

the colonial administration, which, besides, continued to carry out harsh repression. The above parties and groups were bourgeois-oriented, although they were mostly made up of petty bourgeois; they lacked above all a precise agrarian programme, for the bourgeoisie was closely bound to the landlord class. They also lacked a mass base, hence their dispersion into little groups, even coteries, and their division into two opposed, though complementary, tendencies: a little combative reformism and a propensity to engage in vain terroristic actions.

The Quoc Zan Dang, led by an energetic patriot, **Nguyen Thai Hoc**, was the most important of those parties in the years 1928-1930, but it was made up of only small clandestine groups recruited in the main among petty intellectuals and native soldiers. It failed to penetrate deeply into the broad popular masses or to take the lead of big mass actions. In February 1930, this Party launched an armed insurrection in Yenbay, but for lack of nation-wide co-ordination and great mass action, it was quickly strangled. The party leadership and its best militants died heroically, mercilessly executed by the colonial administration. The Quoc Zan Dang disintegrated. Those who returned from China in 1945 in the waggons of Chiang Kai-shek troops, waving the flag of that party, had nothing to do with the patriots rallied around **Nguyen Thai Hoc**. The repeated failures suffered by bourgeois parties and groups clearly showed that in face of imperialism, a powerful and experienced enemy, the Vietnamese revolution, if it was to win, had to take another road.

National liberation and social progress

This road was to be charted by **Nguyen Ai Quoc**, who was to become President **Ho Chi Minh**, and the Party he founded in 1930, the **Indochinese Communist Party**. New principles and methods of actions now played a part in the Vietnamese national movement. Marxism-Leninism shed dazzling light on national problems, the nature of imperialism, and the strategy and tactics to be adopted. It opened the eyes of Vietnamese patriots to problems of world revolution. It forcibly and clearly posed the agrarian problem, putting forward for the first time in Vietnamese history the motto: "Land to the tillers!" Also for the first time, it gave a clear outline of future society.

With the birth of the **Communist Party**, workers' demonstrations, peasant movements, intellectuals' claims, took on another aspect, expanded their scope to become mass movements. Militants of the national movement acquired a new style. As early as 1930, big strikes and peasant demonstrations broke out, the economic depression having considerably worsened the living conditions of the masses, already very low. In several districts of Nghean and Hatinh provinces, committees of poor peasants distributed land and set up a popular power (Nghean Soviets). The 1930's, years of depression, were marked by peasant insurrections in Quangngai province, by strikes in rubber plantations and Saigon undertakings, in the Honggai coal-mines

and the Namdinh cotton mill, by peasant demonstrations in the western part of the Mekong river delta. Ferocious repression was carried out: the colonial administration did not even hesitate to raze whole villages to the ground through air bombing.

While repression succeeded momentarily in stopping mass movements, it failed to drive the Communist Party out of existence, on account of its close ties with the masses. After 1934, the danger of fascism loomed, and in Indochina in particular that of Japanese aggression. In implementation of the directives of the 7th Congress of the Communist International the Indochinese Communist Party as early as 1936 urged the formation of an Indochinese Democratic Front against fascism, for peace, democratic liberties and better living conditions. The slogans "Overthrow imperialism!", "Land to the tillers!" were provisionally withdrawn so as to allow land-owners, anti-fascist big bourgeois, and progressive Frenchmen to join the Front. The success scored in France by the Popular Front contributed greatly to the launching of a great mass movement, in which numerous revolutionaries acquired precious experiences while the popular masses educated themselves politically and became conscious of their strength.

The fall of the French Popular Front put an end to this period of legal activity of the Communist Party: from 1940 Japanese occupation imposed a double yoke on the Vietnamese people, as French colonialists and Japanese fascists collaborated in their endeavour to

stifle the revolutionary movement and extort all possible resources for the war. To struggle against the Japanese and the French colonialists, the Vietminh Front was founded in 1941, rallying under the leadership of the Communist Party all patriots and anti-fascists. The first guerilla units appeared, and combined armed and political struggle resulted, as everyone knows, in the triumph of the August 1945 Revolution and the Proclamation of Independence of September 2, 1945. The founding of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam marked the end of the colonial era, the renaissance of Vietnam as an independent state in the international arena.

We shall deal only briefly with Vietnamese history since 1945, which has often been treated in our review (1). Everyone knows that from 1945 to 1954, the Vietnamese people under the leadership of the Ho Chi Minh government carried through a victorious resistance to the war of reconquest conducted by the French colonialists, this resistance ending with the great victory at Dienbienphu.

