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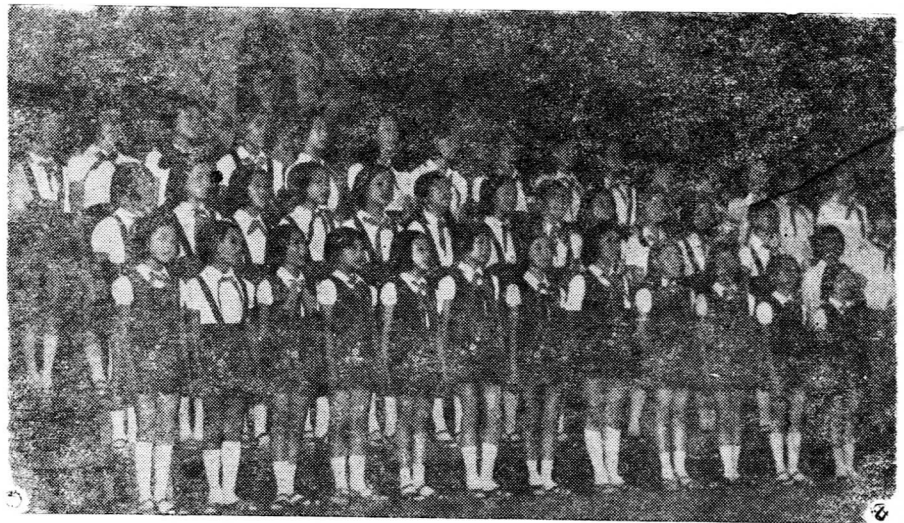
The mid-Autumn festival.

Photo: THU HOAI

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES IN VIETNAM

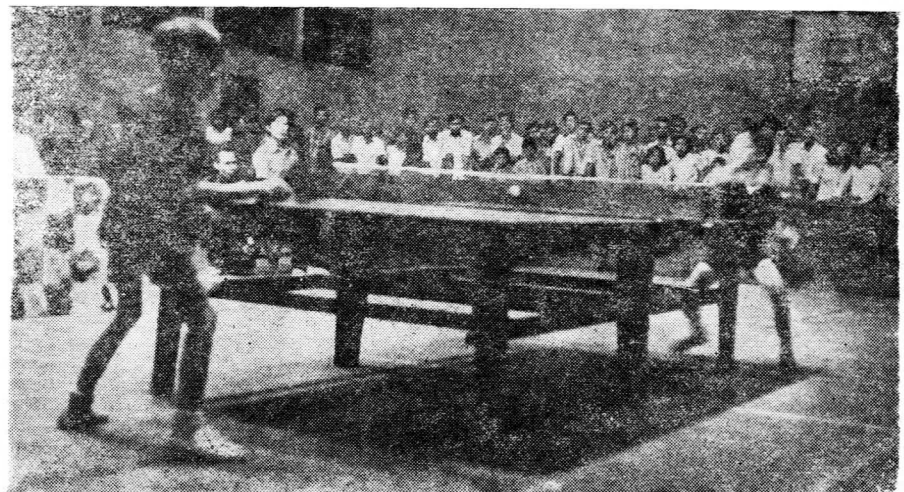
A chorus of the Children's Club in Hanoi.

Photo: TRAN AM



The final match of the "Red Scarf" Table-tennis cup organized by the weekly Thieu Nien Tien Phong (Vanguard Pioneers).

Photo: HOANG HUU



OUR MONTHLY COMMENT

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Front cover :

Early morning at Ha Long Bay.

Photo : NGUYEN ANH KET

Vietnam
Courier

6-1982

Laos, among the poorest countries in the world, with an average per capita income of less than 100 dollars a year, seriously damaged throughout thirty years of war — 3 million tons of bombs were dropped from 1964 to 1973 — has only 3.5 million inhabitants with 68 ethnic groups in which no nationality is predominant, with a population density of 13 inhabitants per square kilometre. The Lao People's Democratic Republic, founded on 2 December 1975, is currently facing enormous difficulties to make the still low level of the people's economic and cultural life equal to the socio-political system.

Forty five years of struggle since the founding of the Communist Party of Indochina, the forerunner of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and carrying out the objectives of the national democratic revolution, prove the great abilities and rapid growth of the ranks of Lao Communists. They successively fought French colonialism and US neo-colonialism and three times agreed to set up coalition governments with their opponents within the country. During that time they had to live in dense forests or caves, directing the political and military struggles in both the liberated and occupied zones. In May 1975, seizing the opportunity offered by the fall of US neo-colonialism in Phnom Penh and Saigon, the Lao people rose up to drive out USAID, symbol of US domination in Laos, and brought about the complete abolition of the US-puppet machinery, including the anachronistic monarchy. There have been few pages of history among Third World countries like those in this country of a "million elephants".

In the stage of socialist building the struggle has not been less fierce and difficult. If socialism requires a large-scale engineering industry, Laos is a small

agricultural country of many natural and autarkic characteristics, a country where there is a serious shortage of communication lines. In 1975, 50% of the total population was illiterate. The road to socialism taken by the Lao people is a totally new one, almost unprecedented in the world.

But the creativeness of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party persists. The measures passed by the Party Central Committee in the plenary session late in 1979 and currently applied are evidence of that creativeness: the new kip (Lao currency) has been introduced and revalued (relative to the US dollar); peasants are allowed to sell their surplus rice, after having fulfilled their duty towards the State; all obstacles to production and circulation of commodities have been removed. The figures on economic and cultural achievements over the past six years are really encouraging and prove the correct leadership of the Lao Communists. This does not mean however that everything is smooth sailing in Laos. The Third National Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, held last month in Vientiane, frankly pointed out the problems the Lao people are facing in national construction. It also spoke of the weaknesses and shortcomings which are to be overcome if the Lao revolution is to advance.

Nevertheless, there is no denying the importance of the achievements of the last 6 years, given the situation in Laos as well as that in Vietnam during this period: Beijing expansionism has chosen the two countries as the objectives for its ambitions. Furthermore, Laos has, to the west, a neighbour which is not always friendly. If Thailand styles itself the front-line country of ASEAN, it means to pursue a hostile policy towards the Indochinese countries.

In the face of much pressure from without and schemes of sabotage from within, Laos has shown itself to be very staunch. This staunchness stems from its own strength, from correct alliances with Vietnam and Kampuchea and from the solidarity and all-sided co-operation with the Soviet Union and other countries in the socialist community. Laos has satis-

factorily carried out two tasks: national defence and construction. Besides, Laos has expanded its relations with other countries such as the Republic of India and Burma, and of late it has normalized relations with France.

The contributions made by the Lao Foreign Ministry to put into effect the resolutions of the conferences of the three foreign ministers of Indochina have given Laos a stronger position in Southeast Asia and the world: the visits and exchanges of opinions between the leaders of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the leaders of ASEAN, including Thailand, and with the leaders of Burma are major contributions to peace, stability, friendship and co-operation in Southeast Asia. The Lao people's goodwill and love of peace has been clearly expressed in their efforts to normalize relations between Laos and China.

The Vietnamese people are very proud to have a neighbour sharing the same ideal — the fraternal Lao people. The friendship between the two peoples has undergone many trials and hence is more steadfast. The Vietnam — Laos Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation signed on July 18, 1977 is a cornerstone for the relations between the two countries to develop further.

The Third National Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party has worked out the general line of the Lao revolution in the transitional period to socialism. It has mapped out the orientation and tasks in the economic, cultural and social fields for the 1981-1985 five-year plan and for the 80's as a whole. It has also worked out the foreign policy of the Lao Party and State. The progress made by Laos is a guarantee for the security of Vietnam too. Vietnam, which enjoyed great assistance from Laos in the wars of resistance against the French and US aggressors, will, in its own interest as well as in the interests of peace in Southeast Asia, combine efforts with Laos as well as Kampuchea in national defence and construction.

25 May 1982

The 3rd Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party was held from April 27 to 30, 1982 in Vientiane. The congress reviewed the different stages of the Lao revolution in the last ten years, especially since the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, took stock of its victories as well as its shortcomings, made a deep analysis of their causes and drew valuable lessons for the period ahead. The congress also decided on the general line, orientation and tasks of the Lao revolution in the period of transition to socialism as well as the main socio-economic targets of the First Five-Year Plan (1981-1985). The congress also discussed some amendments to the Rules of the Party. It elected a new central committee composed of 55 members including 49 full and 6 alternate members. The first plenum of the new Central Committee has elected Kaysone Phomvihane its General Secretary, a 7-member Political Bureau and a 9-member Secretariat.

A NEW STAGE IN THE LAO REVOLUTION

Laos, together with Vietnam and Kampuchea, has become an outpost of the socialist system in Southeast Asia directly confronting the international reactionary alliance with the Chinese expansionists as storm-trooper. Accordingly, the Lao people's struggle to defend their independence and sovereignty and the new regime will be a long and arduous one. Without any doubt, this will render the struggle between the two paths—socialist and capitalist—in Laos more arduous and complicated.

The Lao people are facing two tasks: national defence and building socialism. Neither of these can be made light of but to build the economy and develop culture must be regarded as the central one because this is actually the objective of the revolution and also a firm basis from which to defend the country and the new regime.

The main obstacle to national construction is the small production that has all the attributes of a natural economy. Therefore, it is necessary to take Laos' economy out of its present autarkic state and to advance from small production

Following are the main points of the Political Report and the Report on the Orientation and Tasks of the First Five-Year Plan presented by the Central Committee of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party at the 3rd Party Congress.

to large-scale socialist production. Laos must proceed from agriculture and forestry (Laos has vast forest lands) to carry out socialist industrialisation. The essential is to develop production, but circulation and distribution also have a major significance, so it is imperative to develop communications within the country as well as with the outside world. While the economy plays the decisive role, cultural development cannot be overlooked because without the necessary level of culture it is impossible to transform and build the economy or to defend the country and make the people real masters of their country and their life. Accordingly, it is necessary to take the ideological and cultural revolution, especially education, a step ahead of all other works.

If the Lao-Viet alliance and the Lao-Viet-Khmer alliance has been one of the fundamental factors for the victory of the national demo-

cratic revolution in each country, today in the common struggle to defend their countries and build socialism, this alliance between the three nations must be stronger in all fields. The Lao revolution being part of the world revolution, the strength of Laos is inseparable from the strength of the three revolutionary currents of our time: socialism, the national liberation movement and the struggle for peace and democracy.

Laos will advance directly to socialism bypassing the stage of capitalist development. This means that socialism can be achieved through the real mastery of the working people over the country and society under the leadership of the Party and on the basis of a large-scale engineering industry. To reach this goal the Lao revolution will have to go through many stages, and this will be a protracted and arduous struggle.

General Line

The *general line* of the Lao revolution during the period of transition to socialism is as follows:

To consolidate and strengthen the proletarian dictatorship; to organize and ensure close unity of the working people of all ethnic groups and the exercise of their right to master their country and society; to carry out simultaneously the three revolutions in which the revolution in the relations of production will pave the way for the productive forces to develop, the scientific and technological revolution should take a step ahead, all for socialist construction; to exploit and bring into full play all potentials of the country, starting from agriculture and forestry, taking the development of agriculture and forestry as a basis for industrial development; to transform the natural economy, to turn small production into large-scale socialist production; to carry out industrialization gradually and selectively, considering socialist industrialization as the central task of the period of transition in order to develop the productive forces; to build up and unceasingly consolidate the socialist relations of production, to make Laos a country with developed agriculture, forestry and industry; to build a prosperous, happy and joyful life for the people of all ethnic groups; to eradicate for good the exploitation of man by man; to strengthen national defence and security, firmly defend our sovereignty, national independence and the new regime; to build a peaceful, independent, unified and socialist Laos, and together with Vietnam and Kampuchea to firmly defend the world socialist system in this region, and actively contribute to the struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism in the world.

The Five Immediate Goals on the Economic and Social Planes

Laos is at present in the initial stage of the period of transition to

socialism, the central task of which is to ensure political security, strengthen the proletarian dictatorship at the grassroots level and to stabilize and improve the life of the people of all ethnic groups. At the same time, it is necessary to intensify fundamental surveys and build some key economic areas to serve as nuclei for the common economy of the country, all for the creation of the necessary conditions serving as stepping-stones for the building and development of the economy and culture on a large-scale and at a higher speed in the State plans of the nineties. Therefore, it is necessary to concentrate efforts on the realisation of the following five major objectives on the economic and social planes:

1. To develop agriculture and forestry by building a large-scale socialist production, to restore and develop small industries and handicrafts in order to firmly solve the food problem for the whole country and to produce an increasing quantity of other essential goods. To stabilize and take a step in improving the people's life and to accumulate for socialist industrialisation. To build a number of key economic areas which would have a decisive effect on the solution of the food problem and produce a number of key products for export.

2. To build a communications and postal system that can ensure smooth communications within the country and with the outside world, first of all the roads, to open and make full use of the available waterways, consolidate the network of airways and prepare for the building of the railways linking Laos and Vietnam.

3. To build an electricity network and an engineering industry composed of small and medium-size enterprises all over the country while making preparations for building medium and large power stations in order to meet the energy needs of production and the people's life, and bring a new look to the economic and social situation in our country.

4. To complete in the main the transformation of the non-socialist economic sectors, proceeding from low to high forms, and to ensure the predominant role of the socialist sector.

5. To train and foster a contingent of leading cadres and economic managers and a contingent of scientific and technical cadres and skilled workers capable of managing the economy and society and taking the destiny of the country into their hands.

Tasks and Some Concrete Targets of the First Five-Year Plan (1981 - 1985)

Agriculture

— Food plants (rice, maize, soy-bean): 1.6 million tons (in paddy equivalent) including 1.4 million tons of paddy (up by 246,000 tons compared with 1981).

— Industrial crops: expansion of the areas under short-term crops (tobacco, sugar-cane, cotton, beans), restoration and development of perennial plants of high economic value (coffee, tea, mulberry...)

— Stockbreeding: the herd of cattle will increase by 7% annually, the number of pigs by 15.6% in five years, and fowl by 40—50% in five years.

Forestry

Exploitation of 1.6—2 million cubic metres of timber in five years.

Industry and Handicrafts

Attention will be paid to increasing consumer goods for domestic consumption and export. Textile production will increase fivefold compared with 1980, salt by five times, soap by six times, fish sauce by six times, tobacco by 2.8 times, confectionary by 2.5 times.

To make full use of the existing industrial establishments such as power plants, mining, wood processing, cigarettes and soap enterprises and some local engineering enterprises.

To speedily set up a number of industrial establishments equipped

by fraternal and friendly countries so that they may be put into operation in the second five-year plan, especially building materials factories (cement, bricks, tiles, sawn timber).

To develop small industries and handicrafts especially for the processing of foodstuffs like fish sauce, fish meal, dried fish, dried meat, confectionary, textiles and building materials (bricks and tiles, timber).

Communications, Transport and Post

In 1985 goods freightage will increase by 84.8% and passenger freightage by 44% compared with 1980.

To build Highway 9 and reinforce Highway 13 and other roads linking Laos with Vietnam totalling 400 kilometres. 547 km of roads will be asphalted. To build some ports on the major rivers with the assistance of fraternal socialist countries.

To encourage the use of traditional transport means and prepare for the building of the railway system in the second five-year plan.

