

Section II

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

"UNITY IS LIFE, DISUNITY IS DEATH"--

A slogan of the National Front for Liberation
of South Viet-Nam

Dedicated to the people and Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the National Front for Liberation of South Viet-Nam who are an inspiration for the whole world.

Dedicated also to the memory of my beloved father, Samuel Saxe.

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CRITICS and
~~CADREAGE AND~~ CORNERSTONES

"Having been all over the world, I can truly say that no issue since the Second World War has so keyed up the peoples of the world as Viet-Nam," ^{said} Mrs. Bernie Steele of the Women's Strike for Peace, ~~said, reflecting a general sentiment.~~ "The stakes have never been higher than in Viet-Nam," President Johnson ~~constantly~~ ^{acted} thundered. And he acted accordingly--staking ~~everything~~ ^{all} on destroying the National Front for Liberation of South Viet-Nam and the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam!

Yet throughout the world, and especially in the United States, few people ^{have much knowledge of} ~~know anything about~~ Viet-Namese revolutionary theory, thought and practice, ~~even though nothing could be more important.~~ ^{"experts"} Even professors I have talked with who tour the country to lecture on Viet-Nam are in the dark concerning the most basic facts ^{in this area.} ~~about it. Why, they don't even know what the very cornerstone of the National Front for Liberation is!~~

~~Surely~~ It is impossible meaningfully to discuss the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the National Front for Liberation without discussing their very foundation? ~~Just as it isn't possible to describe a person with any depth without at least revealing whether that person is man or woman; just as it is impossible to analyze a building without telling about its structure, it is equally impossible to write about the NFL without discussing its gender--class gender-- and economic~~

~~and political structure.~~

Contrary to prevalent belief, the NFL is not an amorphous coalition. It is so purposeful, so cohesive, because it has a definite base. That base is the Worker-Peasant Alliance--the cornerstone of the Front.

To ~~fib~~ and say the NFL is a loose coalition goes over well with liberals, while the term "worker-peasant alliance" sometimes causes consternation because of its marxian connotation.

~~Still fresh in my mind is the image of a sardonic Catholic who, wealthy and wishing to become the Benefactor of a cause, almost any cause, unfortunately picked ours. Constantly he loaned his cadillac and threw intimate little "steak suppers" for the U.S. Committee to Aid the National Liberation Front. At one of them, he wondered whether the Communists in the NFL might ever "dupe" the others. I said, that is highly improbable since nearly every book, document and speech by an NFL or DRV leader openly states that the Front is based on the worker-peasant alliance, led by the working class.~~

~~Hearing this, the catholic, who had graciously said Grace only a few minutes before, began braying like a berserk baboon. My one innocent little statement set him off on a four-hours' tirade in which he said (about the only thing not unprintable!) that to connect the NFL with the worker-peasant alliance I was a bitch and a murderer and a menace to the world! In you, he said (or rather screamed!) I see all the bloodthirsty purgers since the Russian Revolution which first introduced the cursed concept~~

of worker-peasant alliance .

If liberals are sometimes ~~consternated~~ ^{alarmed} when they find out the Front is based on the worker-peasant alliance, trotskyists and other hyper-leftists are equally ~~consternated~~ ^{alarmed} because they do not know that it is. Unlike the conservatives, they chastise the Front for not being based on the worker-peasant alliance! But their mistake is the same, since the trotskyists too think the NFL an amorphous sort of coalition. ~~Typical~~ Example:

"The politically-amorphous, peasant-based South Viet-Namese National Liberation Front has the same fundamental weaknesses that led to the betrayal and defeat of so many similar movements in other countries."¹

The NFL is not peasant-based, but worker-based. It has none of the fundamental (or even superstructural) weaknesses characterizing revolutions distorted or defeated. It is only because the revolutions in Indonesia, Nigeria, Ghana, Algeria, Brazil and other countries have not followed the Viet-Namese model that they have failed. The only way to achieve Liberation is by practicing Viet-Nam's successful Rules for Revolution, ~~which this book tries to bring out.~~

~~If the trotskyists only knew~~ ^{The trotskyists sound, with} How foolish ~~their~~ constant calls for the formation in South Viet-Nam of "a Party of the working-class" and for "proletarian hegemony" of the Viet-Namese revolution! ~~sound!~~ Those Rip Van Winkles are calling for something that was established in Viet-Nam almost forty years ago. Since the founding of Viet-Nam's Communist Party in 1930, all of Viet-Nam's half-dozen ~~United Fronts~~ have been led by the working class. Today in South Viet-Nam

the People's Revolutionary Party carries on that same tradition.

