

With Firm Steps

SOUTHERN VIETNAM
SINCE LIBERATION 1975 — 1977

HANOI — 1978

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12 BERRY STREET
LIVERPOOL 1
051 709 1905

WITH FIRM STEPS

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SINCE LIBERATION 1975 — 1977

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HANOI — 1978

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Two years have gone by since the liberation of Saigon on April 30th, 1975.

This collection of articles, most of which have been taken from past issues of the *Viet Nam Courier*, will give our readers an idea of the changes that have been taking place in southern Viet Nam in the intervening period, and the direction that developments there are taking.

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THE SITUATION IN HO CHI MINH CITY SINCE LIBERATION, AND ORIENTATION AND TASKS FOR 1977-1978

(Excerpts from the report of the Ho Chi Minh City Committee of the Communist Party of Viet Nam at the First Congress of the City Party Organization, April 1977).

I. Big Achievements, Profound Changes.

1. The complete liberation of southern Viet Nam marked the beginning of a new stage of the revolution in our city, that of socialist revolution. The situation can be summarized as follows:

a) After smashing the puppet army and administration, we immediately established proletarian dictatorship and the leadership of the Party. Almost four million people in the city were fired with ardent patriotism and the tradition of persevering and staunch struggle, and were filled with enthusiasm over and pride in the victory of the nation. We have an extensive labour force, a corps of skilled workers and a big force of scientific and technical cadres. Following our complete victory, we took over sizeable material and technical bases almost intact.

These are great and very basic advantages.

b) However, we also took over all the city's difficulties and complexities resulting from the heavy consequences of the war of aggression and the vestiges of neo-colonialism:

— There were 400,000 troops and personnel of the puppet administration who had deserted or given themselves up on the spot; and there were reactionary political organizations and the enemy intelligence network which did not give up their scheme of sabotaging the gains of the revolution, socialist transformation and socialist construction in our city.

— There was an artificially prosperous economy, a market flooded with aid commodities, veiling the real nature of an economy dependent on foreign countries and geared to the war machine, which had subsisted only thanks to the 750 million dollars worth of aid goods received each year. Hundreds of thousands of people were living in slums right next to modern multi-storey buildings. The economy was on the verge of collapse. And there was a threat of famine.

— Irrational distribution of the social labour force resulting from the enemy's policy of forcible urbanization, had led to a section of people being able to live without working or producing, causing the population to swell far beyond the city's capacity to cater for its needs. A million-strong army of unemployed was left after liberation.

— War-ravaged suburban agriculture, vast areas laid waste, and a dwindling supply of imported

fertilizers and seeds was the situation in the agricultural areas in the suburbs. Although the city had a number of modern production bases, small production was common.

— Depraved, reactionary, neo-colonialist culture was rampant, social evils were serious. A section of the population was addicted to a bourgeois, parasitic way of life, despising labour, egoistic, running after physical pleasures, with a "here to-day; gone tomorrow" attitude, heeding neither conscience nor morality.

When they pulled out, the US imperialists were cocksure that all these serious consequences would have us floundering in hunger, thirst and chaos. But they were mistaken. We have stood firm and are on the way to stabilization and development.

c) Throughout the two wars of resistance against foreign aggression, our City Party Organization carried out mainly underground activities, becoming steeled and tempered and acquiring experience in political and armed struggle. We are now in a position to lead all aspects of social life through State power, but we find ourselves lacking experience in face of the new tasks of a big and extremely complex city.

2. The situation in the city has undergone *deep and all-round revolutionary changes* over the past two years in the following main aspects:

a) *Politically:*

Fully aware of the paramount importance of the question of who wields power — the key problem

of all revolutions — we have mobilized the masses and rapidly built up the revolutionary administration at all levels, paying special attention to the grassroots level. The revolutionary administration has shown its superiority increasingly clearly, and has proved itself to be the organ of people's power, truly an administration of the people, by the people and for the people. The workers and other labouring people in the city have seen this in their daily life: from being oppressed and exploited they have become the collective masters of the city through their State administration. For the working people this is a basic change in their lives. Millions of people took an effective part in electing the unified National Assembly, the first time they have cast votes to elect representatives who stand for their interests and wishes on the country's road forward.

The city is now seething with the preparations for the election of the people's councils at all levels. Tens of thousands of people who have put forward their opinions to the administration directly, to the Fourth Congress of the Party, now make their observations to the City Party Organization. This is something very new in the political life of the city, and is a concrete expression of the revolutionary nature, the truly democratic nature of the socialist system, a democratic system we have never known in our city.

Together with the revolutionary administration, the revolutionary organisations of the masses, which have over one million members all told, are another reflection of the people's collective mastery.

The people of various strata have joined in discussions and decisions in their own organizations on questions of common interest, organized collective activities, and supervised the activities of the State organs. This is a special feature of socialist democracy, an important aspect of the working people's collective mastery of society.

To ensure the working people's right to collective mastery, the revolutionary administration, with the effective participation of the masses, have taken a number of strong measures, to put an end to the activities of stubborn counter-revolutionaries who refused to give up their criminal path, to eliminate the comprador capitalists as a class, to punish dishonest traders, and to prevent actions disturbing public order and security.

Although the revolutionary administration still has to continue this tasks of repression, it is clear after two years that the system of proletarian dictatorship has been strengthened, and that *political security and social order in the city have been maintained and are becoming more stable*. The reactionary forces have little chance of creating big upheavals, although they still scheme to hinder our advance.

At present, life still involves many difficulties for the masses, which the revolutionary administration and the people cannot overcome overnight. There is a section of the population that is still complex-ridden and is vulnerable to provocations. Social conditions are still very complex. That is why we

cannot allow ourselves to indulge in wishful thinking and to slacken our vigilance.

b) *The economy and living conditions :*

This is the most difficult and complex problem. The Party Organisation and the revolutionary administration are faced with a series of urgent problems all of which they have to solve at the same time. Our enemies thought that we would be unable to cope with the complex of difficulties. But the past two years have shown that, in spite of numerous difficulties, we have succeeded in maintaining relative stability and have made progress in many fields.

Since liberation, electricity and water supplies, transport and communications, and other aspects of public life in the city have been normal.

The city's industrial system formerly depended on foreign countries for raw materials, fuel, equipment, and spare parts. Now, effective aid has been given, from central level and from the whole country, and the working class and the intellectuals in the city have developed their spirit of self-reliance, striven to overcome difficulties, and made full use of and found substitutes in domestically available raw materials. *Industrial and handicraft production has in the main been restored, and in a number of branches it has developed somewhat.* More than 400 State enterprises have been commissioned and 14,000 private industrial and handicraft establishments have resumed their activities. In 1976, industry (including centrally-run industry and local industries) employed 270,000 workers and total output value

was about 1.8 billion dong. Many enterprises had brilliant results in relation to their quota of the State plan.

After liberation, the peasantry, in the suburbs showed great courage in removing and deactivating unexploded mines and shells, and together with the Volunteer Youth and the people from inner city district, reclaimed waste land and opened up virgin land, overcame shortages of fertilizers, fuel, and draught power, and developed water conservancy work for intensive cultivation. The results obtained were heartening: the tilled area in 1976 reached 88,000 hectares as against 50,000 hectares before liberation, rice production reached 160,000 tons in 1976 compared with 95,000 tons before liberation—almost double—, and more than 6 million cubic metres of earth were moved for irrigation projects.

While restoring and developing industry and agriculture, we have started the redistribution of the work force, mobilizing and organizing 700,000 people to return to their native villages, to settle in suburban districts, or to go and build new economic zones. We have taken an important step in reducing unemployment by half (500,000 unemployed people were given jobs), and have reduced social evils. Large numbers of people have found that this is a correct and necessary policy. In many localities the people have stabilized their life and have set about raising production and building their new home villages. However, in a number of places, the people still find life difficult, particularly with regard to food and housing. The supplying of food, daily

necessities and medicine is not good enough, and the orientation for production is not yet clear in all places.

To redistribute such a large work force and reduce unemployment by half in less than two years has involved a great effort on the part of the people and the administration in the city. Meanwhile we have enjoyed substantial aid from central level and from the provinces in eastern Nam Bo.

In restoring and developing production and solving the problem of employment, we have striven to improve the circulation and distribution of commodities, opened a number of State-run trade establishments, and controlled the wholesale trade of a number of necessities. We have relied on the people in establishing a retail sales network (including sales teams, consumer co-operatives, purchasing and marketing co-operatives, and canteens at public offices). At the same time we have had to eliminate the comprador capitalist class, struggle against dishonest traders, hoarders and speculators, manage the market, and take the first steps in transforming a number of key branches that have a direct bearing on people's life.

The city has suffered the serious consequences of a protracted war and of neo-colonialism, and in this situation keeping people's life as stable as at present in spite of numerous difficulties has required a tremendous effort. Shortages and low living standards are an unavoidable post-war phenomenon in any country, and it takes time to overcome economic difficulties.

c) Culturally and ideologically:

After liberation there was enthusiasm and pride in the victory of the nation, but many people, especially those with ties of some sort to the old regime, were complex-ridden with regard to the revolution. They had doubts, were confused, and worried about the policies of the revolutionary administration, and not a few were still influenced by the enemy's divisive and anti-communist ideas.

Now the overwhelming majority of the city people have a much higher political consciousness, have understood the line and policies of the revolution, gradually dismissed their complexes, worries and doubts, and have realized that the country must be reunified and must advance to socialism. Their patriotism has grown and developed, socialist thoughts have gradually penetrated deeply among the people, especially the working people. The majority of the people have confidence in the leadership of the Party and of the revolutionary administration, although they are somewhat put out at the fact that a number of revolutionary cadres have infringed upon policies, and have degenerated. They have confidence in the new system, in their own future and that of their children.

Whereas before people disliked, feared or despised manual labour, almost everybody has now realized that labour is necessary and honourable, and they join in the labour movements for increased production, have left to build new economic zones, and take part in street cleaning, sanitation work and other social activities.

Broad masses of the people have also taken the first step in realizing their right to collective mastery of society. Many people's ideas about their relationship with the community, relationships within a family, and their way of thinking and living have visibly changed.

As a result of these changes, although life is still difficult for people, many movements for revolutionary activity continue in the city, with the labour movement for increased productivity at the core. Hundreds of thousands of people of all strata are involved, creating a seething revolutionary atmosphere. In these movements tens of thousands of vanguard workers, farmers, young people, and women, and thousands of "good nephews and nieces of Uncle Ho" have emerged. These are typical examples of the new people who ardently love their country, hate the old regime and firmly dissociate themselves from it; people who have become collective masters of society, courageously engaged in labour and are striving to endure and overcome difficulties to fulfil their tasks.

The cultural and intellectual life of the people, the working people in particular, has been visibly improved. In 1976, more than 22 million attendances were recorded at lectures and discussions on the revolutionary administration's line and policies, at gatherings, study sessions, talks, rallies, and separate propaganda sessions. There were over two million visits at more than 200 exhibitions. On average each Saigon citizen saw 3.8 performances and 2.4 films, and was distributed 0.8 book.

Almost one million school pupils receive free tuition according to the revolutionary programme in 636 general education schools, 559 infant schools and classes, and hundreds of complementary education schools and classes. Illiteracy has in the main been eliminated, most school-age children of working people go to school, and the social composition of the school population has been transformed.

The public health network extends down to the grass-roots units. On average, there is one medical worker for every 350 inhabitants, one doctor for every 5,000 inhabitants, and 20 hospital beds for every 10,000 inhabitants.

Cultural, literacy, artistic, and physical culture and sports activities are the content of a seething and diversified mass movement. The war invalid and social affairs service has begun to deal with a number of questions concerning policy toward disabled ex-servicemen, families of war dead and families that have rendered meritorious services to the revolution, and retired public employees. At the same time our city has pooled efforts to give medical treatment to, educate, and transform through labour, large numbers of former drug-addicts and prostitutes, and has had good results.

In brief, we can say that *the achievements of the past two years* have been considerable and fundamental. However, there have also been many shortcomings and weaknesses, and we have had many difficulties and problems to solve.

II. Remaining Difficulties.

Our city faces the following main obstacles in its advance :

Firstly, the non-socialist relations of production. Private capitalist economy, with its speculative, anarchic character, its goal of maximizing profits, causes an unstable market and erratic prices, hinders economic planning, prevents people's lives from being stabilized, and generally makes life difficult.

Private capitalist manipulation of a large number of the small traders and small shop-owners and a number of middle peasants interferes with small producers becoming collectivized. It hinders the strengthening of the worker-peasant alliance, and the development of small industry and handicraft production and agriculture.

The non-socialist relations of production are also the root cause of many social evils which disturb public security and order. In addition, small and individual production does not favour the application of technological advances, and therefore hampers the increase of labour productivity.

Secondly, there is an excessive proportion of non-productive forces (more than 85%), with 500,000 jobless. Jobs have to be provided for 100,000 more young people of work-age every year. The inner part of the city is overcrowded. With such a high population density, it is impossible to transform the city into a civilized, modern and socialist city without re-distributing the work force and relocating the population.

Thirdly, there are vestiges of the neo-colonialist ideology and culture to be dealt with. These are reflected in a selfish and parasitic way of life, the search for physical pleasures, the fear of physical labour, and most clearly in social evils. In addition to this, the bourgeoisie and the reactionaries scheme to keep on sabotaging our socialist construction.

Fourthly, the revolution has entered a new stage but there are many cadres and Party members who were not sufficiently prepared for it through education in its line and policies, and so did not fully understand the nature of the new revolutionary stage, of the class struggle in this stage, and the struggle between the two roads — socialism and capitalism.

The majority of cadres and Party members are basically good. They have been trained and tested in the hard and fierce struggle against the US imperialists and their lackeys and forged in the current socialist construction. Many cadres and Party members appointed by the Party Central Committee, though physically weak and still anxious about the difficult living conditions of their families, have consistently maintained their attitude of solidarity and their confidence in and reliance on the masses, and they work devotedly day and night. On the other hand, we severely criticize a number of comrades whose fighting spirit has dwindled, who have degenerated, allowed themselves to be corrupted or have shown an overbearing and authoritarian attitude toward the people, and have violated the people's right to collective mastery.

Our organisational structure has been strengthened, but is not homogeneous throughout. Economic and social management is still weak. Our organisation and style of work are still sporadic, guerrilla-like, bureaucratic and fraught with red-tape. Efforts have been made to foster and train cadres, but these efforts still fall far short of the requirements of the new stage, in which the main tasks are organisation and development and in which a factor vital to success is a knowledge of practical organization.

By correctly assessing our successes, recognising our difficulties, mistakes and shortcomings, and keeping our sights on the road forward, we can maintain confidence in our city's ability to advance and its great prospects in the new stage of the revolution.

Over the past two years the people in our city and our Party Organisation have been through great trials, and we have stood firm and are advancing steadily. The achievements we have recorded in that period are of utmost importance. On the one hand, they have created a fundamental and favourable basis on which to advance further. On the other, they have given our people and Party Organisation self-confidence. With regard to us communists and our conscious responsibility to the people, we are constantly aware of our difficulties, mistakes and shortcomings, and are trying to overcome our weaknesses. With our ardour and enthusiasm, with our knowledge of the objective laws of social development, despite temporary difficulties

on our road forward, we are fully capable of finding the correct orientation for our actions.

Solutions to problems are being found. But the final answer depends on whether we can create a revolutionary upsurge among the masses. Then everything is possible.

III. General Orientation and Tasks of the City Until 1980 and its Main Tasks and Objectives in 1977-1978.

Guided by the Resolution of the Fourth Party Congress, and proceeding from an analysis of the situation and an appraisal of our capabilities and prospects, we have set the following general orientation and tasks for the city for 1980:

Firmly maintaining proletarian dictatorship, we will promote the labouring people's right to collective mastery as we carry out the three revolutions: revolution in the relations of production, scientific and technological revolution, and ideological and cultural revolution, with the scientific and technological revolution as the kingpin. We will concentrate all our forces on completing the socialist transformation of industry, trade and agriculture, on re-organizing production and distribution in line with large-scale socialist production, on building the material and technical basis for socialism, on taking the first steps toward creating an industrial-agricultural economic structure, on rationally redistributing the work force and relocating the population.

We will strive to restore and develop production, solve the problem of unemployment, stabilize and step by step improve the people's living conditions; develop education, culture and social life; foster new, socialist people; do away with the vestiges of the old culture, basically eliminate social vices; put an end to the exploitation of man by man, and step by step do away with poverty and backwardness.

We will constantly heighten vigilance, continuously strengthen national defence, maintain political security and social order, and create all necessary conditions for the general advance of the entire people in a period of vigorous and all-round development of socialist construction.

Proceeding from the above general orientation and tasks, the tasks and objectives of the city in 1977-1978 are:

1. *To concentrate forces on transforming the non-socialist relations of production* as steps on the way to developing production and stabilizing and improving the people's living conditions, transformation must be closely linked with construction, reorganisation of production, and redeployment of the city's work force. The aim is strong growth in the State-run and joint State-private economic sectors, and to make it possible for the State economy to effectively play the leading and guiding role with regard to the other economic sectors.

In 1977 and 1978 we must make all-out efforts to complete the transformation of private capitalist

industry and trade, first of all capitalist trade, and transfer most of the small traders to production.

Along with the transformation of industry and trade, we must not delay in carrying out socialist transformation of the other economic branches. Special attention must be paid to the transformation of a number of key branches related to production and to people's lives. We must mobilize and organize most of the small industry and handicraft workers to engage in suitable forms of collective production. We must motivate individual farmers to engage in collective production by organizing them into production solidarity teams and production collectives and by setting up experimental agricultural co-operatives, so as to basically complete agricultural cooperativization by 1979.

2. *To restore and develop production, stabilize and further improve the people's living conditions*, first of all, we must make full use of all potential and all existing technical equipment, bring into play the city's advantages in industrial production, especially in light and small industries and handicrafts, and make industry serve agricultural production.

By 1978 we must reach about 800 million dong in local industry output value, and take in some 60,000 more industrial workers, not including those to be employed in small industry and handicrafts and centrally-run industries.

The agricultural belt must supply the city with most of its foodstuffs, and produce for export, as well as supplying food to suburban peasants and

for animal husbandry. We must strengthen the material and technical basis of agriculture by intensive cultivation, crop multiplication, land reclamation and expansion of cultivable area, and strive to produce 300,000 tons of starch foods in 1980. Attention must be paid to building key industrial enterprises in the suburbs and step by step shape up the agro-industrial district structure. We must fully equip the district and suburban village engineering workshops and build the processing establishments necessary for agriculture.

While promoting the development of industry — especially light industry and agriculture in suburban areas —, we must attach importance to developing a number of necessary heavy industry establishments in the city and building up a rational urban industrial structure as part of the national industrial structure.

By carrying out a rational re-distribution of the work force, we will be able to basically solve the problem of unemployment within about two years, transfer most former traders to production, and rationally redeploy the labour force and relocate the population of the city and its suburbs. Besides employing about 200,000 workers for centrally-run and local economic establishments in 1977, 1978 and 1979, we must motivate some 700,000 more people to return to their native villages or go to new economic zones, and relocate other people in the suburban districts so that the city's population will fall to around 2.5 million, with 1.5 million in the inner city and the rest in the suburbs.

Along with economic rehabilitation and development, efforts will be made to meet the fundamental needs of the people, namely clothing, housing, education, and health, and to stabilize and gradually improve life for them.

3. *To promote the ideological and cultural revolution*, we must take steps to create a new culture and foster new, socialist people, carry out broad and far-reaching propaganda and education on Marxism-Leninism and the line and policies of the Party, and gradually sweep away the vestiges of neo-colonialist ideology and culture. In the immediate future, we must widely popularise the resolutions of the Fourth Party Congress, enhance patriotism, educate the people and public employees in socialist ideology and the sense of collective mastery of society, help them acquire a correct outlook on labour, and make clear the distinction between working and leading a parasitic life, between collectivism and individualism, and foster a new way of life and the new-culture family.

We must basically complete the educational reform, quickly eliminate illiteracy and develop complementary education and infant education.

We must develop the hygiene and prophylaxis movement, and mother and child care, carry out birth control, and expand the medical network in wards and villages paying particular attention to the working people's quarters and suburban areas. We must encourage physical culture and sports, cultural and artistic activities among the masses, start cultural and public utility projects, develop

art and culture and improve the information, broadcasting, television, press and publication services. Due consideration must be given to the development of science and technology; bold use must be made of the scientific and technical workers in the newly liberated zones, and new scientific and technical workers must be trained. We must give attention to the study of social sciences. We must develop war invalid and social welfare activities, make it possible for war invalids to take part in production, fully implement the policies regarding war invalids, the families of war dead, families that have rendered meritorious services to the revolution, and retired public employees.

We must eliminate a great number of social vices and dangerous social diseases.

4. *To help the working people to exercise their right to collective mastery*, we must strengthen and improve the people's administration at all levels, especially in districts, wards and villages; clearly define the functions and tasks of each level; increase the effectiveness of the people's administration, and bring it to bear not only in maintaining political security and social order and in administrative management but also in the management of the economy, and cultural and social life.

Through elections of the people's councils at all levels we must quickly consolidate the people's committees, replace corrupted cadres, and eliminate bureaucracy, authoritarianism and red tape. We must increase the people's control and supervision

of the administration, correctly carry out the three-fold principle of leadership by the Party, management by the administration, and mastery of society by the people,

We must attach great importance to consolidating and strengthening the military and security forces to help them fulfil their tasks of firmly maintaining political security and social order, and promptly suppressing counter-revolutionary activities.

We must conduct studies in order to improve and build a new system of economic management, and bring the role of the masses, chiefly the working class, into full play in managing the economy and the separate enterprises. We must arrive at a division of responsibilities among various levels of city management, and propose that the Party Central Committee promptly make a decision on the division of responsibilities between the city and the ministries and centrally-run organs.

While ensuring the exercise of the working people's right to collective mastery, chiefly through the State, it is necessary to achieve it in practice *through mass organizations*. The Party organisations at all levels must pay attention to mass agitation and the work of the Fatherland Front, to strengthening the leadership of mass organisations, strengthening the latter in both numbers and quality, increasing the role of mass organisations and their activities in educating and motivating their members and the masses at large to carry out the line and policies of the Party and the State and take part in and supervise the work of State organs.

5. To make the Party very strong politically, ideologically and organizationally, we must speedily raise the leadership and organizational capacity of the Party Organisation to meet the requirements of the political task in the new stage of the revolution.

The orientation for building the Party politically and ideologically is to instill into its members the socialist and communist ideologies, to encourage them to maintain and raise their revolutionary ardour and offensive spirit further, enhance their working-class character, increase the Party's all-round leadership, combine the revolutionary and scientific character of the Party, combine its independent and sovereign spirit with its creativeness both in applying its line and policies and in organizing their implementation.

We must resolutely overcome petty-bourgeois ideology, combat all influences of bourgeois ideology and vestiges of feudal ideology, struggle against all manifestations of individualism, sectarianism, departmentalism, selfishness, bureaucracy, overbearingness, authoritarianism, aloofness from the masses, and corruption. We must stick to and develop the tradition of solidarity within the City Party Organization, and maintain close ties between the Party and the masses.

We must show particular concern for consolidating and strengthening the Party organisations at the grassroots level, especially in wards and villages. We must also strengthen the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union organizations.

We must plan the mass training of cadres in different forms, both full-time and in-service training, long-term and short-term training. We must pay particular attention to in-service training of cadres and to work-and-study courses with a view to meeting the requirements of the political task in the present stage.

We must achieve good solidarity among the various kinds of cadres and make satisfactory use of their talents.

We must improve our style of work, hold fewer meetings, reduce red tape, and keep in closer contact with grassroots organizations and the masses.

(From the daily *Saigon Giai Phong*, April 15, 1977).

SAIGON — HO CHI MINH CITY

I. From Motor to Pedal Transport.

Professos T. rides a biiyile to work every morning. This is a strange sight for his neighbours, who watch this well-known physician in Saigon pedal away from his villa while his two Japanese cars sit idle in the garage. During the past year and a half increasing numbers of bicycles have invaded the streets of Saigon, gradually replacing the motorized vehicles which have been choking the city with their endless backfiring and fumes.

Watching the bicycles gliding along the streets of Saigon, I remembered a joking remark made about Hanoi by a Western journalist, who described this two-wheeled vehicle as the "symbol of Vietnamese socialism".

The bicycle is of course no more socialist than capitalist. In terms of transport, it simply marks a stage of economic development, being the ideal vehicle for a country where industrialization has just begun. Owning a bicycle means considerable progress to a poor worker of an underdeveloped country, and it is this progress that socialism has brought to millions of people in the North.

For Saigonese, however, is abandoning motorized vehicles for bicycles a step forward or backward? Industry in Saigon is no more developed than it is

in Hanoi; and in some respects, it is even less advanced. The hundreds of thousands of cars, trucks and coaches, the million or so scooters and motorcycles that streamed back and forth across the southern part of the country were simply an anomaly. Each year the Thieu regime imported 150 million dollars worth of fuel, while its exports did not exceed 30 million all told.

Petrol, cars and Honda motorcycles were not the only imported goods. I had an opportunity to make a tour of Saigon's central market a week before Tet. Flowers and fruit were the only Vietnamese products. The rest—electric razors, transistor radios, tape-recorders, cassette recorders, stereo sets, irons, luggage, nylon, tetron and other synthetic fabrics, perfume, and so on,—leaves you with the impression of having strayed into a Tokyo, Paris or New York supermarket.

All the gadgetry of a consumer society was on display. You have to go to village markets or to small hamlets to see local products: there, baskets, plaited bamboo, rattan or reed-leaf hats are making a timid reappearance. Increasing amounts of handicraft products are already feeding a thriving export trade. In Saigon itself workshops where bamboo blinds, woollen knitwear, baskets, woollen tapestries and jute carpets are made are springing up like mushrooms. I even saw student-curates in a seminary making blinds for export to socialist countries.

Going back to using bicycles in a city where motorized vehicles still abound, taking up handicrafts again while an enormous variety of industrial

products still fill the markets in profusion, striving to increase export trade when people have recently been quite content with importing up to now; all this means going back little by little to an economic life which is healthy and normal for a country still taking its first steps towards industrialization.

These are the beginnings of a new life, or at least the signs of the end of a long ailment. To replace the too costly GIs by local mercenaries, Washington flooded southern Viet Nam with consumer goods which kept the Thieu regime alive (the US spent 30 billion dollars a year on half a million GIs, but only 2 billion dollars on one million Thieu soldiers).

This flood of goods left an entirely unproductive city, whose population lives mostly on trafficking and more or less illusory "services". Eighty per cent of the people in this overpopulated city do no socially useful work. Altogether in the cities and townships in the South, there were several million people who thus found themselves jobless overnight, people more used to doing "business" than to working with their own hands.

Disturbing, agonizing figures flashed through my mind as I mingled with the thick crowd milling about in and around Saigon's central market. Eighty-five per cent of the population in southern Viet Nam in 1960 was a rural population, 35 per cent in 1974, 50% having been "urbanized" by dint of bombing and herded into the cities and resettlement centres.

A thirty-five per cent rural population is the sort of figure one finds in a highly industrialized country, and the South should go back to at least 70 per cent agricultural population. The implied resettlement of several million people is a double task, involving both creating jobs in the cities, developing handicrafts, industry, and cultural activities, and the return of a certain number of the people to their former villages. But, as the native villages of many of them were destroyed during the war, new economic zones must be created for them to go to.

Figures are available on what has already been done along these lines: more than half a million people have settled in new economic zones, 100 handicraft and small industry enterprises have been established. Small and light industries are already supplying a large quantity of commodities, including bicycle spare parts, tinned fruit, ceramics and electric fans, to the State export services and for daily consumption. All this has not yet absorbed most of the manpower. Several hundred thousand shop-owners, coffee-house and cook-shop keepers, and hawkers still spend their time trading, trafficking, speculating, making prices waltz, and pocketing substantial incomes. Worse still, many young people shy away from work, preferring to traffic for a living.

But wheels are beginning to turn now. The State trade services are gradually extending their network, coordinating their work with the local marketing cooperatives that the population and the

workers have set up in the town, in enterprises and in public offices. Everybody, including the traffickers, knows that the day of all these "services", the panoply of trafficking, which are among the worst sequels of the neo-colonial regime, are numbered.

With a few more years' effort, Saigon will become a very important producer city and cultural centre. The revolutionary power has closed private banks, and private rice and foreign trade operations are no longer permitted. This has pruned the roots of the small and medium trading, causing the efflorescence to wither little by little.

The battle continues however, and is still close, as there are still hundreds of thousands of people trying to profiteer in countless different ways — often unlawful — so as to avoid taking regular employment. Administrative measures, reeducation and economic measures are the "joint forces" the revolutionary administration is setting in motion, and they owe their strength to both the State machinery and the people's organizations. Dispensing this medicine is a delicate operation and requires both technical skill and a keen sense of human problems on the part of the cadres.

Outwardly Saigon still resembles big cities like Calcutta, Djakarta or Singapore: high-rises jostle filthy slums, industrial consumer goods imported from Europe or Japan set the tone, and there is double pollution in the sense that tropical endemic diseases — malaria, cholera, even plague and dengue fever — still occur, while the smell of petrol and

the din of vehicles fray the nerves of the population. But underneath Saigon has begun to change.

No matter what difficulties are involved, nobody is left to his or her fate here. I strolled along many streets at night, and despite the weather being very mild, I saw very few people sleeping on the pavements (I have seen tens of thousands doing so in other tropical cities). All families' minimum daily needs — rice and other staple commodities — are guaranteed. Before the Tet festival, the State stores and mass organizations saw to it that all families could buy traditional foods and delicacies at very low prices, while prices on the free market were exorbitant. Private cars are disappearing little by little from the city traffic, and the disparity of incomes drops gradually as more and more State services and enterprises are set up. Western films that are pornographic or incite violence are no longer seen on cinema and television screens, and dancing bars, snack bars, opium dens, and brothels have been closed.

Little by little Saigon is changing into Ho Chi Minh City.

II. From Third Force to National Front.

I met Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh in her hospital room. The long years she spent in jail have marked her frail tiny body, but she is as lively and exuberant as ever. Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh is physically very weak, but she manages to fulfill her multiple functions as deputy to the National Assembly, member

of the City People's Committee, member of the leading body of the National Front, of the Women's Union, and the Lawyers' Association. I found her sitting on her hospital bed typing a long report.

"There's so much work to do," she said by way of an apology, "that it's impossible for me to follow the doctor's advice strictly. The liberation of the country has given us wings and I'd like to be able to work round the clock."

I told her that some Western newspapers have been saying that she has been put under house arrest and that she and other "Third Force" intellectuals have been forced to go digging. She burst out laughing.

"Those people don't understand anything at all. I fought against Thieu and against the Americans to defend our national independence and our most sacred moral values. Whom do they want me to fight now? It is political childishness to think that one can remain pure only in opposition to whatever regime is in power. Why do they want me to oppose the reunification of the country, the abolition of trafficking and private ownership of the main means of production?

"It is the people's army and the Communist Party that liberated the country, liberated Saigon, and liberated me. Why do they want me to oppose this army, oppose the Party? Why should I found an opposition party? I have lived long enough in the West to understand both the value and the limitations of the multi-party system, and I do not think it is the sole model for democracy. We have the

Communist Party, the socialist State, the National Front, and the various people's organizations. Above all, we are moving toward establishing collective ownership of the means of production. We have to build our own democracy, socialist and Vietnamese democracy, and not by aping the West. It has been a very natural evolution and a real liberation for me to go from opposition to Thieu to full participation in the new regime to build a reunified, independent, and socialist Viet Nam."

"You talk of democracy. Some people in the West, including personal friends of yours, reproach you for approving of the system of reeducation camps..."

