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EDUCATION IN VIETNAM

A class at Le Ngoc Han general education school, in Hai Ba Trung district, Hanoi.

Photo: VIETNAM
PICTORIAL

At a drawing class in the Hanoi Pioneers' Club.

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A kindergarten in Tho Nhuom Street.

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Front Cover:

— A new school year at the Quoc Hoc School in Hue.

Photo: HOANG CHUONG

**Vietnam
COURIER**

9-1982

OUR MONTHLY COMMENT

The visits to three ASEAN countries — Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand — made by Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach in July mark an important step in the dialogues between the two groups of ASEAN and Indochinese countries with a view to attaining a common goal — turning Southeast Asia into a zone of peace, stability, friendship and co-operation. Previously, Malaysia had proposed a formula for a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality (ZOPFAN) and at the UN General Assembly last year, the Indochinese countries, through the Lao Foreign Minister, put forth seven principles for the peaceful co-existence of the countries in the region and for the solution of their problems with respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, non-enforcement of one country's views upon the others and non-imposition from outside.

In the last three years the trend of dialogue and that of confrontation between the ASEAN countries and the Indochinese countries have constantly opposed each other and sometimes the trend of confrontation has held sway, to the delight of those who take pleasure in "sitting on a mountain and watching two tigers fight". But Southeast Asia is a region whose people wish to live in friendship and co-operation. Immediately at the end of the Indochina war in 1975, the two groups of countries established most promising relations, forgetting the years when the imperialist powers had dragged some of the ASEAN countries to their side and set them at loggerheads with the Indochinese countries. The ASEAN countries observed the attitude of non-interference in the internal affairs of Indochina, even at the time when the Kampuchean people rose up and, with the assistance of Vietnam, toppled the Pol Pot genocidal regime. The documents we have in hand show that at that time the ASEAN countries were preparing to establish normal relations with the revolutionary power in Phnom Penh, but with the backing of the United States, China unleashed a war against Vietnam with the consequence that a polarization took place in Southeast Asia with the ASEAN countries siding with China and the United States to oppose the Indochinese countries.

However, confrontation runs counter to the general trend of development in the world; it cannot resolve any problem in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the ASEAN countries can see that the Indochinese countries have become more and more stable and shown sincerity in their respect of the interests of the ASEAN countries as can be seen in the peaceful proposals at their conference convened last July in Ho Chi Minh City. Certain ASEAN countries, Malaysia and Indonesia primarily, have even held that the threat to the ASEAN countries comes from China, not Vietnam. Fortunately, many clear-sighted people in the ruling circles in Thailand, the "frontline" country of the ASEAN group, begin to share this view too.

All this has contributed to the success of the recent trips of Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach.

The Vietnamese Foreign Minister very frankly warned the warlike elements in the ASEAN countries that no country in the world would undertake to refrain from delivering counter-blows should it be invaded. Of course, Vietnam is no exception if it were attacked by the Pol Pot clique which operates with the backing of Thailand.

The Foreign Minister was also frank when he recalled the promise made in 1978 by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong that Vietnam shall never intervene in the domestic affairs of the ASEAN countries and never support the subversive groups in these countries. At least this is a promise the ASEAN countries cannot wrest from the Chinese leaders.

The Minister was frank when he criticized the ASEAN countries for their participation in rigging up a "tripartite coalition government" for Kampuchea, pointing out that by doing so they could help Pol Pot call the tune while Sihanouk, who sides with him, is committing "political suicide".

The constructive part of the talks of the Vietnamese Minister with the leaders of the three ASEAN countries is most heartening.

It is true that no concrete problems have been solved, but the ASEAN countries have given assurances that they will seriously study the proposals made in Ho Chi Minh City and take note of the withdrawal of part of the Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea as a token of goodwill on the part of Vietnam.

ASEAN leaders have accepted with pleasure the invitation to visit Vietnam; this means that the dialogue will continue for the good of mutual understanding and co-operation. Both parties have agreed to create a favourable atmosphere for such continuation.

An important agreement was reached on the principle of respect for the legitimate rights of both parties; this principle should be applied to the following questions:

— The ASEAN countries are interested in the total withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea; Vietnam is anxious about China's threat looming larger over Indochina. The Indochinese countries are ready to meet the demand of the ASEAN countries; reversely the latter must comply with the wishes of the former. The Vietnamese troops will leave Kampuchea when Indochina is no longer threatened by China.

— The ASEAN countries demand the neutralization of Kampuchea; the Indochinese countries request that Southeast Asia be turned into a zone of peace and neutrality, that is it has no more foreign troops and military bases. It is not possible to pose the problem of neutrality of Kampuchea without speaking of the neutralization of the whole of Southeast Asia.

— The three Indochinese countries are concerned with the security of Thailand and request that the ASEAN countries show interest in the security of Kampuchea, Laos and Vietnam. The proposal on the establishment of a safety zone between Kampuchea and Thailand under international supervision made by the three Indochinese foreign ministers reflects this bilateral concern.

— The international conference on Southeast Asia, another proposal made at the Ho Chi Minh City Conference, is a problem the date, place, attendance and agenda of which should be agreed upon by the two sides.

An approach to the bilateral relations between Vietnam and the three ASEAN countries, visited by the Vietnamese Foreign Minister, has been made, including the problem of Thai fishermen operating in Vietnamese waters, the possibility of economic co-operation between Vietnam and Malaysia, the development of trade between Malaysian and Thai private firms and Vietnam (as is the case between Singapore and Vietnam).

Time will tell whether or not, after playing its role at the coming UN General Assembly, the Kampuchean "tripartite coalition government" will be able to stand on its feet. This wrong move of the ASEAN countries which only brings grist to China's mill has obviously delayed the solution of problems between the ASEAN countries and the Indochinese countries. But this delay cannot last long. The continuation of dialogue between the two groups of countries will be reflected in the Vietnamese Foreign Minister's visits to Indonesia and the Philippines in the coming months as well as at other meetings between responsible people of the two groups. It is hoped that it will be not only a question of principle, but will gradually deal with concrete problems affecting the peace and stability of Southeast Asia.

20 August 1982

HOANG SA AND TRUONG SA— VIETNAMESE TERRITORY

Xinhua News Agency of the People's Republic of China has recently issued a comment on the White Book of the Foreign Ministry of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam entitled «The Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes—Vietnamese territory» released in January 1982.

The comment shows that they deliberately shirk the basic problem which is decisive in proving the so-called Chinese sovereignty over the two archipelagoes.

On the basis of an objective analysis, the White Book of the Foreign Ministry of the SRV asserted: «Their (Chinese authorities) greatest embarrassment is the impossibility of proving China's historical and effective sovereignty over these two archipelagoes».

The *Xinhua* commentator has not adduced any document or event but has asserted vaguely that China was the first country to discover, exploit and administer these archipelagoes while no country apart from China had an effective sovereignty over them before the thirties.

In January 1980 the Foreign Ministry of the PRC put forward a lot of ancient books and many events in an effort to prove that «Xisha» and «Nansha» have been Chinese territory for a long time. They laid stress upon the following three events:

First, they say that the *Wujing Zongyao*¹ carried a passage in which the Northern Song Court «orders that royal troops be

dispatched to build and defend the bases of maritime patrol in Guangnan» (i.e. present-day Guangdong) and «that combat ships be built»... «If from Tunmen-shan one avails oneself of the east wind and takes the south-west route one will reach Jiuru Lozhou in seven days.» They consider Jiuru Lozhou to be «Xisha» archipelago and conclude that «the Court of the Northern Song had placed the Xisha archipelago under its administration» and that «Chinese naval units had patrolled the area of the Xisha archipelago as far back as the 11th century».

Second, they cite the *Yuanshi*² according to which China had conducted astronomical surveys in «Nanhai» and conclude that «the Xisha archipelago was part of the Chinese domain under the Yuan dynasty».

Third, they bring forward the *Qionzhou Cuzhi*³ according to which some time between 1710 and 1712 Vice-Admiral Wu Sheng had patrolled Qizhouyang, considered as Xisha archipelago, and conclude that «present-day Xisha archipelago area was then patrolled by naval units of Guangdong province».

No doubt the Foreign Ministry of the PRC is very pleased to have found those books and cite those events. Unfortunately, they do not refer to the same thing.

Regarding the first event, in the passage about «Guangnan east route» the *Wujing Zongyao* recorded that the Northern Song Court «orders the building of bases for maritime patrol» on the mouth of Pearl River, described the position

of these bases and the sea route from Guangzhou to the Indian Ocean, but did not say how far Chinese naval units patrolled nor that they patrolled «Xisha» archipelago. However, the Foreign Ministry of the PRC re-arranges the words of the quoted passage to say that the Northern Song Court had placed the «Xisha» archipelago under its administration.

Concerning the second event, from what is written in the *Yuanshi* the astronomical surveys at the twenty-seven points were not made on a national level as Beijing said but «in the Four Seas», including such places outside the «Chinese domain» as Kaoli (i.e. Korea), Tiele (in Siberia), Beihai (i.e. the sea off Siberia) and Nanhai (i.e. the East Sea). More important still, the *Yuanshi* clearly said that the Chinese «domain» under the Yuan extended only to Hainan island in the South and not beyond the Gobi desert in the north. Needless to say, Beijing ignores this passage.

As for the third event, a look at the maps published by China shows that the places patrolled by Vice-Admiral Wu Sheng are on the coast of Hainan island. At the place called «Qizhouyang» considered by Beijing as «Xisha», the «Chinese sea map» published by China in May 1965 with Chinese and Vietnamese names shows seven islets east of Hainan island. Thus Qizhouyang is Qizhou area, and not «Xisha archipelago area» as the Foreign Ministry of the PRC asserts. Capitalizing on the reader's

unfamiliarity with Chinese names, they turn Wu Sheng's patrol around Hainan island into a patrol of the "Xisha archipelago area" to say that this archipelago was then patrolled by "naval units of Guangdong province".*

Clearly enough, the ancient books and events cited by the document of the Foreign Ministry of the PRC in January 1980 cannot prove Chinese historical and effective sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes; they only prove that Beijing has distorted and re-arranged documents to twist the truth. Small wonder that the *Xinhua* commentator ignores this confounded lie and asserts vaguely Chinese "effective sovereignty" over those archipelagoes.

With regard to the documents that Beijing cannot refute proving that even under French protectorate Vietnam kept on exercising and consolidating its sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes, the *Xinhua* commentator states: "A sovereignty cannot be established by aggression." Here the problem is: who is the aggressor, China or Vietnam?

For a long time Vietnam has effectively administered these two archipelagoes before any country could lay a claim, and has continually exercised its sovereignty for centuries, including the period in which the French Government represented it in external relations.

Li Zhun's landing of troops on some islands in Hoang Sa archipelago in 1909 was simply an act of aggression, so was the occupation of Ba Binh (Itu-Aba) island by Taiwanese troops in 1956, as well as the occupation of Hoang Sa archipelago by Chinese troops in 1956 and 1974. For the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes already belonged to Vietnam. It is

the Chinese authorities who are the aggressors, but their aggression cannot establish any sovereignty.

Since its occupation of the Hoang Sa archipelago, Beijing has striven to consolidate and strengthen its position on the archipelago, and to work with a view to legalising its act of aggression. It wants to turn the archipelago into a military base, a strategic staging ground in the area. In 1977, Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua openly threatened to use force to occupy Truong Sa archipelago, stating that "we will recover these islands", "without any negotiation".

One has to see Beijing's aim with regard to Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes within China's general strategy of realizing its ambition to monopolise the East Sea and expand to Southeast Asia.

This aggressive design is also perceived by nations other than the Vietnamese — direct and immediate victims of Beijing's policy of expansion and hegemony.

Public opinion denounces and condemns the scheme of expansion and hegemony of the reactionaries within the Beijing ruling circles.

After China occupied the southwest islands of Hoang Sa archipelago, the *Kuala Lumpur Star* wrote on February 18, 1974: "China's act in the Hoang Sa archipelago stems from the principle 'Might is right', therefore 'the countries in this area fear that in case Beijing nurtures ambitions about other islands in the 'South China' Sea it will not respect any principle or international rule.'"

In a study carried by the French Annals of International Law in 1975, Professor J.P. Férié wrote: "By occupying Hoang Sa archipelago *manu militari*, China has brazenly violated the principles forbidding the use of force and the

forcible occupation of territory," and "moreover one has to reject China's extravagant ambitions regarding the whole of the 'South China' Sea for they constitute a threat to peace in the area".

The Indian newspaper *The Patriot* of October 15, 1978 wrote: "The Beijing strategists do not hide their ambitions concerning more than two hundred islands in the 'South China' Sea the occupation of which will enable them to control the sea routes of vital importance for many countries."

On October 8, 1981 the Indonesian News Agency PAD reported: "According to the Chinese authorities' calculation the islands in the 'South China' sea can be used by China not only to control all the fishing activities in the area and the important sea routes from the United States, Japan to the Southeast Asian countries, India up to the Middle-East, but also in the end to realise its strategy of expanding southward by sea route."

Once again we reiterate that Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes have always been Vietnamese territory. They have been under Vietnam's occupation before any country could make a claim and Vietnam has continually exercised its sovereignty over these archipelagoes.

The Vietnamese people are determined to struggle to defend their territorial integrity and sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes against all the expansionist schemes of the reactionary clique in the Beijing ruling circles.

Nhan Dan daily, 21 July 1982

1. A book written in the 11th century.

2. The official history of the Yuan dynasty.

3. A local geographical books of the Qing dynasty.

AGAIN ON THE PROBLEM OF VIETNAM'S MARITIME ZONE AND CONTINENTAL SHELF

On May 12, 1977 the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam made public a statement on Vietnam's territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf.

Imprescriptible Rights

Vietnam is a country bordering on the East Sea. Right at its inception the legend about a clutch of one hundred eggs from which were born 100 boys, 50 following their mother to the mountain and 50 following their father to the sea shows that the Vietnamese nation did not live only in the Red River delta but also conquered the mountains and the sea. However, until recent years the Vietnamese people themselves only had a simple, even vague conception of the law of the sea: they only spoke of Vietnam's territorial waters and maritime zone. In reality, the sea comprises an international zone and a zone under national jurisdiction. The latter includes the *interior waters*, *territorial sea*, *contiguous zone* and *exclusive economic zone*. Under the sea is the *continental shelf*.

In the above-mentioned statement the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam made known its viewpoint and defined the country's limits, sovereignty and rights over each maritime zone and continental shelf.