~~Of course~~ Many trotskysts deliberately distort the nature of the National Fronts in Viet-Nam, ~~how else can they have a carte blanche to calumniate?~~ A trotskyst splinter group in the United States, a section of which has declared that ~~they~~ ^{we} and their fellow trotskysts should work for the defeat of the NFL, smugly states:

"Now, but for the small pro-trotskyst MR-130 movement in tiny Guatemala, there is virtually no even semi-qualified revolutionary leadership in any colonial or semi-colonial country where ferment is occurring or apparently imminent."²

~~When all evidence shows that Viet-Nam's revolutionary leaders are the most brilliant exponents of contemporary revolution!~~

The best refutation of the ^{se} mendacities ^{lies} and misconceptions ~~logging down so many in a mental miasma~~ is simply to tell ~~revolution wise~~, what the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the National Front for Liberation really represent. ~~That is the aim of this book. By giving the background out of which Viet Nam's great coalitions evolved, it presents, in a way, a case history of their struggle.~~

General Vo Nguyen Giap wrote:

"The practice of revolutionary struggle in our country, in new historical conditions, has made an original contribution to Marxist-Leninist theory."³ This book deals with that contribution in its various aspects. It also attempts to give a many-sided treatment of Viet-Nam's new-type National Democratic Revolution, which might be considered modern Marxism except that it has gone beyond it. Viet-Nam became the first nation

in the world to bring to triumph this revolution, which I believe can bring about the whole world's ~~renaissance~~ ^{renaissance}. The political and philosophic ideas of National Democratic Revolution, now animating the National Front for Liberation, helped lay the foundation for the development of the government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam--a government whose solidarity and spirit of tolerance evoke much admiration from foreign visitors.

Viet-Nam's revolutionary tactics and strategies have universal application. ~~Out of the legacies and lessons of the Viet-Namese revolution emerges a blue-print for the world's.~~ Well aware of this, Washington wars to prevent Viet-Nam's example from inspiring and igniting the revolutionary forces on all continents. How well the oppressed peoples (including the American people) learn to assimilate the lessons of the Viet-Namese Liberation Fronts ~~literally~~ will spell the difference between Life and ~~Death~~. A revolution incorrectly based and executed is nothing but a costly cipher--in terms of wasted lives. ~~Because whether a revolution is aborted or distorted, it cannot prevent the holocaust of imperialism from unleashing more and more war, obscurantism and misery.~~

* ~~My next book deals with government and humanism in the DRV.~~

The ~~awful armageddon~~ ^{spectre} of nuclear conflagration ~~also~~ presents a real danger unless all peoples learn to build broad coalitions, à la the NFL, to free the nations from the rule of the war-makers. Capitalism and colonialism are on a collision course with the peoples striving for Liberation; we must race against time to arrive at Liberation before the cadillac clique succeeds with its destruction. Unless the independence struggle in Viet-Nam lives, all hope dies. If this struggle succeeds, mankind will have crossed the threshold into the most enlightened era ~~of~~ of all time.

Footnotes for Chapter One

- 1 "The Spartacists," June-July 1966, p. 6
- 2 *ibid.*, p. 6
- 3 Vo Nguyen Giap, "The Political and Military Line of Our Party," Viet-Nameese Studies ("Problems") No. 7, "Pages of History--1945-54," p. 132.

A WORD TO THE NEW LEFT

Lately I have begun even more to dislike dogmatism and empty theorizing. As the air war against North Viet-Nam has continued to escalate, emotionally I have found myself turning away from most political books and theory. Because they are words on paper that have not stopped one bomb from falling on the cities and children of Viet-Nam. So that in a very real sense I can sympathize with the New Left's turning off from traditional theory and seeking solutions in the vortex of life.

When a friend of mine began attending a Marxist study group, my reaction was an almost physical disgust. People who could otherwise be "activists" sitting around a comfortable apartment escaping the horror of the Viet-Nam war by discussing political theory from the Nineteenth Century--the very idea gave me a sick feeling.