Mrs. Thanh did not give me time to finish my sentence. She gave a start and said:

"I am a lawyer and as ingrained a democrat as anyone. Having been in prison many times, I highly appreciate freedom, my own and others'. We have restored freedom to more than one million (Thieu) soldiers and policemen. They even voted in the general elections (of April 1976 — *Ed.*) There have never been any political reprisals.

"As a lawyer and a democrat, I have no qualms of conscience whatsoever in assuming all the tasks proposed by the revolutionary administration. On the other hand I have had personal experience of some members of the former regime: of officers, pacification agents and torturers. If these men were immediately set free, few would hesitate to foment an armed counter-revolution. Washington has trained and indoctrinated them for just that. Now and then, some of them will set off a mine in a factory,

or fire on a coach travelling through a mountain region. Those people got rich with the Americans. many of them have killed, tortured, and ordered whole villages burnt. Today, they are in camps where nobody tortures them, where they are fed and lodged at least as well as the soldiers of the people's army are. All that is demanded of them is that they do some manual work, ponder over their past, over the regime they served, and over the revolution.

"When it is certain that one of them is no longer dangerous, he is freed. It's hard for the family, it's hard for a former general or colonel to go and live in a hut, and lay bricks or carpenter. But we just cannot jeopardize the safety of the entire population simply to meet abstract demands for democracy and liberty."

"And the famous Third Force," I said, "people also reproach you for having buried it."

A much calmer Mrs. Thanh smiled.

"You have seen my friends, Professor Ly Chanh Trung, Lawyer Nguyen Long, the Reverend Phan Khac Tu, and other well-known intellectuals in Saigon: you must be aware of the position and the frame of mind of personalities of the former Third Force."

As it happens, I have had long conversations with these men and other Saigon intellectuals. Politically they were more or less "Third Force" under the former regime. They were against Thieu and against US intervention; some of them had contacts with resistance organs, others didn't; some of them had

a fairly profound theoretical knowledge of socialism, others had no ideas on the subject.

For those who were very deeply involved politically, who had practical experience of political struggle, of the prisons, the switch to full participation in the new regime has been, as Mrs. Thanh put it, quite natural. The bookish education they had had was Western, bourgeois that is, but what they have experienced — the national humiliation of the two French colonial regimes, then the anguish of seeing a society disintegrate before their eyes as a result of the introduction of the American way of life, and an invasion by a mounting wave of superstitions — all this has led them toward socialism.

I met Dr. Tran Van Du in his private laboratory. In between two medical analyses made for his customary clientele, he was doing research on leaven (formerly imported) to be supplied to Saigon bakeries. He has even been to Hanoi to see how bakeries produce leaven.

"My clients' fees," he told me, "are what I live on, but it's only now, at the age of 60, that I have really begun to work. In the past we lived on imported materials and techniques: this was an umbilical cord tying our factories and laboratories to firms and institutes in the West. Now that we have political independence, we have to conquer independence in the scientific and technological field. It's hard, but engrossing. I hope that my laboratory will soon be made a government research unit where I will simply earn a scientific worker's salary."

"What are your relations with the authorities?" I asked.

"I sometimes have difficulties getting fuel supplies and chemicals, and I sometimes disagree on some practical questions, but as we all agree on basics — conquering scientific independence at all costs — this irons out quite a few difficulties. I believe that's what the National Front, of which I am a member, means. I must have a thousand material problems to solve, including questions of organization, but today I can give full scope to my scientific and technical initiative."

Basic agreement on the major political and human options, and multiple difficulties on the practical plane, and daily disputes, even conflicts: such is, I think, the situation of Saigon intellectuals in their relations with the revolutionary power.

The Reverend Phan Khac Tu, who received me in a mechanical engineering workshop he had founded for Catholic workers and seminarists, told me:

"In our meetings, in study sessions on Marxism in particular, Christians and Communists often exchange views. But I think that the real dialogue is on the practical plane. In the past, it concerned the common struggle for national independence. Today, it concerns the work of building a new, equitable and humane society. The gospel has lost none of its truth with the fall of the old regime."

And this priest finds it quite natural that he has become an active member of the National Front. Professor Ly Chanh Trung and Mr. Nguyen Long.

the lawyer, share the same view. They were temporarily separated from the National Front for Liberation by the whole military and police machinery set up by the Americans, but now that this machine has been smashed, nothing prevents them from rejoining the ranks of a broader National Front, and from bringing with them friends and colleagues who have never before joined any political organization. Why a third force today? The point is not to share out seats as in an electoral bout in bourgeois democracy, but to work together to rebuild a country ravaged by 30 years of war, to build together a national culture which looks to the future while respecting the values of the past.

This respect for the values of the past by the revolutionary power still amazes many Saigon intellectuals. Many of them have asked me about the translation of Kieu, a national poem known to all Vietnamese. Why did the North celebrate so solemnly the bi-centenary of the poet Nguyen Du, the author of Kieu, in 1965, when US planes had already started bombing the country? Wasn't Nguyen Du a reactionary? After all, he struggled against the Tay Son peasant uprising. Isn't Kieu riddled with lines that preach resignation to destiny, and renunciation of love and other joys of life?

To a group of high-school teachers, I replied:

"One judges a poet by his work, by the influence he has exerted. Nguyen Du was a mandarin, but Kieu as a whole was inspired by very strong oppo-

sition to the feudal regime, and flayed kings and madarins in no uncertain terms. In an absolute monarchy, Nguyen Du had the courage to sing the praises of a rebel. In a society in which women lived according to Confucian do's and don'ts, Nguyen Du defended young women's freedom to love. He also revived our national language, putting the rich treasure of classical literature within reach of the popular masses. One cannot reproach him for not being a Marxist, for not grasping the historic significance of the Tay Son uprising. He has enough merits to be considered one of the great figures of our national history."

For many Saigon intellectuals, liberation has also meant rediscovery of the beauty of the national culture. Physicians no longer look down upon traditional medicine, artists find matchless models in the statues at Tay Phuong pagoda (west of Hanoi — *Ed.*) or in the bronze drums. For all of them, the gate to the future has been opened, the "strait gate" of the national effort to be pursued in austerity, after all the mirages and nightmares of the neo-colonial period.

I have met engineers and architects off to choose sites for new electric power plants, putting finishing touches to plans for the manufacture of new products, or laying out new roads, parks of industrial suburbs.

I have watched a hundred agro-engineers leaving for the suburbs to help create a green belt for this city of 3.5 million inhabitants.

Of course, some still hanker after the time of easy money and pleasures, and their thoughts are in New York or Paris. Will they be the last remnants of a past and finished colonial epoch or will they in their turn become involved in the advance of our entire people?

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NGUYEN KHAC VIEN
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DISTRICT ONE, HO CHI MINH CITY EIGHTEEN MONTHS AFTER LIBERATION

District 1 (embracing the 1st and 2nd districts of former Saigon) stretches over an area of 7.7 square kilometres and has a population of 250,000. It is one of the seven inner districts of Ho Chi Minh City, and under the US-puppet regime was one of the political centres and a model of the US neo-colonialist society in southern Viet Nam in many fields.

Our correspondent met Tran Van Cau, Secretary of the Viet Nam Workers' Party Committee in District 1 recently, and he inquired about the fundamental changes that have taken place in this area since liberation, changes that can also be seen in the other towns and cities of southern Viet Nam.

Question: *More than a year and a half has elapsed since the complete liberation of South Viet Nam. This tremendous revolutionary gain of our people has been firmly defended and consolidated with each passing day. In your view, what task has been of prime importance, and how has it been carried out in your District? What has the role of the masses been in this connection?*

Answer: As everybody knows, the fundamental question of the revolution is the question of State power: the task of the revolution is not only to abolish the reactionary administration, but also to

build a firm, effective revolutionary administration, and use it as the most important tool in building the new society. So after overthrowing the puppet administration of the US, the work of building the revolutionary power of the people at all levels, especially grassroots level, was given priority and became the most urgent and important task of the revolution.

Combining military attacks with political uprisings, the people in our district rose to disarm the enemy in the days immediately following liberation, taking over the public offices and setting up People's Revolutionary Committees in all wards and sub-wards. However, some negative and opportunist elements, including not a few former agents and spies of the enemy, took advantage of the instability of the situation during the first days, when the presence of the revolutionary forces was not so strongly felt, to infiltrate administrative organs at various levels. This led to incorrect execution of the undertakings and policies of the government in some places. Worse still, government undertakings and policies were biased and distorted by these elements, which caused misunderstanding and even mistrust of the revolution among some of the people. Accordingly, in execution of a directive of the City Party Committee, the Party Committee in our district quickly worked out a plan for mobilizing all Party members and the entire armed forces and population in the district to concentrate on building, consolidating and gradually cleaning up the administrative apparatus from district down to grassroots level, in order

to safeguard the revolutionary gains and ensure the smooth running of daily affairs. Along with stepping up the training of cadres to reinforce the administrative apparatus, the District Party Committee and administration launched a mass movement to involve the masses in building and consolidating the revolutionary power. By relying on the masses, through the people's congresses held in every ward and sub-ward, and with the assistance of specialized agencies, the administration of various levels in the district has eliminated more than 300 bad elements from the power structure. We can say that all of the administrative organizations at all levels in the district have been consolidated now, and have begun systematic activities which reflect the absolute leadership of the Party and the collective mastery of the people.

It must be added that the consolidation of the revolutionary power is inseparable from the consolidation and development of the revolutionary forces of the masses. The number of Party members has increased, including local admission, and we have increased the local Party membership twentyfold compared with pre-liberation days. The Party organization is now capable of providing leadership in all fields in the district. The stormy mass uprisings and other revolutionary mass movements have also led to the revolutionary organizations of the masses growing rapidly. Present membership of the Ho Chi Minh Working Youth Union, Trade Unions and Women's Union in our district totals more than

50,000, 95% of whom have been admitted since liberation. This does not include the more than 20,000 Young Pioneers. This considerable force constitutes a reliable prop for the revolutionary power. Under the guidance of the District Party Committee, these mass organizations have delegated cadres to various organs of power, and in this way strengthened the ties between the administration and the people, and paved the way for the role of the masses as collective masters of society to grow.

Political discussions and people's congresses have been held in every street, ward and factory, and here the people have both courageously criticized the administrative organs, and made suggestions in a very constructive spirit about a wide range of problems, from economic management to administrative procedures and the behaviour of cadres. These discussions and congresses have furnished our Party organizations with many apt suggestions as to how to remedy our style of work and educate our cadres. The people must take part in both superintending and building the administration, so we have instructed administrative executives at grassroots level to make regular reports to the people with a view to further enhancing the function of the administrative bodies. To ensure democratic rights to the people, we have set up a Party control commission and an administration control board, and issued strict orders against any suppression of the right of criticism and other democratic liberties of the people.

The brilliant results of the general elections held for the National Assembly of the whole country is eloquent proof of the success of our efforts. The turnout was as high as 98.7% in our district. There has been a series of successes in a wide range of revolutionary activities, the most recent of which is the lively movement among the young people to register for military service (99.3% of the young men of military duty age in the district, regardless of ethnic origin and religious creed, have registered for enlistment). All this is convincing proof not only that the confidence of the people in the Party and the revolutionary administration has been increasing, but also that the people have become increasingly conscious of their role as collective masters.

Question : *The First District was a very important area in preliberation Saigon and was regarded by some as the capital within the capital of the puppet regime. This could not but pose many complex political problems. What has the situation been in practice? What measures have the Party organization and administrative organs in the district taken to ensure political security and social order?*

Answer: Under the US-puppet regime, the First District was not only the nerve-centre of the whole puppet administration system and the headquarters of reactionary parties and organizations of all colours, but also the residential quarter of dozens of puppet army and police officers. There were many famous hotels and notorious places of debauchery here as well as some of the biggest markets of

former Saigon, such as the Ben Thanh and Cau Ong Lanh markets. This means that our district had a most heterogenous population with only 20% workers. More than 25,000 former officers and soldiers of the puppet army and employees of the puppet administration (i.e 10% of the population of the district) live here, as do 10,000 hooligans, prostitutes, drug addicts, brothel owners and other riffraff who between them used to commit a good twenty major robberies, thefts and swindles daily.

Anyone can see that the situation was far from easy to handle, but as we all know, no "bloodbaths", reprisals or coercion of any kind have been perpetrated in solving these problems. The revolutionary administrations has explained and carried out the generous policy of the Party, and organized an orderly registration of those who worked for the Saigon regime and the US aggressors. More than 20,000 soldiers, officers and public employees of the former regime, including many cruel agents who went into hiding at the fall of the Saigon regime and were persuaded by their families to come back, have reported to the revolutionary administration. They have been sent to political re-education courses designed to help them understand the real nature of the schemes of the enemy as well as their past misdeeds, and decide for themselves the right way to resume life among the people and the nation. The majority of them have been allowed to return to their families and take up an honest profession. Up to April 1976, 95% of them had had their citizen's rights restored,

and on April 25, they joined the rest of the people in electing the National Assembly of the whole country. Some who made outstanding progress and showed rapid political awakening, have won the trust of the people and been given important tasks. This is the case of a former captain of the puppet army who has been appointed to the Fatherland Front Committee in the district.

However, some of these people with long-standing ties with US neo-colonialism have felt prompted to engage in sabotage activities against the revolution. A number of others, despite having attended re-education courses, have found it hard to break with the old mode of life, and have even joined bands of armed thugs or counter-revolutionaries and created political disturbances and disrupted public order. For this reason ensuring a peaceful life for the people, an urgent demand of the masses, remains a prime concern of the revolutionary power.

Since liberation, the administrative organs at all levels in the district, together with the security service, have conducted unrelenting campaigns to track down and repress the remaining counter-revolutionary elements and sweep away vestiges of the old regime. With the active participation and assistance of the masses, they have found their way to hundreds of former soldiers and agents who had refused to report to the new administration and attend re-education courses, as well as to hundreds of the ringleaders of armed robbery gangs, owners of brothels and drug-pushers. As a result, over the

past year and a half, all plots and acts of the counter-revolutionaries have been discovered before they were effectuated, all except for the explosion of a grenade in the Nguyen Van Hao theatre on the night of April 14, 1976, which could not be detected in advance. The number of robberies and hold-ups has dropped by 60 to 70%. The people in the district feel altogether much more secure in the new life they are building.

Question: To what extent has the life of the people in the district been stabilized in these difficult post-war conditions, especially when there are such far-reaching sequels of neo-colonialism to be dealt with?

Answer: The following figures give an idea of the "legacy" left by the US-puppet regime: more than 40,000 people were threatened by famine, there were 60,000 unemployed and loafers (i.e. almost one-third of the work force in the district), to say nothing of the innumerable social evils.

We mobilized the people to use their own resources to tide them over the initial difficulties, and we distributed hundreds of tons of relief rice to tens of thousands of needy people, regardless of their former social standing and political affiliation. As a result, nobody died of famine. At the same time we took various measures to create jobs and stabilize living conditions. The revolutionary administration has gone about rehabilitating and transforming about 1,500 former production establishments step by step, including the Ba Son shipbuilding yard. It also set

up more than 30 production collectives for such people as tailors and metal and plastic workers, with priority consideration given to the branches using raw materials that can be found locally or in the country. These initiatives and other measures have provided jobs for almost 40,000 present and former inhabitants of the district.

Another major concern of the revolutionary administration in our district has been the question of distribution, especially the distribution of daily necessities. Most active assistance from the Women Union ensured rapid organization of a widespread network of food stores in all wards, and meant that the State-run service in our district, though newly founded and still small, was able to play an effective role in helping check the disruptive operations of dishonest traders.

Early last July, the first marketing co-operative was founded in the 17th ward, chosen as pilot ward in this work. In its initial stage the co-op embraced only 1,200 members, mostly from working families, with initial assets of 15,000 dong. In addition to catering for the daily needs of its members with the commodities supplied by the State-run trade service, sold at official prices and in fixed quantities, the co-op also functions as a department store: consumer goods are sold to the local people through the co-op. The emergence and continued growth of this organization is bound to increase the confidence of the masses in the revolutionary power, because it is effectively protecting the economic interests of

the people and diminishing cumbersome and unnecessary transactions. This is the first, encouraging experiment in finding the most rational and equitable mode of distribution in the city.

Question: *In your opinion, what is the biggest problem in stabilizing and improving the people's life? How do you propose to tackle it and what has been achieved so far?*

Answer: The First District was already overpopulated, due to the brutal US-puppet war-time policy of concentrating the population in urban centres, when steady streams of forced refugees and large numbers of puppet army troops and employees of the puppet administration fleeing from other parts of southern Viet Nam flooded the city during the days preceding the liberation of Saigon. The population density in the district grew to incredible dimensions, almost 32,500 persons per square kilometre. This overcrowding is one of the direct causes of the rapidly rising unemployment rate, poverty and other social evils.

The first results of the intensive efforts and energetic socio-economic measures of the revolutionary power since liberation show stabilization of the life of the people in the district. However, a big and seemingly illogical problem remains: quite a number of people in our district still have to live cramped in tumble-down hovels and have no jobs, while large expanses of fertile land lie untilled around the city.

It is to solve these problems that we have been implementing the Party and State policy of redistributing the work force and sending people to do

land reclamation work in new economic zones. The serious implementation of this policy will set the pace for the settlement of many crucial questions such as jobs, housing, food, medical care, education, political security and public order, economic rehabilitation and development, and the building of a new, civilized and healthy way of life. How well these questions are solved depends to a large extent on the redistribution of the work force and the results achieved in building the new economic zones.

Of course, the first steps are always the most difficult. The movements to build new economic zones outside the city ran into difficulties at the beginning, caused in part by the inexperience of our cadres, inadequate preparations, the people's fear of breaking with a longstanding way of life, and by the distortions and allegations made by negative elements. But the movement has gradually won warm response from the people with the result that over the past 18 months, more than 30,000 people in the 1st District have gone to settle in six different new economic zones in Song Be province and other places in the western part of Nam Bo. In zones such as Bu Dop, Long Hoa I and Ben Tuong, life has become pretty stable, many houses have sprung up, and the settlers have reaped one crop of rice and another of sweet potatoes and cassava roots. The impressive line-up of scores of tractors, trucks, bulldozers, mechanical ploughs and other mechanized farm implements at the ceremony held on the morning of September 5, 1976 at the Tan Dan Park (1st District, Ho Chi Minh City) before setting out to

the Cay Truong II new economic zone in Song Be province, has greatly helped discredit the allegation of a few negative elements that "going to the new economic zones means deportation to unwholesome forest areas", an allegation which was not without credit among those who hesitated to leave. It should also be noted that all the mechanized farm implements brought along by the settlers are adequately supplied with fuel by the revolutionary administration. The latter have made clear to the settlers that they are free to build houses to their own liking, on plots of land of their own choice, instead of the uniform thatch-roofed houses built for them by the State.

For our part, we have gathered quite a lot of experience in organizing life in the new economic zones — from providing trucks for the settlers from the city, to their reception, provision of food and means of production for them at the new places. There is every reason to believe that a prosperous life is in store for the more than 30,000 people who have gone to the new economic zones. This is bound to make a favourable impression on those who have not definitely made up their minds to go.

Question : *Finally, would you tell us about the cultural life of the people in your district ?*

Answer : Busy as they are with many urgent tasks, the Party and administration in the district have not overlooked the cultural life of the people. Shortly after liberation, the district administration set about the urgent tasks of getting class-rooms in the schools fixed up in time for the 1975-1976 school

year. The policy of transforming all former private schools into State-owned schools and exempting all pupils from school fees has made it possible for us to provide education for practically all pupils of school age in the district. At present, there are 82,000 pupils at more than 60 schools providing first, second and third levels of general education, staffed by 2,343 teachers, 99% of whom were teaching under the old regime. The anti-illiteracy movement has kept up momentum, with the active participation of broad masses of the people. By early October 1976, more than 3,000 of the 5,000 illiterates in the district had become literate.

To match up to the new political tasks on hand, the mass literary and artistic movement is being encouraged everywhere. The people, especially the young people, have been enthusiastic in joining in the various forms of activity the movement has taken. For instance, there have been stirring days when the young people took to the streets to denounce the enslaving and mongrel culture left by the old regime, there has been a voluntary deposition of more than three million books and other reactionary and pornographic publications, and an eager quest for revolutionary political books and revolutionary literature, in addition to the present broad movement for artistic creation among the masses under the theme of national independence and unity and socialism.

The streets in our district have become cleaner and more wholesome in every sense. Those who visit the once infamous snack-bars, dance-halls, restaurants

and hotels, are surprised to find youth clubs, public reading-rooms, Trade Union meeting-halls, or offices of the local women's organization in their place. The stinking mountains of garbage that used to block traffic in many streets and market places, such as Cau Ong Lanh market, Cau Muoi Street, Huyen Si Church and Tran Quang Khai Boulevard, have been removed by the industrious hands of the refuse collectors. The life of these members of the municipal sanitation service has seen a real metamorphosis.

The new life-style has also begun to make itself felt in community life. Entering a public park or walking on a street pavement in District 1 today, the visitor sees merry chirruping groups of children singing and dancing under the guidance of their group leaders. Every morning, rhythmical music rings out in many streets, and at all schools, public offices and army barracks, while people of all ages and both sexes joyfully fall into line for ten minutes' physical training. Every Sunday morning, people of all ages come out with brooms to clean the streets, following the slogan "Keep our houses and streets clean!"

In short, after eighteen months of intensive efforts in the transformation and construction of all aspects of the economy, life and society, the Party organization and administration in District 1 have achieved encouraging success. But we are aware that these are only initial successes. It will take us much more time and still more intensive efforts to wipe out the far-reaching sequels of the aggressive war and the neo-colonialist policy of US imperialism in southern Viet Nam.

By striving to improve our application of the principle "The Party assumes leadership, the masses are collective masters, and the State is the manager", we are determined to develop the strong points and overcome shortcomings and weaknesses, to forge ahead and make our district into an all-round exemplary district of the city bearing the name of our beloved President Ho Chi Minh.

VIET NAM COURIER
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THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN HO CHI MINH CITY TWO YEARS AFTER LIBERATION

"After two years of continuous efforts, we can affirm that the situation has gradually been stabilized and the way has been cleared for further transformation," Mr. VAN DAI, Vice-Chairman of the People's Committee and Chairman of the Planning Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, told our special correspondent. The interview follows:

Question: What were the economic tasks the people's power had to assume as of April 30, 1975?

Answer: With liberation, our city has entered a new stage during which the main task is to build a socialist city. This does not require any sacrifice of human lives of course, as armed struggle did, but just as great efforts are necessary. This is a new struggle full of difficulties, obstacles, and snares...

The old regime left the economy in chaos. It was imperative and urgent that we begin stabilizing the working people's living conditions, transform this consumer city into a productive one step by step, find productive occupations for the majority of the working population who were then living on commerce and non-productive trades, and gradually reduce unemployment.

In short, we had to see to it that the people do not consume more than they produce, and that they do not live beyond their means.

First of all, order and security were prerequisite to economic stabilization and development. Right from the outset, we concentrated on building the revolutionary power. A new administrative system has now been established, from the centre to the district, wards and quarters, and the people's power has gradually been consolidated. The revolutionary power set free almost all soldiers and policemen of the old regime. And in order to consolidate order and security, and in view of the considerable parts they played in the war and their close ties with the US aggressors, proceeded to the reeducation of those who had been in charge of the pro-American army and of political agents. Refractory and counter-revolutionary elements who continued to sow disorder and to carry out terrorist activities and sabotage were punished. We did all we possibly could to enable all who recognized the criminal character of their past actions to become honest citizens. We can today affirm that order and security reign in Ho Chi Minh City and this is favourable for economic stabilization.

Question : *What have the main economic achievements of the past two years been ?*

Answer : We faced many extremely heavy tasks, and the obstacles seemed insurmountable at first.

First, let us talk about the sequels of the war and US neo-colonialism.

Saigon was the nerve-centre of all administrative, military, economic, and socio-cultural organs, and of all economic and financial activities of the former regime. This was where a major part of US economic aid was spent (estimated at 700-800 million dollars a year), not counting military aid, PX goods (imported duty-free for the GIs), large quantities of which were sold on the local market (about 200-300 million dollars a year), the daily spending by the GIs, troops of satellite armies, and US civilian personnel (about 300 million dollars a year). Over a period of about 15 years, this situation created the "artificial prosperity" characteristic of an economy entirely dependent on foreigners, primarily the United States. Saigon, like other cities of the South, was kept alive by US goods and dollars and spent four to five times more than the value of what it produced.

The economic and financial activities of the city were mainly confined to the service and trade sectors: according to the statistics of the former regime, the yearly income from these two sectors made up at least 60 per cent of the total income of the city. A large part of the population had jobs catering to the daily needs of the US expeditionary corps, and the puppet administration and army. Industry was weak (hardly 10 per cent of the total income), and was completely dependent on American aid for raw materials, machinery and equipment, spare parts, semi-finished products, capital, and technology.

Besides, because of the US wartime policy of "urbanization", of "regroupment of villages", of

"concentration of the population", millions of peasants from different regions had been crowded into Saigon, inflating its population to 4 million, eight times that of the French colonial period. This population was to all intents and purposes supported by American aid and war spending.

Pre-liberation Saigon was a consumer society grafted onto an underdeveloped country, an offspring of neo-colonialism with a dual life: on the one hand, providing great luxury and pleasures; and on the other, harbouring the stark misery of millions of war victims driven out of regions razed by American bombs and shells. There were sumptuous villas provided with the most up-to-date comfort imported from France or Japan (telephones on all floors, television, air-conditioning, Persian carpets, Gobelin tapestries, furniture from Paris, Sevres china...), tennis courts, swimming pools, etc. And not far away was another kind of life, that of slums along the banks of canals, where all kinds of tropical diseases (plague, cholera, typhus, leprosy)—which have been virtually wiped out in northern Viet Nam—still raged.

"Every man for himself, Uncle Sam for all."

After southern Viet Nam had been completely liberated, and US aid cut off, Saigon consumer society collapsed.

And that's what the drama of Saigon is all about!

The people's power could not clear up the mess overnight. To reorganize an economy in complete disorder, transform a lopsided economy totally dependent on foreigners into an independent, plan-

ned economy, to make Saigon a big industrial centre, is a task that requires not only time but also enormous efforts from both the administration and the people.

Shortly after liberation, measures were taken as a matter of urgency to stabilize the living conditions of the working people. We had to remove the immediate danger of famine which was then threatening hundreds of thousands of people. 135,000 tons of rice were distributed free to needy families in the first eight months (from May to December 1975).

Meanwhile, the people's power set about fighting acts of economic sabotage by the comprador capitalists. The latter were not numerous, but they pulled most of the main strings of the economic and financial apparatus. Before liberation they controlled the key economic and financial sectors, from branches catering for the war needs of the US expeditionary corps and the puppet army (food and foodstuffs, metal equipment, building materials, means of transport...) to branches producing raw materials, other materials and ordinary items of production and for people's daily needs (chemical and pharmaceutical products, rice, foodstuffs, chemical fertilizers, plastic products, textiles, household utensils, cultural articles), and other activities like trade, import-export, banking, insurance and hotels.

They dominated the economy and finance, fixed prices, and managed the exchange, collection and distribution of goods. They had benefited from American largesse and had put up factories, buildings, founded trade and import-export establishments

and banks, and made fabulous fortunes. Their fortunes were built on the misery of hundreds of thousands of victims of American bombs and shells and untold war devastation. They were used by their Yankee masters, and were their most reactionary political and social support, meeting a certain number of their war needs on the spot. These compradors worked hand in glove with the puppet generals and ministers.

After liberation, they still controlled large stocks of imported goods, vast trade, distribution and collection networks that had been operating in the cities and countryside for decades, and taking advantage of the difficult first days after liberation and of the shortages of goods, they joined up with traders and traffickers of all kinds to speculate, hoard, defraud and corrupt — their customary activities. The consequences of these actions were incalculable: rocketing prices, scarcities, rising cost of living and economic and social disorder. The people's power decided to liquidate the comprador capitalists as a class by economic measures (basically of a fiscal and monetary nature, and confiscation) and administrative measures (bringing the main saboteurs and trouble-makers to book).

Another, no less imperative task was the rapid establishment of a new economic apparatus, and in particular the State trade services, which would replace the old machinery being abolished and ensure the direct supply of food to the population. Right from the start, the trade services concentrated on supplying the city with staple commodities: fish,

meat, vegetables, sauce, bread, oil, kerosene, charcoal, and paper, with special emphasis on the daily food needs of the working people. To accomplish this task, the State trade services took charge of the purchase and sale of all the vegetable products supplied by the city of Da Lat, and of a large part of the fish, poultry and pigs produced in the western and eastern provinces. Thus it succeeded in supplying to the city 500 tons of fresh food daily, including 300 tons of vegetables.

Besides the four general department stores opened in the heart of the city, many specialized stores were set up (selling daily necessities, foodstuffs, wood and charcoal for heating, building materials...), as well as 720 State sale stations in downtown and suburban areas. At the same time, 200 consumer cooperatives were set up to improve the distribution of supplies and reduce the negative effects of the price rises on the open market.

In order to expand the sources of supply, 10 special trade services have been organized with the task of providing raw materials to industrial and handicraft establishments, and necessary conditions for their functioning (transport and raw material collection facilities at preferential prices) have been attended to; tens of thousands of people have found jobs in these manufacturing branches (hosiery, ready-made clothes, bicycle frames and spare parts, textiles, glassware, plastic goods, building materials, pottery, aluminium household utensils, etc.)

Question : *How did the people's power manage to supply food to such a large population ?*

Answer : Feeding a population of between 3.5 and 4 million inhabitants, 70 percent of whom were non-producers, was a very difficult problem, and one which the people's power had to solve at all costs.

So far, food supply has depended on the help of the central administration and food has come mainly from provinces in the Mekong delta, as our suburban districts are not yet able to produce enough food even for their own consumption.

We do not wish to conceal the fact that we have had difficulties in this domain. During the war years, a large part of the cultivable areas in the Mekong delta provinces were devastated and left waste and this resulted in a shortage of food supplies. The puppet administration had to import, via US aid from 500,000 to 700,000 tons of rice a year. Over the past two years large areas have been reclaimed thanks to the intensification of water conservancy work, and this has made intensive cultivation and multiplication of crops possible. Rice production, though still insufficient, has enabled us to stop relying on imports, and all the rice consumed by our city over the past two years has been produced in the country. This is a great victory for our people's regime.

In 1976, in spite of temporary difficulties, great efforts were made to organize the rice collection and distribution networks: one, two or three stores were set up in each quarter, and altogether 800 sale stations were established in the city.

In 1977, our food supply services must do all they possibly can to meet the daily needs of the population and ensure normal rations for the working people. We must also see to it that the flow of food between different suburban districts is adjusted and regularized so as to reduce the aid from the central administration; the setting up of a suburban "green belt" with 90,000 hectares of arable land and 800,000 inhabitants will help solve the problem.

In the collection and purchase of food, the people's power counts on the revolutionary consciousness of the peasants and on political education and persuasion; it also uses economic measures, like the signing of bilateral contracts with the peasants in exchange for their rice, ensuring them supplies at fixed prices of fuel, chemical fertilizers, insecticides, building materials, and other staple commodities in return for rice sold to the State.

Apart from rice, we are also thinking of organizing a network for purchasing, storing and processing other foods (maize, sweet potatoes, cassava) with a view to stimulating more intensive cultivation of these dry crops.

Lastly, alongside the development of production, we must improve the management of distribution, and save food, especially rice.

We believe that with all these measures we have taken, the supply of food to our city in 1977 will not be so difficult, as the obstacles we came up against first have mostly been overcome.