The postal service will be strengthened: at the end of the first five-year plan the number of telephone exchanges will increase by 20.7%, the number of telephones by 51% and the number of post-offices by 7%, and to speedily put into commission the satellite ground station built and equipped by the Soviet Union.

Capital Construction and Investments in Capital Construction

80% of the capital investments will be devoted to the construction of material production establishments (agriculture, forestry and water conservancy): 26% for agriculture, forestry and water conservancy, 41% for communications and transport, 19% for industries, 20% for non-productive services (5% for education and personnel training).

Investments in capital construction will increase by 8.2% annually.

Concentrated investments will be made for quick completion of key projects.

Trade and Social Life

To strengthen and expand the network of State trade service. In 1985 the sales of State trade service and the co-operatives will double the 1980 figure. Retail sales per capita will increase 73.5%.

To strengthen market control and prevent speculation and hoarding of goods.

To ensure equity in the circulation and distribution of goods. In view of the low level of production, improvement of the living conditions must be made selectively, with priority given to workers and public servants and members of the defence and security forces.

Import and Export

In 1985 the volume of exports will increase by 3.4 times compared with 1980 (6.8 times in trade transactions with the socialist countries, 2.4% times with the capitalist markets). The volume of imports will increase by three times (3.5 times with the socialist countries and 2.8 times with the capitalist countries).

Population and Work Force

By 1985 the population of Laos will rise to 4 million, i.e. an annual growth rate of 2.4%. The work force will increase by 200,000 persons (15% in industry, and 30% in construction and transport). In 1985 the work force in the manufacturing industries will account for 89% of the total work force.

To enforce the system of cost-accounting and completely eliminate the system of government subsidies, to apply the system of piece-rate payment and the system of equitable remuneration.

Finances and Prices

In 1985 the State budget will increase by 73.5% compared with 1980 (at the rate of 11.7% annually).

In view of the still low development of the merchandize economy of Laos and the many imbalances still existing in planning work,

flexible use of the pricing policy will be applied and the application of the laws on planned development will go along with the law of values.

Culture, Education and Social Work

A 150 kW radio station will be erected in Vientiane and the broadcasting system will be increased. To expand the television network; to double the publication of books; to eradicate illiteracy and make primary education compulsory among the entire population. To strengthen job-training, higher education and secondary vocational schools.

Enrolments at general education schools will increase 40.3% in five years (27% for the first level, 2.4% for the 2nd level and 1.9 times for the third level). The number of infant classes will increase by 6.4 times and university students by 59.4%.

The number of hospital beds will increase by 32% (averaging 32.5 beds for every 10,000 inhabitants), the number of physicians will treble, averaging 1.2 doctors and 7.1 assistant doctors for every 10,000 inhabitants. To promote the production of traditional medicines.

Foreign Policy

Laos will do its utmost to strengthen and consolidate its solidarity, special relations and all-round co-operation with Vietnam and Kampuchea and to strengthen its solidarity and allround co-operation with the Soviet Union and the other countries in the socialist community. That is a long-term, consistent and principled policy of the Lao Party and State. Laos will strive to increase solidarity in the international communist and workers' movement and to defend Marxism-Leninism. It unreservedly supports the national liberation and national independence movement and the struggle of the working class and the other working sections in the developed capitalist countries.

Laos puts a high value on the role and contributions of India to

the non-aligned movement, and to peace in the world, especially in South Asia and Southeast Asia. It attaches importance to its friendship with India and Burma, and will unceasingly work for the consolidation and strengthening of this friendship.

Laos is for the peaceful coexistence between the two groups of countries of ASEAN and Indochina, for their friendly and good neighbourly relations, and the holding of dialogues between them aimed at settling all problems arising in the relations between the two groups, on the principle of equality, mutual understanding, respect for each other's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, non-imposition of one's opinion on the other, and joint efforts to build a Southeast Asia of peace, stability, friendship and co-operation.

Laos is a neighbour of the Kingdom of Thailand having more than 1,000 km of common border, and the peoples of the two countries have long-standing close relations. Laos is desirous of maintaining and developing relations of friendship and good neighbourhood with Thailand and of expanding economic, trading, cultural and sporting relations between the two countries. In this spirit, the Lao Government has signed with the Government of Thailand two statements, in January and April 1979, reaffirming the principles governing the relations between the two countries and setting out measures to strengthen friendly relations with Thailand. Laos has consistently done its best to carry out its commitments. In the interests of the two countries and of peace and stability in Southeast Asia, it appeals to the Thai side to strictly implement what has been agreed upon and stop allowing reactionaries to use Thai territory for sabotage activities against Laos.

(Continued on page 9)

MAJOR LANDMARKS ON THE HISTORY OF LAOS

14th century: Foundation of the Kingdom of Lan Xang (Million Elephants) after the national hero Fa Ngum's victories over the aggressors and the unification of the country.

Late 17th century: the dynasty of King Souligna Vongsa brought about the heyday of Lan Xang, but after his death, the country was subjected to internal strife and foreign dominations (Siam and Burma).

Late 19th century: King Chao Anou drove the Siamese out of Vientiane, but afterwards he was defeated and captured, and died in Bangkok in 1935.

1893: After occupying Vietnam and Kampuchea, France imposed its "protectorate" on Laos. Many popular uprisings against the French colonialists were recorded, but all failed.

1930: Foundation of the Indochinese Communist Party; a Lao section of the Party was founded in 1936.

1945 (October 12): The Lao Government claimed independence but France staged a come-back and set up a pro-French government in Vientiane. The independent government took refuge in Thailand and continued to lead the resistance.

1950: Foundation of the Resistance Government in the Lao liberated areas with the Issara (Freedom) Front headed by Souphanouvong.

1951: The Second Congress of the Indochinese Communist Party decided to found three separate parties for the three countries: Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea.

1954: The Geneva Agreements on Indochina were signed. The Pathet Lao forces regrouped to and took control of the two northern provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly.

1955: Foundation of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party.

1956: Foundation of the Lao Patriotic Front (Neo Lao Hak Sat) on January 6.

1957: Foundation of the first coalition government of Laos, with the participation of Neo Lao Hak Sat.

1958: Neo Lao Hak Sat won the election. The US immediately cut their aid to Laos. Phoui Sannanikone took Souphanouvong and other Neo Lao Hak Sat leaders into custody, but afterwards they escaped and continued to lead the resistance.

1960: The patriotic coup-d'état in Vientiane. The Phoumi Nosavan reactionary government was overthrown, but the reactionaries later launched a counter-attack. Laos was afterwards divided into two zones under two separate governments.

1962: The Geneva Agreements on Laos were signed. Foundation of the second coalition government which included representatives of three parties: Souvanna Phouma, neutralist; Souphanouvong, communist; and Phoumi Nosavan, rightist.

1963: Because of US intervention, the coalition government was dismantled. The Neo Lao Hak Sat ministers left for the areas under Neo Lao Hak Sat control. The US then started a special war against the Lao patriotic forces, which, after a short period of fighting, controlled two-thirds of Lao territory.

1973 (Feb. 21): Signing of the Vientiane Agreements between the Vientiane Administration and the Lao patriotic forces (a short time after the Paris Agreements on Vietnam) which led to the establishment of the third coalition government in April 1974.

1975: In May, after US withdrawal from Phnom Penh and Saigon and the total collapse of the puppet regimes in Kampuchea and in South Vietnam, the US had to withdraw its USAID team from Laos. USAID was a symbol of US neo-colonialism. Many US henchmen, including members of the Vientiane Administration, fled the country.

1975 (Dec. 2): Foundation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic after the abdication of the King of Laos, thus ending the country's monarchy.

BACKGROUND NOTES ON THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Economic Conditions

As a result of long feudal rule to which was added the predatory regimes of both old and new colonialism, even after the inception of the people's democratic regime, Laos remains a backward country economically and culturally. And this in spite of favourable natural conditions which are very propitious for the development of agriculture and forestry. In particular, Laos possesses a big hydro-electric potential and abundant mineral resource. However, manpower is deficient — the country has a population of about 3.5 million with a density of only 13 inhabitants per square kilometre. 95% of the work-force is engaged in handicrafts with very low productivity. Technical skills are greatly lacking. In recent years, Laos has made enormous efforts to eliminate illiteracy and raise the general cultural standard of its population. Yet, the whole country still has only a little more than 10,000 students of secondary education and just over 1,000 university graduates. Though this represents a big stride compared with the past, it remains far below the needs of socialist construction.

This low starting point of the economy and culture, coupled with the heavy consequences of 30 years of war and the vestiges of neo-colonialism constitute a major handicap that will take years to overcome.

It puts great limitations on the Lao people's possibilities of exploiting their natural resources and making use of international aid and co-operation even though the Lao revolution is developing in favourable international conditions. The economy still faces many serious imbalances with production falling far behind the needs of consumption. Industrial output accounts for less than 10% of the

gross national product. Communications are very poor and some provincial and district towns remain inaccessible to motor vehicles. Railways are non-existent. The population in many areas still practises an autarkic economy. The merchandized economy is negligible. In the few areas where goods production has seen some development, the economy remains heavily dependent on foreign markets.

Social Classes

Due to an underdeveloped economy, class differentiation is not so deep-rooted in Laos, nor is it even within different regions.

The working class, including those employed in State-run service industries and handicraft workers, counts only about 30,000 persons, or less than 3% of the work force. There are not yet many skilled workers. In spite of its small size and its relatively recent formation, the Lao working class has played the leading role in the revolution through the intermediary of their political party — the People's Revolutionary Party.

The peasants account for 90% of the population. Most of them still farm small and scattered plots of land chiefly for self-sustenance. The amount of commercialized farm products is still negligible. The first differentiation among the peasantry began with the penetration of US neo-colonialism into the countryside. A section of the peasantry got rich and became a kind of rural bourgeoisie combining trading with farming, hiring workers to work orchards, renting farm machines... The greater part of peasants lost their lands and had to hire their work out to or rent lands from the rich families.

Lao peasants have always been patriotic people. They joined the working class in carrying out the national and democratic revolution. Under the leadership of the working-class Party, they are again siding with the working class in the socialist revolution.

The urban petty bourgeoisie, which numbers about 30,000 in the whole country, are mostly composed of small traders, small shop owners and service workers living mostly in Vientiane, the capital city, and the provincial towns. They have a good income but their life remains precarious. Most of the petty bourgeois families' sons or daughters are employed as workers in factories or as public servants. On the whole, the petty bourgeoisie supports the policies of the revolution. In the major towns and their suburbs there are a few wealthy families engaged in industry, trade, transport or construction. Their number is estimated at around one hundred in the whole of Laos. Their negative aspects are many but they still play a certain role in the development of the national economy.

In certain areas which were until recently bastions of the feudal regime, feudal land ownership still remains. This will be dealt with in the program of transformation of agriculture. Thus, exploitation by certain sections of the population remains in Laos, but the main obstacle to the development of production is still the small production of a heavily autarkic nature.

Over the past few years, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has made sustained efforts to transform and develop its economy. Nevertheless, the socialist sector still occupies a very small part of the economy: about 11% in agriculture, one-third in commerce and transport. In the conditions of an economy

remaining basically at the level of a small and scattered agriculture, with production, distribution and circulation of goods still out of State control, the revolution in Laos has to meet three urgent demands at the same time: to ensure the vital necessities of the people's life, to strengthen security and national defence and to lay the first material and technical bases for national construction. This is indeed a daunting task.

Enemies from outside

The Lao people have won a victory in defeating US neo-colonialism in collusion with other international reactionary forces and their agents inside the country. After being forced out of Laos under the impact of the attacks of the revolutionary forces, the US imperialists and their agents are trying to recover their losses. Using Thailand as a shelter and regrouping centre they have sent back Lao exiles in a bid to restore and reactivate their nests of underground agents and bandits in some areas of Laos. The latter are the authors of hundreds of acts of provocation and sabotage and attempts at rebellion. They have also coerced Lao citizens to leave the country, looted and incited people to resist Government policies. In their continuous fight to defend the country's security the Lao people have repeatedly defeated these schemes.

But most bitter of all has been the fight against the Beijing hegemonists and expansionists, the present enemy of the Lao people. As early as the sixties the Chinese reactionary ruling circles revealed their hostility towards the Lao revolution and did some most despicable things. In the new stage of the revolution, the Lao People's Democratic Republic together with Vietnam and Kampuchea have become an outpost of the socialist system in Southeast Asia to directly confront the new international reactionary alliance with the Chinese expansionists as storm-troopers. It follows that the Lao people's fight to defend their independence, sovereignty and the new regime will be an arduous and protracted one. This is also part of a fierce and complicate struggle between the socialist and the capitalist paths in Laos.

LE THANH

Third Congress of the Lao People's

1975 — 1981: ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENTS

(From the Political Report of the Central Committee of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party presented at its 3rd National Congress.)

Over the last six years, thanks to the correct line of the Party, efforts by the entire people and sizable international assistance, the Lao economy has made considerable advances: gross national product increased 43 per cent and national income per capita 40 per cent.

In agricultural production, rice output rose from 700,000 tons in 1976 to 1,154,000 tons in 1981. Cattle increased from 900,000 to 1,300,000 head. The area under rice increased 33.5 per cent. The irrigated areas doubled, and agricultural machinery increased fivefold. Since 1980 Laos has more or less solved its food and feedstuffs problem.

The State and collective sectors in agriculture have been developed: the movement for agricultural collectivisation has been basically completed in four provinces and 31 State and forestry farms have already been set up.

In industrial production, attention has been paid to the development of such branches as: energy; repair engineering; coal, salt and gypsum mining; building materials; food processing, etc. In 1980, the output of electricity increased 3.57 times, brick production 15 times, farm implements manufacture 1.5 times, and food processing industry 1.5 times as compared with 1976. 600 km of new roads have also been built. There are now 188 State enterprises with a total workforce of 13,000. Meanwhile, the State controls the whole system of air transport and 60 per cent of the means of land transport.

The socialist trade service has initially been developed with a network of 180 State stores, 356 buying and selling co-operatives and 150 service establishments. The turnover of retail goods increased 5 times, domestic goods purchased by the State 7.4 times as compared with 1976.

The National Bank was set up to enforce a unified State financial and banking system.

Foreign economic relations have been established and expanded. As a result, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has benefited from foreign aid, particularly from the socialist countries.

Although there remain great difficulties in building its economy, the initial achievements prove that Laos has gradually worked out its own orientation and measures, through its experiences, to reform and build a new economy in the period of transition to socialism.

Besides, remarkable progress has been made in the fields of culture, education and public health:

— 85% of the illiterates have been taught to read and write;

— Enrolment in general education schools has doubled;

— The number of students attending vocational and higher education institutions has increased with every passing year;

— Nearly 10,000 students and workers are now studying in foreign countries.

Attention has been paid to developing information, cultural and artistic activities. At present, there are several central and local radio stations, newspapers and magazines, cinemas, mobile film-screening teams, professional artistic ensembles, circus troupes, etc.

Achievements have also been made in public health: the number of hospitals increased 1.75 times and hospital beds, 1.8 times. Health personnel had a 28-per cent increase.

Other social activities such as care for war invalids, mothers and children as well as assistance to victims of social evils of the old regime have been improved.

