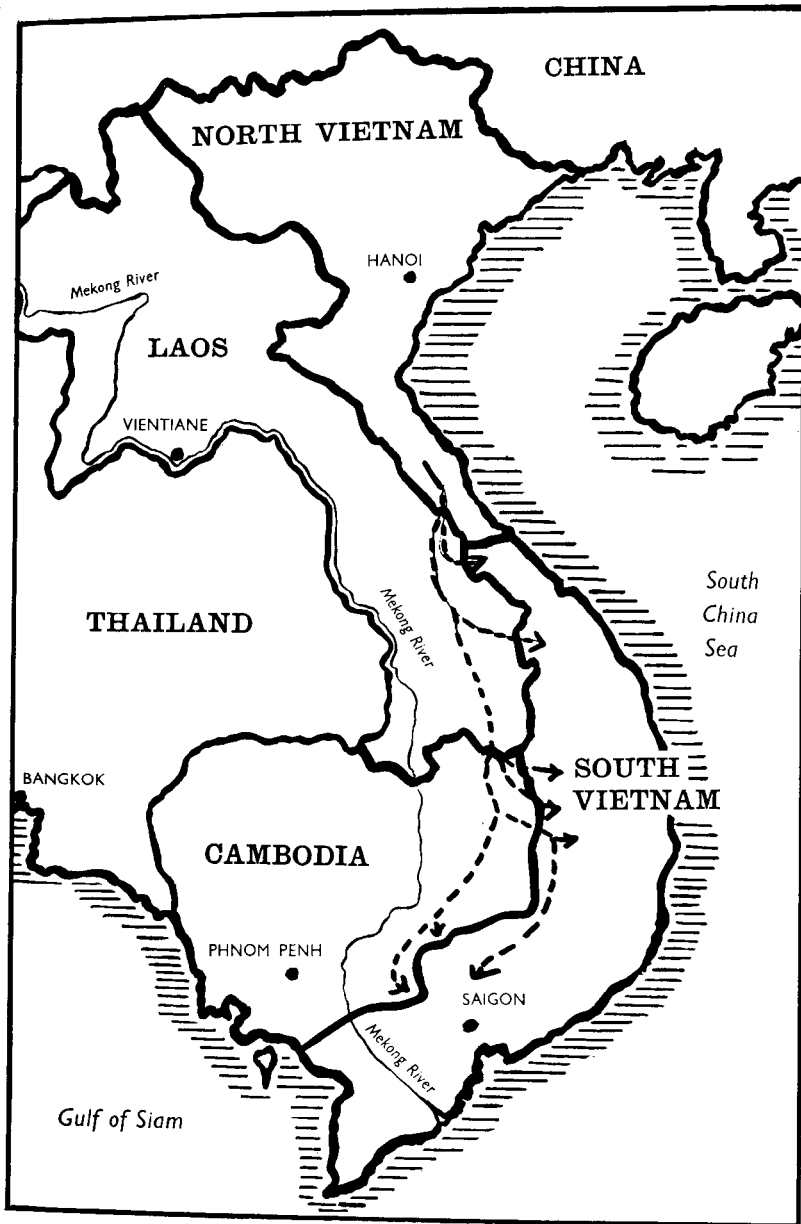


vietnam is our world

max nord





VIETNAM IS OUR WORLD

max nord

vietnam is our world

INTERNATIONAL
DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION CENTRE
(INTERDOC)
VAN STOLKWEG 10, THE HAGUE (THE NETHERLANDS)

I FAIRIES AND DRAGONS OF VIETNAM

A thousand waterfalls dash, crashing sky and earth,
Parting China, you force your way into Laos . . .
And the Nine-Dragons extend their folds and sing with joy,
For, in the distance, you see VIETNAM, the promised land.

From the *Nine-Dragons Hymn* (Nine-Dragons in the Vietnamese name of the Mekong River) by *Xuan Viet*.

With a coastline of over 3,000 kilometres Vietnam extends along the Gulf of Tonkin in the east, the Gulf of Siam in the west, and protrudes into the South China Sea in the south. In the north it borders on the immense domain of the Chinese, who, before as well as after the beginning of the Christian era, were among the occupiers of Vietnam for centuries. To the west of its frontiers lie, from north to south, Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and the easternmost part of India. The population of the country, which was split into two parts along the 17th parallel in 1954, numbers approximately 28 millions, 17 millions of whom live south of the dividing line. The southern part with a coastline of 1,600 kilometres and an

Original title: Vietnam is de wereld.

Translated and prepared at Interdoc, The Hague, by C. G. van Dugteren and G. T. Davis.

Photographs copyright: UPI, AP, ANEFO, Mekong Features, Camera Press, Max Nord. Second map reproduced from 'Histoire du Vietnam' by André Masson, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.

Copyright by Interdoc, The Hague, 1970.

area of 169,000 square kilometres as against a total Vietnamese area of 300,000 square kilometres, varies in width from 50 to 160 kilometres and consists of enormous lowlands intersected by countless rivers in the south. The Mekong River, for example, which rises on the Tibetan plateau, forms in the extreme south of the country a delta with an area of no less than 78,000 square kilometres, which is about the size of Switzerland, and which is increasing by about 80 square kilometres yearly, as a result of mud deposits from the river and its tributaries. Central Vietnam, which is now the north of South Vietnam, is marked by a mountain chain where tribes can still be found which have not mingled with the Vietnamese who originally came from South China, do not speak their language and have resisted integration into any form of Vietnamese state organization up to this day. In the northern and central areas of Vietnam, with rich coastal plains in the east and mountains in the west, there are also fertile deltas. Tropical jungle covers two fifths of the country and is used among other things for industrial purposes. Jute, tea, coffee, vegetables and flowers are grown mainly on the upland plains; from north to south there are rubber and pepper plantations and in the lowlands there is an abundance of rice and fruit.

Legend has it that the Vietnamese are descended from fairies and dragons. The first rulers of Vietnam are said to have belonged to the Hong Bang dynasty. There were twenty of them, and they ruled from 2847 to 258 b.c., 150 years for each emperor. This is by no means long, however, for this dynasty is related to Shen Nong, one of the three legendary Chinese Emperors, descendants of the nine Emperors of the Human Race, who together ruled for 456,000 years and were the successors of the first twelve Emperors of Heaven and Earth, each of whom had ruled for 18,000 years. Beyond these Emperors there was Tao, the Eternal Principle.

The founder of the Hong Bang dynasty was De Minh, a nephew of Shen Nong. He it was who, when travelling through what is now the province of Hunan, met a fairy, who bore him a son, Loc Tuc. The latter ruled over his heritage, the southern part of the realm of De Ninh, which was called Xich Qui, Red Devil, under the name of Duong Vuong. This fairy's son married King Dong Dinh's daughter, who bore the name of Long Nu, which means something like dragon woman. Now the dragons' race and the fairies' race had mingled. Their son was called Sung Lam and succeeded to his father's throne under the name of Lac Long, Dragon King. From his marriage with

Au Co, daughter of King De Lai, a hundred sons were born. But Lac Long believed that the intermingling of dragons and fairies could bring no happiness, and that, as a descendant of dragons, he could not go on living with a wife of fairy descent for long, so at his suggestion Au Co moved to the mountains with fifty of their sons, while Lac Long went with the fifty others to the coastal area in the south. His eldest son ruled under the name of Hung Vuong and made Phong Chau, in the present North Vietnamese province of Vinh Yen, his capital. This was how Vietnam, formerly known as Van Lang, came into existence, and therefore the Vietnamese have dragons and fairies as ancestors. The dragon is the national symbol.

The colourful legend contains elements of historic truth to the extent that it has been established that the origin of Vietnam lay in China, south of the Yangtze, far to the north of its present borders. A migration caused a move to the south from this part of China (Nam Thien), which took these people as far south as the Mekong Delta. On their way they had driven away the Chams and Khmers, peoples of Indian origin. The indigenous tribes in the areas between South China and the Mekong Delta were also either driven away or sometimes absorbed by the invaders, while others fled to the mountains, where some tribes have managed to hold their own down to the present day. This is the reason why there are so many different ethnic types among the Vietnam population and such a large variety, from light to dark, in colour of skin. The culture introduced in these areas was of course Chinese, and so were the original language, as well as the administrative, social and political structure of the country. Also Chinese are the ancestor worship, which has penetrated virtually all other religions here, and the practice of the five virtues Yen, Li, I, Chih and Tsin: humaneness, courteousness, loyalty, understanding and sincerity; and the centuries-old, threefold relation of responsibility: between prince and subject, between husband and wife, between father and son. Confucianism has been the prevailing philosophy for nearly two thousand years, both in personal and public life, in spite of the spread of and oppression by Buddhism; about two thirds of the population worship Buddha. These ancient religious and social traditions, which are no longer so clearly visible in the big Vietnamese cities, continue to exist particularly among the peasant population, where, as everywhere else in the world, the adaptation to modern Western ideas proceeds most slowly. This is one of the many and one of the main reasons why 'Vietnamization', of peace in particular, is so

essential and why it should be given such a high priority in the territory of former Indo-China. For tradition is so strong that from it the population derived the strength to resist and to defeat a repeated and thousand-year-old Chinese domination, and from it they also derived their identity and autonomy.

The earliest registered date in Vietnamese history is 208 b.c., when the kingdom of Nam Viet came into existence. At the time of the Han Dynasty, Nam Viet was an autonomous kingdom, though still under a vague Chinese suzerainty. This situation ended in 111 b.c., when China annexed the country, also known by the name of An Nam, the pacified South; the name Vietnam was officially introduced by Emperor Gia Long as late as 1802 a.d. For 1,000 years, until 939 a.d., Vietnam constituted the Chinese province of Giao Chi. In this period Vietnam, which then did not extend as far south as today, assumed its specific character in the economic, social and political sphere, and adopted the Confucian world and life outlook and the Chinese script. Repeated revolts against the Chinese remained unsuccessful until 939, when there was disorder in China after the downfall of the T'ang Dynasty. The centuries following the liberation from Chinese domination did not show an image of unity and order, but of continual strife between royal families which, once they had come to power, had to defend themselves against their rivals and against an always imminent Chinese invasion, and to seek expansion in the south for the growing population. In those times as well the Chinese Emperor was recognized as the overlord, and an annual tribute was paid to him, in ivory and gold among other things, as a token of dependence. In 1407 the country was once again annexed, this time by an Emperor of the Ming Dynasty. It was the warrior Le Loi, a peasant by origin, who led the war of liberation against the hereditary Chinese enemy, and in 1427 succeeded in shaking off the yoke of the oppressor. Le Loi immediately proceeded to recognize the Chinese suzerainty in name and to pay the necessary tributes, as had been done all the time. But this was obviously no obstacle to political autonomy, and neither were the preservation of the Chinese socio-political organizational system (the examinations, mandarinism) and of the Confucian morals.

Historians hold the view that Vietnam in those days was rather a military-controlled state than a legalized empire. The court was isolated from the people and was above all a symbol; the military and civil services which actually wielded power were mandarins, educated

in accordance with a complicated system of competitive examinations at nine different levels. Skill in poetry-writing and framing of government regulations were among the main subjects, as were knowledge of history, poetry and morals. This education system naturally meant that the ruling class not only constituted an intellectual elite, but at the same time a small minority. For only the sons of rich families could be spared for the arduous and prolonged studies. This fact and the circumstance that mandarin wisdom was mainly rooted in the past implied that the ruling minority was conservative and involved in the preservation of prevailing types of government and administration. The Vietnam economy was then, as now, mainly agrarian; until the eighteenth century there were hardly any towns. The village was the administrative as well as the social unit, and this remained so with the expansion to the south. The kingdom of Champa along the coastal plains of Central Vietnam was conquered in 1471 and thereupon the Khmer country in the south. After a century of strife the Mekong Delta was occupied in 1759 and so the Gulf of Siam was reached. And now the ultimate extent of the Vietnamese conquests was reached too. The time coincide with the first contacts with the European conquerors. Britain, France, the Netherlands and Portugal were then competing in trade and in the spreading of the Christian religion; the Netherlands drove out Portugal and were driven out in their turn by the British, who got their hands full in India. The Netherlands were engaged in the establishment of a colonial regime in what is now Indonesia and France could freely take hold of Indo-China.

From the times of Le Loi, who had captured Hanoi from the Chinese and was proclaimed emperor in 1427, down to the second half of the eighteenth century, the Trinh family in the north and the Nguyen family in the south had fought each other without definite results. The relative balance of power between these prominent mandarin families was shattered in 1770 by three brothers, who in the so-called Tay Son revolt put the Nguyen to flight, defeated the Trinh armies as well as a Chinese army which invaded the country (the last Vietnamese-Chinese war!) and so created Vietnam unity for the first time. The conquering brothers were Nguyen Van Hue, who settled in Hanoi and was proclaimed emperor under the name of Quang Trung; Nguyen Van Nac who ruled in Hue; and Nguyen Van Lu far to the south. But this seizure of power still failed to bring peace to Vietnam. A prince of the ousted Nguyen family, Nguyen Anh, after some decades of fighting succeeded in regaining control first over Saigon and the

south, later over Central Vietnam and Hue, and finally over Hanoi. With the assistance of the Bishop of Adran, Monseigneur Pigneau de Behaine, who provided volunteers for Nguyen's army, trained his soldiers, equipped his fleet and constructed fortifications, Nguyen was able to proclaim himself Emperor of Vietnam on June 1, 1802. He assumed the name of Gia Long and was the first of the imperial dynasty which ended after 1945 with Bao Dai. With Gia Long the struggle began against Christianity which had been making progress in Vietnam, and against the colonizing Christians; the present struggle for power is one of its offshoots.

Gia Long ruled until 1820 and a great number of years of his reign were devoted to the pacification and reconstruction of an empire afflicted for so long by civil war. His reign is described as a military despotism. He did not introduce a single reform in the administration, reintroduced the system of competitive examinations and continued the practices of heavy taxes and forced labour for public works. To his credit may be mentioned a reallocation of land for rice cultivation, revision and extension of legislation, standardization of weights and measures and land registration. His successor, Emperor Minh Mang, proceeded along the same course as his father towards a strictly centralized regime. This emperor felt strong links with Chinese literature and the Confucian traditions and therefore combated Christianity with the utmost violence. In 1833 he even issued a decree under which adherence to the Christian religion was made punishable by death. French missionaries were driven out of the country, imprisoned and executed. He died in 1840 and Thieu Tri, his successor, pursued an even stricter anti-Christian policy during the seven years of his rule, which cost Emperor Tu Duc (1848-83) dear, when the French used it as the direct motive for the military campaign launched by them in 1859 and resulting in the proclamation of the French protectorate in 1883. Once again Vietnam had lost its independence. Already in 1840 French ships had entered Vietnamese ports to demand the release of the French missionaries, which they obtained. When Tu Duc decided on complete isolation for his country and the extermination of Christianity, and when the death penalty on French and Spanish missionaries had been carried out, there followed the French attack on Tourane (Danang) in 1859, which in a quarter of a century was to result in French rule over these territories. In 1862 he signed a treaty ceding the three southern provinces to France. Five years later Admiral de la Grandière occupied the western provinces,

whereupon the French moved to the north and captured Hanoi as early as 1873. Though the French Government annulled this conquest, Tu Duc's prestige had now sunk so low that, realizing his inability to exercise power he asked the Chinese Emperor for assistance. This request was based on Vietnam's ancient relationship of vassalage to China and was at the same time an attempt to play off France against China. But the French countered Chinese troop movements in the north with the (now definite) reoccupation of Hanoi and on August 25, 1883, in the imperial town of Hue, Tu Duc signed the treaty which established French rule over Vietnam.