Question : *What measures have been envisaged for solving the problem of unemployment ?*

Answer : This was an acute problem right after liberation, and the stabilization of the political, economic and social situation depends largely on its solution. But finding jobs for hundreds of thousands of people, giving each of them a modest but stable and regular income at a moment when everything was to be started again from scratch or to be reorganized was a baffling question.

Let us recall in passing that following the signing of the Paris Agreement of January 27, 1973, the complete withdrawal of the US expeditionary corps had entailed the closure of the branches catering directly to war and the needs of the GIs, and of industrial enterprises, as a result of the shortage of raw materials: unemployment was already a problem then. On the day of liberation, the collapse of the puppet army and administration further swelled this army of unemployed.

To redress this situation, the people's power took urgent measures: helping industrial enterprises start work again, developing handicraft production, and in particular, sub-contracting work for export, opening public works sites (water conservancy projects dredging, building of public squares, and so on).

However, the basic way to reduce unemployment consists in orientating jobless people toward agricultural production, and in particular persuading hundreds of thousands of "refugees" to return to their native villages, to reclaim waste land or to take part in new agricultural projects. This is the only

sure way of being able to reduce the city population, solve the difficulties of food supply, and boost agricultural production which has always been one of the fortes of southern Viet Nam. A broad movement to this end has been launched, embracing little by little all social strata, and especially young people who maintained their revolutionary ardour through long years of neo-colonial regime. So far, 700,000 people, most of them former peasants, have left the city for good to take up agriculture.

For city-dwellers to accept the as yet hard life in the countryside is not easy. The people's power, working in close association with the local population, has done its best to make life less arduous for those who leave the city. Substantial assistance in the form of food, capital, seeds, draught animals, dwelling-houses, tools and the like, and teachers, medical workers, and technicians are dispatched to the new settlement areas. In many regions, the people have begun to be self-sufficient in food, children have begun attending school, and health establishments have begun to treat patients. Although this new life is not yet very comfortable, most of these people are gradually getting used to it and have begun to feel confident and secure with regard to their own future and the future of their children.

We plan to send another contingent of about one million people to new agricultural areas in one or two years. This work, however, requires a great deal of preparation.

Question : *How has agricultural restoration progressed so far ?*

Answer : There are large and fertile cultivable expanses in and around the suburban areas which are very suitable as a "green belt" for growing food supplies for the city.

Immediately after liberation, the suburban population who had been driven from their homes by the bombings and shellings, returned to their homes once more.

In 1976, thanks to the intensification of water conservancy works (3 million cubic metres of earth were moved for the building of new projects), 6,000 hectares left waste for a decade were put under cultivation again, and tens of thousands of hectares are already bearing two crops a year.

In certain sectors, unexploded mines and bombs have killed and injured many peasants: American weapons are still killing Vietnamese. With the help of the people's army, our peasants have cleared their fields of these lethal objects and planted them with rice.

Question : *You spoke of industrial restoration. How far has it got and what results have been obtained ?*

Answer : The shortage of raw materials constitutes the main problem. The consequences of economic dependence are obvious here. However, we have done our utmost to overcome this handicap using our own resources, and this has not been without difficulties of course.

To date, 400 State enterprises have been commissioned and most of the 18,000 private (industrial and handicraft) enterprises and establishments have resumed their activities.

To restore the traditional handicraft production which disappeared as a result of competition from imported foreign products (lacquer work, lace-work, tapestry, hat-making, textiles, craftwork products...), we have helped 800 cooperatives and production groups to resume work. 10,000 looms are functioning again, supplying millions of metres of cotton and silk.

The restoration of industrial and handicraft production, though in its first stages, has provided 70,000 people with jobs and enabled some tens of thousands of workers to return to their factories.

Besides the supply of raw materials and spare parts, loans totalling 200 million *dong* (one *dong* = 500 piastres of the former puppet regime), have been granted by the State Bank.

To restore an industry that was entirely dependent on foreign aid is a hard undertaking. Much remains to be done to stabilize (this sector, which has developed in a disorderly way, and to regularize and adjust the relations between its various branches. In the immediate future we must make up for the grave shortage of raw materials, and an effective way is to encourage the use of the country's own raw materials (the COGIDO paper mill has been using bamboo instead of formerly imported paper pulp, for example): this work requires innovations,

initiative, studies and research on the part of technicians, scientific personnel and workers, who are thereby given opportunities to serve their country well.

Question : *What policy has the people's power adopted toward the non-comprador private capitalists (industrialists and traders) ?*

Answer : We have begun the socialist transformation of these economic sectors, the key section of which is private commerce.

In order to make use of everything the private capitalist sectors can offer the economy (production capacity, capital, technical and managerial capacity), the people's power has encouraged capitalists, and first of all traders, to engage in productive branches. This has taken the form of fixing modalities for getting bank loans, for drawing funds, setting norms for profit-sharing which favour them, and setting up joint enterprises (with joint State and private capital).

All enterprises, whether private or jointly managed, must function according to the regulations set by the State plans. They can either make their own provision for raw materials, or work under sub-contracts, the prices of products being fixed by our specialized services, and the percentage of the products to be sold to the State varying according to their importance. Thus both the interests of the State and those of the capitalists and the workers are safeguarded. This policy enables the capitalists and their children to work for the interests of the whole country.

In 1976, capitalists from 16 branches contributed significantly to industrial development in Ho Chi Minh City—in building-projects, spinning and weaving, food products, metal equipment, forestry exploitation, chemical and pharmaceutical products, vegetables, animal husbandry, etc.

With regard to handicraft workers, the people's power has given them aid in the form of capital, technology, machinery and raw materials, and encouraged them to organize cooperatives.

Question : *Would you say that the results obtained by Ho Chi Minh City over the past two years in economic restoration are encouraging ?*

Answer : In the two years that have gone by since liberation, we have recorded quite a few achievements.

In view of the disorder and devastation due to war, the results we have obtained in economic reconstruction — not counting those recorded in other domains — are significant. Not only has the people's power stabilized the living conditions of the working people, but our city has also contributed in some measure to the economic development of the country, particularly with its export trade.

The face of our city has changed — not the main thoroughfares or the fashions in dress, but in the life-style of its inhabitants. The city is being metamorphosed to advance with the rest of the country along the socialist path.

Question : *To what degree has the reunification between the North and the South helped solve the economic problems of Ho Chi Minh City?*

Answer : We must make a point of insisting on the paramount importance of *the role of the socialist North*. In the post-war reconstruction of southern Viet Nam (and of Ho Chi Minh City), as in the victory over the US imperialists, *the North has consistently played the role of national "great rear area"*. Let us not forget that during the war, the North, particularly its industrial centres, sustained more destruction from US bombing than the South did. And yet, in the first days after liberation, when shortages of all kinds and a host of difficulties had to be overcome, the North sent to the South, as in the past, and in particular to Ho Chi Minh City, tens of thousands of technical and scientific cadres and skilled workers. From April 1975 to April 1976, 1.6 million tons of commodities reached the South: rice, sugar, textiles (32 million metres), pharmaceutical and chemical products, fuel, equipment and machinery, spare parts, chemical fertilizers, insecticides, selected grain seeds, and various species of pedigree animals (hogs, cows, poultry and fish.)

Two years ago, the North greatly contributed to the liberation of the South. Today, within the framework of a unified Viet Nam, it is in a position to help the whole country advance along the socialist path. The socialist structures of the North constitute a good starting base for the whole country.

Question : *What are the economic prospects for Ho Chi Minh City?*

Answer : Our city has great economic potential. Before liberation, the total value of its industrial and handicraft production made up as much as 80 per cent of the GNP in all of the South.

Besides large and medium-sized industrial enterprises, the city has a vast network of handicraft establishments. Most of these industrial enterprises were built during the late 60's and early 70's, and have modern equipment and automated production lines. They turn out a great variety of products, of good quality and well presented, which are therefore suitable for export.

Heavy industry has not been developed much and does not include enterprises in the key sectors. It is quite well equipped, however, with some thousands of modern machine-tools, mostly concentrated in repair and fitting establishments and in connection with assembly work and manufacture of spare parts. We can cite the steel industry (iron and copper wire, steel rods for ferro-concrete made from scrap), engineering enterprises producing electric fans, bicycles, sewing machines, clocks and watches, radio and television sets...

Light industry is well developed, covering a number of different branches and including textiles (260 million metres of cotton and synthetic fabrics a year), silk fabrics, hose, woollen knitwear, ready-made clothes, furs; plastic goods (60,000 tons a year); glassware (30,000 tons a year) rubber products (2.5 million bicycle inner-tubes and tyres a year);

paper (20,000 tons a year); processed wood (800 well-equipped enterprises); detergents (50,000 tons a year); printed matter and pharmaceutical products (124 laboratories); foods (sweetmeats, condensed milk, flour, edible oils, tobacco, tinned food, carbonated drinks, refrigerating installations).

Capital construction, with a hundred enterprises and research offices, employed 75,000 people in 1976. This augurs well for further construction works in Ho Chi Minh City and the provinces.

Industry and construction have a work force with good practical qualifications, but weak on the theoretical level; there are experienced technicians, most of whom were trained abroad.

This industrial potential was underemployed before liberation, when most enterprises were running at less than 50 per cent production capacity; and in many enterprises, new equipment is still unused. Socialist transformation will enable these reorganized enterprises to make full use of their production capacity.

Agriculture has great possibilities too. There are 90,000 hectares of fertile land in the suburban regions. With the intensification of water conservancy works favouring intensive cultivation, multiplication of crops, technical renovation and diversification of crops, there are bright prospects for being able to harvest two or three crops a year (and three to four tons of rice per hectare per crop).

Animal husbandry is fairly well developed. Before liberation, there were already 278 piggeries, some of them raising as many as 6,000 pigs; 247 poultry

farms, each with some tens of thousands of hens; certain farms raised as many as 200-300 pigs and thousands of hens. Animal husbandry benefits from excellent breeding, and the pigs have an average weight of 100 kilograms when slaughtered. Besides, the city has 17 food-processing factories with a production capacity of 200,000 tons per year.

The city also enjoys favourable natural conditions for the development of duck-raising, fish-breeding and poultry-rearing.

Apart from rice, the growing of fruit trees is also developed. The mechanization of agriculture has begun with a machine-park totalling 50,00 hp. In a few years, when all waste land has been reclaimed, the soil improved, the countryside electrified, when there has been intensified rearrangement of crop fields and water conservancy work, improvement of mechanization (with new supplies of equipment), all this parallel with the reorganization of agriculture, and the eventual setting up of agricultural cooperatives, the suburban regions will succeed in producing not only enough food for their own consumption, but surplus food as well for city consumption and for the export trade.

The city has a good infrastructure: a big port with a cargo handling capacity of 7 million tons a year, 1,000 kilometres of asphalted road, (700 kilometres of them of international standard), and a dense network of telecommunications ensuring speedy contact with the various parts of the country as well as with foreign countries. The means of transport are numerous, but they are only being

used at 50 per cent capacity. There are several thousand lorries, 3,500 buses, 300 big river boats, tens of thousands of tourist buses and large numbers of other motorized vehicles. Tourism, another important source of foreign exchange, will be able to develop thanks to the existence of 200 hotels, 30 of which are of international standard and well-equipped.

Thus the potential of the city is great in all the main economic sectors. The target population is about 3 million (including the suburbs).

We should bear in mind, however, that this material and technical basis has been paid for very dearly: hundreds of thousands of victims of US bombings and shellings in the whole country, vast war ravage in both the North and the South, the restoration of which will take decades, and the heavy sequels of US war and neo-colonialism (not least of which were a chaotic economy completely dependent on foreign countries, hundreds of thousands of unemployed, prostitutes, orphans, drug addicts, invalids for life...).

Southern Viet Nam's economy was neo-colonialist: it depended entirely on foreign countries for raw materials and especially for technology. The void left in this domain by the Americans will gradually be filled by our efforts. Over the past two years, thanks to the help from the central administration and in cooperation with the technicians, scientific personnel and workers of the North, our technicians, scientific researchers and skilled workers, by their inno-

vations, initiative, studies and research, have made an important contribution to restoring production in our enterprises.

Let us cite an example: under the former regime, the VINAPPRO and VIKYNO factories (mechanical engineering plants) merely undertook the overhauling and assembly of agricultural machines, for which all the parts (and the designs) came from Japan. After liberation, these factories ceased their activities, like all other major enterprises. In 1976, in cooperation with factories in the North, technicians and workers of VINAPPRO and VIKYNO started producing 12-HP and 24-HP cultivators and water pumps.

At present, Ho Chi Minh City must concentrate on socialist transformations and the reorganization of its economy, with the aim of developing its industrial and agricultural production.

Only by coordinating our own efforts with the help given by the central administration and the provinces can we make full use of our economic potential for the development of the whole country.

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(Interview recorded by
NGUYEN XUAN LAI)
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NGHIA BINH PROVINCE AND ITS FOOD PROBLEM

Nghia Binh province in central Viet Nam, formed by merging the former provinces of Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh, has an area of 14,700 sq.km., and a population of 1,650,000 of different ethnic groupings, including Kinh, Thuong, Sedang, H're and Ba Na. Its two major towns are Quang Nghia and Qui Nhon.

Nghia Binh has all conditions necessary for all-round economic development. Firstly, there are three types of region in the province, plains, mountains and the coastal areas, and secondly it has abundant natural riches of many sorts. Off its 280 km coast are some of the largest schools of fish in the South. Its forests cover more than 300,000 hectares, and in them grow many kinds of precious timber such as *lim* (*Erythrophloeum fordii* Oliv), *trac* (*Dalbergia Cochinchinensis* Pierre) *cho*, (*Hopera recopei* Pierre) *kien kien* (*Hopea pierrei* Hance), and medicinal plants and trees. The mineral deposits in Nghia Binh include iron, zinc, graphite, mica and kaolin. Nghia Binh is also renowned for many special products such as Phuonng Mai swallows' nests, Tra Bong cin-namon, Quang Ngai rice malt and Phu Phong silk.

In spite of all these riches, for the past twenty years starvation and poverty has been the lot of

the people of Nghia Binh, as in all the other provinces in the South seriously devastated by war and US neo-colonialism. All branches of the economy in the province stagnated completely during this period.

Starting from Scratch.

At the time of liberation, more than 50,000 hectares were lying waste or fallow (of a total of 300,000 hectares of agricultural land in the province). Unexploded bombs, mines and barbed-wire fences left by the enemy were everywhere. Of the 19 communes of Son Tinh district, 15 were littered everywhere with unexploded bombs and mines. In courtyards, in gardens, on the fields, on paths along ricefield boundaries, in the hills and along roadsides, the danger of explosion was everywhere. 600,000 inhabitants of Nghia Binh, over one-third of the population, had been herded into the towns or into disguised concentration camps. 60,000 workers were jobless and hundreds of thousands of other labourers had very precarious work situations. Tens of thousands of draught buffalo and oxen had been killed. Almost all of Quang Ngai town's 100,000 inhabitants were either engaged in small trade, handicrafts or small industries, or depended on employment in services catering for the war. Nearly all the 15,000 hectares of arable land in the suburban communes lay fallow.

Supplying food to the 100,000 inhabitants of the town and 66,000 other people who had recently moved into the town from Da Che and Go Su concentrations camps posed a serious problem. The US

and its puppets had had to import more than 30,000 tons of rice every year for Nghia Binh alone. Understandably, Nghia Binh ran short of rice after liberation and within a few months the food situation became very serious.

As a first step towards stabilizing the people's living conditions, the government sent 100-120 tons of rice to Nghia Binh every month. In some months the relief rice supplied amounted to more than 700 tons; meanwhile the State could buy almost nothing from the peasants.

Truckloads of relief rice continued to be rushed to Nghia Binh from other provinces in the South and from the North too, at a time when the government had its hands full solving the innumerable post-war problems. The authorities in Nghia Binh had to find a solution themselves.

But famine was not the only problem. There were also the many diseases left by twenty years of continual war. And the social evils under the old regime which temporarily abated in the days immediately following liberation now flared up again with all their virulence: burglaries, robberies, murders, street fights... Remnants of the puppet army and administration who had evaded registration and were in hiding seized this opportunity to try to undermine the revolutionary power. Psychological warfare agents of the recently overthrown reactionary administration were active too, propagating their distorting and vilifying allegations against the revolution in an attempt to confuse and bewilder the population

and make things as difficult as possible for the newly established power.

To rely on the State for relief rice was only a passive stop-gap measure and could not cope with any wide-scale famine situation. Nghia Binh was not the only province in the South that was facing these problems at the time, and some other cases were even more acute.

The Party Committee of Nghia Binh realized that the situation was serious; but not everyone was able to see the problem from the right angle immediately. A few cadres who were used to relying on assistance from above whenever difficulties cropped up argued that as the government had never left Nghia Binh high and dry before, not even during the hard days of the war, it would not fail to supply adequate food to Nghia Binh now that peace had been restored.

A hard struggle between the two trends of thought—self-reliance on the one hand, and dependence on government relief on the other—was finally resolved in favour of the former. Speaking to cadres and people in the province, the former Secretary of the Party Committee of the 5th Zone (Nghia Binh was a province of the 5th Zone), said: "Now that peace has been restored, it would be a shame and a crime if we held out our hands and begged for aid from the central administration. We must bring our population's tradition of self-reliance into full play and produce as much food as we can; and we must content ourselves with what food we can produce."

This determination was echoed by the Party Committee of Nghia Binh who vowed to strive for self-sufficiency in food throughout the province.

When drawing up its plan for 1976, the provincial Party Committee was still not sure Nghia Binh could become self-sufficient in food within the year, but was nevertheless unanimous that this be the goal towards which the efforts of the entire population in the province be aimed; "making agricultural development the cornerstone and regarding food production as the key task."

To make this policy a success, the provincial Party Committee urged all levels of the province administration to carry out a widespread ideological campaign to ensure that the entire Party and people saw and understood clearly all the difficulties left by thirty years of continual war and neo-colonialism, and to help forge their resolve to overcome difficulties and work towards a life of plenty for themselves and towards prosperity and happiness for their province.

Back to the Fields to Clear and Reclaim Land.

Moving more than half a million people from former concentration camps, from leading hand-to-mouth existences in the towns, back to their ricefields was not simple. In Quang Nghia and Qui Nhon towns alone, almost 100,000 person were helped to return to their home areas or to go to new economic zones.

At first it was anything but plain sailing for these people, even though they had been born peasants.

They had courageously stuck to their fields to produce rice not only for their own subsistence but also for the resistance during the liberation war against the French colonialists. But they had been separated from their ricefields for almost twenty years by the US war of aggression, and herded into disguised concentration camps. There they had made their living by peddling or doing service jobs. Some had worked their way to affluence and the glamorous prosperity of neo-colonialist society. When they now returned to their fields and handled a hoe or a plough again on a field overgrown with weeds and littered with unexploded bombs and mines, while suffering privations of all kinds, it is not surprising that not all of them found it easy to adapt themselves to the new life immediately.

The revolutionary administration embarked on a vast and persistent campaign aimed at convincing everybody that at this juncture growing food crops must be the central, the vital task. At the same time, it provided the returnees with the necessary material conditions and guidance to settle and begin agricultural production immediately. Steps were also taken to organize aid from the peasants who had stayed behind to those who had just moved home or to new economic zones.

Then a widespread campaign for land reclamation was launched throughout the province with a view to reclaiming and expanding the cultivated areas.

Those taking part in this movement were peasants, the main force, and soldiers, senior secondary school students, workers, young people and other people from the towns.

As well as opening up new land and reclaiming waste land, the revolutionary power set up a series of new economic zones in Cat Hiep, Binh Khuong, Thuan Ninh, Thuan Phong, Long My and other places with the aim of drawing jobless people from the towns into productive labour and creating a new life.

Fifty hectares of hilly land in Phuoc Thach commune near Quy Nhon town are being made into a farm for the growing of vegetables and subsidiary crops, raising of pigs and poultry for town food supplies and processing of farm produce. A careful survey has been made by the town authorities, a plan for the planting of various crops has been drawn up, and so have plans for building houses, a health station and facilities for food supply for the population.

In addition, to break the "two sao shackle" (per capita share of cultivable land in the area, two sao being one-fifth of a hectare) the provincial authorities persuaded more than 10,000 families, comprising 22,118 persons and including more than 10,000 farmhands, to go and build a new economic zone in the neighbouring province of Gia Lai — Cong Tum. The double aim of this was to expand the cultivated area and increase food output to improve the life of the local people; and to contribute to the building and development of the economy and culture in the mountain region.

By the end of 1976 the people of Nghia Binh province had cleared or reclaimed and brought under

cultivation 30,000 hectares. Almost 300 agricultural production groups have been formed, each consisting of 20-40 households and owning 5-15 hectares of land and a number of buffaloes and oxen. This organization was undertaken to facilitate the progress of the peasants in the province step by step along the road of large-scale socialist production. The setting up of production groups has helped the people of ethnic minorities in the province to give up their nomadic life, the disastrous slash-and-burn method of clearing swiddens, and subsequently to clear more land for the cultivation of wet rice and develop other sideline occupations.

One of the underlying reasons for Nghia Binh's success on the agricultural front is the special concern of the provincial Party Committee for restoring and developing all the work and services necessary for agricultural development. This includes raising herds of buffalo and oxen to increase draught power, restoring and developing industry and handicrafts to increase the supply of goods to the peasants, expanding the communications network and the trading service down to village level to supply goods to farmers on the spot, and extending the medical, cultural and educational network and provide better care for the health and the cultural life of the people.

The Whole province Becomes a Water Conservancy Construction site.

Once land has been reclaimed, water is needed for the crops. Nghia Binh has the great advantage of being watered by many big rivers such as the

Tra Khuc and the Ve. Some major irrigation projects in the province were either destroyed or badly damaged during the war.

Restoration and expansion of the water conservancy system in the service of agricultural production was urgently required, and only a radical solution to the problem of irrigation and drainage could ensure that Nghia Binh would increase the number of crops in a year, expand crop area and increase crop output significantly. This was also the first prerequisite for any advance by the countryside on the road of large-scale socialist production. With adequate supplies of water, it is possible not only to expand the rice area but also to grow industrial crops such as mulberry and sugar-cane, both in limited areas and on a large scale. It also provides conditions in which cattle-breeding and other sideline occupations can develop.

This line of thought has prompted the local Party Committee to regard water conservancy as the prime technical measure in agricultural production. In fact, immediately after liberation the revolutionary administration in Nghia Binh launched a movement for irrigation which turned the whole province into a huge construction site for irrigation projects. In the first days after liberation, tens of thousands of people took part daily in irrigation projects such as building dykes against salt water, restoring the whole system of water wheels for

irrigation of fields along the banks of the Tra Khuc and Lai rivers which had been destroyed by the enemy, digging tens of thousands of wells and ponds and erecting thousands of scooping shafts that bristled like anti-aircraft batteries, and dredging, digging or repairing 900 km of existing canals.

In this vast undertaking, the Party Committee both guarded against and combated the tendency to passively wait for rain or for State-supplied fuel to operate the pumps; at the same time, it called on the people to join battle in the spirit of "squeezing water out of the earth, and making rain instead of the sky", and to put into practice slogans like "let our sweat flow so that our rice and potatoes grow". Everywhere in the province people were moving water. In some places it was scooped to the fields up three levels and in others people had to carry water to their fields bucket by bucket. The movement is both widespread and effective thanks to good co-ordination of large, medium and small irrigation projects.

In 1976 Nghia Binh suffered one of its worst droughts ever, with no rain for four months on end. The revolutionary administration on the one hand supplied sufficient gasoline for the continual operation of the 18,000 pumps in the province, and on the other mobilized the people to contribute millions of workdays to restoring and repairing almost all the existing irrigation works to irrigate almost half of the cultivated area. As a result, the crop acreage almost doubled compared with pre-liberation days.

In the coming years, Nghia Binh plans to build 19 irrigation projects including two major projects — the Thanh Nham dam on the Tra Khuc river and the Phu Phong reservoir in Binh Khe. When completed, these projects are expected to water more than 100,000 hectares.

Other Technical Measures.

Alongside water conservancy, the provincial Party Committee and administration have also paid great attention to other technical measures such as fertilizers and new rice strains, as well as to techniques of planting, sowing, transplanting and tending, and of fighting insects and rats. In all this work, the revolutionary administration has relied on the masses and organized mass movements to carry out the plans. Of course, not everything has been plain sailing.

Take the question of fertilizer, for instance. Under the old regime, the peasants in Nghia Binh, as elsewhere in southern Viet Nam, used neither organic fertilizer nor green manure, only imported chemical fertilizers. After liberation, while continuing to supply chemical fertilizers, the revolutionary administration launched a campaign to make full use of all available sources of organic fertilizer and green manure throughout the province.

High-yield rice strains are grown on an ever larger proportion of the total rice acreage of the province. At present, more than 60% of the rice acreage in Nghia Binh is planted with short-term rice strains such as Nong Nghiep 8, 22, and Nong Nghiep 73/2. In one district, these rice strains are grown on more than 90% of the rice acreage.

At the same time, the fight against insects, rats and other pests has been stepped up. The provincial authorities supplied insecticides and sprayers to pest-affected areas to stamp out crop pest on detection, and encouraged people to use their own remedies to get rid of crop pests and exterminate rats. Encouraged by the provincial authorities, people in many districts have taken interesting initiatives during this campaign. In Mo Duc district and Quang Ngai town for instance, tens of thousands of people went to the fields several nights in a row and used kerosene lamps and torches to kill insects: a small kerosene lamp placed in a tub filled with water and with some oil on the surface can trap more than 100 crop-eating insects in two hours. This and other methods, primitive as they are, are easily practicable by the broad masses for they suit local capacity and conditions. Their positive results in the fight against crop pest and rats were an effective contribution to the recent bumper crops in Nghia Binh, and have increased the people's confidence both in the policies of the Party as well as in their own ability to deal with urgent problems.

Crop Multiplication and Subsidiary Crops.

In early 1976, the people in Nghia Binh sowed 87,000 hectares of rice for the Winter-Spring rice crop, but 2,000 hectares were lost owing to natural calamities. To make up for this crop failure, the provincial authorities launched a campaign for subsidiary and additional rice growing in summer and autumn. When this crop was ripe, the provincial

authorities called for the immediate planting of another rice crop in order to guard against food shortage. But the plan to grow a third crop was objected to by the peasants, who feared it would cost too much effort and would raise their tax contribution. The Party Committee explained carefully that the third crop is tax-exempt and that the agricultural tax quota is based on the planned annual crop output, and the third crop is not included in the annual plan. When this policy had been understood by the people, another 5,000 hectares were put under rice cultivation, and the average output was 2.2 tons per hectares. In some places, it was as high as 3 tons per hectare.

Although crop multiplication is still slow it is important since it has compensated for the failure of the main crops, and it helps tide over food shortages in times of adversity.

In addition to rice, other starch crops are an important addition to food output in the province. Apart from the main rice-growing areas like Phuoc Van, An Nhon and Mo Duc, where the provincial authorities are concentrating efforts with a view to harvesting as much as seven tons of rice per hectare, the people of Nghia Binh are also engaged in a broad movement for growing short-term subsidiary crops. The green leaves of sweet potatoes and cassava can be seen in all parts of the province, from the vast areas of newly reclaimed land in the mountain region to the small plots around the guest-house of the provincial Party Committee. They have used every inch of cultivable land to grow

food crops. When there was not enough sowing ground they even sowed seeds in flower pots. As a result, within only a short time there were enough seedlings for the total area planned in the province.

The fields along the Tra river are used for intensive cultivation of maize, and they yield as many as four crops per year, one crop being planted before the previous one has been harvested.

The people of Nghia Binh, who readily accepted any sacrifice to defeat the French colonialists and US imperialists, are now happy with "Be content with what we can produce" as a policy with which to overcome post-war difficulties in their advance to a bright future.

The province also has a long tradition of processing maize, cassava and other subsidiary crops into various kinds of cakes and vermicelli which people eat instead of rice. This has greatly helped in coping with food shortages in the province and even saves a substantial part of the crops, which can be contributed to the State food reserve.

Most of the central provinces of Viet Nam have the same sort of terrain and climate, and like them, Nghia Binh suffered both from the serious sequels of war and neo-colonialism and a succession of very serious natural calamities in 1976 prolonged cold spell and drought was followed by widespread infestations of pests and rats, which played havoc with many rice fields. The local revolutionary administration encouraged the population to stick to

their tradition of self-reliance, hard work, industriousness and courage in national construction, combined with timely and correct measures, to reverse the trend; and they had as much success as could be expected in such circumstances. The average rice yield for the whole province reached 2.2 tons per hectare in the Winter-Spring crop of 1976 and 2.24 tons per hectare in the Autumn — Winter crop of the same year.

If the output of subsidiary crops (in terms of paddy) is included, annual per capita production of food in the province is approximately 250 kilograms.

This major achievement of Nghia Binh province makes for added confidence in the bright future of agriculture in the liberated South.

THE DUY

A VILLAGE IN A NEW ECONOMIC ZONE

Summer 1976 in Ho Chi Minh City.

Everywhere in the city, on the buses, in markets, lanes, inns and cafés, you can hear the latest gossip about Saigonese going to new economic zones.

From Tam Tin, one of the cadres of the Economic Board set up after liberation to solve the problem of unemployment, we obtained the following figures (released by the former regime).

"At the end of 1974, the population in the South was about 20.5 million (whereas a rough census made by the revolutionary power in February 1976 estimated it at nearly 24 million, about half living in urban centres). Quoting the same source, people of working age were reckoned at 10 million, half in the productive sector and half in the service sector, the latter earning an income amounting to over half the national revenue of the old regime (the ratio was naturally higher during the presence of half a million GIs and satellite troops in the South). 20% of the people of working age were unemployed.

"These figures, which are still far from the truth, nevertheless reflect the actual situation in the South before liberation", said Tam Tin. "After liberation, in Ho Chi Minh City alone there were nearly 1.5

million lay-offs, not including nearly 40,000 disbanded puppet soldiers and officers. This was a heavy burden for the revolutionary authorities which the Western press and politicians said would need several years to solve.

"Apart from the fact that the country has been devastated by a long and fierce war, the heritage left by the French and the Americans was an economy entirely dependent on foreign countries; though there were a number of capitalist industrial enterprises, production remained small and was mainly agricultural; the settlement of the unemployment problem through increased industry is therefore not practicable at present. Meanwhile, millions of hectares of fertile land now lying fallow could become productive within six months if manpower and some investment were provided. That is why, since liberation, the policy of the Government on solving the unemployment problem in urban centres, chiefly in Saigon, has been mainly to induce the townspeople to go to the countryside — either to return to their native villages or to go to new economic zones — to take part in agricultural production.

"As a consequence of this policy, over half a million people have left Saigon in the last ten months. Hundreds of new villages have been urgently built for them. You journalists may pick any village you like on this map for a visit."

New Villages for People from Saigon.

Tran Cong Tam, chairman of the administrative committee of Tan Hung village, Phu Giao district,

Song Be province (40 km north of Saigon), invited us to make a tour of his village.

We walked on a wide metalled road newly built on the red soil, lined by a double row of young trees. Waving his hand from left to right, Tam said, "When the six of us received orders to come here and set up a new village for the settlement of people from Saigon, this region was a battlefield abandoned just as it was after an engagement. No living soul, no animals, no birds. We had to watch our steps to avoid barbed wire, shell splinters and even mines..."

On our left little houses with fibro-cement roofs amidst verdant gardens extended for about five kilometres along the road. On our right were the office of the rural people's committee, the school, hospital, foodstore, department store, playing field and market. Behind lie the fields of Tan Hung village.

Tran Cong Tam was short of stature. He wore a stubbly beard which hardly concealed his sunburnt hollow cheeks, and at 36 he looked older than his age.

