal and external trade.

The end of the war and national reunification introduced new factors of tremendous importance into the national economic picture:

- the cessation of foreign aid;
- the existence in the South of a private industrial, handicraft and commercial sector with an important amount of capital, materials, merchandise and equipment, mostly concentrated in the sprawling city of Saigon;

- the multiplicity of external commercial and economic relations with both socialist and capitalist countries.

To these must be added two other elements:

- For the past century the Mekong delta had been turning out large quantities of marketable produce, in contrast to the Red River delta in the North which had been producing barely enough to feed its own population.

- The flow of goods and foreign currency sent by people who had migrated abroad to their relatives at home, which supplied a fairly large portion of the Saigon population with a livelihood.

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Thus the return of peace and national reunification had created a totally new situation, fraught with considerable difficulties but also containing elements which could help to solve them. In a city of 4 million people who had lived almost wholly on American aid, there were 400,000 former Saigon soldiers besides a considerable number of police, functionaries and secret agents who only yesterday had been serving the Americans, plus half a million *Hoa* (people of Chinese descent) who controlled three-fourths of all capital and inventories and were tightly knit into a community heavily influenced by Beijing's warlike propaganda. Questions of security held pride of place in the first

years. The fall of Pol Pot and the defeat of Chinese aggression on our northern frontier in 1979 were to make the atmosphere somewhat healthier.

The first step in the releasing process was made by Resolution 6 of the Party Central Committee which affirmed the legality and legitimacy of private individual enterprise in the period of transition to socialism, a period which is to last many years. In the present conditions in Vietnam, private enterprise will not lead to a rebirth of capitalism but on the contrary will contribute to the growth of production.

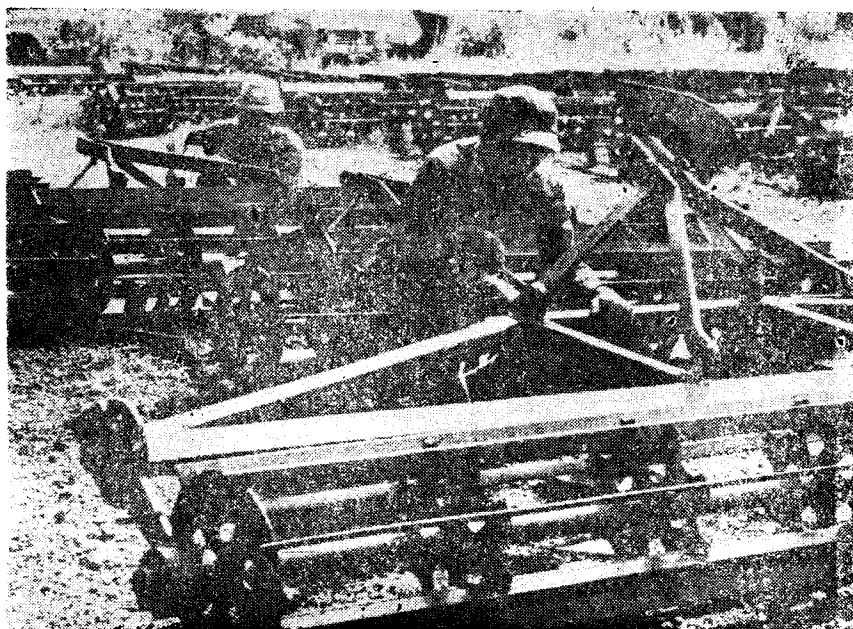
Second step: government directives gave government departments and undertakings freedom of action to solve their problems relating to buying prices of materials and equipment, selling prices of products, and wages and salaries to be paid in accordance with local conditions, the yields obtained, and the workers' individual productivity, without being bound by the price and salary system established by higher authorities. Some enterprises, regions, cities and prov-

inces were entitled to an allocation of foreign currency proportionate to their export capacity, which would allow them to obtain materials and equipment from abroad. Yet another step, which opened a new field of activity to government departments and enterprises: the recruitment of resistance cadres and functionaries and workers of the former regime had swollen their staffs and lowered productivity. Hence the low wages and salaries. Now, in a socialist country it was not possible to proceed to massive lay-offs, but from now on government departments and enterprises are allowed to use their excess personnel and underused equipment and materials as well as by-products — the results of administrative subsidies and bad management — in subsidiary activities after fulfilling the targets assigned to them by the State plan. Revenue from those subsidiary activities are distributed to their employees in the form of increased wages and salaries, bonuses, and free lunches.

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The Thu Duc enterprise producing agricultural tools.

Photo: VAN KHANH



That release of unused potential in both the private and State sector has spawned a surge of activity. Shops have mushroomed, some opened by government services to manufacture bicycle tyres, automobile tyres, medicines, etc. Everywhere people try to turn out some kind of product with makeshift means. Export companies have been set up: Cholimex, Ficonimex, Pharimex, Direximco, etc. Overseas Vietnamese send capital, equipment, ideas. The movement has spread throughout the country but possibilities are naturally the greatest in Ho Chi Minh City where most of the unused capital and stocks are concentrated.

New products appear in markets. A large number of workers, engineers, managers now receive salaries and bonuses which allow them to live decently. Hospital doctors can have a private clientele in their off-duty hours. The tone has been set, and the wheels put in place.

As happens with all new policies, not everybody agrees. Some try to put on the brakes. All is at sixes and sevens, so they claim: Private enterprises are turning out adulterated goods and steal materials from government stocks, while government departments and enterprises devote more energies to their subsidiary activities than to their official assignments. The free market rules the roost. Where are we heading?

Every coin has its reverse side, retort the partisans of release. The point is whether production is on the increase and salaried people better off. One has to accept the negative aspects of the movement while taking measures to limit their effects and check them.

It seems that the partisans of release are right if concrete results are examined: output value of industrial and handicraft production of the City went up from 2 billion dong in 1980 to 2.6 billion in 1981 of which 1.7 billion were contributed by the industry under the direct management of the City; the value of exports from 44.5 million roubles (dollars) to 98

million. For 1982 a 40% increase is projected for industrial and handicraft production and one of 290% for exports. Is this over-optimism or the uncovering of considerable potential?