The *territorial sea* is the maritime zone in which a State exercises full and complete sovereignty over the airspace, seabed and

earth below the seabed of the territorial sea. Vietnam's territorial sea is 12 miles wide i.e. more than 22 kilometres, starting not from the coastline but from a baseline joining its most protruding points and the extreme points of Vietnam's coastal islands where the tide is at its lowest. This baseline will be made public at an opportune time but we definitely know that this line in the main is the line joining the coastal islands because Vietnam has many islands along its coast.

The waters behind the baseline and adjacent to the coastline are the *interior waters* of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam according to the legal statute of the mainland.

The *contiguous zone* is the maritime zone 12 miles wide starting from the exterior border of the territorial sea. In the contiguous zone we exercise such control as is necessary to defend the security and the rights of customs and taxes, ensure respect for the regulations on public health, emigration and immigration on Vietnam's territory and territorial sea.

The *exclusive economic zone* continues Vietnam's territorial sea and makes up with the latter a maritime zone 200 miles wide starting from the baseline. In the exclusive economic zone our country has special economic rights, i.e. to prospect, exploit, defend and administer all the natural wealth (organic and inorganic) in the water, on the seabed and in the earth below. These special rights

mean that this wealth is ours whether we state it or not and whether we exploit it or not.

The *continental shelf* is composed of the seabed and the earth under it as a natural extension of Vietnam's mainland beyond Vietnam's territorial sea up to the exterior margin of the continent. Where the exterior margin of the continent is less than 200 miles distant from the baseline, the continental shelf extends to 200 miles from this baseline. Vietnam has complete sovereignty to prospect, exploit, defend and administer all the natural wealth on Vietnam's continental shelf including mineral, inorganic and organic wealth settled on Vietnam's continental shelf.

The islands and archipelagoes belonging to Vietnamese territory beyond the territorial sea of Vietnam's mainland have their own territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf.

As Vietnam has a common maritime zone with many neighbouring countries, it is ready to concretely settle the problem of delimiting Vietnam's maritime zone and continental shelf with each of these countries. Proceeding from the policy of peace, friendship and co-operation and a goodwill attitude, the Vietnamese Government clearly laid down in its May 12, 1977 statement that "it will negotiate with the related countries on the basis of respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, international law and practice to

settle the problems concerning each other's maritime zone and continental shelf".

Continental and Maritime Vietnam

In the past, the French colonial administration officially applied the 1888 Law to Indochina defining a three-mile wide territorial sea, effective from 1926. In 1936, this was extended to "20 kilometres (about 10.5 miles) starting from where the tide is at its lowest."

After the August 1945 Revolution the Democratic Republic of Vietnam had to concentrate all its efforts on winning its war of resistance against French colonialism and US imperialism to liberate the nation and reunify the country. Only once did the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam define a maritime zone 12 miles wide under its jurisdiction. This sufficed to show the Vietnamese Government's intention to extend its territorial sea to 12 miles.

In the South, the Saigon Administration defined a territorial sea 12 miles wide (1974), a contiguous zone 12 miles wide (1965), a special fishing zone 62 miles wide (1972) and a continental shelf 200 metres deep according to the 1958 Geneva Convention's ruling on continental shelves.

In short, since power returned to the people, our country did not have an official definition of its territorial sea, etc. until the statement of May 12, 1977 settled the matter, hence its great significance. Juridically, it is the first time the Vietnamese people's administration

officially defined the limit of each maritime zone and continental shelf of reunified Vietnam, its sovereignty and rights over them. It is the first juridical document of the Vietnamese people's administration on the sea, the first and very basic step of the codification of our country's sovereignty and rights to the sea.

With its May 12, 1977 statement, the State of Vietnam clearly asserts its sovereignty and rights over each maritime zone and continental shelf for other countries to know and respect, and for its people and armed forces to know their country's maritime zones and continental shelf to resolutely defend them. Vietnam's sovereignty has been extended offshore up to the extreme limit of the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf. As from May 12, 1977 Vietnam comprises a *continental Vietnam* 329,600 square kilometres large and a *maritime Vietnam* several times larger including the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes. Today Vietnam stretches from the mountains, forests and fields to a vast expanse of the East Sea. Since the Van Lang State was established, Vietnam has gone through many stages of development but this is a turning point in the history of the nation: Vietnam is extending eastwards, in conformity with international law.

The assertion of Vietnam's inprescriptible sovereignty over the continental shelf and exclusive economic zone has a great significance because the part of the East Sea belonging to Vietnam, especially around the Hoang Sa

and Truong Sa archipelagoes, is very rich in resources of many kinds, particularly oil and gas.

As regards security, the significance is still greater. Today everybody has clearly seen the true colours of the Beijing reactionaries. Taking their cue from the feudal and bourgeois administrations of yore, they strive to realise their expansionist aims following their traditional southward direction, first to use Vietnam as a springboard to attack other Southeast Asian countries. Their design is to gradually control, then monopolise the East Sea so as to encircle Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea, go down Southeast Asia, then control the sea and air routes between East Asia and the rest of the world. By asserting Vietnam's sovereignty over the part of the East Sea belonging to Vietnam in which are the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes, the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam not only defends Vietnam's legal and legitimate rights but also contributes to checking Beijing's aim of expansion on the sea, for the sake of peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

In every aspect the May 12, 1977 statement of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is indeed a statement of historic significance.

It sets the Vietnamese people a series of tasks: to administer Vietnam's maritime zones, defend its sovereignty and protect and exploit the resources in its maritime zones and continental shelf.

LUU VAN LOI

THE NEW CONTRACTUAL QUOTA SYSTEM IN AGRICULTURE IS ONE YEAR OLD

Editor's Note: The final product contractual quota system, introduced in 1980 by the agricultural co-operatives in northern Vietnam, particularly in the area around Haiphong City (See Vietnam Courier Nos. 2 and 3 — 1981), has, by instruction of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, been popularized to the whole country since early 1981. After one year of application, it has had good results: favoured by climatic conditions, this system has made it possible for the country to obtain an increase of 900,000 tons of paddy; thanks to it the winter 1981 — spring 1982 crop was also a success (See "A Bumper Crop in Hai Hau" in issue No. 8 of Vietnam Courier).

This investigation, following another one entitled "Contractual Quota System in Rice Cultivation in Haiphong" published in the previous issue, No. 8, 1982, by Huu Tho, will show what remains to be done to improve this system.

The application of the final product contractual quota system to each group of farmers and each individual farmer has been closely guided. After one year of application, many conferences have been held in the whole country (Haiphong, Quy Nhon, Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Nam Ninh province, Hue) to review this work. At the central level agronomists have organized many symposiums in this respect and meetings have been held in all districts and co-operatives.

The Fifth Party Congress assessed that the contractual quota system is a driving force behind agricultural production; it stressed that the errors and shortcomings in the guidance of this work should be corrected in time, and requested that a policy on this system should be implemented and applied by the agricultural co-operatives to all crops, not merely to rice, and to animal husbandry and handicrafts. To assess the result of the application of this system, I visited many co-operatives in the districts of Cam Binh, Tu Loc and Chau Giang (Hai Hung province), Kien Xuong (Thai Binh province), Hoai Duc (on the

outskirts of Hanoi). I made the acquaintance of many farmers and cadres to hear their opinions. Many co-operatives have applied the system since the very beginning; others maintained a cautious attitude, waiting for the results achieved in other co-operatives.

Good Points

What struck me most is the unity of view of co-op members and cadres on the correctness of the policy of broadening the final product contractual quota system to individual farmers and groups of farmers. It has the following advantages:

1. Labour is used in a better way and working hours are increased. All the farmers are concerned about the quality of their work, particularly those they have contracted.

2. The land is carefully prepared. It no longer lies fallow; even the smallest plots are cultivated. Receiving abundant manure, the soil is more fertile.

3. Intensive cultivation is applied and planting time guaranteed.

Better care and more manure are given to the ricefields.

4. Saving is made in seed preparation and workdays; the gathering of crops is more careful (no squandering of paddy, good threshing).

5. Thanks to this, food production in all the co-operatives I visited has visibly increased.

Unlike the time of "work contract", there are now many carefully tended fields after application of the final product contractual quota system; previously only intensive cultivation fields had a high production while the other fields produced a low yield. The president of the People's Committee of Tu Loc district told me: "This is a good omen. What we want is not a few fields of high yield but all of them. This can be obtained only by good and persevering work."

Encouraged by the new system, the weak co-operatives have become good, and the good ones better. The manager of Cam Binh co-operative (Hai Hung province), famous for its intensive farming, informed me that his co-operative wavered for one year before applying the new system; now he

1. Of the eight jobs in rice production, five are taken up by the co-operative: soil preparation (ploughing and harrowing by tractors or draught animals of the co-operative); irrigation and drainage by motor pumps or hand scoops; selection of seeds; preparation of fertilizers; supply of insecticides; while the other three are done by the co-op members and their families: transplanting of rice seedlings; tending; and harvesting.

recognizes that never before have his co-op members done such good work as at present. Formerly, it was difficult to urge the farmers to grow two or three rice plants in one tuft; now they do that in a self-imposed manner and the yield increase is obvious."

Errors and Shortcomings

Before making the investigation, I paid particular attention to errors and shortcomings, problems which need to be solved to perfect the new contractual quota system.

As pointed out in many reviewing conferences, the main errors and shortcomings are: the production rate fixed in the contract is low; the rice fields are parcelled out; management is not satisfactory, "blank cheques" are even given to the contracted farmers; the distribution of products is not rational; some material bases of the co-operatives are left uncared for; the collection of products leaves room for improvement...

I did my best to find the cause and degree of these shortcomings. Minh Dat, standing member of the Hanoi Party Committee, said in this respect: "Analysing the strengths and weaknesses of agricultural production, we must be objective: not all of them come from the new contractual quota system as the efficiency of the later is subjected to the State plan, policies, climate, or the application of new techniques... The contract is only a link in the management of production, but a very important link."

He added that the new system is something very new; it will be fully effective only after many years of application and amendment.

It is in this spirit that I wish to delve deeper into an analysis of the shortcomings of this system and of the problems it is posing.

"Blank cheque" Contract

When the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee issued the instruction to popularize the new system all over the country,

it did not fail to remind the co-operatives that they should not apply the "blank cheque" contract as this is not the spirit of co-operation, but the redistribution of land to individual peasants.

In all the co-operatives where I conducted the investigation, responsible cadres told me: "We have seen no 'blank cheque' in the whole chain of production, but have seen it in some link of this chain."

As we are at a stage when agriculture has been collectivized and organized according to the socialist system, each province, district or co-operative works with an orientation, a plan and technical and economic norms.

In a contract there must always be two parties, the maker and the performer. Here the maker is the co-operative, the collective, and the performer, the group of farmers or individual farmers. The performer must pledge himself to execute the clauses of the contract *in determined conditions*, that is, they undertake to fulfil and even overfulfil the provisions of the contract, while the maker must see to the supply of water, seed and fertilizer. As this is understood, to give "blank cheque" in a contract would mean, as a responsible cadre in Thai Binh province told me: "You can do what you like, I don't care a bit provided, after the harvest, you deliver to me the quantity of paddy as agreed upon."

This has fortunately not happened in this area because the co-operatives have a lot of experience in the execution of the plan of production and technical norms; that is why when making a contract, the co-op managers have all this in mind. Only we must admit that the degree of execution of these jobs is not the same in all regions. For example in Hai Hung province where the level of management is quite high, 67% of the co-operatives are weak in planning; they are good at fulfilling the plan of production and contracting loans from the bank, but weak in the mobilization of manpower and execution of the financial program. Economic and tech-

nical norms, bases for planning work, are not scientifically set, and when necessary not readjusted in time.

Besides, at present, objectively speaking, there are many difficulties which prevent the contract maker (the co-operative) from honouring all the provisions in the contract, for instance: guaranteeing the time of delivery and quantity of chemical fertilizer supplied to the co-op farmers. In this case the higher level must give "blank cheque" to the co-operative, and the co-operative must in turn give "blank cheque" to the farmers, that is it will let them work as they like in the link of production (say manuring) entrusted to them.

If "blank cheque" is understood in this way, it would not necessarily affect the final product contract at present (or the "work contract" formerly).

To end with "blank cheque" contract, efforts should be made to raise the level of planning, beginning with the guarantee of technical and economic norms, that is to improve the links of economic management of the co-operative that are outside the contract. This involves the improvement of economic management in the whole country and overcoming our present weak points in the production of energy and chemicals (affecting irrigation and manuring work, etc.).

Besides these factors, the raising of the ability of execution of the cadres is also very important to do away with the shortcomings of "blank cheque" contract and others.

Improvement of the Management of the Plan

Having dealt with the weaknesses of the *elaboration* of the plan, let us now speak of the weak points of the *management* of this plan.

The plan of agricultural production, particularly rice, has many links. To execute this plan satis-

factorily is to harmonize these links in order to develop their efficiency to the utmost. In the contractual system, a number of links are carried out by the collective, others by groups of farmers (generally a family) or by individual farmers. Above all, the co-operative must see to the good execution of all these links and not those undertaken by the collective alone. It must not let its members do as they think fit, provided they deliver all the products they have contracted for.

First, to facilitate the execution of the work, it is forbidden to parcel out the ricefields. As the ricefields are divided into small plots and the farmers are free to grow as many varieties of rice as they like, tilling and irrigation — which are the work taken up by the co-operative — are difficult to carry out (as the rice strains imported from many countries are heterogeneous, thus affecting their simultaneous growth and the harvesting time). Failing to guarantee the harmonious execution of these links is not good.

In the co-operatives at Tu Loc and Cam Binh districts, I observed the dissolution of many seed breeding teams. There are now 23 teams against 51 teams previously at Tu Loc and 23 against 37 teams at Cam Binh. But the rice plants in these two districts grow luxuriantly. It transpires that the co-op members who are all anxious for their final products, have paid great attention to the selection of seeds. Many seed breeding teams are not up to their task (they do not select good seeds and have no good storehouse), and are discredited by the farmers who go and find good seeds by themselves, resulting in the luxuriance of the ricefields but difference in the growing time of the riceplants (as the rice strains are not homogeneous), thus creating the difficulties mentioned above.

This is also due to the shortcomings of the co-operatives which do not stimulate the seed breeding teams to fulfil their task. From this we draw the conclusion that the co-operative must consolidate all its specialized teams (irrigation,

tilling, seed selection, manuring, pest control) if it wants to do good work.

We can see clearly the role of the district authorities who are eager to encourage the co-operatives to execute the five links in the chain of production under their charge; and this depends a great deal on the district agricultural service.

