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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

2nd September, 1945-65

“OUR people have broken the chains which for nearly a century have fettered them and have won independence for the Fatherland. At the same time our people have overthrown the monarchic regime that has reigned supreme for dozens of centuries. In its place has been established the present Democratic Republic.

“A people who have courageously opposed French domination for more than eighty years, a people who have fought side by side with the Allies against the fascists during these last years, such a people must be free and independent.

“For these reasons we, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, solemnly declare to the world that Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country—and in fact it is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilise all their physical strength, to sacrifice their lives and property, in order to safeguard their independence and liberty.”

President Ho Chi Minh: Extracts from Declaration of Independence, 2nd September, 1945.

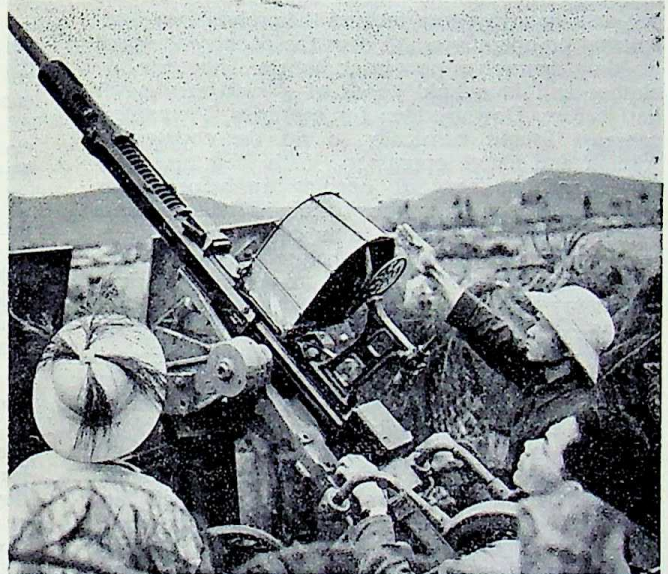
Within days this call for sacrifice had to be answered. On September 23rd, backed by British troops supposed to disarm the Japanese, the French launched attacks through the southern provinces. At once the people rallied in self-defence, and the first phase of the ten years' Resistance War opened up. But even in these conditions, and right in Saigon-Cholon city itself, where the fighting was fiercest, over 90% voted in the January, 1946, election for the National Assembly.

In an effort to achieve a peaceful settlement, in 1946 President Ho Chi Minh went to France and there arrived at a “modus vivendi.” This the French almost immediately dishonoured, and President Ho Chi Minh explained to his countrymen, “because we made concessions in the interests of peace our enemy

thought we were weak and are trying to force more concessions from us.” And this was followed by his historic call to his fellow countrymen once more to rise and defeat this armed attack on their national independence by whatever arms they could obtain.

The new government set itself the immediate three-fold task, to feed the people, to educate them, and to defend the country's independence against the attempts of the French and others to re-colonise it.

Despite difficulties that could have seemed overwhelming, backed by the united will of the people from the north to the south, from the mountain regions to the delta lands, they succeeded in this task. By their own efforts, poorly equipped, undergoing many hardships, they succeeded in developing a brilliant military initiative, and won victory after



River Gianh (North Vietnam) fishermen's self-defence machine-gun nest against United States bombers.

20 GLORIOUS YEARS

victory, thus confounding all the wisecracks who assured them they could never stand up to the experienced French army, lavishly equipped as it was by the United States.

In July, 1954, Geneva Peace Agreements recognised the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Vietnam; provided for the withdrawal of the defeated French forces; laid down that the period during which the French forces be regrouped to the south, and those of the Vietnam People's Army to the north, of a temporary demarcation line at the 17th parallel should not exceed two years, when a nation-wide general election should be held to re-establish the political unity of Vietnam.

Within the terms of these Agreements the authority of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was limited to the northern zone, but no one had any doubts either in Vietnam or elsewhere as to how the people would vote when the time came. That this election was not held, that the U.S.A., already deeply involved, then took over from the French the intention to re-colonise Vietnam, using the South as its base, is a matter of history.