How could they think of discussing "Surplus value," "The Negation of the Negation," "The Unity of Opposites" when Haiphong and Hanoi had been bombed? It reminded me of Russian aristocrats filling up their lives with escapist hobbies when the Russian people starved in gutters. Somehow I have never been able to divorce the Russian aristocracy's extravagant Rabbit Hunts from today's "Hunter-Killer" millions flown by U.S. aircraft over North Viet-Nam, and U.S. soldiers' "search-and-destroy" operations in the South.

But like everyone else, I'm contradictory. Because I

still find myself thinking about Marxist theory (which I learned as an adolescent) simply because much of it is so beautiful, intricate, and sweeping--like a Viet-Nameese United Front. But although it gives me philosophic pleasure (that is, the part I agree with) I fully realize it is my particular escape from the war.

And yet--is it entirely? Everywhere I look, I see evidence of the validity of Marxism. For instance, the Viet-Nameese people are a living confirmation of the "Unity of Opposites," because they are very emotional, very sensitive at the same time that they are strong and heroic! (Of course, the Unity of Opposites concept is much more involved than that, and my simplistic example has on a higher philosophic level distorted it).

The present book presents only theory which has already demonstrated definite pragmatic value. I have made every effort to omit anything esoteric or extraneous to our contemporary experience. The conventional type Marxist study circle may become important again after the war. Now, it would seem more important to set up Viet-Nam study groups, which in addition to teaching about the Viet-Nam war, its causes and course, would study a living Socialist state--the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. Since DRV society and contributions are highly inspirational, learning about them would give people abroad a new perspective. Vital to an understanding of the DRV and of the whole struggle in the world today are the theories that form the keystone of DRV beliefs and practices. This book attempts to provide insight into them.

Unlike the works of the Founding Fathers of Marxism, whose writings showed such peerless insight into man and society, ~~such encyclopedic knowledge of history, science and philosophy, unfortunately~~ much Marxist writing today is both mediocre and irrelevant. Little wonder it doesn't "switch on" the present generation. ~~This is not true only of Marxist writing, of course. Contemporary defenders of the Western way of life evoke disgust not only by the tedium of their leaden cliches but by what George Orwell called their Defense of the Indefensible.~~ ~~Sadly,~~ Few political leaders or theoreticians, whatever their political persuasion, can deal in anything but dull dogma. Ho Chi Minh is one of the unique ones who, as James Cameron said, "rises above the grey desert of dogma."

Another was the late Nguyen Chi Thanh, eminent DRV General, Statesman, Party Secretary and Politburo member, who died on July 6, 1966 of a heart attack at age 53. His writings, his speeches were profoundly original, ^{laced} ~~kissed~~ through and through with warmth and wit. His compassionate humor ^{gave} ~~insight~~ ^{into} man's foibles ~~and the broad spectrum of human nature~~ in a way that ~~may never be~~ ^{was seldom} equalled. One of Nguyen Chi Thanh's witty After-Dinner Speeches is worth many thousands of dull-as-dishwater tracts by Party hacks. ~~Near the end of this book I have included a chapter giving excerpts from Nguyen Chi Thanh's speeches and writings.~~

~~The "mild rebuke" of the New Left which follows was written before the bombings of Hanoi, Haiphong and Hanoi, and before I had discovered Nguyen Chi Thanh. But although since~~

~~then my outlook has changed considerably, causing me better to comprehend the New Left's rejection of abstract study and dogmatic-style writing, I still honestly feel that they go too far.~~ ^{The New Left's} ~~For their~~ refusal to read "anything political" cuts them off from a Nguyen Chi Thanh as much as from the writings of a doctrinaire politician. Their rejection of "theory" cordons them off not only from the "abstract, irrelevant" brand but from concrete, modern theory with concrete possibilities of application, without which it is impossible to change the world at all. ~~So now let me now present this chapter as I originally wrote it, since I believe it still has validity.~~

~~I hope the New Left will not take offense at my criticism, since my purpose is only to be helpful. Please keep in mind that I'm not some senior member of the Old Left lecturing the young. All who know me consider me a member of the New Left, and I would certainly describe myself as such.~~

In the United States many on the Left have disdain for the working class; they would deny to it any important role in bringing about a Socialist revolution. Part of this attitude stems from the middle classes' traditional contempt for working class values and people, whom they look down upon as inferior and anti-intellectual. But who actually is anti-intellectual? Most of today's New Leftists are so down on knowledge that they decline to pick up a single political book. Void of theory or any philosophy of life, structured or unstructured, they resort to rationalizations:

"All that Marxist jargon is so meaningless for us," they

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say, not realizing that this is the case only because they have not taken the trouble to learn it. "We're activists, we don't need boring theory."