DATA ON THE
THREE NATIONAL
CONGRESSES
OF THE LAO
PEOPLE'S
REVOLUTIONARY
PARTY

— The First National Congress: Foundation of the Party on March 3, 1955. The congress was clandestinely held in a resistance base. At the time the Party, with only 400 members, controlled the two regrouped provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly as stipulated by the Geneva Agreements.

— The Second National Congress: Also held clandestinely in a resistance base in 1972. The number of party members rose to over 21,000 and the liberated areas extended over two-thirds of the country.

— The Third National Congress: Held on April 27, 1982 in Vientiane. 228 official delegates (among them 20 women) represented more than 35,000 party members throughout the country, 16 delegations from communist and workers' parties, and national liberation movements the world over attended the Congress.

FIFTH VIETNAMESE WOMEN'S CONGRESS

The Fifth National Congress of Women, organized by the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU), was held in Hanoi on 19 and 20 May 1982, attended by more than 800 delegates from provinces, cities and branches of activity, including the armed forces. Present were representatives of women's organizations in various countries and international women's organizations.

The report presented by Ms Nguyen Thi Dinh, President of the VWU, highlighted the important role played by women in Vietnam, and VWU activities since the last Congress, held in 1974. It also outlined the programme of action for the coming period: to give a strong impetus to the women's movement in the building and defence of the country. Women will play an important role in the solution of many major problems: food (through participation in agriculture), clothing (textile mills are staffed mostly by women; mulberry planting and silkworm breeding are also mostly done by women), and family planning (an acute problem at present). Women are an essential factor in the building of "socialist families" and the rearing of children, who will build the country when they grow up. The report made suggestions concerning future VWU work. It also contained proposals to the State with a view to even greater women's participation in various social activities.

The Congress elected a new VWU executive committee and re-elected Ms Nguyen Thi Dinh its president.

Among the delegates to the Fifth Women's Congress there were 450 VWU cadres, 205 factory workers and State employees, 103 peasants, 26 artisans and 16 members of the armed forces; 92 delegates had a college or post-graduate education; 101 were from national minorities.

A NEW STAGE...

(Continued from p. 6)

Laos will continue to develop its relations with all countries irrespective of their political and social system, on the basis of the principle of peaceful coexistence.

Laos is resolved to struggle against the US—Chinese collusion, which constitutes the main danger to national independence, peace and stability in Southeast Asia. If the United States is serious in its intention to improve its relations with the Lao People's Democratic Republic as it has said, it must take concrete actions and end all the campaigns of slanders and other hostile acts against Laos. The Lao people want to have friendly relations with the American people.

With regard to China, Laos persists in its effort to do everything possible to maintain and strengthen

relations of friendship and good neighbourhood between the two peoples, but it resolutely opposes the hostile policy of the reactionaries in the ruling circles in Beijing. In the interests of the two peoples, of peace in Southeast Asia and the world, Laos is ready to normalize its relations with China on the basis of respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and joint efforts to solve all questions in the relations between the two countries through peaceful negotiations.

Together with the fraternal parties and socialist countries and progressive people the world over, Laos will struggle tirelessly for an end to the arms race, for disarmament and against the bellicose policy of the US imperialists and international reaction, for peace and security of nations.

OUR FOREIGN POLICY: PEACE, FRIENDSHIP AND CO-OPERATION WITH ALL OTHER PEOPLES

QUESTION: *Would you tell us about the result of your visit to the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, India and some countries in Northern and Western Europe and about the prospects for co-operation between Vietnam and those countries?*

ANSWER: I can say that my visit had good results. I went to the Soviet Union and the GDR to exchange views with leading foreign ministry officials on bilateral relations and a number of important international questions to enhance our allround co-operation and international collaboration in the spirit of the Vietnam-USSR and Vietnam-GDR treaties of friendship and co-operation. The Soviet and GDR comrades appreciated the result of the Fifth Party Congress and the principled foreign policy of our Party and State. They appreciated the results of our diplomatic activities and considered my visit to some countries in Northern and Western Europe and India as an important contribution to the common struggle of the socialist countries for peace and reducing world tension.

My visit to India took place only a few months after the visit to Vietnam by Indian Foreign Minister Narasimha Rao which shows that relations between India and Vietnam hold an important position in the external relations of the two countries. After the other countries in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) our multiform co-operation with India has a special significance for us and is developing satisfactorily on a firm and lasting basis. Vietnam-India co-operation is an important factor for peace in Asia

An interview by Vietnam News Agency with Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, who has just returned from a visit to several countries in Europe and Asia:

and Southeast Asia as well as for the development of the non-aligned movement. It is also an example of South-South co-operation.

I visited France, Sweden, Belgium and the Federal Republic of Germany where I discussed with the leaders of these countries and the European Economic Community questions relating to the promotion of understanding and lasting co-operation between these countries and ours, and to peace and stability in Southeast Asia. These countries, particularly France and Sweden, hold an important position in the relations between our country and the West. Many of the countries I visited as well as the European Economic Community as a whole agreed to have regular exchanges of views regarding long-term co-operation in the economic, cultural, scientific and technical fields.

QUESTION: *How would you appraise the result of your visit with regard to the situation in Southeast Asia?*

ANSWER: The Soviet Union and the GDR fully share our assessment of the situation in Southeast Asia. They warmly support the diplomatic initiatives of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea for solving the problems of Southeast Asia. India is deeply concerned with the situation in Southeast Asia and fully agrees with us on the fundamental cause of the tense situation prevailing in this region and supports the revival of the Kampuchean people. Like us, India holds that all Southeast Asian issues must be settled

through dialogues among the countries concerned.

The Northern and Western European countries are all concerned with peace and stability in this region. During our official talks as well as our cordial conversations and meetings with the press, I made clear the following three main points in the situation in Southeast Asia:

1. The past three years have shown that the Indochinese countries are victims of China's hegemonistic policy. Like the ASEAN countries, they want peace and stability in Southeast Asia. Only China does not. It has pitted the ASEAN countries against the Indochinese countries. It is the only country to foster Maoist forces to interfere in the internal affairs of Southeast Asian countries. That is why the fundamental question now is to put an end to China's expansionist and hegemonistic policy in Southeast Asia.

2. The past three years have shown that a policy of confrontation can neither weaken and subdue the three Indochinese countries nor solve the problems in Southeast Asia. Instead, it only undermines peace and stability in this region. Harmony and co-operation between the ASEAN and Indochinese countries without foreign interference is the only policy guaranteeing peace and stability.

3. The past three years have also shown that to support the Pol Pot clique is to play into the hands of China's hegemonistic policy of interfering in the internal affairs of the Southeast Asian

countries and sabotaging peace and stability in the region. It cannot reverse the process of revival of the Kampuchean people. Supporting the Kampuchean people's revival and opposing all attempts to restore the Pol Pot gang and other agents of Beijing are decisive factors for peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

To varying extents more and more people in the Northern and Western European countries have better understood the situation in Southeast Asia and sympathized with the stand of Vietnam and the other Indochinese countries.

QUESTION: *How do you view the feelings of the people in the countries you visited towards our people?*

ANSWER: In recent years, the Chinese expansionists in collusion with the US imperialists and the other reactionary forces have tried to denigrate and slander Vietnam to lower our prestige on the international arena. But I could see during my visit that public opinion everywhere has high regard for our people. The press and many leaders in Northern and Western European countries praised our people's glorious history and heroism, and our spirit of independence and sovereignty. Our people's bravery, self-devotion and industriousness have won sympathy from people the world over. Many of those who participated in the wide protest movement in Western Europe against US aggression in Vietnam and who now hold important positions still have a great sympathy with our people. They still consider themselves as belonging to the "Vietnam generation". We were deeply moved when visiting a room in the home of a Swede which was decorated entirely with souvenirs from Vietnam. The public in the countries I visited is also well aware that our foreign policy is one of peace, friendship and co-operation with all other peoples.

Ton That Tung was born in Hue, Binh Tri Thien province, in 1912. He graduated from the Hanoi Medical College in 1939 with an original thesis, "Disposition of hepatic veins", which was the foundation of his later achievements.

With the victory of the August Revolution in 1945 he devoted himself to building the Medical College of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

During the war against the French he moved from one place to another together with the college and played a key role in training physicians and in organ-

sonnel fragmentation bomb", a new type of anti-personnel weapon the United States was using for the first time in Vietnam.

Ton That Tung was acclaimed in the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, France, Algeria, India, Sweden, the United States, Italy, Holland and other countries for his research on the human liver and, particularly, for his original method of liver surgery.

His research on toxic chemicals as causes of congenital malformations and liver cancer caused a stir in scientific circles around the world, especially the United States.

PROFESSOR TON THAT TUNG

(1912 - 1982)

izing the medical network in service of the resistance. He took part in many military operations, notably the Dien Bien Phu Campaign.

Ton That Tung became vice-minister of Public Health in 1947. When peace was restored in 1954 he became director of the Vietnam - GDR Friendship Hospital in Hanoi and head of the surgery department of the Hanoi Medical College.

Despite the lack of equipment he made every effort to improve the skill of his staff and students. With his own experience and by keeping pace with the advance of medical science abroad he made it possible for Vietnamese physicians to treat common diseases with success.

He performed the first heart operation in 1958. The following year the brain surgery and pediatrics departments of the hospital were built. 1960 saw the introduction of his own method of hepatectomy — the "bloodless operation".

In 1965 he started on heart-lung operations.

During the US air war Ton That Tung was a permanent source of reference for doctors at field hospitals. In 1965 he convoked a symposium on treatment of wounds caused by the "anti-per-

Ton That Tung attended many international conferences and lectured at medical colleges and institutes in many countries. He was member of the Academy of Medical Science of the USSR, the National Society of Surgeons of the German Democratic Republic, the Paris Academy of Surgery, the Lyon Society of Surgeons, and the National Society of Surgeons of Algiers.

His great contributions to the cause of national construction and defence earned him the title of "Labour Hero", the Labour Order, the Fighter Order, the Resistance Order, and other honours.

Ton That Tung was also deputy to the National Assembly and member of the Presidium of the Vietnam Fatherland Front.

He died in Hanoi on May 7, 1982 and was posthumously decorated with the Ho Chi Minh Order.

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The following article is taken from a series written by Ton That Tung on his visit to Holland, Belgium, Spain, Italy and France in late 1980 to further friendship and co-operation with these countries.

MEETINGS WITH COLLEAGUES IN HOLLAND

Professor TON THAT TUNG

My visit to Holland took place in November 1980 following an invitation by the Christian University at Nijmegen and the Holland-Vietnam Medical Committee, which has been very active and has given steady assistance to Vietnam over the past ten years and more. I stayed for seventeen days during which I gave lectures and took part in discussions on surgery. I also gave two demonstrations of liver surgery. In my first day in The Hague I got in touch with leaders of the Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Co-operation (NUFFIC) which is primarily concerned with third-world countries. I was informed that universities in the two countries had drawn up co-operation plans in the framework of a cultural co-operation programme and that aid given to Vietnam by NUFFIC and the Holland-Vietnam Medical Committee over the past ten years had amounted to 80 million guilders, or the equivalent of 30 million dollars. In the fortnight that followed I shuttled, in the company of Mr. Spijkers, co-ordinator of NUFFIC, between universi-

ties in Utrecht, Maastricht, Nijmegen, Wageningen, Leiden, Groningen, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague.

A Vietnamese doctor was studying at Utrecht's St. Antonius Hospital which is well equipped for heart surgery. When I arrived at the hospital a serious case of heart congestion was being handled by Professor De Geste. In the afternoon I gave a talk on my experience in hepatectomy to a large number of people, many coming from nearby cities. Many questions were asked by the audience and at the end of the talk Doctor Loven, chief surgeon of the Rotterdam Hospital, asked me to take in hands a case of liver calculus which three operations had failed to cure.

At the university in Maastricht, where French is commonly spoken, I lectured in this language. At the St. Anadan Hospital I met Professor Konstrat who had been trained at Denver by Stadtson, the American surgeon famous for liver transplants.

I was given a particularly warm welcome at the University of Nijmegen by professors Tongien and Jerusalem, two pillars of science and staunch friends of Vietnam, and other professors, who rallied around them. They shook hands with me before we sat down for a round-table discussion which included professor Bainmack, a Swedish friend who came from the University of Lund, Doctor Yap and myself. To an audience which was too large for the room I spoke about my own method of hepatectomy. The subject covered by professor Bainmack was post-operative treatment. He recalled that at his hospital a few years before I had cut the right lobe of a liver in just four minutes. Doctor Yap, for his part, dealt with the use of scanners in removing stones from the choledoch duct.

I next went to the University of Leiden to perform an operation at the request of my colleagues. After a meeting with Professor Tepstra — "the surgeon with the golden hands" — as his colleagues call him, I examined the patient and studied plates of the liver. Contrary to the advice of other doctors, who all proposed the excision of the left half, or half of the organ, I decided to cut off the left lobe only, or just one-quarter of the liver. The next thing I did was select the necessary instruments, which were somewhat different to what I had been used to, and discuss necessary steps with the anaesthetist. We would have to move very carefully because we were dealing with a big tumour full of blood. The slightest mistake would result in a bloody operation. "How long?" asked the anaesthetist. "One hour if we're lucky," I replied.

The operation began at eight on the following morning and I had to take charge. In Vietnam I would enter the operating theatre only after my aides had exposed the liver, and my job would take no more than ten minutes. Here,

with unfamiliar aides, I had to explain carefully how to make the first incision and how to close it. When my turn came I liberated the left lobe and the excision was completed within ten minutes. This done I saw to it that no hemorrhage would ensue and then closed the abdominal wall. The whole operation had lasted a little more than one hour whereas my colleagues had predicted four.

Professor Tepstra accompanied me back to my hotel and said he would come to Vietnam one day to study my method.

My colleagues took me to the University of Groningen in the north which was the first centre in the whole country to be equipped for liver transplant. At the University's clinic I was introduced to Doctor Krom, who had studied under Doctor Stadtson, the famed American surgeon at Denver. Doctor Krom and I discussed transplant for the early stage of cancer. I said I did not believe in this method where livers which had been attacked in both lobes were concerned, and spoke about my own method: removal of the main tumour by surgery and post-operative treatment with immunizing stimulants, such as the LHI of our won fabrication. As a matter of fact both Professor Canne whom I had known at Cambridge and Doctor Stadtson had found that patients who had undergone liver transplant all died in the sixth month. On the other hand fifty-two per cent of my patients, had lived beyond the sixth month, and two per cent were still living eight years later. During my stay in Groningen I also talked about my method to a large English-speaking audience and was given a very warm welcome by the head of the surgery and pediatrics department at the clinic.

In Amsterdam I was again requested to speak about my method at the clinic of the Academy of Sciences, and during a party given by Professor Guevitden Ote I met many foreign colleagues among them Professor Hoisuma whom I had known at Cambridge.

In Rotterdam I conducted the operation I had planned with

Doctor Loven in Utrecht. I arrived at the hospital late at night because the taxi driver had taken a long time to find it. It was one in the morning and Doctor Loven was waiting for me. He introduced me to the patient, a hotel owner from Hong Kong who had undergone three operations for stones in the left liver. This would be a difficult operation, but I had dealt with more than five hundred similar cases.