It seems that these optimistic estimates are well founded. However, there is a fear that the movement could spawn an uncontrollable free market, a mushrooming of private enterprises which could smother the State sector, accompanied by a resurgence of a consumer-society mentality which American aid had created and which now may again rear its head. There are already a few signs of this: the proliferation of tea-houses and restaurants, the consumption of foreign-made luxuries, tobacco and wines, etc. Is the City to become a parasitic metropolis, a consumer society, a colossal leech that will suck up the nation's wealth for its orgies and revelries, or is it to become an industrial, scientific, cultural and international-relations centre for the whole of the Mekong delta, a pole of development whose activity will benefit the whole country? This is a question that any observant visitor will ask himself.

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A superficial observer will have paid scant attention to the publication in December 1981 of a review named *Science and Development*. A modest circulation: fewer than 1,000 copies per issue and only 6 issues per year. It's not much for a city of 3.3 million people (if the suburban farmers are included). But it's a harbinger. A releasing process is also under way in intellectual and scientific circles. The leaders, freed from security preoccupations and possessed of more experience, are calling more and more on scientists for the elaboration of plans for economic and social development.

It is true that following liberation many scientists had offered

their services for the survey and exploration of natural resources, the study of new rice strains, or certain chemicals. But their participation had remained limited until 1980. After that date, the tone set by the releasing process has brought about a rapid advance of scientific and technological research, with a view especially to finding more natural resources for the development of industry, handicrafts and exports, exploring new sources of energy — biogas, solar and wind energy, replacement of petrol by alcohol obtained from vegetal matter, utilization of peat, designing of gas-producers for motor cars, etc. Geologists, geographers, chemists are the order of the day. A strong boost has been given to the study of traditional medicines in order to find substitutes for imported drugs. A centre of scientific information is being set up.

What is a real novelty is the use of social sciences, hitherto the poor relations, in the elaboration of plans for integrated technical, economical and social development. For the first time, social scientists trained in Europe and the USA have been given assignments.

The fields of activity of researchers (in both the natural and social sciences) now extends far beyond the City. Several provinces in the South — Long An, Tien Giang, Ben Tre... — have asked them to work out projects for high-yield rice growing, development of coconut and sugar-cane plantations, expansion of exports, etc. Engineers, agronomists, chemists, sociologists, economists, have formed teams which have presented leaders with integrated development plans for whole regions or districts. The improvisations which had led to sometimes disastrous failures in the first years are now giving way to plans worked out after serious surveys and investigations.

In September 1981 there were two national conferences on the Mekong delta held in Ho Chi Minh City, one of natural scientists, the

other of social scientists. For the first time ever, a systematic and global review was made of this region with its ecological and social peculiarities, and initial bases were laid for its future development. This development plan of prime importance for the future of the whole country constitutes an inexhaustible area of research for the scientists of Ho Chi Minh City.

Socialism thus begins to take root with the mobilization of scientists for long-term development. Those who visited Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, in the first years after liberation often complained that the subjects of conversation were mainly business deals and trafficking. Now in some circles it is the problems of the future that are debated. The City has gradually freed itself from preoccupation with short-term perspectives. Wider and wider circles passionately discuss the long-term projects now under way: the Tri An hydropower project (320,000 kW); the railway from Ho Chi Minh City to My Thuan on the left bank of the Mekong; the Vung Tau oil complex. Another new fact: one begins to realize how necessary Soviet assistance is to carry out these big undertakings. Imports from and exports to socialist countries are steadily rising. The City is step by step being integrated into the socialist Vietnamese nation and beyond it, into the world socialist system.

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It is no mere accident that the releasing process has been especially effective in the 5th and 11th districts where the most active handicraft and small-industry undertakings and the most amply supplied shops of the City are concentrated. This also used to be a *Hoa* stronghold: the bankers and major traders and industrialists have left, but the great majority of small traders and artisans — diligent and hard-working — remain. The streets of Cho

Lon are as noisy and animated as before. The hustle and bustle never fails to amaze people venturing into that part of the City. The panic which had set in before and after the war started by Beijing and had caused a number of people to leave, is over. Now, with the releasing process, trading and industrial activities have been resumed with renewed vigour.

Thus the *Hoa* community has a chance to work with diligence and ingenuity to take its place in the Vietnamese nation, as the Chinese migrants of the 17th century who had worked alongside the Vietnamese in South Vietnam to open up virgin land in the deltas of the Mekong and Dong Nai rivers did. Their descendants, the *minh huong*, were gradually intergrated into the Vietnamese national community. The colonial period, French and American, is gone: the *Hoa* can no longer hope to carve for themselves a privileged position as compradors in the colonial system to the detriment of the indigenous people. They must also forgo their reliance on Beijing to force the Vietnamese people to grant them a higher status, especially with a view to carrying on profitable capitalist exploitation.

One may say that the majority of *Hoa* people in the 5th and 11th districts, and in other districts of Ho Chi Minh City and other cities of south Vietnam as well, now enjoy a better standard of living than the majority of Vietnamese. Generally speaking, this is something they deserve owing to their industry and ingenuity. If they abstain from serving Beijing's hegemonic ambitions the *Hoa* will preserve their place in Vietnam indefinitely and without any hitch. For centuries, the Vietnamese people gave refuge to those who fled China on the occasion of major natural disasters or political upheavals. I believe, viewing things in that perspective, that the number of *Hoa* remaining in Ho Chi Minh City will be much greater than that of those who have left it.

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Am I too optimistic?

I have no illusions. In Vietnam the transition to socialism has barely begun. Who will win? This is a serious and urgent question, especially in Ho Chi Minh City. Here the State sector faces great difficulties in its competition with private enterprise. With encouragement from Washington, Beijing, and also Tokyo, those who dream of restoring the former regime have not lost all hope. Calls for sabotage, revolt, and desertion broadcast by Radio Beijing or the Voice of America still fall on willing ears. The past is still there: trafficking continues, including drug trafficking; in temples and pagodas crowds still come to beg for divine assistance in healing ailments or clinching profitable business deals; at the central V.D. clinic, doctors still diagnose new cases of gonorrhea or syphilis. It is a closely disputed contest. Besides, it is by no means easy to manage parallel free and socialist markets. There will be more ups and downs, more rules to make or to break, more resistance to overcome, more traps to avoid.

Nevertheless the State sector in industry and trade is making steady progress, enrolment in schools and colleges is increasing rapidly, scientific research is assuming an ever more important role, major projects are attracting the interest of more and more people, north-south communications are intensifying, and cadres and leaders are learning to conserve the wealth and manage the affairs of the State ever better. Socialism has begun to take root.

