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VIETNAM

A THOUSAND YEARS OF STRUGGLE

by Terry Cannon

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Text by Terry Cannon

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I

FIGHT AND LOSE AND FIGHT AGAIN: VIETNAMESE HEROES, FOREIGN INVADERS

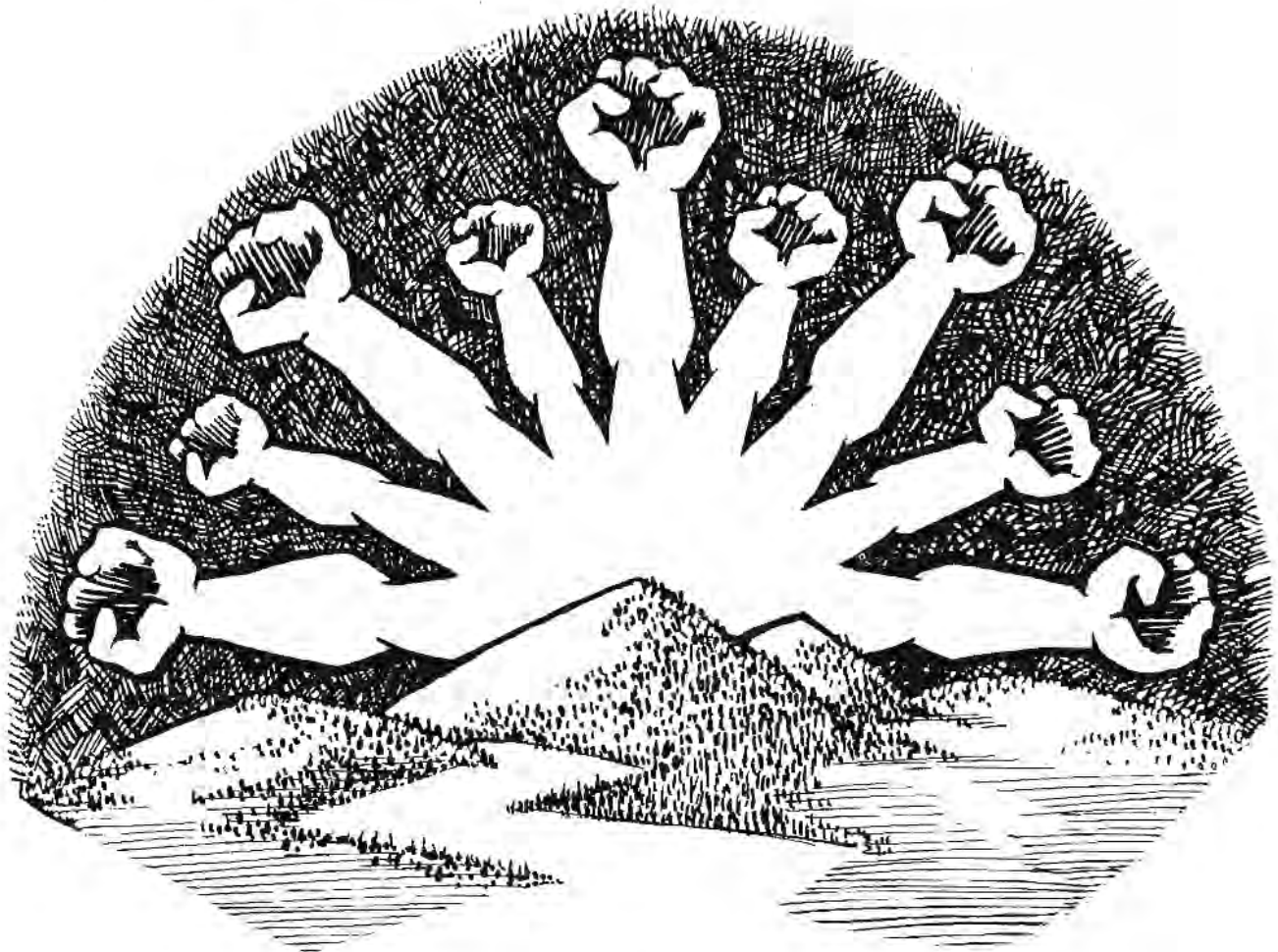
ONE AFTERNOON A thousand years ago a Chinese administrator named Cao Bien was sitting by the River Lo in Vietnam. He had been sent by the Emperor of China to conquer Vietnam and make it part of China.