As soon as I returned to the hospital at eight in the following morning I was confronted with the worried look of the anaesthetist, a white South African. He had been unable to probe into the right ventricle of the heart to gauge blood flow in anticipation of a prolonged operation and serious haemorrhage. At nine I started the operation. The left part of the liver had shrivelled and stuck to the diaphragm. The difficulty was compounded by unfamiliar instruments and specially by an unfamiliar team. I moved slowly but firmly according to plan, making careful but decisive incisions. Gradually I exposed the left liver, opened it and removed all the stones. Only at the end of the operation did I realize that I had done it in two and a half hours instead of the expected four. The whole operation was covered by a TV crew which also wanted to reconstruct the briefing between Doctor Loven and me the previous night. I was also watched by the professor head of the abdominal surgery clinic, who was very interested in my method, and who had expressly come from Utrecht to see me at work.

Outside of my speciality I took part in a scientific debate at the Agricultural College in Groningen on a big pressing problem which was occupying the public in the United States, Britain and Italy, and which was beginning to spread to Holland.

During the Vietnam War huge corporate profits had been made not only in the United States but also in Western Europe, in Britain, Italy, Belgium and Holland as well. In the United States a most vehement dispute had erupted between Vietnam veterans, who said they

were suffering from "agent orange", and the companies which had produced this substance. Public opinion, including scientific circles, was divided on this issue. One hundred and fifty American lawyers had got together and had instituted proceedings against the producers for damages totalling a large amount of money. Meanwhile, the defence had hired the best lawyers available, and Dow Chemicals and Philips were counter-attacking with might and main with the assistance of their powerful scientific staff. Prior to my Holland visit I had attended a conference in Seveso, Italy, with subsidies from multi-national corporations. It had been concluded that no clear danger had been detected from statistics although an increase in malformations had been noted in the region over the years. It was clear that the intention of the producers was to prove that dioxin, though lethal to tested animals, had not been found to cause any detectable harm to human beings. But I had made it clear in all TV and radio interviews that Seveso and Vietnam were different. In Seveso, people had been exposed to dioxin for three or four days only. After that the Italian Government, acting on my advice, had evacuated the population and shut down the place for a year or two until it had been thoroughly disinfected. South Vietnam, on the other hand, had been doused with "agent orange" for eight whole years and exposure had been complete. Moreover, dioxin has been proved to persist and accumulate in the human body. Of the Vietnam veterans who had been checked, thirty per cent had dioxin in their fat.

These were the first reactions when I arrived in Wargningen and during the televised reception of the dean of the College of Agriculture I made a riposte to Professor Siric, a toxicologist who had attended the recent Rome conference and a supporter of the view held by the chemicals corporates that defoliants were harmless to human beings with the exception of skin and liver diseases. In fact, he had found that 2,4,5-T had caused damage in the

(Continued on page 31)

THE ECONOMIC OPTIONS OF THE 5th CONGRESS

NGUYEN KHAC VIEN

For the general public the important changes which took place in leading circles tended to mask the significance of the Congress reports which define the general line and the options chosen for the 80's — a crucial period both for the Party and the nation as a whole.

For those who have closely followed the socio-political development of Vietnam, the 5th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam was indeed the great event of recent years, as much in its preparation as its unfolding. One might say that preparation for the Congress began at the end of 1979 with the important resolution of the Central Committee's 6th Plenum which resulted in considerable changes in economic policy. Heated discussions on many topics took place, inside the Party and all over the country, coupled with real experimentation in different regions and organizations on how to run economic enterprises.

These discussions came to a head during the months preceding the Congress and, thanks to them, important amendments were made to the draft political report presented to grassroots Party organizations.

It can be said that the political report, along with the other two reports on economic development and Party organization, are a true expression of grassroots ideas and proposals. All foreign observers remarked upon the severity of the Central Committee's self-criticism at the Congress. The unity of views which emerged at the Congress around the various reports is in no way a rubber stamp, but reflects the outcome of an intense political process, which saw the confrontation of many differing opinions during

the course of wide-ranging discussions. The grassroots played an active role, taking initiatives and experimenting with novel management procedures, and also in its frank criticism of the leadership.

As a result, Party members now have practical texts on which to base their activities throughout the '80s.

Two Aspects of a Complex Balance-sheet

As a prerequisite for any future advance, we must draw up a balance-sheet for the preceding period, 1976-81. A period studded with important events which occurred in an exceptionally complex international situation. It thus comes as no surprise that the discussions on the various aspects of this balance-sheet were particularly heated, and that agreement was only reached after protracted argument.

The balance-sheet presents two aspects: important advances alongside serious shortcomings and mistakes.

Like many third-world countries, Vietnam faces countless problems in its economic and cultural development: a high population growth rate, technological backwardness, lack of capital, a problematic food situation; these difficulties are compounded by the appalling consequences of 3 decades of war. One of the mistakes made in 1975-76 was to underestimate the scale of the war damage: material destruction, social upheavals, long-term effects of the massive spraying of defoliants, the psychological impact of American intervention.

Another error in 1976 was to underestimate the aggressive intentions

of the China — US alliance. Repeated aggression and military provocations by Pol Pot, and later China, economic sabotage on a large scale perpetrated by a double — Chinese and American — subversive network created further burdens for Vietnam's economy and society.

Managing to resist all these pressures and aggression whilst avoiding famine and epidemics following widespread natural calamities; maintaining order and security; saving the fraternal Kampuchean people from genocide and giving them all-round aid; helping Laos in defence and economic and cultural development; taking big steps nationwide in cultural and medico-sanitary fields; preventing the spread of social evils — prostitution, pimping, drugs — left by the old regime in the South; increasing the cultivated area by 2 million hectares by developing irrigation and breaking new ground; restoring nearly all industrial, road and rail installations destroyed during the war and laying new industrial foundations — no impartial observer could deny these achievements which were made under extremely difficult circumstances.

The decision to quickly reunify the country under one administration and government right from the end of 1976 was particularly clear-sighted; one can scarcely imagine how Vietnam would have overcome all the trials of recent years if it had had two separate governments, north and south. Firmly choosing the socialist path for the whole country has allowed us to think in the long term with a clear perspective, without which we would only have been able to patch things up without far-reaching effects.

National union is still a firm foundation: there is dissatisfaction and disagreement on many things but not on the general line: the defence of national independence and the building of socialism. The rallying of the once hostile Catholic Church and the unification of the different Buddhist sects into a Sangha (Church) which is part of national union; Beijing's failure to stir up revolt among the minority peoples in the border areas, all this shows the strength of the regime, based on a general consensus which allows for widely differing opinions on specific problems. Those who hoped for political opposition to destabilise the regime have backed the wrong horse. Our enemies know this and have now turned to economic and cultural sabotage or armed provocations.

The Vietnamese people, together with the Communist Party, will never be thrown off course.

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But it's a difficult, even tortuous, course. The Congress also provided an opportunity to make an in-depth analysis of the shortcomings and mistakes of the previous stage. Faced with a high population growth rate, the increase in production and productivity have not had the anticipated results, in spite of important investments. Provisions for towns and some rural areas hit by natural disasters are still in jeopardy, a severe shortage of consumer articles is the cause of trafficking and a disturbing rise in prices. The import-export imbalance is obvious while savings are virtually non-existent. Many enterprises are marking time, hardly making use of their equipment, which is often very modern, because they lack raw materials, energy and spare parts.

The Fifth Congress has identified the two major causes lying at the root of the country's problems:

- subjectivism and hastiness;
- the system of administrative, bureaucratic management.

Subjectivism and hastiness, summed up in the slogan "advance rapidly, forcefully, with determined strides", have resulted in excessive investment in far too ambitious projects with the aim of rapidly developing heavy industry, and this when the country was hardly back on its feet after the war, with an inadequate energy and transport network and completely inexperienced managerial and planning cadres, and while the population still lacked many essential commodities. The result is that these investments have not yet brought any tangible results, while shortages have been getting worse, the population has increased, and foreign aid, considerable during the war, has been cut off.

Hastiness in agriculture led to ill-considered increases in the size of co-operatives in the North, and to accelerated collectivisation in the South. This caused disenchantment amongst the peasantry and led to a drop in production. Similar voluntarism led many cadres to neglect and even curb small-scale household production based mainly around private ponds and plots. As far as handicrafts, small industry and petty trade were concerned, the trend was to abolish them as soon as possible to move towards "large-scale socialist production". Important economic resources were neutralized in this way, thus worsening the shortages of goods and services.

The system of economic management was established in the 60's to cope with a relatively simple economic structure, with few industries in the North, entirely devoted to the war effort, and with foreign aid covering most expenditure. In this situation, the peasants did not really sell their produce to the State, but delivered it as a patriotic duty in exchange for which the State provided them with a number of industrial products, mostly from foreign aid. As a result, in both home and foreign trade, prices did not reflect the true value of commodities. Everything was supervised by the central State authority which drew up

plans, provided enterprises with equipment and raw materials, then collected the products with prices and wages set centrally. The private sector was insignificant compared to the State sector. A free market existed, but had no real economic weight. In this situation of a poor country geared up for an almost superhuman war effort, wages were distributed on a somewhat egalitarian basis, a spirit of self-sacrifice prevailed.

In the excitement of victory — the scope of which came rather unexpectedly — we rather lost sight of realities. Everything seemed possible and close at hand. Then came the great trials of 1977-79 — repeated natural calamities, Pol Pot's aggression, the Chinese invasion — requiring immediate and total attention. It was only in 1979, after having got rid of the Pol Pot threat and successfully resisted Chinese aggression, that we were able to turn our attention to the country's economic problems.

In late 1979 the 6th Plenum of the Central Committee published an important resolution, which aimed to correct a number of points of economic policy. This was later complemented by governmental decrees which clarified the new policies in a number of areas. The green light was given to many localities, towns and enterprises to conduct genuine experimentation in production and distribution. Ho Chi Minh City, Haiphong, Long An province to name but the most striking, sought to introduce new management procedures.

The economic policies adopted by the Fifth Congress confirmed the decisions taken since the 6th plenum in mid 1979, and were adopted after examination of the failures and successes of the period 1976-81. The new options will remain valid throughout the '80s.

Economic Tasks in the '80s

It can be said that the economic policy of the Fifth Congress is more balanced than that of the Fourth Congress, because it takes the real

situation more into account. In the years 1976-80, the emphasis was on pressing ahead and rapidly developing the material and technical infrastructure of large-scale socialist production. Now, the political report stresses as top priority the aim to satisfy the essential needs of the population, whose living standards have been greatly reduced as a result of the war and rising prices. The building of a socialist infrastructure is conditioned by the development of agriculture, of consumer goods production and exports, the key factors for the future development of heavy industry. For the time being we shall concentrate on finishing the projects we have begun, and will refrain from investing too much in further heavy industry projects. We shall continue with the transformation of socio-economic structures in the South, but at a more gradual and more effective pace.

Agriculture, light industry (including handicrafts), and heavy industry will be integrated into a balanced economic structure. Family planning, which up till now was practised only in the wider context of medico-sanitary activities, is now given priority status in the political report. The population growth rate, which presently exceeds 2%, must be brought down to 1.7%. In practice many towns and communes have already achieved this rate after several years of active campaigning. We must now extend this to the whole country. Emphasis is also placed on developing the communications network, which was badly hit during the war, and which in the North remains very inadequate.

Investments in agriculture will be focused on the deltas of the Red and Mekong rivers, the country's two granaries, which also produce most of the country's pork, poultry and fresh-water fish. The main industrial crops to be developed are rubber, coffee, tea, concentrated in the Central Highlands and

Eastern Nam Bo, Southern Vietnam proper. The target for 1985 is 19—20 million tonnes of food, including 16 million tonnes of paddy and the rest in dry crops. Soya bean cultivation will be particularly stressed in the years to come. Special attention will be paid to protecting the forests and afforestation (300,000 ha by 1985).

Light industry, small industry and handicrafts, which produce consumer goods and a large proportion of exports, will be primarily based in the cities: Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Haiphong, Da Nang. Ho Chi Minh City, with its numerous installations and its large qualified workforce, is already the country's leading export and light industry centre. The growth of small industry and handicrafts has cut back the city's unemployment. The villages can also take over a substantial proportion of handicrafts, and the northern agricultural co-operatives now also manage large workshops. The 1985 targets are as follows:

- 380 to 400 million metres of fabrics

- 90 to 100,000 tonnes of paper

- 350 to 400,000 tonnes of sugar

Stress is also laid on the production of bicycles and spare parts.

In heavy industry, the main priority is the energy supply. Three large power stations are being built with Soviet aid: the thermo-power plant at Pha Lai (600,000 kW), the hydro-electric schemes on the Da river (2 million kW) and Tri An (320,000 kW). When they come into operation in the '80s they will triple the country's electricity supply. Large funds have been earmarked for investment into the northern collieries, which will reach an annual output of 10 million tonnes in coming years. A large oil and gas complex to tap the offshore reserves in the South to be built with Soviet aid will produce crude oil by the end of the five-year plan. Prospection for natural gas

in the Red River delta is to continue.

We shall not bother with other areas, of lesser strategic importance. The State will devote overall investments of 16 to 18 billion *dong* (old prices) to basic construction during the 1981—85 plan.

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The main feature of this Congress was to make explicit the new economic options and new attitudes. In his report, Chairman of the Council of Ministers Pham Van Dong emphasized the need to: "renovate management mechanisms, increase the administrative and managerial efficiency of the various levels, create a powerful mass movement (...). Our national economy at present combines several sectors of widely differing technical levels, production units on completely different scales, and with diverse institutional forms. This situation has caused serious imbalances, and instead requires dynamic management mechanisms to do away with bureaucratic centralization, conservatism, and the bureaucratic subsidy system..."

The old management mechanism confined local production units and authorities to a narrow and rigid system of regulations which left them no leeway or room for initiative. Relaxing these regulations has made it possible for many regional enterprises and authorities to buy raw materials, set wages and bonuses, and sell their produce at rates which reflect production costs and market fluctuations, instead of being rigidly fixed at the central level. Local enterprises and authorities can now also keep part of their foreign currency earnings if they increase exports, which enables them to acquire the equipment and materials they must import from abroad much more rapidly. Beforehand they had to plough

through endless bureaucracy to obtain the required authorisations, thus wasting months and even years.

The old wages system, with its egalitarian slant, made no allowance for the amount of work contributed or professional qualifications. Initiative and inventiveness were rewarded in a token fashion, and management was straight-jacketed by rigid directives from higher bodies.

The present reforms amount to a new emancipation, and the main task after the Congress will be to abolish a whole range of out-dated regulations, and to institute a new system of prices, wages, norms, management mechanisms, while developing novel economic structures.

This task is all the more complex in that it also involves emancipating small-scale agricultural, handicraft and industrial production which depend not on the State sector but on the private sector and the free market. In the past, the private economy in the North had no real weight compared to the State sector. But with its integration into the national economy, the South brought with it vast numbers of private producers: private peasants, artisans, small traders, petty capitalists. The commodities and currency controlled by this sector now weighs heavily on the national economy.

The point is not to try and crush this sector, and eliminate it as soon as possible as some cadres once thought. Its existence is now recognised as an objective necessity throughout the transition period, and furthermore as a positive factor since it answers many of our society's needs. The essential problem is how to encourage production in this sector while limiting its negative manifestations: black marketeering, traffick-

ing, counterfeiting, contraband, prevarications, etc. The scramble for profits involving millions of small traders, private peasants and artisans, forces up prices and seriously endangers economic stability.

