

CHAPTER IX

BUILDING THE INITIAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIALISM AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST U.S. NEO-COLONIALISM (1954-73)

The Geneva Agreements on Vietnam recognized the fundamental national rights of the Vietnamese people: independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. But the balance of forces between the Vietnamese national resistance on one hand, and the imperialist forces, particularly the Franco-US coalition, on the other, only enabled the Vietnamese people to completely liberate the northern part of their country. Beijing's ambiguous policies also weakened Vietnam's position.

The agreements stipulated that the southern half of Vietnam would be handed over to a provisional administration after two years at the most, and that general elections in 1956 at the latest, would give a united Vietnam a single government.

However, soon after the agreements were signed, Washington, with French government consent, set up a neo-colonialist regime in southern Vietnam with specific counter-revolutionary aims: liquidating the national revolutionary movement in southern Vietnam, turning the latter into a military base and colony of the US, and setting up a military and police apparatus to serve as an instrument for the enslavement of the south and reconquest of the north.

For the Vietnamese people, the complete liberation of the northern half of the country made it possible to create a solid basis for the national revolutionary movement as a whole. Partial

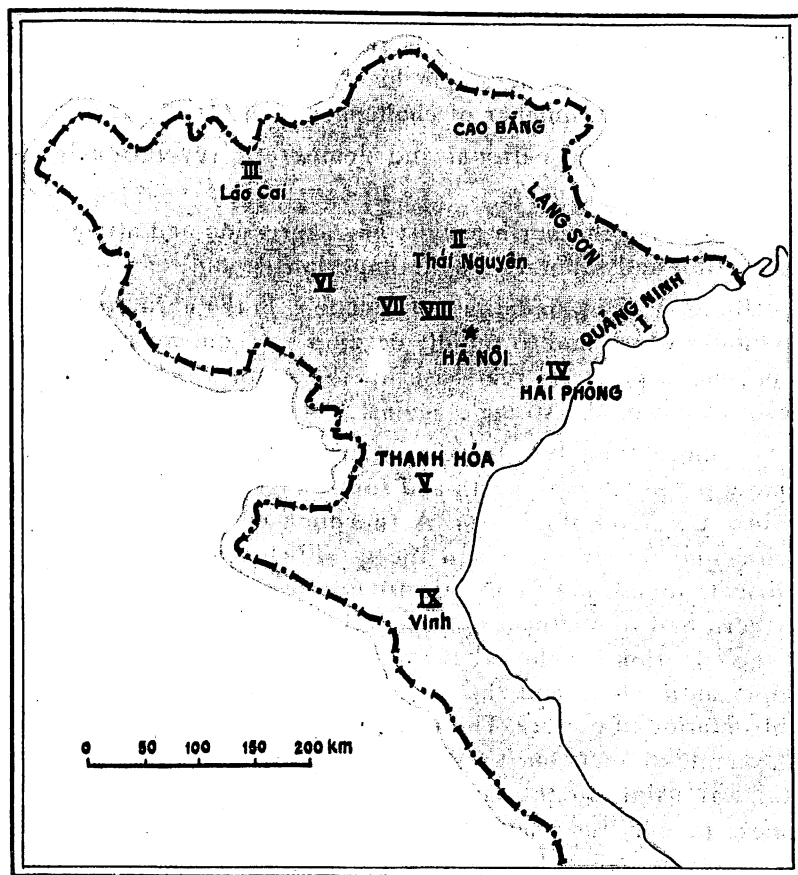
liberation brought about a unique situation, imposing on the Vietnamese people different tasks in the north and south. The Vietnamese revolution, one single historical process, found itself confronted with a number of challenges in 1954:

- Achieving the national and democratic revolution in the south;
- Defending the north against any aggression and attempts at destruction and sabotage by the imperialists; and
- Building the foundations of socialism in the northern half of the country which had to rapidly develop its economy and culture to become a powerful rear base for the south which was now in the forefront of the struggle against US neo-colonialism.

For more than twenty years, from 1954 to 1975, the Vietnamese people in both north and south waged a difficult struggle against US neo-colonialism. A thorough-going renewal of the socioeconomic structure and the establishment of the primary political, social and economic foundations of socialism in the northern half of Vietnam was carried out despite US aggression. As the situation developed, the struggle between the Vietnamese people as a whole and the US imperialists became the crucial confrontation of our era. The US imperialists had wanted to make an example of Vietnam, a test of their global strategy, hence their total war using all the means at their disposal. For the Vietnamese people, the challenge was one of the hardest ever faced but they were aware of fighting not only to defend their independence and freedom, but also for world peace, the liberation of other nations and defence of the socialist camp.

There were three defineable stages during the period 1954-75:

- 1954-65, the establishing of the initial foundations of socialism in the north, and the southern Vietnamese people's struggle against repression and the neo-colonialist war;
- 1965-73, the all-out struggle by both north and south against direct US aggression, which ended with the signing of the Paris Agreements of January 1973; and



THE FIRST INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHMENTS
IN NORTH VIETNAM

- I. Quang Ninh Coal Mine
- II. Thai Nguyen Steel Complex
- III. Apatite Mine in Lao Cai
- IV. Haiphong: cement factory, shipyard, port
- V. Chromium deposits in Co Dinh (Thanh Hoa)
- VI. Thac Ba Hydroelectric Project
- VII. Lam Thao Superphosphate Factory
- VIII. Viet Tri: chemical industry
- IX. Vinh-Ben Thuy: mechanical and wood-processing industries

– 1973-75, the collapse of the neo-colonialist regime in the south.

Initial Foundations of Socialism (1954-65)

With the northern half of Vietnam completely liberated the immediate question was which road to take – the capitalist or socialist one. The programme of the Workers' Party (now the Communist Party) of Vietnam specified that the country, once the national and democratic revolution was achieved, would directly switch to socialism, bypassing the stage of capitalist development.

The main obstacle to the establishment of socialism was the very backward state of the economy, a legacy of centuries of feudalism and colonialism and one which had been ruined by long years of war. In 1954, modern industry accounted for only 1.5 per cent of total production, and not a single motor could be found in any village of North Vietnam. The area of cultivable land was extremely small: one-tenth of a hectare per inhabitant, and the frequency of natural disasters (floods, typhoons and droughts) posed a continuous threat to agriculture. The partition of the country severely disrupted the economy. One year after the liberation of North Vietnam, annual generation of electricity, for example, totalled less than 53 million kwh, and the proportion of modern industry still in full production was around 3.4 per cent.

The Workers' Party, however, asserted that favourable conditions existed for establishing socialism – a strong worker-peasant alliance, the proven leadership of a Marxist-Leninist party trusted by the entire people, and substantial aid from the socialist countries.

Given these conditions, the priority was healing the wounds of war while completing the land reform begun in 1953, turning later to structural change leading to socialism. By 1957, land reform had been completed – despite occasional serious ultra-leftist mistakes committed in the process, publicly recognized by the Party leadership and rapidly rectified – and total production had

reached pre-war levels. In 1958, a period of socialist transformation began, which by 1960 had resulted in:

- The formation of an important State economic sector – industry, domestic and foreign trade, and agricultural and forestry programmes – playing a leading role in the national economy;

- The conversion of private capitalist industrial and commercial undertakings into State or joint State-private enterprises, a relatively easy operation given the weakness of Vietnamese capitalism;

- The creation of handicraft cooperatives employing the majority of handicraft workers; and

- The most fundamental component, the establishment of agricultural cooperatives which by the end of 1960 covered about 86 per cent of peasant households.

By the end of 1960, North Vietnam had for the most part equipped itself with – at least embryonic – socialist socio economic structures. With the completion of land reform and the efforts made by a people happy to have recovered their independence, agricultural production made satisfactory progress. With aid from other socialist countries, new enterprises were set up, the railways destroyed during the war were partially restored, and agricultural hydraulic works were built.

In 1960, economic indices were as follows:

- Population : almost 16 million
- Arable land : 1,877,100 hectares.

(See table on page 298)

Despite these great changes in the relations of production, North Vietnam's economy remained underdeveloped due to technical and scientific backwardness. Agriculture was still predominant, for the most part based on manual and handicraft labour. The economy was fraught with serious deficiencies:

- Agricultural production – the principal sector of the nation's economy – remained unstable and reliant on climatic conditions.

The agricultural infrastructure was very basic, as was the level of organization and management of cooperatives and State farms; agriculture was unable thus to constitute a stable foundation for industrial development.

- Heavy industry, still embryonic, was not yet able to supply other economic sectors particularly agriculture.

- The communications network remained rudimentary.

- Skilled workers and management, scientific and technical workers were still few in number and not well enough qualified.

- Productivity and living standards remained very low.

The 3rd Party Congress held in September 1960 set down general guidelines for economic development and the first five-year (1961-65) plan for construction of the initial socialist infrastructure. The problem was how to firmly establish a socialist system, and in particular to transform a backward economy based on small individual production. To this end, a triple revolution was needed – a revolution in the relations of production, a cultural and ideological revolution, and a scientific and technical revolution, with the latter as the lynchpin. It was vital to mobilize to the maximum all the nation's energies under the Party's leadership, while eliciting any aid available from fraternal socialist countries (the Soviet Union, People's Republic of China and others).

Priority was to be given to the development of heavy industry; this was to be achieved in an appropriate manner as it was also necessary to make greater efforts to develop agriculture as the basis for industrial development. It was also necessary to concentrate efforts on investment, while seeking to improve the living standards of the people who had endured great suffering during the war. It was also vital not to neglect the nation's defence, since the North was also threatened by the aggressive designs of the US.