Rising from the depths of extreme poverty, almost impossible for us in Britain to imagine, life in the Democratic Republic is now on an entirely new plane. Land reform put the peasants at long last into possession of the soil. Producing for themselves instead of feudal landowners and foreign colonialists, they have worked might and main. For the first time in history the northern part of Vietnam is producing enough food for its own needs—even a surplus for export. By the collective effort of the peasants, helped by volunteers from the towns, especially the young people, and units of the army, the irrigation systems destroyed by the French have been restored and new ones built. Nearly all the peasants have by now formed themselves into agricultural co-operatives. All over the country they are building themselves new brick houses. They can buy clothes and household goods of a kind they never had before. Downtrodden for centuries, Vietnamese peasants fought heroically to rid the country of foreign and native oppressors. With their new freedoms, and the new life opening up before them, who would wonder at their whole-hearted response—man, woman and child—to the call of their government to be ready to defend themselves, their homes and their country against to-day's American aggressors?

Very few Vietnamese had any experience of working in industry or in factories, for the French had not been interested in developing industry but only in draining away the country's natural resources. In fact their total legacy when they left North Vietnam in 1954 consisted of 41 items . . . the Hongai coal mines, the Haiphong cement works and the Nam Dinh Textile works (both of which they damaged so much before leaving that they were at a standstill); power stations in Hanoi and Haiphong; a brewery and a distillery, one saw mill, and about 30 ship, motor and railway depots. There were 13 engineers and some skilled workers spread over these various undertakings.

If the deep-seated purpose of the government to improve the conditions of the people's lives was to

be achieved a drastic change was called for. Every form of modern production had to be started from the very foundation. Priorities had to be carefully studied, and all the while the daily needs of the people must be met. While the basis of heavy industry was being laid, factories to produce consumer goods were established. The legacy from the French of 41 has been enlarged to well over 1,000. This means that one new enterprise has been put into production every three days.

The majority of the workers have only known what it is to work as masters of these new enterprises established under the various Plans for socialist construction. They have never known the bullying foreman, the fear of the sack for some small misdemeanour. There is no "women's work" at less than half the men's rate. The young are not used as cheap labour and kept on monotonous processes. All, young and old, men and women, are encouraged to learn, to advance to the highest skill, to fill in gaps in their general education, to go to the polytechnic, the university, if they have the aptitude. The factories and plants build them housing blocks, nurseries, hospitals, club rooms, sports facilities. The trade unions look after their welfare at work, in sickness, build holiday homes, teach them to understand the morale of the new society, encourage them to improve their production.

"We have no desire" said President Johnson at Baltimore on 7th April, 1965, "to devastate that which the people of North Vietnam have built with toil and sacrifice." Imagine the effect on these workers of these hypocritical words, for in the same speech Johnson threatened, "I wish it were possible to convince others with words of what we now find it necessary to say with guns and planes." In the months that have followed, Johnson has not been sparing of words nor his planes of bombs aimed at doing precisely what he declared was not his desire.

Every worker in every plant has taken to arms in defence. When the 'planes come over they spring to action—on the roofs, alongside the gun emplacements of the army units, in boats around the units of the navy. Over 400 'planes have been brought down in this further supreme effort to defend their Fatherland and their right to live as a free people.

"The entire people of the North, united as one, are determined to struggle in a self-sacrificing spirit to defeat all enemy aggressive schemes, to defend the North, and more closely than ever to stand side by side with our southern compatriots and wholeheartedly support their liberation struggle till final victory."—Premier Pham Van Dong, 8th April, 1965.

"To defend the beloved North, the army and people of the South have given vent to their flames of anger at the U.S. aggressors and their agents. If the U.S. imperialists lay hands on the North of our Fatherland once, the armies and the people of the South are resolved to strike twice or thrice as hard at them."—South Vietnam Liberation National Front, March 22nd, 1965.

Vietnam is a lovely country and its people have a noble history, of which these 20 years are its most glorious epoch. Let us in Britain join with them in saluting these years with the determination to stand by them till final victory is theirs and the radiant hopes of September 2nd, 1945, are fulfilled.

Solidarity Conference

By Ralph Bond

DELEGATES from 50 countries attended the second Conference of the International Trade Union Committee for Solidarity with the Workers and People of Vietnam, held in Hanoi from June 2nd—8th.

The Conference was a remarkable manifestation of working class support and solidarity.