He fought for nearly twenty years in the hardest conditions in the hope of liberating his country and finally returning home to farm his ancestors' land devastated by the enemy. But as soon as the war ended, he received orders to lead a team of six militiamen from six villages in Song Be province to set up a new village there.

This was a heavy task, to build a new village on what had been a big military base and was still cluttered with bombs, mines, blockhouses, carcasses of

vehicles, and barbed wire entanglements, a village for 5,000 people of various trades and with a most heterogeneous set of personal records! He had to take care of their living conditions, education and health, in short everything. And this was to be done with their own hands.

After a long and destructive war difficulties were many; where could he find materials and equipment to build thousands of dwellings in so short a time? Like his mates, Tam felt that he had not enough experience to lead and organize such a large number of people, the more so as he himself did not have a high "cultural standard."

It seemed an undertaking fit to break a man's will; but he never flinched from difficulties.

In this struggle, however, he and his mates did not fight alone. From Ho Chi Minh City and Song Be province they received bulldozers road-making machines, lorries, building materials, and teams of vanguard youth and carpenters, and from the North seeds, breeding stock, young trees, fertilizers and food, for Tan Hung and other villages set up by and for the Saigonese. Tam worked out remarkably quickly how to organize and mobilize the settler labour force. And work started at once.

Difficulties cropped up and complications in the work. Life was not plain sailing. Some of the people had never done manual work before or they had given it up long ago. Some, it appeared, were not yet accustomed to the climated conditions. Added to these difficulties saboteurs were out to distort the

truth, exaggerate the hardships and even occasionally lay mines and throw grenades into crowded places to demoralize the settlers. Many of the latter began to waver. Some of them moved back to the city or left their families in the places of settlement in order to receive the settler allowances granted by the State. Leaving the children to look after their belongings, some went back to the city to have a try at small trading.

To ease the situation, Tam and other cadres in the village held meetings to give the inhabitants an opportunity to review their past miseries and to compare these with the opportunities offered in an independent and free country, and to find ways of overcoming the difficulties confronting them as new settlers. These meetings also roused the settlers to denounce the saboteurs so that due punishment could be meted out to them. Little by little the situation became more normal. Although they had experienced a hard life on the land, those who left for the city found their days even harder there, asked to return to the new economic zones, and were welcomed back; those who had wavered now definitely plumped for Tan Hung.

Thus after six hard months, a new village has been set up with five hamlets and about one thousand houses; it is closely and neatly organized, has a primary school for over 400 children, a 12-bed hospital run by an assistant-doctor, four nurses and a midwife, and a motor-road linking it to Ho Chi Minh City and Song Be town. At the market held every

morning one can find manufactured goods from the city as well as foodstuffs (sweet potatoes, manioc, gourds, squash) produced locally.

New Life for a Former Puppet Soldier.

Tran Cong Tam invited us to drop in for a visit to a house by the roadside.

Loi, one of the first settlers at Hamlet I, Tan Hung village, was watering his fruit-trees near his house; his wife was cooking rice in the kitchen. His eldest daughter was picking gourds and squash on the trellis in the courtyard. His four younger children were collecting the fruit from their sister and putting them in a big basket in the middle of the yard. Hens were leading their chicks in search of food between two rows of capsicums in the courtyard. Stopping his work, Loi invited us to sit down at a table in front of his house in the shade of the trellis.

Loi was about forty years old. With his suntanned complexion, this short strong man looked every inch a peasant. He spoke of his family first.

"I have six children, two boys and four girls," he said. "My eldest daughter is the one you see here. My second child is a 17-year-old boy, who is now playing football on the sports field. My wife and myself they and those two are the labour force of our family. They work in the daytime and attend classes or meetings in the evenings (the ten months since they came here, they have learned how to read and write). Of the four little ones, three go to a primary school and the youngest stays at home, being not yet of school age..."

We learned that he was born in a village in a hilly province in Central Viet Nam. Because of lack of land, his family had had to earn a subsistence from basket making for generations. During the war years, in an effort to dodge the draft, he took his family to the remotest corner of the country, in the Central Highlands, to try and make a living; but in vain. He was pressganged into the puppet army, was made lance-corporal after four years of service, and was seriously wounded in the course of a sweep in the Mekong delta. Demobbed in a state of sheer destitution, Loi, his wife and five children went to Saigon, and managed to exist in a jerry-built tin-roofed house in the soldiers' families quarters. His wife hired herself out to work for a well-off family; his two elder children hawked ice in the streets. When business was slack, they scavenged rubbish heaps for empty tins and thrown out food. Before liberation, the boss fled abroad, Loi's wife lost her job, and the family, landed in dire need, had to live off relief from the revolutionary authorities.

One question bothered him constantly: how could he and his family survive? What would become of his six children? This problem remained unanswered, even becoming more acute all through the period from Diem to Thieu.

What amazes him now is that since liberation, the revolutionary power has shown such care for the living conditions of the people, particularly the poor, and that those like him who have been on the wrong side have not been subjected to any reprisal. He

waits and observes and has come to the conclusion that the revolutionary power is really of the toiling people themselves.

Just when he was finding it hardest to live, the authorities began urging jobless people to go to the countryside for settlement. Those who consented would receive adequate houses, land for gardening or doing other productive work, together with a sufficient ration of food to keep them till they were able to fend for themselves. In addition they were granted a loan with which to start their productive work, and enjoyed other facilities such as a school for their children and a first aid station to attend to their health needs.

Was this an opening into the future for him? he asked himself, and made up his mind to go.

What a memorable day it was when he and his family left Saigon for Tan Hung!

He and some other families were seen off by the authorities, who gave the children milk, sugar and clothes, and sent a guide to accompany them on the journey to Tan Hung...

The same warm reception was given him on his arrival; the authorities welcomed him at the bus station, the vanguard youth helped him carry his belongings and his small children, and showed him his house and the piece of land allotted to him. The house covers 40 square metres, and the garden about 2,000 square metres had already been levelled by bulldozer and ploughed up; a well had been already sunk. To help him to settle he received farm implements, seeds and young trees at once to enable him

to catch up with the planting season. He was also supplied with rice, salt and oil to start with. He told us that nearly one thousand families had left Saigon for Tan Hung, two fifths of whom had at least one member who had collaborated with the Americans and the former puppet administration. These however were granted the same privileges as others.

Loi invited us to make a tour of his garden which was green with vegetation: the cassava-plants were already tall and banana-trees were blossoming. He and his wife showed us a papaw-tree from Bien Hoa known for the abundance and quality of its fruit, and a mango-tree from Binh Dinh, well known in Central Viet Nam for its delicious big fruit and small stone. Gifts to the Saigonese settled in the countryside included a durian from Phu Quoc island which he grew from a seed sent by one of his old acquaintances who had heard that he was going to the new economic zone. His garden is already covered with young growth which in several years' time will be an important source of revenue for his family.

As we showed such an interest in his garden, Loi became more candid: "We return to the countryside like a tiger to his jungle," he said. "However as we have not been doing farm work for a long time we have had to overcome some difficulties to start with.

"In fact many of us who had only lived in the town where life is crowded and electricity and running water are always available, could not bear this monotonous life at first. At night there was only the

flickering light of an oil lamp and sometimes there was even a shortage of well water. Many of the families who settled in this immense plain near the forest were scared stiff; on stormy nights all doors were shut tight and no communication was possible.

"This large area had been levelled by bulldozers but was already overgrown with tiger grass and full of tree stumps which were beginning to sprout. The days were sweltering hot, with no relief.

"All this frightened us at first. My wife and children were unanimously against staying and wanted to return to Saigon, where, they said, they would prefer to live no matter how... hawking, or selling what remained of our belongings. We talked it over and agreed that once we had sold everything we had, our prospects would be worse than ever, especially as we were not skilled in any trade.

"Just at that time Saigonese began to arrive at Tan Hung in greater and greater numbers. Life became more cheerful. The children began to go to school or to take part in various activities in their organizations. The sick received medical care, and the more serious cases were sent to provincial hospitals.

"Realities at last convinced me and my dear ones. We set to work in our garden, weeding, breaking clods of earth, uprooting stumps, removing stones and shell splinters."

Pointing his finger to the end of the house where a heap of rusty fragments of bombs and shells lay. Loi went on: "This is not all. When we dig a hole to plant a young tree or make a furrow to sow

maize seeds or bury cassava stems, we still come across splinters of shells or bombs, even sometimes an unexploded mortar shell.

"Work is hard, but it is a great joy for us to see our garden green with vegetation, the field beside our house carefully ploughed where rice plants will ripen in a few months, and our children merrily going to school in the day time and struggling with their spelling at night! We have more confidence in our work and are convinced that our future will be tied to that of our village of Tan Hung.

Bright Prospects.

Tran Cong Tam then invited us to have a look at the fields of his village.

The sun was setting behind a forest of tall trees. While we walked on the wide, partly ploughed up plain showing its old as well as new furrows, Tam told us:

"In this first season, it has been necessary to bring 1,000 hectares under cultivation. Here, in the east the rainy season is the only propitious season for sowing. We have two tractors which operate irregularly owing to lack of fuel. The workers number many thousands but most of them are not accustomed to the inclement weather and to manual labour and there is a lack of technicians. We have to work day and night so as to bring the whole area under cultivation for our immediate task of 700 hectares of rice and 300 hectares of groundnuts and soya beans to solve the food problem for the immediate future. In the next few years the whole area will be planted

with sugar cane and soya beans, as these crops will do well in this area."

Two tractors continue to make long furrows on the burnt over fields. The new settlers work in rows, digging, raking, weeding, felling trees. Almost all the responsible cadres in the village are working with them.

"What are the prospects for Tan Hung village?" I asked finally.

"Difficulties are great", said Tam with a smile. "The four major ones are: lack of irrigation water, of haulage power, of fertilizers, particularly organic manures, and of technicians. But we have found a rapid way to solve these problems. Any beginning is difficult, you see, and we've overcome the initial obstacles: the settlers are firmly installed, and now we can confidently concentrate on production."

Leaving Tan Hung, this new village set up by people from Saigon, I could not help thinking of an "agro-town" (as the American "resettlement" villages were called) situated along National Highway No. 1 in Central Viet Nam which I had visited shortly after liberation. As remarked by a Catholic friend who had lived in a former agro-town and who has now just settled at Tan Hung.

"Their agro-town was hell to live in. But Tan Hung's different. We'll be happy here. "The settlers can see the promise given by Tran Cong Tam, chairman of the village administrative committee, coming true: "We'll make Tan Hung live up to the name the villagers have given it." Tan Hung means 'new prosperity'.

MAI QUANG

FILLING THE VACUUM

Under the US neo-colonialist regime, industry in southern Viet Nam was concentrated in the Bien Hoa — Saigon area. It was a system of enterprises which, although outwardly they looked like industrial establishments, were actually only commercial enterprises. Their main task was to assemble machines produced by foreign countries on sub-contracts and process imported raw materials. Many of their products carried foreign trade marks. All these enterprises depended on foreign aid, mainly American, for everything from raw and other materials and fuel, to machinery, technology and capital. At most of the enterprises, technological management was entirely in the hands of foreign specialists. Vietnamese engineers, though trained in the US, France, Japan, West Germany and other capitalist countries, were only assistants.

After the liberation of southern Viet Nam (April 30, 1975) the revolutionary administration took over this industry in a state of paralysis: almost all the factories had been closed, their cash-boxes were empty, raw materials were in short supply, and all the foreign specialists and technicians had left.

To provide employment for the workers it was necessary to restore production; but the problem was how to get round the economic dependence on foreign

countries. Of the innumerable difficulties of the early stage, the supply of raw materials was a crucial problem for all enterprises. It was impossible to continue importing raw materials as before. To "fill the vacuum", a new and vigorous re-orientation was necessary.

After liberation, the COGIVINA paper mill, which was in the same situation as almost all other factories, ran short of its raw material, paper pulp. A little more than five weeks after the factory was taken over by the new administration, on June 7, 1975, COGIVINA resumed production, first with recycled old books and newspapers collected or purchased by the factory, then with a small quantity of chemical paper pulp sent from the North. These sources of material were not inexhaustible, however, and in about the middle of 1976, the supply of raw materials again became a real problem. New initiatives were needed. Thanks to a number of bamboo and wood processing machines sent by the Viet Tri paper mill in the North, COGIVINA was able to improve its machines so as to utilize bamboo and pine-wood as raw materials. But the exploitation of pine forests was no easy job either, as Lam Dong province (north of Ho Chi Minh City) could only supply 40 per cent of the amount needed.

After a period of study, COGIVINA's cadres and workers improved their method of beating paper pulp in order to utilize a new kind of raw material which abounds in the country and the exploitation of which otherwise presents no great difficulty — the wood of old rubber trees. This is an ordinary wood.

It decays rapidly, has short fibres, and was formerly used as fire-wood or fertilizer. By mixing 50 per cent rubber wood pulp with 50 per cent pine-wood pulp, COGIVINA successfully solved the problem of raw materials for paper production. The quality of its paper is about the same as before, but production costs have dropped by 19,5 per cent.

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The THANH THANH enamelled tile factory, which was built with American aid, used Italian equipment and Japanese raw materials, and employed Italian and French specialists. At the time of liberation, all foreign specialists and technicians left the country. The factory continued production with the remaining materials. In July 1976, the factory was nationalized at the request of its owner.

Enamelled tiles are a valuable export commodity, but to maintain production, it was imperative to find a substitute for the pirophillite used in producing them. After research and experiments with raw materials available, the technical section of the factory arrived at an optimal formula for combining industrial waste and local raw materials. The new material was Pren kaolin produced in Lam Dong province. A factory producing this kind of kaolin was built at the foot of the Pren Pass with a present capacity of 5,000 tons per year, which will double

by the end of 1978. Thus the problem of raw materials for the production of enamelled tiles has basically been solved.

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Another example of the utilization of domestic raw materials instead of imported ones comes from the CUU LONG factory (which belongs to the Fertilizer — Insecticide Company of the Agricultural Service of Ho Chi Minh City). This plant has produced two insecticides — *furatoc* and *nicotine sulfate*, which destroy crop and vegetable insect pests, with materials extracted from maize cobs (to make *furatoc*), and from the stems of tobacco plants and wastage from cigarette production (to make *nicotine sulfate*).

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Another basic feature of the complete dependence on foreign countries by industry in southern Viet Nam formerly was technological dependence.

VIKYNO's full name was "Viet Nam Ky Nghe Nong Co". It was built with Japanese assistance, and was a factory mainly specialized in assembling two main products — internal combustion engines and 7 h.p. hand-operated ploughing machines. More than 70 per cent of the parts of both machines came from

Japan; VIKYNO itself made less than 30 per cent, and the latter were mostly rudimentary and simple.

The main equipment of the factory was geared to assembly work. The machine-tools workshop had only some 50 machines, all of them multi-purpose devices, and not a single specialized machine. The technical cadres, though trained in foreign countries, were only "assembly engineers", although they were highly-skilled technical cadres. Among the 200 workers of the factory only 14 were classed as 7th-grade engineering workers, but they never got farther than mastering assembly techniques either.

VIKYNO was really only an assembly and sales agent for agricultural machines for Japanese capitalist companies.

After it was taken over by the revolutionary administration, the factory did continue to assemble agricultural farm tools with the Japanese parts still in the stores. But VIKYNO gradually switched from assembly to production and manufacture.

The Ministry of Engineering and Metallurgy ordered factories in the North to share some of their equipment with their southern counterparts, including a large number of specialized machine tools, the most important of which were a collection of modern machines producing cog-wheels. The latter comprised all kinds of machines for producing and whetting cog-wheels, threading machines and vertical grinding machines. With these new means of production, VIKYNO has become fully able to produce different cog-wheels for ploughing machines, supply cog-wheels of various kinds to other factories, and

has been able to manufacture more and more parts of machines which formerly had to be imported from foreign countries.

Late in 1975, with the cooperation of engineering factories in the North, VIKYNO successfully produced the "Dai Thang (Great Victory) 5A" ploughing machine, more than 70 per cent of whose parts were made by the factory itself. This marked a big stride on the road from mere assembly and repair to manufacture and production.

The next step taken by VIKYNO was to turn out the 12 h.p. "Bong Sen" (Lotus) ploughing machine with the cooperation of the Ha Son Binh provincial agro-engineering factory in the North. This type of machine was the result of collective research by technical cadres and workers in the North who had spent many years of untiring study of design and industrial process. Tens of thousands of this machine are being produced for cooperative farms in the North. A team of northern engineers and specialists brought VIKYNO valuable materials, including the blue-prints of the Bong Sen as well as the industrial process for manufacturing and assembling it, together with five prototypes, two of which have been perfected. This meant that VIKYNO could shorten the period of test production.

With the help of the northern team of specialists VIKINO finished assembling two "Bong Sen 12" ploughing machines in 12 days, using materials sent by the Ha Son Binh agro-engineering factory. In this co-operative production VIKYNO contributed 58 per cent of the parts on the assembly line. This

was to be only the initial step in test production, and it was undertaken after only a short period of preparation. When the factory moves into mass-production VIKYNO may produce considerably more. This is the desire of both sides and the aim of the cooperation.

This was a test product based on the blue-prints of the Ha Son Binh agro-engineering factory, but VIKYNO has devised other valuable improvements in the field of engineering, such as increasing the speed of the soil loosener from 200 to 240 revolutions per minute, assembling a system for regulating heat in engines, reducing the temperature from 110° to 80°C. This improvement means that the machines last longer and increase their output, as well as saving the workers' time spent pouring water into radiators and mending parts. It has also made the machines lighter, more easily handled, and more suitable for southern ricefields.

On the basis of the experience gained from the test production of the "Bong Sen 12" ploughing machine, VIKYNO prepared for test production of a new ploughing machine, the "Dai thang 12", making 90 per cent of its parts itself or in cooperation with other engineering establishments in the country. This new ploughing machine combines the fine qualities of the "Bong Sen 12" and its predecessor and is being mass-produced to gradually replace the "Bong Sen 12".

In addition to a series of ploughing machines, VIKYNO has produced pumps with capacities of 200, 250 and 450 cubic metres per hour.

Another agro-engineering factory, VINAPPRO, has cooperated with the Tran Hung Dao engineering plant in Hanoi to produce 12h.p. diesel motors.

The technical cooperation between these four engineering factories in northern and southern Viet Nam has made it possible to produce an engine-powered ploughing machine. This production has given technical cadres and workers whose capabilities could not fully develop in the past, the opportunity to give full play to their know-how; and they have made notable contributions to the improvement and perfecting of the 12h.p. diesel motor and the "Bong Sen 12" ploughing machine.

It is no easy task to turn an economy completely dependent on foreign countries into an independent and sovereign structure. However, the road travelled by many industrial enterprises in southern Viet Nam over the past two years has shown that the efforts of these factories, coupled with the assistance of the socialist North, make it possible gradually to "fill the vacuum" left by US neo-colonialism.

NGUYEN XUAN LAI
VIET NAM COURIER
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A FACTORY ON THE BANK OF THE PERFUME RIVER

The Long Tho lime-kilns — the only factory in Hue — stands a few kilometres from Hue as the crow flies, on the right bank of the quiet Perfume River bordered with flame-trees. Facing the kiln is the Thien Mu pagoda, a famous example of Vietnamese architecture.

The Story of Kiln Number One

We visit the lime-kiln about two months after its reactivation. It is already more than half a year after the complete liberation of the South.

We approach kiln number one. It is seven metres deep and brimful of baking lime. The kiln works round the clock. There we meet Vo Ba Khoa, sturdy middle-sized man over sixty with a long face, dark skin and slightly silvered hair, who has had 20 years' experience in his trade.

"Under the French colonialists," says he, "this was kiln number five, and a very obstinate one. Its daily 6 tons of lime was never well-done. As a rule, the lime was only half-baked. The French bosses used to get furious and threaten and coerce the workers to raise the output and quality of lime, but we would put the blame on their poor technique."

And old Khao laughs, proud of the workers' past struggle. Then he goes on:

"In fact, you can see that kiln number five still works very well. The truth is that we purposely made a bad job of it in those days so the French could not exploit us at will. We worked and sabotaged at the same time, so much so that the half-baked lime amounted to thousands of tons, in the end and the French had to stop work at kiln number five once and for all..."

It is now kiln number one at this State factory, the first to get working, and already producing more than 300 tons of soft whitish lime which are conveyed by skips and winches into the stores. Three months later it will be crushed and sifted then put into bags.

The one who should get the most credit for the reactivation of kiln number one is old Nguyen Van Phao, a man with sixty years' experience and a top-notch worker.

After the liberation of Hue, he was one of the first who made application to work again at the factory. Despite his seventy-six years, white hairs, wrinkled face and slightly bowed back, his eyes are still bright and his work still unsurpassed by his young mates.

The young engineers newly assigned to the kiln are learning oven operation from him. With his professional eyes he knows simply by looking at the stone how much coal is needed to turn it into lime, whereas the fire on the kiln walls tells him the quality of the lime. Moreover, he knows how to

remedy underdone lime and an over-weighted kiln while it is thousands of degrees centigrade hot.

When still an apprentice, he would use two bamboo ladder stilts to get more than ten metres down into the oven belly and check layer upon layer of stone, firewood and coal in the stinking pitchdark kiln. In spite of their formulae on the production of hydraulic lime, French engineers were far outshone by our skilled Nguyen Van Phao.

Now he is using his workmanship and experience giving the young workers technical guidance for a rapid rehabilitation of kiln number one.

Once a batch of six tons of high grade lime has been produced, the output of kiln number one steadily rises: seven, seven and a half, eight, nine then ten tons a day.

Asked about the significance of these figures, old Phao simply says, "in the past, we were hired labourers. Now, the situation has changed: we are the masters of the factory, working for ourselves, for our families and for our society.

Kiln Number Three: Destruction and Construction.

Once put into operation, kiln number two does not want to play second fiddle and soon reaches 12 tons a day.

At kiln number three, a great many workers are hard at work giving the finishing touches to the kiln mouth, seven metres above the ground.

Among those taking part is old Huynh Ngoc Khuyen, a member of the works committee, full of

beans for all his white hair. Says he, "I was ten when I stepped into my father's shoes to work here. At sixteen, I became a mechanic and continued to work here in this kiln."

Immediately after the liberation of Hue, he reported at the factory. He can put his hand to any job, and is always on hand whenever there is a shortage of raw materials or fuel or a machine needs repairing.

"It's really been an overall reconstruction job," he says. "The factory has a very significant name: *Long* means dragon and *Tho* longevity (the label of the cement bag printed in 1960 did bear a dragon head with the words Long Tho Lime and Cement, Viet Nam); but under the French, the Japanese and the US-puppets, it has died four or five times!"

At first, the products of the Long Tho lime kilns took pride of place in the building materials market. The hydraulic lime could stand comparison with cement, resisting pressure of from 250 to 300kg per square centimetre.

In 1906, the products of the factory were exhibited in Marseilles and recognised as a good substitute for hydraulic cement.

There were five kilns and 800-1,000 workers in the peak years, producing a maximum of 1,500 tons a month. Apart from lime, the works also produced bricks and tiles, decorative bricks, firebricks, polished bricks and water pipe. The French colonialists intended to expand the kiln and employ 5,000 workers. But their plan was not realized.

The factory was heavily bombed when the Japanese overthrew the French in 1945. After the French reoccupation of Viet Nam in 1946, the kiln was rehabilitated, but lacking raw materials and means, it worked at a loss and was then closed down. It was restored under the US-puppets, late in 1958. But it was not until September 1959 that it was capable of producing even as much as 300 tons a month with only one kiln operating. Early in 1960, Long Tho cement bags lay unsold beside US and Japanese cement dumped in South Viet Nam. Again the factory closed down and early in 1968 it was turned into a concentration camp where more than one thousand of our fellow-countrymen were penned up as Viet Cong suspects.

In 1969, the puppets invested over two million *dong* in it but this only kept it going until September 1972, when all five kilns had to put out their fire.

On liberation, the five kilns lay gaping like five deep wells overgrown with wild grass.

At the outset the old workers over sixty who had spent three quarters of their lives toiling at the kiln made application to the revolutionary authorities to be allowed to come back to restore a traditional trace. Then hundreds of new young workers brimming with pride were admitted to the factory to carry on their fathers' work. All of them, old and young, men and women, have pooled their forces to clear up the wilderness and build the works anew. They have scoured the site for firebricks to reconstruct the kilns,

smashed enemy-abandoned posts to recover corrugated iron and iron bars to remake the roof and reinforce the kiln walls.

The old workers have managed to re-assemble many lathes, generators, planes, drills, crushers and sieves from the debris. Moreover, two lorries and one bulldozer left behind by the enemy on the river bank have been repaired to carry ores and for levelling work. A whole system of hoisting gear and winches has been gradually rehabilitated.

Before ending our talk, old Khuyen points at the workers reconstructing kiln number three: "Kiln number three over there was destroyed by our mines in 1949. The attackers are now rebuilding it, and working day and night."

North and South Together.

"Besides our famous hydraulic lime, our kiln makes a host of other products," a leading cadre of the factory tells us. Huynh Van Xuan, 79 years old, the oldest worker of the factory, tells us that according to the 1976 plan the Long Tho factory will produce 8,000 tons of hydraulic lime and eventually more when all the five ovens operate. Along with the hydraulic lime the plan is to produce ten thousand unbaked concrete slabs. As for bricks, they intend to make about seven million. Huynh Van Xuan also shows us the brick-kilns left inoperative for a half century, now being repaired by young women workers. Long rows of mine, smooth rosy bricks with their names in relief "Firebricks —

Long Tho State factory" are awaiting firing. Eighty thousand firebricks were to be produced in 1975.

The laboratory of the factory has begun work in spite of numerous difficulties. It has two rooms. The outer one exhibits a host of products. The inner room serves as a studio for the engineers and technicians, complete with lab instruments and technical books in foreign languages.

Four engineers have been sent here from the North to help broaden the range of products and expand the capacity of the kiln. A young technician, a former student of literature in Hue, says "Long Tho lime can resist a pressure of 300kg per square centimetre after passing through a sieve with 4,900 holes per square centimetre. Compared with the lime produced under the former regime, ours is one and a half times more resistant. When we apply the experience achieved by the North in this field, the quality will definitely improve.

From the top of kiln number three a middle-aged worker shouts at the top of his voice, interrupting our talk "Hullo, comrades, the brick lorries from the North are coming."

A convoy of newly-painted lorries is entering the yard of the kiln. They carry the fire-bricks, chamotte slabs, fuel and oil sent by the Cau Duong brick factory in Hanoi. The Hanoi workers light from their lorries, and are warmly greeted by their Hue mates.

"This is not the first convoy," and old worker says to me. "Since the liberation of the South, the North

has helped us with Quang Ninh coal, Cau Duong bricks, technicians, engineers..."

This factory suddenly reminds me of all the others I have visited in Saigon, Bien Hoa and Thu Duc. They are all suffering from the same problem: a serious shortage of raw materials and fuel, a serious shortage left by neo-colonialism which we are making good with the strength and resources of a reunified country.

DUY THE

NEW TIMES

Just looking at him, nobody would believe he played the leading role in the rehabilitation of the factory after the liberation of Saigon. His small figure, his nose beaded with sweat on a bony face suggested rather a man dogged by misfortune. Everything about him was tiny and withered, but for two big, bright eyes which gleamed strength. To all outward appearances, he did not seem a capable type; he even looked dull and timid. However, it was clear when they spoke of him that everybody, from the military manager* to the door-keeper, set great store by him, as if the fate of the factory was in his hands. To the military manager, he was "a kind man", while the trade unionists considered him "an outstanding worker in the factory."

There was nothing special about his past apart from a family tragedy. He started life happily enough but he soon had some bad luck. After finishing secondary school, he took a job at the factory when it started making flavouring powder. He used

* Representative of the Military Management Committee for Ho Chi Minh City in the factory. The Military Management Committee administered urban affairs in the first months after liberation — Ed.

half his first month's salary to treat his mates and the other half to buy a gift for his sweetheart, which made his mother weep a whole night. Life was most enjoyable; he had a lot of dreams and few cares. He fell in love only once, and married his sweetheart two years later. His wife was a gentle and diligent girl; she gave a lot of attention to her husband, and knew how to please him. So he was very satisfied with his marriage and confident of his future. But life was not to continue smooth sailing. Misfortune soon befell him quite unexpectedly.

His family happiness was undermined by the introduction in the South of the American way of life, which emphasized material enjoyment and denigrated all human values. His wife fell a victim to its temptations, first from a desire for fashionable clothes and foreign cosmetics; and then got caught up in wild love-affairs and material passions. At first, he mistook this for a predilection for a rich life and overlooked it; but by the time he realized the full significance of it, it was too late.

In pre-liberation Saigon murderers preached philanthropy to the religious, robbers virtue to the plundered, and swindlers prevailed upon the righteous; the result was that countless families were broken up and innumerable people were killed. His family tragedy being no exception, he consoled himself thinking "Mine is a dog's life" or "No peace for the wicked". He ignored his wife and took more care of his three small children. The more he thought of their plight, the more he was determined to struggle with life, convinced that he would

manage to survive. However, despite his effort, he met one difficulty after another. Life seemed like a gulf teeming with sharks while he was but a lonely cod.

When his wife deserted him he kept on working, disregarding his wounded heart. He gave up all amusements in order to concentrate on supporting his small children and old mother; he did not take to drink as many people would have done, because he did not feel desperate. He no longer took any notice of time or his health, not even a sudden illness. One thought spurred him on: to do his duty as a father and a worker. So he went to work thirty days a month and three hundred and sixty one days a year—missing only four days on the occasion of the Tet festival. Every month he was paid a bonus and every year an extra fifteen days' pay. In addition, he was promoted to key jobs in the factory. By dint of working hard and saving, he managed to buy a three-roomed house with modern equipment. He concluded from his experience that a diligent man could live comfortably in any society.

However, the life he had built up with his sweat and tears soon collapsed: he had two call-up papers. When he received the first one, he had to sell all his furniture in order to bribe everybody from the military policemen to the district chief to waive his call-up. One year later, he was again called up. He had to choose between his house and the army. "Whom I shall shoot? Who is my enemy?" Were he obliged to join up, he would shoot the military policemen and then himself, he thought. The thought

of leaving three small orphans restrained him. After several nights of thought he sold his house to pay the necessary bribes. Life was robbing him of everything and driving him into an impasse. "I make sweet powders, but am repaid with sour rebuffs!" he thought bitterly.

Meanwhile, his employer laid off sixty workers under the pretext that he could not sell so much flavouring now the GIs had withdrawn and the government-controlled areas had shrunk. A struggle against the sackings began. Though he was not among the sixty unfortunate ones, Hung anticipated that he might suffer the same fate one day and was very worried. So he took part in the struggle out of sympathy rather than because he was class conscious. His action infuriated his boss nevertheless.

One day when he had finished work and was going down the stairs, the assistant manager handed him his third call-up papers, saying, "Wedding invitation for you!"

Then he added mockingly, "This time you'll leave your skin in the Highlands, old man."

Hung stared blankly at the papers in his hand. The assistant-manager was watching him. It was a dreadful moment. Drops of sweat fell on the papers.

Knowing that he was frightened, his interlocutor smiled and said, "You do look dismayed!"

Then he guffawed and patted Hung's shoulder, "I really had you fooled! Don't worry. The boss has already fixed it."

And the assistant-manager tore up the papers, saying "Where else would you find such a kind

boss?" Then threateningly, "Pity has its limits, so behave yourself!"

Hung was worried. When he first saw the paper he thought of shooting his foot off in order to avoid the army because he could not afford a third bribe. This corrupt society was draining his last drop of blood.