	1939	1955	1957	1960
Area under cultivation (thousand ha) ⁽¹⁾	2,139.0	2,654.0	2,666.0	2,870.0
Irrigated area (thousand ha)	345.7	922.0	1,427.0	2,202.4
Food production (paddy and subsidiary crops - thousand tonnes) reckoned in terms of paddy equivalent	2,738.0	4,114.0	4,585.0	4,698.0
Electricity (million kwh)	123.0	53.0	121.2	256.1
Coal (million tonnes)	2,789.0	641.5	1,084.8	2,600.0
Cement (thousand tonnes)	283.0	8.5	165.1	408.0
Textiles (million metres)	55.0	8.8	63.1	76.0
Machine tools (units)	0	0	0	799.0
Contribution of industry (handicrafts included) to total value of industrial and agricultural output (%)	-	19.0	33.0	43.8
Contribution of modern industry to total value of industrial and agricultural output (%)	-	3.4	11.2	17.8
Contribution of modern industry to total value of industrial and handicraft output (%)	-	20.2	33.5	40.7

1. land yielding two crops per year is counted twice

Major campaigns were launched to achieve these socialist objectives and improve the organization and management of enterprises, especially the newly formed agricultural cooperatives. While centrally-run industry quickly developed, regional industries, which used handicraft and semi-mechanized techniques, were not neglected, the purpose of both essentially being to serve agricultural development.

Large-scale industrial enterprises came into being: the Thai Nguyen steelworks, the Lam Thao superphosphate factory and new power stations. The figures for 1964 were as follows :

- Area under cultivation 2,368,000 hectares
- Electricity 595.2 million kwh
- Cement 600,500 tonnes
- Fabrics 107.2 million metres
- Total food output 5,515,000 tonnes
- Coal 3.6 million tonnes
- Machine tools 769 units
- Contribution of modern industry to the
value of industrial and handicraft output 36.7 per cent
- Contribution of modern industry to
total production 18.4 per cent

North Vietnam's economy began to "take off", gradually taking on the features of a national and independent economy. The general level of development was still of course very low, technically as well as managerially. But the groundwork had been established for future progress.

US aggression compelled the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to give a new direction to its national economy.

Repression and Neo-Colonialist War (1954-65)

Washington's interference in Vietnam's affairs did not date

back just to 1954. As early as June 1950, US military mission was already advising the French Expeditionary Corps command.

The US hold over the puppet government and army was gradually tightened despite French opposition. In September 1951, an "economic cooperation" agreement was signed directly between Bao Dai and the administration in Washington which, putting pressure on the French, gradually installed American agents in the Bao Dai administration. In 1953, in exchange for the large-scale aid granted to France for the implementation of the Navarre plan, the Americans obtained permission to take part directly in the training of puppet troops. Early in 1954, General O'Daniel came to Vietnam to lead this mission.

When a French defeat appeared imminent in April 1954 at Dien Bien Phu, the "hawks" headed by Vice-President Nixon began to press for US troops to intervene directly in Indochina. Washington proposed massive bombing of the Dien Bien Phu front by planes taking off from the Philippines and escorted by fighters from the 7th Fleet. The victories of the Vietnamese resistance and their effect on French and international public opinion dissuaded the British government from joining the venture, and Operation Vulture was called off. Some US generals, including Ridway, former commander-in-chief of US forces in Korea, expressed opposition to the plan, experience having taught them that committing American troops to fight in Asia was to court defeat, or at least risk becoming bogged down in a bottomless quagmire.

Washington tried to prevent the holding of the Geneva Conference on Indochina, then after having failed, concentrated its efforts on undermining it and supporting the preposterous demands of Bao Dai's agents for the unconditional surrender of the Vietnamese resistance, and on grouping imperialist and local reactionary forces in Southeast Asia into a coalition which would allow them to continue the war. The first scheme failed, and the Geneva Conference closed on 20 July 1954 with the drawing up of agreements putting an end to the war. The Southeast Asia

military coalition project had to be put off for a few weeks after the signing of the agreements.

Meanwhile, Washington had managed to persuade the French to accept Ngo Dinh Diem as Bao Dai's minister (June 1954).

From Repression to War

Washington was not prepared to accept the peace agreements and wasted no time in implementing a new strategy. Its objective was clear, i.e. turning South Vietnam into a new type of US colony, a political and strategic base from which to dominate Southeast Asia.

In September 1954, a Southeast Asian military alliance (US, Britain, France, Australia, Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines) was set up under a treaty which included a protocol enabling it to intervene in Indochina. US economic missions and "advisers" arrived to oversee the Saigon administration. These missions and advisers controlled all branches of activity and every project from the drafting of a constitution and the training of the army and police to the carrying out of "agrarian reform" and the school syllabus. In exchange for a number of economic and cultural concessions granted to France, the Americans eliminated all direct French influence. Pro-French religious organizations were brought to heel, some by means of corruption, others by force of arms. For Paris, anti-communism was advantageous primarily in defending French interests.

On 28 April 1956, French troops finally left Vietnam but Paris side-stepped its responsibilities with regard to implementing the Geneva Agreements, which provided for general elections to achieve the peaceful reunification of Vietnam.

US policy in Vietnam rested on opposing reunification by all available means. Openly violating the Geneva Agreements, Washington poured arms and military personnel into South Vietnam to set up a huge puppet army, logistics and air and naval bases, and a complex network of strategic communications.

Also in violation of the agreements, the US advised Ngo Dinh Diem to set up a separate south Vietnamese state with a "National Assembly" and "Constitution" of its own. A fake referendum was held, enabling them to oust Bao Dai and put Ngo Dinh Diem in power.

Thus by 1954 the main planks of US neo-colonialist policy had become clear: to do away with the French presence, and take over South Vietnam; to set up a puppet dictatorship entirely dependent on Washington, to liquidate the national and revolutionary movement in South Vietnam; and eventually to try to reconquer North Vietnam.

The liquidation of the national and revolutionary movement was the *sine qua non* of US domination of Vietnam. With the help of US advisers, the Diem regime, immediately it assumed power, applied a policy of systematic terror against the entire southern population. The experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism in the area of repression, fascist methods inspired by those of the Nazis, and the medieval methods used by Vietnamese feudalists – represented by Ngo Dinh Diem himself – were all applied to terrorize the people and eliminate opposition.

A repressive machine controlled the whole country from the capital down to the most remote villages. Massacres, torture, deportations, mass imprisonment and raids... never had the South Vietnamese people experienced such a dark period. In fact, the few years of "peace" between 1955 and 1959 saw more victims in South Vietnam than the long years of war had previously.

During the first years after the signing of the peace agreements, the people avoided violating them by limiting their resistance to political activity such as demonstrations, petitions and meetings. The peasants in particular fiercely defended themselves to avoid being robbed of their land by landlords and village notables. From 1945 to 1954, peasants in many regions had been allotted land by the revolutionary power and had lived under a democratic system. The feudalists had sought refuge in the cities

where they lived under the protection of the French Expeditionary Corps. Under the Diem regime, they returned to the villages to take back their land and re-establish administrative and political control.

The US and Diem set up a apparatus of repression with strong armed forces and an omnipresent police. Apart from regular troops, the army consisted of security units at provincial and civil guards at village level. Several different secret police services roamed the cities. Any person who had played even a minor part in the resistance against the French was accused of being a "communist" or of "collusion with the communists". The parents of cadres and combatants regrouped to the North were mercilessly hunted down. The charge of "communism" could lead to prison, deportation for an indefinite period, and often to death by torture. The notorious "tiger cages" date back to the beginning of the Diem regime.

After refusing to hold the general elections provided for by the Geneva Agreements, the Saigon administration intensified its repression, and as opposition grew, the repressive measures became more brutal. Raids conducted by forces of between 10,000 and 15,000 men swept through vast regions; steps were taken to concentrate the population, or resettle whole groups in "agrovilles" in rural areas and agricultural settlements in mountainous regions.

Except for those surrounding the family of Ngo Dinh Diem and adventurers prepared to do anything for a few dollars, all social classes and strata were subject to repression including peasants, workers, intellectuals, the patriotic bourgeoisie and those who simply wanted to establish normal relations with the North, ethnic minorities, and non-Catholic religious organizations. Even ministers had to go into exile to escape the police. With US blessing, Diem, his brothers, and his sister-in-law (the notorious Mme Ngo Dinh Nhu) used his power of life and death over the people. For a time Washington thought that US domination in South Vietnam had been achieved, and called Diem "the Churchill of Asia".

The US and Diem had of course seriously underestimated the capabilities of the Vietnamese people. From 1860, the people of South Vietnam had continuously waged a tough political and military struggle against French colonialism. Between 1945 and 1954, this national and democratic struggle had reached its peak, involving all strata of society. From March 1950, while the war against the French colonialists was still raging, hundreds of thousands of people were demonstrating against US intervention. This intervention now needed to be camouflaged, given that it had become quite blatant. The anti-national policy of the Diem family, which wanted to perpetuate the partition of the country, and their bloody repression of the bulk of the population, began to arouse more and more violent opposition.

In May 1959, this repression was given a legal figleaf. The Saigon National Assembly passed Bill 10/59 which permitted special military tribunals to carry out summary execution without trial of those arrested by the police or during raids. The threat of elimination weighed on the patriotic movement and the people in South Vietnam as a whole. From political struggle, they gradually moved into self-defence and armed struggle. The first clashes with the Diem army and police took place in remote villages and mountainous regions. In January 1960, in the Mekong River delta province of Ben Tre, popular forces toppled the Diem administration in many localities and set up an autonomous people's power. A "chain insurrection" movement swept many provinces and the Diem regime in rural areas was soon in a state of crisis.

This crisis soon reached the cities and even parts of the Saigon army. On 11 November, 1960, officers and a number of units launched a coup attempt. The coup failed, but the regime had been seriously undermined.

Challenging the neo-colonialist regime set up by the US was a vast national and popular movement bringing together all social classes, ethnic minorities, religious bodies, and political groups within a population which had long experience of armed political

struggle. On 20 December, 1960, a number of organizations and opposition and resistance groups joined together to form a *National Liberation Front* (NLF) with the aim of overthrowing the Diem administration, ending all foreign intervention, establishing a national coalition government and democratic system, implementing a foreign policy based on peace and neutrality, and proceeding to the peaceful reunification of Vietnam. Early in 1961, a People's Liberation Army came into being.

The "Special War"

The Kennedy administration, newly in power in Washington, was faced with a dilemma – whether to drop the Diem regime and the attempt to control South Vietnam, or wage war against the Vietnamese people. Kennedy chose the second option. With him in power US global strategy began to be decisively directed towards the Third World which it considered as a hotbed of revolution to be crushed with urgency. The Kennedy-Taylor-McNamara team set up a whole political and military apparatus and even worked out a "doctrine" to conquer the Third World, and to crush or divert the national liberation movements of Asia, Africa and Latin America from their objectives. Washington paid particular attention to "counter-insurgency" techniques and weapons to fight guerrilla and other forms of armed struggle.