Thus the emancipation of small private production in no way implies a relaxation of efforts to extend the State and co-operative sectors. State-controlled trade in particular has to face severe competition to ensure sufficient purchases of important products in order to supply cheap essentials to salaried workers and civil servants, and the materials needed by export agencies.

In the agricultural co-operatives, management must take on three related tasks:

- manage the collective work of the co-operative;
- manage individually performed tasks in overall collective work;
- encourage and supervise private household production.

Under the old system, the co-operatives only dealt with collective production, while neglecting and occasionally discouraging the other types of work.

One new factor of crucial importance is the development of international co-operation, with Laos and Kampuchea, and especially with the Soviet Union and the rest of the socialist community. We are not seeking foreign aid so much as promoting co-operation, involving further division of labour on an international plane. This gradual integration within the socialist community enables us to negotiate with other countries, capitalist ones in particular, without having to submit to any unacceptable preconditions. A policy of multilateral relations presupposes a firm support basis.

All these new factors which I have mentioned show that the coming period will be one of economic change, structural rather than quantitative change. A period of change not confined to new management mechanisms and new techniques, but seeking to transform prevailing mentalities, ways of thinking and of working.

Steering this new course, narrowly confined by the lasting effects of the war, population growth, technological backwardness, the Vietnamese people, led by their Communist Party, will need both caution and audacity. The emancipation of small-scale production should improve the supply of consumer goods and generate employment for millions of people, providing them with a decent livelihood. The overhaul of the wages and bonuses system along with improvements in the State retail trade should lead to a gradual increase in living standards of salaried workers. The progressive expansion of the State sector, with the assistance of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, will eventually lead to the creation of essential industrial structures: energy, engineering, chemical industries, communications, metallurgy. It can be hoped that the first such industries will emerge in the course of the coming decade.

At the close of the '80s, Vietnam will embark upon a new stage, with the prospect of rationally exploiting its varied resources, with management mechanisms better adapted to a modern economy, with multilateral international relations based on greater integration within the world socialist community. No great leap forward, but determined steps.

On one condition: that peace is preserved.

Mayday 1982

RENOVATION OF MANAGEMENT AT STATE-RUN ENTERPRISES

In the article "The Economic Options of the 5th Congress" also appearing in this issue, the author, Nguyen Khac Vien, outlines the managerial mechanism at the Vietnamese State-run enterprises applied in the period from the sixties to 1979-1980 described by the Party Congress as an "administrative subsidized mechanism of management", in other words, a mechanism whereby the State will make up for any loss a factory may incur.

This mechanism had the following characteristics: the State looked after everything, the director of the factory did not care about his or her factory's operations (procurement of raw materials and marketing). At the same time, they lost the initiative in many fields, they had no say in production planning, in pricing decisions, in the recruitment of the personnel... For their part, the workers received salaries of a heavily egalitarian character and their labour was regarded primarily as a patriotic act, a contribution to national construction and defence.

But a series of events in 1973 and 1979 made this situation untenable: US aid which ceased to come after 1975 had by then almost completely run out while

in the North, China cut its aid to Vietnam.

After defeating the Chinese aggression in February 1979 Vietnam embarked upon a new peaceful period, but we now have to face a war of sabotage waged by Beijing in collusion with Washington. Meanwhile, we have to be prepared to cope with the possibility of a large-scale war by our enemies. That is why Vietnam has to discharge two tasks at the same time: to build the country and stand ready to repulse aggression — construction is the primary task as was indicated later by the 5th Party Congress.

Any observer can see that Vietnam is still in the initial stage of the period of transition to socialism. This means that while planning remains at the centre of economic construction, other factors must also be taken into account, such as market relations and merchandise-money relations.

Since 1978-1979, there have been growing limitations on the regular supply of raw materials by the State for the normal operation of the State-run enterprises. Meanwhile, large quantities of raw materials and materials remain scattered in other sectors of society. Wide price fluctuations, chiefly upward, due to the shortage of materials and goods while wages remain almost stationary, have caused increasing difficulties for the workers.

Most of the State-run enterprises, for all their efforts, had to lower their targets many times in a year, chiefly due to raw materials and materials shortages.

Vietnam has about 2,000 industrial enterprises with a personnel of more than 600,000. However, one-third of them had to stay idle and machines operated at less than half of their capacity. Some factories had to send part of their personnel to agricultural production or to the coal mines as auxiliary work-hands. Others cut down their production rates to retain workers. In many cases production stopped altogether and workers were given 70% of their salaries during their forced idleness. Faced with ever worsening living conditions, tens of thousands of workers had to take sideline occupations or to go into commerce.

Meanwhile, the demands on industrial production and consumer goods continued to increase. So a radical change in the method of economic management was required. At this juncture, the Party Central Committee held its 6th plenum (September 1979) and issued a resolution on expanding the production of consumer goods and of local industries, opening the way for what is known as a "boom" in production which is actually the release from the obsolete mechan-

ism of management. New factors emerged in the economy.

So, since 1979, in all central and local enterprises two systems of production have been operating side by side, the production according to plan (with State-supplied raw materials) and the production outside the plan (without or with part of raw materials supplied by the State). This is most manifest in the enterprises with great capabilities of using materials available in the country or materials left unused in society. However, for lack of a common regulation, application of the new system varied from one place to another. Some factories took the

initiative in breaking the impediments of the old regulations, sent their employees to look out for materials themselves without waiting for State supplies as in the past. Pioneering in this direction was the Con Dao fishing enterprise (See Vietnam Courier No. 5, 1981). But not a few enterprises persisted in the old way which resulted in a further drop in production. Others took tentative steps while following the situation around and drawing lessons for themselves. After a period of supervision and study, on January 21, 1981 the Council of Ministers issued the decisions codenamed 25-CP and 26-CP.

Emergence of A New Managerial Mechanism

Decision 25-CP deals with the continued development of initiatives in production and business and financial autonomy of the State-run enterprises. Decision 26-CP deals with the system of contractual quotas payment and piece-work payment and the system of bonus in State production and business establishments. These decisions were supplemented by Decision 64-CP of February 23, 1981 on the remittance of products of State-run enterprises and the concentration of cash into the hands of the State.

These decisions form a new and relatively comprehensive system of regulations concerning management and planning in the State-run enterprises from production to marketing of products and the distribution of profits. These decisions reflect the broadening of the initiative of enterprises and businesses on the basis of ensuring the concentrated and unified management by the State and on the principle of relying mainly on planning while making appropriate use of the various laws of the market.

These decisions also aim to increase the financial autonomy of the enterprises, stimulate them to keep a closer watch over funds, equipment, materials and manpower and make use of all existing potentials to expand production, produce more for society and achieve the highest possible economic efficiency. On this basis, they are encouraged to harmoniously combine the three interests (of the State, of the collective and of individual workers), and this is primarily aimed at stimulating the workers to increase productivity, hence to increase their income and improve their living conditions.

Thus, by decision 25-CP the State encourages the enterprises not only to implement the State plan but also to manufacture extra-plan products if it has the necessary conditions in equipment and can procure other conditions such as raw materials and energy.

The plan of an enterprise comprises three parts:

The State-assigned part, with State-supplied materials and raw materials (Part A); the part pro-

duced with raw materials and materials procured by the enterprise itself (Part B) and the by-products part (Part C). The products of both Part A and Part B must be sold to State warehouses or trade service for distribution according to the State plan. The products of Part C should be sold on preferential terms to the State trade service and can be sold elsewhere only if the latter refuses to buy. In this case the enterprise is allowed to retain part of the products (not exceeding 10% of the total) as remuneration in kind to its workers. Part of the products of Part B may also be retained to exchange for necessary raw materials, materials and equipment. With regard to profits, the enterprise is entitled to more profits in Part B than in Part A and enjoys almost all profits brought about by production in Part C, remittance to the State accounting for only 15%.

Decision 25-CP also enhances the sense of responsibility and the power of the director of the enterprise. Provided they strictly observe the State plan, directors have the power to take every decision which they judge most beneficial to the economy, with regard to the use of equipment, funds as well as manpower without having to wait for decision from above as in the past. Apart from the State-supplied fund, they may expand their enterprise's fund through the integration of profits or borrowings from the bank. They may reward or fine the workers, recruit such personnel as they deem suitable for the job, may refuse to accept any personnel sent from the higher echelon found to be unfit for the job and may appoint cadres and personnel in the framework of the common organization. Of course, they must take responsibility for errors or for failing to fulfil the State plan.

Impact on Social Life

More than one year of implementation of the above decisions has brought about positive results. In 1981, in spite of great strains in raw materials, the industrial sector on the whole fulfilled its program. The local industries, in particular, chalked up a 7-per cent increase. Considering the fact that the State could supply only half of the needed raw materials, this success clearly reflects the efforts of the enterprises to procure raw materials for themselves. The Giai Phong engineering plant in Hanoi is a case in point. As 1981 began the plant met enormous difficulties: due to the shortage of raw materials the plant could not carry out its normal operation. A large section of the workers had to stay idle. The plant's planned output value was half a million *dong* but the materials supplied by the State were valued at a little more than 90,000 *dong*. Machine tools being its main production line, to achieve a gross output value of three million *dong* under the State plan, the plant had to use hundreds of kinds of materials totalling thousands of tons in weight. The key to a solution lay in creatively applying Decision 25-CP and giving full play to the initiative of the plant. The directorate convened a general conference of the personnel and gave them a plain picture of the situation and asked everyone to give a hand. Every force was mobilized

in the quest for raw materials and materials. The campaign involved also many relatives of the plant's workers working in other factories. Waste materials were used for the manufacture of more than 50 by-products (Part C), a thing never done before by an engineering plant.

Maximum economisation of materials was the common concern and technical measures were applied to cut down the rate of fuel and material consumption per unit of product. The plant also decided that rewards would be made proportional to the amount of materials saved. The production plan assigned by the directorate to each workshop also includes three parts:

- Part One with materials supplied by the plant,
- Part Two with materials jointly procured by the plant and the workshop,
- Part Three with materials entirely procured by the workshop.

Thus, the initiative in production and business is not confined to the plant but has been expanded to each workshop. This has enhanced the sense of mastery of each worker and paved the way for the development of production,

On the other hand, the grading of management is closely associated

with the system of piece-work payment and the system of remuneration (defined in Decision 26-CP). Thus, the workshops are vested with power to pay the workers according to the number of finished products while the non-productive sections continue to receive their monthly salaries on the basis of a fixed personnel. For instance, at the planning sections of the plant, the plan provided for a personnel of 14, but after the distribution of labour was rationalized it was found that 11 would do. As a result, these 11 persons received the salaries of 14. Bonuses are given to anyone who surpasses their production quotas. The new method of payment of salaries and bonuses and the harmonious combination of the three interests has helped the plant to ensure effective management of production and manpower. The absenteeism rate dropped markedly. There have been fewer instances of workers leaving their machines during working hours, as well as fewer sick leaves and instances of non-observance of working time because everyone has an interest in the increase of production. The income of a worker has doubled from an average of 50 *dong*.

Many earned as much as 300 *dong* and in a few special cases, even 700 *dong*.

Following is a chart of the distribution of profits at the Giai Phong plant in 1980-1982:

	1980	1981	1982
State revenue	223,000 <i>dong</i>	548,000 <i>dong</i>	1,000,000 <i>dong</i>
The plant's revenue	135,883 »	320,000 »	700,000 »
Individual workers' income	112,560 »	220,000 »	430,000 »

Like the Gial Phong plant, many other enterprises have made similar efforts to procure materials and raw materials, not only for the State plan. The Cuu Long jute carpet making factory in Ho Chi Minh City, working along the lines of Decision 25-CP, has signed contracts with many provinces in the Mekong River delta and the Can Tho University for the planting of jute in these areas instead of having to ship jute from the North (the factory consumes 27 tons of jute daily). As a result, it has been sufficiently supplied with jute, a thing never known in the previous six years. Gross output value of the factory in 1981 rose by 23.8% compared with 1980 and remittances to the State budget by two and a half times. The factory has also diversified its production lines from 4 or 5 to 21 at present. All the workers who had left the factory (they accounted for 83% of the personnel) have returned, and the factory is working at full capacity. The same situation is happening in the Tran Hung Dao engineering plant and the Mechanical Engineering Plant No. 1, both in Hanoi.

Deviations and Rectifications

However, Decision 25-CP has a number of loopholes which allowed for some deviations in its application.

— Often there has been an unclear delineation between the various parts of the plan in an enterprise so that materials originally intended for Part A were detracted for Parts B and C (which give the plant and the workers bigger benefits than Part A).

— Failure to remit to the State the volume of products assigned under plan and a tendency to retain more products for the plant than allowed by State regulations.

— There has also been too big a gap between the incomes of various enterprises (resulting from the disparity of two different sets of prices

of the same product, when sold to the State and to the free market).

These deviations and loopholes are being remedied as can be seen in the following:

Unified planning

On the principle of the unification of planning, the plan of an enterprise, including Part A, Part B and Part C, after being drawn up by the enterprise, must necessarily go to higher authorities for adoption.

The question of materials

The enterprise is allowed to procure, in addition to the materials supplied by the State, additional materials with a view to expanding production and making fuller use of the capacity of the equipment. On the basis of a unified price system, raw materials and materials can be exchanged between the enterprises but this must be faithfully reported to the higher authorities. With regard to the materials under the monopoly of the State, no free circulation is permitted. The enterprise may purchase additional materials from the collective economic sector (co-operatives) or private sector at mutually agreeable prices (this is mostly farm produce such as tea, tobacco, jute, hemp, rush...). The State also allows the enterprise to borrow foreign exchange in order to import the necessary raw materials and equipment, and also to enter into joint ventures with other economic organizations with a view to more effective use of foreign exchange.

The marketing of products and the policy on profits.

All products of State-run enterprises, no matter from what source they come, belong to the merchandise funds of the State and the enterprise is forbidden to freely market them. In the case of by-products which are not subject to State control and which the State

trade service refuses to purchase, the enterprise may market them, then make due remittance of profits to the State. Any extra products intended for sales outside the State channel must be submitted for prior approval.

In the matter of profits, the enterprise will be duly rewarded in case of fulfilment or overfulfilment of the State plan. The reward is higher if the raw materials and materials are procured by the enterprise itself. To prevent the possibility of an enterprise netting excessively high profits due to the disparity between the State-fixed price and the free market price, the profits brought about by products of the same kind will be levelled off, irrespective of from what source of raw materials they are produced.

All these measures of remedy are contained in a resolution issued by the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee on March 5, 1982 to serve as a guideline for new decisions and policies of the Government in this respect.

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Decision 25-CP of the Vietnamese Government was issued in a rather special situation. It obviously has a temporary character. Nevertheless, it reflects the spirit of the new structure of the national economy which is taking shape. To work out such a new structure was not without difficulties given the actual conditions of Vietnam which, in spite of numerous obstacles, and a small and backward production, has opted for the path of socialist development. So, the only way is to experiment and draw experiences in the process.