Next morning he learnt that the scene arranged by the assistant-manager was part of the plan to break the workers' struggle. The boss, as Hung was fully aware, treated well those workers that lined his pockets, and the bribe he gave the recruiting agent was nothing compared with the profit he earned by keeping Hung in the factory.

That afternoon, the resistance to the sacking collapsed when the military police arrested ten workers. Sixty workers were laid off, to Hung's desperation.

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Like many Saigon people, Hung longed for a radical change. He was fed up with this society in which money ruled and justice and dignity were ignored. "You've no faults, but you are too poor. I can't live without money. Everybody's chasing money, and I must join the race!" his wife had said when she left him for a plantation-owner. Abandoned by his wife, Hung pinned all his hopes on a better life, in which people's values were more sacred than money and aims nobler than just gratifying themselves.

When Hue, Da Nang, then Xuan Loc fell and the puppet army and the population thronged to Saigon, Hung awaited the entry of the Liberation Army. Early in April, the foreign engineers at the factory had left along with their Embassy. The day the factory closed down, the workers gathered before it and talked of many things — of the bigwigs treading on each other to get away, of the puppet soldiers murdering and plundering, of the sorry plight of the evacuees. Hung did not join them for he had something urgent to do.

He entered the factory and climbed a long flight of stairs up to the control-room. There was an appalling silence, punctuated by the faraway booming of guns. Hung opened the breeding-room door; the automatic machine was still running, like the pendulum of a grand-father clock. He stopped it and divided the cultures in the container into three parts: he left one part behind, took another to the company, and the third he took home to rear in case the others died. He hoped the cultures might be useful.

The following days were not easy to forget. Hung witnessed the death throes of the Saigon regime, in its agony, everything rotten in its body was exposed in the streets.

The cultures Hung brought home grew fairly well, thanks to his devoted care and the various improvisations he devised to replace the equipment he lacked. These tender cultures reared in those stormy days were destined to create a sweet flavour for life.

On the seventh of June, Hung was invited by the factory military management committee to restart production. All the foremen were convened. The military manager was an old, sturdy, severe looking man with white hair.

Like the others, Hung watched him closely. It was the first time in twenty years that he had met a representative of the Revolution of which he had heard so much slander.

The meeting lasted two hours, but reached stalemate. Everybody was aware that the reopening of the factory was an urgent task, in order to provide the workers with jobs and the population with goods. However, there were many difficulties. First of all, nobody knew the complete process of making the flavouring powder. The foreign engineers had not disclosed any professional secrets so as to exact the best terms for themselves from the owner and guarantee that their contracts would be renewed. Thus, all techniques to do with calculation, fostering cultures, the ratio of glucose and various acids needed for the cultures to grow, everything was under their control. This knowledge was necessary for the making of the powder. Indeed, many factories went bankrupt for want of the basic chemical information. Only the foreign engineers had the knowhow. The workers had the right to inquire about anything beyond their individual job — watching clocks and pressing buttons. In fact, automation turned them into robots. All the owner needed from them was profit, not creative spirit. Technique was the business of the foreign engineers. The assistants knew only how to

carry out their orders and write down the figures on the clocks. Not surprisingly, nobody present in the meeting had any idea how to restore production.

"If the military management committee does not send us engineers, we can do nothing," they said.

Hung knew better than anybody how difficult it would be and he racked his brains for how to deal with the problem.

The others were also thinking about it and from time to time looked at one another inquiringly. While waiting for their answer, the military manager looked at each of them encouragingly and tried to read their thoughts. When he saw that Hung answered his look, he nodded to him. And the worker understood. "Cheer up!" he thought. "We're masters of the factory now! Now it's up to us."

Back home in the afternoon, Hung sent his children into the next room and began working. Rummaging through the papers he had brought back from the factory, he looked for the figures he needed and jotted them down in his notebook. After scribbling four pages he heard a knock on the door. Thinking that his mother was calling him for dinner, he said, "I'm busy. Please eat with the kids, mum!"

A second knock. He stood up annoyed, but was struck dumb when he opened the door. A young woman's face appeared behind his mother. The face was very familiar to him. Before they had become husband and wife, he had said that those eyes were "the doors of a lively soul", that nose was "typical

of Asian beauty" and those lips were" the incarnation of concupiscence". Well, that face with gracious, fresh features had at one time belonged to him. Now she was quite a different person. Her eyes were clouded with deep sorrow while her formerly fresh, pink lips hung tiredly.

Frightened perhaps at the look of her former husband, the young woman hastily stammered, "I... I came to see the children." Blood rushed to Hung's face as he replied tersely, "Next room," and slammed the door.

He suddenly felt tired. Without taking his shoes off he threw himself on his bed, his head rested on his crossed hands and his eyes stared at the ceiling. On the yellowish ceiling two lizards were looking for mosquitoes.

"She called on the children. And I thought..."

He banished that thought but another one flashed into his mind: "If she apologized to me, would I forgive her?" He shut his eyes not to see the lizards, which were chasing each other. "No, no. On what ground should I pardon? She..." Then another thought cut in: "She must be very unhappy!" He heaved a heavy sigh. Now he felt a terrible pain in his head and tried to doze a few minutes but couldn't. Old memories merged with scenes of the new life in his thoughts.

The quiet streets were plunged in their night sleep. From time to time some military vehicles passed patrolling the city, but their noise did not disturb the prevailing stillness. Feeling thirsty, Hung took a bottle of beer from his refrigerator, poured

himself a glass and went back to his table. He reviewed the columns of figures in his notebook and tried to work out the relation between them. At times a column of figures kept him puzzled for a while; at times he seized his pen and wrote rapidly, or wearily put his pen on the table and scratched his head until suddenly a flush of joy came to his face. In the end he found the answer to the problem and solved the relationships between columns of figures, which he then put into words.

Being conscientious and careful, he read what he had written, underlined the important phrases and queried the doubtful ones. Now the entire process of making the flavouring powder was before him in all its details.

Carried away with relief, Hung stood up and opened the window. A breeze laden with dew rustled the sheets of paper on the table. He looked up at the starry sky enraptured and hummed a tune. Far from being weary, he felt free in his mind. For the first time he realized the happiness of a man who had done useful work for the Revolution, and he was transported with joy.

The horizon in the east turned rosy. A new day full of hope was beginning.

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When he opened his work-room door, Hung saw a note somebody had pushed under it. He read:

"The boss sends you his greetings and tells you to beware."

Hung frowned "What does this mean? What boss? The old one's been arrested as a spy!". He was puzzled. He put his papers on his desk. The room seemed stuffy. It was certainly a threat. But why? And who had written the note?

He tried to see whose writing it was but could not. Feeling cold air on the back of his neck, he looked round at the door. It was clear that somebody was shadowing him, and deliberately trying to hinder the restoration of production that the military manager had asked him to study and to report to him this morning. What was to be done? If he did not do as the note said, his life could be in danger. In crowded Saigon, agents of the old regime were many, and he could not be sure his life was safe. However, if he gave up useful work for his country which provided jobs for hundreds of workers as well as himself because of an insolent threat, he would be a coward... His life had taken a new turn. Though still difficult, it was full of promise. And his children would have good schooling and live in independence and freedom.

Hung had not decided how to deal with the anonymous note when the military manager summoned him. He took the papers he needed and locked the others in his drawer. The work-room which had belonged to the foreign engineers had all kinds of modern conveniences, some of them beyond Hung's understanding. On the four walls hung drawings or embroideries of Taiwanese, Korean, Japanese and

American landscapes in big, polished frames. All the windows were fitted with new blue velvet curtains. The desk and the filing-cabinets were made of metal, their heavy drawers fitted with automatic locks. In the nearly ten years he had worked in the factory, he had never seen this room. It was not until yesterday afternoon, after over an hour's talk with the military manager that he was told to move in here.

When he entered the manager's office, many people were already there, among them the foremen. Upon seeing him, the manager beckoned him to come and sit near him.

The meeting began, and Hung stood up and reported on the formula of the ferment. At first he was nervous, for he had never spoken in public before. All eyes were encouragingly fixed on him. He recovered his nerve after a few minutes and spoke fluently. He answered questions by giving the exact calculations, and ended his technical report to warm admiring applause.

Hung felt a flush rise to his face while his heart beat faster. With a light head now, he imagined he was flying in the air. He could not know all the joys to come with the Revolution, but at least he knew this one.

However, the shadow of the old regime still haunted. He felt malicious eyes on him. He tried to dispel this fear by reason, but to no avail. His knowledge of the Revolution was too limited. The new social order which fulfilled the aims and desires of working people like himself, was nevertheless too

new for him to understand fully. In spite of that, his confidence in the new regime was firm, which gave him the strength to keep going.

The following days were very busy for Hung. The manager decided to try out the production of a hundred and twenty tons of flavouring powder; so Hung's time and energy were completely concentrated on that task. He stayed in the work-room and took his meals in the factory. Some nights he could sleep only one hour. Sometimes he could not finish his meal without being called. He did three shifts with the workers on the machines. Many workers tried to persuade him to go to bed, but he refused. There were old workers who rebuked him.

"You don't trust us, it seems. You must let us to be masters, too. You're always standing over us, like a boss."

Far from displeasing Hung, this reproof made him understand his work mates better, and sometimes moved him to tears. On the management's orders and out of esteem for him, the cooks brought him a bowl of soup or a bottle of soft drink every night. This kindness was unheard of in pre-revolutionary days. Being a man of feeling, Hung was really affected. He saw the limitations of money, while feelings know no bounds, especially revolutionary feeling.

The trial production entered its fourth day. The fermentation was excellent and the first neutralization achieved. The cultures grew fast because all the process were correctly done. As difficulties were solved promptly by the workers, there was no infection.

On the fifth day Hung was dozing when the telephone rang. "Second neutralization coming, please come!" It was a quarter past two a.m. Hung was pleased with the success. Only two more days and one hundred and twenty tons of flavouring powder would be sifted and put in sachets. Though he had had almost no rest for the past five days and nights, he did not feel tired and wondered why he was in such good form.

The passage leading to the machines where the second neutralization was being worked was a narrow corridor. The big glucose boilers with crisscrossed pipes were quiet after completing their work. "If all is well, from next week these boilers will have to work continually," Hung smilingly thought to himself.

Going down the staircase, Hung suddenly felt a heavy weight on his shoulder, then a violent pain raced to his head. A few more steps to the ground floor, and he collapsed, unconscious.

He came out of his coma and heard foot steps and voices in the distance. He strained his eyes, but again lost consciousness.

It was not until the next afternoon that he came to and realized that he was in a hospital. After eagerly drinking a glass of milk fed to him by a nurse, he felt his thirst abate and his body grow warm again. In a weak voice he asked:

"Do you know when I came here?"

"The factory brought you here at a quarter past two last night."

"Who brought me here?"

"A white-haired man who said he was your father."

Hung frowned, then stammered, "No, my father died long ago, when I was twelve. The white-haired man is the military manager of the enterprise."

The nurse was astonished "That is a surprise! This morning he called here twice and was upset because you hadn't regained consciousness."

"Did anybody else come?"

"A lot of workers from the factory, but I didn't let them in. Only an old woman and a young one were allowed in after many entreaties. The old woman said she was your mother and the other a neighbour of yours."

Hung flushed and smiled "Well, the old woman is my mother but I don't know who the neighbour is. What did my mother say?"

"She wept pitifully. Then she implored me to help put you on your feet again. As if we would abandon you to your death! She said that somebody had beaten you. Is that true? Strange, that you fight at two a.m. like children."

The girl's candour amused Hung. She probably did not know what sorrow was.

"Can I go home tomorrow?"

The nurse looked at him. "How can you? You have to stay here one week at least."

Hung was worried about the batch of flavouring powder in the making at the factory. Second neutralization would be finished tomorrow noon. The powder would be poured into troughs then put into a

centrifugal machine to separate water out, and tomorrow night it would be sifted and conveyed to the packing section. This important moment in the process made Hung anxious.

Unaware of his thoughts, the nurse teased him, "You miss your mother, it seems."

Hung answered with a lie, "Do you know why I must go home tomorrow noon? I'm getting married..." He smiled.

Then the girl said mischievously, "If that's true you must stay here."

"Why?"

"Because your health cannot stand such great happiness."

Upon this the girl left, Hung gazed at her white blouse disappearing behind the door and smiled.

His wound was a slight one. The villain had perhaps intended to break his head but had failed, and Hung only got a bruise on his shoulder. Fortunately his clavicle was unhurt, so he was able to go home after two days of treatment. The more he thought about the anonymous note, the more he hated and despised his enemy.

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Hung went home in a car provided by the factory. His appearance made his mother weep.

Smelling a concoction of oriental drugs, he asked her, "What drug is that?"

Drying her tears on the hem of her dress, she answered, "Yesterday the old man at the factory came and gave me forty thousand piasters to buy you some oriental drugs, I'm making a concoction and intended to bring it to you in the hospital this evening. How are you now?"

"I'm quite well. Do you have anything to eat, mum? I have to go to the factory."

"A meal is ready, but you have to rest. I've been anxious about you these last days. If anything happened to you, my only son," the old woman felt a lump in her throat, "the children and I would be alone."

Then she burst into sobs. Very moved, Hung tried to comfort his mother.

"Death does not come so easily. Even in the past we managed to live through hard oppression. There is nothing to fear if we love and help each other."

"And we have to be virtuous too. When you were in the hospital many people both men and women from the factory came and inquired about your health. They brought gifts and asked if we needed anything. I don't care about the gifts, but what is precious is the friendship in time of misfortune. You have to appreciate your fellowmen."

Remembering what the nurse had said, Hung asked his mother, "By the way, who came with you to the hospital yesterday?"

"Well, the children's mother. She was abandoned by the plantation-owner, and called here before going to settle in the new economic zone, but you didn't receive her. I was ten times more indignant

with her than you, but now I feel sorry for her. Truth to tell, it was not entirely her fault; the corrupt society also had its part. She is sorry now and is having to rebuild her broken life. One should not beat people who come to you. Unlike the former society, this one prizes virtue. And it is precisely because we are virtuous that she comes to us, my son."

Hung was moved by his mother's generosity. Like her, he took pity on the woman. It was, however, a long way from pity to conjugal love.

"Is she still in Saigon or has she gone away, mother?"

"She went away yesterday noon. She said that she would invite the children and myself for a visit once her house was built."

"Did she ask about me?"

His mother smiled. "She asked why you had not married again."

"What did you answer?"

"I said that you are afraid the children would be unhappy. Her eyes filled with tears and she answered, 'I am ashamed that I only thought of my own happiness.' I had to comfort her for a long time before she stopped sobbing. Not only she but the children too have suffered. Now, you have to solve the problem yourself. As for me, I'm already old. I just want to see you happy."

The story puzzled Hung. Mother and son understood each other quite well. He knew that his mother wanted him to forgive his wife but she did not say

it openly, for she was aware that he would do as she wished, and she did not want to use her influence.

For his part, Hung could not give his mother a firm answer. To please her he said, "Let me think it over. Such an important affair cannot be settled in one day."

Then he put on his working clothes, took his canvas cap and said, "Now I have to go to the factory. The batch of flavouring powder will be ready for the sifting this afternoon."

As Hung was leaving home, the factory was in a bustle. The workers on the first shift who had finished their work an hour before, now gathered in front of the chemical resting room to wait for the result. The manager was discussing future plans for the factory with the foremen. The cooks were preparing a large meal with deer meat to celebrate the return to production. An atmosphere of festivity prevailed.

Meanwhile, the chemical testers were busy at work. They got more excited at each result, and were getting increasingly flustered as people asked them over and over again about the test. While talking with the foremen the military manager kept on glancing at the room. The entire factory was waiting for the result.

At last, the chief tester went and reported the result to the management. The workers who sat chatting in the yard rushed toward them.

"Ninety-nine degrees of protein," said the chief tester.

A whisper went round the crowd.

"How much, old chap?"

A foreman then cupped his hands to his mouth and shouted, "Ninety-nine degrees of protein! The same as before the liberation!"

The clapping started from one corner where a young woman worker jumped up and cheered.

The crowd milled toward the canteen, excitedly talking about the first batch of flavouring powder produced by themselves. Only those who had done the work could fully appreciate the success.

When Hung arrived the party was already in full swing. Advancing quickly, he was immediately noticed by the manager who went to meet him. Many workers also gathered around him, inquiring about his health. It was ten minutes before order was restored.

The manager led Hung to the table and said to the whole gathering:

"Hung has just told me he will try to raise production to two hundred tons of powder a month, twenty tons more than before liberation. Do you agree?"

A chorus rose, "Agreed! Agreed!"

Then a loud voice said, "Let us drink to our victory and to Hung's health!"

Many people approached Hung, and amid the clinking of glasses he was suddenly very moved. For the first time he felt completely happy.

Saigon, November 1975

XUAN DU

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST COMPRADOR CAPITALISTS

Flavouring Powder Fever.

July-August 1975, Saigon ran short of the flavouring powder, MSG, so much appreciated by housewives for seasoning some dishes. It almost disappeared from the market and the price soared as never before.

Why the sudden rise in price? One morning, the foodstores were invaded by customers asking for the powder at any price; it was rumoured that it would be short. A kilogram of the powder, that usually sold at 4,000 (old) piastres in the South, now fetched 16,000 and even 20,000 piastres. As it became scarcer and scarcer, households began to hoard it and the price rose skyhigh.

The editorial office of the daily *Saigon Giai Phong* (Liberated Saigon) was flooded with letters and petitions, and "Readers' Mail" carried many complaints about this sent by workers, students, and people of all walks of life. With their political acumen, they all pinned responsibility for the shortage of this powder on the "big speculators, the financial and commercial tycoons" so well known in Saigon. The inhabitants of the city could remember

that a similar crisis had taken place under the Thieu regime, the "pheasant" crisis. A carefully synchronized propaganda campaign, raised the bird to the rank of a foodstuff of very high quality and wonderful nutritive value. Its price went skyhigh, and it was these manipulators in the business, intimately linked to the then administration, who feathered their nests with the profits.

On orders from the Saigon-Gia Dinh Military Management Committee in response to the wishes of the inhabitants, the security forces arrested the "flavouring powder crisis", namely Hua Quang, Dao Mau, Tan Trieu Minh, Ma Ut... Later a comprador specializing in foodstuffs declared that "the powder crisis was only a test on our part to see how the revolutionary authorities would react. Had you proved to be powerless, we would have gone on."

The reaction of the revolutionary government has a double aspect. On the one hand the dishonest compradors and speculators were arrested. On the other, as flavouring powder is made in Saigon-Cholon from local raw materials, mostly in nationalized factories after the flight of their owners abroad, it is not difficult to remedy this crisis. Orders were given to the factories to increase their production and the sale is now done through the State trade service. Apart from free sale, a supplementary rationing system is applied for the powder at the price 3,800 piastres a kilogram. The crisis is rapidly being solved. However the situation for other commodities is still gloomy. The prices of milk, sugar, soap, petrol, textiles, and medicines

continue to rise. In some localities, rumors persist that "price rises are due to the presence of the Northerners."

However another "crisis" gives the lie to this rumour. Salt is plentiful along seacoast provinces in the North as well as in the South, so no Northerner ever takes salt from the South with him. But, like the flavouring powder, one witnesses the same shortage and the same manoeuvre, and a kilogram of salt which normally costs 70 piastres has gone up to 400 or even 500 piastres.

These market fluctuations weighed heavily on families at a time when the ranks of the unemployed swelled considerably after the disintegration of the puppet army and administration. This phenomenon is all the more artificial as the price of rice, a staple has tended to fall: 100 kilograms of rice sold at 20,000 piastres before liberation, costs only 18,000 piastres now. And it is a rule that the prices of all other commodities are directly dependent on that of rice.

One understands in these conditions the wrath of the working masses who asked the revolutionary government to take strong measures against the agitators. That indignation is expressed in many letters and petitions sent to the Military Management Committee and the paper *Saigon Giai Phong*.

A Striking Blow.

Early on the morning of September 11, the Saigon-Gia Dinh Military Management Committee held a press conference to make public the PRG

statement on some aspects of the policy of restoration and development of industry and trade and the suppression of the comprador capitalists, traffickers and speculators.

The statement makes clear that at a time when the revolutionary administration is trying to overcome its difficulties, US imperialism and its agents, although utterly beaten, nevertheless have not given up their schemes of sabotage. They leave no stone unturned to make use of the remaining counter revolutionaries to undermine the revolution. The comprador bourgeoisie is an instrument of the US imperialists for carrying out their neo-colonialist policy; they are also the biggest war profiteers. They worked hand in glove with the political and military ringleaders, and by hoarding and dealing in contraband, netted huge profits during the war.

At present, the declaration said, they remain in close contact with the reactionaries, spies and CIA agents; in the economic field, they do their utmost to disrupt the market, hampering the daily life of the population. They use money and goods stocked before liberation, and get their agents to corner primary goods and engage in contraband of gold, foreign currency, precious stones, and narcotics. Thus it is necessary for the PRG to promulgate a 14-point policy aiming at:

- extending the State sector in various economic branches as the basis for the intensification of production and circulation of goods, in order to help stabilize the market;

- encouraging the national bourgeoisie, craftsmen, small manufacturers and traders to cooperate with the State in their activities, to their own and society's benefit.

- punishing the comprador capitalists who, by their harmful activities, interfere with production and the people's life, and hamper the forward march of society.

The 14 points stipulate, among other things, the total or partial confiscation of property of these compradors and their arrest if they continue after liberation to monopolize the market and plot with the counter-revolutionaries (See full text of the 14-point policy in Appendix).

While the 14-point policy was made public by the PRG, in Saigon and other South Vietnamese cities, house searches made it possible to lay hands on much illegal property and uncover evidence of illegal transactions and speculation.

A Murky Past.

The study of the records of about thirty compradors arrested in Saigon on September 11 and the following days shows exactly what they had done before and did after liberation.

Generally speaking they took part directly in the war on the side of the Americans and their puppets. Such is the case of Hoang Kim Quy, a comprador, native of Hanoi, where he had a sizeable import-export business. Going South in 1954 on the bandwagon of the French expeditionary forces, he immediately went over to serving the Americans

and became the "barbed wire tycoon." His products were used everywhere in South Viet Nam — around "strategic hamlets", military posts and installations, or simply to cordon off streets for round-ups. In his mills we found US and West German-made machines for the manufacture of barbed wire together with 2,000 tons of wire, amounting to 762 million (old) piastres worth.

Hoang Kim Quy was a member of the Saigon "Lower House" and in this role he took part in an investigation on the crimes at My Lai and Ba Lang An. On his return to Saigon he had the cheek to declare that he had not witnessed any case of unnatural death in these two localities.

The compradors who ran the UNIPAC company—Ly Trang, La Nghia, La Hoi, Ly Hoa, Chau Tran Tin—specialized in supplying stewed and dried rice to the puppet army. They urged their "brass-hat" chums to step up military operations, thus increasing the needs for their rice. The profit was, of course, shared with the brasshats. UNIPAC managed three-quarters of the foodstuffs sent by the international humanitarian organizations to war victims in South Viet Nam. These compradors gave these foods a little further preparation: put them in tins with UNIPAC labels and sold them on the market.

The compradors went in for many kinds of activities. They could concurrently be owners of factories, department-stores, hotels and shareholders in banking and import-export firms. Thus Ly Long

Than, a multi-millionaire in Saigon-Cholon, was owner of the VICASA company with a capital of 3 billion piastres, specializing in the melting of scrap iron, and shareholder of a dozen enterprises including the SADAKIM company, the VINAFILCO and VINATEXCO textile factories, the Viet Nam dyeing works, the Nam A cooking oil factory, a biscuit factory, a Saigon-Singapore shipping company, the Thien Hong restaurant, etc. He was also known for his dollar trafficking.

These compradors also had widespread international relations. Many of them were shareholders in enterprises in Hongkong, Singapore, Taiwan, in the Philippines, in Japan; they owned villas in Switzerland, and had French and American bank accounts. House-searches revealed many radio transmitter sets, for contacting Hongkong, Tokyo, Taipei, and other Southeast Asian capitals. In their safes were all kinds of foreign currencies US and Hongkong dollars, pounds sterling, West German marks, French francs, Japanese yen... From their HQs in Saigon or Cholon, they directed a whole network of wholesale trade and retail trade agents in various districts of the city and in other urban centres in South Viet Nam.

They admitted that their heyday was 1965 and the following years with the massive introduction of GIs in South Viet Nam. It was during that period when business was most thriving that they began the construction of buildings and big air-conditioned hotels with strip-tease night clubs.

Ly Hoa, a dealer in fuel, confessed: "I was lucky to obtain a kind of monopoly over the import of petrol and lubricants. I raked in fabulous profits. At times, I pocketed two or three million piastres per day". The trick of this sole agent for the big oil companies ESSO, CALTEX and SHELL was in fact to stock petrol in underground tanks. The imported fuel remained there from 3 to 6 months before being sold. If one remembers the price rises of fuel following the world oil crisis, one understands the size of the profit netted by Ly Hoa. Let up compare the following prices of a litre of petrol:

1971 :	21.30	piastres
1972 :	29	—
	40	—
1973 :	58	—
	103	—
	142	—
1974 :	235	—
1975 :	250	—
	800-1,000	—

Needless to say, the relations of the compradors with the bigwigs of the old regime, quisling and American, were very close. Gifts, banquets, shares in industrial and banking firms were given to them at regular intervals.

Nguyen Van Thieu's wife was director of a puppet army bank whose owner was Ma Hi, a comprador. Native of Soc Trang, Ma Hi was the sole army purchaser of rice in Nam Bo up to the province of Binh Thuan. From there the monopoly

belonged to Sau Huyet, Thieu's sister and mother of Hoang Duc Nha, Thieu's minister of information. With Thieu's support Ma Hi persuaded the puppet troops to launch mopping-up operations to snatch the peasants' rice crops or to buy them at "dirt-cheap" prices and even to resell the rice to the same peasants at higher price after it had been processed in one of the dozens of husking mills owned by himself. On the occasion of the wedding of Thieu's daughter, Ma Hi offered the bride and bridegroom a Mercedes and a Roll-Royce. He often invited Martin, the American ambassador to luxurious banquets.

Lam Hue Ho, nicknamed "The King of Iron" in Cholon, headed 18 import-export firms dealing in hardware. A friend of the puppet general Mai Huu Xuan, he appropriated a dozen hectares of land at Thu Duc in the name of that general to build big storehouses. He was the partner of the wife of Tran Thien Khiem, the then "prime minister", and also of Cao Van Vien, "chief of General Staff", in the export of scrap-iron-tanks, armoured vehicles, airplanes and ships destroyed by the PLAF. It was calculated that for each 100 tons of scrap-iron exported, he pocketed from 15,000 to 20,000 dollars.

Desperate Criminal Attempts.

The PRG declaration of September 11, 1975 came like a bolt from the blue to the compradors.

"We knew beforehand that we would be punished," said one of them after his arrest. "But what

we did not know was when and how that punishment could be meted out. We thought that you would have other fish to fry, that you would be swamped with difficulties and, consequently would not be able to hit us right away!"

Another comprador declared, "We discussed between ourselves the means to resist, saying, Under the French, we could 'buy' governors, French and Vietnamese alike. With the Americans it was even easier: with gold and greenbacks we could 'buy' any bigwig. From that experience, we came to the conclusion that as the revolutionaries are men, they might also be bribed. But we were mistaken".

Examples are not lacking of the intense efforts made by the compradors in their attempt to "buy over" revolutionary cadres. After the liberation of Saigon and other towns and cities in the South, the administrative services have been run by our cadres and officials, who are not accustomed to urban life. They have been offered beautiful houses provided with conveniences such as TV, refrigerators, air-conditioners... Others have been invited to share houses with the capitalists so that the latter can publicly declare that the house is now the seat of an office of the revolutionary administration; then under that label, they are free to indulge in activities harmful to the revolution and the national economy.

Attempts to "buy over" cadres were made simultaneously with the spreading of false reports. A comprador confessed "Our main anti-propaganda

theme is to pin all responsibility for the economic crisis on the cadres from the North. We circulate rumors that they have grabbed all the goods from the market at the expense of the Southerners."

Other rumours concern more directly political matters, for instance that hundreds of puppet officers sent to reeducation classes have died of forced labour, including mine removal. To those who want to give ear, it is retailed that the Americans will soon come back, that the troops loyal to Thieu continue to operate in such and such localities. In particular the word "socialism" has its meaning entirely distorted: it spells the end of all private property, and is synonymous with poverty, of leveling to the bottom...

In some way the surprises for the compradors are not yet over. After the liberation of Buon Me Thuot, the most shrewd of them "smelt a rat" and dispersed their properties. They have made bogus sales of parts of their workshops, stores, or businesses to "straw men." They invested their money in foreign banks. Then as April 30, 1975 (Liberation of Saigon) drew near, many of them left South Viet Nam, but not forgetting to entrust their businesses to their confidential agents who remained.

What are these compradors trying to do? They go in for an intensive hoarding, speculating and spreading false reports to discredit the revolutionary administration. They have also prepared themselves for the worst by having everything packed up ready for flight while carefully concealing their valuables such as gold, diamonds and bank-notes.

Take the case of Ly Hon, sole sales agent for petrol. Capitalizing on the shortage of that product in the market, he has sold his stock at unimaginable prices which could go up to 1,000 piastres per litre (as against 258 piastres before liberation). Then in early September, anticipating the storm, he gathered all his money being kept by his sales agents. He put all bank-notes in 14 wheat floor bags, gold and diamonds in a suit-case, and on the eve of September 11 carried them to three of his relatives, where the gold and diamonds were immediately buried. After his arrest, in face of irrefutable proofs, Ly Hon owned to having hidden his wealth. All the gold and diamonds were recovered.

Hoang Kim Quy, "the barbed wire tycoon", studied means to cope with the new regime, witness the many rabid counter-revolutionary books found in his house. Regret for his heyday is testified by the presence in one of his rooms of a "Medal for the defence of the Fatherland" awarded by the puppet regime, which he continued to exhibit in the place of honour. Quy hid his gold under the mattress of his bed.

At comprador Luu Trung's a big quantity of gold was discovered at the bottom of a water tank while more was scattered in his many storehouses.

A huge quantity of articles and commodities concealed have been recovered: 24,000 sewing machines, 4 tanks of petrol containing half a million litres, a stock of 27,000 bags of cement, one million

metres of textiles, motor car and moped tyres, chemical fertilizers...

Many economic enterprises belonging to the compradors have been seized: works, factories, workshops, warehouses, even an industrial poultry breeding farm with 800,000 chicks.

These operations against the comprador bourgeoisie have been brought to the knowledge of the public. The working masses were most enthusiastic. They held meetings and street demonstrations for days on end; the speakers — many of them representing the national bourgeoisie, victims of the keen competition of the compradors who were backed by the bigwigs of the old regime — expressed their unstinted support for the campaign launched by the authorities.

In the workshops and other economic enterprises of the compradors of various nationalities, male and female workers, some of them Chinese, unanimously supported the nationalization of means of production. Freed now from all exploitation, they have given their word to step up their production work in the establishment of which they are now the collective masters. They are happy to see the growth of the State economic sector, which is the guarantee of the gradual stabilization of prices.

The elimination of the compradors has resulted in the visible reduction in the prices of primary goods in Saigon as well as in other towns and cities in South Viet Nam.

The campaign against the comprador bourgeoisie is only in its early stage. On the economic plane, it is only the logical continuation of the military and political campaign against the puppet regime rigged up by US imperialism. That regime has ended with the disintegration of its army and administration. Its leaders belong to that comprador bourgeoisie of which they were the bureaucratic and militarist leaders; they controlled the administrative and military apparatus while operating business and illegal transactions.

That regime was subservient to the US and its principal social basis was the comprador bourgeoisie, which in turn relied on it to grow rich.