The "special war" strategy was born. Classic colonial adventures with direct intervention by US troops were becoming increasingly difficult, and Washington was trying to wage war by proxy. US technical and financial muscle enabled it to maintain a large puppet administration and army and to equip mercenaries with up-to-date weapons they thought it was sufficient to direct this army using US "advisers" specially trained for this type of war in which a complex political and military strategy backed up by ultra-modern weapons technology would enable them to defeat the revolutionary movements of the Third World.

Washington chose to make South Vietnam a testing-ground for

this new "special war" strategy. With preparations complete by early 1962, the US operational command set up its Saigon headquarters in February with a group of "advisers" – which rapidly swelled to 25,000 by 1964 – to command the Saigon army.

All categories of puppet troops – regular, regional and local – were strengthened, reaching half a million men by 1964. An air force with 500 planes, an armoured corps comprising several hundred vehicles, amphibious vehicles, numerous river units, ultra-fast sub-machine guns, powerful artillery, and numerous electronic devices, gave this army great mobility, considerable firepower, and sophisticated means of information-gathering and detection. For the first time in human history, toxic chemicals were used to destroy crops and natural vegetation.

In terms of both manpower and armaments, Washington concentrated more force on winning this "special war" than France had in 1954 at the time of Dien Bien Phu. From 1962, the US and puppet command began to conduct operations, averaging several a month and sometimes involving from 15,000 to 20,000 men each.

Washington was pursuing a dual goal, on the one hand destroying the liberation armed forces in lightning military operations, and on the other, forcing the entire rural population to regroup in some 16,000 "strategic hamlets" – in actuality concentration camps where, behind the barbed wire, the Saigon regime could impose direct and absolute control.

Helicopters in particular were used to ensure absolute domination by Saigon troops, enabling them to strike anywhere by surprise and swoop down on trapped guerrillas like "hawks on sparrows", as the promoters of this weapon put it. Mass bombing, endless artillery shelling, spraying with toxic chemicals and indiscriminate terror were employed in order to crush all attempts at resistance and compel the people to join the "strategic hamlets". This ruthless war and the means of mass destruction and slaughter employed resulted in numerous victims and initially, particularly in 1962, caused great problems for the resistance. Around

20,000 operations were conducted. US aid to the Saigon administration by then totalled 600 million dollars, four times as much as in 1960. Washington aimed to "pacify" South Vietnam by the end of 1962 (the Staley-Taylor plan).

But the South Vietnamese people and their armed forces rapidly found ways to counter US weapons and strategy. Combining armed struggle with political struggle, building combat villages everywhere, fighting in rural areas as well as cities, on the plains as well as in mountainous regions, and using rudimentary weapons such as booby traps, as well as modern arms captured from the enemy, the people and liberation forces caught the enormous US – puppet military and administrative apparatus in an equally vast net, paralysing it and inflicting severe losses on it. The work of explanation and political persuasion among the puppet forces also succeeded in demoralizing them.

In January 1963 at Ap Bac, 80 kilometres from Saigon, the two cornerstones of the "special war" – helicopters and amphibious vehicles – first showed their vulnerability. After Ap Bac, 1963 was marked by severe setbacks for the Saigon army. The victories of the liberation forces greatly helped the people in their struggle. Many "strategic hamlets" were demolished or turned into combat villages. Many of these hamlets changed hands several times, the Americans and puppets desperately attempting to retake ones that had been liberated. The entire population, men and women, old and young, in all regions and localities, joined this desperate struggle. By the end of 1963, 80 per cent of "strategic hamlets" had been destroyed.

The repeated military setbacks and failure to control the population showed Washington that Diem was no longer capable of controlling the situation. It was necessary therefore to replace Diem's civilian dictatorship with a military junta which would directly carry out the orders of the US command. On 1 November 1963, Diem and his younger brother Ngo Dinh Nhu were assassinated, and the US mission installed a military junta headed by

General Duong Van Minh. In 1964, Robert McNamara visited Saigon to work out new pacification plans, and Washington dispatched new equipment for the battle. But the Saigon army and administration, badly shaken, were in a state of continual crisis. There was a succession of coup d'états in Saigon while the US mission searched in vain for a government which would conduct the war effectively, whether a military junta, joint military-civilian government, or dictatorship by a general, old hands or young turks.

For their part, the people and the liberation armed forces, having rapidly mastered the art of armed and political struggle, swung on to the offensive. By early 1965, the failure of the "special war" had become obvious. The puppet army had disintegrated, losing all fighting capacity; the puppet regime was in crisis, the "strategic hamlets" policy had been bankrupted, and the liberation armed forces, far from being destroyed, had become battle-hardened and were able to challenge all US weapons and tactics.

The area liberated by the NLF covered almost four-fifths of the territory and two-thirds of the population, while public opinion in the United States had begun to turn while the international prestige of the US declined. By contrast, international support for the NLF was growing.

Once again, Washington faced a dilemma; either it renounced all further attempts to dominate South Vietnam and sued for peace, or it continued and escalated the war to try to save at all costs the tottering puppet regime, holding on to Vietnam and Indochina whatever the cost.

People's War vs. Escalation and Local War (1965-73)

At the end of 1964, having foreseen the failure of the "special war", the US command took the first step towards escalation. On 5 August 1964, aircraft from the 7th Fleet bombed several coastal areas in North Vietnam. Washington's rationale was quite simple,

even simplistic: threatening North Vietnam through aerial bombings would be enough to bring Hanoi to its knees, and consequently, to put down the Vietnamese resistance. But the planes which bombed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam met with a firm response, while the popular forces in South Vietnam stepped up their struggle. President Johnson ordered a further step in escalation. On 7 February, 1965, US planes again bombed the DRV, and raids multiplied in the following weeks; on 6 March, the first contingent of US marines landed at Da Nang. On 7 April, Johnson, while ordering that the bombing be stepped up, put forward peace proposals which amounted to a call for surrender by the Vietnamese forces. In the minds of American leaders, the increasing threat of elimination would eventually force the Vietnamese people to accept US conditions.

But the Vietnamese people did not give in. Washington expanded its military presence. American strategists had anticipated that if the "special war" failed, US forces would have to intervene, using all their firepower so as to create a decisive breach and impose Washington's will. Within a few months, while the bombing of North Vietnam was intensified, crack American divisions, accompanied by forces from satellite countries (South Korea, Australia and New Zealand) landed en masse in the South. 7 Fleet warships and aircraft based in Thailand took part in the operations. In November 1965, by the start of the dry season, American forces in South Vietnam had reached 190,000 (more than the French forces in 1954). Together with the Saigon army and forces from satellite countries, the 7th Fleet and US units in Thailand, the whole constituted a war machine 800,000 strong equipped with several thousand aircraft and helicopters (450 helicopters for the US Air Cavalry Division alone), and several thousand artillery pieces. Vietnam as a whole, North and South, was engaged in a total war against the Yankee imperialists.

Deterioration in Vietnam-China Relations

Washington was able to escalate the war all the more easily

now that Chinese policy towards Vietnam had begun to change. Beijing wanted at all costs to avoid armed conflict with a US which was still aggressive towards China, so the armed resistance in South Vietnam was regarded with some disapproval by Chinese leaders. As early as July 1955, Deng Xiaoping, secretary-general of the Communist Party of China, had said to Vietnamese leaders: "To use armed forces to reunify your country would lead to two eventualities: either victory, or the loss of North Vietnam itself". In July 1957, Mao Zedong declared: "The 17th parallel must be preserved". Beijing recommended that the Vietnamese "lie in ambush for a long time" before launching the armed struggle.

Thus, while publicly supportive, Chinese leaders sought to dissuade the Vietnamese people from waging an armed struggle against the Americans with the aim of reunifying their country. This sharpened the ideological conflicts between the two parties in the 1960s. The Vietnamese Communist Party sought to preserve unity with all other parties, especially the Soviet and Chinese parties, while firmly opposing any attempts to divide the revolutionary forces.

In 1963, the Vietnamese Party rejected a Chinese proposal to convene a conference of 11 mainly Asian Communist parties, thus forming a new Communist International which would inevitably come under China's leadership. Deng Xiaoping then proposed that China give Vietnam one billion *yuan* in aid if it refused all Soviet aid.

In January 1965, Mao Zedong declared to the American journalist Edgar Snow: "Chinese troops will not cross their frontiers to fight. This is absolutely clear. The Chinese will only fight when they are attacked by the US".

Thus in February 1965, the US was given the green light to launch its escalation, and at each meeting, Chinese leaders kept advising the Vietnamese to avoid major battles and restrict themselves to guerrilla warfare. In July 1965, ignoring previously signed agreements, the Chinese informed the Vietnamese com-

mand that the Chinese air force would not come to Vietnam's help. A Vietnamese proposal that the socialist countries release a joint declaration against US aggression was rejected by Beijing, as were two Soviet proposals for coordination between the three countries – the Soviet Union, China, and Vietnam – in the face of American aggression. A proposal from the Japanese Communist Party for the creation of an international front against US aggression was also rejected. The transport of Soviet weapons via China encountered continual obstacles and delays.

Alongside the cultural revolution in China, ethnic Chinese in Vietnam and Laos – the Hoa – incited members of the Vietnamese and Lao parties to oppose their leaders whom they accused of "revisionism". In 1965, Pol Pot, secretary-general of the Cambodian Communist Party, went to Beijing and, after his return, stepped up guerrilla attacks against the Sihanouk government which was seeking to defend Cambodia's independence against US domination by allying itself with Vietnam.

People's War vs. the Air and Naval War of Destruction

The escalation of the US air and naval war against North Vietnam had a twofold aim:

- To block all aid from the northern population to the people and combatants in the South; and
- To deal serious, if not fatal, blows at the socialist system in the North, and drive North Vietnam "back to the Stone Age".

The North Vietnamese people, under the leadership of the Party and the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, did not limit itself to passive responses to US raids. The national economy and society and culture were reorganized on a new basis.