French colonial rule has brought about a definite and indeed inevitable break in Vietnamese history, not only through the introduction of Western European methods in administration, economics and politics, which constituted a break with the ancient traditions originating in China, but at the same time by evoking what may be seen in retrospect as a national resistance to the alien rulers, which has inspired fiercely nationalist sentiments and has thus, in the course of over fifty years, turned the political unity of a nation embracing so many peoples, religions, customs and persuasions into a necessity and a reality. The French, following the good old colonial habit, ruled absolute, though they had drawn up an administrative system under which Tonkin was governed indirectly by French governors ('résidents') at the same level as the existing mandarin hierarchy, and Annam kept its emperor and its court. Only Cochin China was formally termed a colony; Tonkin and Annam as well as Laos and Cambodia were termed protectorates; they were joined with Cochin China to constitute the Indo-China Union of 1887. At the head of this Union was a Governor-General under the direct responsibility of the French Minister of Colonies. The Governors-General were rarely if ever experts, they were French civil servants or politicians whose appointment was prompted by motives related to domestic policies. Naturally this did not enhance the expertise of top-level government and gave the regional and provincial officials scope to exert considerable power. Besides, there was great fluctuation at the top; between 1892 and 1930 there were no fewer than 23 Governors-General — less than two years per Governor-General. This indeed was a far cry from the traditional 150 years for the reign of each emperor! But we must apparently view this within the context of French conditions, for the number of French Ministers of the Colonies in the same period was even higher than that of the Governors-General.

At all levels of civil life in Vietnam the French seized power; there were so many of them that, according to Virginia Thompson's conclusive formula 'there were too many for what they did and too few for what they should have done'. Around the turn of the century French colonial policies developed into unabashed exploitation of a conquered country and in this their attitude was no different from that of other countries towards the areas colonized by them. The Bank of Indo-China became the financial and political nerve centre of this colonial policy. As a discount bank and a credit bank it was the channel through which French investments were fed into the colonies and through which they also flowed back in the form of capital many times multiplied. The pattern of the Vietnamese economy was not changed by the French, who seized complete control of the mines, rubber and textile industries, virtually leaving rice cultivation and stockbreeding to the Chinese section of the population, and allowed the well-to-do Vietnamese to concentrate on large land ownership and its exploitation. In 1940 the peasants still made up 85 to 90 percent of the Vietnamese population. At that time a great deal of large land ownership was divided into smaller, sometimes too small, parts, while the industrialization (rubber) resulted in the migration of large groups of manual workers from the north to the south, and in urbanization and poverty. But the peasants also were usually poor and their poverty grew worse as a result of the introduction of government monopolies for the production and distribution of important by-products such as alcohol, opium and salt. Besides, as a result of urbanization and road construction and the disappearance of old traditions, the function of the village as a common centre of social and economic security was to a considerable extent lost, and was replaced by nothing but poverty and alienation. Justice administered by the French with the aid of interpreters now became a breeding-ground of corruption; the introduction of the French system of education finally created a small native elite of French-oriented senior civil servants and large landowners, often Catholics as well, who became even more isolated from the native population than had been the case under the mandarin hierarchy.

The loss of traditional values and impoverishment were the natural breeding ground of deracination, resistance, nationalism and communism. In the Twenties illegal organizations sprang up, among which the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang, the Vietnamese Nationalist Party, founded in 1927, was one of the most important. Other

illegal organizations often had Marxist tendencies. The National Party mentioned above aimed at the overthrow of the French regime and the establishment of a Vietnamese republic. The Chinese Quo Ming Tang of Sun Yat Sen was their example. However, the rebellion organized by them close to the Chinese border in February 1930, was suppressed by the French and resulted in the crushing of the party, which did not reemerge until after the outbreak of World War II. The void left by its disappearance from the scene was filled by the three Vietnamese Communist organizations, which in 1930, merged into the Indo-Chinese Communist Party led by the Comintern representative in South East Asia, Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot), an alias of Nguyen Tat Thanh, later known as Ho Chi Minh. In 1911, at the age of 21, he had left Vietnam as a cabin boy on a merchant vessel, had gone to France, where, as a member of the French Socialist Party, he had voted in 1920 for the breakaway from that party of the group which was to constitute the French Communist Party. Three years later he represented it at the Peasants International in Moscow, went to Canton as an interpreter and there founded the Indo-Chinese Communist Party. This party organized peasants' demonstrations when crops failed, strikes at plantations and in factories, uprisings and even the institution of 'soviets' in two Vietnamese provinces, which provoked severe counter-measures by the French. It is estimated that there were approximately 10,000 political prisoners in Vietnam around 1932; executions of communist leaders were frequent in those years. But the communists were not defeated, even if they were divided — Trotskyist groups were also active — and lost some support at the time of the Popular Front in France, when socialists and communists took part in the French government. The end of the Popular Front in 1938 turned the Indo-Chinese Communist Party once again into a persecuted and illegal organization, which had to be reorganized in South China. But it had then already proved to be the main revolutionary and nationalist resistance organization in Vietnam.

The Japanese, who invaded Vietnam in 1940, left the French in peace as a result of the relations between the French Vichy government and the Axis Powers. It is obvious that in those years when the liberation seemed to be close at hand, the national and liberation movements in Vietnam developed rapidly. At times they were backed by the Japanese, and anyway they were always tolerated by them, in accordance with the political course also applied in the Dutch East

Indies. At a congress in China in October 1942 all Vietnamese resistance organizations joined in the foundation of the Viet Nam Cach Mang Dong Minh Hoi, the Revolutionary League of Vietnam, Dong Minh for short. The main parties were the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang, the Nationalist Party mentioned previously, which was practically eradicated by the French after the 1930 rebellion, the Viet Nam Phuc Quoc Dong Minh Hoi and the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi, Viet Minh for short, League for Independence of Vietnam, the core of which consisted of members of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party led by Ho Chi Minh. The Nationalist Party counted on the support of the Chinese Quo Minh Tang, the Phuc Quoc Hoi expected support from the Japanese, and the Viet Minh tried to secure the support of the Americans in China with its anti-fascist attitude and the assistance given to American pilots brought down in North Vietnam. Of these calculations, only those of the Viet Minh materialized.

When in March 1945 the Japanese disarmed the French and made Emperor Bao Dai proclaim the independence of Vietnam (at the same time stating his willingness to collaborate closely with Japan) the foundation was laid for a seizure of power by the Vietnamese. But which of them? At the Japanese capitulation in August 1945 the opportunity was seized by the Viet Minh, in favour of whom Bao Dai abdicated. The Quoc Dan Dang nationalists, who were at Hanoi before the others and were also prepared to cooperate with the Emperor, were beaten as regards energy and cunning by the Viet Minh, who immediately prepared for the suppression of these non-Marxist rivals. The Viet Minh guerrilla forces in North Vietnam, fighting with American weapons, imported from China, who had often been trained by American officers brought in from China for the purpose, had contained an entire Japanese division (the 21st) in the north. The Viet Minh took over power from the Japanese, as did the nationalists in Indonesia. On August 19, 1945, two days after the proclamation of Indonesian independence in Djakarta, there was a Viet Minh government in Hanoi and on August 25 a nationalist demonstration by approximately 100,000 people or more took place in Saigon. When the French returned to (the south of) Vietnam, the Viet Minh was firmly in power, both in the north and in the south. But the recognition by France of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as an autonomous state within the French Union in March 1946, one year after the disarming of their soldiers by the Japanese, again failed to bring independence and freedom.

In that year of disarmament and rearmament of the French something else had happened. In Saigon the Viet Minh had ruled for no longer than a month. Late in August 1945 the British had moved in, to whom at the conference of the Big Three in Potsdam South East Asia had been assigned as their sphere of influence. In the case of Indo-China they had to share the responsibility for the restoration of law and order with China. For that reason the French colony (the French, powerless for the moment, had to look on) was divided into two along the 16th parallel. In the north the Chinese had to round up the defeated Japanese, disarm and repatriate them; in the south this was the task of the British. While in the north the Chinese interpretation of their task implied the de facto recognition of the provisional Viet Minh rebel government with Ho Chi Minh as President, the British view in the south was that they had to put an end to this regime as soon as possible and restore the French to their rights. The demonstration in Saigon mentioned above had come about in connection with this attitude and ended in riots in which three men were killed. Thereupon the British refused to enter into direct negotiations with the Viet Minh. These negotiations had to take place via the headquarters of the defeated Japanese armies, who had been ordered to wait until they were disarmed and evacuated by Allied troops. The British proclaimed martial law and ordered the disarming of the Viet Minh army and police forces. They rearmed and regrouped French soldiers, who, on September 23, under the command of Colonel Cedile and jointly with British troops who had arrived from India on September 12, occupied the Saigon town hall, where the Viet Minh government had installed itself as well as other strategic points in the city. There were casualties, arrests were made, and many Viet Minh leaders fled. The very same morning the French tricolour was once again flying over the city. A strike and rioting on October 3 resulted in fruitless negotiations and now French reinforcements started to flow into the city. French and British, sometimes assisted by Japanese troops, fought the Vietnamese independence fighters. By Christmas the French had 50,000 troops in their colonies and the British departed now that France could be considered capable of taking over the pacification of the area.

The Viet Minh defeat south of the 16th parallel was a serious drawback for the north. It was to their advantage that China had little reason at the time for leniency in her political relations with France; besides, a friendly North Vietnamese government was in her interest.

The 3,500 French troops disarmed by the Japanese remained disarmed and confined in the citadel of Hanoi; 1,000 French refugees in China were not allowed to return to Vietnam. The Chinese 'occupation', which lasted four months, caused grief and vexation to the French, worry and anxiety to the Viet Minh, but no fighting. The Vietnamese communists received no support from Soviet Russia, which watched the Chinese influence in this area with suspicion but assumed an attitude of wait-and-see, nor did they receive support from the French communists, to whom the Viet Minh rebellion could mean a political obstacle in their relations with the USSR and in their European tactics.

So when in March 1946 the French recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as an autonomous state within the French Union they could move to the north. In September of that year in Paris Ho Chi Minh and the French Minister of Overseas Affairs concluded an agreement which included a 'modus vivendi'. But it had hardly been valid for a few months when the French killed 6,000 Vietnamese in an incident at Hai Phong. Within a month of this incident the Viet Minh troops attacked the French throughout Vietnam, and this was the beginning of a struggle for power which has not been won today. But has been lost — by the French.

II THE HIGHER POWERS

When we are still under the effect of Karma
We must be not too quick to murmur against Heaven
For the source of happiness dwells always in our heart.

From *Kim Van Kieu*, classic Vietnamese poem of the nineteenth century.

France started its campaign in Indo-China in 1859 with the capture of the port of Tourane, the present Danang. Soon afterwards Saigon fell, but it took the French thirteen years before the six southern provinces were in their hands and their forces could move to the north. It was a small French force which captured Hanoi.

The French troops who conquered Vietnam numbered no more than 3,000 and their victory is mainly attributed to the mobility of the French fleet and the fire power of the artillery. Over seventy years later, when on May 8, 1954, at Geneva the French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault in a voice muffled with tears announced the fall of Dien Bien Phu and with this the end of French rule in South-east Asia, France had in the field a National Vietnamese Army, raised in

1948, consisting of 200,000 troops and another 50,000 militia in the villages, while 30,000 Vietnamese also served in the 178,000 strong French Expedition Corps in Indo-China. Furthermore 50,000 Cambodians and Laotians fought in their countries' armies against the Viet Minh.

A hundred years after the French with their expeditionary force of 3,000 had gone ashore on the thousands of kilometres long coast of Vietnam, the United States had about 300 military advisers in South Vietnam, members of the US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), who had undertaken the training of the Vietnamese army. The next year, on May 5, 1960, this group was enlarged to 685. On December 20 of the same year the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam was founded. In 1961, also on May 5, President Kennedy stated that armed assistance by the United States to South Vietnam was being considered and in 1962 the presence of 4,000 American military personnel in South Vietnam, was reported. The figure was increased to 25,000 in 1964, to 54,000 in June 1965, and to 128,000 in September of that year. When on October 31, 1969, on the eve of the presidential elections President Lyndon B. Johnson announced the cessation of American bombing in North Vietnam together with his withdrawal from the political scene, there were 549,500 American military personnel in Vietnam, forming part of the total allied force of 1,400,000 (according to Admiral J. S. McCain, Commander-in-Chief of the American Pacific Forces in an interview with the Readers' Digest). According to Associated Press the South Vietnamese army at that time totalled over a million men.

France defeated Vietnam with 3,000 men and lost it with 428,000. A hundred years later America starts with 300 military advisers and after ten years of war with nearly two and a half million men and an almost unimaginable superiority in the conventional military and technical respects has still not won the war. Can she win this war? Has she overestimated herself out of all proportion, while underestimating the enemy? A question which American commentators like to ask and to answer in the affirmative, but a way of putting the question which perhaps does not serve to elucidate the various problems which are inherent in this struggle.