As he sat there on that afternoon, 500 years before the first white man ever set foot in America, scheming of ways to get the riches of Vietnam back to China, he saw something huge and terrifying.

An enormous shape towered above him

over the river and the hills. "I am the spirit of this land," it announced. "You will never defeat me." Cao Bien had some reputation as a magician, but he was too scared. He kept quiet.

The next day he had several altars built to drive the spirit away. A storm came up that night and bolts of lightning bent the altars out of shape. Cao Bien sighed a deep sigh. "This country has a powerful spirit," he thought. "I won't be able to stay here."



China had tried to conquer Vietnam for a thousand years before Cao Bien arrived. China was a powerful empire, Vietnam a small scattered country. China had trained armies and gunpowder, the Vietnamese had bamboo sticks, spears and arrows. In the end, fifty years after Cao Bien saw the spirit, the Chinese were driven out.

In Europe, the Danes were invading England, Germany was not even a nation, Charlemagne was dead and France was in a state of anarchy. In Asia, the country of Vietnam was independent for the first time in a thousand years.

The Vietnamese fought long and hard for their independence. The Trung Sisters led the first revolt while Christ was still alive, and held out for three years against powerful Chinese armies. The Lady Trieu, riding on the back of an elephant, led her troops against the foreigners at the time the Roman Empire was declining.

Vietnam lived in peace for 300 years after Cao Bien was kicked out. Then the Mongolians decided to capture this jewel of Southeast Asia. Kubla Khan sent 500,000 soldiers—the same number of soldiers the United States has in Vietnam today—to conquer the country.

What was Vietnam to Kubla Khan? He had just conquered all of China. His armies had swept across Asia right into Europe and down to India. He was the ruler of most of the world. But the Vietnamese kicked him out!

How did they do it? The same way they are doing it today. *All* of the people, peasants, landlords, and noblemen united together. They fought guerrilla war against Kubla Khan, fighting many little battles and some big ones. They fought a long war of resistance, not trying for a quick victory.

They didn't draft people into an army, like we do today, and send them off to do the fighting. The professional armies of Kubla Khan, like China before him, were fighting for gold, glory and loot. The Vietnamese, like the Vietnamese of today, were fighting for independence and freedom. They weren't out to loot and kill, so they made better soldiers.

The peasants who fought against the for-



eigners wanted more than just political independence from foreign rulers—they wanted economic independence too. So when they kicked the invaders out, they didn't stop fighting.

The Vietnamese lived under feudalism, the same as in Europe during the Middle Ages. A king and a bunch of nobles ruled the country and made the peasants work for them. Working from dawn to night, the peasants had to grow rice, fish, and hunt animals for their families. On top of this they were forced to work for nothing for the rich nobles.

The nobles fought among themselves too. Each one wanted to be king. They didn't really care about the peasants, except when they needed them to fight foreign invaders. If the peasants wanted economic freedom, they had to fight for themselves.

And they did. Peasant revolts broke out all over. One peasant leader, Nguyen Huu Cau, was the "Robin Hood" of Vietnam. During the days when America was a colony of England, he led the peasants against the rich,

plundering their mansions and giving their wealth to the poor.

Vietnam was not completely re-unified until three brothers, the Taysons, organized the peasants to take over their own country. The Taysons began their fight the year of the Boston Massacre in America.

They had to fight many enemies. The rich nobles called for help from the King of Siam, who sent 50,000 troops. The peasants beat them. Then the Chinese figured this would be a good time to get Vietnam back. They sent 200,000 troops. The Vietnamese peasants marched 400 miles in a few weeks, surprised the Chinese near where Hanoi is today and smashed the Chinese armies.

In 1789, just as the infant United States was setting up its revolutionary government, the Taysons won back national independence from the feudal lords who had betrayed their people.