At a meeting attended by the co-op managers of Cam Binh district and cadres of various services of this district, the co-operatives extolled the work of the district supply service which sent them chemical fertilizers in required quantities in time. The head of Cau Ghe pumping station, the first of its kind in the North, was pleased to find that since the application of the product contract, the irrigation teams have paid more attention to the ditch network, thus meeting the requirement of the co-operatives in water. For his part, the head of the district tractor station was uneasy as he had to request the co-operatives to strengthen their seed breeding teams so that the latter could select more homogeneous seeds to save work for the mechanical tilling teams: in the last rice crop, as the co-op members have changed the rice strains of their free will, the tractors had to move frequently from one field to another, thus entailing a consumption of 13.5 kilograms of fuel per hectare instead of 12.5 kilograms as previously. In this way, all the technical branches of the district (not only the tractor station, material supplying service, pumping station, but also the bank, financial service, planning service) can draw useful lessons. This is an effective way of improving the style of work of the cadres of the district as well as at grassroots level, to enhance the efficiency of the contractual quota system.

Improvement of Distribution of Products

In the application of the new contractual system, a problem has arisen, that of the working capacity of the cadres of the co-operative, particularly the technicians working in the specialized teams (irrigation,

seed breeding teams, etc.). There are many manifestations that cadres of these teams do not do their work satisfactorily as they also have to tend the fields contracted by their families. This is quite comprehensible because they work in specialized teams but are also toiling peasants who help their families farm their land in order to eke out their income. As the wages paid them as technicians have not been raised, they feel they are disadvantaged compared with what they earn by working for their families. It is necessary to remedy this state of affairs.

During my investigation, I found that the contractual system is only applied to rice production and not to other economic activities of the co-operative. At Cam Binh, in animal husbandry and other branches such as the smithy, carpentry and brick making, the co-operatives still apply the "work contract" system (which consists of giving a determined number of work-points to work finished regardless of its quality). This method of evaluation of work is not correct as the wages paid to handicraft people are often higher than those earned by the rice producers, while their work is lighter. This leads to an unfair distribution of products in the co-operative. As has been rightly pointed out in the resolution of the Fifth Party Congress, it is necessary to study the possibility of broadening the contractual quota system to all collective agricultural units. People have told me: "Some cadres of the commune and co-operative are not pleased with this method, because at present they dispose of a "work-day fund" in cash or paddy which allow them to hire labourers to work in their place in such public utility work as road, cultural house or cemetery building. Or course, this fund in cash or in kind derives from the products distributed to them after each crop. The wages they receive as non-productive workers are in direct proportion to the number of work-points given by the co-operative (they are high if the total of work-points are high). Now should the work-points be withdrawn from other branches of activities to be on a level with the rice producers, it is possible that their wages (as non-productive workers)

would be reduced. But in my opinion, they are over anxious: if the distribution of products is fair in the co-operative (distribution in proportion to the work done), be they productive or non-productive workers, be they rice growers or artisans, their interests would not be injured as long as they do their job well. However, this is a ticklish problem which needs to be studied and solved, after long experience and discussion with the co-op members.

Technical and Material Bases of the Co-operatives

I have heard someone complain: "It is good to apply the contrac-

50,000 dong, after costs, to establish and develop its material and technical bases: consolidation of irrigation work, expansion and repair of the ditch network to bring water to the fields. After three crops in which the system has been applied, Hoai Duc district (outskirts of Hanoi) has been able to farm three more hectares of land. In 1981, Tu Loc district brought a new area of 50 hectares under cultivation.

With such an increase in income, the co-operatives can buy and repair a great number of pumps and insecticide sprayers; Hoai Duc district has bought 1,000 new sprayers. Improved carts have quickly increased in number. In

don't care a straw for these help-mates and compel them to over-work), the animals are thin or die in great number (in Cam Vu commune, Hai Hung province, up to 17 draught animals perished in this way). Thus we can see that with the contractual system, the material and technical bases of the co-operative are developed and consolidated. Conversely, the area of pigsties has shrunk. For instance, in Tu Loc district each co-operative rears only some hundred pigs instead of one thousand as before, and requires thus a small area of pigsties, as after the application of the new system, the porkers are reared in the co-op members' families; only sows and pig sires are tended by the co-operatives. The rest of the pigsties have been demolished and the bricks salvaged to build crèches and schools. However, there are co-operatives which are waiting for new decisions in this matter.

The drying yards are in the same situation. Formerly each co-operative had many of them when the harvesting was taken up by production brigades which used them collectively. Now the crops are reaped separately by each co-op member's family which threshes them in its own yard. In some co-operatives the drying yards are now used to build artisan's workshop or put at the disposal of seed breeding teams (26 co-operatives in Tu Loc district and 25 in Cam Binh district); but many yards are misused by the co-op members as seed beds or for brick making. Sometimes, even the tiles covering these yards are stolen.

In many co-operatives, the threshing machines remain unused, not because they no more meet the requirement of the new contractual system, but because of lack of electricity and a new regulation for use. Such small machines as the 12 H.P. "Lotus" tractor are moth-balled for shortage of spare parts, not as the consequence of the contractual system.

In a word, the application of this system does not entail the reduction of the number of material and technical bases of the co-operatives, though many of them no longer meet the new requirements and need to be transformed for better use.



Transplanting rice seedlings at Bac Ly co-operative, Ly Nhan district, Ha Nam Ninh province.

Photo: THE THUAN

tual quota system, but the material and technical bases of the co-operatives are left unused; this is a waste."

To see whether this complaint was well-founded, I discovered that according to the reports of various services of Hai Hung province connected with agriculture such as statistics, finance, banking, in the year when the contractual system was applied, each co-operative netted an additional income of

Hong Phuc co-operative (Hai Hung province) each household has a cart of its own.

The number of draught animals has been increased, too: in Hoai Duc district, 300 buffaloes and oxen have been bought by the co-operatives and over 2,000 by peasants' families. A co-operative in Hai Hung province has bought a dozen buffaloes. Where care is taken of draught animals, they grow fat; where they are left uncared for (the contracting farmers

Delivery of Products

In the regions where I conducted the investigation, I observed arrears of crops delivered by the farmers to the co-operatives. This debt accounts for 2% of production. Though not much affected, Cam Binh district has failed to deliver 661 tons of paddy to the State out of the yearly quota of 80,000 tons. But in the whole province of Hai Hung, this debt amounts to 2.8%.

This state of things has long existed, not just from the time of the application of the new contract. The reason is that, as the co-op members are allowed to carry the whole harvest to their houses, they have more conditions to be insolvent.

In Hai Hung province 2.3% of these debts are newly contracted but not all of them derive from the contractual system: there are debts owed by animal breeders who fail to deliver meat to the State, but the co-operative has converted these debts into paddy at the rate of 4 kilograms of paddy for one kilogram of meat; there are also debts contracted by failure to deliver subsidiary food crops and they too are converted into paddy at the ration of three kilograms of subsidiary food crop for one kilogram of paddy. However, a debt in paddy does exist. The reasons are:

— The co-operative does not satisfactorily run all the links of the chain of production; it fails to execute the contract signed with higher levels and some of its members retain the quantity of paddy deducted from the part of the quota the co-operative does not deliver to the State.

— As a result of the delay in the distribution of products, some co-operatives cannot reward or penalize their members for the fulfilment of their plan of delivery. Pending the solution of this problem, the co-op members retain the part of reward which should be granted them.

— In some localities, due to the delay in banking operations, the co-operatives do not have cash to pay their wages, the co-op members keep back a quantity of paddy as security. In the others, pending the payment of debts the State has contracted with the co-op members (debts owed for the supply of

meat, jute to the State and the food which the State sends to industrial crop regions), they retain some quantity of paddy for further deduction.

— Some families which are spendthrift and insolvent, squander their paddy and run into debt (they say that the debts owed to the co-operative are not binding). This situation is more serious when the co-operative cadres and Party members are not exemplary in the delivery of crops.

An analysis of this delay in delivery should be made to see whether it is caused by the new contractual system, and if this is affirmative, whether it is the fault of the collectivity or the co-op members. In any case this situation is not serious thanks to the good political consciousness and sense of responsibility of the co-op members.

Many measures have been taken to put an end to this state of things: early elaboration of the plan of distribution of crops to enable the production brigades to calculate beforehand the quantity of paddy obtained by each household and its food delivery; timely planning of collection of product by the co-operative on the basis of *each tuft of riceplants gathered and each spell of sunny weather*; setting up of crop collecting teams in each production brigade.

Help Given to Needy Families

When the distribution of products is made on the basis of the work done, we recognize the fact that there is a discrepancy between the incomes earned by the co-op members' families derived from the importance and quality of the work done. In my investigation conducted in many co-operatives in Hai Hung and Thai Binh provinces, I found that this discrepancy is twice as much in some families than in others. But after complete examination, this is not entirely a result of the contractual system, as there is also a discrepancy in the payment of wages for different kinds of work, and the producers of the most important food, rice, are not properly stimulated. With regard to the contractual system it is affected by the situation of small families

which have little or no capacity to work. For instance, the family of a young couple in Cam Binh district: yesterday, it had a great working capacity, but now meets with difficulties as the husband is ill and the wife pregnant.

To solve this problem, we must not return to the old form of egalitarian distribution, but call for mutual love and assistance between members of the same co-operative. Under the socialist regime, it is necessary to distribute goods in proportion to the work done and, as many co-operatives have done, to grant allowances to needy families through the "social assistance fund" or to give them light work to do to eke out their living. With regard to the families of war invalids and war martyrs, they are helped by the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union and the Women's Union.

Conclusion

The final product contractual quota system is a motive force boosting agricultural production as shown over the last year. But whatever may be its importance, this system is only a link in the management of the co-operative. To raise the efficiency of this system, it is necessary to improve all the links of this managerial work, namely, doing the planning work well and executing satisfactorily the plan of each stage of rice production and other work in the co-operative. Fixing norms was done as early as 1960 and has improved year after year, but at present these norms are lacking in many co-operatives. Better management must be enforced not only by the co-operative but also by the district authorities and higher echelons. In this work, the choice of good cadres is of prime importance.

The contractual system speeds up the improvement of agricultural technique (selection of new seeds, pest control, increase in the supply of fertilizer, development of irrigation work), to boost agricultural production. A good management will create favourable conditions for the application of the new contractual system which in turn will give a strong boost to technical improvement. Thus we can say that the new system is a catalyst accelerating the improvement of management of agricultural production.

HUU THO

The surface area of Vietnam is about 33 million hectares, of which forest land occupies more than 10 million hectares and farm land, 6 million. With a tropical climate, flowers of forest trees and plants blossom almost all the year round both in the North and the South. From time immemorial, the Vietnamese people have known how to exploit this favourable situation for rearing honey bees. Even in December, in Dong Van Highland (Ha Tuyen province), the country's highest area, people manage to raise bees and collect honey on peppermint flowers. In the southernmost part of the country, millions of swarms of bees can be raised on 150,000 hectares of different kinds of breakwater trees such as mangrove and cajuput. On the average on one hectare of farm land people can raise one or two swarms of bees. But for such species as longan, jujube, jute, maize, lychee, rambutan and some other kinds of fruit trees in southern Vietnam, each hectare can support from three to ten swarms.

For a long time, three species: *khoái* (Dorsadar), *nội* (Cerana) and *muỗi* (meaning mosquito in Vietnamese) have been raised in Vietnam. Of these, the Cerana is the most remarkable and gives a larger quantity of honey compared with other species. In the past, people used to rear bees in hives and on a family basis. After the Third Party Congress in 1960, the Government decided to raise bees on a bigger scale. Since then large movements for beekeeping have been launched in the North. In Thai Binh, Hai Hung, Ha Nam Ninh, Vinh Phu, Ha Son Binh and Thanh Hoa provinces, several beekeeping companies have been set up, each having between 2,000 and 4,500 swarms. Up to 1974, there were in the North 37 State farms with 37,500 swarms and 110 agricultural co-operatives with more than 2,500 swarms. Each year, more than 300 tons of honey and

more than 300 kg of royal jelly were delivered to the State.

In 1975, an epidemic affecting the grubs was rampant in the North, causing a high death rate. Only just over 7,000 swarms remained of State farms. Thanks to great efforts, the epidemic was halted. The remaining swarms of bees were quickly developed and by late 1981, there were 41 State farms with a total of more than 21,000 swarms. Most remarkable were the more than 10,000 *Amipifica* swarms of Italian origin. Besides, there were more than 55,000 swarms raised by individual families boosting the total number of swarms to 76,000 in the whole country. Annual honey output was from 250 tons to 280 tons, with 5 tons of pollen and 400 kg of royal jelly. Some families can produce from 900 to 2,000 kg of honey per year.

From 1981 onward, Vietnamese apiculturists have expanded their relations of co-operation with those in the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Hungary. The Vietnamese Association of Apiculturists has been established and is giving satisfactory assistance to every apiculturist. It is also a member of the

International Association of Apiculturists. It is planned that apiculture will be specialized and industrialized—a complete process of production starting from rearing, exploiting and processing of products for export and for domestic needs.

Thanks to co-operation with the Soviet Union, a contingent of specialists have been trained. Experts from the Soviet Union, Cuba and Hungary have come to Vietnam for on-the-spot study to work out plans for co-operation.

With favourable natural conditions and a variety of suitable trees, Vietnamese apiculturists will be able to produce the *Amipifica* species both for export and for home use. Seven areas specializing in bee producing have been formed throughout the country from Son La—Lai Chau province to Nam Bo, South Vietnam proper. In the future, Vietnam will produce bee strains for the Soviet Union during the four winter months, enabling it to replace 5 million swarms which have already reached their honey and pollen capacity.

DAO QUANG THEP

Pepper is a perennial industrial plant of high economic value. As well as being a favourite spice, pepper is also a material for the food processing, pharmaceutical and aromatic industries, and as such is a highly appreciated export item.

In Binh Tri Thien province, thanks to suitable soil, climate and weather, pepper can be grown practically everywhere. On the basaltic soil of Quang Tri the plantations give a high output of high-quality pepper corns. The pepper of Vinh Linh, Gio Linh and Cam Lo has a long reputation both at home and abroad for its firmness, aroma and high piquancy. Today, Binh Tri Thien has 506 hectares of pepper of which 312 hectares are grown on seven State farms, the rest on co-operative or family plots. More than half of the pepper area has begun to yield fruit. In 1981 Binh Tri Thien exported 202 tons of pepper corns and the figure is expected to be higher this year.