Let us go back to Dien Bien Phu, the end of the Vietnamese struggle for national independence against France and, while taking into account the developments over the past sixteen years, seek a better way of putting the question more likely to offer a perspective. Dien

Bien Phu, now the legendary name of a fortress in a valley close to the Laotian border, some hundreds of kilometres east of Hanoi, a name connected with so much despair and triumph, suffering and heroism, a name which meant the end of French domination in South-east Asia, as the name of Singapore had meant for the British in 1942. The bloody battle of Dien Bien Phu, which lasted 56 days, started on September 2, 1954, with the proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam by Ho Chi Minh, founder of the Communist Party of Indo-China, exactly three weeks after Sukarno had proclaimed the Indonesian Republic. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam was recognized by France in six months, but as 'an independent state within the French Union', and hardly had Ho Chi Minh signed his agreement on a 'modus vivendi' in Paris, when the French violated it by setting up a customs control of their own in the North Vietnamese port of Hai Phong and took an incident in this connection as a motive to teach the Vietnamese a lesson: a bombing on November 23, 1946, which resulted in the death of 6,000 residents of Hai Phong. This and other incidents led to a Vietnamese attack on the French at Hanoi on December 19. Thereupon hostilities broke out throughout the country. The troops of the Democratic Republic were commanded by General Vo Nguyen Giap, who was to become the conqueror of Dien Bien Phu. Attempts at negotiations on the part of Vietnam were either ignored by the (Socialist) French governments or (once) countered with a demand for capitulation. The French counter-offensive took shape in the proclamation on June 5, 1948, of Emperor Bao Dai — already unsuccessfully elevated to power by the Japanese in 1945 — as Head of State of a Vietnam integrated in the French Union. Bao Dai, who lived in Hong Kong and had been given the merry nickname of Nightclub Emperor there, was an adviser of the Ho Chi Minh government, while Ho Chi Minh in his turn was popularly called Uncle Ho. The French hoped to create a central anti-Ho figure in the shape of Bao Dai. They had now formally accepted the unity of Vietnam and at the same time laid the foundation for a split. It lasted a full year before Bao Dai could officially proclaim the State of Vietnam. Then followed de jure recognition by Great Britain and the United States in 1950, a Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement between the United States and France, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos for immediate military assistance by the U.S. to the three last-named countries as a result of the North Korean attack on South Korea, and a treaty providing direct American

economic aid for Vietnam. In 1951 Vietnamese as well as Laotian and Cambodian delegations took part in the ratification of the Japanese Peace Treaty at San Francisco. Contrary to French expectations the Ho Chi Minh army was not attacked by the Bao Dai supporters. This task fell to the French themselves. Not only French soldiers and Indo-Chinese, but also ex-nazis from the Foreign Legion, Moroccans and Senegalese were fighting on the French side. The political watchword in those years was Vietnamese unity, silence was kept as much as possible about communism in order to enable the enemies of France — Catholics and communists, socialists and democrats — to be agreed on one common programme. At that time, according to Ellen J. Hammer, Ho Chi Minh even refused to state whether he was a communist or not.

In 1951 France had spent about 2 billion dollars on the Indo-Chinese war and lost some 19,000 European French in battle in four years. Independent and left-wing newspapers such as *Combat* and *Franc-Tireur* opposed the government's policy in France, as did influential magazines such as the Catholic *Esprit* and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*. The French Socialist Party, which formed part of the government, declared itself several times for negotiations with Ho. But the French continued to fight and even received considerable financial support from the United States, which footed the bill for no less than 80 per cent of French military expenditure in Indo-China a few months before the fall of Dien Bien Phu. But in the meantime the Democratic Republic of Vietnam had found a strong ally in Communist China. At the celebrations in 1950 of the anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic there was no longer any question of disguising its communist nature; in August the Republican radio ended one of its transmissions with: 'Long live Marshall Stalin! Long live Chairman Mao Tse-tung! Long live President Ho Chi Minh!' When the Vice-Premier and Minister of Defence, Politburo member General Vo Nguyen Giap, Commander-in-Chief of the people's army which had been trained by him ten years before, gained the victory in the valley of Dien Bien Phu, the north of Vietnam was in communist hands. As stated by the American commentator Joseph Alsop, the Viet Minh had won the leadership of the Vietnamese national movement. The Geneva Conference, which was decided upon by the Foreign Ministers in Berlin in February 1954, and where the Korean as well as the Indo-China wars were to be discussed, started on April 27 and was dominated from the first by the bad news from the valley in

North Vietnam. The news from the south, however, was encouraging. Terrorism in Saigon had been virtually suppressed, the Mekong Delta largely cleared of Viet Minh troops; Catholics, Buddhists and prominent Buddhist sects such as those of the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao showed actively anti-communist attitudes. On July 20 and 21 agreements were signed at the Geneva Conference, which was presided over by Great Britain and the USSR and also attended by France, the United States, Communist China, Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The main settlements were the provisional partition along the 17th parallel as demarcation line, no military bases or foreign military personnel were to be allowed in either zone; no new troops or military equipment could be brought into either zone; elections were to be held throughout the country on July 20, 1956, which were to lead to reunification; an International Control Commission (India, Canada and Poland) was set up to supervise the carrying out of the agreements. For 300 days after the signing of the agreements Vietnamese civilians were allowed to travel freely from the north to the south and vice versa. The United States and South Vietnam did not sign the agreements. The United States issued a unilateral statement that it would refrain from all threats of force or use of force in violation of the Geneva Agreements, that it would regard fresh aggression in contravention of the agreements as a serious threat to international peace and security and would continue to promote Vietnamese unity, to be achieved by means of free elections under the supervision of the United Nations. The South Vietnamese government protested against the agreements and the American statement, explicitly reserved its full freedom of action and committed itself only to abstain from the use of force.

While the Geneva Conference was still in progress, on July 7, the Head of State, former Emperor Bao Dai had appointed the strict Catholic Ngo Dinh Diem as Prime Minister. It is generally regarded as due to his regime that the antagonisms in Vietnam escalated as they did. His was a gigantic task. The police was dominated by a criminal gang, the Binh Xuyen, with an army of its own, which controlled the narcotics trade, gambling houses and prostitution in Saigon; the landowners, most of them members of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects, which also owned small armies, governed the peasants in the feudal manner; and the French opposed him since they regarded him as an opponent. Ngo Dinh Diem forcibly brought all these various political, social and religious groups under control, and established a

family dictatorship which was bound to end in bloodshed. The well-known American politicologist Hans J. Morgenthau holds him responsible for laying the foundations of the present civil war. 'He ruthlessly suppressed all opposition', he writes, 'established concentration camps, organized a brutal secret police, closed newspapers, and rigged elections'. No wonder that the suppressed sought refuge in the camp of the communists, who found it even easier to pose as liberators from tyranny and capitalism.

The same occurred in the north, but in reverse. But while Diem only incited opposition, 'Uncle Ho' wiped out his opponents drastically. The land reforms carried out by him cost tens of thousands of lives; the estimates of the number of those liquidated by murder and imprisonment vary from 50,000 to 100,000. Add to this the 850,000 refugees from the north — largely Catholics — who availed themselves of the opportunity for free travel within 300 days after the signing of the Geneva agreements to flee to the south, and it becomes plain that soon after the closing of the provisional demarcation line there could no longer be any question of any appreciable opposition in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam — *mirabile dictu*. According to Bernard Fall only 150,000 Vietnamese had moved from the south to the north. Moreover the north left behind in the south large weapon depots and a few thousand well-trained guerrilla fighters of the former Viet Minh army. A note from the British Government to the Soviet Russian Government (co-chairmen at Geneva in 1954) sent in April 1956 also shows that the North Vietnamese army, in gross violation of the Geneva agreements, had been increased from 7 to at least 20 divisions, while the South Vietnamese had reduced their forces. Thus in the shortest possible time the position of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam had become many times stronger than that of South Vietnam. In the meantime Diem had not been idle in the south. He had succeeded in getting rid of the ambitious military commanders, had driven the Binh Xuyen army out of Saigon, had defeated the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao forces and had managed to provide housing for the hundreds of thousands of refugees from the north and to integrate them in the south. Within a year of his premiership he formed a new cabinet which consolidated his power. This happened in May 1955. Six months later, in October, the Head of State, ex-Emperor Bao Dai, was deposed by referendum, this time definitively, and Diem succeeded him as President with a majority of 98 %. Early in the same year the first few hundred Americans

embarked on the training of the South Vietnamese army (MAAG) and the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which had come into being in September 1954, was ratified by only three Asian states: Thailand, the Philippines and Pakistan, and by the United States, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and France. The treaty was given a special protocol pledging the protection of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam against communist-led 'internal aggression'. From the American side South Vietnam had already received the assurance of support and protection in October 1954 in the shape of a letter from President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Diem. Also in 1955 Diem refused to accept the North Vietnamese invitation to start the discussions which were to lead to the elections on July 20, 1956, and the reunification of the provisionally divided country. In North Vietnam, Diem argued, there will be no really free elections and the fraudulently obtained North Vietnamese votes could outweigh those of South Vietnam. Seen in retrospect, it is absolutely incredible that a sophisticated Western diplomacy could allow a blunder of such magnitude and such far-reaching consequences to happen. So that when July 20 passed without elections, without at least demonstrable and serious attempts at their organization by the countries which had signed the Geneva agreements and committed themselves not to violate them, on both sides of the 17th parallel violation had become definitive and all later invocations of those agreements had become senseless and a proof of impotence.

General elections in South Vietnam, the promulgation of its first constitution and the installation of a parliament in 1956, statements such as those by General Eisenhower and President Diem in 1957 while the latter was visiting the United States as his guest, that both countries were seeking peaceful reunification of Vietnam, fresh elections in South Vietnam in 1959 — while communist guerrilla activities were increasing — in which the opposition parties were not allowed to take part, the foundation of the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam on December 20, 1960, complaints lodged by the south with the International Control Commission about the presence of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam, an unsuccessful coup against Diem's regime in the same year — when one sums up in chronological order the events between the Geneva Conference and President Diem's statement at the opening of the budget debate in parliament on October 2, 1961, ('This is no longer a guerrilla war . . . It is a war waged by an enemy who is attacking us with heavily

armed military units and is aiming at a strategic decision in South-east Asia in accordance with the Communist International') one cannot fail to notice how the clouds over this part of the world were gathering and becoming more and more ominous. President Kennedy also spoke in 1961 of 'the smouldering coals of war in South-east Asia' and stated that America would do everything to save South Vietnam from communism. At the end of the year President Diem declares the state of national emergency and President Kennedy promises him more assistance.

The following year, 1962, Communist China for the first time makes herself clearly heard. In a radio transmission the Chinese Republic states that her security is seriously threatened by a non-declared US war in South Vietnam and demands withdrawal of the American troops. At the time there are 4,000 American military personnel in South Vietnam, where a systematical 'clear-up' of Viet Cong rebels has started in the province of Binh Duong (operation 'Sunrise') and Diem's scheme for the installation of a few thousand 'strategic hamlets' in the Mekong Delta in order to stem communist forces and weapons flowing into the country through Cambodia, meets with warm approval in parliament. That year also the Canadian and Indian members of the International Control Commission, on June 2, find North Vietnam guilty of subversion and covert aggression against South Vietnam. The Polish ICC delegation rejects the accusation.

Then follows the year of Ngo Dinh Diem's assassination. In April 1963 he had initiated the 'open arms' campaign, still functioning successfully today, which facilitates desertion for the rebels and makes it attractive, but when in June of that year the Buddhists of Hue started their demonstrations, martial law was hastily proclaimed and the first Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc, burns himself to death in front of the Cambodian Legation by pouring petrol over himself and setting it alight, (June 11), a threatening Buddhist revolt materializes in a hideous manner. Government troops had to suppress riots in Saigon and an agreement was concluded between the government and the Buddhist leaders which looked very much like a cease-fire. In August armed police were used together with army units for a raid on the main Buddhist pagoda at Saigon, the Xa Loi pagoda. Diem's Foreign Minister Vu Van Mau, himself a Buddhist, resigned that very day and the Ambassador to the United States Tran Van Chong, his father-in-law, does the same. A few days later Cambodia broke off her diplomatic relations with South Vietnam.

Then events followed one another with fatal speed: on September 2 the Times of Vietnam, a Diem-controlled paper, accused the US Central Intelligence Agency of planning a coup d'état for August 28 to depose President Diem. The same day President Kennedy stated that the US is prepared to continue its support to South Vietnam, but that he doubts whether the war could be won without the support of the people. 'In my opinion', he added, 'in the last two months the government has gotten out of touch with the people'. Once again there are parliamentary elections that year, once again all 123 candidates have been approved by the government and many of them are not opposed. Among them are President Diem's brother Ngo Dinh Nhu and his wife. Then, in October, follows the White House statement by Minister McNamara and General Taylor in which they express their opinion that America's military task in South Vietnam can be completed at the end of 1965. 'Victory in the sense applying to this type of war is only a matter of months now,' writes the chief of the US Military Assistance Command Vietnam, set up early in 1962, General Paul D. Harkins, in an attempt to make his contribution to the general understanding of military affairs (and his own in particular) in Stars and Stripes, Tokyo on November 1. But in fact the first escalation of the drama is only just beginning. For on that very day, November 1, 1963, the chief generals of the South Vietnamese army launch a military coup against the Diem regime. They surround the presidential palace at Saigon, which they penetrate the next day. President Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu escape through a secret tunnel to a church in the Chinese quarter Cholon, but are caught by the rebels a few hours later. During their transfer to the rebellious generals' headquarters they are murdered. Exactly three weeks later, on November 22, 1963, President Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas. When his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, then two days in office, confirms America's will to continue the military and economic assistance to South Vietnam, the next phase of the war in South-East Asia has begun. There is now no way of telling whether, without these top-level changes in the US and South Vietnam, the course of the fatal events in South Vietnam would have been the same, or whether it was precisely Kennedy and Diem who set the escalation machinery in motion. It looks as if the Vietnam war has specific laws of its own. As in Greek tragedy, higher powers seem to be at work, powers to which peoples and leaders must submit. After Diem's assassination the military leaders formed a provisional

government headed by the former Vice-President Nguyen Ngoc Tho. Political prisoners were immediately released. Parliament was dissolved. But, late in January 1964, three months after the coup which caused the fall of Diem and his regime, there was a new coup! General-Major Nguyen Khanh overthrows the government of General-Major Duong Van Minh and takes his place. In August the Buddhists turn against Khanh, who is in his turn ousted by Nguyen Xuan Oanh, but a month later he returns as Prime Minister. That same month, September, there is a fresh coup d'état led by Lam Van Phat — unsuccessful this time. In October Mayor Tran Van Huong replaces General Khanh, but in January 1965 Tran Van Huong is replaced by Nguyen Xuan Oanh, who is removed in February and replaced by Dr. Phan Huy Quat, who is replaced in June by General Nguyen Cao Ky, who is replaced by Nguyen Van Thieu . . . An encouraging spectacle to the North Vietnamese, who do not remain idle and make their contribution to a further deterioration of morale in the South. With the escalation, the Big Powers, who are perhaps playing the role of the higher powers I mentioned earlier, became increasingly involved in what some time ago it had seemed possible to confine to a civil war. Dean Rusk, American Secretary of State, informs the world on January 2, 1964 of the discovery of enormous stores of weapons and ammunition of Chinese origin in the Mekong Delta and expresses as his opinion that the responsibility for this infiltration rests fairly surely with Hanoi. A few months later the American Minister of Defence announces that an additional amount of 50 million dollars will be granted and another 50,000 troops sent to South Vietnam. In August of that year occurs the incident in the Gulf of Tonkin, in which an American destroyer is attacked (within North Vietnamese territorial waters? It has never been established) by patrolling North Vietnamese torpedo boats and two days later the destroyers Maddox and C. Turner Joy report a torpedo attack and the sinking of two North Vietnamese vessels. In the same year incidents occur between American and Cambodian forces and Russia starts the supply of weapons to Cambodia; Americans are killed and injured in terrorist actions in Saigon. In his State of the Union message of 1965 President Johnson states concerning Vietnam: 'Ten years ago we pledged our help. Three presidents have supported that pledge. We will not break it'. A short time later, after a guerrilla attack on an American base at Pleiku he orders 'retaliatory strikes' to be made on North Vietnamese targets, which are first carried out on

February 7. The Russian Premier Kosygin had arrived in Hanoi the previous day . . . in a speech on February 9 he promised Hanoi more support. Seen from a distance it is like a play in which, following the author's diabolical scheme, the arrival and presence on the stage of the actors are timed to enable a horrible drama to be enacted, the pattern of which becomes increasingly visible. It is on February 12 that 160 aircraft of the American and South Vietnamese air force attack North Vietnam. The great battle of destruction of the north has begun. But it does not bring military decision any nearer. The Tet offensive of February 1968 (Chinese New Year) has remained the last of the attempts by the National Liberation Front to enforce a military decision in an attack on all fronts. Never before had there been such full-scale fighting in South Vietnam and the fierce battles fought at Saigon and Hue for example certainly demonstrated the massive striking power of the northern troops. But the South Vietnamese and Americans repelled the attack, there is no panic, no defeat, rather the conviction that the northern communist republic and its Liberation Front in the south had made a supreme effort, with no other effect than enormous losses on their side, a reduction in strength which would for the time being keep them from launching new large-scale offensives. And the war returns to the old pattern: a bloody guerrilla without perspective, destroying people and their dreams of a life of peace and prosperity, causing hate and bitterness, fear and suffering. When, on October 31, 1969, the departing American President Johnson, who does not seek reelection, who has achieved none of the aims he had set himself concerning the Vietnam war, who hands over to his successor a divided nation, announces the cessation of all bombing in North Vietnam there is still no peace prospect for the survivors on both sides of the 17th parallel.