From Europe there were delegations from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania, Italy, France, the G.D.R., Cyprus, Norway and Austria.

From Asia delegations came from China, Mongolia, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Ceylon, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand.

The African and Middle East nations were strongly represented from Guinea, Congo, Angola, Algeria, Mali, Syria and others.

Many delegates travelled from Australia, New Zealand, Uruguay, Mexico, Argentine, Cuba, Chile and Venezuela.

All these delegates assembled in Hanoi, capital city of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, to make common cause with the people who are resisting the aggression against their country.

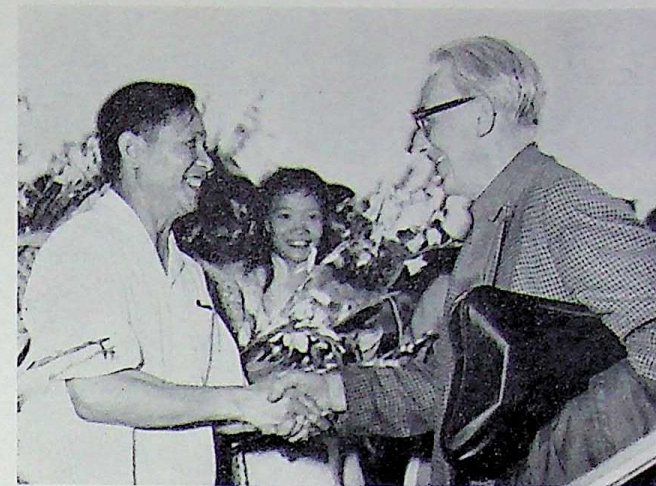
The Conference was officially opened by Renato Bitossi, President of the W.F.T.U. The Conference hall was modern and spacious, and simultaneous translation was provided to each seat in four languages, Vietnamese, English, Spanish and French.

Bitossi was followed by Hoang Guoc Viet, of the North Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions, who gave a detailed and lengthy exposition of the American aggression, affirmed the complete solidarity of the people behind their Government, and called for the maximum support to the international working class.

The ovation his speech received was only exceeded by that given to the representative of the South Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions, Tran Van Than. The entire conference was moved by description of the crimes perpetrated against the people in the liberated areas by America and its puppet government in Saigon, and by the heroism and courage of the people of the Liberation Front and Army, who now controlled four-fifths of the country and who had liberated 10 million of the 14 million population.

It was interesting to hear that there are 500,000 trade unionists in South Vietnam, many of whom are working clandestinely in Saigon and other industrial centres still under the control of the puppet regime.

The speakers from Vietnam gave details of the great victories achieved by their forces. In the North over 300 enemy 'planes had been shot down by the time of the Conference (and many more since). In the South, the majority of the "strategic hamlets" (another name for concentration camps) had been



Tran Dank Tuyen, General Secretary of the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions, welcomes Ralph Bond to Hanoi.

destroyed and their inhabitants liberated. Enemy strong points were under constant attack, and small and even middle-sized towns were attacked, temporarily occupied and their defenders annihilated.

Troops of the Saigon Government were constantly deserting to the Liberation Army, leaving their officers and American "advisers" to their fate.

A powerful Liberation Army had been built which will be able to undertake bigger military tasks, and eventually win total victory.

The political strategy of a "People's War" utterly nullifies the greater technical and mechanical superiority of the American forces.

The political situation in South Vietnam deteriorates daily, continued Tran Van Than. The successive Saigon governments enjoy no popular support. The overwhelming majority of the 14 million inhabitants support the National Liberation Front.

The speakers from both North and South Vietnam emphasised the importance of solidarity and aid from the workers of other countries.

China had pledged full support and assistance. The U.S.S.R. had declared its readiness to give all support asked for.

The Governments of all other socialist countries had pledged all necessary support.

Thousands of tons of medical supplies and equipment and clothing had already been shipped from centres abroad to the Liberation Front.