In Ho Chi Minh City, patches of light and shadow exist side by side and jostle with each other, but light is indisputably gaining. More and more, Ho Chi Minh City, the ex-Saigon, is becoming a centre, a pole of development for the entire south of the country.

Ho Chi Minh City — Hanoi
March 1982

NGUYEN KHAC VIEN

HOUSING — A REAL PROBLEM

At present, housing is a pressing problem for Vietnam, especially for Hanoi. Over the last 25 years, nearly 250 million *dong* have been invested in building houses, but the average city-dweller still has only 2.5 sq.m. floorspace. New blocks of flats have been built, but many are still lacking in basic amenities — electricity, water, sewers and drainage, toilets, other utilities and public services.

In late 1977, based on this situation, the National Assembly and the Government discussed a housing development program presented by researchers in the Building Branch. The program aimed at:

- Improving housing conditions;
- Speeding up the building, and improving the quality of houses;
- Mobilizing people to invest and participate in house building under the guidance of the State; and
- Giving their opinions on the State's housing policy and development plan.

Following this, research was carried out in many fields: sociology, architectural drawing, design, construction materials, etc. Nearly 100,000 *dong* were spent for this purpose.

The sociology of housing is a new field. The steering committee, in collaborating with hundreds of researchers in geography, economics, construction, architecture, health and statistics, has mobilized a huge

number of technicians and specialists. They have studied documents, drawn up statistics, interviewed thousands of families in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and in many districts and new economic zones such as Hai Hau, Cu Chi, Lam Dong..., they have assessed the quality of multi-storey buildings at Trung Tu, Truong Dinh, Khuong Thuong, etc. Numerous proposals and data sheets were drawn up concerning the construction and standardization of buildings with separate apartments of varying size. It is also necessary to improve the fittings within the flats.

The investigation in Hanoi and in some other towns and industrial cities revealed some design faults: lack of imagination, disparity of styles, bad service provisions, bad communications, etc. As a result, more rational designs, new construction and structuring methods, better layouts, and norms of building density and surface areas were adopted.

An architectural design competition was held with 266 entries from a large number of architects, scientific and technical cadres from central and local design institutes, universities and vocational colleges, and Vietnamese residents in France. The projects included overall planning submissions, detailed designs, and improvements in existing models to suit regional and local conditions: multi-storey blocks, one-

storey houses for the countryside and new economic zones, and housing designs for two-storey houses of unfired brick (in Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Nam Ninh province).

It also featured construction materials for roofing — rubber, straw, earth linoleum... to be used in the new economic zones, and establishing processes for paints (ultra-marine), natural pigments for ornamental tiles, and paving stones. There were also plans for the trial production of adhesives and unfired bricks; to establish an experimental workshop with an annual output of 60,000 bricks per year in My Duc (Ha Son Binh province); manufacturing processes for glues and construction materials from paper pulp leftovers (100 tons per year); another experimental factory of materials; studies of pentonite clay (in Eastern Nam Bo) to prevent roof leakage; manufacture of unfired brick in Ho Chi Minh City, slag agglomerate brick and cement in Hoa Lu (Ha Nam Ninh province)...

There were also many projects for construction techniques: 5-storey buildings using the floor-lifting method; solid bricks for foundations and roofs, flexible floors tried out in Dai Cuong clinic (Ha Nam Ninh province).

Concerning architectural physics, many suggestions were made for heat resistant roofs, structural designs against the sun, and rational spacing between houses.

The above-mentioned projects and techniques will help to overcome the shortages in construction materials, to save cement, steel, to reduce costs, and gradually improve housing conditions, labour productivity, and the health and happiness of the people.

The award of the first prize at the 10th Chopin competition in Warsaw to the young Vietnamese pianist Dang Thai Son was a veritable spiritual discovery for the world. The success of his subsequent recital tour contributed to attracting the attention of music and art circles in many countries to a very active centre of culture in Vietnam: the Hanoi Conservatory (Nhac vien Ha Noi) which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, on 24 October 1981.

It was the official recognition of the cultural efforts made by the people's regime since its foundation in 1945 and especially since 1954 when the building of socialism started in the North. The setting up of a conservatory marked the will of the nation and its leaders to encourage artistic and musical formation on an enlarged social basis.

two pianists with some reputation: Thai Thi Lien who had studied at the Prague Conservatory and was to give birth three years later to the present Vietnamese Chopin laureate, and a former student of the great French virtuoso Alfred Cortot in Paris, the late Vu Thi Hien, whose daughter Ton Nu Nguyet Minh, then a young child, was to be the first Vietnamese to win piano laurels in Czechoslovakia, a quarter-century later. Other amateurs of instrumental and vocal music came back from the resistance, among them an old folk artist, Vu Tuan Duc. In the last years in the maquis they had already been working for the popularization of music and singing in the army and the government services by running skeleton classes, between two military offensives. Now in the capital they met self-taught colleagues who

resistance to American aggression. Evacuated from the capital, teachers and students gave up their modest urban comforts to live in the countryside in precarious conditions. They built themselves thatched huts where they lived, taught, and studied. More than once the sound of pianos, trombones and bassoons almost drowned out the drone of enemy aircraft cruising in the distance, ready to pounce on their targets. Another no less redoubtable enemy was the tropical damp which threatened to ruin the old Steinways and Gaveaus, which had to be moved about at frequent intervals for better airing. Fingers, hands, arms, the whole body and even breathing became better adapted to painful effort than to delicate nuances. Yet the musical training went on at the cost of much spiritual stamina and mental energy when such qualities as touch and

THE HANOI CONSERVATORY

A heroic past

It was like laying a longshot wager when in 1956 an establishment devoted to the systematic teaching of vocal and instrumental music opened its doors to a handful of students in a neat house in Nguyen Thai Hoc Street in Hanoi. The country was hardly out of a bitterly fought anti-colonial war and music had suffered. There were few trained musicians. Only

had eked out a modest living under French occupation from private classes of solfa, piano and violin. Those music enthusiasts, whose passion was only matched by their inexperience, were to prove the correctness of their act of faith by the sense of responsibility they showed in their work and the ardour they put into their study.