In April 1965 American students first demonstrated for an end to American participation in the Vietnam war. The peace movement spread like a tidal wave over the United States, over Europe, over Japan. Russia and China, now rivals for hegemony in the communist world, are looking on and continuing their arms supplies and their economic aid to the north. Whichever of the two makes peace with the United States will be the loser and the traitor. Therefore there is no reason either for North Vietnam to seek peace, if this does not imply that the south will simply be thrown into its lap. The Paris negotiations which started in May 1968 have served no other purpose than tactics and propaganda. The North officially denies

that troops of the Democratic Republic are involved in the fighting in the south! In Vietnam the North Vietnamese government even rejects a South Vietnamese offer of repatriation of wounded North Vietnamese soldiers. Because there are no North Vietnamese in South Vietnam . . . The neutrality of Laos and Cambodia (Ho Chi Minh trail) is violated daily and overtly, but all over the world protesting masses turn against America. Even Uncle Ho's death on September 3, 1969, does not start the long hoped for proceedings for negotiations for a cease-fire, which could lead to peace. There is fierce speculation about his successor, but not until six months after his death is Le Duan, First Secretary of the North Vietnamese Communist Party, assumed to have won the struggle for the succession. In an ideological document of no less than 50,000 words, issued in March 1970, he insists on a purge of leaders and other elements 'who are abhorred by the masses'. Duan is regarded as Pro-Russian, while his rival Truong Chin, leading member of the Politburo and chairman of the Permanent Commission of the North Vietnamese National Assembly, is said to be pro-Chinese. Commentators are drawing conflicting conclusions from the events in North Vietnam. Victor Zorza claimed in March 1970 that 'the Vietnam war is virtually over', while Senator J. William Fulbright pleads the reverse: North Vietnamese dominance in Indo-China, a situation in South-east Asia comparable to the communist 'dominance' in Eastern Europe. The events in Laos and Cambodia seem to belie Zorza's view. North Vietnam appears to show rather a tendency to transfer the war to these countries in order to achieve its goals in South Vietnam than a willingness to end the war. And as for the Democratic Senator's please, there appears to be little hope that either his analysis or his perspective give any certainty of the war coming to an end. Only of its being carried on elsewhere. And the handing over of millions of non-communists to a regime which has never shown any inclination to spare its opponents, but on the contrary a preference for their annihilation. Whatever may turn out to be the significance of the events in North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia however, the US has once again been forced on to the defensive and faces far-reaching decisions, on the home front as well. The former French colonial territory has increasingly become a battlefield for the three World Powers, each with its hawks and doves. The dove of peace is not yet on the wing, the bloody-beaked hawks are still hovering over the mountains, forests and ricefields of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

III VIETCONG AND NOT VIETCONG

Guerrilla-warfare is the means whereby the people of a weak, badly equipped country can stand up against an aggressive army possessing better equipment and techniques.

— *Vo Nguyen Giap*

The term Vietcong, literally meaning Vietnamese Communist ('cong' is an abbreviation of cong-san), has been deceptively used for 'the' enemy of the Saigon regime. Deceptively because the term is correct and at the same time incorrect; correct for the organized, armed and ideological resistance to the government(s) of South Vietnam; incorrect because that resistance has also organized non-communist resistance and controls it. Not only have illegal nationalist and religious groups joined the National Liberation Front, but apart from troops of the North Vietnamese People's Army and local South Vietnamese army units (mostly former Viet Minh members) many South Vietnamese have been forced to take part in the guerrilla war, who

are no communists and hardly know what doctrinaire communism implies.

The Liberation Front was founded on December 20, 1960, its express purpose and the first item on its programme being 'to overthrow the camouflaged colonial regime of the American imperialists and the dictatorial power of Ngo Din Diem, servant of the Americans, and institute a government of national democratic union'. The former Viet Minh fighters left behind in the South had first united purely to save their skins and with great skill and experience engaged in terrorist anti-Diem activities. But also remnants of the Binh Xuyen armies for example, and battalions of the Hoa Hao sect, some of whom afterwards took refuge in Cambodia, and the numerous illegal movements, peace committees and Trotskyist organizations which had conspired against the Diem regime and had been dealt with successfully by Diem, realized that they could only operate successfully if they were integrated into a wider, centrally controlled, whole. When Diem in a decree of June 1956 abolished the elected village councils and village chiefs, he incurred the hostility of the rural population as well. It looked as if Diem made himself as many enemies in the South as Ho Chi Minh eliminated and drove out in the North. Ho Chi Minh naturally realized that Diem had to be fought and attacked by all available means if he were to unite the South and the North under his rule. The refusal to call elections in July 1956 — as had been established in Geneva — by Diem and his American advisers must have been a bitter pill for him. Though the Republic of South Vietnam and the United States had not signed the Geneva agreements, while the former had even protested against them in order to retain freedom of action to prevent an all too easy communist victory in this part of Asia, there can be no doubt that Ho had followed the Soviet advice to sign the agreements in the firm conviction that within a few years he was to be lord and master of a Vietnam bordering on China in the north and on the South China Sea in the south. Already Le Duan, the current ruler of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, had at the 3rd Congress of the Communist Lao Dong (Workers) Party held on September 5, 1960, in his capacity as Party Secretary and former Viet Minh leader in the South, drawn up a report pleading for a 'broad national united front against the US-Diem clique.' Six months earlier the Nam-Bo Veterans Resistance Organization, meeting in dead secret, had already issued a proclamation, announcing that they had taken up arms in self-defence.

Bernard B. Fall, American Professor of International Relations, who with several books and *The Two Vietnams, a Political and Military Analysis* (1964) in particular is, together with the French writers Jean Lacouture and Philippe Devillers, among the most distinguished historians and commentators on South-east Asia since World War II, writes that the National Liberation Front did not make itself very conspicuous in the first two years of its existence, though plenty was heard about the military organization, the 'Self-Defence Troops of the People'. President Kennedy stated in Congress on May 25, 1961, that 4,000 small government officials were killed in one year in Vietnam, which amounts to eleven a day . . . While the number of guerrilla fighters was still estimated at 3,000 in 1959, there were 15,000 in the middle of 1961. In 1965 there were reportedly 35,000 elite troops in the field and from 60,000 to 80,000 local guerrilla troops.

The chairman of the National Liberation Front was Nguyen Huu Tho, a Saigon lawyer, imprisoned by Diem after leading a demonstration against a visit of American warships to the French in the capital. After three years in prison he set up a committee for the defence of peace and the Geneva agreements, which brought him back to Diem's prisons at the end of 1954 during a 'clear-up' of peace committees. He escaped in 1961 after his appointment as chairman of the Liberation Front. Viet Minh communists, armed supporters of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects, representatives of ethnic minorities, discontented students and peasants, deserters from Diem's army, all such heterogeneous groups joined in the Liberation Front. They were joined by the infiltrators from the North, mainly Vietnamese returning to the South after having fled to the North following July 1954 and whose number is roughly estimated at 100,000.

According to Bernard Fall there was only one communist among the five vice-chairmen at the time of the foundation of the Liberation Front; the other four were: a doctor who had fled from Saigon, a 'montagnard' who was chairman of an autonomy movement, an architect from Saigon who was at the same time Secretary-General of the Democratic Party, and a Buddhist bonze who was a member of a Cambodian minority in South Vietnam. The Central Committee also included a Catholic, a Cao Dai leader and a number of others who were to render the committee 'representative'. Fall does not fail to mention the numerous changes which the Liberation Front has undergone since its foundation. The chairman of the Democratic

Party for example was replaced by the military commander Tran Nam Trung, who holds supreme rank in the South Vietnamese communist party, the Revolutionary People's Party, founded in 1961, and at the same time represents the People's Self-Defence troops in the presidium.

The ten items of the Liberation Front programme contain, apart from the overthrow of the Diem regime already mentioned, (which has been out of date for a long time now): to institute a largely liberal and democratic regime; to establish an independent and sovereign economy, and improve the living conditions of the people; to reduce land rent, implement agrarian reform with the aim of providing the tillers with land; to develop a national and democratic culture and education; to create a national army devoted to the defence of the fatherland and the people; to guarantee the equality between the various minorities and the two sexes; to promote a foreign policy of peace and neutrality; to reestablish normal relations between the two zones; to struggle against all aggressive war.'

Fall holds the view that this programme formulates at best a number of election promises and calls to mind that North Vietnam also had a constitution which until 1960 contained several literal quotations from the American Declaration of Independence and was changed for a strikingly doctrinaire document, once North Vietnam had been made secure for the regime. He argues that the fact that the Liberation Front has failed to transform itself into a 'Liberation government' is in favour of the theory of its being a total puppet of the North.

The American Douglas Pike, who with his *Vietcong, the Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* of 1966 wrote the first extensively documented and perhaps even exhaustive study on the Liberation Front, also holds the view that the communists during the first years played a dominant but not exclusive role and gradually extended their control until they were managing NLF affairs at all levels from the national Central Committee to the villages. They had kept their own organization, at first as members of the Southern branch of the Lao Dong Party and later as members of the People's Revolutionary Party, . . . The interest of Pike's book lies not only in the scientific collection and arrangement of a vast and largely unknown quantity of material concerning the Liberation Front, dealing extensively with all relevant aspects of its previous history, how it came into existence, its background, development, organization, ideology, leadership, programme, aims and mysticism, but also

in the fact that he is the first to draw attention to a tradition, that of the secret organizations in Vietnam, a sociological heritage which he regards as one of the important factors behind the existence of the National Liberation Front. The first factor he distinguishes is the passion for independence, which, in the course of a thousand-year-long Chinese domination and the almost century-long occupation and struggle against France, still fresh in memory, was inevitably roused to a height bordering on fanaticism. Regionalism, the second factor mentioned by him, he describes as originating from the big move south, which, progressing by 'frog's leaps' lasted 800 years, and entailed the submission, moving away and adaptation of a great variety of peoples, who have often managed to preserve their identity without damaging or endangering Vietnamese unity. Considering the fact that up to the present time Vietnam has been continually partitioned into two or three parts, that not until 1802, under Emperor Gia Long, was unity first achieved, following a division into three parts by the Tay Son brothers and being followed by a new division into three parts applied by the French in their administration, whereupon the Geneva agreements divided the country once again into two parts . . . one cannot but wonder at the fanaticism with which that unity of the country is pursued by the Vietnamese. It need not be said that the North Vietnamese, as a result of that big move, are different from the South Vietnamese and both differ from the inhabitants of Central Vietnam. And this not only under the influences of history and surroundings, but at the same time as a result of development, geographical and climatic circumstances, and by intermingling with adjacent peoples or through purity of the original identity. The North Vietnamese, for example, are regarded as warlike, intellectual and dynamic by the South, the South Vietnamese as slow and lazy by the North. According to Pike, the Vietnamese are as aware of their region as are the Indians of their caste.

This strong attachment to their region and the wish for independence and individuality which is no less strong, lead in situations of intolerable stress such as the alien domination in which Vietnamese history abounds, to withdrawal into small units such as the family and native village, to taciturnity as well, to secrecy and fanaticism. All over the world, under the pressure of dictatorship, either of native or alien origin, blood alliances have sprung up, secret societies, religious sects, revolutionary movements and political parties. In Vietnam these factors have even given rise to a tradition of illegal, clandestine

organizations, which according to Pike, have always dominated politics and society in the country and which achieved their refinement under French rule. Oppression and the resulting absence of open and legal opposition have turned political and social power into an absolute notion, something to be fought for and for the highest stakes. The dangers of the struggle once it has started turn guile and secrecy into necessary weapons; subtlety, flexibility and adaptability become virtues. How close are those qualities to lack of character, deceit and untrustworthiness?

As the model of a leader of illegal organizations of this type, Pike of course mentions the man who became known throughout the world as Ho Chi Minh. Using over ten aliases, he worked all his long life for an independent Vietnam. It is generally assumed that his real name was Nguyen Tat Thanh, and he became known in particular as Nguyen Ai Quoc, in which Nguyen means 'patriot', and Ho Chi Minh meaning the Enlightened One. Of the other names, such as Ly Thuy, Lee Suei and Vuong Son Nhi, each had its allusive meaning. There is no information at all about some ten years of his life, which are lost to history. The mystery that surrounds this man is so great that there were some who believed that, as Nguyen Ai Quoc, he died in a Hongkong prison in 1933. As the secret plotter that he was, cunning Uncle Ho never did anything to throw light on the mysteries of his life, on the contrary he himself spread the most contradictory informations. He denied everything or was silent about his communist ideas and party membership, for example, and also about the movements led by him, if this suited him. He killed or threw out his allies when he saw power, which to him was indivisible, in his reach. In July 1946, he dealt with the National Party leaders in North Vietnam in this manner, when he seized power. And his adversaries in the South were treated in the same way, where he eliminated mercilessly the potential opposition of the future. Douglas Pike mentions among others the three leaders of the (Trotskyist) Socialist Workers Party and the Fighting Group, Phan Van Hum, Ta Thu Thau and Tran Van Tach. He had them killed by the Viet Minh, as happened to Buy Quang Chieu, leader of the Constitutionalist Party, and Ho Van Nga, who led the National Independence Party. He also ordered the killing of two mandarins who played a role in politics in the days of the Japanese defeat. They were the moderate pro-French leader of the Tonkin Party, Pham Quynh, former Prime Minister of Bao Dai, and the brother of the later Prime Minister and President of the South

Vietnamese Republic, Ngo Dinh Khoi. The latter was buried alive. This list does not claim to be complete, but it suffices, I think, to round off the characteristics of a man so representative of his country and his time as was Ho Chi Minh, and above all to outline the life-and-death atmosphere which surrounded the revolutionary politicians of those days, and indeed of earlier days and the days to come as well, when fruitless attempts were made to defeat the French, who with the assistance of the British were engaged in the restoration of their former colonial power in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh, who was one of the great organizers of South-east Asia and of his time, gave the National Liberation Front in the South the strength and the structure which made the world watch with admiration and alarm the feats that could be performed through guerrilla organization and tactics against the American adversary, who was so immensely superior in numbers and equipment, in accordance with the definition of the conqueror of Dien Bien Phu, Ho's military counterpart, which has been quoted as a motto to this chapter.