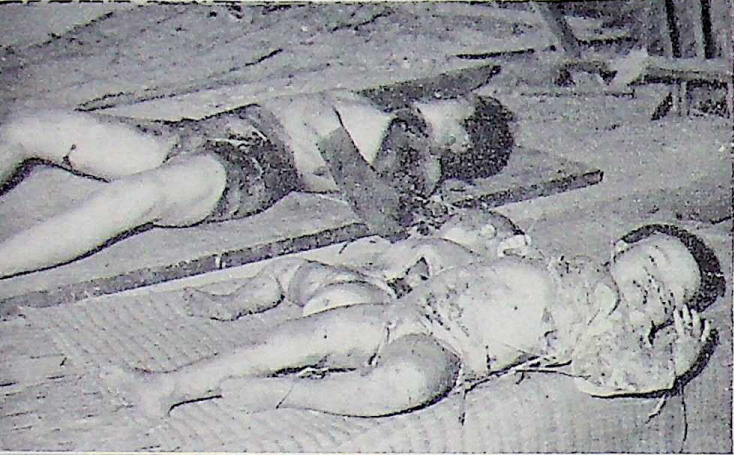
Furthermore, all the socialist countries had fully accepted the Four Point Programme of the South Vietnam Liberation Front.

Big solidarity actions were developing in the capitalist countries, and from many parts of the world workers were volunteering to fight shoulder to shoulder with their Vietnamese brothers.

This was the answer to the American imperialists, who were sending mercenaries from

(Continued on Page 6)

SOME OF THE REAL FACTS



Top—Ruins of secondary school of the village of Quynh Lap (North Vietnam) resulting from U.S. bombs. Middle—Woman and her two children killed by United States bombs in Nghe An province (North Vietnam). Bottom—Buddhist pagoda destroyed by U.S. bombs in Ha Tinh province (North Vietnam).

IN the course of his many pronouncements on United States policy towards Vietnam (more than 80 during his presidency) Johnson has even said that the U.S. would be willing to consider the 1954 Geneva Agreements as a starting point for "discussions on negotiations."

This is sheer effrontery for it is precisely the U.S.A. which has trampled on every clause in these Agreements.

Not only did the U.S. government specifically refuse to accept the Agreements, "The U.S. has not itself been party to, or bound by, the decisions taken by the Conference" (President Eisenhower). During the discussions at Geneva, the U.S. representatives did their utmost to prevent a constructive and peaceful outcome and launched the preliminary steps to form the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation as a means of off-setting the provisions of the Agreements.

No attempt has been made to disguise the long sequence of breaches of all the clauses forbidding the remilitarisation of South Vietnam. The U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group established in Saigon in 1951, had been enlarged by 1960 from some 300 in 1954 to over 2,000. Early in 1962 the disguise of an "Advisory Group" was dropped when a full-fledged American Military Command was set up in Saigon under General Paul Harkins. This was denounced in a Report of the International Control Commission, appointed to watch over the correct implementation of the Agreements, in June, 1962, in the following terms: "... though there may not be any formal military alliance between the governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Vietnam (i.e. South Vietnam) the establishment of a U.S. Military Assistance Command in South Vietnam, as well as the introduction of a large number of U.S. military personnel beyond the stated strength of the M.A.A.G., amounts to a factual military alliance, which is prohibited under Article 19 of the Geneva Agreement."

The I.C.C. has been unable to list all the armament, etc., illegally brought in by the United States for, as it frequently had cause to complain, facilities for inspection were denied. For example, "Since 1961 the Commission's Teams in South Vietnam have been persistently denied the right to control and inspect. . . . Thus, these Teams, though they were able to observe the steady and continuous arrival of war material, including aircraft carriers with helicopters on board, were unable, in view of the denial of controls, to determine precisely the quantum and nature of war material unloaded and introduced into South Vietnam."

Well before the end of 1964 the U.S. had introduced into South Vietnam at least 700 aircraft, including jet helicopters and supersonic bombers; 350 naval craft; 500 motor launches; 450 armoured vehicles. The enormous quantity of munitions and introduced included nearly all types of armament and such weapons as flame-throwers, self-propelled guns, napalm bombs, phosphorous bombs and shells, and toxic chemicals used as a weapon of war.

But the farce of there being any supervision or control over American intervention may as well be

dropped, for it is official U.S. policy to flood South Vietnam with American troops and armament. "I have today ordered to Vietnam the Air Mobile Division, and certain other forces which will raise our fighting strength from 75,000 to 125,000 men almost immediately." (President Johnson, 28th July). On 14th July the Defence Department announced that it had notified American shipowners that 54 more merchant ships would be needed to carry supplies to Vietnam immediately. Ports and airfields are being enlarged to receive these colossal reinforcements, and billions of American dollars provided for this work of destruction.