The question was whether to halt the establishment of socialism and concentrate all efforts on national defence. The general policy drawn up by the Party advocated a considerable strength-

ening of defence while continuing to promote the former. Despite outward appearances, the US escalation against North Vietnam, as well as the landing of GIs in the South, were not offensive operations, but operations conceived and conducted by the Yankee imperialists in a losing and passive strategic situation. The raids against the North could only be conducted in the form of "escalation", i.e. very gradually, by probing the terrain and testing the reactions of world opinion. By openly attacking a sovereign member of the socialist camp, Washington was locking itself into increasingly serious political isolation. North Vietnam was able to ensure its defence while continuing with the establishment of socialism.

Mobilizing the entire population, it concentrated its defence efforts in several crucial areas:

- Setting up an anti-aircraft defence program involving the various branches of the armed forces – missiles, fighter planes, light and heavy artillery, and infantry – which attacked US planes at all altitudes and in every region. Wherever they operated US aircraft flew into a deadly net. The omnipresence of local militia with significant participation from young women using infantry weapons or light artillery pieces made low altitude flights and dive-bombing raids, which enabled the planes to reach precise targets, very difficult. US naval units were also countered by coastal defences organized along the same lines. All sappers and commandos who landed or were parachuted in were put out of action or promptly captured.

- Maintaining at all costs the transport links supplying the southern front and meeting the economic needs of the various regions. Besides technical units and services, the people helped repair damaged roads, bridges and railways, building new ones and transporting materials, goods and ammunition. All available means were mobilized to this end from the most up-to-date to the most rudimentary.

- Increasing aid to the South until the final victory. The more

bombs and shells the US dropped on the South, and the more GIs they landed, the more aid arrived from the North despite fierce attacks by the US air force and navy.

The North-South road along the coast was in US hands. It was therefore necessary to build the "Ho Chi Minh Trail" along the Truong Son Range, through dense forests and across high mountains. The Ho Chi Minh Trail gradually became a complex network of roads totalling thousands of kilometres in length and accompanied by a small pipeline. The construction of this network and the flow of aid to combatants in the South, under repeated attack from the US air force, required considerable effort and sacrifice. It was a true epic indeed.

The defence effort and aid to the South were only possible provided the economy held up to the repeated bombing raids. A new economic structure suited to wartime conditions was set up, with the following essential elements:

- Evacuation and dispersal of major factories from towns and industrial centres to villages and forests. The urban population, workers, technicians, and administrative bodies were dispersed among villages. The people followed their machinery and their offices, and lived with the local inhabitants or in temporary barracks. Schools, colleges, laboratories and hospitals were also evacuated and continue their activities in the countryside and forests. Operation *So tan* (evacuation and dispersal) was a complete success. Although major projects were stopped, the country's economic and social activity was never disrupted even for a moment, nor was there the slightest sign of disorganization or panic.

- Development of the economy, especially of regional industries, at provincial or district level. Each province, consisting of an economic unit of about 1.5 million inhabitants, sought to become self-sufficient in the most essential products and consumer goods by tapping its natural resources, and developing semi-mechanized and eventually mechanized workshops and handicraft industries. Advocated since the 3rd Party Congress in 1960, this

policy of regional industrialization was fully implemented as a result of the war.

– Maintenance, thanks to strict reorganization of domestic trade, of stable prices for basic commodities sold by State-run services such as rice, salt, fabrics and petroleum; these were regularly supplied to the population whose living conditions were not too disrupted by the war.

– Development of communications and transport.

International aid, especially from the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and other socialist countries, contributed enormously to the maintenance of economic stability. This aid, however, would have been much more effective if the Beijing government, had not gradually changed its policy after 1965.

An important aspect of economic life during the war years was the strengthening of agricultural cooperatives. The important role played by rural workers in defence and communications did not prevent cooperatives continuing to build hydraulic works, improve the soil and gradually introduce new farming techniques. Mechanization, particularly the installation of pumps and husking and threshing machines, proceeded rapidly. New varieties of rice with short-growth cycles and high yields were introduced, leading to new cropping patterns more frequent harvests and a gradual shift away from the monocultivation of rice to different crops. This was the most important advance in agriculture in North Vietnam during these critical years. Within just a few years, the rural landscape of North Vietnam had changed.

The newly-established socialist system was weathering the trials of war, and its structures remained intact. The US air and naval bombardment intensified and gradually reached important industrial areas, hitting major cities such as Hanoi and Haiphong. Yet none of the strategic targets were reached, while the Vietnamese people succeeded in fulfilling both their national and international obligations. Reconstruction work began immediately after the bombing campaign was called off in 1968, and in 1972,

after the violent bombing raids during the second escalation, the balance sheet was as follows :

	1964	1968	1971	1972
Total food production	100	84.0	89.2	104.1
Electricity	100	63.2	127.6	92.5
Cement	100	11.6	58.8	25.8
Coal	100	66.7	94.4	47.2
Fabrics	100	78.0	102.2	68.4
Price of one kilo of rice (in <i>dong</i>)	0.40	0.40		0.40
Number of U.S aircraft shot down between 1965 and 1972:			4,181	

Although the socioeconomic infrastructure held up, the enormous destruction caused by the bombing did seriously impede the country's economic development, especially in the area of industry.

People's War vs. "Local War"

The landing of the massive US expeditionary corps in South Vietnam to help the Saigon army completely changed the nature of the war. Against the "local war" strategy applied by the Pentagon, the people and liberation armed forces of South Vietnam, under the leadership of the NLF and with aid from the North, applied a strategy of "people's war" taken to the highest level.

In November 1965, thinking that it had mustered sufficient force, the US command launched its first dry season offensive. A hundred battalions were dispatched in five directions in Nam Bo and central Vietnam with the aim of crushing the NLF regular forces, reconquering a large part of the liberated areas, and driving the Vietnamese resistance back towards remote mountainous areas. Never before had a battle corps had such firepower, mo-

bility, and numerical superiority over its opponents. What could be done in the face of this colossal war machine? Did the Vietnamese people have any option other than unconditionally accepting US conditions? The war was being conducted without mercy, with massive artillery shelling, carpet bombing by B52s, and widespread use of toxic chemicals, napalm and cluster bombs. Right from the first battle, the American propaganda machine was already claiming victory.

The 1965-66 dry season dragged on. By April 1966, the US command was forced to order its troops to retreat, and admitted that none of its main objectives had been attained. On its side, the NLF published an account according to which 100,000 enemy troops, including more than 40,000 Americans, had been put out of action. The myth of the invincibility of the US war machine was thus exploded.

The failure of the first dry season counter-offensive forced the US command to come to the inevitable conclusion that the means at its disposal were insufficient. It therefore threw in even more American and puppet troops. By the end of 1966, the US armed forces in South Vietnam totalled 380,000 men and by early 1967, 440,000. With the puppet army and forces from satellite countries, the enemy army comprised more than one million men, 4,500 aircraft and helicopters, almost 3,000 artillery pieces, and 3,500 armoured vehicles. Each month, the Americans fired 1,700,000 shells and dropped 50,000 tonnes of bombs on Vietnamese territory.

Despite this military build-up, the US command had shown more caution in the dry season of 1966-1967, setting less ambitious objectives for its counter-offensive than for the previous one, by concentrating its forces in areas northwest of Saigon, in Tay Ninh province where the NLF was supposed to be headquartered. Greater attention was paid this time to the "pacification" campaign to which units of the puppet army were specifically assigned. Destruction of villages, with displacement of the population and mass killings, became common practice.

Between the end of October 1966 and April 1967, the US successively launched three large-scale operations in the direction of Tay Ninh. The biggest of them, "Junction City", involved nearly 45,000 men, 800 armoured vehicles and several hundred aircraft. For their part, puppet troops numbering 175,000 assisted by 40,000 "civil guards" specially trained for this operation, sought to "pacify" the region. Never before had the US military effort in South Vietnam been so great, and bombing raids on the North were intensified.

The Tay Ninh operations failed, and Washington, in the middle of a war, was forced to recall two generals who had commanded the sector. About 175,000 US and Saigon troops were put out of action during this dry season campaign, and 1,800 aircraft and helicopters were shot down or damaged on the ground. The US command had to postpone indefinitely its plan to reoccupy the Mekong delta. Early in 1967, when US and puppet troops were sustaining heavy defeats northwest of Saigon, the liberation forces opened up a new front on Highway 9 near the 17th parallel. General Westmoreland then had to rush the best US and puppet units to this new theatre of operations, leaving the Nam Bo front exposed. US and Saigon troops completely lost the initiative and had to pull back to ensure the defence of Saigon, the major bases, and communication routes. The rate of desertion from the puppet army increased sharply.

During 1967, Washington attempted to send new reinforcements to Vietnam, but increasing opposition from American public opinion meant that the US command only received 100,000 reinforcements in 1967 as against 170,000 in 1966. By the end of 1967, the number of GIs in South Vietnam had grown to 480,000 and in early 1968, to more than half a million, not counting units stationed in Thailand and the 7th Fleet. With a rapid increase in all categories of puppet troops and forces from satellite countries, the US command had 1.2 million men on the South Vietnam battlefield by early 1968.

This huge force, however, was not sufficient to enable the US to

hold off repeated assaults by the liberation forces which retained the initiative, attacking US – puppet bases and posts northwest of Saigon, on the high plateaus and during regular operations, while guerrilla fighting was stepped up in the Mekong delta.

It was this situation that enabled the people of South Vietnam and the liberation armed forces to launch their 1968 *Tet* offensive. On the night of 29 January and during the following days, armed attacks and popular uprisings took place in 60 cities, provincial capitals and townships and on military bases. The people coordinated their action closely with those of the liberation forces. On the night of 30 January, a series of key targets inside Saigon were attacked including the US embassy, "Presidential Palace", headquarters of the puppet General Staff, radio station, headquarters of the puppet marines and paratroops, police headquarters and numerous munitions and fuel depots. The 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Precincts in Saigon were occupied by liberation forces, and the people there promptly organized self-defence units and set up people's committees.