Those unsung pioneers of Vietnamese musical education were fully involved later in the national

finesse seemed lost for good. However, the successive batches of singers and instrumentalists trained in those heroic days were to pass the twofold test of patriotism and love of art with flying colours. It is in this way that the first school of music of Vietnam born of remote classes held in the jungle, has reached its present stage after countless tribulations and a long process of sublimation. Our musicians have seen a long-cherished



A concert by the Hanoi Conservatory traditional instruments students.
Photo: Vietnam Pictorial

dream come true: their seniors of the pre-war period had suffered great frustration when the "Conservatory of the Far East" set up in 1927 was suppressed three years later as part of the sanctions against the nationalist revolt led by Nguyen Thai Hoc¹. Only two witnesses of those colonial happenings are still alive: Nguyen Xuan Khoat, the President of the Association of Vietnamese Musicians, and his colleague, Father Luu Quang Duyet, director of a private music school now incorporated into the Hanoi Cultural Centre. Incidentally, this school is housed in the same building which served as the headquarters of the Conservatory of the Far East half a century ago.

The organization of the Conservatory

The faculty of the Hanoi Conservatory now has more than 170 professors and teachers and receives competent assistance from about thirty artists, composers and musicologists of the capital. It trains, up to college level, about a thou-

sand students recruited each year by examination, most of them receiving scholarships, without counting extramural classes. Dormitories for 300 are reserved for young people from the provinces. There are six departments:

1. Traditional instruments (string, percussion, wind).
2. Accordion and guitar.
3. Piano.
4. Orchestral instruments (string and wind).
5. Composition, musical theory, conducting.
6. Singing.

In accordance with the organization of professional training in Vietnam, the education dispensed at the conservatory includes:

- a) Secondary-level musical education lasting 9-11 years, starting at the age of 7;
- b) Higher-level musical education lasting 5 years;
- c) General education on the pattern of universal compulsory education.

As early as the 1960's, higher-level classes were started for instrumental music (1962 for the piano and 1964 for the violin).

Most professors hold degrees from conservatories of European socialist countries. Director Nguyen Van Thuong studied at the Musik Hochschule of Berlin, conductor Trong Bang and violinist Ta Bon at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. Violinist Bich Ngoc, cellists Bui Gia Tuong and Vu Hong, pianist Nguyen Huu Tuan, oboist Vu Thien Co, flutists Vu Cuc and Nguyen Thi Nhung, musicologists Vinh Cat, Nguyen Xinh and Nguyen Thi Nhung have all furthered their musical and pedagogical training in socialist Europe.

The masters teaching traditional instruments owe their formation solely to personal practice and research. They are none the less highly qualified: Xuan Khai (moon-shaped guitar); Phuong Bao (16-string zither); Mai Phuong (pear-shaped lute); the couple Ho Khac Chi and Nguyen Thi Tam (one-string zither); Thao Giang (two-string viol); Do Hoa and Hong Thai (bamboo flute) are classed among the best in the country owing to their talents as virtuosos and musical composers.

This musical elite is so to speak the brain of the Conservatory. It makes possible an almost exhaustive selection of abilities at the annual entrance examination which is, needless to say, open to all. The granting of scholarships allows children of needy families and youngsters from rural areas to have access to musical careers. This has given a boost to traditional-instrument classes. In the early days, these were attended by a mere dozen students, who did not have to compete for admission. Now, hundreds of candidates compete each year. They are all the more eager to gain admission in this department as they will be taught the piano besides their chosen traditional instrument. Enrolment in one-string zither, bamboo flute, 16-string zither, pear-shaped

lute, guitar and xylophone classes account for a good third of total enrolment.

Since the 1970's Vietnamese music has held a sizeable position in the curricula. A piano method worked out by Thai Thi Lien includes many Vietnamese works in the repertoire. The same goes for the symphonic classes, which were originally confined to material studied in European conservatories. Traditional instruments have stimulated creation. Besides the folk and traditional heritage new studies feature technical innovations which have enriched the repertoire, and traditional instrumental art has been raised to academic level.

Progress and prospects

The Hanoi Conservatory has thus become a cultural centre that is representative of the new Vietnam. Its activities encompass every field of music. Over the past two decades, several thousand musicians have graduated from it. They are now instrumentalists, composers and conductors in the 158 art ensembles of the country. The work of teaching has led to a large number of theoretical and instrumental studies related to both musical composition and research. Concerts given on the occasion of term or annual examinations and especially those performed by groups made up of teachers and some of the best students, either in auditoriums or in the studios of Vietnamese radio and television, are part and parcel of cultural life in the country. The traditional orchestra, through its lively popularity, has acquired a well-founded reputation on the occasion of song and dance festivals where folk music is always honoured. The symphony orchestra of the Conservatory can provide accompaniment to its soloists in the performance of many famous classical works. Other instrumental groups, now operating within the school, will soon be able

to play an active role in the field of musical performance.

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Dang Thai Son is not the only "veteran" to have secured recognition for this Vietnamese conservatory which is taking shape and colour as it trains talented youth imbued with the socialist ideal. Ton Nu Nguyet Minh, his senior by ten years, participated in 1974 in the Tchaikovsky competition and reached the second round. Six years later, she won the third prize in the Smetana Competition in Czechoslovakia, a good introduction to a virtuoso career. There is also the violinist Ta Bon who was the first Vietnamese to attend a Tchaikovsky competition, in 1970, and returned there as a member of the jury eight years later.

Those artists went through the Moscow Conservatory where Dang Thai Son studied under the eminent Soviet professor Natason. They have also benefited from the advice and counsel of artists and teachers from socialist countries who worked in Vietnam as experts.

Their colleagues in the traditional music department, Thao Giang (two-stringed viol), Phuong Bao (16-stringed zither), Mai Phuong (pear-shaped lute), have been trained in the country and have reached their present level thanks to their own efforts, for lack of superior mentors. But they have brought just as much honour to Vietnam when their names figured on concert bills in many countries of the world: Thailand, Japan, Sweden, Norway, Algeria, besides the socialist countries. Xuan Khai, the head of the department and a specialist of the moon-shaped guitar, presented traditional Vietnamese music at the International Congress of Folk Music held in Sofia (Bulgaria) in 1979. At the international song festivals in Dresden (German Democratic Republic), Gottwald (Czechoslovakia)

and Sochi (USSR) the sopranos Ai Van and Le Quyen and the tenor Duong Minh Duc won enthusiastic applause with their vocal range, accuracy, emotional message and their very conception of singing.