This was the Golden Age of Vietnam. Novels and poems were written in the Vietnamese language. Songs of romantic love, love based on choice, not social rules, were popular. Scientific culture arose. Men wrote books on medicine, geography and philosophy.

It did not last. Vietnam had not seen the end of foreigners. They could not have known then that the brave, new revolutionary government of America would some day send over as many soldiers as Kubla Khan to invade their country. But there was a new foreigner on the scene. A feudal lord named Gia Long hated the peasant revolt and decided to overthrow the Tayson government. He began to reconquer the country. This time he had help from a European country. His army was trained, his navy was equipped and his forts were constructed by a powerful ally—soldiers from France.

The peasants of Vietnam had a new enemy.



II

FRENCHMEN, GO HOME!

NO NATIVE-BORN AMERICAN can know what it is to live under colonialism. Our own colonial struggle against England is deep in the past. Many people say "Things are different now" and they don't understand why the people living in Asia, Africa and Latin America fight against America with the same anger and passion that Thomas Jefferson, George Washington and Tom Paine fought against Great Britain.

Vietnam is an old nation. 500 years before America was discovered the Vietnamese peasants and their lords and kings forced the Chinese to leave their little country. They wrote books, satires, and poems in their own language. They handed down from generation to generation the stories of their battles and their national heroes.

The soldiers who fought in these battles were peasants. They hoped that by kicking out the foreign rulers they would get freedom to own their own land and farm it, without paying high taxes or doing free work for a feudal lord. Again and again they were disappointed.

In 1802 the emperor Gia Long took power. He moved his capital from Hanoi, which was surrounded by militant peasant movements, to Hue, where he hoped to be safe. He brought back dictatorship and passed laws worse than those of 400 years earlier.

Foreigners appeared in the cities and towns of Vietnam. French traders and merchants came to buy goods. French priests and missionaries came to preach the word of a foreign gospel, Catholic Christianity.

The French knew nothing of Vietnamese life and culture. They looked on the people only as sources of wealth and labor and as possible converts to Catholicism. If the people could not be convinced to give up their wealth and their religion, the French were ready to force them to.

The Vietnamese emperor was more afraid

of his own people than of the French. He didn't like the French, especially when they argued against his religion, Confucianism. But he wanted money and power. The French were willing to give him money and he hoped



they would protect him against the peasants who would have overthrown his government if they could. So he let the French come in.

This wasn't enough for the foreigners.

In 1859 the French and Spanish used the death of several missionaries as an excuse to invade Vietnam. They landed soldiers and conquered Saigon. For 25 years they went on like this, conquering new territory and forcing the chicken-hearted emperor to sign treaties giving them the "legal" right to what they had conquered.

Finally they controlled all of Vietnam. Vietnamese independence came to an end. The people now served two masters: the Vietnamese lords and the French. But they did not quit fighting.

A Frenchman, who came to Vietnam in 1860, was impressed by the popular resistance to his country. He wrote:

The insurrection seemed to spring up from the soil. The fact was that the center of resistance was everywhere, subdivided almost as many times as there were Vietnamese. It would be more accurate to say that every peasant tying up a sheaf of rice was a center of resistance.

His report sounds familiar—like the stories



American GI's tell of towns where women and small children fight and die against the American Army.

This resistance couldn't last. The peasants had few weapons and they could not count on the lords or the emperor to lead them. By 1913, all armed resistance to the French was crushed. The people fought bravely, but they lost.

What was French colonialism like? Did it bring "civilization and modern living" to Vietnam like so many people think?

The French did not change the feudal structure of Vietnam, they just laid a foreign administration on top of it. Life got worse, not better. The economy was controlled by a few French companies and by their bank, the Bank of Indochina. They ran the mines, the rubber plantations and the industry. Poor harvests and famines forced many peasants to flee their villages and come to the cities to work as "coolies" for a few cents a day. The landlords grabbed their land away from them. They could not produce handicrafts themselves, because French goods were cheaper. Year by year, the people were driven into poverty and despair.

The industry and the roads built by the French did not benefit the peasants. Those who did get jobs were subjected to heavy fines and punishments. The Vietnamese were treated like foreigners in their own country. The courts and the schools were conducted in French. The government was run from the top down. People could not vote. The French administrators who ruled Vietnam were appointed in Paris.