The long history of breaches of all the clauses forbidding the re-militarisation of Vietnam has only been possible because of the sabotage of that most fundamental provision of the 1954 Agreements, namely, that the 17th parallel is a temporary military demarcation line and that Vietnam should be reunited not later than July, 1956, through nationwide elections. On December 17th, 1954, H. Stassen, then president of the Commission for U.S. Aid to Foreign Countries, declared "It is unlikely that there will be free general elections in Vietnam."

Working through their agent Ngo Dinh Diem, whom they had brought in to head their puppet regime the U.S. saw to it that Stassen's prophecy was realised. This fact alone makes nonsense of the U.S. claim that their war is at the "request" of their South Vietnamese friends to "defend their freedom from communist aggression." This prolonged division of Vietnam has meant that Vietnamese citizens are prevented from moving freely about in their own country; it has prevented those members of the Vietnamese People's Army, native of the southern provinces, who in conformity with the Geneva Agreement, were regrouped with their military units to the north of the demarcation line from returning to their homes and families. It prevents any contact between members of families in the different zones. It has hindered the economic development of the whole of Vietnam by the prevention of normal trading and commercial relations over the country. It offends against the national sentiment and whole history of the Vietnamese people. It negates the undertakings of the Geneva Agreements to ensure the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Vietnam.

With the withdrawal of the units of the Vietnamese People's Army north of the Demarcation Line, the people in the South were left defenceless against attacks immediately launched on them. In the sober words of the I.C.C. reporting on one such incident "... the deployment of troops was obviously excessive and has brought damage to the population's life. . . ."

Further to this, wholesale persecution was launched against former members of the anti-French resistance and their families. In his book "Vietnam Divided," B. S. N. Murti, who served for 3 years with the International Control Commission, writes that "the authorities in charge of the administration of the South followed a conscious, deliberate political policy to weed out undesirable elements from the local administration." By this is meant local people

1954 Geneva Agreements

Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities

Article 14(c). Each party undertakes to refrain from any reprisals or discrimination against persons or organisations on account of their activities during the hostilities and to guarantee their democratic liberties.

Article 16 . . . the introduction into Vietnam of any troop reinforcements and additional military personnel is prohibited.

Article 17 . . . the introduction into Vietnam of any reinforcements in the form of all types of arms, munitions and other war material, such as combat aircraft, naval craft, pieces of ordnance, jet engines and jet weapons and armoured cars is prohibited.

Article 18 . . . the establishment of new military bases is prohibited throughout Vietnam territory.

Article 19 . . . no military base under the control of a foreign state may be established in the regrouping zone of either party; the two parties shall ensure that the zones assigned to them do not adhere to any military alliance and are not used for the resumption of hostilities or to further an aggressive policy.

Final Declaration

Under Paras. 4 and 5 the Conference took note of the clauses under Articles 16, 17, 18 and 19 of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities quoted above.

Para. 6. The Conference recognises that . . . the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary.

Para. 7. General elections shall be held in July, 1956. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competitive representative authorities of the two zones from July 20th, 1955, onwards.

Para. 12. In their relations with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, each member of the Geneva Conference undertakes to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity and the territorial integrity of the above-mentioned states and to refrain from interference in their internal affairs.

Statement by U.S. Representative, Walter Bedell Smith

The Government of the United States . . . takes note of the Agreements concluded at Geneva on July 20th and 21st, 1954 . . . declares . . . that it will refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them.

... serving in the organs of local government known to be sympathetic to the cause of Vietnamese independence. Mr. Murti writes further, "In this process . . . a number of former resistance workers and sympathisers of the People's Army were arrested and detained without any trial . . . certain political

Solidarity Conference (Contd.)

Formosa, South Korea and the Philippines to bolster up the tottering armies of the Saigon Government.