The elimination of the social basis of the puppet regime is the final stage of the national democratic revolution in South Viet Nam, which thus begins to build a new economy and a new society.

NGUYEN HOANG

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH CENTRE IN HO CHI MINH CITY

At the Mac Dinh Chi Street and April 30 Boulevard crossroads in Ho Chi Minh City there is a multi-storeyed building which used to be a hotel for US advisers. After the liberation of southern Viet Nam, it was converted into a southern centre for scientific research.

The cadres in charge of the centre — Candidate of Science (Ph.D.) in Mathematics and Physics Hoang Anh Tuan, Doctor of Chemistry Ho Si Thoang, and Mrs. Thuy Quynh, engineer, in charge of management — took us round the building. The name plate reads "South Viet Nam Scientific and Technical Institute", and inside we found well-equipped laboratories for research in various fields — biology, natural compound chemistry, catalysts and petrochemistry, physics, and many others. Engineers Thuy Quynh and Do Dinh Thai have done a marvellous job together with the workers at the centre transforming these identical hotel rooms into laboratories suited to different research activities and for various types of machines. Some of the equipment, either directly imported from abroad or brought from Hanoi, was already functioning. We

saw a gas chromatograph, a spectrograph and vacuum sprayers operating, for example. Others had been built up by the personnel at the centre themselves, like the semi-automatic bacteria counters with transistors and micro-electronic components, and a Butenko clock, which is indispensable for the growing of synchronized cells, an important link in studying new plant strains.

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Two years is too short a time in which to gauge scientific research. Nevertheless, scientific workers at the Institute have achieved good results in 14 scientific projects — seven in biology, two in natural compound chemistry, two on catalysts in petrochemistry, and three in physics. Some projects had been started some time before in Hanoi and have been developed and adapted to conditions in southern Viet Nam. These include studies on certain rice strains adapted to local climatic conditions, an insecticide based on *Bacillus Thuringiensis*, various species of menthol in southern provinces, the use of solar energy, the synthesis of zeolite Y, and a catalyst used in the cracking technique, very necessary to our oil industry in the very near future. The laboratory for experimental biology is the best equipped section and has the most researchers in the whole institute. They are about 40 in number, and are divided into three teams: experimental

microbiology, vegetal genetics and biochemistry. There we found young rice seedlings cultivated from the pollen of various species found in the country. We also learnt that the laboratory staff had succeeded in establishing a rational cultivation process for the pollen of some strains (including among other things the *Oryza sativa*, var. *Indica*) which makes it possible to raise the yield from the formation of cicatricial tissue by 40% and to identify both monoploid and diploid cells in this tissue and those transformed into polyploids. This opens possibilities for the application of stimulated mutation at cell level — monoploid cell — in order to increase the frequency of mutations and create “pure” strains.

Laboratory director Ngo Ke Suong, Candidate of Science (Ph.D.), further told us that he and his collaborators were continuing experiments on mutations stimulated by chemical and physical agents, experiments which they have begun many years before in Hanoi. This artificial selection has given rise to 16 most promising mutable strains, the growth of the fourth generation of which has just been observed by members of the laboratory on the fields of Binh Chanh district outside Ho Chi Minh City. Observations show that in most of those strains the effective tillering, the number of grains on each ear as well as the weight of 1,000 grains are all higher than those of the control samples. Other valuable information has also been gathered.

In the same period, the laboratory collaborated with the biological section of the Viet Nam Scientific Institute in Hanoi in studying the manufacture of an insecticide from *Bacillus Thuringiensis*, and easily found local raw materials like peanut and coconut oil-cakes and waste materials from the fish sauce and glutamate industries. The new insecticide used experimentally on a very refractory kind of worm which played havoc with vegetable crops in Da Lat has proved particularly efficacious. Mixed to a Cidi preparation 50 (with a concentration from 5 to 50 times lower than normally used) it killed more than 90% of the worms.

Other laboratories of the Institute have obtained encouraging results in their research. Taking into account the fact that these research projects have been conducted alongside the organization of housing facilities and the use of still inadequate equipment and facilities, one can appreciate the role which the staff of the Institute is called upon to play in national scientific research here.

N. L.

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ONE YEAR WITH THE REVOLUTION

Truong Tuyet Anh teaches literature at Ho Chi Minh City University. The following are excerpts from her article *One Year with the Revolution* printed in the bimonthly review *Higher and Secondary Vocational Education* No. 5 (52), Sept. — Oct., 1976, Hanoi.

Southern Viet Nam was liberated only a little more than a year ago, yet in my thoughts and feelings there has been a deep change which would take decades to come about in other circumstances. I can say that what has now taken place in me is an inner revolution, which I had been trying in vain to arrive at for many years, without ever managing to get off the ground. I now greatly admire the revolution I used to fear, and this admiration has led me to have confidence in and love the revolution. The revolution has freed me from the uncertainty that had been tormenting me for years. I have known the humiliation of a person conscious of living under foreign domination; but because I did not have a correct view of the great history of our nation, I simply suffered, thinking that I belonged to a small, weak and backward people continuously subjected to oppression and foreign domination, and I felt ashamed of being powerless in

face of the enslavement of my country. The elaborate anti-communist propaganda of the former regime had deluded me into believing that the brutal war in our native land was an ideological war between the "dictatorial" communist side and the "free" "nationalist" side (although I was well aware at the same time of the dirty, contemptible things being done in the "free" world), and I found no way out of the impasse, either for my country or for myself. In consequence, I paid little attention to the political situation under the former regime, closeted myself in my ivory tower of poetry, and I became a proponent of moral revolution on the basis of love for humanity and what I imagined to be the infinite love of man for his fellow creatures. Now I realize that the revolution advocated by English Romantic poets (I teach English literature) is only a chimerical revolution as long as a political and economic revolution has not been carried out to end social injustice and bring well-being and happiness to all.

I have learnt all that in two political courses, in contacts with revolutionary cadres, during a visit to Ben Tre, and from explanations by the cadres in charge of our school.

What I have learnt about the history of our nation and our resistance against the French and US aggressors and their agents has given me the national pride I have been thirsting for since my youth, when I began to feel how humiliating the domination of our country was. How can I express my deep gratitude to the Revolution which has brought

me an independent Fatherland, independent forever, to love and which allows my children to grow up proud of belonging to a heroic people! The history of the Vietnamese revolution I have studied has strengthened my love for the poor "country folk", because I now know that my love for them is right. It is those labouring peasants and the workers issued from the peasantry who have liberated my native land under the leadership of the Viet Nam Workers' Party (now the Communist Party of Viet Nam-Ed.), the vanguard of our working class.

Indeed, we must not only love workers and peasants, but also feel honoured to serve them. My visit to the Giong Trom and Ba Tri districts in Ben Tre province has made clear to me all the sacrifices that our peasants have had to endure so that we may enjoy independence and freedom.

Together with a number of colleagues I participated in the building of irrigation works at Thai My (Cu Chi), and I have begun to understand how hard a peasant's life is. And our peasants have endured hardships for centuries so that people like us may live in comfort and get educated. But whom have we been trained to serve? All my years of study, all my research work on poetry during the past twenty years, and the moral revolution I preached have less value than what I learnt in one day of socialist labour! This is a painful, but most useful discovery to me. Poetry must spring from real life, and the most meaningful life is that of labouring for the collectivity and with the collectivity. Our visit to the construction site for the irrigation works

at Ba Tri district has clearly shown us the immense strength of the collectivity. In only five days, 28,000 inhabitants of that area dug a canal 18 kilometres long, 10 metres wide and 2.5 metres deep! When workers, peasants and revolutionary combatants endure so many hardships and sacrifices without complaining or boasting about their deeds, is it not a great honour for us teachers to educate their children?

In realizing the essential role of workers and peasants in the evolution of our history, I have understood why the patriotic movements in the early years of this century failed. It is because, as President Ho Chi Minh has said, "For the liberation of oppressed people, there is no other way than that of proletarian revolution." I was greatly impressed when I learnt how the Indochinese Communist Party came into being, and what a great role President Ho Chi Minh played in the political education of our revolutionaries. Our great leader taught his first collaborators that patriotism must lead to socialist patriotism. I was no less impressed by the development of the August Revolution under the brilliant leadership of the Party. Indeed, the success of the August Revolution was due to fifteen years' careful, painstaking and wonderfully skilful preparation.

I have eagerly listened to a lecture and watched the documentary film of the battle of Dien Bien Phu. I recognised the military genius of the leaders of our revolutionary army, and the iron will of our army and people who endured untold hardships.

The battle of Dien Bien Phu shows that the brilliant victories of the revolutionary forces over the US imperialists, crowned with the triumph of the historic Ho Chi Minh campaign, were only to be expected. The Vietnamese with their extraordinary heroism and unshakable patriotism have defeated the huge, up-to-date US military machine and their technology. I have been wondering how the Party was able to inspire our revolutionary combatants with the ardent patriotism which made possible such heroic deeds as carrying a machine gun on one's shoulders while it is firing at the enemy, crossing the Truong Son mountains to liberate the South. And I have found the answer: it is because those young men were living in a socialist society and had received socialist education.

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Formerly, because I paid little attention to politics and was under the noxious influence of anti-communist propaganda, I had only a vague, erroneous idea of socialism. I had been deluded into believing that communists did not value family ties, had no patriotic feeling and were against all religion. And during the past twenty years, I developed a great fear of the Revolution. For some months before the liberation of Saigon, I was living in anguish; for there were so many rumours about the barbarous acts committed by the revolutionary troops

against the people in newly-liberated regions. Later, I realized that the rumours were only inventions spread by the CIA to deceive the population. On April 30, 1975, I looked in bewilderment at the gentle-mannered liberation troops. Tears came to my eyes as I saw how young they were. I could no longer believe that they were cruel. We were told that people who engaged in revolutionary activities were motivated by love of their fellow countrymen, and in a broader perspective, by love of the labouring people of the world; and that the Revolution opens its arms wide to receive all those who come to it. I cannot find words to express my constantly increasing confidence in the Revolution. I believe more and more strongly that the above is true, although I have been troubled by some negative things that have happened. Studies of the socialist revolution in our country have shown that my sympathy with the Revolution, now that I have come to know it, is well-placed, because the fundamental aim of the socialist revolution is to eliminate exploitation of man by man and to bring happiness to the people.

Formerly, the dictatorship of the proletariat was purposely misrepresented in order to create a fear of communism among the population. Like many others, I thought that the dictatorship of the proletariat was a dictatorship in the manner of fascist dictatorship, that it was a cruel proletarian regime; and I feared a class revenge. Contacts with respectable revolutionaries and study of the transitional period in the advance to socialism have dissipated

my fear caused by the capitalist misrepresentation of the word "dictatorship". Now I know whom proletarian dictatorship is directed against and to whom it brings the right to be masters of the country. Having clearly realized the role of proletarian dictatorship in the period of transition to socialism, I see that this dictatorship is natural and indispensable. I no longer fear proletarian dictatorship, on the contrary I firmly believe that it will bring the social justice I have been yearning for to my native land. Only proletarian dictatorship can eliminate capitalist exploitation, establish new relations of production and bring about a scientific and technological revolution on the basis of which we can build up a modern industry and a modern agriculture in our country. Only proletarian dictatorship can speed up an ideological and cultural revolution which turns out new men and women who are masters of their destinies, who can exercise their right to be collective masters of the country, who are loyal to their Fatherland and their fellow-countrymen, who place the interests of the community above their own and those of their families. Only proletarian dictatorship can preserve independence and freedom for the country.

My confidence in socialism was further consolidated during my visit to my family in Hanoi, when I was able to see the superiority of socialism in the North. The war had just ended, and there was still much hardship for the population, who had to eat rice mixed with other cereals, still lacked many commodities, and were living in crowded houses.

The North had to continue to build socialism in the conditions of a most brutal war ; and I greatly admired the willingness of the population to continue to make sacrifices in order to preserve national independence. The population fully understood that political independence could be preserved only when an independent economy had been secured, and they were willing to undergo temporary hardship in order to build Viet Nam into a socialist country with modern industry and agriculture. I was happy to see that all were equal now in Hanoi, there were no social classes, and the head of a government office using a bicycle to pay visits to friends was a common sight. It was a great pleasure for me to see workers and peasants crowding the big department store in Trang Tien Street where they bought such things as quilts, children's clothes, milk and towels ; I knew that in the old days only rich people went to such a place. I also saw that the medical service in the North is very well organized, the State paying great attention to the prevention of epidemics and medical treatment for the labouring people. The immense verdant ricefields on both sides of the Haiphong — Hanoi highway, the big kohlrabi, the heavy cabbages that women were taking home after work were concrete proof of the big leap forward of agriculture in the North. And I also saw how great was the respect and love of the population for President Ho Chi Minh when I visited the mausoleum where our great leader rests. We stood in a long file and followed one another into the mausoleum. On seeing our beloved

leader, I understood that such a man had devoted his life to the pursuit and realization of a great ideal. My confidence in socialist construction in the North was further strengthened.

I cannot find words to express my deep joy that springs from confidence in socialism, although I know that all of us will have to undergo many hardships to achieve this goal. But the road we are following will make each Vietnamese realize the great significance of independence and freedom, and become men and women with the finest virtues.

TRUONG TUYET ANH

Viet Nam Courier

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THE PATH TO SALVATION

Encounters in Saigon

As soon as I arrived in Saigon, I was invited to a family banquet to welcome one of my cousins, Loi, a former officer in the puppet army, back from a reeducation course organized by the revolutionary government.

All those present at the party, like myself, were thirsty for information. This was visible in the expression in their eyes, in their more or less direct questions, in the warm handshakes and vigorous slaps they gave the man as if to make sure that he really was in good shape.

Though still somewhat tense, the atmosphere was merry.

An old man drawled out the first question: "How long did you stay at the camp, Loi?"

"Four months and two days exactly," said Loi's father.

"As long as that!" someone exclaimed.

"Long?" said Loi. "In my opinion, four months is not a long time, not for all the things we had to learn."

That answer aroused a ripple of surprised murmurs. A man said, "Loi, don't exaggerate!" Another

wished to know everything that Loi had learnt. A third asked sarcastically whether he had thought of prolonging his stay in the camp. An old lady, Aunt Chin, insistently asked him (I learnt later that her son was still in the camp): "As we are among ourselves, tell us frankly, Loi, were you ill-treated, were you sent to do hard labour?"

"Never, Aunt, believe me. Nevertheless..." said Loi, turning to the lady. "I myself had believed that we would be sent to do hard labour. But we soon realized our mistake. All we had to do was to tend a tiny plot of land in front of our hut and grow bindweed".

"But you've never touched a hoe in your life."

"We learnt pretty fast, aunt. Besides it was not compulsory."

"And you ate bindweed every day?" a man joked.

"Not every day," Loi replied calmly. "We ate meat. Two or three times a week only, it's true. But many lieutenants in my group found the food better than what they had had at home. This should not surprise you, aunt, when you know that they had to feed six or seven children and their wives had no jobs."

"He now knows how to make sandals from old motor-car tyres," his father said proudly "He even made them for his friends at the camp."

"Oh! that's how things went at the camp," Loi said, a little embarrassed. "We helped our mates as much we could, for we've learnt to be humane. A lesson, never explained to us, but well learnt

nevertheless... When I first arrived at the camp, I believed that it would be like our "open-arms" and re-education centres: ill-treatment, threats, humiliations of all kinds to break your spirit and bend your knees. This was what I dreaded most, even if I thought that I well deserved it... However, nothing of that sort happened to me: no blows, no persecution."

"But, why were you sent to the camp?"

"Only to give us explanations, to show us the right path, to help us understand ourselves better, to show us who are our true friends and who are our real enemies..."

"And all that only by means of explanations, not by violence?"

"First, explanations. Then sessions of discussions were organized for us to speak our minds freely."

Loi then said how moved he was by the care given him by the camp authorities.

"At first, I thought it was a demagogic move," he said. "But I realized later on how humane they all were! The soldiers, in particular. In bygone days, we have seen troops of various nationalities parading in Saigon, French, British, Indian, American, South Korean, Australian, Thai, and the mercenaries of the former Saigon army. They were all cruel, brutal, indisciplined. But there was nothing like it among the liberation fighters. Courageous in combat, they are so simple and so kind-hearted in everyday life!"

Loi shook my hand warmly and said, "They've won my esteem, your soldiers!"

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The following day. I saw Loi again. He was waiting for me in company with some friends about his age, forty. After shaking hands I caught sight of a big picture of Christ, crucified, with the inscription "Salvation is nowhere to be found!"

Loi looked a bit embarrassed and explained: "The picture has been there for a long time. But now it seems that I have found my way of salvation..."

After some hesitation, he introduced me to his friends, former "comrades-in-arms".

The first one was, to my great surprise, a priest. He wore a shirt and pants of synthetic fabric, and spectacles, and had a kind smile. Loi told me that he had begun by enlisting in the puppet army. But he soon grew sick of the atrocities committed by the American and puppet soldiers, deserted, and took Holy Orders, more to avoid being arrested than because of any religious vocation.

"I would now like to return home," said the man, "but all my family is against the idea."

"Nothing should be more simple," I said, with some surprise, "you have only to explain your situation to your family. They would certainly understand and accept you back among them."

"I can see that you are not a Catholic. For Vietnamese Catholics, to have a defrocked priest in the family is a great shame. I had to go into the church to avoid the barracks. But now that I no longer fear being pressed into military service, I must all the same continue this 'life of evasion', perhaps for the rest of my life."

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Before Loi could introduce his second friend, the latter said, "I, sir, was a military offender."

Without waiting for an answer, he told his story. "I was sent to a disciplinary battalion because I had deserted. Not out of cowardice, believe me. I had dodged military service by hiding for nearly ten years in an underground tunnel dug under my bed. All through that period my wife and I endeavoured to have five children. Don't laugh! Under the old regime, if you have five children you were spared military service. Unfortunately after the fourth child, my wife fell ill. One night, when going to the hospital to visit her, I was caught by a patrol and pressed into the army. Being a graduate, I was made an officer and sent to the Quang Tri front. I could not bear to leave my ailing wife and my four children uncared for. So I deserted, only to be caught in Saigon three weeks later. That was how I was condemned to this terrible life in a disciplinary unit."

"Your misfortunes have come to an end now," I said.

"Not yet, alas!" he replied with despair in his voice. Rolling up the sleeve of his shirt, he showed me a swollen vein on his arm marked by many traces of injections.

"I took to drugs when I was in the disciplinary battalion in order to hold out, to get some relief. Now I'm addicted."

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A heavy silence prevailed in the room. I looked at the three men in turn: three lost souls, three wasted lives.

In a slow voice, Loi went on: "Dear cousin, I would have liked to introduce you to the other one who formed what we jokingly called the five tigers with us. He is Sau Ken, a son of Aunt Chin whom you met yesterday here. But he is still in the camp. He is the youngest of us and has the mildest character. He was enlisted three years ago, and became a lieutenant. We met at the camp. I believed that he would be the first to be let out. But, suddenly one night, he woke me up and tearfully told me that he would soon make a confession'."

'Of what?' I asked.

Then he told me all the crimes he had perpetrated as a Saigon officer, I could not believe my

ears. Just imagine: he had killed twelve persons, all civilians. By mistake, in a sweep, he said. He even raped women in the presence of their families just like the Yankees."

After a short pause, Loi continued: "Who would have believed Sau Ken capable of such abominable things? If the war had not stopped, what more crimes would the Americans have driven us to? In the four stories you just heard, the Americans are already to be blamed for innumerable crimes. And yet there were one million puppet soldiers throughout South Viet Nam, one million victims of the Yankees who spoiled their youth and plunged them into crime. You see, the lives of us all were tragedies!"

I looked at the picture of Christ and ventured to remark, "Didn't you say that you've found the road to salvation?"

"It's true," said Loi, lowering his head. "But I'm still rather pessimistic. Do you know what Sau Ken said to me when I pointed out to him the risk involved in such a confession: wouldn't he be considered a war criminal? But he said 'I'll do it, whatever may happen to me. My mind will be at peace. I'll have at least thirty more years to live and the Revolution will show me the right path. You see, how deep his trust in the Revolution was!'"

Loi paused as if to make up his mind, and concluded: "After thinking the matter over we decided that Sau Ken's decision was a wise one. This is one reason for us to be optimistic about our future."

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To all these men of the defeated puppet army it has lifted from the mud, the Revolution is anxious to give faith and some point to life. The tragedy experienced by some of them—for instance the man who became a priest against his will and the one who became a drug-addict—has not ended with the liberation of the country. But does this mean that they should lose all hope in the future? The new society will certainly make it possible for them to make new lives for themselves.

LUA MOI

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KEEPING WRECKED YOUTH AFLOAT

Three apparently asexual beings with long hair down to their shoulders, bright shirts sticking to their emaciated bodies, and flared trousers flapping as they walk, saunter down Ham Nghi street toward Bach Dang wharf. It is mid-summer and the heat is suffocating. The three young men suddenly stop. One of them stumbles and collapses on the pavement, racked by convulsions, slobbering and sweating as in an epileptic fit. One or two passers-by come up to help, thinking perhaps that it is a case of sunstroke, but the others move on without paying any attention. The afflicted young man seems to have been abandoned by his companions, who have disappeared completely. Another *xi ke* addict, somebody says. And everything becomes clear.

Xi Ke — Vietnamese pronunciation of scag, American slang for drugs — was introduced into southern Viet Nam in 1965, together with the US expeditionary corps.

That was twelve years ago, and our young addict was a child then. Now he lies prostrate on the pavement, his body little more than a skeleton, his still beardless face already wrinkled. His companions reappear shortly with a small plastic syringe containing a colourless liquid which they hurriedly

inject into the man's arm. Slowly he opens his eyes, yawns nonchalantly, wipes away the tears rolling down his cheeks, and gets to his feet. The young men continue on their way as if nothing had happened.

This scene took place fourteen months after liberation, on the eve of the merging of Saigon — Cho Lon and Gia Dinh into the present Ho Chi Minh City. The revolutionary power has closed down the numerous joints left by the former regime, but the illicit drug trade continues. Drug addiction remains a serious problem in the largest urban centre of reunified Viet Nam. There are still about 50,000 drug addicts of both sexes in the city of a population of 3,500,000. In this respect, Saigon is second only to Hong Kong, where addicts number 100,000 in a population of 4,000,000.

Drug-and-Rule

During the last months of the Thieu regime, a great scandal broke in the city. In September 1974, the People's Front Against Corruption, founded in Hue, published its "Indictment No. 1" in which Nguyen Van Thieu was accused of heroin-trafficking, among other things. The accusation was based on Alfred McCoy's findings made public in his book *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, published in 1972. The book was of course banned by the Saigon authorities, and several Saigon newspapers which quoted from it were quickly silenced. Only *Dung Day* (Stand Up), a leftwing Catholic review, managed by dint of journalistic ruse to publish first

a summary of the book, then a translation of the whole chapter entitled *South Viet Nam : Narcotics in the Nation's Service*.

This was the first revelation of the drug traffic networks in southern Viet Nam. They were in the control of the very same men who had been put in charge of running the state for US-neo-colonialism : Nguyen Van Thieu, President of the Republic, and his Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem, both generals. Apparently rival gangs collaborated with one another. They comprised politicians, generals, admirals and many high-ranking officers who controlled important resources of the armed forces. Control of the air force and the navy ensured transport of heroin from Vientiane, Bangkok and Hong Kong to Cho Lon. Here the drugs were handed over to Chinese merchants from Tchao Chow who parcelled them up and then delivered to the land forces for marketing. Police, customs and port officials were also part of the racket, which brought in 88 million dollars a year, nearly half a billion dollars in the last five years of the regime.

Before Thieu, Air Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky (who later became Prime Minister and then Vice-President of the Republic) had had the cooperation of the Chief of Police, General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, in setting up a drug trade which flourished from 1965 to 1968 and made huge profits from the heroin smuggled into southern Viet Nam from Vientiane. Ky and his rival Thieu were denounced on July 15, 1971 in Saigon by NBC correspondent Phil Brady, who accused the two men of financing their election

campaigns with money obtained from drug trafficking. This practice, which dated from the days of Ngo Dinh Diem, shows the close links there were between drugs and power in Saigon under the US-puppet regime. The ill-fated dictator had ostentatiously closed down opium dens on his accession to power, only to restore the drug traffic in order to finance the activities of his secret police.

Drug-and-rule. The French colonial administration used drugs to undermine the people's combative spirit, and repressive measures against rebels were financed by profits from the opium monopoly. US neo-colonialism, with much greater material means to finance repression, were content to support the trafficking indirectly, by turning a blind eye to their agents' activities. The hand of neo-colonialism might have seemed cleaner ; its policy was not so apparent and it was not pursuing financial interests. But it was no less dangerous. Heroin is twenty times more toxic than opium, and in the course of only ten years, from 1965 to 1975, it ruined the bodies and souls of a whole generation in the occupied zones of southern Viet Nam.

Heroin, a Way of Life

Until the massive introduction of GI's in early 1965, the "black drug" (opium) reigned, and addicts were content to smoke it in the traditional way. The smoker uses a long bamboo pipe, attached to the end of which is a small earthenware bowl pierced by a small hole on the top. With a needle, the smoker takes a drop of semi-liquid opium from a phial, and

dries it over an oil lamp, taking care not to char the drug. This produces a pellet which is put over the bowl hole. Then the pipe bowl is placed over the oil lamp, and as the opium pellet burns, the smoker slowly inhales. Under the effect of the drug, he falls into a dreamy state, then into a torpor.

"I began smoking opium in high school," Tran Anh Dung, twenty-eight years old, former paratrooper of the Saigon army, tells us. "Out of sheer curiosity, I tried a few pipes at a local opium den. The drug made me feel weightless and I had a sensation of hovering in a supra-terrestrial world of beautiful colours where I relived even long-forgotten childhood scenes. I became an addict in less than two weeks. Opium was not very dear, and in the beginning I could get what I needed with my pocket-money. But I needed bigger doses every day, and I soon had to steal to get the necessary money to buy them. Then I had to give up my studies, and I became a puppet soldier. That was in 1966. I was eighteen."

In principle, drug-taking was forbidden in the army, but there was always some way of satisfying one's needs. The young man was wounded and discharged, and became a politician's bodyguard. As he had to move about a great deal, he changed from opium to the more convenient heroin. The "white drug" could simply be put into a cigarette and smoked. Injections produced a much stronger and more lasting effect. "When I had got into the habit of using heroin," said the young man, "opium smoking no longer had any effect on me, even when the

dose was tripled. So I went over to heroin permanently, and kept a phial of the drug, a small syringe and several needles by me constantly. I had six or seven fixes a day."

Phan Dinh De, 17, began taking heroin in dramatic circumstances when he was only fifteen.

"We were a happy family until my mother began to frequent Americans for their dollars. She came home late in the evening more and more often, and this aroused my father's suspicions. First there were quarrels, then blows, and finally they divorced. I was badly shaken, left home and was introduced to heroin by a friend."

Many young men and women became addicted at fifteen and sixteen, for different reasons — curiosity, family dramas, unrequited love, examination failure, or just some minor setback. The fratricidal war waged under the banner of anti-communism and imposed by US imperialism, the massive pressganging, the general uncertainty, the frantic dollar-chasing, values turned upside down, systematic depravity caused by the lure of material gains, and the influence of the mass media, all contributed to the destruction of a generation who claimed to be hippies because hippies were in fashion. This was not a conscious choice, but they just resigned themselves to their fate, to increasing anguish, and received the American manna with open arms, frantic to find an escape from the anguish.

Drug-taking leads to crime, and after liberation gangs of drug addicts in Saigon continued their predatory life, stealing, plundering and even killing

for their daily dose. Considerable damage must have been caused by these elements in the past, and this can be inferred from data given by American authorities about drug addiction in the United States. An average addict has to spend 8,000 dollars a years on his drugs, and in the State of New York alone, drug addicts steal money and goods worth a total of half a billion dollars every year.

Cures, another Profitable Business

As drug addiction spread among young people, alarmed parents tried to find a solution. Many addicts realized the danger to which they were exposing themselves, and tried to stop before it was too late. Cures became another profitable business. Several private clinics were opened, none of which guaranteed success, of course. Private "reeducation" centres for young addicts were set up, and these were reformatories where the young people were kept at their parents' expense.

"I was at the Duy Tan Education Centre," said nineteen-year-old Tran Huu Loi. "With my parents' consent, uniformed men came to our house one day at 9 p.m., dragged me out of bed, handcuffed me and took me away in a jeep. I thought that it was the police, and wondered why I had been arrested until I saw the sign as we drove into the establishment. The director briefly told me where I was, and ordered his men to search me to make sure that I did not have any sharp or pointed object on me with which I could commit suicide. Then I was told to change into the regulation pyjamas of the establishment. I

shared a small cell — 1.8 by 1.2m — with two other inmates. We had to stay in the cell around the clock, we slept on the floor and were given meagre daily rations of rice, duckweed, pumpkin and salted sesame powder. I was left alone with the acute pains and convulsions of withdrawal. After a month, I was 'cured' of addiction, and was transferred to a convalescent ward, where the food was no better. The warders, who were all boxers and wrestlers, freely laid into rebellious inmates with their rattan sticks. We never dared to tell our parents the truth and they continued to believe what they had been told by the establishment — that we were given good food and proper medical care. After six months' internment I was returned to my family, but I started taking heroin again immediately."

Such "reeducation" was extremely costly. Twenty year-old Tran Ngoc Minh who had been sent to five different medical or educational establishments before liberation to be cured of his drug addiction, told us:

"I spent six months at the Duy Tan Centre, then another six months at the Martin Centre. At the former, my parents had to pay 60,000 piastres for the first three months and 45,000 piastres for the rest of the term. At the Martin Centre, they had to pay 300,000 piastres for the whole term."

According to Tran Ngoc Minh, the Duy Tan establishment had eight or nine hundred "pupils", and the Martin Centre five hundred. It was quite evident that the undertaking was most profitable (100 kg of rice cost only 3,000 or 4,000 piatres). But the results

obtained were far from satisfactory: the "reeducated" were soon back on drugs as their social environment had not been made healthier and the addicts themselves had not been completely immunized.

After liberation, the drug trade shrank markedly. Hoarding led to price rises for heroin in the order of twenty times pre-liberation levels. Many addicts went over to using Seconal instead, a barbiturate with sedative and somniferous effects. This drug was sold on the black market in tablet form and is used to make a solution for injection into the veins. Any impurity will block the capillaries in the limbs, and when this happens gangrene soon sets in and the affected limb has to be amputated. A Saigon doctor showed me five fingers with varnished nails in Formalin — the fingers of a pretty nineteen-year-old girl who had been a hairdresser until she lost her hand after a Seconal fix. In 1976, a Seconal pill cost one *dong*, one-third of the price of a dose of heroin at that time, or the equivalent of three kilograms of rice sold by the State Trade Service.

A Practicable Solution

The fight against drug addiction in Ho Chi Minh City involved treatment of 50,000 addicts and simultaneous cleaning up of a social environment seriously polluted by twenty years of US neo-colonialism. How were we to do it, and where were we to begin?

The revolutionary power had never faced such a problem in the liberated zones. Moreover, the country had been bled white by a long war and faced countless difficulties. It was impossible to apply

methods used in advanced countries: a Methadone cure for instance, as used in the United States, cost from 1,000 to 5,000 dollars, depending on the addict's condition and the duration of the treatment.

Soon after liberation the City Party Committee instructed the Social Affairs Service, the Health Service and the City Section of the Communist Youth Union to collaborate in the search for a practicable solution to the problem of drug addiction in the Saigon-Cholon area, with a view to making this a pilot area in the anti-drug campaign in the South. This shows the great importance attached to the drug problem. It was clear that a good solution would require the combination of administrative and technical measures, backed up by intensive persuasion work among the masses. The people's police was to cooperate, but not to play a predominant role.