What started as a heterogeneous mass of large and small rebellious groups, from the most diverse layers of the South Vietnamese population, has thus in the course of the years grown into an organization completely controlled and led by the Communists from the North, receiving reinforcements, weapons (supplied by the Soviet Union and China), provisions and instructions via the route named after Ho Chi Minh, which leads from North Vietnam through the mountains and jungles of Laos and Cambodia to the scene of battle in the South. These two countries, which also have their native Communist rebels who are supplied with material and ideology by Hanoi, can only by offering hardly any resistance to this use of their territories — in itself another gross violation of the fading documents of the Geneva agreements — stay out of the bloody and devastating war, which does not come to an end in South Vietnam because the three Big Powers: China, Soviet Russia and the United States continue to enable the North and the South, Communists and non-Communists on the one side to gain victory and on the other side to prevent defeat. It is only logical that the American bombers attempted to disrupt this supply route and, from a political point of view, exactly as admissible or inadmissible as the use made of it by North Vietnam. Just as logical again was the American effort to block up the sources of the supplies in North Vietnam itself through bombing; illogical to the layman in military and strategic affairs, at least incomprehensible, is the failure

of that effort when the enormous quantity of destructive material used in bombing towns and countryside in the North is taken into consideration. The fact that the attempt was made, and on such a scale, shows that the experts in the field of military and strategic affairs do not understand it either . . .

When the forces of the Liberation Front are divided into the regular army (approximately 35,000 men), the territorial troops of the provincial districts operating in groups of fifty, who are poorly paid and may be integrated into the professional army as a promotion, and the local guerrilla forces, who are often peasants by day and soldiers at night (together approximately 100,000), it must be established that they are faced by a regular army of the Republic of Vietnam of 200,000 troops, reinforced with an equal number of para-military forces. The estimates of losses of the Northerners are problematic, as they are backed by a well-trained and well-equipped army of 300,000 men and no exact figures are known about the numbers of infiltrators or South Vietnamese peasants who are forced into service in areas controlled by the Liberation Front. But from the above figures, which date from 1964, it may be concluded that the South Vietnamese army is twice as large as that of the Democratic Republic, without mentioning the American troops, which totalled 549,000 at the end of 1969, and their aircraft, helicopters, equipment and munitions. But Professor Frank N. Träger of New York University mentions in a treatise: 'prior military experience with communist insurgency under more favourable conditions in Malaya and elsewhere in South-east Asia showed that a successful campaign required ten to fifteen patriotic troops to one communist guerrilla'. The forces of the Liberation Front are concentrated in a quadrangle round Saigon, since the fall of the capital would unavoidably put the whole country or at least large parts of it into the hands of the communists. South of Saigon they are trying to cut off the Mekong Delta, which supplies the Republic of Vietnam with a major part of its food. In the Northern view this area belongs to the 'areas of concentration', which also include important coastal areas and the lowlands of Central Vietnam. 'Areas of opportunity' are constituted by the mountainous regions of Central Vietnam, to the north of Tuyen Duc province, thinly populated areas with towns such as Pleiku, close to the Laotian frontier and the Ho Chi Minh trail, eminently suitable for guerrilla tactics of hitting and vanishing. The effective closing of those long frontier lines is a virtually impossible task, also in view

of the impassable terrain. Large-scale 'bulldozing' and defoliation, day-and-night patrolling, construction of transport and communication roads are among the measures needed for an effective control over these areas. Träger maintains that a decisive action is possible only if the standpoint that fighting is allowed exclusively in South Vietnam is abandoned. He sees the possibility of forcing a decision in 'threatening, penetrating, undermining and attacking North Vietnam', and considers the risks of escalation slight. Seal off the frontiers and attack North Vietnam with tactical means of an offensive as well as a defensive nature, he writes, and adds that the objective of this action is not the conquest of North Vietnam, but the sealing off of the North Vietnamese influx of troops and equipment.

I mention this military-strategic vision above all in order to provide some notion of the problems facing those who are under attack in South Vietnam, but at the same time to show to what extent this view, which was so strongly defended in 1964 and which sounds plausible, has turned out to be unworkable. For the fact that this is indeed the view of the military leaders is borne out by the fact that it has been carried out almost completely, though no South Vietnamese troops or Americans entered the territory of the Democratic Republic. But they did enter the North Vietnamese airspace and how! What is meant by Träger by 'risks of escalation' is probably the risk that Communist China and/or Soviet Russia could enter the war directly, as the Americans have been doing in South Vietnam. It is true that this did not happen and that this type of escalation may indeed be expected if the allies from the South were to cross the 17th parallel and move to the North. It is out of the question that the Americans could have had any reason other than this risk for not taking this step (a step in the literal sense as well). For the rest it remains a mystery that the allies of the Northerners did not supply them with aircraft and helicopters, as if — as in the Middle East — the 'higher powers' were seeking a balance of strength and power, indeed as if they were afraid of a disturbance of that balance, since defeat would affect the prestige of the world power in question. As the failure to gain a victory has in fact been detrimental to American prestige in the world. It is not out of the question that, in view of this perceptible fear, a cease-fire will eventually materialize. The round table in Paris, round which the headless delegations are still producing the same old arguments from their briefcases, presents a similar static image.

To the troops of the Liberation Front the guerrilla is only the first stage of the military operations which must lead to the exhaustion and destruction of the adversary. The development described above from pluriformity in the structure of the organization to complete control by the communists from the North, has been possible first of all because the Liberation Front did not constitute a movement organized in advance and built to take up arms according to plan, but came into being along opposite lines: a chaotic and vague medley of mainly small groups of resistance fighters without backing in the rear, which in an experienced and utterly skilful manner was given a manageable form and an efficient structure. This fits the second stage, too: the mobile warfare of units suddenly emerging and launching surprise attacks on the 'opportunity areas', occupying small and less small hamlets, ousting non-communist chiefs, organizing and indoctrinating the population, dividing the land, persuading or forcing men into their service, and, if necessary, vanishing just as suddenly. In this way they also attend to their provisioning. The third stage, that of the front assault, is the decisive one. The troops then emerge from their secret and often literally underground hiding-places, where food as well as weapons and munitions are stored, where hospitals and schools are also housed. Then pitched battles are fought, as was the case near Dien Bien Phu, and as, it must be assumed, the 1968 Tet offensive ought to have led to victory. At that time the large urban centres, Hue and Saigon, were also attacked and almost captured. The fact of the return, after this offensive, from the third to the first and second stages constitutes irrefutable proof of the failure of the big assault. And it proves other facts too: that the National Liberation Front has not been accepted as the national movement that was to lead to liberation. The general rebellion of the population did not materialize and if it had it could certainly have been decisive, it could have brought the victory within reach. This must lead to the conclusion that the population is not only exhausted, tired of war and disappointed, that they are concerned only about saving their skins, but above all, and this is an important conclusion for the future, that they do not rely on the Liberation Front as the symbol of independence, freedom and prosperity.

One cannot but conclude that the movement which was named Viet Cong when it had no right to that name and is called National Liberation Front now that it ought to bear the name of Viet Cong owes this highly disappointing result (for the Communists) to the process

which led to that reversed development. One cannot help but feel also that the disappearance of Ho Chi Minh, the leader who remained to the last the symbol of liberation from foreign rule, can only intensify and hasten this process of growing distrust of the Liberation Front. It is up to the South Vietnamese government to win the favour of those disappointed masses and make the population take their side in earnest. In order to achieve this the government should first of all take the side of the population to a greater extent than has been the case so far. Only then will the population itself become the political, social, economic and military buffer against the threat from the North.

PEOPLE AND LANDSCAPES
OF VIETNAM



Marble Mountain, view of section of Da Nang symbolising war over Vietnam.

Montagnard woman smoking a pipe.

Home produce. ▶





A North Vietnamese girl-worker in the mines.



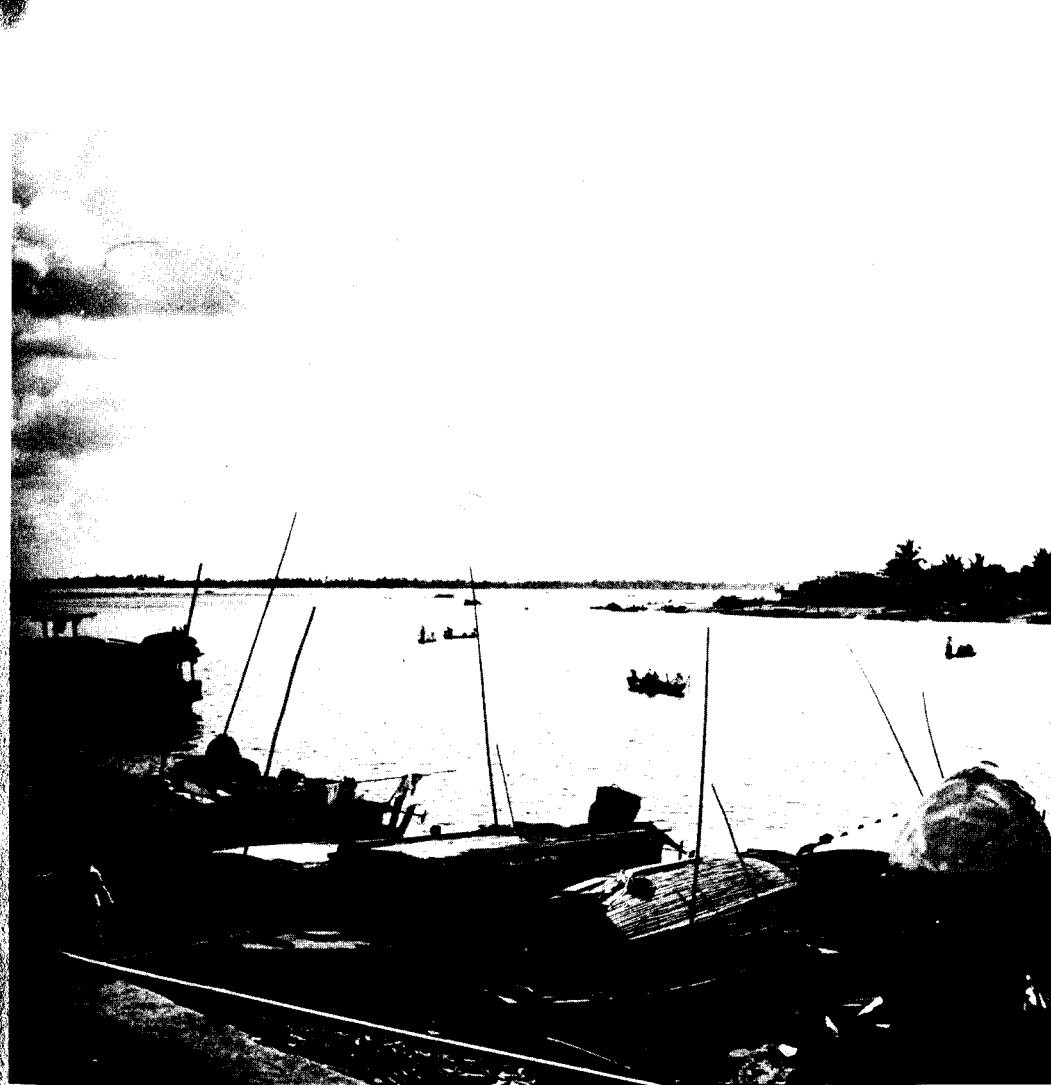
A Montagnard woman. ▶



North Vietnamese women planting rice.



Going to school by ox in North Vietnam.



The Mekong river near Can Tho.

◀ The Mekong river seen from the air.

View of the town of Hanoi.



View of the town of Saigon.





In the jungle near Saigon.

◀ Buddhist women praying for peace in Saigon.



Montagnard baby in air-raid shelter.

◀ 12 year-old, playing a game of ball in Qui Nhon.



Hotel in Saigon blown up by the Vietcong.



Fighting in Cholon.



North Vietnamese soldiers taken prisoner.



Bombing of Haiphong.



American bombardments.



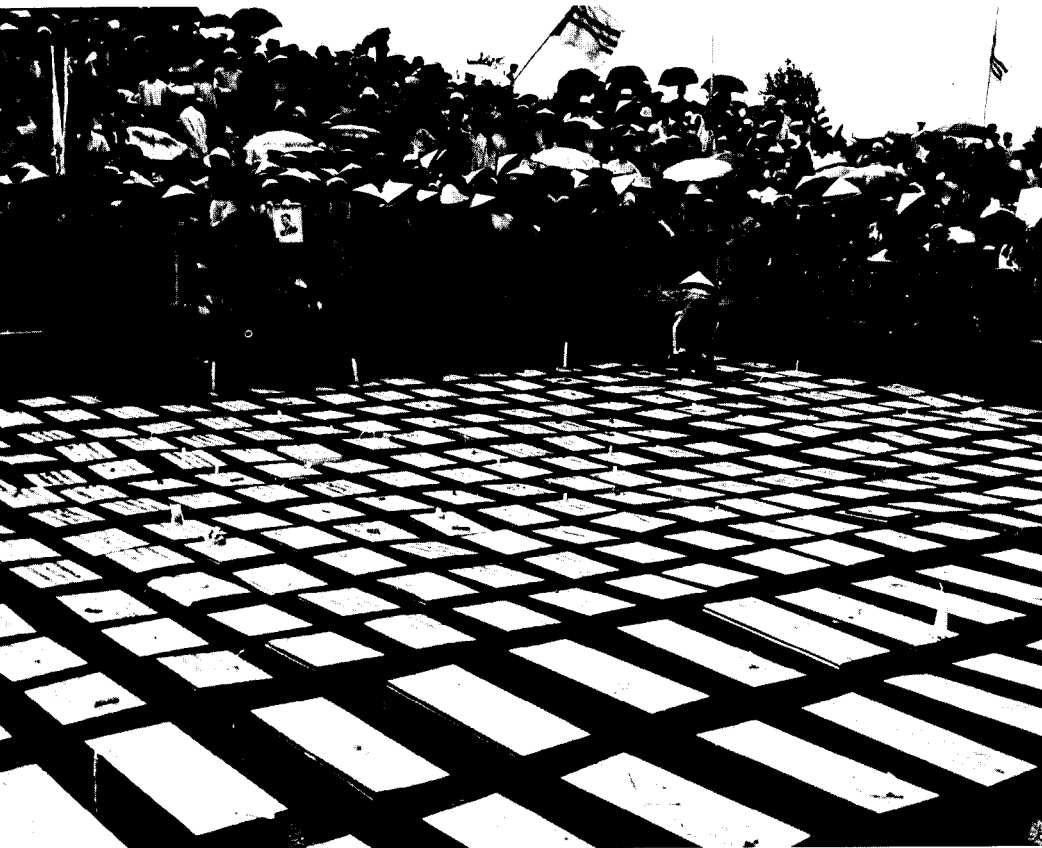
The imperial city of Hue in 1968.