The Vietnamese delegates pointed out that the Americans had now given up all pretence that their troops were merely "advisers." They had an expeditionary force of more than 60,000 troops, 2,000 warplanes, and all modern military equipment and services. Their fleet constantly shells parts of North Vietnam. In April last, their planes again started to drop poisonous chemicals in the South, spraying rice and maize crops in the hope that the population would die of hunger.

Napalm and gas have been used, and thousands of people burnt to death. Schools, hospitals, churches have been destroyed by American bombs in this dirty war against people fighting for their independence.

The subsequent days of the Conference were devoted to the speeches of delegates, and I had the good fortune to be called on fairly early. After conveying the customary greetings, I reported on the growing protest movement in Britain, and mentioned the many Trade Unions who have passed resolutions denouncing the aggression. I referred to the anger and disappointment of thousands of British trade unionists about the shameful manner in which the Labour Government had given unqualified approval of everything the Americans were doing against the Vietnamese people.

I said there could be no peace in the world until the American Government learned the bitter lesson that it can no longer be allowed to destroy the people in their march towards freedom, independence and democracy.

In conclusion I said that under no circumstances must we allow any differences that may exist between us to hinder for one moment our task of giving every possible support to the gallant Vietnamese people fighting for the freedom and independence of their country.

My speech appeared to give satisfaction to the delegates and particularly to the hundreds of Vietnamese trade unionists who packed the public part of the conference hall.

Subsequently speaker after speaker mounted the rostrum—from Guinea, Mali, the Yemen, Cyprus, Australia, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia, New Zealand, China, the Soviet Union, and a score of others.

All reported on the actions taken in their countries, all pledged support, and as was proper in such a gathering many delegates, particularly those from the newly independent countries, as well as those still under colonial rule, denounced the American aggressions in San Dominica, South Korea, the Congo and elsewhere.

On the final day of the Conference the Presidium presented a number of documents for approval. These comprised, firstly, the main resolution, secondly a message to the American people, thirdly an appeal to the workers of the world, and finally a letter to the workers and people of South Vietnam.

The main resolution, too lengthy a document to quote in full here, after summarising the situation in North and South Vietnam arising from the American invasion and the people's war to defeat it, expressed full approval of the political demands of the

Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front. These can be summarised as follows:

1. The immediate ending of the U.S.A. aggression.
2. The immediate withdrawal of American troops, planes, military bases and supplies.
3. Respect for and implementation of the 1954 Geneva Agreement by the U.S.A.
4. The recognition of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front as the only genuine representative of the South Vietnam people.
5. The re-unification of the two zones of Vietnam to be decided by the Vietnam people without any foreign interference.

The resolution noted that throughout the world diverse actions were developing: collection of funds, medicines, food and clothing; letters and telegrams of support; meetings and demonstrations; the boycott of ships sending weapons to Vietnam. Workers of some countries have sent money to enable the Liberation Front to buy arms. In several countries young men and women have volunteered to fight on the side of the Vietnam people if requested.

URGENTLY NEEDED Medical Aid for South Vietnam Collecting Sheets Available

Donations to W. Zak,
Treasurer, British Vietnam Committee
c/o 25a, Abbey Gardens, London, N.W.8

The resolution gave its approval to all these actions and activities, and called for:

1. An intensification of propaganda work.
2. Making more widely known the policies of the Liberation Front and of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.
3. An increase in the mass actions of all friendly people by all forms of struggle—meetings, demonstrations, strikes, refusal to transport American troops and weapons.
4. The launching of a widespread movement of solidarity and support with a view to collecting and immediately despatching to the National Liberation Front medicines, food, clothing and especially funds to increase the fighting capacity of the Vietnamese people.

I am pleased to say that the resolution, and the other documents, met with the unanimous approval of all the delegations, and were carried with acclamation.

At the conclusion of the Conference we all left Hanoi not only with a greater understanding and respect for the Vietnamese people, but with the determination to tell the truth back home, and to secure the widest support for a cause that should command the approval of all honest and fair-minded people throughout the world.