The results obtained so far are still modest compared with the potential. In particular, the rate of expansion of the pepper area is still too slow. At several farms only between 5—7 hectares are added each year. Not many agricultural co-ops have undertaken pepper growing alongside food-crop farming. As for private plots, except for a few places like Ben Hai and Dong Ha with a long tradition in pepper growing, this occupation has not become a firm habit. Generally speaking, pepper output is still low. While the Tan Lam farm has as much as 4.3 tons of dried pepper corns per hectare, the other farms have yielded only an average of 2.6 tons.

With the aim of boosting pepper growing in the last few years the Binh Tri Thien agricultural service has, jointly with the State farms and pepper growing areas, undertaken elaborate studies of this plant. Many seminars have been held and extensive experimentation has been carried out on a variety of questions: seeds, fertilizer, watering, pesticide, harvesting and processing. The two most fundamental and also biggest problems in the present effort to increase pepper area and carry out intensive

cultivation are the questions of strains and trellising.

Experimentation has shown that the big-leaf pepper plant is the strain most suitable for Binh Tri Thien. However, to have a high output of pepper the first thing is to choose good cuttings. A good cutting must be made from the main stalk of the plant after one to three years of planting. Such plants must have already borne

nursery which receives priority supply and is tended in the best possible way so that each hectare produces enough cuttings for planting on 10—12 hectares after three times of cutting.

Trellising is the other important factor for the growth of the pepper plant. The burgeoning and budding rate will drop drastically if the plant is not given a timely and

PEPPER PRODUCTION IN BINH TRI THIEN

fruit and have fresh and young sticking roots which have not yet degenerated. Due to poor selection of cuttings the survival rate of pepper plants at many farms is still very low and even the surviving plants do not thrive. Good strains are rarely seen on private plots. Many families, ignorant of any technique of pepper growing, have planted top branches and even small branches. This leads to an abundant foliage but a poor fruition rate. The agricultural service has charged each State farm with producing enough pepper cuttings to meet not only its own growing demand but also to supply the co-operatives and families in the neighbourhood. Each farm has set up its own pepper

strong enough support. For generations, the local population has used a tree called "muoc" as a living trellis for the pepper plant. This is a tall tree with a straight trunk, hard wood and a rugged bark that helps the auxiliary roots of the pepper plant to stick fast to the trellis tree. It has a moderate foliage which provides shade for the pepper plant during summer and in winter it sheds leaves, leaving all the sunshine to the pepper plant. Another good side of the "muoc" is that its roots strike deeply in the earth which increases resistance to storms and at the same time offers little competition with the pepper plant in the

(Continued on, page 17)

Vietnamese medicine:

THE SOCIALIST OPTION AND A SENSE OF NATIONAL REALITY

Millennia of feudalism and a century of colonial slavery: such historical conditions were obviously not favourable to health work in Vietnam. Infectious tropical diseases caused by bacteria and viruses were rampant in all regions of the country, especially in the rural areas. Chronic epidemics: cholera, small-pox, plague, typhoid, poliomyelitis, dysentery, exanthematic typhus, encephalitis, meningitis, etc., erupted from time to time. Social diseases — malaria, trachoma, tuberculosis, leprosy, worms, venereal diseases — affected large numbers of people. According to statistics of the colonial period, between 1936 and 1939, which were the most stable years under French rule, the general mortality rate was 26 per thousand, infant mortality was 300-400 per thousand, and maternal mortality 20 per thousand — thus breaking all world records, if one may use such an expression.

To cope with such a disastrous situation, the former administration used tragically inadequate means. For a then total population of 18 million, there were in the whole country only 47 hospitals and 9 maternity clinics totalling 4,000 beds and located mostly in the major

cities and towns, and about a hundred physicians, i.e. one for every 180,000 people. The Hanoi College of Medicine and Pharmacy was the only medical college for the three countries of Indochina — Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea — and graduated each year, starting from 1936, 20 medical doctors, 5 pharmacists and about 20 State-certified midwives. To remedy the shortage of trained physicians, a Medical Assistance School was set up in Saigon in 1941 turning out health officers called "secondary-level Indochinese physicians." The four Pasteur Institutes — located in Hanoi, Saigon, Nha Trang, and Da Lat — prepared barely enough vaccines and serums to ward off epidemics from administrative and industrial centres and colonial garrison towns. As for the rural population, it was neglected by both the official medical network and private doctors. Fortunately, there were, in scattered fashion, practitioners of traditional medicine, which, following the triumph of the revolution, received a strong boost from the new administration.

The Vietnamese health service started practically from scratch. At the time of the revolution in

1945 there were 51 medical doctors, 152 assistant-doctors, 1,227 male and female nurses, and 215 midwives in the country. There was no pharmaceutical industry, and the stocks of imported medications were completely depleted. There was a tragic shortage of anaesthetics, and in many a military hospital operations were performed without them in the first days of the war of resistance to French aggression. In the *maquis*, one tablet of quinacrine (an anti-malaria drug) would be dissolved in a bowl of water and shared by three or four patients, less for any curative effect than for the boost it might give their morale. Great efforts, however, were made and health activities were stepped up as the war went on. In the highlands of Viet Bac, where the headquarters of the resistance were set up, a College of Medicine and Pharmacy was organized on the basis of the former Hanoi establishment. Its students alternated theoretical studies with tours of duty in military campaigns. Secondary schools of medicine and pharmacy were subsequently opened in the war zones to train assistant-doctors

and pharmacists, while crash courses for nurses and midwives were held in large numbers in provinces controlled by the resistance. The Institute of Microbiology under the Health Ministry continued to operate in the hills, turning out vaccines against cholera, small-pox, typhoid... In all three parts of the country—the North, the Centre, and the South—medicines were produced using handicraft methods. By the time of the Dien Bien Phu victory (7 May 1954) which put an end to the First Indochina War, a comprehensive health network had taken shape, with doctors heading services at regional or division levels, assistant-doctors at provincial or regimental levels, senior nurses at district or battalion levels, and nurses at communal or company levels. Traditional medicine contributed a big share in cadres and medicines. It was in this way that during the nine years of anti-French resistance, from 1945 to 1954, the groundwork

was laid for the health services, both civilian and military, of fighting Vietnam.

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The 1954 Geneva Accords, which formally recognized the national independence and sovereignty of Vietnam, provided for a temporary partition of the country. But owing to American intervention, this division was to last 21 years, until the liberation of the South in May 1975. During that period, the North and the South underwent two opposing trends of development: while the former took the path to socialism, the latter was hitched to the chariot of neo-colonialism.

In the North, once the stage of economic rehabilitation was completed, a 3-year plan for economic and cultural development (1958-1960) got under way, in the course of which the socialist transformation of private capital-

ist industry and trade was carried out in the towns and agricultural co-operation in the countryside. The First Five-Year Plan (1961-1965) was interrupted by American aggression in early 1965.

It was during this period between two wars of resistance, from 1955 to 1965, that the line concerning health care and sanitation work took definite shape on the strength of previous experience and in anticipation of the next stage, that of socialist construction and industrialization. The directives laid down by the Worker's Party, now the Communist Party, contained these five main points:

— Vietnam's socialist medicine serves production and national defence and primarily cares for manual and intellectual workers, mothers and children. It contributes to raising the people's living standards and pays especial attention to the national minorities;

— Prevention combined with cure is the principle governing the organization and operation of the health network. With regard to treatment, the patient is to be looked upon as an organic whole;

— The achievements of traditional medicine shall be turned to good account and studied in the light of modern science;

— With regard to organization, we must rely on the masses who shall be educated in matters of health care and sanitation and who are to be mobilized by persuasion.

— It must be added that Vietnamese medicine shall rely mainly on its own efforts while striving to expand international co-operation and making the most of foreign assistance.

For a country which is economically under-developed and has furthermore been ravaged by long wars, it may seem, if not utopian, at least unrealistic, to dream of general medical assistance, eradication of social diseases, systematic



Spraying insecticide in Dong Hai new economic zone, Minh Hai province.

Photo: XUAN CAU

disease prevention, and well-organized medical research, all at the same time. And yet, such a dream has come true—in the North as early as in the years preceding American aggression and then in the very crucible of the war of resistance to that aggression. This success is accounted for first of all by the line advocated by the Communist Party in the field of health care and sanitation work: this line, while socialist-oriented, takes into account the national reality, which is bound up with centuries-old economic under-development. Inspired by a spirit of offensive, it emphasizes disease prevention without neglecting treatment. Setting great store by the national heritage and the people's experiences, it puts new value on traditional medicine and uses it to complement modern medicine. Health work is regarded as revolutionary work and assumes both a scientific-technical and a mass character. The masses are both the mainspring and the beneficiary of health work, and broad-ranging popular movements are launched in which health cadres constitute the scientific-technical core, while leadership is provided by Party organizations at various levels. Deeply conscious of the national requirements and possibilities, health work turns to the best possible account the means available in an under-developed economy in order to fight those diseases that are the most closely related to under-development. Far from making its own development conditional upon economic development, it strives to keep ahead of the latter, considering Man to be the primary factor in socialist construction and national defence.

On the basis of those fundamental considerations, the State devotes one-third of its social budget to health work, to which the people contribute their share,

in the form of materials and manpower for the building of communal health stations, and also in cash for the purchase of medical equipment. The State provides remuneration for medical personnel at the central, provincial and district levels, while agricultural co-operatives pay the salaries of medical staff at the grassroots. Such a system is possible in a socialist regime, in which the interests of the State and the people are at one. Within a record time, it can give birth to an omnipresent, multi-echelon health-care network. On the eve of the liberation of the South, there were in the North 444 State-run hospitals and 595 infirmaries totalling 50,000 beds, while nearly 6,000 health-care stations totalling 45,000 beds had been set up at the level of the commune through popular initiative. While there had been one physician for every 180,000 people in 1939 and for every 126,685 in 1955, the figure for 1970 was one doctor and one assistant-doctor for every 763 people. While the war of resistance against American aggression was raging, from 1965 to 1972, not a single patient, not a single woman in childbirth had been left without care in the North and no serious epidemic had ever broken out. Better still, the four main social diseases of colonial days had been noticeably reduced: malaria, trachoma, tuberculosis and leprosy.

The health system of the North had thus proved its superiority before being brought into the liberated areas in the South and eventually into Saigon itself following the collapse of the puppet regime. The legacy of American neo-colonialism, far from being any lighter in this field than that of French classical colonialism, had been even worse. At the time of liberation, cholera and plague were smouldering in the major cities, next to plush residential quarters. Other infec-

tious diseases such as dengue and poliomyelitis were endemic with frequent outbursts. Drug addiction affected people by the hundreds of thousands and venereal diseases by the million. There were large numbers of people suffering from tuberculosis, leprosy, mental ailments, as well as war invalids and people with physical disabilities. Malaria was rampant in the highlands, among the national minorities in particular, and was a threat to 10 million people. In face of that ocean of sickness, the former Saigon Administration had set up, besides the medical system needed by its armed forces, an essentially private medical network, in which doctors cared only for their practices. There were some modern hospitals with sophisticated equipment in the major cities but they were only showcases. The few results obtained in the field of health care soon came to nothing owing to the continued existence of the sources of evils.

Following liberation in 1975 the organization of medicine in the South was restructured, this undertaking being completed in the main in 1979. At present, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam possesses a unified and homogeneous medical system in which traditional and modern medicines, far from excluding each other, are integrated from the grassroots level up. On the civilian side, in 1980 throughout the country there existed 677 hospitals, either general or specialized, and 9,886 health stations at the communal level totalling 201,234 beds, together with 55 pharmaceutical plants (14 of them are national undertakings), eight medical and pharmaceutical colleges, 47 higher schools of medicine and pharmacy. The figures for medical personnel came to a total of 224,236, among them 12,936 doctors, 5,131 pharmacists, 29,061 assistant-doctors, 4,687 assistant-pharmacists, 2,833 State-certified

midwives, 4,084 practitioners of traditional medicine, more than 12,000 secondary-level technicians and more than 80,000 auxiliaries. In Socialist Vietnam there is now one doctor for every 4,172 people, one doctor and one assistant-doctor for every 1,277 people. Although in World Bank classification, Vietnam is among the 25 countries with the lowest GNP, Western authors point out that it has faced morbidity and mortality risks with "a degree of success unknown in the developing world", "superior indeed to what has been achieved in countries of southern Europe in the late 1960's, such as Italy, Greece and Spain."¹

Starting in 1961, when the First Five-Year Plan got under way, Vietnamese medicine embarked on a planned development. A new stage began in which it was now possible to initiate some kind of association of medical work with physical culture and sport. The country's Constitutions have formally recognized the people's right to health care. The 1981 Constitution, adopted by the 7th National Assembly, says in article 47:

"The State shall see to the protection and improvement of the people's health; build a Vietnamese medicine with emphasis laid on disease prevention; combine modern medicine and pharmacology with national traditional medicine and pharmacology; associate prevention and treatment, the emphasis being on prevention; integrate the State-run health system with that developed by the people themselves at every echelon. The State and society give protection to mothers and infants, and encourage family planning."

DAI DONG

1. François Rémy, *La santé au cœur de la vie*, in *Santé du monde*, May 1968 issue.

PEPPER...

(Continued from page 13)

matter of nutriment since the latter's roots are nearer to the surface. But the "muoc" has the defect of growing slowly, being able to serve as support for the pepper plant only after seven or eight years. Accordingly, to expand the pepper area quickly, the "muoc" alone is not enough. In some localities, people have also used wooden trellises, but apart from being easily rotted by exposure, a wooden trellis also has the defect of being unable to provide additional sap for the pepper plant which is a commensal plant. Moreover, the use of wooden trellises would require an enormous quantity of timber and this would further aggravate the danger of forest denuding, to say nothing of the difficulties and expenditure involved in the felling and transportation of timber.

After many years of experimentation the Tan Lam farm has provided for itself a great variety of support trees to meet the demand in both extensive and intensive cultivation of pepper. A tree that can serve as support for the pepper plant must fill the following five conditions:

- be a commensal of the pepper tree;
- have a straight trunk and not too dense a foliage;
- have deep roots, hard wood and a rugged bark;
- live at least 25 years to provide a lifelong support for the pepper plant; and
- finally it must be fast growing and pest tolerant.

In addition to the "muoc", many other trees have filled these five conditions, such as the jack-fruit tree, the *nuc nac*, the kapok, the teak tree, etc. The rubber tree and the *rang* may also suit the purpose. Among the trees mentioned above, the jack-fruit tree is the most important. It is being grown on several hectares at the Tan

Lam farm to serve as support for the pepper plants. The jack-fruit tree has the advantage of growing very quickly and can serve as trellis for the pepper tree after only one year. It is also easy to plant and proliferate and has a foliage that can be subject to any degree of pruning.