A Vietnamese patriot who later was to organize his countrymen against the French described the condition of his people. He said:

As Vietnamese they are oppressed, as peasants they are robbed, plundered, expropriated and ruined. It is they who do all the hard labor. It is they who produce for the whole horde of parasites, loungers, civilizers and others. And it is they who live in poverty while their executioners live in plenty, and die of starvation when their crops fail.

One can see that behind a mask of democracy, French imperialism has transplanted in Vietnam the whole cursed

medieval regime, and that the Vietnamese peasant is crucified on the bayonet of capitalist civilization and on the cross of prostituted Christianity.

He was angry and so were the peasants. From time to time, Vietnamese soldiers mutinied, and secret groups led uprisings, but they were always crushed.

The Vietnamese wanted to get the French out. They had the desire and lacked the

leadership. The wealthy Vietnamese would not lead them and the tiny middle class could not.

If the people were to drive out the foreigners they had to organize a *national, democratic* movement that would do away with feudalism, and set up a government that was run by the Vietnamese people.

Who would lead this revolution?



III

THE FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY

"NGUYEN AI QUOC" (Nguyen the Patriot) was the alias chosen by a young Vietnamese man who left Vietnam when he was 21 as a cabin boy on a merchant ship. He travelled to New York and then to Paris where he lived for several years after World War I.

In Paris he tried to find people who sympathized with his desire to end the French rule of his homeland. He joined the French Socialist Party because several of its members showed sympathy for his cause, but, as he wrote later, "I understood neither what was a party, a trade-union, nor what was Socialism or Communism."

One day a friend gave him a book by

Lenin, the leader of the Russian Revolution. Nguyen Ai Quoc remembers this book well:

There were political terms difficult to understand in this thesis. But by dint of reading it again and again, finally I could grasp the main part of it. What emotion, enthusiasm, clear-sightedness, and confidence it instilled in me! I was overjoyed to tears. Though sitting alone in my room, I shouted aloud as if addressing large crowds: "Dear martyrs, compatriots! This is what we need, this is the path to our liberation!"

Several years later he returned to his country. Many other Vietnamese also believed that only socialism could solve the problems



of Vietnam, but they were divided and argued among themselves.

Nguyen convinced them to unite and form the Indochinese Communist Party (Indochina was the French word for what is now Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia). He convinced them not just to talk among themselves but to go to their people, to form large organizations of everyone who wanted to free Vietnam from the French.

To a young peasant who had joined the Communist Party and was working in the mountain villages, he said:

A revolution cannot be made by a single man. A large force is needed, the entire people must participate. Our members must be kind-hearted, open-minded and sincere. They must help one another as comrades.

A man joins the revolution only when he understands that oppression is the cause of his sufferings. Therefore we cannot lie to the people. Before the people, a revolutionary has no right to assume a haughty and arrogant attitude, as if he were a feudal warlord. He must be modest.

Nguyen Ai Quoc knew his history very well. He knew that the peasants had driven the Chinese and the Mongolians out of Vietnam centuries before only to be betrayed by their own leaders, the rich lords. Under Socialism, this would be different. Those who led the revolution, the Communists, would not stay apart from the peasants, living in big houses and only trying to get rich themselves instead of sharing the wealth with foreign masters.

The Communist revolutionaries helped the peasants in their daily work: husking and milling rice, getting water and firewood, looking after the children, teaching the people to read and write. The Communists, who were peasants themselves, became known as "the people who get things done." They were the first to take risks, the last to back down. The French tried to destroy the Party, using torture and intimidation. If the revolutionaries had not been close to the people, the people would have turned them in to the French, but they did not.

Nguyen Ai Quoc also wrote poems which

were printed in the underground newspapers of the movement. During the Second World War he spent a year in prison. This is one of his poems:

MOONLIGHT

*For prisoners, there is no alcohol and
flowers,
But the night is so lovely, how can we
celebrate it?
I go to the air-hole and stare up at the
moon,
And through the air-hole the moon smiles
at the poet.*

Nguyen Ai Quoc was older than most of the revolutionaries, who were young men and women. His friends and followers called him "Uncle." Today he is known to the world as Ho Chi Minh.