Way back in 1925 Ho Chi Minh seemed to have foreseen the ideology-nil groups on the New Left when he wrote in The Revolutionary Path:

"A party without ideology is like a man without intelligence, a vessel without a compass."

But today's young radicals contend that Marxist theory is old hat. "Can't you substitute something for those awful clichés like 'worker-peasant alliance'?" But ask them to suggest a phrase that means the same, and ~~naturally~~ the ~~New Left~~ can't. Socialism is, among other things, the science of the workingman's struggle. Yet many people actually resent the fact that Marxism-Leninism has evolved a number of ^{theoretical} definite concepts in *They flinch from the knowledge that these concepts require disciplined, intense study.* the course of its history and development. [^] They don't realize what is clear to any schoolchild in the rest of the world:

Because Marxism-Leninism is a political science, it must use the jargon of a political science. Americans would hardly expect to pick up an advanced physiology textbook, or Second Year German and without previous study be able to comprehend it right off the bat. But when for the first time in their lives they glance through a book of Marxism they ~~have the affrontery~~ to say, "It's no good, because it uses all that jargon; it's political."

I have talked with college students and other New Leftists who condemn the Marxist-Leninist literature they have merely looked through because as one of them put it, "we are artists,

we are esthetic and those books don't use literary language."

Any Viet-^Namese peasant is ^{Knows} ~~savvy~~ to much more political terminology than almost anybody on the New Left. And if one of them ~~wasn't~~ ^{did not} ~~he~~ ^{would} have enough respect for ^{Scholarship} ~~the study of~~ politics to want to know what terms like "National Democratic Revolution" meant. ~~Recall the portraits of Lenin with the Russian peasants looking up to him and what he was teaching them with absolute reverence.~~

Now nobody is asking for that. But so much of the New Left has gone to the other extreme and is rootin' tootin' proud of its anti-intellectualism which it ^{is} ~~was~~ like a way-out hippie badge.

OK

Lately a number of learned ~~Leftist~~ ^{Leftist} professors admired by the New Left have condemned the latter's ^{rejection of} ~~mindless~~ ~~ideology~~ theory. In a ~~report~~ ~~delivered at a forum of "The Cause of the Month"~~ (yes, in New York there is actually a club which meets ~~every month to examine in the hopes of championing a different cause every month!~~) Professor Eugene Genovese ^{has} ~~has~~ said:

"Most of the New Left prides itself on its pragmatism which in this case means mindlessness, and its freedom from Marxian dogma. Actually, it has no theory at all; nor an understanding and respect for history; nor even a knowledge of what it does not know. The New Left, notwithstanding the efforts of "Studies on the Left" [a monthly journal] and a number of individuals, is more violently and stupidly anti-intellectual than the Old Left ever was.

"Consequently, the New Left may know that American society is unjust and sick, but it hardly knows why. It has no theory

of society, no theory of social change, and no understanding of the nature and promise of Socialism, which it is incapable of discussing apart from the experience of the present-day socialist countries. Its concern with the deterioration of moral values lacks focus, either historical or theoretical.

"If the Old Left constantly trampled on individuality in the sacred name of the collective good, the New Left constantly tramples on the collective good in the sacred name of individuality. I am not certain that anything has been gained by this swing of the pendulum, for neither is much good without the other. The Old Left understood organization, discipline, the prerogatives and the legitimacy of leadership and authority. If it pushed these things too far, it at least understood that the world cannot be run without them in a manner fit for civilized men and women."

~~Typical were the New Leftists and apolitical young people who worked with the U.S. Committee to Aid the National Liberation Front. When I used to ask them whether they had any interest in Socialism, they'd say, "Nah! I don't care anything about sectarian arguments from the 1930's."~~ *I personally* ~~Sometimes one long~~ to say to ~~them~~ *New Left*: "We, who know what the National Liberation Front represents, who believe in different groups and political tendencies uniting together ~~in a far embracing coalition~~, hate sectarianism worse than you do. But what has that to do with learning ~~something about~~ *the basics of* Marxism-Leninism, which would ~~enable~~ *enable* you ~~to comprehend~~ to comprehend life and the world in so many of its manifestations? Even if it did not open up a new and

necessary dimension for you (~~which it certainly would!~~) it would still be of tremendous value as a discipline ~~anyway~~. ~~Say you~~ Read Lenin's great polemics with the philosopher Mikhailovsky in the former's book What the Friends of the People (Narodniks) Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats. ~~Even were some of~~ The debates ^{are not} outdated, (~~but they're not in this book~~) Lenin answers almost every argument conjured up by today's anti-Marxists; ~~it would still be the greatest discipline for your mind;~~ You would be reading something on the level of Socratic dialogue, only with far more possibilities of modern application. It would equip your mind with logic and the ability to win arguments. ~~You would then be able to comprehend anything better!~~