Decision 25-CP, after being rectified and amended, will together with other documents undoubtedly take the economy of Vietnam out of its present stagnation and meet the hopes raised at the 5th Party Congress held in March this year.

VU DUY HOANG

Before the August Revolution in 1945 literature for children, as part of a colonial literature, did not have much chance to develop.

Few writers were engaged in this activity and not all seemed to know what they were doing. There was a fair number of books, published in different series, like "Sach Hong" (Rose Books) by Doi Nay, "Hoa Xuan" (Spring Flowers), "Hoa Mai" (Apricot Flower), and "Le Livre du Petit" (Children's Book) by Mai Linh, "Truyen Ba" (Dissemination) by "Hoi Truyen Ba Quoc Ngu" (Association for Dissemination of National Romanized Writing), etc. But the themes lacked variety, circulation was restricted (only about 1,000 to 2,000 copies for a title), and sales were limited to the towns only.

Since the victory of the revolution, children's literature has received due attention with every encouragement to develop. There are now three major collections: "Kim Dong" by the publishing house of the same name and run by the Central Committee of the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, "Ngua Giong" by the Hanoi Publishing House, and "Mang Non" by the Mang Non Publishing House in Ho Chi Minh City. To reach audiences in both city and countryside, each book has from 20,000 to 30,000 copies.

"Kim Dong", the main house specializing in literature for children, put out more than 1,300 titles, in 34,000,000 copies, in the 20 years from its founding in 1957, to 1977. Every year the three houses put into circulation about 100 titles with approximately 2,000,000 copies. These publications, interesting in content and attractive in form, are in great demand and have exerted a beneficial influence on children both at school and at home.

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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Children's literature in Vietnam has a clearly defined function: to prepare children for maturity by fostering their love of the country, people, and home, and their passion for learning and work.

This is scrupulously observed by authors, whether they write in prose or poetry, whether they tell legends or real stories, science fiction of life histories of famous figures and ordinary people. Main characters may be children who excel in studies and productive activities, or who distinguish themselves in joining their elders to fight the enemy and build the country. They may also be exemplary parents, model teachers, dedicated workers, loyal soldiers, etc.

Over the past three decades children's publications have increased in number and quality, and juvenile literature has involved more authors. A nation-wide writing movement has been set in motion with the participation of not only professionals, but also children, who write about life at home and at school, about the Young Pioneers Brigade, and other subjects. "Tam long chung em" (Our Hearts), "Noi day cho dieu" (For Kites to Fly Higher—a collection of poems), "Tu goc san nha em" (From my Courtyard—a collection of poems, stories in prose, and drawings), "Ky niem ngay sinh" (Birthday Recollections), and "Nha tai tu" (The Amateur, short stories), are among the most successful works written by children, which captivate even adult readers because of their fresh original

views of the world and their genuine feelings.

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The publications can be divided into six groups:

1. Patriotism

Subjects for this theme are derived from past history and from the recent wars against colonialism and imperialism. The national liberation struggle of almost four decades, which has brought about profound changes in the life of the people and has given rise to so many examples of heroism, is an inexhaustible source for authors to delve into. It is covered by more than 400 titles printed in about 12,000,000 copies. Reading them, children learn about the great sacrifices the nation has made in exchange for independence and freedom.

Fighting, however, is not always the dominant note. The books also tell of children who besides helping their elders in fighting, make great progress in studies, or give a helping hand to families whose members are in the armed forces or have died in action.

A very popular character has been cast after those fearless, resourceful children who voluntarily served as runners in the army. Authors not only bring out the distinctive traits of these little heroes, but also endeavour, through the latter's journeys, to acquaint their readers with the magnificent landscape and time-honoured customs of the country.

TURE IN VIETNAM

Leading this group are historical stories, such as "Song Gio Bach Dang" (The Stormy Bach Dang River) by An Cuong, "Trang nuoc Chuong Duong" (At Chuong Duong) and "Tren song truyen hich" (Orders given on the River) by Ha An, "La co theu sau chu vang" (The Banner with Six Golden Words) and "Nguoi lao boc cua vua Quang Trung" (The Old Servant of King Quang Trung) by Nguyen Huy Tuong, etc. The best books about the wars against French and American aggressions are "Doi du kich thieu nien Dinh Bang" (Little Guerrillas at Dinh Bang) and "Phia nui ben kia" (On the Other Slope) by Xuan Sach, "Que noi" (My Father's Village) by Vo Quang, "Khau sung nguoi ong" (Grandfather's Gun) by Ho Phuong, "Cuoc truy tam kho vu khi" (The Search For the Arms Cache), "Con nuoi trung goan" (The Regiment's Foster Child) by Phu Thang, etc.

2. Distinction between Good and Evil

Books of this category are addressed to the pre-school group and primary pupils. They are written, in prose or verse, about contemporary subjects, people or animals, or tell folk stories, legends of myths, which, because of their romantic and poetic character, are conducive to love of beauty, justice, fraternity and honesty, and hatred for brute force and cruelty. Animals and plants are personified to help children form right notions about nature and observe the world around them.

Little children, with their retentive memory, can easily remember these vivid stories, which are read to them by their parents before bed time, or by their teachers at kindergartens. Their imagination, excited by the clear messages, soars freely.

Notable among the 100 or so titles of this kind (published in about 3,000,000 copies) are "Cai Tet cua con meo" (Kitten's New Year) by Nguyen Dinh Thi, "Nhưng chiec ao am" (Warm Jackets) by Vo Quang, "Doi canh cua ngua trang" (White Horse's Wings) by Thuy Ngoc, "Cu ly lun" (Shorty Sloth) by Vu Hung, "Chep con trong ruong lua" (Little Cap in Ricefield) by Nguyen Quynh, "Cuoc phieu luu cua bao con va meo con" (The Adventure of Leopard Cub and Kitten) by Chu Hong Hai, etc.

3. School Life and Work

Subjects are derived from school life, from the Young Pioneers Brigade, the countryside, the building of agricultural co-operatives, the movement of "mini-plans", industrial production, etc. They are treated in more than 350 titles with a total circulation of around 10,000,000.

School life is best depicted in "Mai truong than yeu" (My Beloved School) by Le Khac Hoan, "Nhưng tia nang dau tien" (The First Sun Rays) by Le Phuong Lien, "Hoa Xuan Tu" by Quang Huy, "Nhưng nam thang khong the quen" (Unforgettable Years) by Nguyen Ngoc Ky, "Doi Ban" (Two Friends) by Tat Thang, etc. These successfully portray efforts made

in study, difficulties encountered, joy of progress, sadness of failure, right and wrong attitudes in pupil-teacher relations and so on.

Leading the group on agricultural production are a trilogy — "Bi mat mieu ba co" (Mystery of the Three Sisters' Temple), "Cau chuyen tren Dam Dong" (Story of Lake Dong) and "Em Sao" (Little Sao) by Van Trong, "Ke chuyen nong thon" (Country Story) by Nguyen Kien, "Con bao so 4" (Storm No. 4) by Nguyen Quynh, "Ong chau va dan trau" (Grandfather, Grandson and the Buffaloes) by To Hoai, "Nhưng co tien ao nau" (The Brown-clad Fairies) by Hoai Anh Duong, "Co be 20" (Miss B-20) by Van Bien, etc. The authors, speaking about chicken raising, cattle grazing, trapping, rice planting and other common things, and painting such common scenes as a banyan tree, a river landing stage, a lotus pond, or "fields too vast for storks to fly over them", acquaint readers with the work of peasants and their achievements in improving their life and changing the face of the country.

4. Science

Books of this kind are made interesting by their literary form with life-like events lived by ordinary characters. Unlike school manuals, they do not teach science, but seek to drive home to children the key role of science in national construction, thereby arousing their interest in inventions and discoveries.

About 100 titles have been published with a total circulation of around 3,000,000. Leading the list are "Dinh nui Nang Ba" (At the Top of Nang Ba Mount) by Pham Ngoc Toan, "Cuoc doi chim noi cua chu kip le" (The Ups and Downs of Little Anthracite) by Vu Can, "Lu buom dem" (Night Moths) by The Vu, "Hon than

da" (A Lump of Coal) and "Theo canh chim thu" (Carrier Pigeons) by Viet Linh, "Bi mat mot khu rung" (Mystery in Jungle) by Hoang Binh Trong, etc.

Added to this group are translated science fiction books and other foreign publications. "Tu sach danh nhan" (Famous People Series) is particularly popular. It includes stories of Michael Faraday (by Nguyen Viet Long), Evariste Galois (by Bui Viet Bac), Albert Einstein (by Vu Hung), Thomas Alva Edison (by Hoang Thi Dau), and other great scientists.

5. Nature and the Country

Vietnam's varied landscape, its great resources, the cloud-clad mountains and whispering pine forests in Viet Bac and Tay Bac, the long trains of pack horses driven by weather-beaten men travelling along rough mountain trails, mountain inns whose signs consist of a single branch of pine over the door and whose interiors are decorated with big bunches of red chillies and large chunks of meat; the Truong Son Mountains with their unexplored

forests, their indigo-coloured peaks crowned with limpid lakes, their vast stretches of golden rushes in autumn, their elephants, leopards, bisons and their last rhinos — these are among the subjects covered by the "Dat nuoc ngan nam" (Our Millennial Land) series published by Kim Dong.

Local customs and resources are described in many books, including "Dat rung phuong nam" (Land and Forest of the South) by Doan Gioi, "Mua san tren nui" (Hunting Season in The Mountains) and "Bien Bac" (Silver Sea) by Vu Hung, and "Thu rung Tay Nguyen" (Fauna of the Central Highlands) by Thien Luong.

6. Family

As in other countries families in Vietnam form the basis of society. Children live with their parents till they marry which is a considerable part of their life. Family life, therefore, is a subject for many authors, who write about gratitude to one's parents and elders, about fraternal ties, filial duties, and other aspects of harmonious home life.

"Tim me" (The Search for Mother) by Nguyen Huy Tuong, "Cay la do" (Red-leaf Tree) and "Em be va bong hong" (The Child and the Rose) by Tran Hoai Duong, "Cai tui thi" (The Persimmon Bag) by Nguyen Quynh, and other publications in this series are designed to inculcate children with the idea that family love is the first step to patriotism and family life is the introduction to social life.

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Children's literature in Vietnam is not purely for entertainment. It is aimed at training socially useful people. The successive wars in the past years were a great impediment to creativity, research and criticism, which are necessary for a full development. But this was made up for by a diversity of subject matters and genres and by a good style, which combine to make this kind of literature appealing to its audience and contribute to the general success in education.

VU SON

THE 12th NATIONAL PHOTO EXHIBITION

Recently, the 12th National Photo Exhibition was simultaneously held in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang, displaying 156 pictures by 86 photographers selected from a total of 2,000 entries.

The majority of portraits are of people at work. The close-up is used to portray inner feelings, and expression through eyes, hands, wrinkled faces and beads of sweat.

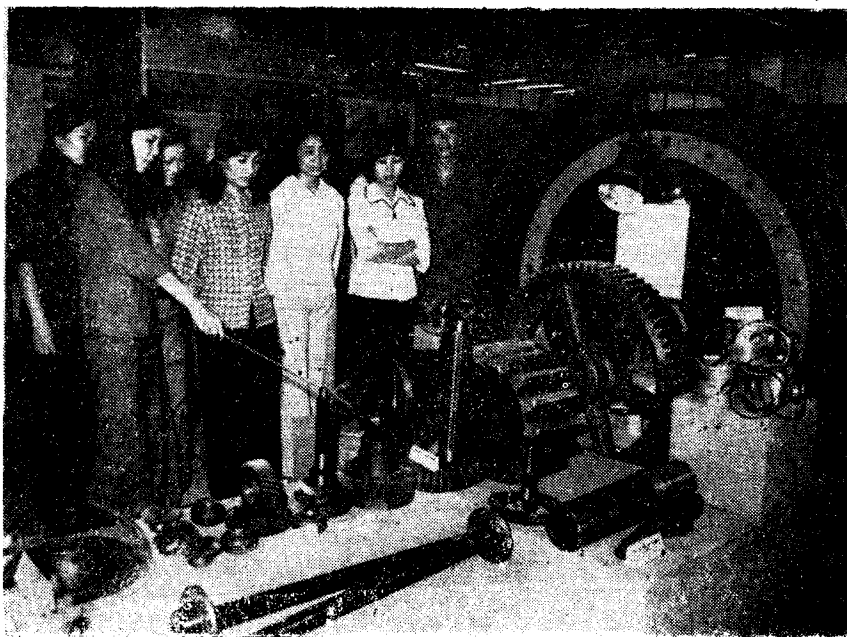
The photos of industry faithfully reflect the bustling atmosphere of production. Pictures on this subject present new features in their composition, showing the painstaking efforts of the photographers.

In the field of agriculture, the pictures reflect new aspects of production, the initial stage of agricultural mechanization, people's initiatives in harsh natural conditions. There are, however, few outstanding photos in this field.

There are only 20 photos of army life, but they reflect in a lively way the daily life of our fighters at the frontier and offshore islands.

Landscape photos drew much attention from spectators. Some of these have unusual poetic compositions such as: "Spring in Hue" by Do Huan, "Dusk" by Le Cuong, "The Fertile Countryside" by Hoang Kim Dang...

It is true to say that this exhibition is an advance in comparison with the 11th exhibition held in November 1974 in Hanoi. The subjects are a clear reflection of life. All the photographers avoid the beaten track and seek a new, diversified mode of expression and many promising young photographers have come to the fore.



Wheel for grinders used in cement works. (Army stand).

Photo: TRAN AM

THE 1982 EXHIBITION OF ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

The 1982 Exhibition of Economic and Technical Achievements held in Giang Vo (Hanoi) Exhibition Centre to greet the Fifth National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam shows the important progress recorded since 1976 (year of the Fourth Party Congress) in various fields: agriculture, industry, science and technology. Participating in the exhibition are 24 branches of activity, 13 provinces and 3 cities under central authority (Hanoi, Haiphong, Ho Chi Minh City) with about 2,000 products and 500 projects.

Taking pride of place at the Centre is the landing module of Soyuz 36 which Gorbatko and Pham Tuan (Vietnam's first cosmonaut) brought back safely to

Earth on August 30, 1980, together with other gifts of the Soviet people: photos and materials related to the study-work undertaken during that flight: study on azolla pinnata, telesurvey, semiconductor in conditions of weightlessness, all of which are being carried out in the framework of Intercosmos.

There are the stands devoted to agriculture, hydraulic works, silviculture, food industry, light industry, and aquatic products.

Agriculture is the major concern of the whole country at present. In an area of 250 square metres there are more than 300 agricultural products, samples and models... Most noteworthy are 40 samples of strains of rice, maize, potato, sweet-potato, bean, pine-

apple, tea, azolla pinnata... Rice varieties NN 75-2, NN 75-6 and NN 75-10 give 3.5—7 tons per hectare for each crop, can resist pests, submersion, alum and therefore are grown in many provinces throughout the country. Maize variety 2A yields 2.5—4 tons per hectare and suits many areas. Selected and acclimatized from the GDR, potato varieties VD-1 and VD-2 give from 16 to 20 tons per hectare. Soya variety can yield 0.75 ton per hectare (as against 0.5—0.6 ton in 1976). The strains of rubber, pepper, coffee, tea, hops... enable us to boost the industrial crop in suitable areas. Beside the plant strains are the breeds of cattle and fowl, both egg-layers and poultry, and particularly white pig DBI-81 and black pig BSI-81, a cross-breed of Vietnamese sows with Yorkshire and Berkshire pigs, ox Fl Ha-Viet, and milch-buffalo Murrah imported from India... which are already acclimatized.