The Geneva Conference put an end to the war in July 1954 (see following article); but American intervention, open since 1950, has become ever more serious since the 1954 armistice, taking the form now of truculent neo-colonialism. Through the intermediary of the Saigon puppet regime, American imperialism has carried out atrocious repression against the people, making hundreds of

(1) *Read Vietnamese Studies :*

No 7 — Pages of History 1945-1954.

No 8 — South Vietnam 1954-1965.

thousands of victims, and, after 1961, launching a "special war" against the popular movement. The failure of the special war caused Washington to land American troops on a massive scale. For their part, the people of South Vietnam have resumed, against the American aggressors, the national democratic struggle they once waged against French colonialism. Born of this struggle the National Front for Liberation (NFL) is now the only genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people.



History is at the same time continuity and revolution. Historians are still holding discussions as to the epoch in which one could first speak of a Vietnamese nation, but the essential fact is that two thousand years of history confirm the originality and vitality of a people who would not let themselves be conquered and assimilated by foreign forces however powerful. Those who in the 13th century fought against the Mongols were continuing the tradition of the Trưng Sisters, just as the people's war waged from 1945 to 1954 against French imperialism was an extension of the protracted resistance opposed by Le Loi and Nguyen Trai to the Ming troops five centuries earlier. In the actions of a South Vietnamese guerilla standing up to enormous M.113 amphibious armoured cars, or of a North Vietnamese gunner pointing his gun at Seventh Fleet aircraft, are embodied two thousand years of history.

Here man is intimately bound to the land, which he has conquered after long centuries of gigantic

work. Every inch of land is soaked with the sweat of the multitudes who have worked on it, saved it from floods, typhoons, drought. Every time an invasion came, the peasant turned soldier to defend his land, the land bequeathed to him by his forefathers. But of this land wrung from nature over the centuries, the peasant vainly aspired to own a plot: it was this aspiration as old as the world, which influenced the whole course of Vietnamese history.

The revolution came, joining in the same upsurge national and peasant claims. The peasant rose up this time both to defend the fatherland and to become master of his land. Every citizen stood up to defend both the heritage bequeathed by his ancestors and his own aspirations for a better future. For the first time in history, the class which carries the future in its bosom, the working class, took in hand the destiny of the country. In the Northern half of our country, which has been completely liberated, for twelve years, hope has acquired a precise meaning, socialism and the future have begun to take shape. Our millenary history is extending itself and our confidence in the future is the explanation why all the terrifying techniques of the Americans have proved ineffective. On this Vietnamese land, the words: independence, peace, social progress are veritable weapons — the best of weapons.

V. S.

by LUU QUY KY

**Problems:
true and false**

GIA Lam airport, one afternoon in September 1966. Hanoi is three kilometres away as the crow flies. Ever since June 29, 1966, American aircraft had been continuously violating the airspace of the capital city, had repeatedly bombed and strafed suburban areas, at the same time attacking numerous towns, cities, factories, villages, roads, bridges, market-places, schools, hospitals over the whole of North Vietnam. Day and night, the country was in a state of alert.

From a civilian aircraft, a woman passenger alighted, was presented with a bouquet of flowers, and found herself among a welcoming crowd. A writer, she came from a Western country, which collaborated with Washington and was not in friendly relations with the Vietnamese people. But she was a woman of good will, who was sensitive to injustice and understood the Vietnamese people. This was her second visit to North Vietnam.

Hardly had she stepped on the ground when she said:

"When the plane approached Hanoi, I saw the city aglow with lights. This made me feel at the same time reassured and anguished. I was happy to see that Hanoi was standing firm, but I was somewhat worried by what I felt was a lack of vigilance: why don't you have a blackout?"

She got the following reply from a friend:

"We try not only to defend our capital but also to maintain a normal life for the population. While

we fight, we continue our production work, the building of the country, and our studies. In this way, we shall be able to fight on for a long time, ten or twenty years if necessary. Even if Hanoi is bombed, even if it's deprived of electricity, we shall stand firm and fight on as resolutely as ever."

"I am rigged out to live in the jungle. I've left at home my usual clothing... lipstick included."

"We haven't come to that point yet. You'll find in Hanoi everything required for a normal life. But you did well, preparing yourself to face all eventualities. There is still electricity in Hanoi, but we've also got paraffin lamps ready, as well as all other things needed for living and fighting under all circumstances."