These successes reveal the hallmark of that modest establishment which used to be nicknamed *Cho Dua*² Music School as well as the profound influence of the national temperament, its musical personality, heroic life, and solicitude for things artistic. To that twin cradle our artists owe the poetry in their souls and tenderness in their hearts and that musical and political understanding without which no superior performance would have been possible, while their musical message would have lost much of its emotional content and enchanting magic. It is that teaching as well as Vietnamese traditional music which attracts students from abroad, from neighbouring Laos and Kampuchea as well as from distant Australia, Sweden and Norway.

It would be premature to speak of a characteristic "school" of musical training and interpretation. This will take decades, even centuries of sustained and constant effort. But the Hanoi Conservatory, now in full growth, has shown its ability to preserve and develop the national heritage while absorbing that of other peoples, European classical music in the first place. As Goethe said, it knows how to "assimilate" it and, by striving to raise itself to the level of the world's conservatories, proves that socialist revolution, by liberating artists and their art, leads to their full blossoming.

DAO TRONG TU

1. A hero of the struggle for national independence, after whom the street where the Conservatory is located is named.

2. Cho Dua literally Coconut Market: name of a suburban quarter of Hanoi where the Conservatory is located.

An aspect of reborn Kampuchea:

THE COMMUNITY OF SURVIVING MUSLIMS

Chrang Chamre (The Slope) is a village on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, along National Highway One which, running parallel with the Tonle Sap River, leads to Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. Its population (30,000) includes 10,000 Chams who live in three hamlets called Kilometre Stones 1, 2, and 3. Most of the Chams practise fishing. The rest are farmers, blacksmiths or traders.

Having escaped genocide they took refuge in the capital city where, as they put it, living in the focus of international attention, they might be safe from further persecution. The black-clad army of Pol Pot had fled the country, but the fear of the Chams had not completely vanished. They were not sure yet if the People's Republic of Kampuchea would treat them any better than Democratic Kampuchea.

The present Chams are descendants of the Cham hordes who, four centuries ago, set fire to and shed blood all over the land of Angkor to retaliate against the occupation of Champa by Khmer armies. All through these centuries the successive Khmer States tried to play up the long-standing enmity between the two races. Carvings in many a temple and palace depicted scenes of Khmer armies wreaking havoc on Champa, and the gap had been further deepened by religious and social differences.

The Chams brought with them Islam. By that time Buddhism had become the State religion and Brahminism had long disappeared, leaving its imprints only on sacred statues and on certain court

rituals. To survive in a hostile country Chams, wherever they were, formed hermetically sealed micro-societies, jealously guarding their own language and customs from assimilation by various movements of extremist Khmer chauvinism, which were encouraged and abetted by the ruling circles.

By the end of 1979 the Cham population at Chrang Chamre totalled 12,000 and was increasing fast as if to make up for the terrible losses under the Khmer Rouge. By and by they understood better the policy on nationalities advocated by the new regime and their confidence grew gradually. Early in 1980 many people returned to their old homes, especially in Kompong Cham and Battambang provinces. However, Chrang Chamre remains the most important community, about a third of the entire Cham population in the whole country. All told, there are no more than 30,000 Chams in Kampuchea today. These include children born after liberation. When the Khmer Rouge came to power there were almost 150,000.

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To survive as a community the Chams draw their strength from their religious and racial consciousness, and it was only natural that the first thing they did at Chrang Chamre was to rebuild the mosques which Pol Pot troops had destroyed.

We visited the three mosques at Kilometre Stones 1, 2 and 3, in the company of Doctor Tinn Yousof

Abdoulcoyaume, a well-known Muslim of Cham stock, and Ouk Somnang, the chairman of Chrang Chamre and a devout Buddhist of Khmer stock. Mosques, as a rule, are unpretentious, but these were very simple, for understandable reasons. They consisted of halls vast enough for several hundred people to kneel flat on the floor. Instead of tall minarets for muezzins to call the hour of prayers five times a day, a bilal sounded his gong at sunrise and midday, at three in the afternoon and seven in the evening, and again at bed time. Believers prayed wherever they happened to be at such times. Those who went to the mosque spread a square of cloth on the floor and knelt upon it. Every Friday a Katip would read the Koran below an Arabic inscription reading "Allah is the only God, and Muhammad is His Prophet".

Each mosque is headed by a hakim. The one at Kilometre Stone 7 is Ismael Yousof, a soft-spoken, slightly-built man of over 50, who welcomed us together with other local dignitaries, all dressed like him, in close-fitting white coat, checkered sarong and white cap, which made them look very much like Malaysians. Later I learned that the cap was designed to keep their hair from falling in their eyes during the five daily prayers and the sarong was meant to facilitate their movements while praying.

"Our mosque," the hakim said, "is called Masiid Noor Alihsan, meaning Light of Kindness. Our former hakim was Srong Yousof,

who had studied in Cairo. He was executed by the Khmer Rouge. A number of other dignitaries, who could speak Arabic and who had visited Mecca, were also murdered. All prayer books were burnt, and the Chams in Nha Trang and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, after liberation, had to send us prayer books and Islamic calendars. Our mosque was repaired in March 1979 and since the beginning of 1980 activity has resumed. We have received many co-religionists from abroad, from Vietnam, Syria, Algeria, Palestine, etc."

One dignitary, Smal Ni, who was still going strong despite his almost 60 years, told me the tragic story of 128 Muslim families herded to Ba Theay district, Kompong Cham. They refused to eat pig fat as ordered by the Khmer Rouge and were ruthlessly put to death, the aged and infants alike.

"In our belief," Smal Ni explained, "pigs are impure animals, so they are not fit for eating. Moreover, Islamic laws provide that believers must pray five times a day. The Khmer Rouge forced us to break our laws and many of us were killed for disobedience. About eighty per cent of the Chams died at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. Now life has returned to our hamlet thanks to the presence of Chams from Kampot, Takeo, Kompong Cham, Kompong Thom and other places. Of course, quite a few Muslims yielded to violence by giving up prayers and eating pork. But we did not regard them as wilful renegades. Immediately after liberation we prayed Allah to forgive all those who had failed to observe our laws in these terrible years."

Asked to speak about the policy of the new regime regarding the Chams and Islam as a whole, Smal Ni said: "We are free to speak our mother tongue and to dress in our way. Women are allowed to wear their hair long. All other customs are maintained, without any constraints. We may restore

mosques with contributions from believers, and are allowed to do daily prayers and to fast during Ramadan.