Planting mulberry and raising silk-worms constitute a key measure to solve the clothing problem. The exhibition shows 13 varieties of cocoons weighing from 0.1—0.11 g (yellow cocoon) to 0.38—0.42 g (white cocoon). One has to see the stand of Quang Nam—Da Nang province to realise fully the value and beauty of silk products, samples of which draw a crowd of spectators.

Stifled under the US-puppet regime owing to the import of fabrics, this traditional trade is being restored. 10,000 hectares are now grown to mulberry to obtain 500-600 tons of cocoons per year. Quang Nam—Da Nang bids fair to make enough cloth for its population and do its bit for the country.

The area devoted to water conservancy—the cardinal measure to

develop agriculture at present — shows models and charts of major hydraulic works. Thus in 1980, 420,000 hectares of cultivated area were irrigated in a scientific way, increasing crop yield by 10 — 15%. Worth noticing are Cau Ghe (Hai Hung province) irrigation works watering 1,804 hectares and draining 425 hectares; Ke Go (Nghe Tinh province) works irrigating 21,000 hectares and generating 2,300 kW of electricity; Dau Tieng hydraulic works (planned to water 172,00 hectares of agricultural land in Tay Ninh province heavily devastated by US chemical warfare) built with World Bank, OPEC, Kuwaiti and Dutch aid.

The area devoted to sylviculture attracts spectators with its samples of precious wood noted for their resistance, vein and colour: ebony, *trac* (*Dalbergia cochinchinensis* Pierre), *bang lang*, *cam lai* (*Dalbergia oliverii* Grambl), *giang huong*,... Pine resin and stick-lac are noteworthy articles for exportation.

Among the products of light and food industries exhibited, several obtained gold medals in international fairs: 8 at various Leipzig fairs and one at Plovdiv. Special mention has to be made of Lua Moi liquor awarded two gold medals (at Leipzig in 1973 and Plovdiv in 1979) and of lychees in sirup awarded a gold medal at Leipzig in 1982.

The range of consumer goods is fairly wide. Bicycles rank first, with a score of trade marks and spare parts made by industrial enterprises and even handicraft co-operatives. (The bicycle is the most suitable means of transport in present-day Vietnam.) Then come electric fans of various models and sizes, clocks of all kinds, even "Neptune" and "Friendship" television sets made in co-operation with Poland... These articles bespeak the efforts of the consumer-goods industry to meet the people's needs.

Then there are the stands devoted to heavy industry: metallurgy,

engineering, chemicals, transport and communications, coal, oil and gas, electricity, geology... Among the exhibits stands the diesel motor 12 M made by the Tran Hung Dao factory which won a gold medal at the 1981 Plovdiv fair. Mention has also to be made of drilling-machines, hydraulic presses, refrigerators, distributors of low-voltage electricity, stabilizers of various kinds. Agricultural machines occupy a worthy place. To serve the Mekong delta, the industrial enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City pooled their efforts to provide the districts and communes with integrated engineering: generators working with gas from rice husks and a set of ten agricultural machines for rice threshing and husking and fodder grinding.. An interesting feature is a tractor with special wheels for muddy fields which got an award at the 1978 Moscow exhibition of young innovators.

With its abundant manpower and scientific-technical capacities, the Army brings a great contribution to many economic branches: agriculture, fishery, sylviculture, industry, pharmaceuticals... Besides consumer goods of high quality and wide popularity, one has to cite the Army's achievements in electronics and optics. The Army's Technical Institute makes transistors. The Army's Institute of Medicine turns out good medicine to cure burns and scalds from home materials. Most attractive is the US plane U6A used for spraying toxic chemicals now transformed by the Army's Technical Institute to spray pesticides and sow seeds.

Public health, culture, education, tourism, postal services... also have special stalls showing their general developments as well as their specific products.

Outstanding among the stands devoted to the various regions of the country are those of Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Haiphong. The Hanoi stand shows products

of engineering, handicrafts, fine-arts, consumer goods like bicycles, electric fans, cloth, ready made clothes, footwear... The spectators admire artists Song Hy's woollen carpets portraying Lenin and Ho Chi Minh with hundreds of coloured threads and artist Nguyen Van Hue's ivory tusk engraving the tribulations of Kieu after poet Nguyen Du's famous work *The Tale of Kieu*. The stand devoted to Ho Chi Minh City numbers 258 kinds of products with over one thousand pieces, the most remarkable being the consumer goods — abundant and varied, gracious and colourful, suitable to the tastes of the many spectators. Most impressive on the stand devoted to Haiphong are various products of engineering from big machines like boats, barges for river and sea transport, electric fans, centrifugal pumps, tapping machines... to small tools like rush cutting machines, scales of various kinds, machines to process traditional drugs.

With a combination of charts, photos and showpieces Haiphong makes the spectators realize the new mechanism of agricultural management: setting norms to each working collective and to each worker.

Each province has its specific products: Dong Nai earthenware, Song Be lacquer, Central Highlands coffee and rubber, Bac Thai tea... testifying to the big economic potentials of Vietnam.

Apart from showing the achievements recorded, the Exhibition aims at creating conditions for the production bases, branches and regions to exchange experiences about applying scientific and technical progresses in production. Many economic contracts have been signed between provinces, branches, production bases, and other contracts with foreign economic delegations during the exhibition.

DAO QUANG BINH

VIETNAM COURIER

ELEPHANT HUNTERS IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

The rainy season had come to stay in the Central Highlands. Aridity had given place to greenness. Streams were overflowing their banks and our jeep, instead of raising thick clouds of dust, was splashing about in reddish mud.

We were driving from Buon Me Thuot, the chief town of Dac Lac province, to Buon Don, a village near the Vietnamese-Lao-Kampuchean border.

We were now in bush country, flat and endless. Now and then the monotony of the scenes was broken by an elephant convoy. The animals would make way for us, gazing at the car with their tiny eyes and flapping their enormous ears at the noise of the machine.

At a turn in the road two men stepped out from the driving rain.

"Give us a lift, would you?"

"Where to?" the driver asked, leaning out of the window.

"Buon Don," one of the strangers said and the driver's eyes lit up with interest.

"Pakam?" the driver asked, incredulous.

"Yes, pakam from Buon Don," the strangers affirmed and got in.

So they were "pakams", the famous elephant trappers and trainers. Big, powerfully built, deeply tanned and with their rain-soaked hair and beards they were impressive indeed. They said they had been in search of a wild pack. "We lost track of them because of the rain," one added in a deep voice.

Barbecue with the Pakams

The jeep pulled up outside a long house. The owner, Makong, and his numerous children and grandchildren lined up on the front balcony to welcome us.

I went up a flight of stairs hewn out of a whole tree trunk and entered the house, which was divided into small compartments. In the outer one, where guests are usually received, my attention was caught by a quaint piece of furniture. It was a big bed carved in one block from what must have been an enormous tree, with the space between the legs hollowed out. The thing must have involved a great deal of wasted wood and many workdays. But, as I learned later, such an item is a must in every household in the Central Highlands where neither good timber nor manpower are in short supply. The huge bed, which looked like a kneeling elephant with its curved legs, was where the owner of the house slept at night. One corner of the room was occupied by several coils of heavy rope made of buffalo hide and a number of long bamboo poles and the walls were hung with shiny brass gongs—the paraphernalia of an elephant trapper.

Makong was the leading trapper in the village. In Buon Don trappers are classed into four categories. The lowest category consists of "bac sai tay ngang", or people who have only five to seven seasons and only five elephants to their credit. While on the hunt they are allowed to wear only a loincloth and at night they have to sleep at a lower place and take turns to tend the fire. The "bac sai tay pram" make up the next category. These have each caught from six to fifteen elephants. Above them are the "gru zien pram", who have caught from sixteen to thirty animals. It should be noted that an elephant or two would be regarded as a lucky season, and it is not uncommon for a trapper not to make a single catch from one year to the next. So to be classed in the second category trappers must be well above fifty years old. At the top are the "gru tay pay ziet", the veterans.

Makong, 62, was one of the two "gru tay pay ziets", with thirty-two elephants on his record. The

other was Duom, a young mahout. Duom was an exception: he had caught only six elephants, but one of the animals was white, a thing unheard of in three generations. White elephants are very rare in Southeast Asia. Extremely intelligent, they can easily outwit even the best trappers. In Thailand where, as in Laos, white elephants are regarded as sacred, Duom's trophy had fetched as much as thirty ordinary elephants, and the feat had won Duom promotion to the top rank.

Duom was held in respect by his fellow-trappers and was considered to be an equal of Makong. That much I could see during our first meeting at Makong's.

I asked the two leading trappers about their job but they said that could wait and sent word for other hunters to get some game for a party.

The hunters, armed with crossbows and lances, rode their elephants away, headed for the Serepok, which has its source somewhere in the mountains and flows west into the Mekong River.

Other people, meanwhile, were fetching the drink. Big vases were brought out which contained steamed glutinous rice in fermentation. The vases were decorated with intricate designs and I was told that they had been exchanged for elephants. The host covered the rice with coconut fronds and, by means of an ox horn, filled the vases with water. He finished by putting into each vase a long, curving bamboo pipe.

By the time the sun had completely disappeared and night birds were beginning to come out, the hunters returned. The elephants were lined up alongside the balcony and from their backs the hunters dismounted with their kill, a fat deer whose wounds were covered with leaves to spare whoever might not like the sight of blood, and which, as a result, looked as if it were sleeping peacefully.

A big fire was built in the middle of the room and the deer was carved up on a big bamboo tray. The party began.

People had their pick of the meat and roasted their portions in the fire. Those who liked jungle flavours wrapped the meat in grapefruit and citronella leaves.

The roasted meat was laid on dishes cut out of banana leaves and brought to where the vases of alcohol were laid, and the pipes were passed from one person to another. The guests drank first. Then came the turn of the villagers, beginning with the elders and office-holders. I took a drag and instantly felt the warmth spreading through my veins.

The trappers, quite loquacious now, told me about their work. As I later found out only extreme excitement would loosen their tongues and that rice alcohol would be the best means to bring them to this ebullient state.

The Village Herd of Elephants

A few years back I had visited several elephant-raising villages in Laos and had come to know about the customs of elephant keepers. So I was looking forward to see the elephants which had been away again after their return from the hunt in the afternoon. But I waited and waited and the elephants did not show up. No heavy footfalls were heard on the muddy village road.

Throughout my stay at Buon Don, however, I never saw a chained elephant although the village claimed to have the biggest pack in the whole of the Central Highlands. In the daytime I missed the sight of massive bodies swaying gently on huge feet. At night there was no nostalgic trumpeting in answer to mates from the wilderness.

It turned out that a different method was used here. In Laos, mahouts usually spend a great deal of time with their elephants. At the end of a working day they would take them to the river to bathe. The animals, after frolicking in the water to their hearts' content, were led to their pen built inside the village under some big trees, and where food in abundance was waiting for them — maize stalks, bamboo shoots, banana trunks, and grass and leaves of all sorts. The animals would nibble daintily at the food to sample it and, after making their choice, each would start making a heap of its own by the stake to which it is chained. Then, munching lazily they settled down for the night.

The practice at Buon Don was different. The elephants were left to fend for themselves. After work they were released to feed in the jungle. However, to prevent them from running away their keepers would shackle their forelegs with stout rattan.

Thus impeded they could not go far and the mahouts would have no trouble fetching them and did not bother about their food either. But the two methods had resulted in two different attitudes on the part of the animals. Lao elephants were more friendly. They would show their attachment to their keepers by flapping their ears, winking their eyes and curling their sniffing trunks. At Buon Don, the animals treated their owners with indifference.

Elephant taming at Buon Don reached its peak in the period 1930—1945 when the pack numbered about one hundred. The animals were well trained in tracking and hunting and they helped the trappers catch about one hundred others every year.

At that time Buon Don was known as the biggest elephant market in the whole of Southeast Asia, supplying log-hauling elephants to Thailand and Burma, pack elephants to Laos and Kampuchea, and circus and zoo elephants to Europe. Prices varied according to age and degree of docility, but generally one elephant would be the equivalent of ten or fifteen first-rate water buffaloes and had to be paid for in silver coins, gold ornaments, silk, or rare porcelain vases. In 1935 when rice was sold at about two piastres a hundred kilograms and a good buffalo would cost from twenty to twenty-five piastres, an elephant trained at Buon Don would fetch from two hundred and fifty to three hundred and fifty piastres.

Buon Don, as remembered by Makong, was as animated on market days as the provincial township. All the Chinese eating-places were packed, and elephants were displayed in a vast open pen, each tied to a short stake. Customers were very demanding, because buying an elephant was quite an important affair. They would judge the intelligence of an an-

imal by the way it bore itself and by the movements of its ears, eyes and trunk. They would look for a spirited one because it would certainly be healthy and hard-working, and would closely inspect the skin for age-indicating spots and signs. Finally docility would be tested: the keeper would cause his elephant to bend a foreleg or flex a hindleg to enable the buyer to mount on its back. Satisfied, the buyer would take their purchase home by themselves or would hire a local pakam to do it for them.

The trade registered a sharp decline with the French reoccupation of the Central Highlands and with the many years of war. Wild elephants deserted the region and the pack at Buon Don was used mainly for transporting supplies for the revolutionary army. During the last war Buon Don elephants were hunted down by enemy helicopters. They were strafed to death and left to rot in the jungle after their killers had cut off their tusks and carved off a few choice hunks of meat. Ninety per cent of the pack perished in this way.

At the time of my visit only about ten elephants were left and great effort was being made to increase the pack. Luckily the season was promising: in the first four hunting expeditions five wild elephants had been caught. I was told that elephants



Illustration by THANH CHUONG

were always at a premium for their diverse capabilities — transporting, hauling, land-clearing, and also navying.

Makong said that orders had been placed not only for the present season but for the next one as well. "Our plan for 1982," he said, "is to have twenty tamed elephants so that we may catch an equal number next year."

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The Rainy Season

The bush country, parched in the dry season, revives with the first rains and becomes prime grazing land for wild elephants. Trappers also prefer this vast open space to the sacred woods where overhanging branches impede their movements.

Elephants come from mountains bordering on Laos and Kampuchea, along trails broken by themselves. There will be the Black Pack, or native elephants, and the Grey Pack, or the bigger species from Burma and India.

Native elephants will start their annual south-bound journey in May or June to be in time for the young palm fronds and banana trees. In August or September in the middle of the wet monsoon they will arrive in the bush country. The Grey Pack, meanwhile, will be travelling in the opposite direction, heading north for home where food in abundance is waiting.

At Buon Don the trappers will be straining their ears for the call of the Black Pack leader and as soon as this can be discerned from the roll of thunder, trackers will be sent ahead. By reading signs along the trail, they can tell the strength of the pack, its composition, the time of its passage, whether or not it is alarmed, and whether or not a hunt should be started.