Vietcong torture.



Women looking for the skulls of their sons. Hue 1968.



Burial in Hue 1968.



Identification of the corpses in Hue in 1968.



Special Forces jumping.

American soldiers North of Qui Nhon searching for Vietcong. ▶





Women on guard in Hanoi.

American pilot brought down near Hanoi is led away by North Vietnamese soldier. ▶

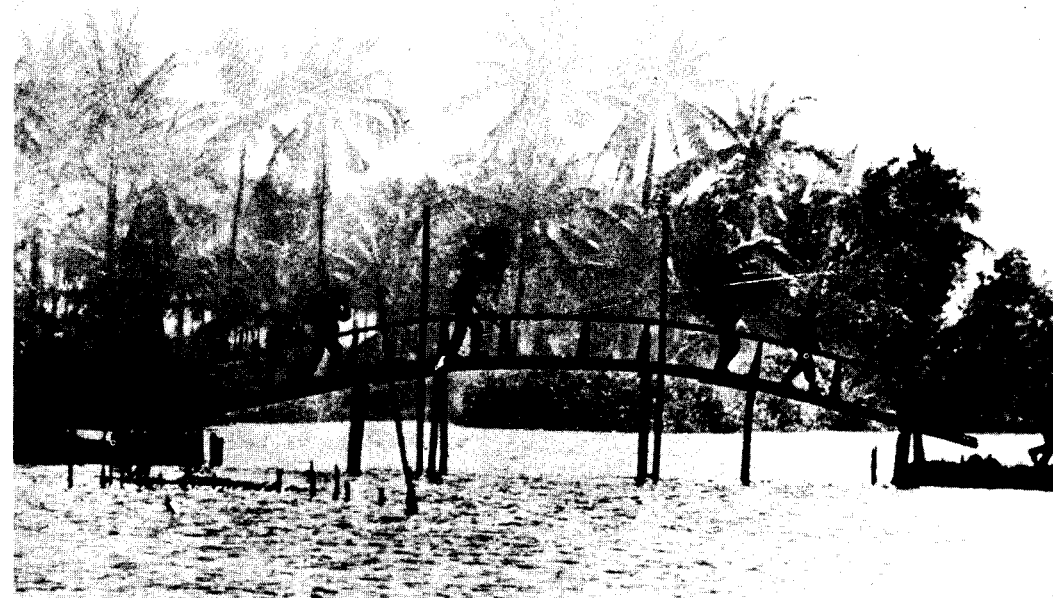


Shell-fire.



Near the Cambodian border.



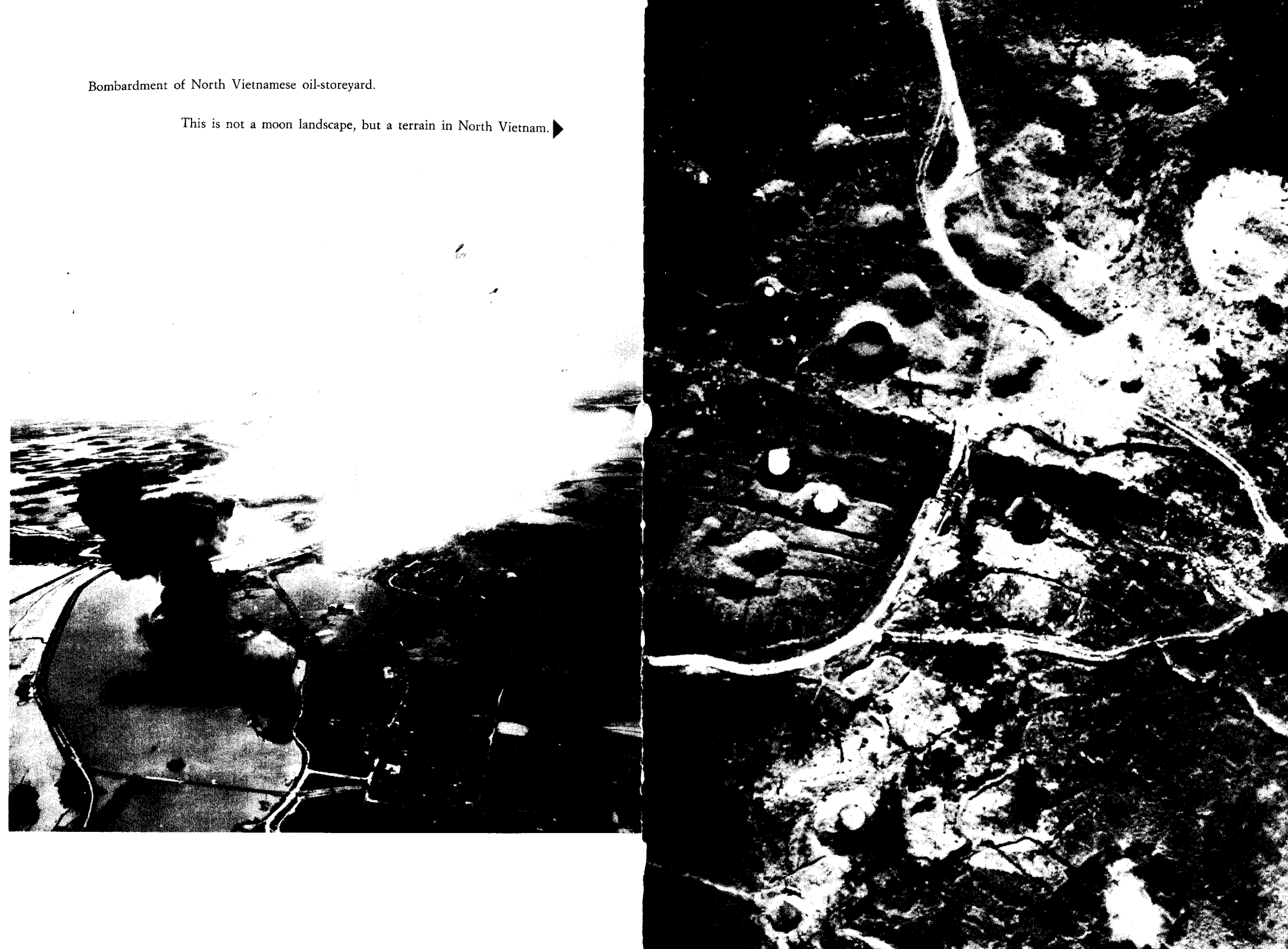


The bitter reality of war.

◀ Bamboo.

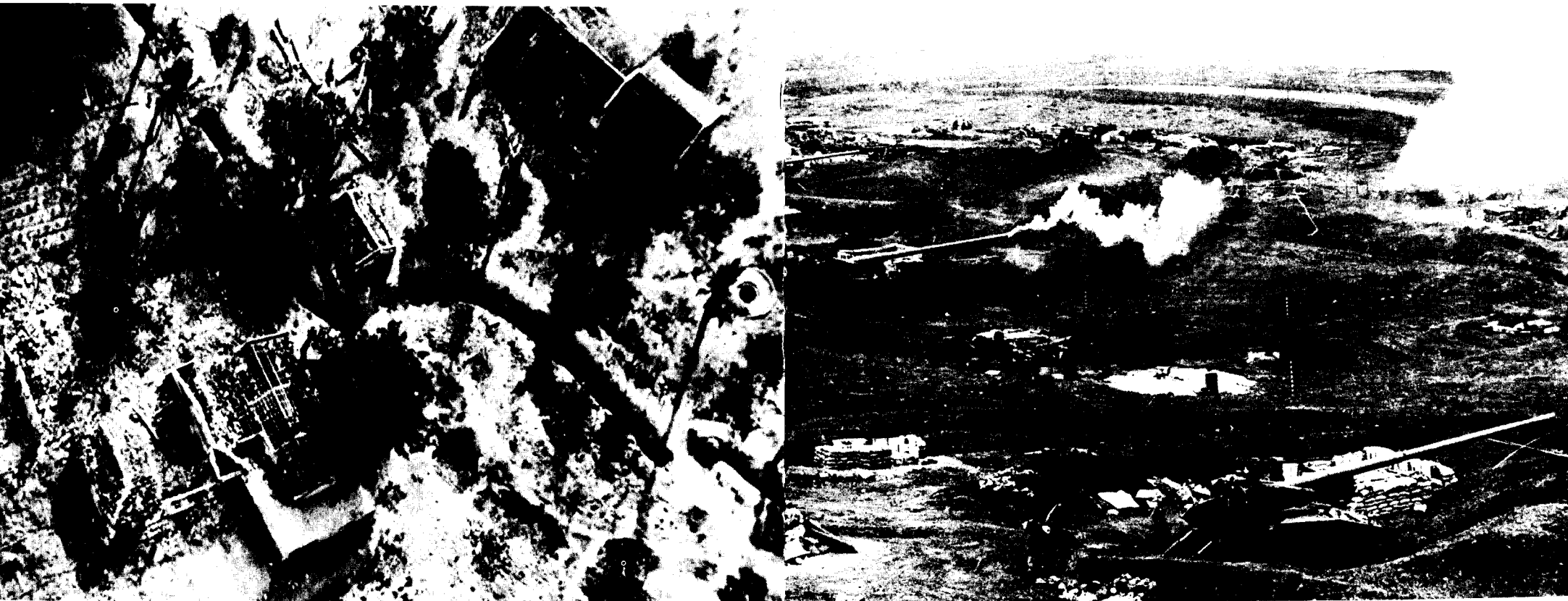
Bombardment of North Vietnamese oil-storeyard.

This is not a moon landscape, but a terrain in North Vietnam. ▶



Song My in the province of Quang Ngai under heavy artillery fire. Here the population was later slaughtered.

One mile south of the demilitarized zone.





The former world-famous imperial palace in Hue. In ruins.

◀ Bomb-crater north of Saigon.



Dead and wounded among the civilian population after a Vietcong bombing attack in Saigon.

◀ Hue in 1968.

1968 Tet offensive in Saigon.



Death over dinner. Saigon 1965.





This is how children are brought up in Hanoi. Throwing arrows at Johnson.

◀ The Vietcong left this pile of corpses behind after an attack on Cau Mau in the Mekong Delta.



Grandfather and grandson fleeing.

◀ Little refugee with his duck.

Children moving out.



Evacuation.





Refugees.



Refugees.



Mothers and children fleeing.

Villagers moving out.

Women demonstrating against communism in Saigon.



Demonstrating Buddhists pelt South Vietnamese military forces in Saigon.





The Russell tribunal investigating war-crimes in Roskilden in 1967.



Demonstrations against the Russell tribunal in Stockholm.

Waiting for the 'all-clear' in Hanoi.



Russian freighter Pavlovak being unloaded in the North Vietnamese port of Haiphong, October 1968.





◀ Captured American pilots being paraded through Hanoi.

The population of Hanoi denouncing captured American pilots paraded through the streets.





South Vietnamese peasant woman.



Little South Vietnamese girl.



Fishing-boats in the Bay of Tonkin: peace.



Boats glide serenely along the Perfume river near Hue against the backdrop of clouds from napalm: war.

IV MORALS AND CRIME

Having lived in Vietnam for six years, I have to a degree put down roots there and have come to care very deeply about what happens. The plight of the Vietnamese people is not an abstraction to me, and I have no patience with those who treat it as such. — *Douglas Pike*

And contributing to the anti-war polemic seemed to be the only worthwhile reason for an American to be writing about Vietnam now. — From *Trip to Hanoi* by *Susan Sontag*

At a time when Europe is commemorating for the 25th time the end of a war which was crueller, more merciless and more cowardly than any war in the past, because cruelty, mercilessness and cowardice were committed not as excesses of an exceptional nature but as the effectuation of an official policy programme, at this time we must sadly acknowledge that peace has not been attained and morals have not improved. Western Europe has been cut in two, straight across German soil, with the knife of Allied victory, and on each side of the dividing line hundreds of thousands of men armed to the teeth are again waiting with fear and aggression for the others to attack. Those who flee from the East to the West are shot, women and children

included. In spite of the downfall of Hitler and Mussolini, two fascist dictatorships are still holding their own in southwestern Europe; in the south east a new dictatorship has been established on the Mediterranean. In Eastern Europe one of the three World Powers, which had just been celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, has twice imposed its will on a small rebellious state by military means without provoking world-wide protest. The overt motive of this forcible oppression was of an ideological nature, and was finally publicly formulated as follows: 'When forces hostile to socialism try to turn a nation towards the restoration of capitalism, this becomes more than that nation's affair, but a matter of concern for all socialist countries'.

All over the world the escalation of violence and oppression is becoming visible; while in 1945 it appeared for a moment to have been tamed it is now spreading death and mutilation like a relapse into a malignant disease. From the eastern part of Europe until far back in the Urals hundreds of millions of people are governed with compulsion, imprisonment, intimidation and arbitrariness; in the Middle East peoples of one and the same race are threatening to exterminate each other; in southernmost Africa 13 million blacks are exploited by a minority of 2 million whites as slaves of their wealth. In Rhodesia and Angola the same pattern prevails on a smaller scale, while in Nigeria a quarrel between brothers was fought out by force and starvation. South America also, conquered by the Europeans with deceit and massacring of the native Indians 300 years ago, witnesses once again the slaughter of the surviving descendants of those wretched people; in Haiti a dictator is employing terror, poverty and undernourishment to sustain his rule; and on the North American continent, whose government is indirectly helping to maintain in power most dictatorships in the south — particularly through economic aid — a tradition of economic exploitation is coming to an end through fierce resistance by the socially underprivileged descendants of the ill-fated slaves, who were released from their chains but not from their subjugation. In the China of the Cultural Revolution children are taught at school how to torture and kill, according to testimonies received. A sixteen-year-old Arab boy, who in September 1969 threw a hand grenade at the Israeli Embassy in The Hague, had been trained for his deed in Jordan and had been sent to commit it by Arab authorities, who, when after three months he was released, had him carried around shoulder-high like a hero and made the Libyan

Foreign Minister receive and honour him. The Amnesty General organization supplies lists of political prisoners in Greece, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Spain, Czechoslovakia, the USSR and Turkey; in Iran, Nepal, India, Indonesia, Formosa and Vietnam; in Cuba, Mexico and Paraguay; in Kenya, Lesotho, Uganda and Tunisia. Lust for gold and thirst for blood, craving for power and megalomania, the entire rainbow of sin as Hans Christian Andersen termed it, is outlined more sharply than ever before against a sky that is darkening over our world.