The pepper processing industry is being broadened in Binh Tri Thien province. It has long been a popular assumption that pepper, though an export item of high economic value, involves too simple a processing industry which does not help much in the solution of unemployment, a major problem in the locality. To solve this issue, the local research institutes have made persevering studies and experimentation and have recently succeeded in extracting from defective pepper corns a substance called piperin from which to synthesize liatropin, an aroma used in the perfume and liquor industries, and also savisin for the production of balm and alcohol for the treatment of such ailments as cold-induced stomach ache, digestive complaints, toothache, sore throat and also as a mosquito repellent. Research is under way to use savisin instead of DDT. In the past, the Tan Lam farm used to throw away tons of defective pepper corns after each harvest. If they can retrieve 40 or so grammes of piperin as has been done in the laboratory, the farm will have a sizable additional income. The farm has signed contracts with several establishments for mass production of savisin.

A plan is also afoot for expanding the pepper-growing area to one thousand hectares from now to the end of 1986, of which 840 hectares will be located in the State farms. This means that from 1990 onward each year Binh Tri Thien would have between 2,000 — 3,000 tons of pepper for export, which would be a noticeable contribution to the development of the national economy and to the improvement of the local people's life.

QUOC VINH

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND MODERN MEDICINE — A COMBINATION

Traditional medicine, whose origins are lost in time, is also called oriental medicine in contrast to western, or modern, medicine. A close scrutiny reveals two components: a popular, indigenous, element, and a "scholarly" element from Chinese sources.

Popular medicine is wholly empirical and bound up with local and family traditions. It has no theoretical basis, is not built into a system, and uses local medicinal substances. It consists of a multitude of cures handed down from one generation to the next and kept strictly secret within a family, a clan, or at most a village community. As practised by healers, it is often accompanied by superstitious procedures, sorcery and magic. Its diversity springs from the multinational character of the Vietnamese population (54 ethnic groups) and the existence of many natural regions with different climatic and pedological conditions resulting in a great variety of medicinal flora and fauna. The traditional medicine of the Viet majority group is dubbed "southern medicine", Vietnam being situated south of China.

The "scholarly" element, "northern medicine", seems to have penetrated our country even before the Christian era with the Chinese conquerors, whose domination was to last a thousand years until the early 10th century. Based on ancient Chinese philosophy with its *yin-yang* (the female and male principles) theory and five universal elements — metal, wood, water, fire and earth — it forms an elaborate system on both the theoretical and practical planes, hence its superior position vis-à-vis popular medicine. While the latter uses "southern remedies" made up of local medicinal substances it employs "northern medi-

cines" either imported from China or prepared according to methods of Chinese pharmacology and given Chinese names. In feudal times it was part of the programme of study of Confucian scholars who had to acquaint themselves with four fundamental disciplines: Chinese classical humanities, medicine, geomancy and astrology. Most practitioners of this medicine were scholars who had failed the mandarin examinations; they practised it on either a professional or semi-professional basis, and trained disciples within their families according to the method of direct observation

Over the centuries, those practitioners gradually brought modifications to classical Chinese medicine, adapting it to Vietnamese conditions and enriching it with Vietnamese experiences, so much so that it finally became what French orientalist later were to call Sino-Vietnamese medicine. In traditional Vietnamese society, the upper classes set great store by this "northern medicine" with its imported medicaments while the common people were forced to rely on "southern medicine". Thus for many centuries these two medicines were practised side by side and their association under the guidance of famous masters brought happy results.

According to abundant historical testimony, traditional medicine reached a high level of development under the successive national dynasties. The Tran dynasty, which repelled three Sino-Mongol invasions in the 13th century, had a well-organized military medical service with hospitals, medicinal-plant farms, and pharmacies. Specialists of national medical history have recorded 150 names of famous physicians who practised in various periods. One of them was Tue Tinh, a Buddhist monk

living in the 14th century who was lauded as "the god of southern medicine". He was the author of a medical treatise containing 3,872 cures for 182 ailments and syndromes, and a pharmacological treatise entitled *Nam Duoc Than Hieu* (Miraculous Effects of Southern Medicines) in which 630 species of medical flora were described with their curative properties. Another was Hai Thuong Lan Ong, who lived in the 18th century and was a great humanist as well as an eminent physician. He left his mark on an entire epoch and his precious legacy to posterity was a voluminous treatise entitled *Y Tong Tam Linh* (General Principles of Medicine) comprising 28 books in 66 volumes, which contains studies of classical Chinese medicine, Vietnamese popular medicine, pharmacology, hygiene, deontology and a record of his own experiences in the healing art, that "art based on humanity" to use his own words.

In spite of its great wealth and prestige, however, traditional medicine could not compete with modern medicine brought into the country and upheld by the colonial power. Thanks to its scientific basis and technical means, modern medicine won spectacular successes especially in the detection and treatment of infectious diseases, endemic as well as epidemic, and in surgical operations. It was blindly worshipped by certain westernized urban strata. Yet, only a very small part of the population had access to its service: French colonials, functionaries, members of the urban bourgeoisie... The great majority of the people had to rely on traditional methods and remedies, which were looked down upon by followers of the new school. Those methods and remedies regained their popularity under Japanese occupation when war and blockade interrupted medical sup-

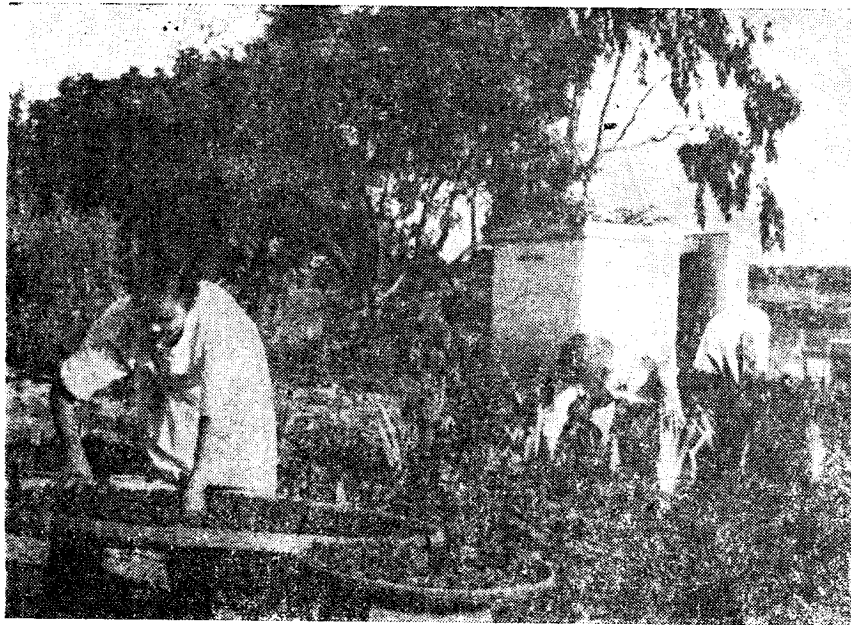
plies from France, but they truly developed only under the revolutionary regime.

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The new regime, conscious defender of national values, paid great attention to restoring traditional medicine. It was stimulated in this effort by necessity. Faced with a shortage of medical equipment and medicines, it encouraged practitioners of the old school and village healers and gave the green light to personal initiative. Thus the period extending from the triumph of the August Revolution (1945) to the victorious end of the anti-French resistance (1954) was marked by spontaneous, almost uncontrolled, development of traditional medicine, which was practised alongside modern medicine. In some resistance areas, western-trained doctors with a traditionalist bent engaged in tentative efforts to use popular remedies or to associate traditional tonics with modern curative medicines. Good results were obtained in those initial experiments but no one was yet certain which road to follow.

This was shown by President Ho Chi Minh in a message to the National Conference of Health Workers in February 1955. He called on them to "build up our own medicine" which must be "scientific, national and popular". He said: "Our forebears gained much experience in the treatment of diseases with southern and northern (read Vietnamese and Chinese, *Ed.*) medicines. In order to enlarge the sphere of our medical activities let us try to combine traditional medicine with modern medicine."

More concrete directives were to come from the Party and the State, which recommend that



Medicinal plants at Tien Ngoai commune, Duy Tien district, Ha Nam Ninh province.

Photo: THU HOAI

our health workers combine the two medicines in all fields: prevention, treatment, pharmacy, cadre training, and scientific research; study traditional medicine systematically in the light of modern medicine on both the theoretical and practical planes while carefully collecting popular cures in all localities and ethnic groups; work out appropriate methods of treatment for various ailments which might be either traditional, modern, or a combination of the two; grow more plants and raise more animals which supply materia medica; and step up the making of pharmaceutical products from local materials...

In short, the aim was to build a specific Vietnamese medicine in which the traditional and modern schools, far from excluding each other or working separately, were to develop in symbiosis and work in a guided relationship, the latter contributing its scientific method-

ology and sophisticated techniques, the former its wealth of experience and inexhaustible source of materia medica, not to mention its as yet unexplained mysteries.

This was an immense and difficult undertaking calling for protracted and patient efforts, not only from the State but also from the people, beginning with the practitioners of the old school and the healers themselves. A machinery was devised which had to satisfy both scientific-technical and socio-political requirements. On the State level, there are at the centre a Traditional Medicine Department and a Commission for the Alliance of Traditional and Modern Medicines which advises the Health Ministry, under which several research centres have been set up: the National Institute of Traditional Medicine, the National Institute of Materia Medica, the Institute of Traditional Medicine

and Pharmacy of Ho Chi Minh City, and recently the National Institute of Acupuncture. The provincial and district health services each have a traditional medicine section and each health station at the grassroots has a worker in charge of traditional medicine. The Vietnam Association of Traditional Medicine Practitioners, with a membership of some 15,000, has branches in all provinces, districts, and communes. It has contributed greatly not only to the practice of traditional medicine but also to the revival of precious methods and drugs which were in danger of disappearing.

The health services and the Association have jointly opened initiation and refresher courses, the aim being to train a core of health cadres capable of promoting the alliance of the two medicines. Doctors, assistant-doctors, and nurses of the modern school are acquainted with ancient theories and practices while practitioners of the old school are familiarized with elements of anatomy, physiology, microbiology, hygiene and epidemiology in a gradual way. Starting from the 1960's traditional medicine has been part of the curriculum of medical colleges and schools, and a distinct branch of learning for those who wish to specialize in it. The Tue Tinh School of Traditional Medicine exclusively trains practitioners in traditional methods, many of which, while effective, have yet to be explained in a modern, scientific way.

At present, one may see working side by side, at all levels of the national health network, doctors, assistant-doctors and nurses specialized in traditional medicine on the one hand, and practitioners of traditional medicine who have updated their knowledge on the other. In health stations at the

grassroots level, all common ailments are treated with traditional remedies: fever, catarrh, flu, migraine, diarrhoea, dysentery, coughs, boils and some gynaecological conditions such as dysmenorrhoea and leucorrhoea. All hospitals, either at district, provincial or central level, have a traditional medicine section which helps reduce to a minimum any recourse to chemotherapy. There is also a hospital network specializing in traditional medicine which completes the general network. It comprises dozens of hospitals run either by the health services or by the Association of Traditional Medicine Practitioners, not to mention hundreds of infirmaries and thousands of medical co-operatives treating outpatients under the sponsorship of the Association and the control of the health services. For diagnosis, modern clinical and paraclinical means are used most of the time owing to the lack of precision of ancient methods, especially with regard to the detection of infectious and parasitic diseases. For treatment, traditional means are made the most of: phytotherapy, acupuncture, moxotherapy, massokinesitherapy... In cases where modern treatment is absolutely necessary: chemotherapy, physiotherapy, surgery, etc., traditional tonics are used in combination, with a view to improving the general condition of the patient, shortening the duration of the treatment and reducing the period of convalescence.

Workers in traditional medicine have perseveringly and systematically collected cures (more than 20,000 so far) for a large variety of ailments and syndromes. They have retrieved 550 ancient books of medicine and pharmacy left by Tue Tinh, Hai Thuong Lan Ong, Hoang Don Hoa, Nguyen Dai Nang

and other famous masters, written in classical Chinese or *nom*, the national demotic script inspired by Chinese ideographs. Many of these books have been translated into modern Vietnamese and published together with translations of classical Chinese medical books from China. From the Hanoi Medical Publishing House and various research institutes, nearly 200 books of research or popularization on traditional medicine and pharmacy have appeared, written by scientists in collaboration with practitioners of the old school, not to mention textbooks used in medical colleges and secondary schools and lesser works published in the provinces. Finally, three periodicals are circulated nationally: the Review of Traditional Medicine, the Bulletin of Traditional Medicine, and the Newsletter of Traditional Medicine.

On the basis of classical knowledge and popular experiences, medications have been devised against an increasing range of ailments from functional troubles to microbial or parasitic diseases to allergic conditions: digestive troubles, ulcer syndromes, haemorrhoids, athrepsy, viral hepatitis, whooping cough, cystitis, keratitis, ulcer of the cornea, intro-ocular haemorrhage, high blood pressure, asthma, poisoning and cardiovascular collapse due to snake bites... Some medicines have proved beneficial in cases of chyluria, obliterating arthritis, and lipoidic nephrosis, which are usually quite difficult to cure. There is a wide range of very popular tonics, both general and specific, prepared from either vegetal or animal substances. They are believed to prop up either the *yin* or *yang* principle in the patient, and to have effect on such and such an organ of the body corresponding to such and such a universal element. The peasantry in

particular have great faith in them and they have proved quite helpful in conditions of general and permanent under-nourishment.

Traditional pharmacy has also been given a great boost: of the 450 medicinal substances used in cures of "scholarly" traditional medicine, many come from vegetal species grown in China or at least in regions of cold or temperate climates. Following patient research and experimentation our specialists have succeeded in acclimatizing a number of them and finding substitutes for others. Our major achievement, however, has been an inventory of the medicinal plants of Vietnam, with their pharmacological properties and geographical distribution. Of the 13,000 vegetal species of Vietnam, 1,200 belonging to 200 families have been ascertained as having curative properties, located either in the whole plant or in one or several of its parts: leaf, flower, fruit, stem, wood, bark, root, sap. Besides functional remedies and tonics, our medicinal plants yield effective anti-inflammatory, anti-allergic and antibacterial substances which can combat chemo-resistant microbes. To cite but one example, *rap ca* (*boutuynia cordata*) is quite effective against ulcer of the cornea caused by *bacillus pyocyaneus*, which frequently leads to blindness. Of the 100 or so most frequently used vegetal medicinal substances, a selection has been made of 25-35 so-called fundamental species, which are indispensable for the treatment of current ailments in rural areas, and a drive has been launched to encourage their cultivation by every peasant household.