The trackers can give a precise description of the leader — its height, girth, weight, etc. — simply by measuring the circumference of its footprints and the distance between them. Generally speaking the height is about twenty times the circumference of the foot. Thus an elephant leaving footprints of from 0.9 to 1 metre usually stands between 1.9 and 2.2 metres. The girth can be obtained by multiplying the height by two, and the weight is reckoned by measuring the depth of footprints.

Pit-trapping is not practised at Buon Don, although it is fairly simple. Pits, very deep and wider at the

base than at the top, will be dug along trails frequented by the Black Pack and are covered with branches and elephant dung. But these, however well camouflaged, will not fail to be detected by the male elephants, which, at the least suspect sign, will stop and investigate with their trunks.

The females, on the contrary, are forever sniffing about in the air for alien scents and are thus less heedful of the danger lurking in the ground. Consequently, an animal may land in a trap from time to time.

Even so it is no problem at all for the rest of the pack to rescue their trapped mate. They just trample the earth around the opening into an inclined plane for the animal in the pit to get out, pushed and pulled by their mighty trunks.

Lassoing is preferred by the mahouts at Buon Don, who will drive their animals into the wild pack, sowing panic by shouting and beating their gongs. The next step is for a group of hunters to give chase to the young elephants.

Each mahout is equipped with a rope made of buffalo hide as thick as a big toe and from sixty to seventy metres in length and laid in a coil by his seat on the head of his hunting elephant. The rope has previously been soaked in fat to be pliable and its loose end is formed into a sliding noose and attached to a long bamboo pole.

The hunters continue the pursuit until their quarry is exhausted. Then one man will slip his noose around the animal's hindleg and, swiftly alighting from his mount, will tie the other end of the rope to a nearby tree.

Brutally the quarry is jerked back and the cord becomes as taut as the string of a bow. The hunting elephants then draw up in a circle around the quarry and immobilize its thrashing trunk with their own. The captive will be led to the village or will be shackled on the spot with its right ear hung to a branch. For several weeks it will be kept in this awkward posture, which renders it as harmless as a calf. All this time its captor will remain by its side to feed it. After having won its confidence he will give it a name, usually after the locality where it was captured, and partly in the Lao language on account of the inhabitants' affinity to the Mnong tribe in Laos. The third elephant of the previous season was taken at a stream called Tat and was named Kham Tat, meaning "Gold Found by the Tat" in the Lao language.

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In the small hours of my sixth day at Buon Don I woke up to distant elephant trumpeting. Makong had also woken up. He listened in silence for a moment and whispered to me, "The Black Pack."

The other pakams had also heard the elephants and were coming to the house without waiting for the usual signal from their leader.

They spoke urgently, not in the Lao language which had always been used for my benefit, but in a broken jargon known among themselves as "ghost language", which is believed to be unintelligible to Nguot Ngoan, the god of elephants.

The discussion was brief, and Duom brought it to a close with a few phrases.

"Thmun!" the master called out sharply, and the women got busy immediately, rinsing rice and tending the fire. They went about their business disheveled, since it was taboo to comb their hair on the day of a hunt. The children huddled by the fire and followed with sleepy eyes the activity of the adults.

The pakams rushed down the stairs, taking two or three steps at a time while tucking short spears under their belts which they used to prod the elephants. They went off in the direction of the jungle and returned about an hour later with eight massive hunting elephants.

The pakams ate in a hurry and as soon as they were finished they started loading equipment on the backs of the elephants. The greenhorns were naked except for their loincloths, and I was struck by the

rugged beauty of their black hair and beards and their brawny brown chests.

Excited by the sharp orders to the elephants, I asked Makong and Duom to take me along.

"Impossible!" The old man was adamant.

Duom showed more understanding. "You don't speak the ghost language," he explained, "and will betray our intention to the god of elephants. The hunt will be a failure."

I promised not to utter a word until the hunt was over.

"It can't be done. You're not a pakam and you don't smell of elephant like us. The Black Pack will get your scent miles away."

That put a stop to my insistence.

Meanwhile the mahouts had taken their place to the left of their elephants. Makong said something in the ghost language and the elephants lifted their forelegs to allow their riders to climb onto their backs.

The hunting party rumbled into motion. I waved at the pakams and wished them success. They raised their spears in reply and started off in the direction of the Serepok River.

VU HUNG

Buon Don, the rainy season, 1981

1. "Get us some food!"

MEETINGS...

(Continued from page 13)

liver concerning the conversion of porphyrin. Professor Siric had also investigated a major case of pollution at the village of Broin Waterland where 2, 4, 5-T had been found in a lake in such density that dioxin was contained in the water and mud at 400 p.p.t. Even so he had stated that it was no problem at all. The local population, taking up the example of the Vietnam veterans in the United States, had formed a "People's Committee Against Defoliants" and sent a young doctor, Kiz Cladon, to contact me. At my second debate with Professor Siric in Nij-

megen I again drew attention to the case of the said village. A journalist went to that place immediately, and a few days later it was discovered that the area was affected by dioxin-containing chemicals and that pollution was as extensive and dangerous as in Seveso. Later, while I was in Paris I learned that the Government of Holland was greatly concerned by the case and that the cost of disinfection was estimated at 20 billion guilders.

The press in Holland took this occasion to recall how Vietnam had been devastated by defoliants (there were about thirty articles on this subject during my stay). Films on Vietnam War were also televised. Public attention was aroused and I was told that it was the first time

that the public was so interested in Vietnam since Jane Fonda's anti-war visit.

I saw my debate with Professor Siric on television a few days later, during a party given by Professor Ote. For a quarter of an hour I revived the US aggression and chemical war, and I realized that as far as Holland was concerned the Vietnam War was far from over. Back in Vietnam I received a letter from a Dutch woman. She wrote about the Nijmegen debate and said, "You should not think that scientific circles in Holland all side with Professor Siric. Thousands of scientists and doctors here are reorganizing and are urging the Government to support your country which was devastated by chemical war."

CHRONOLOGY

(16 April — 15 May)

APRIL

16. Vietnam is elected to the UN Committee to examine discrimination against women.

17. At the Spring session of the Interparliamentarian Union held in Lagos (Nigeria) from April 12 to 17, the Vietnamese delegation rejects US slanders against Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

18. Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach pays a visit to the German Democratic Republic from April 16 to 18.

19. Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach visits the Belgian Kingdom and the headquarters of the European Economic Community.

— Signing in Hanoi of an agreement on long-term cultural co-operation between Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

— A Vietnamese Ministry of Culture and Information delegation, headed by Minister Nguyen Van Hieu, pays a friendship visit to Kampuchea.

20. Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach pays a visit to the Federal Republic of Germany at the invitation of the FRG Foreign Ministry.

— A delegation of the USSR State Committee for Prices headed by its chairman N.T. Glushkov visits Vietnam.

21. In response to the International Year for the Protection of the Environment, the Vietnam Committee for "World Environment Day" holds a seminar on environment and health. 18 papers are presented.

22. A high-level military delegation of the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia, led by Defence Minister, General Martin Dzur, pays an official friendship visit to Vietnam from April 22 to 26.

23. Vietnam participates in the Economic and Technological Creativeness Exhibition of Youth in Moscow.

24. The Vietnam Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian People sends a message expressing solidarity and support on the occasion of the Week of Solidarity with Palestinian political prisoners.

25. The Council of State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam decides to confer the Ho Chi Minh Order on I.V. Arkhipov, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, first Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, on the occasion of his 75th birthday.

26. A delegation of Vietnamese officials in charge of information and cultural relations with foreign countries visits Japan from April 10 to 26.

27. A delegation of the Council for Research on Productive Forces of the USSR State Commission for Sciences pays a visit to Vietnam from April 13 to 27.

29. A high-level delegation of the Sandinista National Liberation Front of Nicaragua (FSLN), headed by Revolutionary Commander Victor Manuel Tirado Lopez, member of the FSLN National Leadership, visits Vietnam.

— Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach ends his official visit to India begun on April 25.

MAY

2. The Ministry of Culture and Information opens its first course on economic management for cadres of the ministry.

3. Vietnam enters more than 300 items for the Plovdiv International Spring Fair.

4. A spokesman for the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry issues a statement condemning the armed aggression against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Argentina by British authorities.

— A delegation of the Communist Party of Vietnam, headed by Truong-Chinh, member of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee, President of the Council of State, attended the Third Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party from April 25 to May 4.

5. To serve offshore oil and gas exploration in Vietnam, a delegation of the USSR Insurance Company, led by I.G. Sekerz, deputy director-general, visits Vietnam.

— The Swedish National Assembly agrees to a proposal of the Swedish Government to give Vietnam emergency aid to the value of 345 million *kronor* for the 1982-1983 fiscal year.

6. A detachment of the Indian Navy under the command of Rear Admiral Sukhman Jain, Flag Ship Officer of the Eastern Fleet, pays an official visit to Vietnam.

— An economic delegation of the Communist Party of Cuba, headed by Lionel Soto Prieto, secretary of the Party Central Committee, paid a visit to Vietnam from April 24 to May 6.

— Signing in Hanoi of a protocol on communications and transport between Vietnam and the German Democratic Republic for 1982.

11. Founding of the Vietnam Committee for the International Year of the Elderly with Nguyen Huu Tho as its chairman.

13. The Vietnamese Council of State confers the Vietnam's Sao Vang (Gold Star) Order on N.A. Tikhonov, Political Bureau member of the CPSU Central Committee and Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

14. A Vietnamese traditional music ensemble attends the first Vietnam-Laos-Kampuchea traditional music and dance festival in Phnom Penh.

15. A "Women's Festival" is opened at the Giang Vo Exhibition Centre showing the achievements of Vietnamese women in national construction and defence.

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES **IN VIETNAM**



"Playing the captain" by the children
of a kindergarten in Hai Phong.

Photo: THU HOAI

A geography lesson.

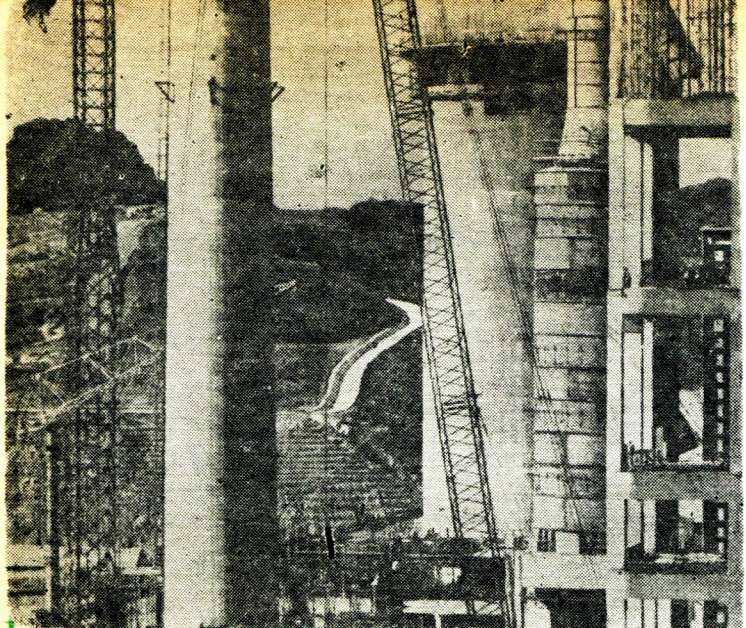
Photo: NGOC QUAN



A biology lesson.

Photo: VU TU HAI



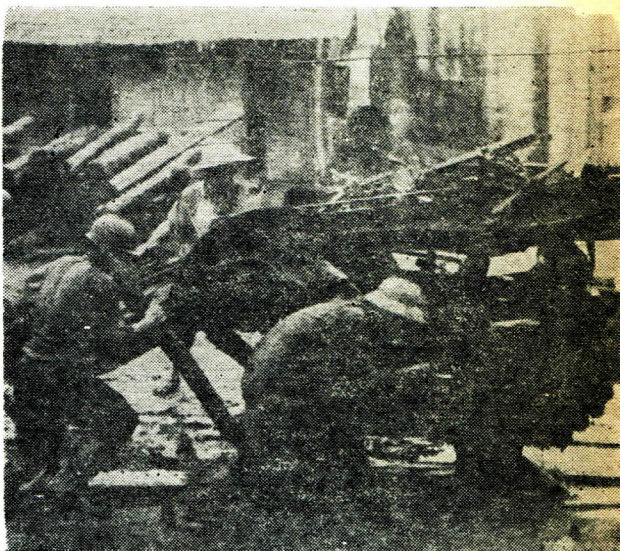


Standing out against the mountain. (Second prize)

Photo: HOANG KIM DANG

Driving rain. (First prize)

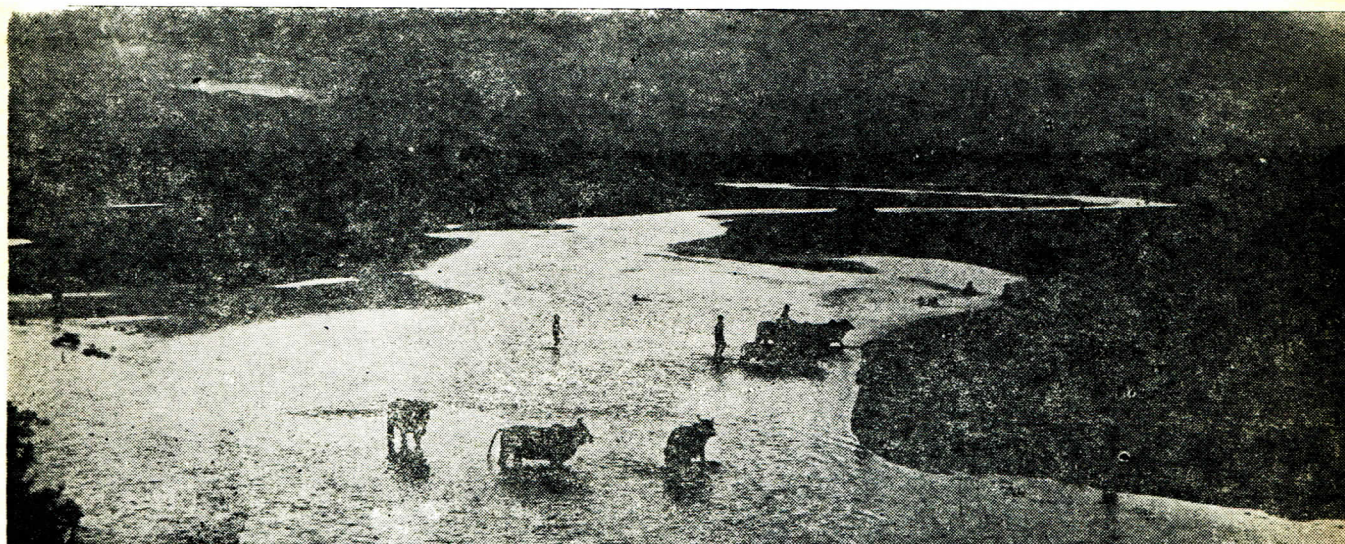
Photo: DUONG TIEN



THE 12th NATIONAL PHOTO EXHIBITION

Dusk. (Third prize)

Photo: LE CUONG



Vietnam
Courier

Le Courrier
du Vietnam

HOBOCTB
BETHANA

El Correo
de Vietnam

Báo đối ngoại

TIN VIỆT NAM

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

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