Vietnam is our world. Betrayal and corruption, greed and harshness, torture and rape, injustice and robbery are spreading like poisonous weeds on an undermined and scorched piece of land and exist side by side with idealism and generosity, a spirit of self-sacrifice and compassion, love of one's fellow-man and a zest for living. For all these human traits exist side by side and interwoven. They lie at the root of the revolt against oppression and ideological indoctrination, against lack of freedom and poverty. And also of the fear of having to live with this burden, fear for fathers, brothers and sons, anxiety because the perspective of the future is darkening with the daily habituation to an apparently endless war. It is a vicious circle. It is this getting used to death, pain, injustice and the implied necessity of holding one's own by toughness which sets the escalation of violence in motion and closes the circle of hunger and cruelty. The history of Vietnam over the past century is that of the world, a world of conquest and oppression, domination and revolt, of hunger and disease. And also a world of contradictions. Between ruler and subject, between wealth and want, between knowledge and ignorance, between freedom and slavery. Independence, justice and well-being are indivisible. So are oppression, lawlessness and poverty. There is no middle course. Escalation in the one or the other direction is the only possibility. This is what we are witnessing now.

Also those who are defending freedom by force run the risk that the road of violence becomes a dead end in the literal and the figurative sense. There is in war only one morality, that of immorality and there is in history only one main constant, that of war. War means the breaking loose of the savage animal, hungry, baited, in search of prey, insatiable, untamable.

The fact that protest is being heard in the countries where society allows sufficient freedom to express the disgust for the trade of war is a hopeful sign. Never before has a generation testified so youth-

fully and on such a large scale to its opposition to an order of society which has to assert and establish itself with fragmentation bombs and napalm; never before, it seems, has 'love is all we need' been sung with such dedication all over the world. It is the sweet antiphony to the screeching of grenades, the hissing of the gases and the explosions of the bombs. But is this protest not also, in too large measure, mere rhetoric? Does it not testify to an inexcusable emotionality that precisely in those countries where criticism of one's own order of society, of oneself, is not only permitted but even encouraged as a superior form of culture, of independence and identity, that precisely there resistance is directed one-sidedly at the crimes of that very society? Inexcusable indeed. For reason is lacking to such a degree in this protest that the main conditions which should lead to the goal pursued are entirely overlooked. A first condition concerns the indivisibility of violence, which implies that a unilateral ending of warfare, which is being clamoured for, does not lead to peace, the ending of violence or at the least a greater possibility of peace, but on the contrary to oppression, terrorism, and violence, the cries of which will not or hardly reach us, the extent of which we shall not know — as we have already experienced with countries that call themselves 'socialist', such as the Soviet Union, East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, China and North Vietnam. However respectable the conviction may be that this is no reason why the Western, free and democratic world need commit these crimes against the one and only 'livable' form of society, the avowed ideals are not achieved in this way. On the contrary, one rather comes to shoulder a similar and comparable guilt, that of looking on passively while injustice (the word is inadequate) is being done to large groups and entire populations. The only justification for that guilt can be impotence, as it has occurred in Eastern Europe, where armed support from the West given to countries fighting for their freedom might lead to such a large-scale war that a direct risk of whole continents being exterminated would be among its implications. Nor has any political willingness to arrive at a peace which could bring the end of violence like a sigh of relief to South-east Asia been shown by the adversary so far. In fact, all indications point, unfortunately, to the contrary. The cessation of American bombing of Vietnam, which lasted over a year, the first withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam and the announcement of another considerable reduction of troops have caused, as became irrefutably clear in March of this year, only

a new escalation of the struggle, which was transferred and intensified by the North Vietnamese and Liberation Front troops in Laos and Cambodia. President Nixon's decision to attack and destroy the Communist troop concentrations of 44,000 men with their high command and their munition stores on the eastern flank, which was more seriously threatened than ever before, can only be called logical in this respect — if, at least, military information turns out to be based on truth and this strategy does not fail as strategies have so often failed, witness so many unfulfilled military promises.

A second condition for the cessation of violence and the suffering and war crimes it implies is that the adversary should be able to refrain from war independently and voluntarily. In this respect as well there is not a single indication which could open up at least a perspective in that direction. The Soviet Union and China, without whose support North Vietnam could not hold its own in the military field, can continue fighting to the last Vietnamese in order to tie the United States with hundreds of thousands troops and with amounts of money many times higher than this figure to a scene of war which besides is weakening America's political position at home as well as in Europe. So far neither the Soviet Union nor China have shown any preference for peace to the current unstable situation, which offers easily-gained advantages to them and the ending of which would apparently appeal to them only if it were to tip the scale in favour of communism. Two events from the struggle for world power have made this abundantly plain. The first was the late President Kennedy's firm attitude at the time of the installation of Russian rocket installations in Cuba, the second President Nixon's conciliatory gesture of suspending the supply of Phantom tanks to Israel. In the first case the world witnessed the withdrawal of Russia, in the second the appearance of Russian pilots in the Egyptian airspace. This demonstrated that Russia will withdraw only before a threat of supreme force and will advance on every square foot of ground abandoned by America. No misunderstanding is possible here.

If the conditions for a cessation of the war in Vietnam are not met, a unilateral withdrawal of the United States' military support to South Vietnam does not only become a senseless action — the object in view is not achieved — but it even becomes distinctly dangerous, as it would create a political and military void which would be immediately filled by the pressure of communist means of power. There is no getting away from the conclusion that the Vietnamese war of

attrition will not end unless the three world powers, one of which: China, is now on the way to overcoming her technical backwardness, take this decision unanimously. World War III has already been in full swing for years in marginal areas which were isolated up to now! There is no sense in political speculations by certain observers about a potential conciliation between the United States and the Soviet Union, whether or not as a result of a possible clash between the rivals which China and the Soviet Union have always been, or about the time and the circumstances in which the fairies will reign in Vietnam instead of the dragons, when better informed statesmen, politicians and military commanders continue to shuffle the cards in front of the world forum without knowing what and in whose hands are the winning cards. There is nothing we can do but keep on seeking better and more means of defence against a further advance of social systems which offer man the worst opportunities for a development without hampering the development of others. And as long as that defence will assume the shape of war and irreconcilability as it does in Vietnam, crime cannot be checked. There is no need of an imitation tribunal at Stockholm or a Sartre or Russell to make that clear. The confusion of mind which is shown in this sham spectacle unfortunately seems to be characteristic of the world of thought which is protesting against the American presence in Vietnam. As if the crimes committed by Americans in Vietnam, including murder, plunder and rape, were comparable to what was committed by the Nazis in the German, Austrian and Polish concentration camps! As if the Americans like the Nazis had been engaged systematically, on the instruction of their leaders, in the extermination, manhandling, torture and starvation of entire groups of the population on grounds of race, conviction and religion! As if Americans had gone to Vietnam deliberately to subjugate peoples, to reduce them to slavery and exploitation, as the Nazis entered the Western European countries, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and strangled and trampled down the defeated!

This is not intended to condone My Lai and the summary shooting of a large part of the civilian population, nor the bombing of the civilian population of North and South Vietnam, the destruction of houses and ricefields, the torture applied in interrogation, the plunderings and the shameful acts committed on women and young girls. Nor is it intended to condone the disgraceful treatment of political prisoners in so-called 'tiger cages', as practised by the South Vietnam authorities

on the island of Con Son in the South China Sea. But is it not like this that the Vietnamese civilian population is directly participating in warfare as happened throughout Europe during World War II — either voluntarily or under coercion? And that it is asking a little too much from soldiers, whether American, French, Australian, Korean, British or Dutch, to inquire into the identity of a potential adversary before shooting? Is it not like this that children in the Middle East and in the invisible guerrilla front in Vietnam are used in warfare? That trained boys from the Arab states are even sent to Europe to make attempts on people's lives? Is it not like this that tension and fear transform an average civilian into a ruthless soldier? A soldier who often, in guerrilla war, cannot distinguish friend from foe and is anxious only to save his own life? There is now no one to whom these questions are unfamiliar, since there no longer exist people who have not experienced either directly or from a close distance war, rebellion, oppression, discrimination, poverty, ignorance. Exactly the same is valid for the adversary, the assaulter from the North and the rebel in the South. He terrorizes the civilian population with mines hidden in the roads and under staircases in schools, causing peasants, tradespeople and children to be torn to pieces, he throws hand-grenades into theatres and restaurants, he tortures and kills the chiefs of 'liberated' villages, he 'executes' twelve-year-old children and intimidates the population by tying their leaders to poles, drilling holes in their bellies and pulling out the entrails until death occurs.

No, imposing laws, conventions and agreements on war is a contradiction. 'Humanizing' war by practising a minimum of justice, fairness and decency is a paradox. Whoever speaks of war speaks by definition of crime: crime that is public and allowed, since it is thought necessary. We had better strike out the word 'humanization' from our vocabularies, since it presupposes morals. And war does not only destroy people, and hope and future, but also morals. The beast of war, having once broken loose, cannot be restrained, checked or kept under control. It is the not to be stemmed escalation of violence in which the survivors of three massive revolutions and two world wars and their descendants now find themselves. The English city of Coventry was reduced to rubble by the German airforce and London harassed with rockets hardly 25 years ago, after cities such as Warsaw and Rotterdam had already been heavily bombed. Soldiers or civilians? This did not matter at the time. And a few years later

German cities such as Cologne and Dresden were destroyed by the Allies in exactly the same manner. Soldiers or civilians? Villages such as Lidice in Czechoslovakia, Oradour-sur-Glane in France, Putten in the Netherlands, were burnt down in World War II and the population shot dead, burnt alive and evacuated. To this sad list has been added My Lai. The mass graves in Poland found their counterpart in those of the Vietnamese imperial city of Hue. And the shootings in South African Sharpeville echoed in Cambodia in April of this year, when the bodies of dozens of murdered Vietnamese drifted southwards, to their country, down the waters of the Mekong River . . .

However hopeful the protests of the post-war generations against violence in the present world may sound, they are misdirected, contradictory in themselves and fruitless. These protests themselves are often so provocative and violent (*nota bene*) that people are killed and injured at the universities of America, Japan and France. According to a recent news item from the United States the widow of a pilot killed in action over Vietnam, had to flee with her children from the town of Tulsa where she lived, under the pressure of threats from anonymous anti-war activists. Having returned to her village she was still exposed to the same kind of threats and died from heart failure. It is clear that the My Lai incident caused an intensification of the abhorrence of violence, which was already highly explosive after all the bombing, defoliation operations and shootings which had already occurred. The fact that the ultimate degree of longing for peace will also explode in violence is the n'th disappointment for whoever tries, though himself not without emotion, to retain his clear vision and clear thought. Let us therefore devote our particular attention to the hundreds of doctors and nurses from all parts of the world who have come of their own free will to help those in Vietnam and who, with superhuman strength endeavour to perform a humanitarian task in an area and in circumstances where the individual hardly counts and has become a stake and a puppet. This, too, is our world. This, too, is Vietnam.

V DEMOCRACY AS A RISK

Strongly the DEMOCRATIC WIND overflows the world,
Brilliantly, the civilized sunshines are colouring East and West.
Vietnamese youth! The youth of LAC HONG!
Being madly in love with the wind and sunshine,
[they step steadily ahead.

Pham Uiet Tuyen

The American troops who moved into Cambodia were not waging a colonial war there, nor are they doing so in Vietnam, which they have neither conquered nor occupied, and are not exploiting or intending to exploit. When peace comes or an armistice is concluded, the United States will have to continue to assist South Vietnam — and perhaps the North as well — in reconstructing the country with additional hundreds of million dollars, just as they are now spending large amounts of money on their military and economic support to South Vietnam — and even more, the lives of thousands of American soldiers. All this is done with no other purpose than containing a forward-pushing communist regime, which, according to

the convictions and historical traditions of the American people, and as experience in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Chinese People's Republic has taught, stands in the way of human happiness and social development. 'Communism with a human face' has been crushed for the time being in Czechoslovakia with the Warsaw Pact armed intervention in 1968 and the Brezhnev doctrine, the disheartening reflection of which we also observe in the world of Vietnam. Neither the cessation of the horrifying American bombing of North Vietnam, nor the failure of the aggressors' large-scale Tet offensive of February 1968 have been able to change the rigid attitudes at the Paris conference table. The conquest of the Valley of Jars in Laos by communist troops has been followed by their advance in the direction of the Cambodian capital, prompted by Hanoi's anxiety to protect the supply route from North Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia to South Vietnam and not to miss the opportunity to cause South Vietnamese and American military defeats along this route. It seems likely that Hanoi has taken into account the possibility of a counter-offensive by the South Vietnamese and American troops who had to defend the south on this flank, which was being threatened more than ever before. But there is another possibility one could think of, apart from bitter necessity for the North Vietnamese army and the Liberation Front in this unexpected situation: a strategic move to drive President Nixon, with his promises to end American participation in the war, into a militarily and politically untenable position. It remains to be seen whether the prompt American reaction has not been a miscalculation, whether the military risks for South Vietnam would really have been greater if this counter-offensive had not been launched, and whether the political risk of an unhampered North Vietnamese advance in Cambodia would have outweighed for the Americans the strained relations between the allies which would have ensued if over 500,000 Vietnamese in this neighbouring state, who were threatened with extermination, had been left to their fate. The facts of the advance into Cambodia without the authorization of the government of that state and the South Vietnamese fleet sailing to Phnom Penh to evacuate the Vietnamese indicate the weight of the latter argument.