The guest entered the hall, looked around, and said:

"This building wasn't here two years ago. Why do you build such beautiful things in times of war?"

"American bombings have naturally caused us some difficulties. But our international relations expand with each passing day, and so does our civil aviation. Our friends are coming in ever greater numbers. We want to give them a worthy reception. The same thing is true for all other branches of activity. We develop those which are necessary."

"I have been following closely the news from Vietnam. But I could hardly imagine what North Vietnam and Hanoi look like after twenty months of bombing. At home, every time we received a letter with the Hanoi post-mark, we felt great joy. We couldn't imagine the real situation at Hanoi airport."

■

Three o'clock in the morning. The alert sounded. The guest was led to the shelter of the hotel: an attendant switched on the electric lights and a fan, and offered her a chair and a hot cup of tea. Said she:

"I lived through the Second World War, and the bombings by the fascists. More than twenty years have passed, but the wail of the alarm siren still makes me nervous. Please excuse me."

"It was the same with us. The first time one heard the siren screaming and bombs exploding, it was hard to keep calm. But our people have gone through twenty years of struggle: they know how to keep their sang-froid in face of the enemy's most terrible weapons. Now, every time we hear the siren blowing and bombs crashing, anger and hatred seethe in our hearts and urge us to action."

A young girl, a first-aid kit slung over one shoulder, a rifle on the other, entered, inquired about the guest's health, and went out. Our guest asked:

"Is she a member of the armed forces, or a civilian?"

"Well, she waited upon you at dinner. She was then wearing a white apron. Now she is in battle-gear, wearing a cap of the self-defence militia."

"How many militia members are there in this hotel?"

"As many as there are members of the hotel staff. Just look for yourself."

Our guest stepped towards the entrance of the shelter, looked out and saw everywhere people in their combat positions, in foxholes, at the corners of the buildings, in the garden, all armed with guns.

“That’s the ‘Three Readies’ movement, isn’t it?”

“It’s one aspect of the ‘Ready to Fight’ movement. It’s the same everywhere.”

From the loudspeaker came a woman’s voice, calm and firm: “Look out! Enemy aircraft have violated the airspace of our beloved capital. Let our armed and paramilitary forces stand ready to fight! Take accurate aim! Score direct hits! Don’t let them escape.”

Projectiles of all calibres traced red streaks in the dark sky, converging on the US aircraft like a fireworks display. Our guest, attracted by the spectacle and by the shouts of joy which broke out every time an enemy plane was hit, had forgotten all about her first alarm.

She heard a series of explosions, which came from the bombs dropped at random by the planes dispersed by groundfire. There was a crackle of small arms fire. Then everything returned to calm. The fight had lasted but six minutes. From shelters and foxholes, people came out, commented on our anti-aircraft defence, praised those who had taken accurate aim, blamed others who had wasted their ammunition, discussed the number and types of planes shot down. Fire-engines and ambulances moved to the northeast of the city.

Our guest lingered a while near the shelter, asking:

“The US president has declared on several occasions that the Americans only strike at steel and concrete and not at economic and civilian objectives. Is there any truth in it?”

“Let's dot the i's: even our concrete and steel works, nobody has the right to attack. Our country is independent and sovereign. We have never attacked the United States. The Americans have no right to strike at any target in our country. As to what objectives they have in fact attacked, you'll have occasion to see them. And as you have seen, American aircraft have flown over our city on a dark night amidst a dense barrage of groundfire. How could anyone guarantee that even your hotel wouldn't be hit by rockets, bombs or splinters?”



We were standing before a map of Vietnam.

“For a long time already, school textbooks — even those published in the days of French domination — have been telling our children that Vietnam has the shape of an S. It is a narrow territory on the shore of the Pacific, stretching from Dongdang in the North to Cape Camau in the South, with the shape of an S. If the country's boundary were the 17th parallel, it wouldn't have the shape of an S! Our coast runs nearly 3,000 kilometres from the Gulf of Bacbo to the Gulf of Thailand. Our 2,500-long western boundary

lies along majestic mountain ranges. Our people have been living here since the Stone Age. In the year 40 of our era, Trung Trac and Trung Nhi, our two national heroines, raised the banner of insurrection against a foreign aggressor (like Joan of Arc in France, but Joan did not appear until the 15th century). The United States of America didn't even exist then. Our people's history is one of several thousand years' struggle for independence, freedom and the right to live. We have just freed ourselves from the French colonialist yoke. Twenty-one years ago, on September 2, 1945, our people proclaimed their independence and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was set up in the South as well as in the North..."