Strikes and peasant insurrections once again broke out during the depression years of the 1930's. In several areas of Vietnam committees of poor peasants seized power and distributed the land owned by the rich landlords to the peasants. Thousands of Vietnamese were actively fighting the French. This movement for independence was made up of Socialists, Communists, liberals and many others.

All these political groups got together in 1939 to form the "Vietminh," which is short for Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh—the League for the Independence of Vietnam. A year later, the Japanese began to move into Vietnam. The attitude of the Vietminh was—"We don't want either the French or the Japanese as masters."

Faced with Japanese attack, the French acted the same way the cowardly Vietnamese lords did when the French attacked them. They were more afraid of the Vietnamese than the foreign invaders. When the Vietminh offered to join the French in fighting the Japanese, the French replied, "You want arms now to use against the Japanese. But later you will use them against us. Nothing doing!"

Vietnam fell to Japan. The only people fighting for Vietnam were the Vietminh. The French spent all their time fighting the Vietminh, killing and jailing thousands of people who wanted to defend their land against invasion.

The Vietminh, under the leadership of the Communist Party, formed the first guerrilla units, fighting underground against both the French and the Japanese.

The Japanese set up an army of Vietnamese who were supposed to fight for them. Many Vietnamese patriots joined the Japanese army, just to get their hands on a gun so they could split and join the Vietminh.

The American army supported the Vietminh. They parachuted guns, radios and supplies to the underground and even sent in American advisors to help Ho Chi Minh's troops.

When the war ended, Japan surrendered. The French, who had been beaten by the Japanese in Vietnam, were nowhere in sight. There was only one organization that had the support of the people, the only group that had fought against all foreign rulers. It was the Vietminh, organized and led by Vietnamese. It looked like the age-old dream of independence was finally to come true. A new flag was raised over Hanoi, the flag of the Democratic Republic, a yellow star on a red field.



IV

RED FLAG, YELLOW STAR: THE BIG POWERS BATTLE A FREE PEOPLE

HANOI WAS IN VIETNAMESE hands for the first time in 70 years. The Vietminh, who had led the resistance against the Japanese (with American help), formed a new government, elected Ho Chi Minh president, and announced the Republic of Vietnam. On September 2, 1945, they issued their Declaration of Independence.

Few people have read the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence. It begins with words that should be familiar to us:

All men are created equal. They are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Those are the opening words of the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence, and the



second sentence of our own. Ho Chi Minh hoped that America would continue to support the Vietnamese.

We are convinced that the Allied nations which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam.

Once again, and many times more, they were to be cruelly disappointed.

At the same time the Vietnamese were taking control of their country, the "Big Three," Churchill, Truman and Stalin, were meeting in Potsdam, Germany. As the winners of World War II, they met to decide who controlled what. They decided that all of Southeast Asia should belong to England. Just like that, with the stroke of a pen, they decided the fate of Vietnam. One thing complicated this; they also owed China a debt for fighting against the Japanese. So with another stroke of the pen they cut Vietnam in half at the 16th parallel, north of Hue, pretty much where the "borderline" between North Vietnam and South Vietnam lies today.

North of that line the Chinese were to occupy the country; south of the line belonged to the British. The job of the Chinese and British was to "restore law and order." The Big Three paid little attention to the fact that there was a government there, supported by the people, that was already "restoring law and order." That did not concern them. They were big men with a world to carve up among themselves.

This was the beginning of the end of Vietnamese independence. China at that time was governed (at least in part) by Chiang Kai-Shek. He had no love for the French, who had tried to colonize his own country. He also

wanted some influence in Vietnam. So China immediately recognized the Vietminh government in Hanoi.

But not the British. They planned to overthrow the Vietnamese government in the South and restore the French to power. When the British officials arrived in Saigon, crowds of Vietnamese came out to welcome them, carrying Allied flags. Suddenly, shooting started. The British used this breakdown in "law and order" to declare martial law.

They refused to talk directly with the Vietminh government, insisting on going through the local Japanese military headquarters! They closed the Vietnamese newspapers, re-armed 5,000 French troops that had been captured by the Japanese, and ordered the Vietnamese militia and police to disarm.