THE REAL FACTS

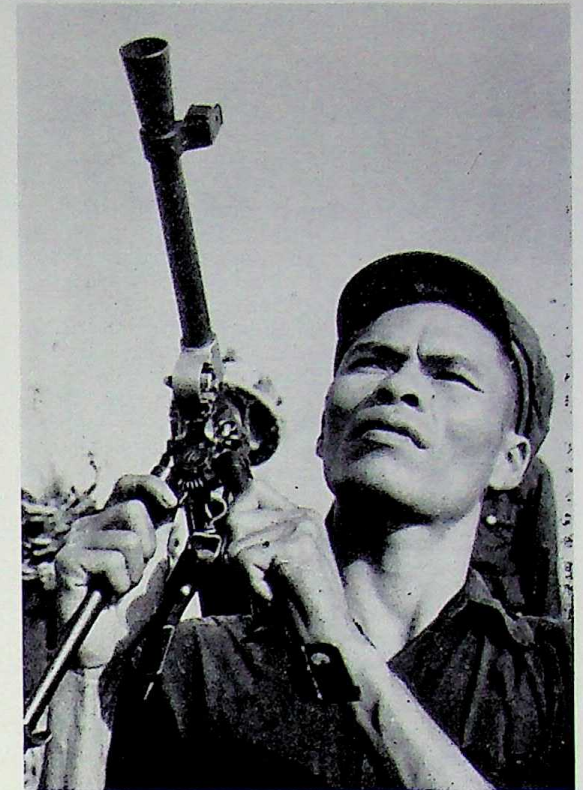
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murders also took place, but mostly it was arrests and tortures that attracted attention of the International Commission."

This was only a foretaste of what was to come. Mr. Murti writes of the "political policy" of the administration of the South for the "systematic extermination of communists. . . . Tremendous propaganda was built up . . . and people were asked to denounce communists. All over the country anti-communist weeks were celebrated and press and radio had been active with 'catch a communist' slogan . . . it became extremely difficult to guarantee democratic freedoms to people living in the South of the provisional demarcation line." It must be emphasised that these remarks refer to the period 1954/1955 and that the regime became progressively more oppressive. Over the years the South Vietnam press itself has reported many cases of execution under the various decrees enacted by the successive administrations installed in Saigon. Figures, which are probably by no means complete, showed that by the middle of 1964 over 370,000 people were in detention; 880,000 seriously affected by torture; over 160,000 killed, either through execution, torture, or in the course of so-called mopping-up operations carried out all over the country, or in the campaign to concentrate millions of peasants into the "strategic villages" (now dubbed "new-life villages") under the plan to "pacify" South Vietnam in 18 months worked out by Eugene Staley and General Maxwell Taylor in June, 1961. With the tremendous increase in the U.S. war effort over the past months, the loss of life and suffering in South Vietnam has become incalculable.

It was the complete absence of freedom and normal political life, coupled with the now notorious bloodthirsty nature of the Diemist regime that at last in 1960 drove the people, especially in the countryside, to seek self-defence by whatever means they could find. And it is from these first actions in self-defence that the resistance of the people of South Vietnam to the terror imposed from Saigon and U.S. intervention in their country has developed to its present strength.

How does the United States attempt to justify its continuous and mounting breaches of the Geneva Agreements which, though it refused to accept, it did undertake not to attempt to undermine them by the use of threat or force? By asserting, contrary to all evidence, that resistance does not come from the South Vietnamese people themselves but that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has attacked the South from across the demarcation line. Further, that arms and men from the North are smuggled into the South though there have been countless reports in the press of all countries, including the U.S., that the bulk of the arms used by the Resistance Forces are captured weapons of American manufacture. The U.S. White Paper of March, 1965, claimed to have captured 15,000 weapons from the Resistance Forces in the years 1962/63/64, while it admitted to losing 27,400. It would have been supposed had their accusations been true that a substantial portion of the 15,000 captured weapons would have been of North Vietnamese or foreign



Le Ngoc Le, Secretary of the Vietnam Workers Party of Quang Binh and Chairman of Phu Xa agricultural co-operative serving at a machine-gun mounting in defence against United States bomber attacks.

origin. In fact the White Paper lists only 179 various weapons of foreign origin, 76 of these being rifles, 24 other weapons of French origin, and 8 with no country of origin given. This hardly adds up to the large-scale invasion talked of by the U.S. (echoed by the British Government) and given as the excuse not only for its intensification of the war against South Vietnam, but also for its attacks on the North. These attacks the United States carries out from bases built up in the South, yet another flagrant breach of the Geneva Agreements on the two counts that no military bases under foreign control be permitted and that one zone shall not be used as the base for an attack on the other.