I'm not advocating that you ~~accept~~ Marxism-Leninism, ~~not at all~~. (Especially as I myself have discarded much of the textbook kind which cannot be translated into reality.) Without knowing it, however, you lack all option of rationally accepting or rejecting it or any part of it. "

~~Strangely, the middle-class New Left and apolitical "No-Left" people who worked with the Committee to Aid the DRV often helped sell the political literature that they couldn't understand and refused to read.*~~

*The causal relationship is simply that when they couldn't understand a word or term, anti-intellectualism and/ or ego-pride stood in the way of their looking it up or asking. So out of frustration they stopped reading, "throwing the baby out with the bath." Since this section of the book both explains and simplifies some important DRV political thought as well as telling lessons of the Viet-^Namese revolution, it has an important by-product: the reader who could not do so before will be able to comprehend almost any DRV political book and extract from it most all its meat and meaning. While I consider DRV political

~~Literature among the most brilliant and significant in the world (something that unfortunately cannot be said of the bad translations of it) this book will also help people to comprehend progressive political literature from other countries as well.~~

Every contact with them proved the validity of Le Duan's analysis of the bourgeoisie as a vacillating class. Such persons are at first effusive in their support of the NFL's struggle to liberate the people; they are for self-determination for Viet-Nam, which is all they know, or care to know. Later they begin to waver, to become poisoned by their own middle-class conditioning and slowly turn against progressive Viet-Nam's position. The ones I knew were always ranting about "objectivity," harping on the "two sides to every story" bit. Epitomizing that objectivity for them is The New York Times which gives "the facts." Every book from a Socialist country is full of "propaganda" and cannot be believed! (As if everything were not "propaganda" since the word simply means something propagated, or spread; yet people have been conditioned to attach a bad connotation to it, not realizing that propganda can be truthful as well as mendacious. Personally I like Herbert Aptheker's definition of "objectivity" as "partisanship with the oppressed." As Dr. Aptheker puts it, "If you had perfect partisanship with the oppressed, you would have perfect objectivity." In the broader sense, "objectivity" does not exist and will not till the day the world ends and "all the fact are in.")

About Viet-Nameese poetry, telling of the sufferings of a nation at war, some said, "These poems are about the war;

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therefore, they're political; therefore, they can't be poetry!" (Strange logic!) Meeting such people always made Le Duan's words on the bourgeoisie come absolutely alive for me. (What he wrote on the subject will be quoted in a later chapter.)

Not only the New Left but many of the older radicals turn up their noses at the suggestion that they should share power and influence with workers. (One of these doyens even said at a Socialist Conference that in the U.S. marxists should seclude themselves to study and formulate Marxist theory, but never become active revolutionaries. He argued vehemently against the concept of marxists working with the people in building a revolutionary movement. So many American radicals lack balance, to say the least; either it is all theory with them, or else all practice--the twain seem destined never to meet.)

The Viet-~~N~~amese revolutionaries have no use for theory that isn't full of pragmatic possibility. In my opinion, they have made Marxism really relevant by taking from it only those parts that when put into practice give the highest benefit to the people and the nation. They have supplemented this Marxism-in-action (words sans deeds will forever be worthless) with the wisdom gleaned from their own traditions and those of other nations, which they try very hard to live up to. Much of the matchless organizational propensity that the Viet-^Namese display in the creation of their United Fronts results from their choosing principles and procedures on the basis of their work-ability. Duplicating the Viet-Minh experience, cadres in South Viet-Nam set their political programs to the tunes of the most popular songs because

that way when they have singin's the words will stick in the people's minds. The people will become politicized without half the effort! But the political words become meaningful within the context of the villagers' lives only because they deal with their local, day-to-day problems.

In the same way, the working class in Viet-Nam has always led the Revolution not because some Marxian dogma decrees it, but because it revolved out of their own experience and works out in practice to the benefit of the whole nation.