In Hue on 31 January 1968, the liberation forces infiltrated the city, hoisted the NLF banner over the royal citadel, and freed 2,000 prisoners. In response, the US subjected the city to brutal bombardment, almost completely destroying the royal palaces, which are among Vietnam's most important cultural relics. On 6 February, a special communiqué from the NLF reported that the cities of Saigon, Hue, Da Lat, Nha Trang, Da Nang and Quy Nhon, as well as several dozen provincial and district capitals, had been attacked, that everywhere the people had joined in a combined effort with the armed forces, and that 50,000 enemy troops, including 10,000 Americans, had been put out of action, and 1,500 aircraft and helicopters destroyed, mostly on the ground.

The 1968 *Tet* offensive and uprising demonstrated that the liberation forces were capable, at a time when the US – puppet forces had reached maximum strength, of launching closely coordinated

attacks everywhere, while the Saigon and Washington propaganda machine kept broadcasting to the world images of an NLF completely crushed by US military power. The resounding victories of the NLF caused deep divisions in world and US public opinion. On 7 February, 1968, Walter Lippmann wrote in *Newsweek* thus:

"Johnson-Rusk policy in Asia is crumbling. What is crumbling is the idea that the United States can with its military force determine the order of things on the Asian continent. Washington has had to recall Westmoreland from his command in Indochina, and replace him with General Creighton Abrams".

The Pentagon had not only to name a new commander-in-chief, but also to change its strategy entirely. It was no longer possible to send to Vietnam the 200,000 reinforcement troops requested by Westmoreland following the losses of *Tet* 1968. Abrams received the order to stick to a defensive strategy, and instead of launching operations to "search and destroy" the NLF's regular units, limited himself to "clean and hold" operations in the areas surrounding the major towns and bases, Saigon in particular.

This did not imply that the Pentagon had abandoned the idea of imposing by force a Pax Americana on Vietnam. Compelled to reduce the scale and number of ground operations, the US command multiplied air and naval bombardments, artillery shelling and spraying of toxic chemicals. The areas surrounding Saigon and other cities, for several dozen kilometres, were practically razed to the ground and every bush was doused with toxic chemicals. The bombing of North Vietnam became heavier every day.

Meanwhile, the American public was losing patience and Johnson and the Democratic Party had their electoral campaign to think about. The issue on which world and American opinion showed itself to be the most sensitive was the serious escalation against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, an independent and sovereign state, member of the socialist camp. On 31 March 1968, Johnson had to declare that from then on the bombing would be con-

ducted on a restricted area of North Vietnam, that he would not stand for re-election and that Washington agreed to negotiate with the representatives of the DRV government. The latter promptly accepted the proposal, and in May 1968, talks were opened in Paris which lasted until 1973, while military operations continued.

After 31 March, the US air force concentrated its attacks on the southern part of North Vietnam, from Vinh to the 17th parallel, in the hope of cutting all communications between the North and the South and terrorizing the people in this region with the systematic destruction of towns and villages. In this area, the population and the communication lines were concentrated in a narrow passage squeezed in between the mountains and the sea. For seven months, the region was subjected to intensive air and naval bombardment of an unprecedented barbarity. But this supreme effort against the DRV proved futile. The elections in the US were drawing near. On 1 November, Johnson was forced to order an unconditional cessation of the bombing of the DRV. This last-ditch manoeuvre, however, was unable to save the Democrats which lost the presidential election, the American people having lost confidence in both Johnson and his party. With his promises of peace, Richard Nixon succeeded in being elected, and the Republican Party was returned to power.

Nixon's War

Promises of peace and a policy of war was the line promoted by Johnson in 1964 before his election. Nixon followed exactly the same path. A ruthless advocate of war, he had as early as 1954 called for direct US intervention on the side of the French colonialists. This time, fully in control, he was determined to win the war. But the situation when he came to the White House in 1969 did not leave him with any more options than it had with Johnson in 1965. Nixon was unable to reinforce the US expeditionary corps, and was obliged to begin to bring the "boys" home. US losses in Vietnam had reached

unacceptable levels for the American people. Expenditure on the war in Indochina had topped 30 billion dollars a year, while social welfare and school development projects were starved of funds. Opposition to the war increased, especially among college students. America began to awaken.

How could the war be continued and won while reducing losses in US lives and expenditure to levels acceptable to the American public, without renouncing, however, the claimed right to impose conditions on the Vietnamese people? Nixon's solution was to "Vietnamize" the war.

The key requirements were to :

- Sufficiently strengthen the puppet army in terms of men and equipment to make it the main fighting force, capable of eliminating the Vietnamese resistance and constituting the main bulwark for a Saigon administration entirely committed to Washington's interests;

- Gradually withdraw US ground forces;

- Maintain in Vietnam sufficient air power and artillery to give effective support to the puppet army. This US military presence would last as long as proved to be necessary; and

- Make life unbearable for the people by massive air raids and continual spraying of toxic chemicals, thus compelling the population to regroup in towns controlled by the Americans and their agents.

This forced "urbanization" advocated by Harvard professor Samuel P. Huntington was aimed at turning those parts of South Vietnam not controlled by US forces into deserts pockmarked by millions of bomb craters, where no vegetation would grow, where no birds would sing, and where, as a consequence, revolutionary forces could not set foot while millions of rural inhabitants, forced to seek refuge in the towns, would find no other means of livelihood than joining the puppet army and police.

In areas they controlled, the US sought to intensify the pacification campaign with incessant raids, the assassination of activists and suspects, and the imprisonment and deportation of

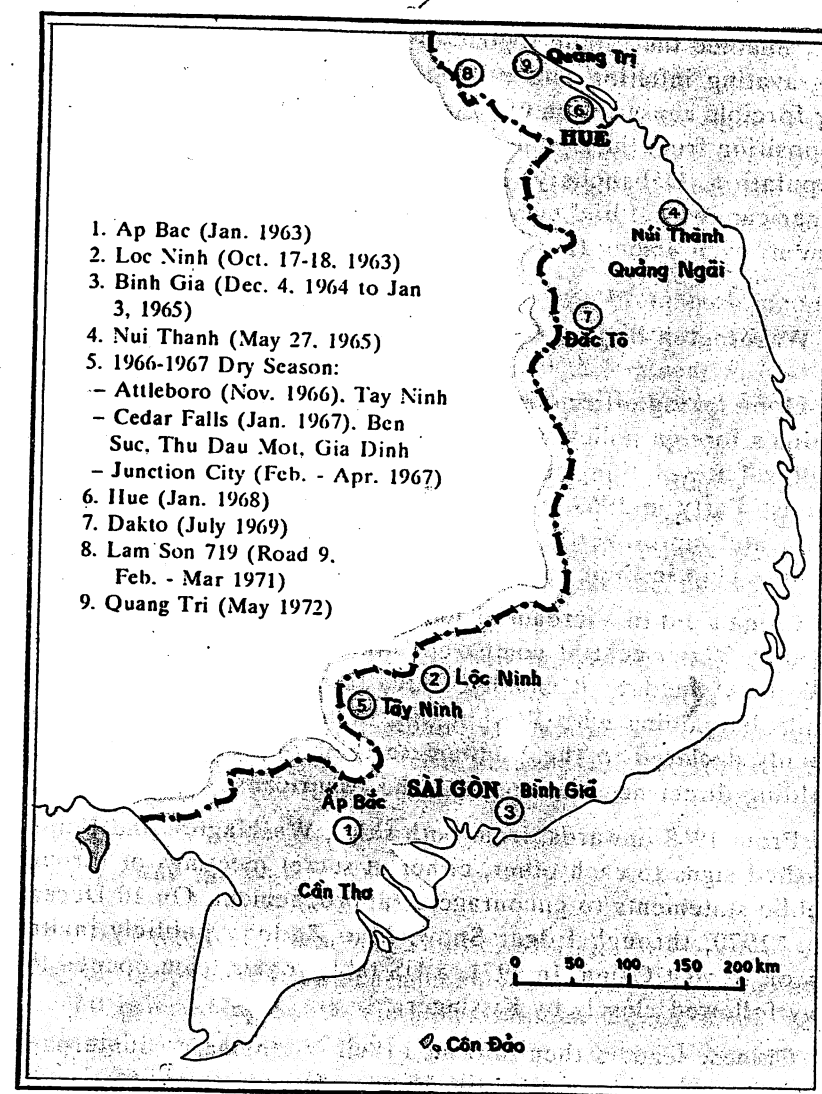
hundreds of thousands of people. The military forces and police intimidated the people without respite, while terror was stepped up. Some 44,000 specially trained pacification agents backed up the regular police in terrorizing the population.

Nixon applied this barbarous policy at the same time that he was forced to begin withdrawing the GIs, when the resistance in South Vietnam was rapidly gaining both politically and militarily.

In these conditions, and increasingly as the presidential elections drew nearer, Nixon turned to total war. In 1969, while North Vietnam was being only sporadically bombed, the quantity of bombs dropped on Laos and especially on South Vietnam passed the 1968 total to reach 1,389,000 tonnes. This did not include artillery shelling and the spraying of chemicals, the latter covering several million hectares and resulting in virtual biocide. According to US sources, between 1965 and 1973, 10 million rural people were forced by these methods to leave their villages and move to the cities.

Shortly after the 1968 *Tet* offensive, the Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces (ANDPF) was formed, bringing together intellectuals and members of the middle class in enemy-held cities for joint action with the NLF. In June 1969, the NLF and the ANDPF held a national congress which established the *Provisional Revolutionary Government* (PRG) of the Republic of South Vietnam, which was rapidly recognized by many governments and international organizations. Revolutionary People's Committees were elected in most villages and districts and many provinces. This flowering of the national and democratic movement through all regions and social strata contrasted sharply with the worsening crisis in the puppet regime. The death of President Ho Chi Minh on 3 September, 1969 deeply saddened the whole country, but his passing only strengthened the will of the entire people to carry through the national liberation struggle.

The massive US troop commitment had clearly saved the puppet regime from collapse, but had also emphasized the anti-national character of the agents Washington had placed at the head



RESISTANCE AGAINST THE US IN SOUTH VIETNAM
Principal Battlefields

of the Saigon government. Increasing US economic aid undoubtedly enabled the Saigon regime to survive, but only at the cost of aggravating inflation and ruining local industries. In particular, the forcible conscription of young men sparked daily more violent opposition from those concerned and from all other strata of the population. Debauchery, corruption and the imposition of the American "way of life" eventually sparked deeply-felt anti-US sentiment, even among those who benefited from American aid.