A month after they arrived, a small group of 150 French commandos seized the government buildings, hauled down the Vietnamese flag, and hoisted the French tricolor. In the South, with British help, the French were back in power.

Soon the French were attacking the countryside around Saigon. Who did the fighting for them? Japanese troops! General Douglas MacArthur announced from Tokyo, which America had occupied, "If there is anything that makes my blood boil it is to see our allies in Indochina deploying Japanese troops to reconquer the little people we promised to liberate. It is the most ignoble kind of betrayal."

Betrayal was the name of the game. Vietnam is a country rich in minerals, rice and rubber. France was not about to let these riches go. Britain helped France, and America stood by. What about Russia, a communist nation, supposedly dedicated to the politics of Lenin, who supported the freedom of small nations? One Vietnamese patriot put it very well. "The Russians are nationalists for Russia first and above all. They would be interested in us only if we served some purpose of theirs." Russia was hoping to become an ally of France and if France wanted to keep Vietnam as a colony, that was o.k. with Stalin. He urged the Vietnamese to play along with the French and not fight back.

The struggling government of the Republic of Vietnam had no strong allies. "We apparently stand quite alone," Ho Chi Minh told an American professor, "We shall have to depend on ourselves."

Meanwhile a series of tricky negotiations were going on between various other Vietnamese and the French. The French knew they could not run Vietnam in the same obvious way they did before the war. Open warfare had broken out between the French and the Republic in the North. In November, 1946, the French bombarded Haiphong, a seaport near Hanoi, killing thousands of Vietnamese. In the South, 50,000 French troops were brought in to reconquer the countryside.

The French had to find a Vietnamese leader they could use to give the impression of national independence as a cover-up for French rule. They needed a puppet (this seems like a loaded term, but even such a respectable scholar as Ellen J. Hammer of Stanford University used this term to describe what the French wanted, and got.)

They got Bao Dai.

Bao Dai had been the "Emperor" of Vietnam under French colonialism. When the Vietminh established their government in 1945 he "wearily and gladly" gave up his throne. His abdication statement is surprisingly personal for a king. Referring to himself as the royal "we," he said,

We cannot but have a certain feeling of melancholy upon thinking of our glorious ancestors who fought without respite for 400 years to make our country great.

Despite this, and strong in our convictions, we have decided to abdicate and we transfer power to the democratic Republican Government . . .

Henceforth, we shall be happy to be a free citizen in an independent country . . .

Long live the independence of Vietnam!

Long live our Democratic Republic!

Bao Dai was a weak man. By 1947 he was living the life of a "playboy emperor" in Hong Kong. The French, who could find no one else to set up against Ho Chi Minh, settled on him. It took two years to convince

him, but finally the French had their way. Bao Dai returned to Vietnam, once again to be the puppet of the French.

Now, suddenly, the French recognized the "right" of Vietnam to be unified. They announced that Bao Dai was the head of state of *all* Vietnam, just as Ho Chi Minh was the head of all Vietnam (except that Ho had been chosen by Vietnamese, and Bao Dai by the French).

The French hoped that a civil war would develop between these two governments. This time they were the ones to be disappointed. The real battle was between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, led by Ho Chi Minh, and the army of France. Bao Dai sat, as he always had, at the side.

The first Indochinese War was on.





V

HOW THE GRASSHOPPER DEFEATED THE ELEPHANT

ON DECEMBER 19, 1946, the French army attacked Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh appealed to all Vietnamese to wage a war of resistance against the French:

Compatriots all over the country!

As we desired peace, we made concessions. But the more we made concessions, the further the French colonialists went because they are resolved to invade our country once again.

No! We would rather sacrifice all than lose our country. We are determined not to be enslaved.

Ho and the government of the Democratic Republic moved their headquarters to the mountains. The people destroyed the highways and the railroads rather than let the French use them.

The French thought reconquering Vietnam would be easy. Someone described it as a war between a grasshopper and an elephant. The country was ruined by the Japanese during the War. Two million people starved to death in 1944 when floods and drought destroyed the crops. All their industrial goods, even their nails and needles, had to be bought from France.