"In a word, we have complete freedom of religion, and we have never been so free. We are no longer discriminated against, as we used to be under previous regimes. In the old days Chams and Khmers, though they might live in the same hamlet, would turn a cold shoulder to each other. Now we put our heads together on community affairs. Chams have married Khmers, and vice versa, which was unheard of."

The hakim also said that the government had created every condition for Muslims in Kampuchea to keep in touch with the rest of the Islamic world. They had received Islamic literature from Arab countries, from Malaysia, etc., and the Islamic World Bank of Development, with its headquarters in Saudi Arabia, had promised to give 1,000,000 US dollars to Muslims in Kampuchea to build a school at Kilometre Stone 7.

In our conversation Doctor Abdoulcoyaume had the kindness to act as our interpreter in French, and the other Cham dignitaries all spoke Khmer out of consideration for the Khmer chairman, who did not speak their language. Before parting the hakim led us into the mosque to give us blessings. Opening a green-covered prayer book printed in Arabic and published in Cairo, he read a passage. Then he shut the book but continued to pray softly for a while. I was told he was asking Allah to protect the Chams, the Khmers, the Vietnamese and the People's Republic of Kampuchea. When the dignitaries spread their arms, palms upwards, to receive Allah's grace, the village chairman and I followed suit, although the chairman was a Buddhist and I a non-believer.

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At Kilometre Stone 8 we were received in the mosque by Hakim Tolep Idris, a very old man, and about fifty other people, both dignitaries and laymen. We sat cross-legged on the floor, on palm mats which covered the large hall facing the prayer room wall-to-wall, and the surviving Chams recalled the terrible days under Pol Pot. The hakim said his family used to be so large that they could eat a whole cow in a single meal. Now, he said, one fish would be more than sufficient. I thought he was exaggerating, but was told that some fish in the Tonle Sap could weigh up to two hundred kilograms. The hakim said Allah had caused the Vietnamese to come and save the Chams from the Khmer Rouge. Allah, he maintained, arranged for the Chams to meet many good Khmers even in the darkest hours. He said he himself had heard two Khmer Rouge men discussing an order for the execution of Chams. One said, "It's too inhuman. I can't do that."

Tinn Prasocur, 29, who was sitting next to me, said not all Khmer Rouge were dehumanized, but since they worked for the regime they had to do as they were told. Otherwise they would be disposed of pitilessly. Tinn Prasocur had studied literature at the Phnom Penh University and had been one of the four favourite students of Françoise Corrèze, a well-known French ethnologist and a great friend of Vietnam. Of the four only two were left — Tinn and Pen Navouth, the present minister of education — the two others having been executed, one in Kompong Cham, the other at Tuol Sleng in Phnom Penh. Tinn was working as a district official at 60 riels a month. He treated other members of the Cham community with familiarity and was open-hearted to the Khmer chairman who was accompanying us. It was clear that people such

as Doctor Abdoulcoyaume and Tinn, who had overcome racial prejudice, were bridging the gap between Chams and Khmers following the nightmares the recollection of which could still make their flesh creep.

We were shown around the hamlet—a jumble of huts with walls made of rough planks and covered with corrugated iron. None of the constructions, even the mosque and the school, seemed to be permanent yet. A number of the huts were built on stilts in the Malaysian fashion, but the rest were erected flush to the ground, building materials being scarce. These dwellings were not tidy inside, but the walls were decorated with painstakingly drawn Indian pictures, the most ubiquitous of which was one depicting a woman cuddling her infant. Tape recorders were playing religious tunes in some houses, and I learned that it was not Cham but Malaysian music. Cham music had become extinct, with not a trace left.

We lunched at Kilometre Stone 8. In a hut, probably the biggest in the hamlet, food had been laid out on a wooden platform running the length of a whole compartment. There were about twenty guests, all males. There were six courses, almost entirely made of chicken, pork being taboo, beef prohibited because of the great need for work cattle, and fish not in season. It was a good meal, not because of the great number of dishes and bowls, but because of the quality of the cooking and good service. The dishes which were to the taste of the guests were replenished again and again. What I liked best was chicken curry cooked with coconut juice, flavoured with peppermint, and served with rolls dipped in peanut oil, which reminded me of Indian cuisine. Also very good was stew-

ed ducks stuffed with lotus seeds, a typical Chinese dish. To drink we had water instead of alcohol, which is prohibited by Islamic laws. Also, instead of using our fingers, as required by ancient Cham customs, we ate in the Western style, from a plate and with knife, fork and spoon, and each was provided with a napkin. Dessert consisted of choice bananas and a kind of cake made of green beans but in form and colour looking like boiled egg yolk and served with caramel. I was told this was a Khmer speciality.

The meal was excellent, the atmosphere warm, and the women who served us were friendly and solicitous. The whole gave an impression of sophistication combined with unshowy charm, which bespoke time-honoured traditions. To wind up the hakim and the other dignitaries, remaining in their places, prayed for the Chams, the Khmer, the Vietnamese, and the People's Republic of Kampuchea. Together with the village chairman I clasped my hands and thanked them. "Won tikun," we thanked each of the women who had served at the meal.

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As they do not have an equivalent for solidarity the Chams use "samakhi", a loan word from the Khmer language. So, Hachi Trayet, 55, called the fishing team he headed "samakhi".

"Our samakhi," he said, "comprises 14 families. The men fish, repair the boats, and do other heavy jobs, and the women make nets. We specialize in ring nets, which are like very big bags, each measuring 30 metres across and 160 metres around. Of course we

also use other kinds of net, and at the moment we have 800 kilograms of nylon thread, five sampans, one motor launch and a 30 by 4 metre raft to hold the catch. The whole is worth 40 taels of gold."

I could not help being surprised, and looked at my interlocutor inquiringly. This was a big sum indeed, considering the fact that hardly three years had elapsed since genocide, and that of all the ethnic groups in the country the Chams had suffered the worst losses.

The head of the fishing team seemed to read my mind. His face broke into a broad, candid smile. "We're entirely funded by the State," he explained. "Investments, of course, were not made at one go, but little by little, and mostly in materials. First we were given rice to tide us over famine, then bamboo with which to dam up the river and build holds, and then thread to make nets and wood to make boats. Capital accumulated fast. Moreover, we don't have to refund the State, but are required to sell 60 per cent of the catch to the State, at 3 riels a kilogram. Of course we could double the price at the markets but we never did that out of gratitude for the great assistance of the State. My team alone uses 800 bamboo trees a year, and as much nylon thread as possible, and there are about 300 teams in the whole of Chrang Chamre. Now, with the circulation of the new currency we are getting loans in cash for development purposes."