"Then why do some people say that your country has never been unified?"

"Formerly, when feudalists and colonialists wanted to rob the peasants of their lands, they forged false ownership certificates to demonstrate that those lands had never belonged to the peasants. In that well-known fable by La Fontaine, the wolf also says to the sheep: "This spring belongs to me. How dare you come and drink from it!" The same logic sustains Washington's propaganda. Our country is one. The Vietnamese nation is one. Our people, from North to South, share a common history, a common culture, speak the same language. The traditional colonialist policy is 'Divide and rule'."

"But you signed the 1954 Geneva Agreements which set up a demarcation line at the 17th parallel dividing Vietnam into two zones."

“ True, we signed the Geneva agreements. But these agreements stipulate that the 17th parallel is a purely military, not political, demarcation line, and that it was to be set up for only two years. It should have ceased to exist in July 1956 at the latest. Now we are in 1966. According to the Geneva agreements, the demarcation line at the 17th parallel should have been erased ten years ago. ”

“ The Americans have been saying again and again that North Vietnam is attacking South Vietnam, that it is the North Vietnamese army which is waging war in the South. ”

“ This is a legend spread by the American aggressors. It is they who are invading our country. They are looking for a pretext to cover up their aggression. Can anyone say that ‘ Vietnam is being attacked by Vietnamese ’ and that Americans, coming from 13,000 kilometres away, have done so in order to resist this aggression ? ”

“ There are instances in which foreign troops have come at the request of a people to support them. ”

“ But at whose request did the Americans come to Vietnam ? Ngo Dinh Diem’s ? This man served the French colonialists, then became an agent of the Japanese fascists. The Americans took him to the United States and educated him in New Jersey. Eventually, they murdered him for his incapacity. And who succeeded him ? Men appointed by Washington and overthrown one after another by the people. Who is Nguyen Cao Ky ? An ex-paratrooper who served the

French colonialists, an adventurer despised by world opinion, not to mention Vietnamese opinion. Besides, if the Americans have come to help the South Vietnamese people, how does it come about that wherever they set foot, the local inhabitants never let them enjoy any safety? Why have they been wantonly bombing villages and hamlets and spraying toxic chemicals over vast areas ? They are waging war against the Vietnamese people, not against any foreign troops in Vietnam. ”

“ Some say that the Vietnamese problem is a civil war between North and South Vietnam. ”

“ There is no problem at all. The people in both zones, North and South, are compatriots, blood brothers animated with the same will for independence and the same aspirations towards freedom. They are of one mind in struggling against the American imperialists and their valets. This is a war of aggression waged by Americans against Vietnam, a war fought between the Americans and their stooges on the one hand, and the entire Vietnamese people on the other. As you can see, each day it's only the men in the White House and the Pentagon who discourse at length about the war in Vietnam, work out military and political plans (even plans for so-called 'general elections' in South Vietnam) and appoint Saigon rulers in advance. The deceitful proposals for 'peaceful negotiations' are made by American politicians. Against this American war, the population of South Vietnam is fighting, grouped in a unified organisation, which is the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation. ”



One afternoon, our guest drove to Nhattan, a village located three kilometres as the crow flies from the central organs of the D.R.V. in Hanoi and five kilometres from the centre of the city. On the dyke on the bank of the Red River, a bomb crater had just been filled up. American aircraft had bombed this village, which grows vegetables and flowers for Hanoi. Our guest saw collapsed cottages, seared flower gardens, a small-ware shop completely destroyed. On the ground of a bombed primary school, she saw a half-burnt text-book, a broken inkstand, and, between two crushed bricks, a broken pencil. Standing before the graves of nineteen children and many adults, innocent victims of the bombing, she could not contain her emotion.

We told her :

“ If our anti-aircraft fire had not driven the American air pirates away, this dyke would have been blasted, the river water would have flooded Hanoi and a large number of surrounding villages, and this village would not have been the only one to suffer casualties. If civilian defence had not been well organised, our losses would have been much more important. Of late, when they run up against a dense network of groundfire the American airmen, who are not distinguished for their courage, have dropped their bombloads at random so as to get away as quickly as possible. That is why the number of their crimes has been increasing. ”

““ Massacre and destruction in this village alone is enough to remind us of the French village of Oradour, which was burnt down by the Hitlerite fascists. Oradour

left unforgettable impressions of fascist barbarity on our minds."