Ho Chi Minh once said that to help bring about unity between the classes in society the intellectuals should go to the workers and peasants, should take the first step towards them. I have no doubt, he went on to say, that the workers would welcome this first step. But U.S. Marxists only wail and whine about how ignorant and unprogressive and American working class is, not realizing that as intellectuals it is their duty to do something about this--by spreading revolutionary ideas among them. Yes, it is their duty to take that first step; the proletariat will always be an elephant which does not realize its own strength till it is taught to.

Most Marxists seem to have forgotten--if they ever knew--the inspiring saga of how Russian revolutionaries from the aristocracy went among the workers to enlighten them. (Also to learn from them--such interaction alone produces true revolutionary perspective.) Why should American radicals do any less? Even Russian babushkas selling publitchkas were better revolutionaries--the spunky old women hid political pamphlets under the bagels they pushcarted to the factories!

Ho Chi Minh always advised his followers to write simply and succinctly so that the working people might understand and retain their ideas, and he himself has always practiced what he preaches. Every one of his articles, speeches and books is a model of simplicity, conciseness and compelling logic. Like Lenin, Ho Chi Minh has the facility for making complicated matters simple, of expressing the essence of anything in a few deft lines. He has set an example that revolutionaries the world over could benefit from emulating.

But radicals in the West tend towards extremes. Either they reject all theory and take pride in their ignorance, or else they show they have ego problems by writing in such a pedantic and esoteric way that even many Marxists, let alone ordinary people, are unable to understand their works. ~~(Maybe this is what they want!)~~

Like it or not, since in this technological age only the proletariat plays the main role in society, only that class can play the main role in Twentieth-Century socialism. Middle-class radicals might ponder to advantage L. Duan's statement that "Without the working class standpoint and ideology we cannot understand socialism." Yes, cannot understand socialism--let alone try to bring it about!

Footnotes For Chapter II

- 1 President Ho Chi Minh. By Pham Van Dong, etc., op. cit., p. 59
- 2 "Genovese Looks At American Left--New and Old," The National Guardian, Feb. 19, 1966, p. 6

RISE OF VIET-NAM'S WORKING CLASS

The French colonialists could not dream that their introduction of capitalism to Viet-Nam would spread the seeds of their own destruction. Ironically, by bringing about the growth of the Viet-Namese Proletariat, they unknowingly benefitted Viet-Nam. The paradox was that the whole of French colonial policy was geared solely to benefitting the Mother Country.

Even the little industry the French developed in Viet-Nam-- only seven "major" industrial enterprises and thirty repair shops--never benefitted the Viet-Namese. The colonialists took all the rich raw materials and minerals they could out of Viet-Nam, out of the whole of Indo-China, to batten imperialist industry in France. The last thing France wanted was Viet-Namese native industry as competitor. According to Len Fox, under French colonialism the people in the North and Central part of Viet-Nam were forced to eat insects, because the colonialists exported so much rice to the Metropolitan country! 31

Typical is the colonialist mentality impelling the French after their defeat in 1954 to burn, bomb and sabotage what little industry they had built in North Viet-Nam--to prevent its benefitting the Viet-Namese "natives." Taking all the machinery they could out of Viet-Nam before their withdrawal, and wrecking the rest, the French even destroyed the plans for these enterprises, believing that in this way the Viet-Namese would never be able to rebuild them! It would be mammoth understatement to say that they were wrong. Not

only did North Viet-Nam rebuild such establishments--notably the Haiphong Cement Plant and the Nam Dinh Textile Mill--but greatly enlarged and expanded them. On the ruins of a weakening war the North Viet-Nameese built thousands of modern factories and enterprises that made their nation the only industrialized one in the whole of Southeast Asia. No wonder the United States ~~destroyed~~ sent its bombers to smash the industries, hospitals, schools, the economic and social accomplishments which had made the fledgling DRV the soaring inspiration for all Asia, Africa and Latin America!

How did the French sow the wind that reaped the whirlwind? The growth of French capitalism following World War I brought about the ruin of the small productive branches in the Viet-Nameese countryside, resulting in tens of thousands of peasants streaming into the towns. French exploitation on the rubber, rice and coffee plantations and in the few industrial enterprises the French built in the North turned hundreds of thousands of these peasants overnight into workers.

But soon after leaving their feudal farms to try their luck in the cities, the peasants became disillusioned and despairing. They found city life, with its scourge of starvation and unemployment, so intolerable that almost without exception they wanted to return to their farms again.