The Vietnamese fauna is also a rich source of materia medica. From time immemorial various insects, molluscs, reptiles, and the

organs of various mammals (bear gall, tiger bone, deer antlers, etc.) have been used in medication. On the basis of ancestral experience and following analysis and experimentation according to scientific methods, new value has been attached to this treasure.

Now, the mere gathering of natural medicinal substances no longer suffices. Besides the medicinal-plant gardens in the communes, which help attain relative self-sufficiency in basic therapy at the grassroots, now there are State-run farms specialized in growing high-value vegetal species or the raising of animals providing medicinal substances: deer, snakes, monkeys, geckos, etc.

Phytotherapy stands at the top of the list. Traditional remedies do not as a rule call for complicated preparation or sophisticated equipment. Vegetal medicinal substances used in popular cures are often administered orally, either raw or in infusion. On the other hand, substances used by "scholarly" medicine are preliminarily fired and are taken in decoction, powder, pill, extract, jelly, etc. In any event, preparation of traditional remedies can be easily practised at the grassroots level. However, a more rational, scientific and economical way of preparing them has had to be found. Using advanced technology, our pharmaceutical industry has been able to extract a large number of medicinal essences and alkaloids and prepare some 300 medicines from traditional materia medica. The first national pharmacopoeia, completed in late 1976 after 15 years of work, reserves a prominent place, besides modern medicines, for drugs of traditional pharmacy: 250 scientifically scrutinized and time-tested remedies and a list of 180 current medicinal plants with their usual Sino-Vietnamese and

Latin names and their pharmacological properties, together with 120 vegetal-or animal-based drugs.

Besides medication for the treatment of diseases, traditional medicine includes very effective methods for reducing fractures and dislocations and a diversified physiotherapy comprising acupuncture, moxotherapy, massokinesitherapy and so-called "vital" physical exercises. Acupuncture, in many cases very effective and needing no medicinal additives, is practised in Vietnam in all health establishments, including health stations at the grassroots. According to conclusions reached at an ad-hoc inter-regional seminar organized by the World Health Organization in 1979, — these conclusions being based on clinical experience — this ancient therapy, still wrapped in mystery, has proved its effectiveness in at least fifty ailments, among them those related to the upper respiratory system and the general respiratory system, and to ocular, stomatological, gastro-intestinal, nervous, and musculo-skeletal troubles. Doctors in Ho Chi Minh City have successfully used acupuncture in the treatment of drug-addiction, a tragic sequel of US neo-colonial occupation. While the underlying principles have remained the same as those discovered perhaps many centuries ago, the therapy has undergone a rapid evolution in recent times with such techniques as electro-acupuncture, pharmacopuncture, acupunctural analgesia, etc. The first consists, once the needles are planted, in maintaining excitation by electrical stimulation of the points of acupuncture: this is done by hand by quickly rotating the needles between the thumb and the index finger, from right to left and vice versa, moving them the while up and down. The second technique

uses hollow needles to inject, into the meridians concerned, tiny doses of medication: the effects are immediate... Analgesia through acupuncture, discovered in China in 1958, has been successfully applied in Vietnam since the 1960's to tens of thousands of patients in about sixty types of intervention. Other methods coming under traditional physiotherapy have also proved quite effective: digipuncture or acupressure, which relieves pain through pressure with the fingers on certain points of acupuncture; moxibustion, which achieves similar results through application of heated sticks of mugwort leaves, etc.

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Post-treatment complications due to side-effects of chemical drugs and radio-active substances have been at the origin of a return to phytotherapy throughout the world and there has been renewed interest in acupuncture and other ancient therapeutic methods. This further justifies the State policy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam with regard to traditional medicine. However, while the revaluation of the latter has steadily progressed, its alliance with modern medicine is still at the initial stage. In many cases, there is a pure and simple overlap between methods of the two schools, while conflicts between the two have not entirely disappeared.

The point is to make traditional medicine a complement of modern medicine and bring about their gradual fusion. Vietnamese medicine of the future, the result of this process, will include both in an organic whole while being qualitatively different from either of them.

LE DAN

A NEW GENERATION MATURED AFTER THE AUGUST 1945 REVOLUTION

On the occasion of the 37th anniversary of the August Revolution (August 19, 1945) and National Day (September 2, 1945), we introduce one of the achievements brought about by the Revolution, i.e. the training of a new generation of qualified people, who are now working with enthusiasm for their people and homeland. They are young intellectuals who have a good grasp of scientific and technical knowledge and who are now taking part in the scientific and technological revolution in Vietnam. They have made an active contribution to change the appearance of the Vietnamese countryside. The spirit of the August Revolution has also spread to the South. Since liberation, many young people in Ho Chi Minh City have enthusiastically participated in social activities such as teaching at evening classes...

PROFILE OF A SCIENTIST

In 1968 a 28-year-old Vietnamese student presented a brilliant thesis for a master's degree at the University of Odessa in the Soviet Union. The paper, entitled "Absorbent activities of the Small Intestine in Internal Organs Pathological Conditions", was described by Academician A.M. Ugolev, President of the All-Union Association of Physiology, as a "quasi-doctoral paper in many respects".

Six years later, at the same institution, the same man defended his doctoral thesis, which was warmly received by the jury. He was also offered a professorship, but declined the honour, saying that he had done very little to deserve it.

Nguyen Tai Luong, — doctor of biology — now heads the Physio-

Biochemistry Centre at the Vietnam Institute of Sciences.

Far From Home

Nguyen Tai Luong was born at Ly Nhan, Ha Nam Ninh province. During the war against the French colonialists, he followed his parents to Thanh Hoa province, where he studied at the Lam Son High School. In 1960 he was admitted to the Hanoi Medical College and was granted a scholarship to the Soviet Union, where he was assigned to the Department of Biology at the Metnikov University, Odessa.

In the summer of 1964, after he had finished his fourth year, Luong was sent to do practical work at the Academy of Physiology in Kiev where he worked at the Physio-

Biochemistry Department under Prof. Dr. Potsibyakin. The theme assigned to him was "Energetic reflex activities of the stomach on epidermic points" and his work consisted mainly in feeding animals with bread, meat and milk and taking measurements of their body temperature and electric tension. Luong kept his nose to the grindstone and, after a fortnight, duly handed in the data he had painstakingly collected. His tutor, instead of calling it a day, told Luong that what he had produced was just run-of-the-mill stuff. "Try something better," the demanding professor urged.

"Think harder, my young friend," the professor continued. "Think and new ideas will come. Nothing we know is perfect. Everything is in the midst of development."

Luong pondered over the advice but could not come up with any original ideals. Finally, it struck him that stimulation with rice, which is the staple food in Vietnam, might give different results from stimulation with European foods. "That sounds interesting," agreed Prof. Potsibyakin when informed of the idea. "Start on it now."

The experiment proved to be very interesting indeed. In the case of bread, meat and milk, body tem-

perature and electric tension increased gradually for one hour to reach a maximum before dropping. But stimulation with rice brought about two peaks, at the first and third hours.

"This is new," remarked Prof. Potsibyakin after controlling the results. Whilst a medical student Luong had also suggested a new method of checking gastric secretion instead of inserting a long plastic tube into the stomach. He observed that the increase of gastric secretion gives rise to the increase of body temperature and electric tension. This was recognised as a "significant discovery", and Luong was recommended for post-graduate studies.

Luong returned to the Soviet Union in 1970 to work on his doctoral thesis and, for four years, he co-operated with one of his former teachers, Doctor R.O. Feitelberg, in writing a book entitled "Absorption in the Digestive System". He also acted as tutor to two Soviet post-graduates — Dr. S.A. Polina and Dr. A. Rahitberghiev, while teaching in the fourth year and at evening classes. His Soviet colleagues found him a dynamic, devoted and helpful comrade.

A Dedicated Man

Since 1974 Luong has been directing two State research projects: the use of locally available amino acids, vitamins, micronutrients and vegetal antibiotics in livestock breeding, and research on protein-rich resources.

Luong and his staff at the Physio-Biochemistry Centre are working flat out for higher output in animal husbandry and for greater effectiveness in family planning. They worked out an easier method of producing Foliculine. This is a drug for controlling secondary production and regulating the various hormones. It can be used as a contraceptive and a drug for breast cancer and other diseases. Used on female animals it helps them increase in weight and give more milk. For fish, it is a sex stimulant. Luong and his group have also created HCG, a hormone derived from the urine of pregnant women, and anti-HCG. These products are very useful, especially in causing massive discharge of ova in cattle for artificial insemination. Their products — Foliculine and its derivations — have been recommended for mass production by the Public Health Ministry.

For some years now Luong and his colleagues have been working on synthetic feeds for pigs, chickens, cattle, fish and snakes, and food for undernourished children, and in this they have the close co-operation of the College of Agriculture No. 2, the Hanoi Polytechnic, the Hanoi Teacher-Training College, the Institute of Livestock Breeding, the "Moncada" Cattle Farm, the Company of Animal Feeds, the Ministry of Marine Products, the Public Health Ministry, and other institutions. Under Luong's guidance a group of young researchers — Pham Van Chi, Vu Dinh Tai, Nguyen Anh Thu and

Ngo Thi Kim — have succeeded in making a number of organic and inorganic biological products, catalysts, and stimulants from local materials.

Pigs treated with Fimitan, a product made from vegetal materials, fatten quickly and are resistant to rickets. Another product, Sinsumin, accelerates the assimilation of proteins and increases blood supply. Pigs fattened with Sinsumin weigh 15 or 20 per cent more than those raised on ordinary fodder. There is also Vita, which gives breeding sows more milk and accelerates the growth of pig fetuses and piglets; Vimiga which increases hen's productivity by 20 or 30 per cent, Tramina which makes fish grow quicker, and synthetic food for raising snakes, geckos, deer and monkeys for export.

Nguyen Tai Luong and a colleague of his, Doctor Dai Duy Ban, are also working on new drugs to combat malnutrition in children and to prolong life expectancy.

Luong is also a member of Scientific Councils at the Hanoi Teacher-Training College, the José Martí College of Agriculture, the College of Agriculture No. 2, and the Hanoi Medical College. He teaches physiology of digestion and absorption at the Hanoi University and has tutored many candidates for the master's degree. Luong is a vice-president of the Biology-Fishery Inter-Departmental Scientific Council.

His books, including "Physiological and Pathological Absorption" (254 pages, Science and Technology

Publishing House, August 1981) and "Chemical and Biological Problems in Animal Nutrition" (Vol. II, 250 pages), of which he is a co-author, have been warmly received. "If the primary task of a communist is productive labour with high efficiency, Nguyen Tai Luong has carried out this task with outstanding success," write Nguyen Kim Do and Nguyen Thuong, both candidate doctors, in their recommendation of Luong for membership of the Communist Party.

Model Worker

Luong has at heart the progress of the 40 staff members, most of them university graduates. Under his guidance Nguyen Khoa Dieu Thu successfully defended her master's thesis in biology. Twelve other undergraduates are working under his tutorship for the master's degree. One young biologist, Bui Xuan Nguyen, has succeeded in grafting zygotes on rabbits and continuing the research on milk cows imported from Cuba and Indian dairy buffaloes.

A plain-living man, Luong often travels by bicycle to farms in nearby provinces, and it is not uncommon to see him clean animal cages when the cleaner is out. Last year, to manage the centre's modest budget, he proposed that it be used for State-sponsored projects only. Then, in order to be self-sufficient in other projects he signed contract to supply chemical products to agricultural co-operatives and stock farms. As a result, there was money enough to finance both

minor research projects and supplement the staff's incomes.

His wife, Nguyen Thi Phuong Chi, a specialist in microbiology, rarely has cause to complain about him, as he is very helpful in looking after the household chores and their two children. Several nights a week husband and wife sit late to study languages, English for him and Russian for her.

On March, 24, 1980, during a visit to the Institute of Sciences, Premier Pham Van Dong warmly commended Nguyen Tai Luong for his achievements and gave official approval to Luong's suggestion to build a workshop specializing in biological products in service of animal husbandry.

NGUYEN ANH TRAM

THE YOUNG GENERATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

After a few years of absence, I have just had the opportunity to return to my small native village of Vu. It was springtime and a light drizzle was falling. On the road I met a convoy of carts laden with tomatoes. Bringing up the rear was a charming young girl with round big jet black eyes and long eyelashes, wearing an azure kerchief on her head. The irrigation canal of blue water running along the road was speckled with red flowers on a background of green vegetation.

My village lies in a water-logged region; formerly the inhabitants had to use bamboo boats to reach the highway. Duckweed drifted on the surface of water; its violet flowers reminded me of the old days. Then, the submerged rice-fields, skimmed by rare kingfishers, were recognizable only by stakes planted by the tillers to mark the limit of their working area.

As the situation stood, the inhabitants had to roam about in search of a job. When my father left the village and boarded a goods train for Hanoi, he had only a sweet potato in his pocket.

Sweet potatoes are still planted on the poor soil of my native

village, but potatoes are now grown in the immense fields of Dong Go, Dong Bai, Dong Van and Dong Vu; these names are dear to my heart as they now give us rice, potatoes and beans every year.

* *

In December, a downpour fell unexpectedly and soaked the fields in water, followed by sunny weather.

As nimble as a goat, the co-op deputy manager scoured the fields from Dong Bai to Dong Van. I had difficulty in catching him up. As he knew I was a cadre of the Ministry of Agriculture, he asked my opinion as to the quality of the soil. I promptly offered to help him though I was back in my village for a rest. We spent a whole morning visiting many areas; my canvas bag was full of earth samples.

In a field I again met the young girl with the blue kerchief and merry laughter.

The deputy manager introduced her to me. "This is Thoan, head of Production Brigade 4. Ordinarily, she is shy, but at work she is a very enterprising girl. She has a

hot temper and is most stubborn as in the case of transformation of the Chuom marsh, but her work is very efficient."

Early last year, a heated discussion was afoot in the co-operative managing committee around the transformation of the marsh. The members, including the most experienced old farmers, cast doubt on the plan for transformation of this marsh by young girls headed by Thoan. The co-op management had reason for suspicion—the marsh had never given any good crop because it is situated in a low lying region and had water on all sides. The co-op deputy manager at that time sarcastically questioned Thoan: "What do you want to grow in that water pocket which has existed since the time of our forefathers, the 10th-lunar month rice or 5th-lunar month rice?"

Thoan's retort was prompt: "We'll grow subsidiary food crops there and even 5th-lunar month rice; we'll dig a new canal, dredge the old one and build four sluices to drain water. We've calculated the water level."