Washington-Beijing Complicity

Upon taking office Nixon had an asset: the new orientation in China's foreign policy, which was definitively re-shaped after the Cultural Revolution and the 9th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 1969. From then on, Beijing's leaders affirmed more and more overtly their intention to use Vietnam as a bargaining chip in their rapprochement with Washington.

China's aid to Vietnam in 1969 dropped by 20 per cent and in 1970 by 50 per cent as compared with that of 1968. But some aid was maintained, as it enabled China to put pressure on Vietnam while bargaining with Washington. Meanwhile, Chinese leaders openly declared to the Vietnamese their opposition to Vietnam holding direct negotiations with the Americans.

From 1968 onwards, from both sides, Washington and Beijing flashed signs to each other, either at secret meetings or through public statements to encourage a rapprochement. On 10 December 1970, through Edgar Snow, Mao Zedong publicly invited Nixon to visit China. In 1971, a US table-tennis team opened the way followed closely by Kissinger.

Chinese leaders then informed their Vietnamese counterparts of their desire to negotiate the Vietnamese question directly with the Americans, while recommending acceptance of Washington's proposals: linking the withdrawal of US troops and a cease-fire to the maintenance of pro-US governments in South Vietnam and

Cambodia, thus returning to the Geneva solution of 1954. During Vietnam-China talks in 1971, Mao Zedong pleaded: "When your broomstick is too short, don't try to sweep too far".

But the Vietnamese side answered: "You have no right to settle the Vietnam question with the US. You have recognized your mistake of 1954; you should not commit it again". When the Chinese side informed him of Nixon's forthcoming visit to China, a Vietnamese leader answered:

"In the struggle against US aggression, the Vietnamese people must win. At this stage the American imperialists may well resume their war of destruction against North Vietnam with even greater barbarity, but the Vietnamese people will not be intimidated. They will win".

In February 1972, Nixon was warmly received in Beijing. It was agreed that if Beijing succeeded in obtaining Vietnam's acceptance of US conditions, then the questions of Taiwan (China's seat at the United Nations) and US technical and financial aid to China would easily be resolved.

In April 1972, the US resumed their massive B52 bombing of North Vietnam, mined North Vietnamese ports and intensively shelled the whole of South Vietnam. The Vietnamese people thus had to face a two-pronged offensive, military from the Americans, and political from the Beijing leadership.

Expanding the War

Neither intensified bombing and destruction nor the strengthening of troops numbers and armaments in the puppet army could succeed in crushing South Vietnam's popular forces, much less continued propping up of the Saigon regime. While "Vietnamization" meant prolonging the war in Vietnam, it also led to its expansion to encompass the whole of Indochina, as the "protection" of South Vietnam could be ensured only if Laos and Cambodia were integrated into the US sphere of influence. The French co-

lonialists had experienced this earlier themselves.

Losing in South Vietnam, Nixon lurched into forward flight and launched operations which none of his predecessors would have dared undertake.

In Nixon's mind, "Vietnamization" was to be achieved by "Indochinization" and eventually by "Asianization"; Indochinese were to fight Indochinese, and Asians to fight Asians. To ensure continued US domination in Asia Washington would have to provide only dollars and weapons. Only the skin colour of the casualties would change.

In Laos from 1969 onwards Washington tried to strengthen the right-wing forces militarily and politically, strengthening "General" Vang Pao's mercenaries to use them as a spearhead against liberated zones, and introducing Thai troops.

The Americans intensified the bombing of regions controlled by Lao patriotic forces. Up to 600 sorties were made every day, using all types of planes including B52s. Many villages saw their populations forcibly removed by helicopter to be regrouped in refugee camps.

In August 1969, under the command of 12,000 American advisers, 50 battalions with large-scale air support launched an attack on the Plain of Jars – Xieng Khouang area. Fighting lasted until February 1970, when Lao patriotic forces, aided by Vietnamese forces, launched a major counter-offensive and drove the enemy out of the region, inflicting severe losses on them. In this operation, the US command had mustered all the most effective means at its disposal for the first test of the Nixon doctrine: specially trained mercenaries, numerous American advisers, and large-scale air support.

The failure of this operation led to a new push forward. On 18 March, 1970, US intelligence engineered a coup d'état against the neutral government of Cambodia. Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who had striven to maintain Cambodia's independence and neutrality, was toppled by pro-American agents – Lon Nol and

Sirik Matak. But no sooner had the Lon Nol government come to power then it began to face strong popular resistance. An appeal by Norodom Sihanouk, followed by the April Summit Conference of Indochinese Peoples, to draw up a joint programme of action to form a National United Front of Kampuchea (NUFK) and Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea (RGNUK), greatly encouraged the Khmer people's resistance.

To save the Lon Nol government, the US command on 30 April, 1970 launched an attack by Saigon and US troops against Cambodia. Seventy thousand men invaded the country while US and Saigon planes bombed cities and villages. Cambodia in turn experienced all the horrors of American warfare. But the Khmer people put up strong resistance. Most of the countryside, in response to the NUFK appeal, rapidly organized itself in order to deal stunning blows against the Phnom Penh puppet administration. The RGNUK called for help from Vietnamese troops and the coup d'état against Norodom Sihanouk brought entirely unexpected consequences for Washington: in solidarity with the Vietnamese and Lao Peoples, the great majority of the population of a hitherto neutral country now became engaged in a determined armed struggle against the US imperialists and their agents.

The reaction of American and world opinion to the invasion of Cambodia forced Nixon to withdraw US ground forces after June, but Washington continued to step up aid in weapons and dollars to support the tottering Phnom Penh regime at all costs. The most important task – military support – was assigned to Saigon troops, who occupied Cambodia where they behaved like true conquerors. The Nixon doctrine appeared in all its barbarity – making Asians kill Asians for the benefit of the US.

Before 1975, as the war unfolded and the Khmer resistance badly needed Vietnamese military aid, Beijing and Khmer Rouge leaders could not openly foster discord.

Nixon's bellicose and adventurous policy brought the three

peoples of Indochina closer together, and the most bitter setbacks experienced by the GIs and Washington's mercenaries were related to the mutual support between the three peoples. Isolating the national and local resistance in each country so as to throttle them more easily, and cutting all communications between them, became major US objectives following the serious setbacks of 1970. The liberated zone in southern and central Laos constituted a sort of umbilical cord which the Pentagon set about severing early in 1971.

The southern Laos operation began in February using the maximum firepower available including 2,000 US aircraft and helicopters, the best Saigon units (paratroops, rangers, the 1st Infantry Division, and armoured units), and powerful US ground forces. A total of 45,000 men were engaged on Highway 9 which runs close to the 17th parallel from the South Vietnamese coast to the Mekong River. With such a huge deployment, of aircraft in particular, the US command believed it could cut enemy communications, thus preventing the liberation forces from supplying their troops fighting further south, and that the all-powerful US Air Force could if necessary crush them if they engaged in battle.

With air force protection, helicopters landed Saigon troops on the hills overlooking the highway, while armoured columns swiftly advanced down the road to take Tchepone, the hub of the communications network. But the liberation forces reacted promptly. Fire from anti-aircraft batteries brought down hundreds of helicopters loaded with men and equipment, while enemy posts set up on the mountaintops along Highway 9 were crushed by the liberation forces' artillery. Caught in ambushes and mine traps, the armoured columns were decimated. The battle, begun on 8 February ended on 22 March with the destruction of almost all the puppet forces engaged in southern Laos and heavy losses for US and puppet troops stationed in the South Vietnamese sector of Highway 9; 23,000 men were put out of action, 730 aircraft and helicopters brought down, and 1,400 military vehicles destroyed. This was one of the greatest battles to have taken place during

the Indochina war since 1945.

For the US command, the gravity of this defeat lay in the fact that it had deployed its key assets, i.e., the crack units forming the strategic reserves of the Saigon army, maximum air support, and carefully-prepared tactics. Washington had wanted to make this operation a test of the policy of "Vietnamization". But in the event, it had proved a failure.

By mid-1971, 11 months before the presidential election, Nixon found himself faced with a less than encouraging situation; resistance by the Vietnamese, Lao and Khmer peoples continued to intensify while support from socialist countries and other peoples kept increasing and US public opinion reacted more strongly every day.

On 1, July 1971, Mrs Nguyen Thi Binh on behalf of the PRG put forward a seven-point plan for the settlement of the Vietnam issue, with two basic conditions: withdrawal of US troops, plus the resignation of the Thieu government and its replacement with a new administration which would hold talks with the PRG on the forming of a government of national reconciliation. This initiative, strongly supported by world opinion and 70 governments, did not spark any serious response from Washington. Nixon, announcing a trip to Beijing, tried to persist with the fiction that the Vietnam issue could be settled, not between representatives of the Vietnamese people, but between the big powers.

In its editorial of 19 July, *Nhan Dan*, the organ of the Workers' Party of Vietnam, put the record straight:

"Nixon is going astray. The way out is clear, yet he is walking into an impasse. The days when big powers could decide on the fate of small countries are past and gone forever".

Having secured Beijing's agreement, however, Nixon went ahead with his military and political manoeuvres with the aim of imposing his will. On 21 September, 200 aircraft heavily bombed Quang Binh province in North Vietnam, and on 3 Oc-

tober, Thieu saw himself re-elected president with, he claimed, 94 per cent of the vote. Pacification operations continued, but encountered strong resistance, especially in October, in the western Mekong delta province of Tra Vinh. On 11 October, Kissinger tabled a US sponsored peace plan without, however, giving a precise date for the withdrawal of US troops, and demanding the maintenance of the Thieu government as the sole government in Saigon. Military operations intensified in the last months of 1971, in Laos and Cambodia as well. In South Vietnam, the pacification campaign in the U Minh region in the west of the Mekong delta ended with 16,000 men killed or wounded. In Cambodia in December, the defeated Lon Nol forces had to call off their "Tchenla-2 Operation" launched in August, the most serious setback so far for the Phnom Penh administration. In Laos, patriotic forces had almost completely liberated the Plain of Jars, wiping out many Vang Pao and Bangkok units. US aircraft continued to fly reconnaissance and bombing missions over parts of North Vietnam. Repression was stepped up in Saigon while in Cambodia Lon Nol, gradually driven into complete isolation, launched a new coup on 10 March 1972, dissolved the national assembly, and assumed the titles of President of the Republic and Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

For Nixon, 1972 was the year of the presidential elections; to achieve re-election, he had to give the impression that he was determined to end the Indochina war, but being a diehard neo-colonialist, he wanted to perpetuate the American "way" in Vietnam and impose his own conditions on the Vietnamese people. Three years of "Vietnamization" had enabled him to strengthen considerably the Thieu army and police which together totalled 1.2 million men and were equipped with one of the most up-to-date air forces, naval and river flotillas, and armoured corps in the world. Three crack divisions (rangers, paratroops and marines), formed the spearhead of this army, and were trained to destroy enemy regular forces and protect major towns and bases. The US air force and navy provided significant support to these

forces, while the ruthless pacification campaign kept the Saigon-controlled areas in a state of terror. Continual bombing had turned liberated zones into deserts.