"In Vietnam, the Americans have left numerous Oradours during their two years of bombing the North and their many years of aggression on the South. Their B.52 super-bombers have so far carried out something like 5,000 sorties."

"From afar, we never could believe the Americans had reached such a degree of barbarity."

"The life of every one of us Vietnamese is being threatened daily, and our most precious possessions are being destroyed. Never shall our hatred subside. But, besides those crimes which cause ruin and mourning, we declare that the Americans have committed one much more serious. We hope you will denounce it still more vigorously before world opinion."

"What other crime can be greater than those?"

"That of being aggressors and warmongers, of laying violent hands upon the independence, freedom, even the lives of 30 million Vietnamese, of committing piratical actions in the air and on the sea, of violating the territorial integrity of our country, of pursuing a war of aggression of a genocidal character, of sabotaging the peace and security of the three countries of Indochina: Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and of Southeast Asia... This is a very great crime, the greatest crime perpetrated by American imperialism in our era against the Vietnamese people, the people of Southeast Asia, and the whole of mankind."



We went to the office of the Association of Vietnamese Journalists. Our guest said:

“ Anyhow, the war is going on. Can one try to put an end to it as quickly as possible so as to avoid losses in lives and property? What is to be done to restore peace? ”

“ We never want to prolong the war. Can a people who have gone through over twenty years of war want to prolong it indefinitely? It's precisely in order to achieve peace, to put an end to this dirty war of aggression by the American imperialists, that we have been fighting. ”

“ But Johnson has been saying that he is ready to negotiate to re-establish peace. ”

“ Peace on what basis? On the basis of the recognition of our people's independence and freedom, or that of occupation of South Vietnam by the Americans, who will turn it into a U.S. colony and military base? Our President Ho Chi Minh has often said: **'Genuine independence is needed for a just peace'**. So long as the Americans continue to attack our country, we will fight on and the war cannot end. The Americans have made numerous proposals, but they have never clearly and definitely recognized our fundamental national rights: independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. ”

“ Like you, the Americans have talked about the Geneva agreements. Can one negotiate on the basis of those accords? ”

“ We respect the Geneva agreements. That is why our government has put forward a 4-point stand for a solution to the problem. The N.F.L. has also made public its five points. The 4-point stand and the 5-point declaration embody the fundamental content of the Geneva accords. The Americans do not recognize and do not want to implement those points : can one say then that they respect the Geneva Agreements ? Can it be said that they want to solve the Vietnamese problem on the basis of those accords ? ”

“ But the Americans have been saying that they are ready to discuss conditions put forward by all parties concerned. Why don't you agree to come to the conference and plead your case there ? ”

“ While they express the desire to see us come to the conference, the Americans continue to send masses of GIs to South Vietnam, organise big mop-ups against the people, use strategic bombers and toxic chemicals and poison gas. They are intensifying their air strikes against North Vietnam ; each month their aircraft carry out an average of 5,000 sorties to sow destruction in all regions of North Vietnam, including the periphery of Hanoi and the centre of Haiphong. Is it peace or war that they are after ? Do they want to negotiate with us or continue to attack us ? Can an independent and sovereign people, any more than a self-respecting man, hold discussions with an enemy who is raining blows on them ? If the Americans only agree to withdraw their troops from South Vietnam, dismantle their military bases, stop their aggression in South Vietnam, put a definite and unconditional end to their

bombings on North Vietnam, free negotiations will take place, on the basis of equality."

"But if you won't compound on these conditions, a peaceful solution can never be found. Can't you offer a few concessions in return? You must also think of saving the Americans' face."

"What concessions can we offer? We have never attacked or committed aggression against the United States. We lived in peace in our country, and we have only been fighting for our legitimate rights, our independence, our freedom. We have never encroached in such a way on the Americans' rights as to have to offer them something in compensation now. We cannot certainly offer our independence and freedom, or sacrifice what is most precious to us in order to save the Americans' face. Let them withdraw their troops from our country, let them stop their aggression if they want to save their face. Is there anything more dishonourable than being aggressors? Is it just to ask a victim of aggression to compensate his aggressor? Let the Americans withdraw their troops and leave the Vietnamese to settle their own affairs. Peace will immediately return, and this will be a just peace."

"Can one conclude that it is the Americans who hold the key to peace?"

"The Americans only hold the key to war. War-mongers never give up their dark designs voluntarily. Premier Pham Van Dong has said: 'The key to peace is in the hands of the peoples: the Vietnamese people and the world peoples.' The American imperialists do not want peace, they sabotage it. The Vietnamese