The deputy manager went on to tell me: "I am unable to imagine this daring project, I must admit". Wavering at first, I backed their plan. Thoan lost weight through overwork, but she remained optimistic. Then the old peasants and co-op committee members gave the girls their support. The inhabitants came in great numbers to dig and dredge the canal. We reckoned that the marsh would give a dozen tons of paddy. When the 10th-lunar month rice began to grow, a conference of the co-op Party Committee was held to review the transformation work and Thoan was appointed to the Party Committee. Highly elated, I gave a party for the girls to congratulate them on their success."

At midday I left the deputy manager in the fields and returned to the village to the whirr of tractors—the planting of the

winter-spring crop was in full swing. In a field near the road a farmer was following his plough drawn by a fat buffalo.

People often think that everything is smooth sailing in the countryside. It is not so. In the past it was miserable and poverty-stricken. Now it is full of activity at transplanting and harvest time and in the period of distribution of the crop. Unlike the time of my father, the houses in my village now have white-washed brick walls and red tile roofs. The husking machine sector is bright with electric light. During my stay, I wandered about the village to see for myself what the old folk call a "metamorphosis of the countryside". However, I was obsessed by the image of Thoan, the girl who had round black eyes and long eyelashes and wore a blue kerchief!

One day she came to my aunt's house. I was not eavesdropping but knew they were talking of food collection. My aunt was hesitating or rather she was weighing up the pros and cons, though the village had reaped a bumper crop thanks to the contracts signed with each co-op member.

Thoan said: "Over five hundred households have harvested five hundred and fifty tons of paddy this year—over one ton per household. In no previous year did we obtain such a quantity of 10th-lunar month rice. In my opinion, our people must take advantage of this heavy crop to deliver the food quota for the whole year to the State. This quantity will enable the State to feed our soldiers like Tham, your son, serving at the northern frontier."

I did not hear my aunt's answer, only Thoan giggle. She said: "So the fear of the committee members that I could not persuade you in this affair is not founded."

Thoan bowed to my aunt and me and left the house with a broad smile. After her departure my aunt told me: "She is Mrs Hai Soang's daughter—a very bold girl, she does what is best for the community. In the last 10th-lunar month crop, after application of the contractual quota system, all the village was jubilant over the harvest."

Not resting on the laurels of this bumper crop, Thoan was clear-sighted. She proposed that the managing committee reserve a dozen tons of paddy for buying nitrogen fertilizer and buffaloes, and giving help to needy families. At first the committee members wavered, but her sound reasoning convinced them. She mentioned all kinds of soil and the quantity of fertilizer needed by each of them. She brought in a big scroll of paper showing all the pieces of land and said: "It is good to adopt the contractual system but better to have a good working method." Our village boast many girls of her calibre.

After seeing Thoan for the third time, I made up my mind to pay her a visit, but she was busy organizing a pioneering team before sending the youth union's members to the coast to build a sea dike to enlarge the foreshore for the growing of rush and mangroves and rearing of bees.

Then at a Party meeting she was selected as one of the three delegates to attend the district Party Congress. Before her departure she only had time to tell me: "I wanted to see you but couldn't as I now have to leave the village before you."

Giving me a warm smile, she rode her bike fast to catch up with the other delegates. I only saw her azure kerchief reduced to a smaller point on the road leading to the district town.

HÒA TRINH

CONFIDENCES OF A COMPLEMENTARY EDUCATION TEACHER IN HO CHI MINH CITY

Since 1976 I have taught a class of complementary education to eliminate illiteracy. Adults and children met in Mother Sen's house, and for furniture we had only a piece of wood serving as a blackboard, the benches being provided by the pupils themselves. After a short time, ten people were cured of illiteracy.

In 1979, the class moved to De Tham school. The pupils were no longer young and old women but waifs and strays collected from the streets.

To deal with these children, I had to study their habits and manners. Unlike the grown-ups who were aware of the importance of education, the little ones first came to the class for the pleasure of company. They came and went to school as they pleased: often they were distracted by a film show or the singing of some opera on the TV screen. When there was no hand writing exercise, they stayed at home while their parents paid no attention to what they were up to and even urged them to remain at home to watch their younger brothers or sisters or sent them on the street as itinerant vendors to eke out their income. There were children like Dang Lay Huu, aged 15, who had to take care of his brother in the morning and sell cakes in the afternoon. In the evening, if the cakes were sold,

he had time to attend class; if not, he did not come. His parents even showed annoyance when I came to ask their child to go to school.

However, prompted by my determination to fulfil my task and having a real affection for these children, I had to persevere with material assistance such as buying their unsold goods, giving them writing paper and pencils, and picture story books which they are pleased to show to their families. The most striking case is that of Nguyen Quoc Hung who, bereft of his father, has to collect plastic bags in the streets to help his mother bring up her six children of whom he is the eldest. After learning of his situation, I suggested that the school managing board give him exercise books and clothes. His mother is very moved, as he does not have to pay any tuition fee and is well looked after. Thinking of their past unbecoming attitude, parents repent and arrange things in the house to enable their children to go to class regularly. Now Hung can read and write and has moved up to another class.

Taking charge of a class is a joy but also a trial for me as the age bracket is extended to receive all the disinherited and wandering children. Some of them are as old as 15, some have been dismissed from other schools; others are un-

cared for orphans. They are accustomed to an unruly life and are hardened cigarette smokers and regular gamblers. To gather them in one place and keep them under control is not an easy job. Only a rough word is enough to incense them and make them more stubborn. They have to be educated not by reproof as they are accustomed to rough handling, but by a sincere love and care. With regard to spoiled and older children, I study their characters and their family situation and seek ways to gain their confidence in order to help them in a more efficient manner. In the class, I often entrust them with such tasks as monitor, group head or keeper of order. When they play truant or smoke cigarettes, I do not haul them over the coals, but pretend to be sad and to pay no more attention to them. After the class they come to me to apologize and promise not to relapse into these bad habits, and entreat me not to hate them.

To create an atmosphere of emulation in the class, I save money to buy chalk, pencils and children's books to give them as prizes at weekends. This has roused an enthusiasm for study among them. I do not explain a lesson only in my quality as a teacher but as a mother caring for her children, and carefully correct their writing and spelling. Thanks to this, I have, little by little, put my class in good order. After the first three months, my pupils have made good progress. They go to class more regularly, do not swear and smoke, but study seriously. Though my pupils are numerous, they come to class regularly. After the first term, ten pupils were able to move to general education classes and I have just been singled out as a good teacher.

*(Told by NGUYEN THI VUNG,
Tan Khai, District 5, Ward 11,
Ho Chi Minh City.)*

BUDDHISM **AND** **SOCIALISM** **IN** **KAMPUCHEA**

The confluence of the Mekong, Tonle Sap, and Bassac river is called The Four Arms by Kampuchians. It became a sacred place in the eyes of the people. Eventually, kings built their capital there, the core of present-day Phnom Penh.

Here, looking out over an expanse of water fifteen times wider than the Seine in Paris, rose the Royal Palace and the Unnalom Buddhist monastery not far from each other. They were thought of as presiding

over the destiny of traditional Kampuchea, one on the temporal, the other on the spiritual plane. Under the people's regime, the former royal residence has become a museum, but Unnalom remains the national centre of Buddhism.

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It was at Unnalom that I was received by the present head of the Kampuchean Buddhist clergy, the

Venerable Preah Vinayadhara Tep Vong. Having called without an appointment, we had to wait in the reception room. There I saw two altars, one dedicated to Samdech Sanghareach Chuon Nath, head of the Mohanikay order, who died in 1969; and the other to his successor, Samdech Sanghareach Huoth Tat, who was driven out of Phnom Penh by the Khmer Rouge and later disappeared in obscure circumstances.

We had been told that the Venerable Tep Vong had just recovered from an illness. He appeared in a brownish saffron robe; his deportment almost ethereal, his features full of benevolence. His thin body bore the signs of illness rather than asceticism. He had a pale complexion, and his gentle eyes were filled with religious kindness. He answered my questions in a weak voice.

"I took orders at the age of twenty-one," he said, "thirty years ago. I performed my religious duties in my native province of Siem Reap. The Pol Pot men at first drove me to Preah Vihear, then brought me back to my native village where I was put to work in the fields. They unfrocked me and even threw me in jail for some time. I was fortunate enough to survive their persecution. Nine months after liberation, in September 1979, I was re-ordained."

Elected by the Representative Assembly of Buddhist Monks toward the end of the same year, the new prelate no longer bore the title of Samdech, or Monsignor, which used to be bestowed on religious dignitaries by the king in his capacity as Protector of Religion. In the old days, our host's order, the Mohanikay order, had always shown some independence vis-à-vis the powers that be. And so in 1864 King Norodom, aiming to undermine its influence, created the Thommayuth order which was related to Siamese reformism. The new order was adhered to by the royal family and received vast privileges. It was officially maintained that while the two orders followed

the same doctrine emanating from the Pali Canon, the second aspired to more piety. In fact, there was a muted rivalry between the two but the people's support went to the Mohanikay which, moreover, accounted for 95% of the monks in the country. Following the fall of the monarchy, Thommayuth lost its power base. And so I asked my host about its present place in the revived Buddhist Church.

"Now we make no difference between the two," he said. "There is at present only one Sangha, as we Buddhists call our monastic community. We call for union and solidarity in order to raise our religion from its ruins. Now that the Khmer Rouge have been chased away, we must rebuild pagodas and monasteries and train or re-ordain thousands of monks."

Indeed, what does it matter if a Thommayuth monk carries his alms bowl and pronounces Pali in a different way from his Mohanikay fellow-monk when the Buddhist clergy faces the immense task of bringing back on its feet a national religious organization? Before its complete destruction at the hands of Pol Pot and his confederates, this clergy was well structured. Thus each *wat* or monastery (often incorrectly translated by pagoda, a term which corresponds to the shrine alone) was headed by an Athicar who supervised the monks and novices and also the pupils of the school attached to it. All the monasteries within a *srok* (district) were placed under the authority of an Anouc Kon, who was himself under a Mekon, who was in charge of a province. The Mekon bore the title of Reachea Khanac—high dignitaries of the Buddhist clergy, they were appointed by the king on the recommendation of the Head of the Order. They were classed in four echelons, the lowest requiring twenty years of priestly function at the very least. There was besides a corps of inspector-monks sent each year by the Head of the Order on a tour

of the kingdom to control the observance of the laws, secular as well as religious, among the regional monastic communities, and the management and maintenance of monasteries.

"It's still too soon," said our host, "to think of restoring the past splendour of our religion, with the whole of its infrastructure and organization. We are now starting from scratch and our immediate objectives are modest. We mainly work to re-ordain monks who were forcibly defrocked by Pol Pot and train new ones from novices recommended by provincial authorities. The clergy's national directorate has been able to send fifteen of the most respected superior monks to the provinces in order to attend to religious affairs. Of the twenty administrative divisions of the country, the capital included, Mondulkiri and Rattanakiri alone have not yet been taken in charge by a bonze superior."

Our host told us that the people's regime, which has helped restore religion, has imbued Buddhist monks with a new spirit. They have been encouraged to take an active part in the new country's affairs, especially on the social plane. Those Theravadins—the Pali word Theravada meaning Doctrine of the Elders—differ from priests of other religions in that they are not intermediaries between Man and a divinity and offer no sacrifices. They do not take eternal vows and can doff their robes whenever they wish. They pledge themselves to poverty, chastity and non-violence and collect their food each morning, taking only one meal a day. At all times, their contact with the people has brought them sympathy and they sided with them whenever they rebelled against their oppressors. However, unlike those monks in the West who grew crops or cleared land, they despised manual labour which they thought incompatible with their Buddhist ideal and status.

"On this point," said the Venerable, "our clergy have begun to

think differently. All of us now know that the popular regime, which orients itself toward socialism for the good of the Kampuchean nation, will be built by the conscious labour of all. So our clergy have been urging not only the faithful but also the monks to take an active part in national reconstruction. Many priests now wholeheartedly participate in public work such as the building of schools, hospitals, roads, water conservation projects, etc."

We talked about the Kampuchean tradition of young people spending several years in monasteries before returning to lay life and raising a family.

"The State no longer encourages this practice," said our host, "although it does not prohibit it. In its view, young people, who are in the prime of life, must take part in production work, which lies at the basis of society. Of course, they may if they wish attend to religious affairs while working. Such a course is no doubt logical especially in view of present circumstances."

We rose to take leave. The religious leader advised us to visit the Venerable Oum Soum, one of the few experts in the canonical texts to have survived Pol Pot's genocide. He also handed us his visiting card, printed in Khmer and English. It says that the Venerable Tep Vong is Vice-President of the Central Committee of the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea—now the National Front for the Building and Defence of Kampuchea—and President of the Kampuchean National Centre of the Conference of Asian Buddhists for Peace, whose headquarters are in Ulan Bator (Mongolia). He is also Vice-President of the National Assembly.

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The Venerable Oum Soum, now 64, head of the Sangha of the capital, lives in a two-storeyed house behind the main shrine of the

Unnalom monastery. Like his superior in the hierarchy, he exudes kindness, serenity and benevolence in spite of his rather large stature for a Kampuchean and a majestic deportment. He, too, took orders at the age of 21 and was living in the Saravann monastery in Phnom Penh when he was driven out by the Khmer Rouge to Kompong Cham, then to Kompong Thom. He was forcibly defrocked but resisted the order to get married. One can imagine what tribulations he went through at the hands of Angkar. He owes his survival to the arrival of Vietnamese troops and was reordained in May 1980. He is reputed to be the country's best interpreter of texts.

"Our canonical texts," he explained, "are written in Pali, not Sanskrit like the Mahayanist scriptures. Our rules are very strict and we keep close to the teachings of Buddha."

Theravada, which the Kampuchean Buddhists follow, aims at perpetuating the theses of original Buddhism. The purpose of Buddha's doctrine being to convey Man to salvation, Theravada is generally known under the name of Hinayana or The Lesser Vehicle, in which there is room only for one person. This school sees in Nirvana the total annihilation of both subject and object, self and universe, in short, absolute nothingness. It preaches the ideal of Arhat, a saint who attains his personal salvation by entering Nirvana as soon as possible. In opposition to Hinayana, popular in so-called Indianized Asia (Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Kampuchea), Mahayana developed toward the beginning of the Christian era. The name Mahayana means The Great Vehicle, in which a man can take with him other companions. This school's doctrine was propagated mostly in China and in so-called Sinicized Asia (Korea, Japan and Vietnam), mingled with Taoist beliefs. At least as it is preached among the people, it considers Nirvana as a paradise with a

golden sky and immense lotus flowers in which Man is freed from all physical and moral pain and lives in an ecstatic atmosphere filled with divine music and dance performed by beautiful celestial nymphs called Apsaras. It upholds the ideal of Bodhisattva, the being that compassionately refrains from entering Nirvana in order to save others.