We followed Hachi Trayet to the banks of the Tonle Sap where by means of a catwalk, we entered a shed on stilts built above the water. A group of women were engaged in netmaking. They were smartly dressed, in sarongs made of cotton print of dark colours,

and bodices cut from light material of gay colours. From the shed we crossed another catwalk to the hold. This was a kind of raft with a big submerged hold in the middle. At one end was a fairly large shed which served as both storeroom and kitchen. The raft was strengthened with bamboo floats on either side and provided with a hand-operated winch to haul in the net. Fish could be kept in the hold as long as possible, provided that they were fed every day.

We sat down on a low cot and picked up the conversation. "Fishing," Hachi Trayet said, "requires a great sum of money. In the old days we had to hire out because of lack of funds. The Chinese capitalists, by bribery, were allowed to monopolize whole stretches of the river. They bought boats and nets and hired us to work for them, paying us a few riels a day. A few of us worked on our own. To do that, however, we had to borrow money at interest. Moreover, there were the rents to pay to the Chinese. Now life is many times better with the production teams. With State assistance fishing is developing fast."

Hachi Trayet pointed to the other side of the river. "There used to be big Cham hamlets there with four hundred tile-roofed homes built above the water," he said. What I saw, however, was only a vast stretch of muddy water, and a couple of sampans drifting in a late flood.

"You can see some boats out now," Hachi Trayet continued. "For the moment the Mekong is flowing into Tonle Sap Lake through the Tonle Sap River. In about a week the flood'll recede from the lake. Only when the Tonle Sap River changes course will the fishing season properly begin. The best days will be a week before the full moon in

December and in January and February the following year. The river will be thick with fish and you can catch as much as you like. Some catfish measure up to two metres. The meat is very tasty and the fat is put aside for a rainy day."

Kampuchea used to export tens of thousands of tons of dried fish a year, and its chief customer was Indonesia. Export was monopolized by five Chinese firms, which all had branches in Singapore, and they made huge profits. The Government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, seeing the great importance of fishing, is making every effort to develop it. Catch in 1980 totalled 45,000 tons, with the exclusion of hauls made in ponds, fields and the sea. This was roughly one-third of the output in 1940.

Hachi Trayet continued: "To raise fishing to the old level the first thing to do is restore manpower. Most of the fishermen on the Mekong, the Bassac and the Tonle Sap in the old days were Chams and Vietnamese, and almost of all them were killed under Pol Pot. Now some people are getting impatient and want to speed things up a bit, but their thoughtless acts have led to disastrous consequences. Recently they lowered a high-tension power line into the water, and a vast stretch of the river was white with dead fish. The State had to call an immediate end to this harmful practice, which had caused considerable trouble to the teams in this village."

However, Hachi Trayet looked forward to the coming season with optimism. His team had completed all preparations. He said we should return then so that he might treat us to catfish, black carp and other famous species.

So a new life is beginning for the Chams, probably the best that has ever been known to this minority ethnic group whose past history was an endless chain of persecution. For the first time they are provided with good conditions to build a community with their own material and moral standards while joining the Khmers, as equals and brothers and sisters in building a new Kampuchea.

On the religious plane, however, the Chams are facing a big problem. They belong to the orthodox sector of Islam which is the second largest religion in the world after Christianity, with a following of about five hundred million. This sector is again divided into three sects, the main one, Trimen, advocates the use of the Malaysian language in teaching Koran and in all other religious activities, while the two others insist on the use of Arabic. A young Cham, therefore, has to learn the Cham language, a religious language, and also Khmer, the official language. Moreover, there are religious practices to be observed, from the five periods of prayer every day to the observance of Ramadan every year and pilgrimage to Mecca which each Muslim has to make at least once in their life. So rigorous a religious life will not fail to affect the economic and cultural life of the Chams.

Now that the Islamic world at large is suiting its laws to the conditions of the modern world, the Chams in Kampuchea, who have made tremendous efforts to avoid extinction, are expected to modernize their religious practices in their own interests.

October 1981

VU CAN

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CHRONOLOGY

(16 February — 15 March)

FEBRUARY

16. The Council of Ministers adopts a resolution to improve economization in all fields with a view to solving the economic imbalance.

— The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam sends a note to the Chinese Foreign Ministry rejecting their note of February 11, 1982 which said that Vietnam had undertaken armed provocation on the Chinese border during the Lunar New Year Festival.

17. The fifth Indochinese foreign ministerial conference is held in Vientiane on February 16-17. In the joint communiqué, new proposals towards China, Thailand and the ASEAN countries are made.

— The Presidium of the National Assembly of the People's Republic of Mongolia confers Sukhe Bator Orders on Le Duan, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Truong-Chinh, President of the Council of State, and Pham Van Dong, Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

19. VNA rejects the report (AFP news, February 18, 1982) by a spokesman for the Thai Supreme Military Command saying that Vietnam had fought with a borderguard unit on Thai territory.

— French presidential adviser on foreign affairs Regis Debray pays a visit to Vietnam.

20. A spokesman for the SRV Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemns a declaration of the Taiwanese authorities that the Truong Sa archipelago is under their jurisdiction.

— The Ministry of Health holds a conference reviewing the work of traditional medicine in Ho Chi Minh City.

23. In Hue, the Ministry of Agriculture organizes a conference reviewing its activities in 1981 and to discuss the orientation and tasks for 1982.

24. The Central Committee of the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions holds a meeting reviewing its activities in 1981 and to discuss the orientation and tasks for 1982.

— An economic delegation from Algeria visits Vietnam.

28. Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, head of the USSR State Planning Committee N.K. Baibakov concludes his visit to Vietnam.

MARCH

1. Rafeenddin Ahmed, special envoy of the UN Secretary-General, paid a visit to Vietnam from February 26 to March 1.

— The Vietnam Institute of Sciences and the Commission for the Study of the Atmosphere hold a symposium on space exploration at which 20 scientific papers were read.

— Vietnam attends a round-table at ministerial level on the development of industry and agriculture in developing countries in Baghdad (Iraq).