After several months' study, a plan was worked out, and the first "School for the Restoration of Young People's Dignity" came into being. This pilot centre, which can take up to 300 persons at a time, is housed in a former orphanage near the Binh Trieu bridge. The buildings are in good condition, but furniture is lacking. The pupils, like the staff, including the directors, eat standing up and sleep on the floor. They also sit on the floor for meetings. A self-defence group recruited from among the "pupils" maintains order and security, assisted by a policeman.

"This is the third group we have had for education in our establishment," said deputy-director Le Anh Ton, a youth cadre and a former political

prisoner detained on Con Son (Poulo Condor) Island. "Our pupils have just completed one week's work at the construction site of an irrigation project. Many of them are on leave right now. The difficulties we had in the beginning have been overcome and we're advancing along the path that has been charted."

Neither Le Anh Ton, nor his colleagues among the board of directors, knew anything about drug addiction when they were appointed to their present posts. Le Anh Ton decided to get to know drug addicts belonging to different social strata, and to study their needs, their psychology and behaviour. He visited the Duy Tan and Martin centres, which were still operating, and with his experience of work among the masses he soon realized what was to be done and where he should begin.

"Right at the beginning," he continued, "only 80 addicts volunteered to come to our establishment. They were rather sceptical, as they had experienced detention in dark cells under the old regime. By our attitude more than by our statements, we showed that we abhorred violent methods, which are never an effective means of dealing with any such task. We made great efforts and finally succeeded in developing our own methods based on very simple principles: we urged each addict to fight the compulsion to take drugs himself, appealing to his sense of dignity and his determination. The collectivity supports him in this difficult battle; and study, manual work and collective entertainment will gradually wean him from drugs until he is completely cured.

During fits caused by withdrawal in the initial period, he will be given proper medical care."

Medical treatment plays an important part in the fight against drug addiction. Without his drugs, the addict inevitably shows withdrawal symptoms characterized by many complex psychic or functional disturbances which cause painful, sometimes fatal muscular cramps. A method of treatment has been developed in which acupuncture and some traditional ingredients are used, together with synthetic sedatives. I had a very interesting talk on this subject with three Western-educated doctors at the establishment who take a keen interest in Eastern medicine.

"Prolonged use of drugs," explained Dr. Ngo Anh Tuan, "causes generalized cell modifications and the bio-chemical composition of the organism is affected. In this respect, opium is less dangerous than morphine, and morphine in turn is much less dangerous than heroin. Many heroin addicts have come to us in a very serious condition, vomiting blood, seized with convulsions or even in a coma. Acupuncture administered in time can prevent such complications. We resort to sedatives only in exceptional cases. We use pills prepared from vegetal substances which have both sedative and tonic effects. On average, a withdrawal period lasts two weeks, after which convalescent patients eat as many as twelve bowls of rice at a meal. A cure in our establishment lasts six months, the time we reckon is required for the bio-chemical composition of an organism to return to normal."

The "School for the Restoration of Young People's Dignity" takes only volunteers. The youngest pupil is fourteen, and the average age is between eighteen and twenty-five. Despite its name, the centre also accepts older patients, among whom is a sixty-six-year-old man who has been a drug addict for nearly half a century.

Not an Irremediable Evil

I talked to young men and women from all walks of life at the establishment — workers, peasants, and petty bourgeois. Many have had secondary education, and a number show obvious indifference to politics. During collective recreation times they sing revolutionary songs together, instinctively giving them the syncopated rhythm of jazz. All of them are well-behaved and willingly attend the classes organized for them. Here they learn about drug addiction and its consequences, the systematic corruption of youth by US neo-colonialism, revolutionary ethics and ideals, and the Revolution's objectives for the younger generation. Discussion of these questions is at first perfunctory, but becomes increasingly lively as the participants' confidence grows and they are encouraged to find personal examples to illustrate the theoretical points. The cadres' devotion to their work, the fraternal solidarity between community members, the collective work, everything contributes to restoring a sense of being a part of society in the misguided young people. They come to the school seeking salvation thinking only of themselves, but when they leave it, they will volunteer to serve the common cause.

The case of Pham Thanh Long, 34, is most telling. A singer, trained at the Saigon Conservatory, he served in a puppet army band, all the members of which, including himself, were heroin addicts. He was unemployed when Saigon was liberated, dependent on his wife who was a low-paid office-worker, who also had to support their four children. He changed from heroin to Seconal, trying to economize, lost his right arm on account of obstruction of blood-vessels by impurities, and was one of the first volunteers to the centre, where he stood out on account of his persevering efforts and model behaviour. He has now been made a superintendent and is an instructor at the school.

"I have no other knowledge than my own experience as a drug addict," he told us. "Revolutionary cadres have taught me devotion to the common cause and love of man, and this is the most important thing in our delicate work. Of course, I am acquainted with the world of the drug addicts. I know their slang and their way of life, and the kind of solidarity that binds these unfortunate people together. I can convince them more easily than any non-addict. I tell them that I too have been down in the mud; that I have known their anguish about the future; that now the moment has come to build new lives, and that the Revolution is there to help us..."

Several assistants chosen from among cured addicts, like Pham Thanh Long, help the newcomers, telling them about their own experience, giving them advice and moral support, conveying

their requests to the cadres responsible. The inmates themselves contribute more and more to the fight against drug addiction. The former addicts are most effective in tracing drug traffickers, and they play a vital role in operations to roll up the networks set up by smugglers and pushers. These operations, which often meet organized resistance, require much strength of mind and courage on the part of the former addicts.

"No detective," continued Pham Thanh Long "is smart enough to discover all the tricks of the illicit trade. Once we found a den that was so well camouflaged that it had not been detected during the many previous searches. We recognized some addicts entering a house, from which they reappeared only a long time later. One of us managed to get the password and was allowed into the joint. The secret lay in an ordinary-looking wardrobe. It had no back, and stood over a hole in the wall opening into a walled-up room in the next house. Clients could only get into the 'grotto' through the wardrobe, and there they had been able to relax and enjoy their drugs in perfect safety up till then."

But such activities, though spectacular, are not the main purpose of the school. Positive and lasting results among the patients are the object, and the inmates are encouraged not only to break with their vice, but also to develop their personalities, or more exactly, to build up their personalities by breaking the addiction. In the eyes of the responsible cadres

the real remedy and test of the cure lies in conscious involvement in productive work; and every inmate must pass this test if he is to become a new man.

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The neo-colonial version of the American way of life has determined life styles in the occupied zones of southern Viet Nam for twenty years, blotted out traditional values, and produced a generation of slave-consumers, prisoners of the dollar and of increasingly sophisticated desires, and in the final analysis destined as cannon-fodder for US imperialism. Drug addiction was only one of the evils brought by the Yankees, and could not be fought successfully without also dealing with other sequels of neo-colonialism, in the first place large-scale unemployment and prostitution. The revolutionary power plans to completely eliminate all these evils gradually, in a long-term effort which may last several years. Nearly all 500 drug addicts of the first three groups re-educated in the "School for the Restoration of Young People's Dignity" in Ho Chi Minh City are now on the right path, although a few have relapsed. Many are now in shock youth groups building water conservancy works at different places in the Mekong delta. The number of cured addicts is still small, but conclusive experience has been gained during the test period, and revolutionary authorities are contemplating an ink-blot offensive in several waves against drug addiction. Each of the

seventeen districts of Ho Chi Minh City will have its own school with workshops for professional training.

In many countries of the "free world" the fight against drug addiction has proved to be most difficult. Huge sums of money have been spent, but no radical solution has been found: a radical solution would require radical change in the social structure. The Vietnamese do not feel they are over-optimistic in their conviction that socialist construction will remedy the evils left by the former regime. And in this respect, the path of socialist development is certainly the best one.

VU CAN

Viet Nam Courier
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FAREWELL TO "LIFE'S DUST"

"Whereabouts do you come from, Hung?"

"My home's in An Giang. By the way, Nguyen Van Hung's not my real name. My real name's Tien Ba Hiep."

"When did you decide to change your name?"

"When I was ten I began wandering about the streets. I got it then, along with a false address to hide my father's past record."

"What did you do to make you fear arrest?"

"Well, I used to throw the dice in a gambling den. Sometimes I snatched things in a market place or at a bus station."

"When did you leave home for good?"

"When I was eleven, after gambling away all the cash I'd made selling some of my father's things. I was afraid of being beaten for this so I ran away to Saigon. There I got very hungry. I happened to meet a "life's dust" gang leader who took me in, fed me and taught me the way I have kept alive during these last five years."

"I think you are impressed by your gang leaders?"

"Sure. Small as I am, I already know how to get by. They do even better. If you don't believe me, come over here and I'll show you."

"Never mind," I said, shaking my head. "I know the stuff you're made of. I only wonder why you don't make a break for it: it would be easy to climb over these low walls and gates."

Rolling his eyes, the boy argued soberly, "I wouldn't break out to return to my 'life's dust' habits. For I've learned now and I understand the future of young people in the new society. I have a future to think of now. Besides I don't want to escape from here. Mother Hieu and uncle Loc care about me so much."

Mother Hieu is the school head, Vo Thi Hieu, and uncle Loc is deputy school head Tran Van Loc. The place young Hiep does not want to run away from is the Special School for Children-Number Two, situated in Binh Chanh district, three kilometres west of Ho Chi Minh City. Hiep landed here after five years as a "life's dust" kid with hundreds of thefts on his record and an ambitious night burglary in which he was caught redhanded. His case is similar to that of hundreds of other boys, but each of the nearly four hundred boys and girls in this school has a different story. A few are orphans, while the others still have fathers or mothers or other relatives somewhere. What they have in common is that they have at some time in the past been abandoned and neglected by their families and rejected by the old society.

They have since childhood been hirelings of the underworld, used to cheating and lying, speaking foul language, and behaving arrogantly priding

themselves on the term "life's dust" given them by the old society.

"Life's dust" children first began to appear under the French occupation, but they enormously increased in number under the US-puppet domination. Most were concentrated in the big cities, in the towns and around US bases. After liberation, since November 1975, the Ho Chi Minh City War Invalids and Social Affairs Service were helped by the security service to set about collecting the "life's dust" stratum, now renamed the "not yet good children", to give them a new start in Schools One, Two and Three. Two months after the start of the "round-up" of nearly 1,500 "not yet good children" aged from 6 to 15, over 200 returned to their homes. In the fourth quarter of 1976 alone, 663 ex-life's dust kids were soberly getting on with the job of growing sweet potatoes and rice on a State farm and learning handicrafts at School Number Three.

How disciplined they have become! From living in unrestricted disorder as troublemakers they now wake up at a whistle, brush their teeth, wash their faces, do their physical exercises, line up for class and to eat, enthusiastically pursue political or artistic activities, and take turns to criticize themselves and their friends in their daily triumphs and lapses.

As a matter of fact, were it not for their willing acceptance of discipline and the special feeling they have for the school, these budding criminals, experts in climbing walls and breaking locks, would very soon have returned to their former way of life. What then has kept them here?

For a start, let us read a bit of a wall-paper article written by young Phan Chau Tam: "...This is a school set up by our revolutionary aunts and uncles to get rid of social evils and turn children into good people useful to society. Since I came here I have been fed, educated, entertained and well cared for, and we have learnt a new morality we can use to do away with the bad habits the US-puppet rule taught us... I have grown to have a big appetite for study, I want to become a good student useful to society. Then I can return to my family."

The wish of this boy came true a month ago. Since the beginning of this year, an impressive number of children have gone back from this school to their homes. Like Tam. Many others have either been transferred to School Number Three to learn handicrafts or have moved on to Phu Van State farm. Some have been recommended for service in the Voluntary Youth Force.

These spectacular changes have amazed Sister Tinh Mat who has been working here since before liberation, when the institution was Dieu Quang Orphanage. Now she is in charge of the medical side. She beamed at the happy, clean children busy with their activities and physical exercises all round us.

"I was the one who washed them on the day they came. All of them were pale and dirty, many of them were itchy and stinking. Look at them now. They have enough food, clothes and medical care and can spend their time in study or in manual work. A far cry from the orphanage which only gave them free shelter for the night."

I called at the children's henhouse, a "reward" given to the children by mother Hieu and uncle Loc. The children told me that they had grown 264 kilograms of vegetables. They had begun to behave in a disciplined manner and behaved like brothers and sisters among themselves. This is certainly true. For all the children here in this school, whether yellow, white or black-skinned, have the same "mother Hieu"

She told me, "The biggest problem for our staff is the variety of our pupils. A realistic education must take into consideration the circumstances of the child's family, the reason why the child left home, the number and nature of their offences, their age and period of delinquency, even their personal tastes and feelings. Another difficulty is awakening enthusiasm in the children to learn new things, to live healthily and to practise criticism and self-criticism in order to begin to develop their spirit of collective mastery. The main thing is to make them trust and love you as you trust and love them."

I met other children, among them Hiep, who had just came back from his job as night watchman of the school to report to the school management. The children are proud of the responsibility entrusted to them; this strengthens their loyalty to the school.

As I left the school these children love so well, the safe and happy place made for them by our Party and our State, I was full of emotion and pride in the work of "cultivating people" that is going on there in response to our Uncle Ho's behest.

MINH NHAT

Viet Nam Courier

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THE NEW SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENTS IN HO CHI MINH CITY*

Thirty thousand students at fifteen higher education establishments in southern Viet Nam, eight of them in Ho Chi Minh City, began the new academic year on October 1, 1976. On September 25 and 26 tens of thousands of young men and women sat entrance examinations. In Ho Chi Minh City alone, 36,000 were seeking admission to eight colleges. Those who pass the examination and are physically fit will be notified by the end of November; and the 1976-1977 academic year will start for them officially in early December.

Eighteen months after liberation, higher education has undergone fundamental changes in the South in general, and in Saigon in particular. Higher education establishments, which were once tools of neo-colonialism for enslaving our people and centres of anti-communist culture and ideology, have become centres for training cadres for the new regime. This has been made possible by the reorganization of the education system, the improvement of teaching material and syllabuses, and particularly the change

* See *Metamorphosis of Saigon University, Viet Nam Courier* — No. 46, March 1976.

in the views and feelings of those who constitute the education system, first and foremost the teachers.

Nearly 1,200 intellectuals in Ho Chi Minh City attended a basic political course, organized by the Higher Education Institute from December 18, 1975 to April 20, 1976 at the schools for which it is directly responsible. For four months they studied the history of the Vietnamese nation, of the Vietnamese revolution, and the character of socialist education. At the closing of the course, a woman doctor of law said: "I firmly believe that we have been shown the right path to follow, even though this path is full of difficulties and hardships. It will lead all Vietnamese to a decent life."

What is it that has so radically changed the views and feelings of these intellectuals? They say it is the first time they have had an "opportunity to make a full review of the history of Viet Nam written in our mother tongue... presented in a new light, from a new angle, quite different from what we have learnt before".

They have recognized the historical truth that "there is no other way to save the country and liberate the people but by proletarian revolution" (Ho Chi Minh). And now that the nation has been completely liberated it has become apparent to them that "to love one's country is also to love socialism", because socialism is a historical necessity, and the shortest and best way to build up a strong and prosperous Viet Nam and a just society, as all patriotic Vietnamese have been yearning for.

To persuade intellectuals in Ho Chi Minh City of the validity of this historical truth, they not only take part in discussions during the political course, but also visit factories and new economic areas, and take part in days of socialist labour organized by the Patriotic Intellectuals' Association and the Saigon Higher Education Institute.

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Their new views and feelings have further enhanced the sense of responsibility Saigon intellectuals have towards the building of socialist higher education. The first thing they have to do is to reexamine the former higher education system in its true light. Reports presented at establishments directly responsible to the Higher Education Institute included severe criticism of neo-colonialist higher education by those who served in its ranks.

The latter have unanimously come to the conclusion that the aim of higher education in southern Viet Nam was formerly in keeping with the general aim of colonialism, old and new. The scheme was to use culture and education as a more effective, more lasting means of enslaving the Vietnamese people. The effect of information and propaganda would be reinforced, and a number of men with some professional abilities and great ambition, whose interests were closely linked with those of imperialism, would emerge from the system.

The Americans and the French used different methods, and worked on different levels to achieve these ends. The French undertook direct training of a limited number of mandarins, interpreters, clerks, doctors, chemists and engineers to serve as intermediaries between the colonialists' direct administrative apparatus and the native population. These intermediaries served colonial exploitation in its first days. The Americans trained officials for their puppet regime, not for a colonial administration. The expanding puppet military and administrative apparatus and the nascent capitalist economy under this regime necessitated a considerable expansion of the education system, including higher education. Whereas French history had been taught in a manner that induced the Vietnamese to regard the ancient Gauls as their own ancestors, nothing of the like was required by the Americans. There were no American schools for Vietnamese children like the Jean Jacques Rousseau and Marie Curie schools founded by the French in Saigon, and English has not been imposed as the vehicle language in higher education establishments. It was not because the Americans were not capable of doing these things. They wanted to effect "Americanization", but in a more discreet manner, with both immediate and far-reaching results.

US influence on education, including higher education, was exerted in many ways: through financial aid (12,615,000 dollars in 1968); technical aid—assistance by Michigan State University in building up the National Administration Institute for the training

of district and province chiefs, high-ranking officials in the administration, diplomatic service, intelligence service and police service; assistance in improving the training of primary school teachers, by the University of Southern Illinois, and of secondary school teachers, by Ohio University assistance from the University of Missouri Rolla to the School of Engineering, of the University of Florida to the School of Agriculture, Forestry and Animal Husbandry. The University of Washington gave its assistance in the question of controlling student affairs; the University of Southern Illinois helped in college administration and granted scholarships to the United States (for over 10,000 students, half of whom have returned to Viet Nam); it also organized study tours and improvement courses in the United State for intellectuals and college teachers.

The US also set about Americanizing the leadership of higher education establishments particularly in technical and medical schools; they set up a Viet Nam-United States Association, and through evangelist missions, through a number of schools and publishing houses, propagated their language and the American way of life and culture; they also sponsored student "extracurricular activities".

Many reports presented during the political course stressed that strong US influence had determined the character of former higher education in southern Viet Nam. In the first place, it was an education without national character. Because the university was supposed to "harmonize Eastern with Western

culture" (Inauguration speech at Saigon University in October, 1955 by Diem's Education Minister), a job in higher education in southern Viet Nam provided an easy solution to many former French-trained intellectuals, as they did not have to sever their close and longstanding ties with the culture and education introduced by old colonialism. On the other hand, the door was wide open to American culture, especially American science and technology, which soon pervaded higher education, spiritual life and society in southern Viet Nam, greatly enhancing US prestige there. But US influence which prevailed in the military, political and economic fields for twenty years was unable to drive out French influence in the field of higher education. And in this situation, higher education of a mixed kind took shape, slavishly copied from French and US models, without national character, and divorced from national culture. One college professor wrote: "In South Viet Nam neither higher education nor general education had any Asian character. Nor did it have a Vietnamese character. It was out of place and without purpose, being built on vestiges of colonialism and fettered to the past. General education and higher education in those first decades (of the Saigon regime) were a continuation of colonial education, taking up in them its outlook, aims, organization and methods." (*Van Hanh Review*, October-November, 1974).

The teachers who attended the political course have come to the clear realization that with its slavish, non-Vietnamese character, higher education

was exactly what the Americans and their puppets in Saigon needed as an anti-Communist stronghold and a tool of neo-colonialism.

An anti-communist stronghold: under the guise of vague notions of "nationalism", and "social justice", college authorities propagated both ideologies with very concrete anti-Marxist and anti-Communist objectives, and notorious anti-national themes like "Two Viet Nams", "Aggression by North Viet Nam against South Viet Nam", etc. Trotskyite Ho Huu Tuong among others was already advocating in 1965 that each student in the "anti-Communist stronghold" should be turned into an anti-communist combatant on the cultural front". (Talk at Phu Xuan, *La Boi* Publishing House, 1965, p. 35).

Education was a tool of neo-colonialism: the Saigon puppet regime had concrete aims in launching the slogans "politics out of the classroom" and "college autonomy". On the one hand, it wanted to keep the influence of the revolution out of the schools, and on the other hand, it was trying to conceal its own efforts to introduce a pro-American, anti-Communist line into colleges. Saigon intellectuals have cited many examples. Under the Diem regime college professors had to attend a course on strategic hamlets at Lo O. The Plan for Developing Culture, Education and Youth Activities published by the Saigon administration in 1974 (after the signing of the Paris Agreement) said that "Education and civic action must both be part of the political struggle against Communism."

For two decades, the Saigon educational system served the US-puppet regime and its war machine efficiently. Under the Diem regime, school pupils had to "salute the president" every morning, and study the biography of the president. Young men were gradually prepared to become soldiers. When young they learnt to admire American-type he-men, to play cowboys and Indians, shooting Red Indians like monkeys, and they were encouraged to play at being US soldiers shooting German troops, and "nationalist" troops shooting Communists. As they grew up, they would learn that might is right, and would be taught jungle law as part of the "nationalist and anti-Communist ideology". Military training grounds would complete the transformation of youths into shooting robots.

The intellectuals who attended the political course have come to a correct conclusion: any education system reflects the political regime that controls it. A neo-colonialist regime under a nationalist label necessarily creates neo-colonialist education which pretends to be "nationalist, humanist and emancipating."

The non-Vietnamese and slavish higher education in Saigon was also reflected in traits peculiar to the puppet regime: Article 10, Chapter II of the Constitution of the "Second Republic" stipulated that "compulsory education was to be enforced." During a debate at the Saigon Senate (December 2, 1971) the education minister spoke of "an education system for the people and by the people," "to give all citizens an equal opportunity to receive education." In

reality, education was reserved for a privileged minority, and that was most clearly seen in the domain of higher education. Only half the children ever went to school. According to statistics given by the Saigon Ministry of Education, for ten school years, from 1956 to 1960 and from 1964 to 1970) barely one-half of all primary school children completed Class Three. Pupils dropped out either for economic reasons or because of elimination through examination. In 1964, only 11.6 per cent of school children received primary education certificates, and only 11 per cent received secondary education diplomas. No wonder less than 10 per cent of college students were children of workers or peasants. Average total expenditure by the Saigon regime per primary school pupil was 15,000 piastres, per secondary school pupil, 57,000 piastres, per college student, 222,000 piastres and per student sent abroad, 1,300,000 piastres.

Studies, either in local public schools or in foreign countries, were privileges reserved for children of the ruling class. Thus both general education and college education had a marked class character.

College education was reserved for the privileged few, and was divorced from realities in the country, ignoring production and construction needs. Chapter X (on culture and education) of the four-year national economy development plan (1972-1975), drawn up by the General Planning Agency, says that for 1974-1975 there would be 118,500 college students, 80 per cent of this number made up of literature and law students; only 1,200 students would learn

technical subjects, which play a key role in economic development, and only 1,270 would study agriculture, in an essentially agricultural country! Those who wanted to study either law or literature had only to register at the Faculty of Law or Faculty of Letters to be admitted, and these became ideal refuges for draft dodgers. No wonder the number of literature and law students increased tremendously during the '70s. All this reflects a severe lack of balance between the different branches of college studies, and shows that the aim of studies was to get diplomas and was in no way related to production and the labouring people. Commenting on the four-year plan, one college professor wrote: "There was no coordination whatsoever between the various branches of education and the needs of the national economy. The four-year plan was only a list of separate programmes worked out by different ministries, each with its particular needs."

Such a higher education system has a profound effect on the students, poisoning them with an anti-national doctrine as well as anti-Communist ideology. The young people were not taught to value productive labour, they preferred service to production branches, office routine to work in factories or on the fields. Living in a society based on individualist values and seeking individual enjoyment, on leaving college they were happy to become servile tools of the puppet regime and of neo-colonialism. They readily submitted to a regime which gave them positions, well-paid jobs and foreign travel. Finally they accepted the US-puppet regime as "their" regime,

and a number of them directly served the criminal US aggression against their country. Many have not hesitated to leave the fatherland on the heels of the defeated Yankees, who tried to deprive the country of its technicians and intellectuals in this way.

But all that belongs to the past. Saigon intellectuals now have an opportunity to serve a new system of higher education in which science is no longer separated from politics, school from society, intellectual work from production and manual labour, modern technology from traditional methods.

To meet a growing demand for secondary school teachers in southern Viet Nam, the Teachers' Training College has increased the number of its students from 913 to 3,400, or 3.7 times. The existing teaching body of 80 has been reinforced by 10 new lecturers appointed by the Higher Education Institute in Ho Chi Minh City and a dozen guest lecturers from the North. The Teachers' Training College is striving to become the main teacher-training centre in southern Viet Nam.

At the Agricultural College, the number of students has been increased to 2,100 (almost twice as many as before). It comprises six branches: crop-growing, marine products, animal husbandry, forestry, engineering and hydraulics. A curriculum and time-table for training agricultural engineers in southern Viet Nam have been worked out. An experimental farm of 180 hectares has been set up to complement the students' theoretical studies with practice. In November 1976, 115 students will graduate from the college.

The former Faculty of Law has been transformed into the College of Economics with nine branches: national economic planning, industrial economy, agricultural economy, commercial economy, foreign trade, pricing, accounting, statistics and banking, comprising 15 different areas of specialization and over 80 subjects. Besides training 5,000 regular students, the college also organizes courses for economic management cadres doing parttime studies.

College professors and students are actively taking part in building a new life in southern Viet Nam. A few months ago, the Engineering Department of the Phu Tho College (now the Polytechnic) started studies in about ten subjects with a view to meeting the immediate needs of production, such as the steel alloy used in making turbine shafts for the Thu Duc and Da Nhim power-stations, making a rubber shaft for paddy-husking machines designing low-jet pumps which can supply twice as much water with the same quantity of fuel as a Japanese pump, making 200 shuttles for the Satylen textile mill to maintain its production norm. The University of Saigon, with the assistance of the General Department of Chemical Products and the General Department of Foodstuffs, has been studying extraction of oil from the seeds of rubber trees for making paint and edible oil. It has also prepared a bran insecticide which can be extracted from the cores of maize ears and pressed sugar cane.

Early in October, a number of professors and 700 students of the Faculty of Letters went to Song Be new economic area to build houses for old people

and invalids ; others went with 5,000 students of the Faculty of Science to Le Minh Xuan new economic area, or with 1,000 students of the Polytechnic, to Pham Ngoc Coi new economic area, to clear and reclaim land and plant trees. In both individual and collective efforts to overcome difficulties in agricultural production during the transitional period, bringing new life to enormous formerly desolate areas, we can clearly see the organic relationship between the revolution and science, between the revolution and intellectuals and young people.

HOANG NHAN
and PHONG HIEN

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SOUTH VIETNAMESE LITERATURE AFTER LIBERATION

To each revolutionary writer in the South, the moment of liberation — “the meeting between the old and the new” — came in a different way. “I drift about in the streets of Saigon”, recalled Giang Nam, Deputy Secretary General of *Liberation Writers and Artists Association*. “I mix with the crowds and see beaming, cheerful faces, faces of my comrades, my friends, my fellow-countrymen. And I wonder if all this is true...” (*Liberation Literature* No. 50, May 31, 1975). This was also the case of Vien Phuong, poet and President of the same association. Twenty years ago he was arrested while distributing revolutionary leaflets in the streets of Saigon. “Hands manacled. lips bleeding, body beaten to a pulp.” Out of prison he took to the jungle, and returned to Saigon at Tet 1968 in the ranks of the Liberation Army. “It seems as though I were dreaming. The sky is very clear, very blue, and my heart swells with joy”. (*Liberation Literature* No. 51, June 7, 1975). Le Van Thao travelled with the advancing columns of the Liberation Army, taking notes as he went past the tamarind-trees and bridges he had known all his life. Phan Tu, author of *Man and I*, was only a little less lucky. It was not until 17:30 on April 30, 1975 that

he learned the news of the liberation of the city, as he sat in a Mazda 616 south-bound from Da Nang. Vu Hanh, who had for many years opposed the negative influence of reactionary culture right in Saigon, had just come out of prison. The morning of April 30 saw him building a bomb-shelter. "I let go of the spade," he recalled, the moment he heard Gen. Duong Van Minh's surrender statement on the radio. "I broke into a great sweat, as though my whole self were crying out for sheer joy" (*Liberation Literature*, No. 50, May 31, 1975).

Some of these men met in Saigon three days later, at the Saigon-Gia Dinh headquarters of the *Liberation Writers and Artists Association*. They were also present at the first public appearance of the Saigon Military Management Commission on May 7, and at the Victory rally on May 15. They talked with progressive writers in Saigon, Hue and Da Nang, and introduced revolutionary literature to the new public. The 49th issue of *Liberation Literature* was printed in Saigon, on May 28, while *Liberation Publishing House* worked flat out to bring out a number of revolutionary works and reprint many others. Less than two months later, on June 17-18, a full conference was called in Saigon by LWAA, with the participation of 500 delegates from all parts of the South. There were Ly Van Sam, Giang Nam, Anh Duc, Vien Phuong and Nguyen Trung Thanh, who were among the first to join the resistance movement and who were foundation members of LWAA on July 20, 1961. Almost half of the participants were "city people" — people like Vu Hanh,

Son Nam, Ly Chanh Trung, who had been more or less active in the struggle against the US-Thieu clique on the literary front. They bowed to the memory of those colleagues who had fallen in action — Nguyen Thi, Le Anh Xuan, Le Vinh Hoa, Duong Tu Giang, Duong Thi Minh Huong — and others who had perished in prison. They discussed a report on "literature in the new period", made by Anh Duc, author of *Letters from Ca Mau* (1965), *Hon Dat* (1967), and *The Dream of the Old Man in the Garden of Birds* (1969).

The first point for discussion on the conference's agenda was how best to do away with the lingering effects of psywar literature used by the US puppet clique and reactionary factions for promoting anti-communist feeling, along with the sex and mysticism rubbish which influences the people against the nation's traditions and man's dignity.

To tell the truth, this kind of literature had already been on the decline in the last months of the Thieu regime, together with a worsening situation in education and a general moral breakdown. Of the titles published in Saigon in 1973, only 20 per cent were Vietnamese originals, the rest — over 100 titles — were translated works. In the following year, 80 per cent of the authors had to stop writing, and the best thing a writer could hope for was to see his book printed in 1,000 copies, instead of the customary 3,000. The same was true of the few remaining literary magazines, whose usual circulation of 6,000 had

dropped to a mere 3,000. To explain why special issues were released from time to time, dedicated to this or that author, *Bach Khoa* (Encyclopaedia) (special issue, At Mao Tet, Jan. 24, 1975) writes, "...otherwise, what with the fast changing military politico-economic situation, what with the constant talk about life, death, big wigs, battles and rackets, nobody cares about what you may have to say about books and authors, about prose and poetry."

So, even before the end of the Saigon regime, the official literature had ceased to play any kind of role. Its decline was accounted for by its reduced social and moral basis, and by the marked lack of enthusiasm in its supporters, who became discouraged by the public's indifference and by the harsh censorship clamped down by Thieu himself now that he was living on borrowed time.

Now, although the puppet regime literature has collapsed together with its purveyors and the society in which it bred, its publications can still be found in book-stores or on news stands. Having been fed to the public for decades it still heavily influences the thoughts and taste -- especially literary taste -- of a number of people. Physically the colonialists have gone, but they remain ideologically in these reactionary literary products, and are still entrenched in the minds of those who are morally stuck, weighed down by prejudices and misunderstandings and people who have not been able to adapt themselves to the new way of life. The old literature still appeals to such people; it anchors them in the old parasitic mode of living still alive

here and there in dark alleys, on pavements, in cafés, "busily, frantically, like a challenge, a temptation, a long sigh from the US imperialists after they have gone from the South" (*Tin Sang*, Morning News, special issue, Binh Thin Tet, 1976).