In drawing attention to the Geneva Agreements, the U.S. has only focused attention on its continuous violations of them and its intention, as stated by the then Secretary of State, J. F. Dulles, three days after they were signed that "from now on, the main thing is not to complain about the past but to take advantage of the future opportunity so that the loss of North Vietnam might not pave the way for the loss of other parts in Southeast Asia."

Nam Dinh

"American 'planes again attacked bridges and other military targets in North Vietnam."—Any news bulletin, any day.

ON July 2nd waves of U.S. 'planes flew in and bombed Nam Dinh, the third largest city of the Democratic Republic, in the Red River delta. On July 28th jets again bombed and strafed its streets and buildings. Each time the trail of death and injured included many children.

Nam Dinh is a textile centre employing thousands of workers, many of them women. I went there in 1962 to take part in the anniversary celebrations of the July, 1954, Geneva Agreements, and learned something of its history. The lives of the workers, during the period of French rule, had been almost unendurable and there were spasmodic revolts and strike actions, always savagely repressed.

When they left the French put the power plant out of action and did their best to break up the machines. With considerable difficulty the workers got the power plant going again and patched up the machines. Incidentally, they are still using some machines imported from Oldham before 1939. They would have been quite happy to import more modern machines from the same source, as well as spare parts for the old ones, but the obstructive attitude of the British Government prevents normal trading relations. Not that such tactics have stopped the progress of the Democratic Republic, for the Nam Dinh workers developed an engineering industry which can supply not only the spare parts and up-to-date machinery for Nam Dinh, but of such quality that it is sold abroad.

I went round a great deal of the plant, met and talked with many of the workers and heard their plans to increase and improve production, train themselves to understand the whole question of textile production in all its branches and make their contribution to the reborn Vietnam. Last year in the shops of Hanoi I was able to get some idea of how they have fulfilled their ambition—more cloth of all kinds available for the home market—new designs, new colours and real luxury products able to earn valued foreign exchange.

Already in 1962 the Nam Dinh people had other things to show me beside their factories—the new blocks of flats, the hospitals, dispensaries and maternity centres, the schools and nurseries. My visit was crowded with impressions.

But to this day my mind's eye still carries as its most vivid memory the nurseries for the children of the women in the textile plant. Room after room of cherished children, born to freedom, to a life free of the harsh experience of colonial oppression. Especially the room where the youngest of all sat on the floor in a circle and, when the gentle young girl looking after them gave the signal, and they

clapped their little hands together, making just a whisper of sound, in time to the song she sang them, with all their eyes turned enquiringly to the strange woman who had come to see them. They were like a cluster of flowers, and I thought then, "If only I could show this to the people at home what a feeling of friendship for Vietnam it would arouse."

In 1937 I saw the child victims of air attacks on Barcelona, and again in 1940 in my native city of London. Can we tolerate that this slaughter of the innocents becomes a commonplace? In this message Cambodia speaks for all civilised people the world over:

"The government of the Kingdom of Cambodia condemns with indignation the U.S. barbarous bombing of Nam Dinh, an industrial and densely populated city, causing many deaths and injured to the civilian population. The government of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Cambodian people assure the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Vietnamese people of their profound sympathy and energetically condemn the U.S. crimes and aggressive acts which constitute an extremely dangerous new step in the U.S. 'escalation' war, fraught with the danger of provoking a widespread conflict in Southeast Asia. The government of the Kingdom of Cambodia resolutely supports the Vietnamese people's just struggle in defence of peace in Indochina and the world until final victory."

What protest has come from our government? No protest, but excuses for American barbarity and slanders against the people who are its victims. We must not relax our efforts until our government speaks worthily in our name, condemns the U.S. war of aggression against Vietnam and demands that it cease forthwith. And I shall write to the people I met in Nam Dinh and assure them that in their struggles and their trials they have the support and sympathy of millions of us here in Britain.

HILDA VERNON.



River Gianh fishermen's self-defence group who have successfully operated against United States aerial attack.

Those wishing to receive the "Vietnam Bulletin" regularly, should write to British-Vietnam Committee, c/o 25a Abbey Gardens, London, N.W.8