More than 70,000 officers had been trained to command this army; they also controlled the political apparatus while engaging in all kinds of trafficking. The model for them was Nguyen Van Thieu himself who, while still a young man, had joined the French army's paratroop force before crossing over to the US and whose wife and close relatives had amassed huge fortunes in countless deals. This "military-political-trafficking" caste, trained and indoctrinated by the Americans, constituted the true ruling class in South Vietnam. It was neither a bourgeoisie, nor a native feudal class. It was a pure creation of US imperialism, just as the enormous military and police apparatus which it commanded was created by dollars and the policy of systematically destroying the South Vietnamese countryside. Ruffians and thugs were specially trained to kill and torture, to back up troops, carry out the dirty work and terrorize the population.

With this gigantic machine, Nixon thought he could carry through his "Vietnamization" policy and gradually withdraw American ground forces, all the more so that he could launch fierce bombing raids against North Vietnam at any moment. Efforts were also made to give a semblance of economic prosperity to areas still under Saigon control. US aid, both military and economic, averaged out at two billion dollars a year – an enormous sum for Vietnam – but nothing compared to the 30 billion dollars spent annually on the direct intervention of American troops in the war.

Nixon had a certain amount of success; the enormous economic and technical power of the US directed for so many long years against a small country could indeed produce results, and it was not without reason that Nixon confidently entered the election year, especially since negotiations between Beijing and Washington had already brought about substantial agreement.

The confrontation of 1972 was decisive. On the Vietnamese

side, answers had to be given to several military issues of prime importance:

- Could the outer defence system set up by the US and Saigon armies be overcome?
- Could the crack units of the Saigon army be wiped out?
- Could supplies be maintained in case of a drawn-out offensive?

In a bid to gain some control over the direction of operations, Beijing proposed that the Vietnamese send 200,000 Chinese troops to Vietnam. The Vietnamese refused.

The offensive launched by popular forces on 30 March shed vivid light on the situation. By 1 May, fortified positions in the northern part of Quang Tri province near the 17th parallel, those located northwest of Saigon in the direction of Loc Ninh and An Loc, and important bases on Highways 14 and 19 in the Central Highlands, one after another fell as a result of attacks by the people's artillery, tanks and infantry. The best Saigon units, in spite of strong support from the US air force and navy, were unable to withstand the assault. Quang Tri province was completely liberated.

The Vietnamization policy had sustained a devastating defeat, and Washington was obliged to partly "re-Americanize" the war. Key air force and naval units arrived to reinforce those still in Indochina. The fleet of US tactical aircraft and fighter-bombers grew to more than 1,300 and the number of B52s to 200. Washington had to come to the rescue of Saigon, since it was not only the outer defensive perimeter that was threatened, but also the area to the rear, the zones that had already been "pacified". Guerilla battles were raging and the administrations set up by Saigon in regions such as Binh Dinh and the western area of the Mekong delta were being dismantled. To help Saigon troops retake the provincial capital of Quang Tri, the US air force and navy daily fired 15,000 to 20,000 shells at its citadel, while around 300 aircraft were in operation behind enemy lines.

To save his unsuccessful Vietnamization policy, Nixon ordered a new escalation against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. On 16 April, B52s destroyed many quarters of Haiphong, the second biggest city in North Vietnam, which was systematically bombed until the end of 1972. The US air force operated over North Vietnam in terror raids against the population (carpet bombings of towns and villages) or using pinpoint bombing raids targeting sophisticated weapons (laser bombs) against economic targets, bridges, factories, and so on.

Almost all the towns in North Vietnam were totally or partly destroyed and all industrial establishments damaged in Washington's attempt to systematically destroy the country's industrial economy. Agriculture was also a target, the most important hydraulic installations being subjected to saturation bombing. To top off the escalation, many bombing raids were directed at the network of river and sea dykes, with the aim of causing catastrophic floods at times of heavy rain in July and August.

To supplement the bombing, on 8 May Nixon ordered the blockading of all ports of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam with thousands of mines so as to stop all foreign supplies from coming in. North Vietnam hit back. Many American planes were brought down, the supplies were kept flowing and the people remained calm and continued fighting. The Saigon forces only retook the town of Quang Tri at the cost of a massive and desperate effort. Massive intervention by US forces had of course saved the Saigon army and administration but Nixon had failed once again to impose his will. In the North the year 1972 was a dry one and the raids against the dykes did not bring the expected results. An operation by Vang Pao's mercenaries to retake the Plain of Jars in Laos failed. Nixon was unable to present any prospects for peace to American electors, and McGovern's nomination as Democratic Party candidate posed a serious threat to him. The intensification of the bombing certainly inflicted serious losses on the Vietnamese people and boosted the

stocks of the Thieu regime, but Nixon remained in an impasse, despite all the support given to him by Beijing.

On 11 September, the PRG proposed a fair and reasonable solution consisting of the withdrawal of US troops and formation of a provisional government of national reconciliation comprising representatives of three parties: the PRG, the Saigon government, and a third group of other political forces in South Vietnam. Thus neither a communist nor pro-American government would be imposed on South Vietnam. It became more and more difficult during the election period to keep obstructing the peace plans of the Vietnamese side. Nixon had to resign himself to negotiating as American losses in planes and pilots mounted. Between April and October, 554 US aircraft were brought down over North Vietnam, and on 17 October, the 4,000th US aircraft was shot down, an F111, the latest pride of American technology.

During the first weeks of October, negotiations were speeded up between delegations from the DRV and United States. It was agreed that on 22 October the two sides would initial an agreement in Hanoi, and that on 30 October, the foreign ministers of the two countries would officially sign it in Paris. On 22 October, Nixon sent a message to Prime Minister Pham Van Dong of the DRV. This enabled Nixon to appear before his electors as having already settled the Vietnam affair. On 23 October, after the votes were cast, Washington, under the pretext of difficulties raised by Saigon, went back on the terms of the agreement and the agenda that had already been set. Military operations in the South and bombing of the North resumed, while the US command took advantage of the hiatus to send large consignments of new weapons, especially aircraft, helicopters and armoured vehicles, to the Saigon army. By the end of 1972 the Saigon air force thus had more than 2,000 planes, making it the third most powerful in the world; US officers passed themselves off as civilian technicians "advising" the Thieu army. The naval air arm launched fierce attacks on North Vietnamese provinces between the 17th and 20th parallels. Washington then demanded dras-

tic changes to the basic provisions of the agreement reached in October (126 changes were proposed), with the aim of denying the Vietnamese people their fundamental national rights.

Having failed to impose his conditions on Vietnamese negotiators, on 18 December Nixon sent his B52 strategic bombers against the major cities of the DRV. From 18 to 30 December, 1972, several hundred fighter-bombers and about 150 B52s operated daily over North Vietnam. Vietnamese anti-aircraft defences brought down 81 American planes including 34 B52s, until then thought to be invulnerable. A wave of protest swept the world. The failure of the B52s to cause panic among the population of North Vietnam, the huge losses in numbers of aircraft and pilots, and worldwide indignation compelled Nixon to halt the bombing and return to the negotiating table.

On 27 January, the "Agreement on the Cessation of the War and the Restoration of Peace in Vietnam" was signed in Paris. It stipulated in particular that the United States should respect the fundamental national rights of the Vietnamese people, and that US troops and advisers and all other military personnel of both the US and its allies should be withdrawn from South Vietnam before 27 March. The withdrawal of US forces opened the way for a political settlement. The Paris Agreement implicitly recognized the existence of two administrations and two armies, as well as three political forces which were to work for the implementation of national reconciliation. On 21 February in Vientiane, an agreement between the two Lao parties on the re-establishment of peace and the implementation of national reconciliation in Laos was signed, also guaranteeing the Lao people the exercise of their basic national rights. The United States had to cease all intervention and aggression, end its military presence in Laos and disband the special forces set up in that country. A new provisional government of national unity was envisaged as well as a consultative political council with equal participation from the Vientiane government and Lao

triotic forces.

Thus in January and February 1973, Washington was forced to recognize, at least in principle, the right of the Vietnamese and Lao peoples to settle their own affairs without American interference. The most important point was the obligation on the US to withdraw all its military forces from South Vietnam. In view of the systematic nature of the interventionist policy followed by the US in Vietnam since 1950 and pursued after 1970 with Beijing's complicity, this was a major defeat, a serious setback for US imperialism. To have geared all its strategy to tutoring the Third World, to have for over 20 years concentrated all its efforts on trying to crush the Vietnamese national movement, to have to recognize the existence of the DRV and that of the PRG in South Vietnam, to find itself confronted by a battered American nation, a younger generation and an army tormented by doubt, the nation's honour stained for ever by the magnitude of the crimes committed – this setback constituted a bitter failure for the Washington neo-colonialists.

Cultural Development in the Period 1945-75

Thirty years of war and social upheaval did not prevent Vietnamese culture from undergoing continuous development. It was an integral part of the revolutionary movement, one of the essential weapons of national liberation and social renewal.

Never before in Vietnam's history had cultural activities developed so rapidly in terms of both quantity and quality. The flourishing of literary, musical, theatrical, and artistic works of all genres over the thirty years 1945-75 surpassed that of several previous centuries, even without counting the birth of new arts such as the cinema.