But it wasn't so easy. Colonialist police terror, hunger and unemployment buffeted them from one job to another. Most were forced to remain in the cities merely to keep alive. The French made them work in virtual slave labor, denying them the permission, the money and the sheer energy of trying to struggle

back to their farms.

In North Viet-Nam, in the coal mines of Hong Gai and Campha, in the Nam Dinh Textile Company, the Haiphong Cement Plant and other enterprises, the young Viet-Nameese working class under French colonialism suffered especially severely. Nguyen Cong Hoa, now Vice-Chairman of the Viet-Nam Federation of Trade Unions, worked at the Haiphong Cement Plant under French rule when the plant was very backward and "all day long the workers lived in a cloud of dust."^{#2} He relates an incident there that typifies the brutalities the Viet-Nameese suffered under French colonialism:

"... a 'mad' Frenchman ordered his 'yes men' to stuff cement into the mouth of an old worker because the latter, owing to his weak eyes, failed to salute him. [All Viet-Nameese were forced to salute the French.]

"The poor man was suffocating and about to die, so they pretended to take him to the hospital but actually threw him into a remote storeroom, where he died the next day. Deaths by labour accident happened every week. Run over by wagons: death. Fallen from broken scaffolding: death. The workers' lives were not worth much."^{#3}

Working 12 to 17 hours a day, seven days a week in abominable sweat-shop conditions, the Viet-Nameese workers still never earned enough to keep very far above starvation. Workers and their families had to rummage in garbage heaps for food and resort to eating rats--if they were lucky enough to eat at all! Every year 300,000 to 400,000 North Viet-Nameese starved to death. (Over two million persons died of starvation

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in North and Central Viet-Nam in 1945.)

On the job, there was no break for lunch. The Viet-Nameese workers had to sneak a little food behind the back of the overseer.

The gruelling overwork and under-nutrition robbed the Viet-Nameese of so much energy that even if they had had any leisure time they could not have enjoyed normal relations with their families nor with other people. Child labor was widespread. The colonialist overseers often beat the workers, including the women and children. In fact, the children were beaten worst of all.

Exhaustion led to a fantastically high rate of accidents on the job. To make matters worse, the French set work quotas for the Viet-Nameese, and imposed heavy fines on those who could not fulfill them in a set time--which usually wasn't long enough for the fatigued and malnourished workers. At the end of the week when the "fines" were added up a worker often wound up with only one day's pay!

Of course, all the benefits the government of the DRV brought the workers--the seven and a half hour day with Sundays off, full pay during illness, free medical and hospital care, social security pensions (to which, by the way, the workers had to contribute not a single penny), paid vacations, nursery schools for the workers' children, hot showers in the factories and mines, recreational facilities, rest homes, modern apartments--all these would have seemed miracles to the Viet-Nameese, back in the days of French colonialism. Now U.S. bombs have destroyed the DRV's factories and cities such as

the twin mining towns of H_ong G_ai and Campha and together with them, all the benefits that the workers enjoyed.

Outside of Hanoi and Haiphong, not one North Viet-Namese city remains standing, U.S. bombs have rendered them rubble. Everything built by the DRV government in the last dozen years, every factory, every building, every power station, every cultural facility--everything that gave the people's lives comfort and charm--has been specially singled out for destruction.

Consider Hong G_ai and Campha. The coal from their open-cast mines, the largest and richest in the world, besides being one of the DRV's leading industries and an important source of power consumption, also was essential to its foreign trade. The U.S. has made those mines a prime target.

The Second Investigating Commission of the Bertrand Russell International War Crimes Tribunal pointed out in its report that time and again, U.S. planes purposely disgorged their deadly bombs just when the workers' shift changed. "Many were caught eating in the town restaurant; others were caught on their way home." ⁴ Sometimes at lunch, sometimes at dinner, but always, always at mealtime, bombs blotted out the workers' lives. The same at Thai-Nguyen Iron-and-Steel city, at Viet-Tri, at Hanoi, at Haiphong, at all North Viet-Namese industrial areas... (It has reached the point where here in New York, I cannot watch the workers blithely eating in their cafeterias, everything reminds me. I hurry home so that I shouldn't see them and the bright lights, hurry to pull down my window-shade. But in my mind I see it all the same, workers eating in the cafeterias when the bombs struck...)