In September 1975, the Ministry of Information and Culture of the DRVN put a ban on 56 of the roughly 1,000 authors, and on over 200 of the thousands of books in circulation at that time. On March 25, 1976, it ordered that all reactionary publications be registered and handed in beginning on April 3. This was the first offensive on reactionary literature. More positively, this started a campaign to drive home to the public the superiority of revolutionary literature. "It is agreed by everybody that revolutionary literature is good, healthy, that it has a national, popular character, that it upholds morality, justice and man's dignity, and is the intellectual food of this generation and generations to come" (*Liberation Literature*, No. 81, Jan. 8, 1976). Said Tran Quang in the same publication No. 85, Feb. 4, 1976: "There are not enough revolutionary books for the public." Indeed, revolutionary literature has won, thanks to its fine character. Outlawed in the old days, it is now playing a leading role in building the new society and in the formation of the new man in southern Viet Nam.

As far as literature is concerned, it is true that in the South today "to destroy" is only its secondary and temporary task. There is a more important,

more essential and long-term objective: "to help build" an independent, re-unified, socialist Viet Nam.

What now? This question was carefully discussed by the 500 writers attending the first literary conference.

It was agreed that they should continue to write about the recent war against US aggression. Indeed, US imperialism has not given up its scheme of sabotage, although it has had to quit; and although the puppet regime has collapsed, reactionary elements have not yet been swept out of the area. The neo-colonialist rule has been overthrown, but cities and villages are still full of its vestiges. The war has ended, but millions of bomb craters have not yet been filled, millions of destroyed homes have not yet been rebuilt, millions of hectares of waste land have not yet been cleared, millions of defoliated trees have not yet been restored, and millions of minds have not yet shaken loose from the past. People are still being killed every day by unexploded bombs and mines in peaceful rice-fields. Therefore, to promote revolutionary heroism, while exposing the sinister intention of enemies in all forms, is to help people distinguish friends from foes and, as the past gradually disappears into oblivion, to send a fresh breeze of national feeling and of our times into the minds of those people who can not yet see things clearly, or who have a morbid nostalgia for the past.

The second task unanimously agreed upon is to work for the re-unification of the country in peace, independence, freedom, for the healing of all the wounds of war throughout the land, and for the

advance of the whole of Viet Nam to socialism. Said Anh Duc, "It has already begun — the conflict between individual interests and those of the collective, between the old and the new, between individualism and collectivism" (*Liberation Literature*, No. 83, Binh Thin Tet, Jan, 1976). So, in order to produce works that are truly revolutionary and ethical, authors will have to live more closely to real life, exploring every aspect of it, firmly supporting the upward trend, full of both general promise and personal tragedy.

Literature's transition to the new stage means, in the last analysis a change in a writer's moral attitude. Anh Duc, back from the resistance zone, thanks the revolution for giving him "the biggest joy" and teaching him "to trust and love with all his heart". He agrees that the change is the results of a conflict between the old and the new taking place in himself. Says Vu Hanh, a staunch champion of patriotic literature in occupied Saigon, "Conditions were never so good as they are now for writers to serve the country and the people. We used to write for a minority, or for money. Now we write for justice and for the legitimate rights of the entire nation" (*Liberation Literature*, No. 50, May 31, 1975). For their pens to serve justice and the nation better, Vu Hanh and his friends will have to make greater efforts to improve their outlooks and methods.

There are other people, like Trinh Cong Son, who lived in the city all the time, who were deeply involved in the old-regime literature and were complete strangers to the revolutionary literature. What will

they do to get rid of the past and see that new things are being born from the ruins of the old regime? "I don't want to be a pitiful loner lost among the gorgeous fields of freedom, peace and independence... I'm living two liberations: the cleansing of the South from the last stains left by the US aggressors, and the lifting of the gloom and weariness that have had a hold on my mind for many anxious years... For myself, I want a complete metamorphosis" (*Liberation Literature*, No. 76, Nov. 29, 1975).

Another problem for all writers, whatever their backgrounds may be, is to improve their skill to serve the new public, which has to a large extent got rid of the bad taste acquired under neo-colonialist society and which now demands works of a higher order, both in content and form. "A mature literature for a mature public" is the watch-word for literary people in Saigon nowadays. This, many have admitted, is the real test.

The necessity of organizing all forces old and new, has emerged from all this, so that literature may play an effective role at the present stage. For this purpose, a conference was held in Saigon on Oct. 14-15, 1975, exclusively for the 150 writers in the city, and on this occasion 72 of them were granted membership of *Liberation Writers and Artists Association*. Similar activities took place soon afterwards in other places, like Hue and Da Nang. The commemoration service held for Tran Huu Trang, a veteran actor who died on Oct. 20, 1966, was the occasion when one could see how the literary force in the South had grown in the past decade.

Many people have worked with great zeal. Dozens of titles have been published or republished totaling more than one million books, and over 40 issues of *Liberation Literature* have come off the press. Writers back from the maquis are writing about the war and their greatest war experiences. Lu Giang has successfully portrayed "the south Vietnamese Mother" — the perfect symbol of the south Vietnamese revolution:

"You have given birth to men of humanity;

"You have raised us with the songs of Rach Gam,
Rach Goc,

"With wild plants on victorious Chu Pong Mountain,
"With lullabies by A Dam Stream."

(*Liberation Literature*, No. 68 Oct. 4, 1975)

Vien Phuong, for his part, sings the praise of the girl guerrillas in the suburbs:

"Saigon abounds in flowers

"None, however, can vie with their sisters seeing
the day through hardships

"Flowers which bloom in bitter trials

"So that nights may be blue and cities may
have peace."
(op.cit)

Khuynh Diep writes about his "Return to Saigon's Western Suburb" where a new economic zone has been set up, named after Le Minh Xuan, a battalion commander who died during a violent battle there. Le Diep called at Son My (or My Lai — Ed.) the Vietnamese Guernica, Oradour or Lidice — where 504 villagers were massacred by GIs. He recalls

how people were hoodwinked, how many of them sang the praises of the United States in exchange for dollars, obstinately refusing to see the crimes perpetrated on their land and against their fellow-countrymen.

Others have gone to where personal conflicts are taking place to assist the birth of the new way of life. In "Complex", Trieu Bon dissects the conflicting feelings of Thai, the soldier who has to fight hard against his complex reactions to clear his conscience and to build the future (*Liberation Literature*, No. 77, Dec. 6 1975). Another short story, by Le Van Thao, is about Lanh, an ordinary woman in an ordinary Saigon back street, who succeeds in forgiving her husband for the wrongs he has done to his country and to herself (*Liberation Literature*, No. 69, Oct. 11, 1975). Le Thu, in *The Journey of a Friend*, writes about the feelings of Boi Tu and other young girls who join a volunteers' brigade to rebuild the country. One story by Nguyen Xuan Phan tells of the workers in the marble quarries on Mount Ngu Hanh, and of the visits paid to them by Premier Pham Van Dong and National Assembly Chairman Truong Chinh following their physical and professional liberation (*Liberation Literature*, No. 92, April 3, 1976).

This is only a beginning; but it is a beginning of great promise.

PHONG HIEN

Viet Nam Courier
No. 49 — June 1976

ENTER SPRING

It is spring. Swallows fly past the window dipping the people's spring, for the spring in every actor's life. Spring has also made its entrance on Saigon stages. Actors and actresses of the old regime have become people's players; and their stage tears or smiles now bring sorrow or joy to the faces of the broad masses.

The peach and apricot trees are in full bloom for the people's spring, for the spring in every actor's life.

An actress who is well-known from the old days for her interpretations of many renovated theatre (*cai luong*) roles confides to me, "With the Americans and the puppets, beauty and talent caused an actress nothing but problems, as they only provoked the lust of the big shots. When the curtain fell, we shuddered at the sight of the bouquets brought by plane from Da Lat with visiting cards inviting us to rendezvous. An invitation from of a big shot was really a summons to appear, which it would have been suicidal to ignore."

One *cai luong* actress felt obliged to tell her sweetheart, "If you love me, never come to the theatre again. I don't want you to be hurt by what you see there. You'll despise me for it and want to smash things up when you see those people with their feet

on the seats, eating, shouting, jeering, making fun of my embarrassment and humiliation."

Only those who knew what Saigon stage life was like formerly can fully realize what joy the actors feel at this turning-point in their lives. The theatres now resound with cheerful songs, echoing those of the swallows in the sky. And like swallows rejoining their flock, actors now hold their heads up and sing happily.*

*
* *

Not quite two years have passed since liberation, yet the Saigon stage has undergone a complete transformation. The spring of the fatherland really has worked miracles.

You can sense spring in the new plays: it is in the playwright's hearts.

Reactionary, retrogressive, anti-national and depraved works, and old operas absolutely alien to national culture and full of absurdities, have given way to new plays full of vigour and in which the revolutionary sap runs fast.

The play "People of the Suburbs" performed by the Saigon I *cai luong* group has been a great hit. It exalts the militant patriotism of peasants in 18 hamlets who specialize in growing Hoc Mon and Ba

* Traditional Vietnamese theatre genres are all sung theatre.

Diem betel. "Creating a New Life" performed by the Saigon II *cai luong* group portrays US crimes and shows involved people the only way to salvation: taking part in the struggle against the aggressors and creating a new life. This group is also rehearsing "The Hao Hoa Hotel", about the arduous underground resistance in Saigon. The Saigon III *cai luong* group, after giving brilliant performances of "A Surgical Operation", which has a modern social theme, is rehearsing "Back to Da Son", a modern version of the old legend of My Chau and Trong Thuy, due to be staged during Tet. This spring, the Thanh Minh group will present "Light and Shadow" in which the shadows cast on people's lives recede and prospects in the new life become brighter and brighter. "The Tyrant" performed by the Ho Chi Minh City Liberation Drama Ensemble is about the courageous struggle of Saigon students against the US-Thieu regime; and "The Durian in Blossom" played by the same group shows that only determined struggle against the enemy, under the leadership of the Party, can bring happiness.

Most subjects for historical plays were formerly drawn from foreign history. Now our theatres perform plays about national heroes from our own history: Nguyen Hue is presented by the Minh To group, Dinh Bo Linh by the Huong Mua Thu group, Trung Trac and Trung Nhi by the Thanh Minh group. Truong Dinh by the Saigon I group, Hoang Hoa Tham by the Huynh Long group, Thach Sanh by the Thai Binh group.

Besides groups which specialize in *cai luong* and traditional opera, there are modern drama groups, like the Kim Cuong group. They have put on "The Key" a strong attack against the comprador bourgeoisie's amassing of riches at the expense of the people.

At Saigon theatres there is no more jostling, shouting and jeering. With the return of spring, the evil influence left by the old society is being swept away. People no longer go to the theatre merely "to buy pleasure", and there are no more moneyed men who can do anything they like there. In the theatres, a minimum of dignity and civility is required and there is mutual respect between those on the stage and those in the audience. From now on, those who really enjoy dramatic art form a new public with a new spirit, a new soul.

I was greatly moved at one performance I attended, given by a drama group for volunteer youth and vanguard workers in the city who had distinguished themselves on the production front. When the curtain fell, all the spectators stood up applauding loudly and burst into songs praising labour and the revolution.

I hope, and believe, that the day will come in the invigorating spring of the nation, when every member of the audience as he steps into a theatre of the socialist city will feel as if he has come to a festival.

If this is to become a reality, the theatre must respond to the wishes and demands of the masses, and tackle and solve actual problems of daily life. This means that an actor must be a fighter on the cultural and ideological front. Collaboration between

playwrights and the new team of stage managers has proved to be most beneficial to the theatre, bringing to it dignity, homogeneity and a socialist character.

We rejoice at the success with which actors have freed themselves from the shackles of the old regime and joined the ranks of revolutionary actors of the Cuu Long Giang group, the Ho Chi Minh City Liberation Drama Ensemble, all of whom have gone through the trials of armed struggle. The Saigon actors who have broken with the past are now making great strides, with spring vigour, full of enthusiasm and creativeness.

We are also proud of the surprising progress made by amateur players who come from among the masses. We have met many of these new actors, and they are open-hearted, enthusiastic young workers, peasants and students who have a passion for acting and love plays with revolutionary content.

Modern, spoken drama is becoming increasingly popular. It was not much appreciated by Saigon audiences in former days, but is now greatly liked by the masses, particularly the young people.

This popular dramatic art will certainly produce new actors of talent and character

In this spring of the Year of the Snake, we rejoice at new developments in the theatrical world. But we also feel some anxiety; after all, we are still in

the initial stages, and our actors will have to face more trials. Any metamorphosis is painful, and breaking with the bad sides of one's character and affirming and developing better attributes is a real revolution.

We now have a new public, not a very large one, but a demanding one, which expects a new ideal, a new aesthetic to emerge in and from the theatre. Young Kim Hoang told a correspondent of "The Stage": "I never used to go to the theatre because it wasn't our theatre, it didn't speak our language. After liberation, we had hot discussions in our Faculty of Science about some plays we saw which led to our buying books on the same topics, and which we read avidly. I understood then that our theatre had changed. It has become more lively and dynamic. And now I love going to see plays."

The young people who think like Kim Hoang will follow, and keep a check on developments on the stage. But they are still very few in comparison with the number of indifferent spectators who spend their money every evening just passing the time. The masses' view of the theatre is evolving, but its progress depends on developments on the stage. First of all, the actors who have joined our ranks must be fully integrated into the forces of the Revolution, and progressively subjected to socialist transformation. But the essential thing is that the actor himself finds the right path to follow, and replaces his old views with revolutionary ones which will completely transform him. In this way, the actor will become better both as a professional and as the man he is,

and both his art and his ideology will be reinvigorated. Actors must devote much time to revolutionary practice; by playing roles of revolutionary militants, they can also gradually transform themselves.

The day will come when the spotlights will focus on a new Saigon stage, with new men and women resplendent in their light.

LUU TRONG LU

Viet Nam Courier

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HOI AN THEN AND NOW

The Oldest Town in the South

Hoi An lies on the left bank of the Thu Bon, less than five kilometres from the mouth of the Dai¹, in its broad, flat estuary. 30 miles from the coast lies Cham Island, which acts as a wind-screen for the merchant craft as they sail in to their destination. Just south of the town is Tra Nhieu lagoon. It opens near Hoi An quay, providing good anchorage for foreign ships. Thus it is not surprising that Hoi An was already an important trade centre as early as the 16th century, while Nam Bo and Saigon were still deserted, and Da Nang was still only a fishing lagoon.

That the international port of Hoi An was prosperous was due in the first place to its favourable geographical position. More important is that Quang Nam province, its hinterland, was very rich in agricultural, forest, mineral and marine products, not to mention the fact that the 200-kilometre long Thu Bon river and its tributaries run through areas with such famed specialities as Tra Mi and Tien Phuoc

¹. Situated nearly 30km south of Da Nang, it was considered by the US-puppets as the chief town of Quang Nam province.

cinnamon and pepper, Nong Son coal, Bong Mieu gold, Trung Phuoc areca-nuts, and Go Noi and Bao An silk and satin, all of which found their way to Pho Hoi. Moreover, goods produced in nearby Thang Hoa, Dien Ban, Quang Ngai, Qui Nhon, Binh Khuong and Nha Trang were brought by road and river to Hoi An and sold to the countless merchants who came here to trade.

While the Trinh lords in the North strove to ban all contact with foreigners, the Nguyen in the South advocated encouragement to them to do business, by giving them many privileges and reducing export duties. This explains the rapid prospering of Hoi An. In addition to the foreign traders who came and went, others settled for good. Rows of Chinese shops sprang up along the Hoi An river, followed by numerous restaurants.

Most of the merchants attending the annual Hoi An fair were Japanese and Chinese. The former brought with them 40-50 thousand ounces of silver each and the latter many of their country's special products, like muslin, five-colour brocade, various kinds of cloth, Eastern medicines, paper, gold, silver, perfume, gold thread, silver thread, dyes, glass, crystal, writing brushes, ink, clothes, foot-wear, lanterns, brassware, tin-ware and earthenware. European merchants brought earthenware and porcelain, paper, tea, silver ingots, sulphur, brimstone, lead, zinc... They found any number of valuable goods at the fair: swallow's nests, shark fins, dried shrimps,

seaweed, edible snails, tortoise shell, pearls, rhinoceros horns, elephant tusks, sandal-wood, musk, cinnamon, pepper, sappanwood, cardamom, nutmeg, rice, castor sugar, candy sugar...

The fair was in business for 5-6 months each year. Hoi An prospered, and was bustling and animated as nowhere else in Viet Nam. This prosperity triggered the development of such crafts as carpentry, masonry, brick and tile making, hat-making and mat-weaving, pride of Hoi An people for centuries.

Under US-Puppet Rule

With the passage of time, the alluvium brought down the Thu Bon river silted up the mouth of the Dai. Nearby Da Nang developed into one of the best military and commercial harbours in the South. Meanwhile, Hoi An became a "cul-de-sac", and trade activity there gradually declined. Many Chinese merchants, attached as they were to the spot where they had made their fortunes, had to leave Pho Hoi for Saigon-Cholon to expand their businesses.

Ancient Hoi An was still bordered on three sides by the Thu Bon river; her small picturesque streets were still lined by regular arjun parasols; the single storey houses, built in the old Chinese style with low, curving roofs, and walls jutting out at odd angles, were still there, quiet and cosy; there were

still "the pagodas from Cau to Am Bon"² but how empty and sad Hoi An was!

During the US neo-colonialist period which lasted over twenty years, although Hoi An was the chief town of Quang Nam province, with 120,400 inhabitants the American aggressors only had a CIA office there with a plainclothes force. But the extremely brutal and savage Blue Dragon Brigade of South Korean mercenaries was stationed here for many years to take part in the repression of the people. For its part, the puppet administration set up a coercive apparatus in the town. It included all kinds of puppet functionaries, reactionary parties and the puppet army, amounting to about 15,000 men.

Hoi An changed completely, from an elegant, poetic spot into a garrison town. There were soldiers everywhere, behaving coarsely to girls in the streets, bullying people in the market, raiding pagodas when drunk, arresting people willy-nilly and plundering their property day and night. They forced peasants around the town to leave their villages and settle just outside the town proper as a human shield for the puppet Vietnamese and Koreans. Fishing ground to a halt. Farming was neglected. Handicrafts dwindled away. The renown which the town had earned from its conical hats, mat-weaving, masonry, Kim Bong carpentry, and Thanh Ha bricks and tiles was now something only the old folks could remember.

² This refers to the limits of Hoi An proper — Cau (or Lai Vien Kieu) pagoda to the north and Am Bon pagoda to the south. These were two of the most beautiful pagodas of Hoi An.

Now Hoi An had to import 3,000 tons of rice a year. Most of the people not engaged in production became traders, big and small, and took various odd jobs... Life became dependent on US aid and dollars.

Hoi An's brilliant past gradually sank into oblivion.

A New Lease of Life

In Spring 1975, every town in Viet Nam embarked on a new period in their development. Hoi An, which is now part of Quang Nam — Da Nang province, was no exception.

Immediately after liberation, nearly half the townsfolk moved back to their native villages or to new economic zones to engage in production. More than sixty thousand remained in the town, thirty-five thousand of whom lived on trade and non-productive activities. The revolutionary power was thus confronted with the urgent task of working out how Hoi An should develop in order to create jobs for everybody and get the regional economy out of its impasse.

Together with the transformation and development of agriculture and fisheries in six suburban villages, the resolution of the Hoi An Party Committee stressed that small industry and handicrafts had to be gradually resurrected, first of all in the three inner districts of the town, where a small power station and an ice-works were the only sizeable installations, and they had catered for the puppet army and administration.

The orientation was agreed on, but it was no easy matter to materialize it as there was no production base, no capital, no material means, no specialized workers, and not even any organizational experience. However, the revolutionary cadres were determined and the masses were absolutely confident in the Party's line, and a new, intensive and hard struggle started. The population contributed what capital they had; people pooled their weaving looms when they moved back to their villages: workers were given accelerated training courses by teachers invited to Hoi An from Saigon or the northern provinces; and above all special attention and concrete guidance were given by the regional Party Committee and administration. Hoi An's small industry and handicrafts rapidly took shape, developed steadily, and were diversified.

Hoi An has altered a great deal in the past two years. At the former barracks of the cruel Tay Ho puppet battalion, the Hoi An Engineering Works now clanks away. What was the jail under French rule, and was later turned into the CIA office, has given way to a cooperative producing bamboo and rattan articles for export, staffed by groups of lively, gay girls. What used to be a row of shabby dining rooms on the former site of the city hospital has been fixed up for winding and weaving Cam Pho silk, and the enterprise rings day and night with the noise of the shuttles.

The people of Hoi An can be rightly proud of their achievements of the past two years. The Hoi

An Party Committee and administration consider engineering the cornerstone which impels and serves the development and extension of other economic branches, and have paid considerable attention to boosting it. Local engineering workshops formerly turned out rudimentary agricultural implements, did small repairs on motors and made fishing lamps; now they can do big repairs, build boats, rice-husking machines, make blinds, and have produced grinding machines for use in the pharmaceutical industry, and especially improved farming tools and rice-thrashers, both for the region and for many other districts in the province.

Meanwhile, weaving has developed here faster than anywhere else in the province: 200 looms weave all kinds of coloured cotton, flowered silk, satin, muslin, silk suiting... Many customers agree that moving the traditional Quang Nam weaving to Hoi An was not a groundless decision.

Also worthy of note is the development of the manufacture of bamboo, rattan, embroidery and lace articles, flowered mats and wooden furniture for export, which employs nearly one thousand skilled workers. This has generated new jobs, particularly for women, and brings in considerable revenue. This is not to mention brick and tile making whose initial annual production is 2 million units; lime-making from coral and shells, starting with 1,500 tons a year; leaf-hat making for all those working on the Phu Ninh irrigation works at the rate of 80,000 a year, and many other growing crafts and industries.

In two years Hoi An has built up 37 small industry and handicraft production establishments from scratch, in such branches as engineering, weaving, masonry, carpentry, building materials, food processing, articles for export, and local consumer goods, with a gross output value of five million *dong* — a heartening development. Meanwhile, the 700 workers trained at the outset for the various essential trades have provided the in-service training necessary for 3,150 others, and trained thousands of part-time workers.

Hoi An's achievements over the past two years are only the first steps. However, they have helped the town to leave its economic stagnation of the recent past behind and have paved the way for further advances.

PRG 14-POINT ECONOMIC POLICY
CONCERNING INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE
AGAINST THE DISRUPTION OF THE MARKET,
SPECULATION, AND CONTRABAND

1. The State will strive to build and improve state-run establishments in the various economic branches to serve as a firm basis to promote production, improve the circulation and distribution of goods, stabilize the market and guarantee the people a good life.

2. The State welcomes Vietnamese capitalists who wish to engage in business with their own capital and abilities to develop the national economy in branches and trades beneficial to the nation and the life of the people in accordance with the Government line and policies; their right to ownership and their legitimate profits are protected by the State. The State guides and helps owners of enterprises and other businessmen to solve difficulties with regard to raw materials, equipment and fuel, and selling their products, in order to create conditions for them to maintain and increase production.

3. The State is ready to co-operate with capitalists who wish to join the State with their own capital,

equipment, raw materials, and skills in restoring and building new enterprises to meet the needs of the development of production, improve circulation and distribution of goods, stabilize and improve the people's living conditions, and build a national, sovereign and prosperous economy.

In the State-private enterprises, on the one hand leadership and management by the State and the fundamental interests of the workers shall be guaranteed, and on the other hand, the right to take part in management and the legitimate profits of the capitalists shall be guaranteed.

4. The State will strive to encourage and help capitalists to take part in building new economic regions with their technical skills and abilities.

5. In the particular case of capitalists who wish to make over their production establishments to the State for the benefit of the national economy, the State will consider each concrete case separately.

6. All intellectuals with scientific and technical training and professional abilities in production techniques or in management who wish to contribute actively to the restoration and development of the national economy will be well received and rewarded appropriately according to their abilities and the results of their contributions.

7. The State will strive to encourage, guide and help small industrial producers and handicraftsmen in production, supply them with raw materials and equipment and help them sell their products in order to restore and develop the needed

branches and trades, especially traditional national handicrafts, thus contributing to the production of more commodities to meet the needs of the people and export.

8. Small traders will be guided and assisted by the State in their business activities so as to earn their living in accordance with the policies and laws of the Government, and help them to avoid being misused by comprador capitalists.

The laws of the Government must not be abused by the comprador capitalists by hoarding and speculative activities disrupting prices and the market. The revolutionary administration, in coordination with the mass organizations, will help them reorganize themselves in appropriate ways to unite, aid and assist one another in their trading and to elect honest persons to act as buying and selling agents of the State in the service of production and the people. The State will strive to assist small traders now crowded in the towns to gradually transfer to production, to return and work in their native places or go to the new economic zones.

9. The State will resolutely eliminate all hoarding and speculative activities and contraband; will sternly punish speculators and smugglers who seek to monopolize commodities, and disrupt the market, prices, the currency and the supply of commodities, spread false information, steal, or disclose State economic secrets, thus harming production and the people's life and public security and order.

10. Speculators and economic monopolists who are causing disruption of the market in collusion with reactionaries will be arrested and punished appropriately for their crimes. Their property may be confiscated in whole or in part.

11. All property of comprador capitalists who engaged in hoarding and speculative activities during the war, depended on the US imperialists, and colluded with the chieftains of the puppet army and administration, whether they have fled abroad or remain at home, is placed under the control of the State and confiscated in whole or in part depending on the nature and extent of their offences.

12. Those who have cooperated with or served as henchmen of the comprador capitalists since liberation day and are still aiding the comprador in carrying out speculative and monopolistic activities, hoarding commodities, raising or reducing prices, smuggling currency, gold, silver, diamonds, narcotics or dispersing their property, etc. will be considered as accomplices and punished appropriately according to their offences.

13. Those who help the State organs expose or give information leading to the arrest of speculators and smugglers who are disrupting the market or dispersing their property will be rewarded materially or morally according to their merits.

14. State cadres and personnel, combatants of the armed forces must set good examples and strictly implement Government policies. Those who disclose State secrets or connive with, protect and assist persons engaged in illegal activities will be sternly punished.

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POLICY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY POWER
TOWARD MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES,
FUNCTIONARIES AND MEMBERS OF POLITICAL
PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS OF THE
FORMER REGIME

The former Saigon army and administration were instruments in the service of US neo-colonialism. And in most cases, the soldiers, non-commissioned officers and "ordinary" administrative personnel (those who did not hold responsible posts — Ed.) were either duped by the Americans and the chieftains of the puppets or compelled by the necessity to earn their living to serve the US-puppets or take arms against the liberation army. There were not many who resolutely opposed the revolution, committed crimes against the civil population or thrived on war.

Acting on this analysis, the revolutionary power has, ever since the liberation of South Viet Nam, shown leniency toward those who, renouncing their past, wish to return to the fold of the nation. It remains, firm however, against the stubborn elements who continue their counter-revolutionary activities. Political courses have been organized to help the persons concerned to see more clearly the crimes

and schemes of the Americans and the traitors as well as the duties of Vietnamese citizens in the new stage of national reconstruction and socialist construction and to mend their ways in order to find a place for themselves in the new society. 95% of them have been restored their civil rights and took part in the general elections to the National Assembly of reunified Viet Nam. It remains to examine the dossiers of those who occupied important political, military and police posts in the former regime.

On May 25, 1976 the PRG reaffirmed its policy in more detail.

Below is a brief analysis :

A — Toward those who have rendered services to the revolution.

Members of the former Saigon armed forces including the paramilitary organizations (security, police, etc.), and the functionaries and agents of the former administration are recognized as having rendered services to the revolution and will be rewarded :

- if they have done no harm to the revolution ;
- if they took part in underground revolutionary organizations or if they aided them, contributing in some way to the revolution.

(Article 1)

B — Toward those who have behaved well during the political courses.

Political courses are organized on the spot when lasting a few days, or in reeducation centres for longer durations.

1. On-the-spot political courses are held for :

- soldiers and non-commissioned officers of all armed forces including paramilitary organizations ;
- “ordinary” functionaries of the former regime ;
- ordinary members who, through joined reactionary political parties and organizations as a result of deception or coercion.

If they follow these political courses seriously, comply with the policies and directives of the revolutionary power, and do not engage, either overtly or clandestinely, in counter-revolutionary activities, they may recover their civil rights.

The revolutionary power will gradually reintegrate the functionaries and agents of the former administration or help them to find other jobs. Those who are reintegrated into public services enjoy the status of functionaries without discrimination of any kind.

(Art. 2, 3 and 4)

Members of reactionary political parties and organizations who were members of local executive committees are subject, following a political course, to administrative surveillance on the spot for a period of from six months to one year before being restored their civil rights.

(Art. 8)

2. Civilian personnel called up for military service in the former Saigon army and army men with special functions such as doctors, engineers, workers and technical agents, managerial cadres, teachers, (including chiefs of services, chiefs of provincial and central boards of education, public health, science and

technology, heads of university faculties, etc.) who have been called upon, while following a course of reeducation, by the services concerned to carry on their professions, are subject to surveillance by these services and the local administration for a period of from six months to one year. If they make progress and their progress is recognized by the services concerned, subject to the agreement of the local administration, they may be restored their civil rights and enjoy the status of functionaries.

Otherwise they may be sent back to the centres of reeducation or dismissed and subject to a renewed administrative surveillance of from six months to one year.

(Art. 5)

3. Officers and functionaries who have made progress in the reeducation centres may, with the guarantee of their families and the agreement of the local administration, be authorized to return to their families. Following administrative surveillance of from six months to one year's duration they may be restored their civil rights.

If members of their families have taken part in or rendered service to the revolution, their requests will be given priority consideration and the duration of their administrative surveillance reduced.

The same applies to the aged and sick persons, those who retired prior to the liberation, and pregnant women or women with children of less than three years of age.

C — Those who must continue their reeducation or who must be brought to trial.

1. Soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers of all armed forces, including the paramilitary organizations, functionaries of all grades, if they do not belong to the categories described above, must spend three years in a centre of reeducation. Those who are found to have made real progress will be authorized to return to their homes and to recover their civil rights earlier than the regulation time.

Die-hard agents of the former regime who have committed numerous crimes against the people and who show themselves to be obstinate at the political courses will be brought to trial at people's tribunals.

(Art. 9)

2. Those who, having committed crimes against the revolution or against the civilian population, fail to report to the revolutionary authorities, hide or conceal themselves in any way, including the assumption of a false designation of their grade in the former army, or who take refuge in churches, pagodas, schools, etc., and clandestinely sabotage the revolution, will be severely punished by law.

If, however, they report to the revolutionary authorities and own their crimes, they will benefit from a reprieve of their penalty.

(Art. 11)

3. Those who have committed numerous crimes against the revolution or against the population and

have zealously served the US imperialists, and now, following the day of liberation, seek to leave the country in the wake of their masters, will be punished by law.

Not included in this category are those who have been duped by enemy propaganda, taken fright, and have fled abroad.

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Page	Line	Instead of	Please read
13	31	particulary	particularly
17	14	literacy	literary
30	3	biyile	bicycle
36	21	is in power	in power
38	2	principe	principle
136	5	flovouring	flavouring
137	12	and old woman	an old woman
199	22	just came back	just come back
234	29	sizeable	sizable
248	5	who, through joined	who, through deception or coercion. joined

SOUTHERN VIET NAM :

— Efforts exerted over the past two years in all fields — political, economic, cultural and social — to eliminate the serious consequences of war and of US neo-colonialism.

— Initial achievements in socialist transformation and construction in line with the Resolution of the Fourth National Congress of the Communist Party of Viet Nam.



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