Peace, an armistice or even a step in that direction, do not appear to be in sight yet, in Indo-China. They will not come about unless one of the superpowers feels the need to be urgent. The withdrawal of American troops, promised by President Nixon — a promise which

was not revoked but explicitly upheld and carried out — and the implied 'Vietnamization' of the war, obviously do not mean that the United States intend to surrender South Vietnam, and with it South-east Asia as a whole, to the communist regime. It must be assumed that this is not so much a matter of 'honour' or 'the first American defeat for 190 years', though such nationalistic emotional elements naturally play a role, but above all an extension of the line in world politics which made the United States the only power capable of containing communist expansion in Asia. Agreement, which will have to be reached at the conference table, presupposes that the North Vietnamese, under the pressure from or with the approval of their allies, will have to take a few steps to meet the wishes of the Republic of Vietnam, and to drop a large part of their demands which boil down to complete submission by the Saigon government to Hanoi and a public denunciation of the United States. So too, on the other hand, the South will have to meet reasonable Northern wishes and should not attempt to make agreement appear as total victory. What that prospective peace in these areas will be like, in what way a reunification can bring independence and autonomy and at the same time an essential degree of freedom — it is impossible to predict. An eventually reunified Vietnam, the reconstruction and development of which will take place with the assistance and under the influence of the three superpowers, which have confronted each other here? A Vietnam cut in two, along the Korean and German pattern, the North backed in its reconstruction by China and the Soviet Union, the South by its American ally? The latter seems the more likely, as long as relations between the three superpowers remain what they are. Moreover a premature Vietnamese reunification would involve the risk of large-scale outbursts of hate and massacres, as occurred in Indonesia after the abortive coup of 1965. However unpredictable and far away peace in Vietnam may be as yet, it should not take the responsible leaders by surprise. It is therefore reassuring that in the North as well as in the South schemes dealing with the problems which will arise after the ending of the war, have already been prepared. It is a known fact that North Vietnamese architects have prepared the blueprints for a number of brand new towns, including those for a completely new Hanoi, the construction of which can be started at any moment. South Vietnamese and American economists have made an extensive study of post-war problems and drawn up plans for their solution south of the

17th parallel. A several-hundred-pages-long report of their findings was sent to President Nguyen Van Thieu and President Richard Nixon in March 1969. This Joint Development Group, composed of the Postwar Planning Group in Saigon and the Development and Resources Corporation in New York operated quite independently during the years of its activities, though of course with the support of both governments. The report contains an analysis of the problems which will arise after the war and their potential solutions over the first ten years of peace. Naturally it also provides data about the development backlog in the areas concerned, thus indicating the direct effects of warfare more plainly than has been done so far. As I am convinced that this expert information deserves to be known in wider circles than those of a few specialists and the people directly involved and that even a rough outline of the main points of the policies traced here gives more perspective to the future of Vietnam than speculations about the how and when of an armistice could do, I have chosen to conclude this book, which is intended as a contribution to a better understanding and exposition of the situation in South-east Asia, with a reproduction of some main points from the Joint Development Group report. And I have done so for yet another reason: because it should be possible — and this can be inquired into — to start with the introduction of some of the measures suggested for the post-war years now, in wartime already. For it is on the improving of the political structure, social security, prosperity and education that the victory of South Vietnam and its allies depends; victory in the only significant sense of the word. For if the defence of South Vietnam is seen, not as a struggle for purely economic Western interests and consequently as a semi-colonial military effort which would support any dictatorship from opportunistic considerations, if the defence of the Republic of Vietnam is seen, on the contrary, as an effort by the West to sustain, bring into being, an open and democratic society against the threat of a closed communist dictatorship (and I have exerted myself to make it clear that the Vietnam war should not only be seen as such, but also, in the United States and elsewhere, be experienced and fought as such), the promotion of material well-being, social security and a perspective of free development in the sciences and the arts acquire as high an interest as that of the military struggle. Only if such inspiring prospects are brought nearer to their realization and soon will the population south of the Geneva dividing line — the people the report is about — be induced

to give their utmost ideological and actual support to their government. The 'realism' of an American senator like Fulbright, who stated in April of this year that his country should withdraw from Vietnam because North Vietnam happens to be the 'dominating power' in Indo-China, is not only based on a contestable hypothesis, but overlooks the fact that in politics reality is not simply found but made, converted, brought about, and in this case must be brought about. The fact that this defeatist thesis meets with such great response in the United States and is spreading over Europe from France, which must herself have a far from clear conscience over Indo-China and which evidently considers this one way of meeting the American challenge now under discussion all over the world, all this cannot strengthen our faith in the capacity of many prominent politicians and would-be or real prospective intellectuals for unemotional and constructive thought. And faith in democracy as a society structure, in democratic representatives of the people whose task it is to keep watching that same structure with a critical eye is actually the matter at issue. It is true that democracy is the most hazardous form of society ever tried by mankind in the course of his history. The ever shifting limits of tolerance with respect to convictions and groups assailing those elements of the existing order which have become obsolete, give democracy not only its strength and its appeal, but at the same time its weakness and lack of homogeneity, its inertia and lack of balance. Throughout the world mankind has witnessed time and again the collapse of democracy owing to the temptations of apparent strength, unanimity and efficiency, to the worship of the kind of authority which turns out to be dictatorship and which has no other substance than repression and exploitation. This is the risk which the United States and its allies have accepted, either consciously or unconsciously, when they shouldered the burden of the defence of South Vietnam. The legacy of a feudal society which had been further developed under French and indeed 'classical' colonial rule, was taken on voluntarily by the United States of America. It often appeared as if the Americans developed an involvement in this part of Asia, so one-sidedly military in character that even the appearance of democracy in South Vietnam was no longer observed. Reality? There is no doubt about it. And this is one of the risks of democracy which ought to be eliminated. If America fails in this respect it will have turned its assistance into a travesty, it will have misused its soldiers and wasted its millions. The realism of all the Fulbrights in the world is

a plea to betray precisely those issues which have been and should be the cause, motive and justification of the struggle already being waged and that is still to come. The team of economists of the Joint Development Group has accepted the challenge of democracy, to use Servan-Schreiber's now famous term once again, to the full and even optimistically. Vietnam, so it begins, has not been destroyed by the war: in some respects it has even been strengthened. It is true that a great number of citizens have been driven away from their homes, but on the other hand many of them have received a training which they would not otherwise have had and which will benefit the post-war economy. It is true that large parts of the country's infra-structure have been damaged, roads, railway tracks, the main power plant; but all this can be reconstructed, and airfields and harbour installations have been constructed which will be more than adequate for the country in peacetime.

After reading the report one must come to the conclusion that the greatest problem of post-war Vietnam will not be the repair of material war damage, but much rather the overcoming of backwardness, the legacy of a feudal colonial system. The agrarian nature of the country necessitates above all increasing rice production and that of other foodstuffs as a matter of the highest priority. Agriculture which yields by far the largest part of the national income and on which 70-80 % of the population depend for a living (the same figure is valid for North Vietnam) has not nearly been developed to the full, which is due first of all to a far too high number of too small holdings yielding no more than a meagre living to the peasant families. While the population could easily exist on rice culture, the rice crops are declining; and measures such as the opening up of new land, modern irrigation methods, research, experiments with types of rice yielding more than one crop yearly, desalination of the water in the Mekong Delta are needed in order to raise the production to many times its present height, as also are mechanization, market research, better distribution, the use of fertilizers and bactericides and grants for the rice growers.

The average size of the small holding is estimated at 3,335 acres, insufficient to nourish a family with most types of crop. Therefore land reform is necessary, from a social as well as a political point of view. But the report sounds a warning that large and flourishing farms should not be carved up; in many cases the employment of labourers on living wages will be preferable to a division of the land into too

many small holdings which would each provide only a poor and insecure living to the new owner. The report recommends strong decentralization — also with respect to industry, road construction and education — for its development programme, in view of topographical and ethnographical differences which determine the problems regionally and locally.

In the five northern provinces of South Vietnam which have suffered most from the war and where over half a million refugees have left the region, approximately 148,200 acres of land will have to be taken into cultivation all over again and as a matter of priority. The average size of a farm here is only a third of the average in the Mekong Delta, i.e. 1.60 acres (1.73 acres in the Central Lowlands), 80 % of which is used for rice cultivation. Here the recultivation of the land, but above all adequate irrigation and more than one annual crop will have to provide the urgent improvements, while in the coastal area desalination is needed, as in the Mekong Delta. The main part of the country's overall crops will have to be produced in this southernmost region, the rice basin of Vietnam. National and regional interests coincide absolutely here. The Delta has an area of 9.14 million acres, 5.2 million of which is suitable for rice cultivation. 3.57 million has already been cultivated (4.2 rice) with one crop a year and three different cultivation methods, depending on irrigation. A new high-yield rice variety has been introduced here, though not on a large scale. The output, approximately 3.3 million tons for 1967, an average of approximately half a ton per acre is judged high for Vietnam, but it is low as compared with several other countries and particularly with what it could be, i.e. twice as high if all conditions of irrigation, desalination and the right rice variety were met. The fact that improvements are already being introduced in the Mekong Delta (experiments with new rice varieties, installations to prevent seawater flowing up the rivers, is important, although the report warns that the carrying out of the entire scheme as suggested will take more than the foreseen ten years).

Starting from the desirability of minimal imports and maximal exports, the Joint Development Group argues that industry should not be developed independent from agriculture. Great attention should be given to import substitution, though in view of the restrictions imposed by the available raw materials in the country, the need of importing capital goods, and a higher demand on the part of consumers with the rise of average earnings, the need for considerable

imports during the first post-war years should be taken into account. This should be met by exports of, as is to be expected, mainly agrarian produce. It is evident in this connection that agrarian produce will have to be sold at low prices, during this period in any case. The war effects on various branches of industry differ of course. The drinks, tobacco and canned food industries have benefited from the presence of foreign troops and also from the move from the countryside to the towns and the high degree of employment there. But textiles, rubber, glass and ceramic industries have suffered from war conditions, as have such products as cane sugar, methyl alcohol, paper and silk. Rehabilitation and expansion of those industries will have to come first, as will the manufacturing of products important for agriculture, such as fertilizers and chemicals controlling plant diseases. Tobacco is highly important in connection with excise duties. And timber production will also need attention. A forest area of some 15 million acres over the whole country could make a considerable contribution not only to the domestic economy and reconstruction, but also to exports. Forest exploitation now is most inadequate according to the report. Vietnam even has to import timber for home demands. This must be attributed partly to inadequate methods dating from the colonial epoch, partly to the war situation and the inadmissible and harmful forcing-up of prices. The writers of the report consider a complete overhaul of these policies necessary and mention a request for expert assistance made by Vietnam to the United Nations. A remarkable phenomenon in the context of the timber industry is the fact that a large part of it is to be found in the Mekong Delta, the only Vietnamese area without forests. The sixty sawmills there with an overall annual capacity of 312,000 cu. yards sawn timber, representing a substantial part of the country's industry, with permanent employment for 1,200 workers, operate so uneconomically that they do not reach more than 5 % of their capacity. This industry, which at first sight one would not expect in this area, is based on cheap supplies of timber from Cambodia by way of the Mekong and Bassac Rivers in the past. Cambodia, as a matter of fact, is a nearby and therefore inexpensive furnisher of other raw materials needed by Vietnam, which ought to provide another reason for the Saigon government's opposition to a communist regime in that country which could seal off its frontiers, and for its desire to pursue good relations with it. This is, indeed, a mutual interest. I will pass over the sections about the monetary, fiscal and investment

policies in post-war years, however important they may be, about fisheries, now virtually paralysed by war, and about employment policies, which, in the first years of peace in particular, will be closely associated with the refugee problem, retraining of perhaps a great number of soldiers returning to civilian life and the regional depopulation of the countryside. Work in these fields cannot very well be started in wartime.

But there are two important aspects of the rehabilitation of Vietnam which should be given attention, if opportunities are sought of setting to work straight away on problems which will fully arise only after the ending of the war. The first that should be mentioned is the city of Saigon, situated at the centre of some ten rural provinces which together produce a substantial part of the rice output of the country, a large part of the timber, the major part of the sugar and nearly all of the rubber, and, in addition, such a large part of the industrial production (Saigon and Bien Hoa) that it is described as out of proportion in the report. Saigon houses a third of the provincial population and has become too large for the country. This contrasts strongly with the case of Hanoi, where the population, as a result of the evacuation following the American bombings, has fallen from a million to 200,000 in the years from 1965 to 1968. Saigon, however, is now inhabited by 16 % of the total national population, it has to provide for 3 million inhabitants, while having facilities only for the half million that made up its population 25 years ago . . . The same problem has arisen in the capital of Indonesia, Djakarta, where under comparable conditions the number of inhabitants rose to unmanageable heights owing to people moving into the city from the Java countryside.

In the Joint Development Group report it is calculated that, at the present rate of growth of the population (2,6 %), Saigon will have a population of 4,8 million in 1980 and 9,2 million by the turn of the century. This will add up to a fourth of the national population as estimated for the year 2000. The consequences of the current population growth in terms of housing, sanitary facilities, power supply, food supplies and distribution, hygiene and everything else connected with an urban society, are hardly conceivable. The pressure on the rest of the country as a result of the provisions required for such an urban hypertrophy would not be justified, neither in the economic nor in the human sense. Therefore here, too, decentralization is required, a balanced distribution of industries over the country,

development of other cities, providing adequate communications with the other parts of the country are indispensable and urgently needed. It must be possible to plan these measures in anticipation and lay the foundations for a solution of this problem soon, without waiting for the end of the war.

A matter of utmost importance appears to me to be education, now beset with difficulties on a scale unimaginable in Western countries, such as a shortage of schools, shortage of teachers, books and other teaching aids. In many cases there are hardly any opportunities for the children to get any education at all. Basic education and vocational training, secondary education and university training are so extremely important for the future of the country, for the research that is so urgently needed, for the training of administrators, managers and doctors — there is a shortage in every field — that decisions on the ultimate form of the educational system (it may be questioned whether the present system, derived from the traditional French education system and now increasingly beginning to show American influences, meets the needs of a Vietnamese society), which in the report are postponed until post-war years, cannot be delayed without serious damage being done. According to data provided by Susan Sontag in her sympathetic and sincere anti-war book *Trip to Hanoi*, North Vietnam, which had to cope with similar difficulties under American bombing in particular, does give attention to this important problem. Teachers and professors are exempt from military service, as are the 200,000 students. The number of students at vocational schools and universities have been rising since 1965, according to the American author. Similar measures have been taken in South Vietnam, where compulsory free education for children aged between six and eleven is stipulated under the Constitution. According to the *Information Bulletin* of the Republic of Vietnam, however, only 80% of these children receive 'some education'. It appears necessary already now to extend the exemption regulations and the educational facilities as a matter of priority. When it is stated in the report that the teaching staff in basic education is undermanned, inadequately trained and badly paid, one must conclude that this situation should not have to wait until the end of the war for improvement. Basic schooling for all children, followed by adequate opportunities for secondary education, while stronger emphasis should be laid on vocational training and opportunities for specialization in optional subjects, three times as many pupils receiving

secondary education as at present and three times as many university students as at present — under the circumstances these are indeed demands which cannot be fulfilled and must serve as a post-war programme for a development towards a really independent nation and which must lay the foundations for the independent thought which should conquer the immense and fascinating domain of freedom without bloodshed.

It is the basis of the morale of the Vietnamese people which should be strengthened and intensified now, at the present time, in order to give inspiration and conviction to the belief in the future and make the people appreciate the risks of their own form of democracy. This is the very first essential condition for the inner strength, unity and firm will to accept the risks themselves.

CONTENTS

	Page
FAIRIES AND DRAGONS OF VIETNAM	5
THE HIGHER POWERS	17
VIETCONG AND NOT VIETCONG	29
PEOPLE AND LANDSCAPES OF VIETNAM	40
MORALS AND CRIME	107
DEMOCRACY AS A RISK	115