Perhaps the bonze, talking to me about the faithfulness of his clergy to the dogmas of the primitive Church, intended to emphasize the purity of the Theravadin school to which he belongs. Yet, Buddhism as it is now practised in Kampuchea bears a strong imprint of Brahmanism which it had ousted, and even of the animism of primitive times. Buddha, or the Enlightened One, founder of a religion which is rather nontheistic, appears in the eyes of the faithful and a large number of monks as an all-powerful deity, merciful and benevolent, whom people worship while also adoring old Brahmanic gods and innumerable genies called *neak ta* who fill the universe according to popular belief. Hence the great discrepancy between philosophical Buddhism and everyday Buddhism. Of course, the Venerable Oum Soum had been talking to us about the former.

"Sangha naturally cares about the salvation of all Kampucheans," he said, now touching upon secular question, "but it does not neglect their destiny on earth and that of the nation as a whole. That is why, as you probably already know, it refused to collaborate with the French colonial authorities, disapproved of the abuses of power by the monarchy, and condemned American aggression."

Indeed, the Kampuchean clergy has always adopted a positive attitude on this plan. Thus, the first resistance movement against the French colonial conquest in the later half of the last century was led by a Buddhist monk, Pokumpo. Once the colonial regime was installed, the Buddhist Church

preached non-cooperation with it. More recently, Prince Sihanouk, when he was Head of State, was unsuccessful in his quest for the total adhesion of the clergy to his home and foreign policies. As for Marshal Lon Nol, who advocated a holy war against communism under the sponsorship of the United States, he met with the Buddhist Church's outright refusal to cooperate.

Such stands taken in major political affairs of the nation have added to the prestige of the clergy among the masses. Wasn't it Saloth Sar, the future Pol Pot, who wrote under the pseudonym of Khmer Da'em or Original Khmer, these lines: "Enlightened bonzes have always grasped the nature of the monarchy and have told the people not to have any faith in it," adding: "Our Great Master the Buddha was a very learned man. He quickly became aware of the fact that his father, King Suddhodana, just amassed wealth while leaving the people to flounder in ignorance, disease, hunger, having neither shelter, schools, nor hospitals (sic!). Buddha then decided to desert the monarchy to become a friend of the people, teaching them mutual love."

The above passages are excerpts from an article entitled "Monarchy or Democracy" printed in the ultra-leftist review *Khemarak Niset* (The Khmer Student) in Paris in 1952. The French scholar Serge Thion reproduced this article in his book *Khmer Rouge* written in collaboration with the Australian historian Ben Kierman, adding this comment: "It was not because of his father, but because of the misery of the world, that Siddharta Gautama renounced the world to become Buddha."

Now let us listen to the Venerable Oum Soum's opinion of the people's regime and its advance to socialism:

"We support socialism," he said, "provided it is genuine socialism

and not just verbal socialism serving as a screen for unpublished aims. Didn't Pol Pot himself quote socialism? Before him, Sihanouk had also advocated socialism, national Buddhist socialism in his words, by rigging up the Popular Socialist Community, a political party in his service, and the affiliated Movement of Khmer Royal Youth. The prince claimed to be president of these two organizations, yet remained none the less a quasi-absolute monarch, even after giving up the throne. Let me point out that our religion has many affinities, especially ethical ones, with authentic socialism. Doesn't it uphold the love of work, thrift, frugality, honesty, justice, fraternity? There are divergences, of course. Our supreme aim is Nirvana, the great Nothingness. Everything vanishes there. But this is no reason for turning terrestrial life into a hell. We intend to work for the happiness of all. That is why we support the people's State, which seems to me to sincerely care for the welfare of the people, for their spiritual as well as material life."

We discussed at some length a topical problem: the crusade conducted against the Kampuchean popular State by the counter-revolutionary troika Pol Pot — Son Sann — Sihanouk, which Beijing and world reaction strive to keep together. The Venerable Oum Soum only deigned to talk about Sihanouk. As is well known, this representative of Khmer royalty admits to having lost more than thirty members of his family in the hurricane of Khmer Rouge genocide. He has publicly repudiated Pol Pot whom he calls a heinous criminal and his personal enemy, and says he would only negotiate with his lieutenants. But what I am wondering about is his so-called national Buddhist socialism.

"Before answering your question," said the Venerable, "I would like to quote Buddha's teaching on

the 'five rules of everyday life': to be compassionate and respect every manifestation of life; give and receive freely, but never take without permission from the owner; never lie, even when circumstances seem to absolve it; respect women and never commit any illicit or unnatural carnal act."

Then he added: "Which one of these five rules has the Prince followed and will follow all his life? You must have passed by the former Casino of Phnom Penh, on the bank of the Four Arms, not far from the Royal Palace. Many people of Phnom Penh lost all they had there, and later committed suicide. It was a terrible scandal: the casino was established on orders from none other than the Samdech Head of State and the profits went to the budget of the royal family. The Prince called himself Father of the People; the latter added that he was also the Father of the Casino. As a Buddhist, I am not certain about his Buddhist faith. As for the rest, it's up to you to judge him, being conversant with matters related to socialism and politics in general."

He remained silent for a while then concluded: "In any event, in the eyes of any thinking Kampuchean, the Prince has fallen behind the times, both he and his national Buddhist socialism."

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Of the 3,000 Buddhist monasteries which existed in the country and were later reduced to ruins by the Khmer Rouge, 700 have been restored and now house about 3,500 monks, i.e. nearly one-twentieth of the clergy at its peak. Again, on the immense Kampuchean plain one may see their pointed roofs and slender silhouettes which break the monotony of the landscape and form a harmonious combination with the plumed trunks of the sugar palms. Monks draped in their saffron robes, as quiet as shadows, meditate and pray. On festive days,

crowds of worshippers in multi-coloured dress come to kneel before Buddha's altar and offer food to the priests. Scenes so dear to the hearts of Kampuchians, yet which at one time seemed to have disappeared for ever, are reborn.

These new monasteries, however, differ from those of former days. They no longer house literacy classes for children or infirmaries. The people's State has built schools and communal health stations. The peasants have also set up solidarity groups, the *krom samaki*, which also look after the elderly and orphans, for the monasteries no longer serve as asylums for the destitute. The monasteries are now simply shrines and can be properly called pagodas. The number of monks has declined and there are no longer swarms of novices, aged from 12 — 15, as in the old society.

Buddhism, the religion of the Khmer ethnic group, to which belong 85% of the Kampuchean nation, was rightly or wrongly looked upon as a pillar of traditional Kampuchea. In people's Kampuchea, it has ceased to be a State religion. Yet it has marked the national culture with a deep imprint and still plays a big role in the country's political life. The new regime, following the people's aspirations, has actively assisted in reviving it while giving it equal treatment with other religions, among them Islam practised by the Cham minority and the Christian faith which now has but a handful of believers among the Viet minority, who were almost completely exterminated by Pol Pot. My talks with Buddhist monks and Muslim priests have convinced me that the People's Republic of Kampuchea holds the religions of the country in great respect and seeks their co-operation in the settlement of problems of this workaday world while leaving in their exclusive care the affairs of the world beyond, without encroaching on their spiritual vocation.

VU CAN

CHRONOLOGY

(July 16 — August 15)

JULY

16. The Chairman of the Council of Ministers decides to set up a Central Commission for Market Control.

17. A delegation of the Vietnamese Party and Government, headed by Nguyen Van Hieu, Minister of Culture, leaves Hanoi for Nicaragua to attend the celebration of the third Revolutionary Day.

20. Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach paid a visit to Singapore from July 18 to 20.

— Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach pays a visit to Burma from July 20 to 25.

22. Some units of Vietnamese troops have left Kampuchea for home after fulfilling their international duty there.

— Enforcement of the Rules for Aquatic Products Co-operatives.

23. The Commission for the Nation-wide Campaign for Peace and Disarmament holds a conference in Hanoi.

24. The Vietnamese Council of State confers the Gold-Star Order on Cuban President Fidel Castro Ruz.

26. The Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam issues a statement reaffirming its strong solidarity with and resolute support for the surely victorious and just struggle of the Palestinian, Lebanese and other Arab peoples against US imperialism and the Israeli aggressors.

— Opening of the Public Health Ministerial Conference of Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam in Vientiane.

28. The Vietnamese Foreign Ministry issues a statement strongly condemning the genocidal crimes committed by the Israeli troops against the Palestinian people and reaffirming the militant solidarity with and full support for the just struggle and sure victory of the Palestinian and Arab peoples.

— Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach ends his visit to Malaysia begun on July 25.

29. Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach pays a visit to Thailand.

30. Promulgation of a decree by the Council of Ministers on the management of State program of scientific and technological advances.

31. Vietnam participates in the fine-art products exhibition held by UNESCO member countries in Mexico.

AUGUST

2. Signing in Kabul (Afghanistan) of an agreement on co-operation between Vietnam News Agency and Bakta News Agency.

3. Closing of the solidarity summer camp for 300 Vietnamese and Kampuchean children from Phnom Penh and Ho Chi Minh City held in Ho Chi Minh City from July 25 to August 3.

— The Third National Mechanics Conference is held in Hue.

4. Minister of Culture Nguyen Van Hieu, head of the Vietnamese delegation, leaves Hanoi to attend the World Conference on Cultural Policies organized by UNESCO in Mexico.

7. Deputy Foreign Minister Vo Dong Giang, special envoy of the President of the Vietnamese Council of State, visits Iraq.

9. A meeting of representatives of friendship associations of Laos, Kampuchea, Vietnam, Mongolia and the Soviet Union is held in Hanoi to exchange views on the present situation in Asia and in the world as a whole. They inform one another of their own countries' efforts in the struggle for peace and disarmament and of their peace proposals concerning different regions in the world, particularly in Asia and Southeast Asia.

10. Pham Binh, special envoy of the President of the Vietnamese Council of State, visits Guinea.

— Signing in Jakarta of a joint communiqué on co-operation between journalists' organizations of the two countries.

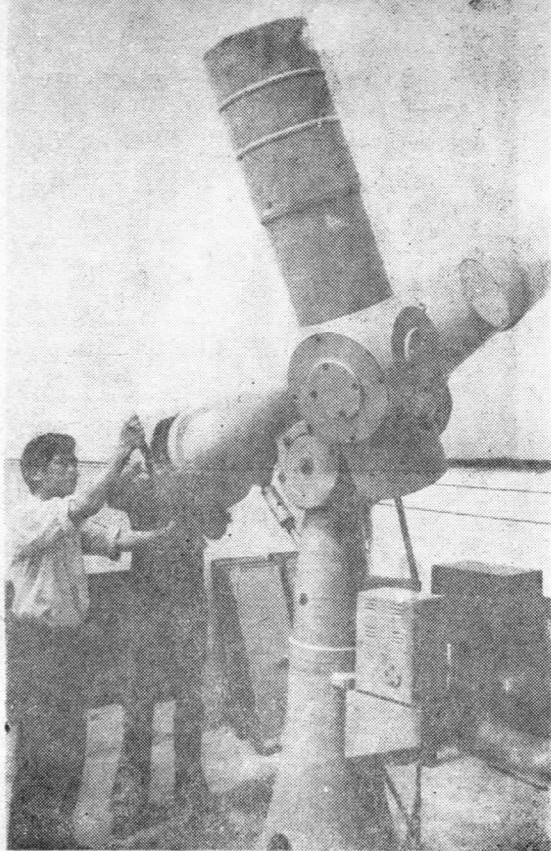
— The Public Health Ministry holds the third conference on internal medicine in Ho Chi Minh City.

11. Deputy Foreign Minister Vo Dong Giang, special envoy of the Chairman of the Vietnamese Council of Ministers, visits wounded Palestinian combatants.

13. The Vietnamese Lawyers' Association holds a meeting in Hanoi to study the juridical position of the Israeli war of aggression. They strongly condemn the crimes of aggression and genocide committed by the Israeli Zionists with the guidance and backing of the US imperialists.

14. A delegation of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha leaves Hanoi to attend the Sixth Asian Buddhist Congress for Peace held in Ulan Bator.

15. Opening in Hanoi of the 1982 summer camp for 140 outstanding pupils representing various secondary schools in the country.



Observing the sun at the Hanoi Institute of Physics.
Photo : NGOC ANH

Locating the positions of fishing boats at sea are students
of the Nha Trang Marine College.

Photo : DO HAI



VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH



Students of the Thanh Hoa Medical College.
Photo : DO HAI



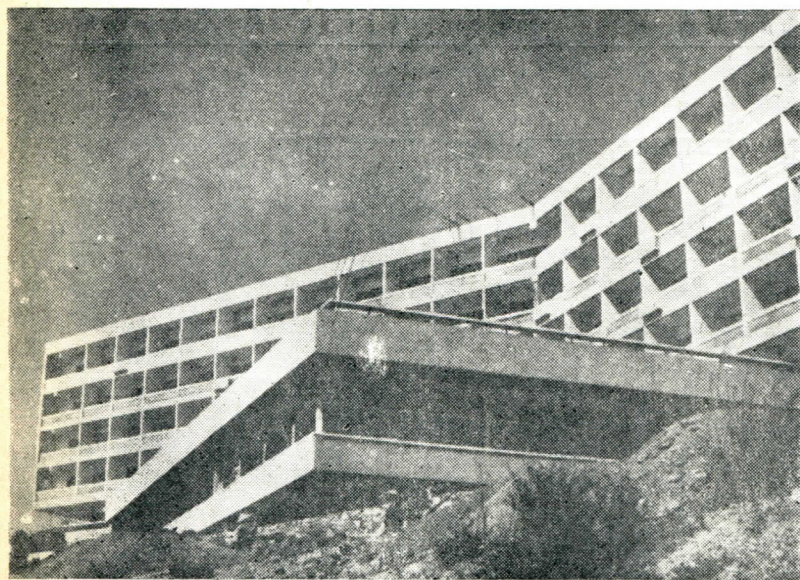
A model kindergarten in Ho Chi Minh City.

Photo : VNA

A new block of flats in Vinh City.

Photo : THE THUC

CIVIL CONSTRUCTION



A new rest home on the Quang Ninh seashore.

Photo : HO HAI

**Vietnam
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**НОВОСТИ
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