5. The SRV Ministry of Foreign Affairs sends a note to its Chinese counterpart protesting against acts of espionage and provocation. On March 2 and 3, nearly 40 armed Chinese boats intruded into Vietnamese waters, four to ten nautical miles off the coast.

6. VNA rejects the news reported by the China news agency *Xinhua* from Bangkok on March 2 saying that a number of Thai border hamlets were destroyed by Vietnamese artillery.

— A five-year program for literary co-operation is signed in Hanoi between the Vietnam Writers' Association and the USSR Union of Writers.

— From February 27 to March 6 in Hanoi, Vietnam and the Soviet Union held a meeting to discuss co-operation in coal mining in 1982-1983 and implementation of the plan for the period 1981-1985.

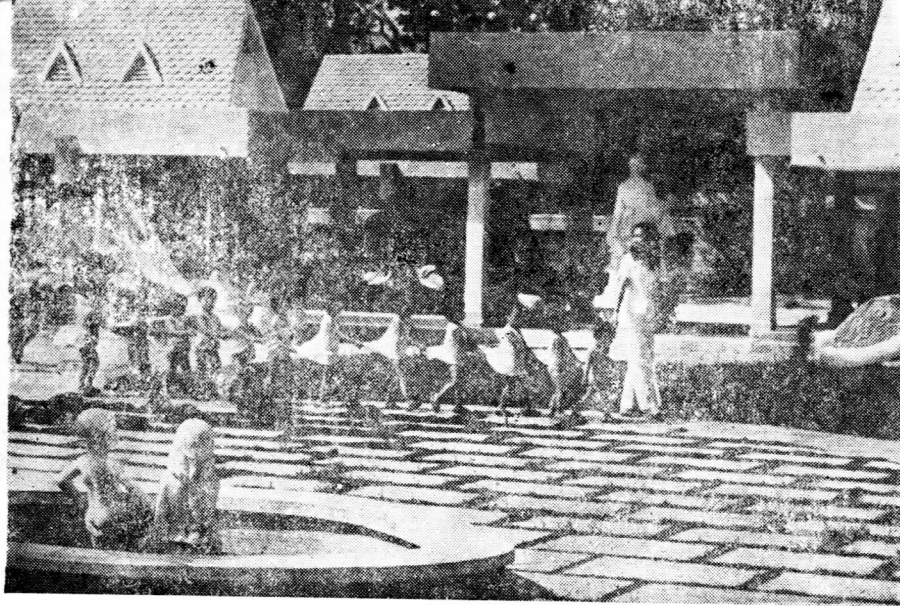
7. The Chairman of the Council of Ministers adopts the State fund plan for salary distribution according to work done and productivity.

9. All papers in Hanoi publish a communiqué of the 12th plenum of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee that preparations for the Fifth Party Congress, which will open in Hanoi on March 27, 1982 have been completed.

10. In Hanoi the General Department of Meteorology and Hydrology inaugurates a joint Vietnamese-Soviet tropical meteorological station.

11. VNA rejects the news of western news agencies reporting that Vietnam sprayed toxic chemicals on the Kampuchea-Thailand border area.

13. A delegation of the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions headed by its President, Nguyen Duc Thuan, attends the 17th plenum of the USSR Central Council of the Trade Unions.



HO CHI MINH CITY AFTER LIBERATION

The May 19th kindergarten.

Photo: TU HAI

Job training for ex-prostitutes.

Photo: HOANG THINH



**Kinetic therapy in Binh Trieu centre
for drug addicts.**

Photo: HOANG THINH

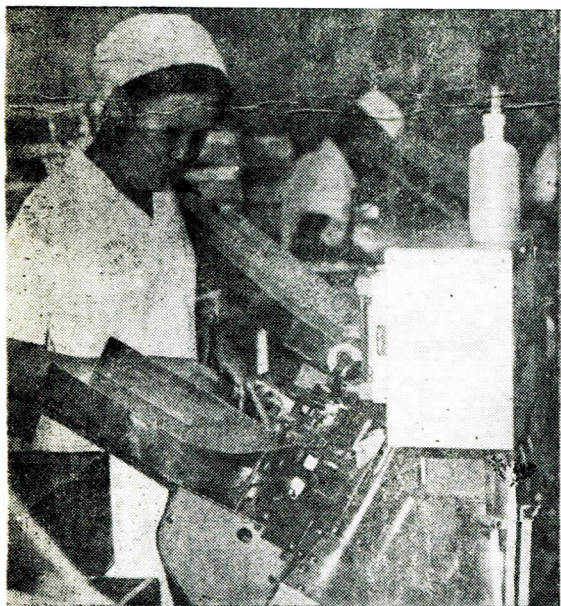




Harvesting bean in the city's vegetable farm.

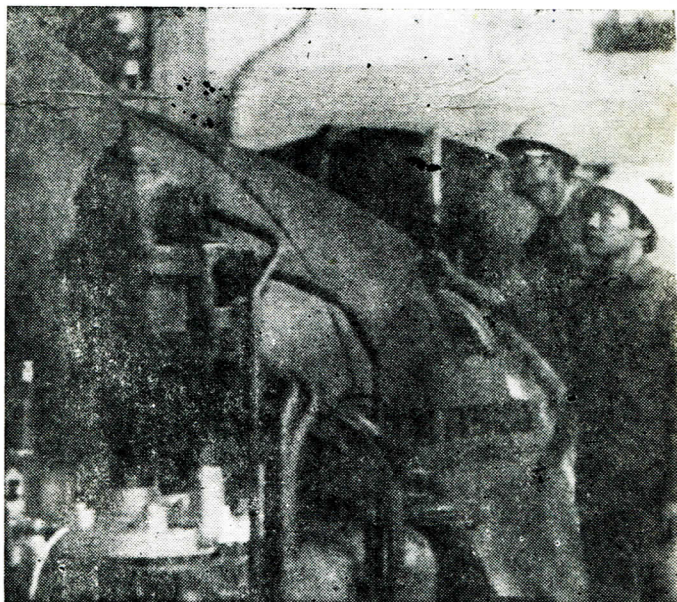
Photo : DUC TRUONG

IMAGES AFTER THE LIBERATION OF HO CHI MINH CITY



Producing medicines in Pharmaceutical Factory No. 1.

Photo : TU HAI



Maintenance of the 12,800 kw generator in Cho Rong electricity plant.

Photo : QUANG KHANH

**Vietnam
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Đáy nói : 53 998

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