Eighty years of colonial domination had stifled both traditional culture and the potential for modernization, and of all renewal. With the triumph of the 1945 August Revolution and

especially with the complete liberation of North Vietnam after 1945, with all the attention given by the Party and government to the development of science and culture, conditions were created for the reassessing of traditions and the birth of a national culture suited to our era, Vietnam underwent a true cultural renaissance.

Many social and historical factors were involved:

- Use of the national language as the medium of instruction at all levels in place of French. The national language was quickly updated in many areas, including tens of thousands of scientific and technical terms;

- Complete elimination of illiteracy and rapid spread of education. By 1958, almost every adult in North Vietnam could read and write, and after 1960, even during the US bombing, one out of three North Vietnamese was involved in some sort of study. The number of intellectuals increased dramatically, while the various strata of the population eagerly took part in cultural activities, read newspapers and books, and went to the theatre and cinema;

- Renaissance of traditional culture and the modernization of contemporary culture were also carried out among various ethnic groups in mountainous areas, and Vietnamese culture took on an increasingly multi-ethnic character; and

- Close contacts were established with other socialist countries including the Soviet Union and others in Europe, China, Cuba, and also with cultural organizations throughout the world. An open-door policy, though hindered by war, was maintained, enabling the nation's culture to benefit from the rich cultural treasury of other nations.

Immense material and human losses due to war and partition hampered this cultural upsurge significantly. Many scientists and artists died in battle, and many artworks and historical monuments were destroyed or damaged. Artists, writers, and scientific researchers had to work in very difficult conditions.

Education and Scientific Development

The literacy campaign launched in September 1945 achieved rapid success. With the use of the national language and the elimination of outdated and reactionary notions from syllabuses and textbooks, a new education system took shape. In 1950 in the liberated zones, the education system began to closely link political and armed struggle, production and school education. Teachers' colleges and technical and higher education institutions were set up one after another.

The complete liberation of North Vietnam in 1954 created conditions for the rapid development of education. Illiterates in newly liberated areas quickly learned to read and write, while schools introduced a uniform ten-grade system of general education. Infant classes were set up not only in cities but right down to villages level, paid for by agricultural cooperatives. Further education courses, specially designed for activists and qualified people, were offered to literate adults, helping them to raise their educational standards. Many higher and secondary technical schools were opened.

When US aggression began in 1964, North Vietnam had a comprehensive schooling system from infant level up to university, with further education courses for adults. Each village had at least one first level (primary) school for children aged 7 to 11; most had a second level (junior high) school for ages 12 to 15, and each district had at least one third level (senior high) school for pupils aged 15 to 18.

US aggression posed a great challenge for the Vietnamese school system. Within ten years a new generation had been suitably educated, providing the armed forces with soldiers capable of handling modern weapons – artillery, missiles, radar, jet planes – which had not been in existence at the time of Dien Bien Phu. Educated politically and ideologically by the new system, the young assumed war-time obligations both at the front and to the rear.

Party and government directives were clear on the following point. In spite of the war, education was to be developed to help the war effort, but also to meet the needs of the future. Schools and colleges from the cities had to disperse to the forests and villages, and village schools had to break up into small units. Each evacuated or dispersed school had to build new premises, shelters and trenches, house teachers and pupils, and set up libraries and laboratories either in people's houses or in temporary compounds. This enormous task was performed successfully thanks to the dedication of the teachers and pupils and the assistance given by the entire people.

For these reasons, educational progress was not interrupted during the war years even in the most frequently bombed provinces such as those situated near the 17th parallel. In 1965, responsibility for higher and vocational education was transferred to a new ministry separate from the Ministry of Education.

In mountainous areas, conditions were much more difficult owing to great ethnic and linguistic diversity, with economic and educational standards lagging behind those of people living on the plains, while the population was more scattered as well. Special commissions developed scripts for the languages of the most important ethnic groups. Pupils in mountainous regions thus learned both the language of their own ethnic group and that of the *kinh*, the common national language.

The following tables illustrate progress made in education:

North Vietnam	1955	1956	1972
Enrolments in general			
education (not counting			
infants' classes)	716,000	2,666,000	4,882,000
Higher education	1,200	26,000	53,000

(not counting the many students learning by correspondence and those studying abroad)

School enrolments across the whole of Vietnam (north and south) in 1939, under the colonial regime :

General education	University
567,000	600

With regard to scientific and technical research, the legacy of the colonial regime was practically nil in terms of equipment and personnel. The first students at the new colleges and universities did not graduate until 1959 or 1960, and only after that date can one speak of the birth of scientific research in Vietnam. In 1959, the State Committee for Science and Technology was established in order to lead and coordinate research. In 1967, this committee split into two, the Committee for Natural Sciences and Technology and the Committee for Social Sciences. In fact, the first facilities for scientific research purposes were not really established until 1966. Several dozen specialized institutes were set up, many of them during the war against the US. An Association for the Popularization of Science and Technology attracted many members, with branches reaching down to the level of village and agricultural cooperative. *Khoa Hoc Thuong Thuc* (Journal of Scientific Popularization) enjoyed considerable success. The social sciences – history, archaeology, linguistics, ethnography and so on – also saw rapid advancement.

Literature and the Arts

The 1945 August Revolution freed writers and artists from the narrow and suffocating atmosphere in which they had been working under the colonial regime, particularly since the start of World War the Second. Almost all writers and artists of renown left the cities to join the resistance against the French. Fighting, living among the people, and political and ideological work gradually transformed these artists of the former regime, while new

writers and artists trained by the resistance itself progressively emerged on to the cultural scene.

The complete liberation of North Vietnam in 1954 and the first steps in the establishment of socialism led to a new flowering of cultural life. Exhibitions, conferences and festivals as well as specialized journals and publishing houses multiplied. The State at both central and provincial levels encouraged artistic, theatrical, musical and dance groups, and set up art schools, offices and studios to develop film-making. Amateur theatre companies were formed in factories, villages and army units. Never before had the country witnessed such a ferment of cultural activity.

Despite the partition of the country, the US intervention failed to break the national and revolutionary unity of the artistic movement. Works produced in the period 1954-75 in the North as well as in the liberated zones of the South sprang from the same sources. Political writings, in particular those of leaders such as Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, Pham Van Dong, Truong Chinh and Vo Nguyen Giap, with their concise style and the finesse of their language, constitute literary works in their own right.

National and revolutionary realities, the tough and heroic struggle of an entire people against aggression and the building of a new society were the main themes used by writers and artists. The era of romantic dreams, of hermetic literature, and of art for art's sake was gone. but while the literary and artistic portrayal of the national struggle was relatively easy, the building of a new society, a new people, and socialism which was only at its beginnings, was expressed with much less ease. In this domain, the transformation of villages, and the problems of the world of the peasant were reflected more often and more easily than those of industry and the workers' world. The problem also arose, especially in theatre and music, of safeguarding the traditional heritage while modernizing it. These were problems pertaining to a developed and growing body of literature

and art. It was only in the light of the struggle that the ancestral legacy could be correctly evaluated and only by continuing the nation's traditions could the nation's cultural life be modernized.

The period 1945-50 was marked by the appearance of shorter works: poems, narratives and short stories. Only after 1950 did the first novels appear. The new guidelines for writers were about creating a national, scientific and popular culture. In the period 1954-60, the first war of resistance provided the main source of inspiration for literary and artistic works. After that date, short stories, novels and films tackled, with varying degrees of vigour and skill, the problem of establishing socialism, in particular those of agricultural co-operatives, conflicts between the young and older generations, the blunders, disputes, and enthusiasm of activists, and the emancipation of women. From 1965 to 1975, more and more poems, narratives, short stories and films dealt with the struggle against the US in both South and North. It often sufficed just to describe the life and struggle of a combatant to create a good quality work, the reality of the struggle being so rich and moving.

While To Huu remained the leading figure, poets of the pre-1945 romantic generation had undergone profound change. Xuan Dieu, Che Lan Vien, Te Hanh, Huy Can and others now depicted with warmth and skill the heroes and achievements of the advancing revolution. These masters were joined by a host of young poets, often still entangled in clumsy expression, many of them born into worker or peasant families, or from minority ethnic groups, such as Nong Quoc Chan and Ban Tai Doan. From the South came poems by Thanh Hai, Giang Nam, and Thu Bon, poems which had a profound resonance throughout the country. A generation of child poets was born, Tran Dang Khoa being the most famous.

Novels, narratives, and short stories flourished. Pre-1954 veterans such as Nguyen Cong Hoan and Nguyen Tuan kept on producing major works. Many new talents such as Nguyen Dinh Thi, Nguyen Van Bong, Vo Huy Tam and Nam Cao grew up during

the first resistance, and after 1954, younger writers emerged such as Nguyen Ngoc, Nguyen Khai, Chu Van, Vu Thi Thuong and Bui Duc Ai. From the South came novels and short stories by Anh Duc, Nguyen Thi, Phan Tu and Nguyen Trung Thanh which depicted the arduous struggle with conviction. A new genre – literature for children – also appeared, and the Kim Dong Publishing House specializing in this genre had within 15 years (from 1958) published about 1,000 titles.

A tidal wave of change produced by the revolution also swept through music and theatre. A large-scale revival of the national cultural legacy was undertaken, revolutionary songs were written, and symphonic poems were composed for traditional orchestras. European music, however, was not neglected. Composers tackled major musical forms including opera and symphony. Through its development music made an effective contribution to the development of other artistic sectors such as theatre, cinema and dance.

Dance saw significant development with the revival of national choreographic traditions, particularly those of ethnic minorities, while renovated dance forms were also successfully introduced. All forms of theatre – *cheo*, *tuong*, *cai luong* and drama – were able to develop, once again by reviving traditional themes and techniques while also assimilating modern ideas.

In spite of material and technical difficulties, cinema was one of the areas which developed most rapidly after 1954 and especially after 1965. Newsreels, feature films of varying lengths, documentary and animated films – all these genres were represented, some works being awarded prizes at international festivals.

The literary movement closely followed the revolutionary movement, setting itself revolutionary tasks; during the war the motto was to "cover the sound of the bombs by singing", so helping to encourage revolutionary heroism among the broad masses. Literature and the arts in Vietnam proudly fulfilled this mission. However, it was inevitable that we would have to wait for a time of peace for really great works to emerge.