In the countryside the peasants still used medieval wooden plows. Many were starving. The French controlled the rich rice fields of the South and the factories of the North.

The Vietnamese guerrillas were armed with bamboo sticks, obsolete rifles and other odds and ends. How could they fight an enemy that had an industrial economy, armored cars, artillery and airplanes?

There are two kinds of independence—political independence and economic independence. The Vietnamese had to fight for both.

In the Free Zones (the provinces controlled by the Vietminh resisters) the peasants strug-

gled to increase the production of rice. They knew that "Good food makes a good army." They issued their own money and refused to use any French "piastres." When the French drove them from a town, they carried piece by piece on their backs thousands of tons of machines to be put together in the mountains. They ripped up railroad tracks and carried them into the jungles to make weapons and bullets.

Slowly they cut the umbilical cord that tied them to France. They fasted once every ten days, so the starving could have food. All the government officials, including Ho, grew food on every patch of land available. They took away the land belonging to the French and the Vietnamese landlords who had joined the French and divided it among the poor peasants.

Four years later, the war of resistance took a new turn. In one campaign, the People's Army (the regular, full-time army of the Democratic Republic) destroyed a 7,000-man French army in the northern mountains and won control of the border between Vietnam and China. The French were uptight. Their "lightning war" ground to a halt in the northern and southern parts of the country.

The American government was also nervous. Like the Chinese emperors of a thousand years ago, American businessmen wanted the riches of Vietnam. Their president, Dwight Eisenhower, admitted this openly:

"Let us assume we lose Indochina (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia)," Eisenhower said in 1953. "The tin and tungsten that we so greatly value from that area would cease coming. So when the U.S. votes \$400 million to help that war, we are not voting a give-away program. We are voting for the cheapest way to prevent the occurrence of something that



would be of the most terrible significance to our power and ability to get certain things we need from the riches of Indochina.”

The “cheapest way” to get their hands on the riches of Vietnam was to pay the French to kill the Vietnamese!

There was another reason why our money was used to pay for the French reconquering of Vietnam: China. The Chinese, led by Mao Tse Tung, were liberating their own country from foreign control. Mao and Ho were communists. To American businessmen that meant one thing—loss of profits. The tin, tungsten, rubber, and jute would be used to help the people of Vietnam and China instead of making super-profits for U.S. corporations.

That’s where the bogeyman of “Communism” comes in. The American people were told that the Indochinese War was “holding the line against Communism,” just as we’re told today. If we had known it was a land grab, we might not have been so sympathetic.

By 1950 our money was paying for 85% of

the French war against Vietnam. Every time the Vietminh captured a supply depot or a military base they found most of the guns and supplies marked “Made in USA.” Americans might not have known where their tax money was going, but the Vietnamese sure did: it was going to kill them.

Meanwhile, the Vietnamese were creating a new economy and a new kind of society in the areas they controlled. Thousands of illiterate peasants were taught to read. Labor laws were passed, rents and interest rates were lowered. The fight for economic independence was going on.

You can’t ask peasants to fight in an army while at home their harvests go to rich landlords. You can’t ask them to plant and harvest in the night time, carry their own rice to the soldiers at the front, organize guerrilla warfare and repair dikes without taking the burden of a backward economy off their backs. An economic revolution had to be won at the same time as the fight for independence from the French.



The new Vietnamese society was decentralized. Factories and schools were spread out all over the country. Since lines of communication were often cut and every person was "a center of resistance," a strong, centralized government was impossible. Each province was pretty much on its own.

Then suddenly, after eight years, the war against the French ended. It ended at Dienbienphu on May 7, 1954.

The French army took a gamble and lost. They were pretty much in the same situation the American army is in today, in 1969. They controlled the cities. Most of the countryside was controlled by the Vietminh and the rest of it was shared: the French by day, the Vietminh by night.

General Navarre, the man in charge of the French forces, needed to defeat the regular army of the Vietnamese, now well equipped and trained and possessing American artillery which the Chinese had taken from Chiang Kai-Shek when they chased him out of China. Navarre, an old armored division officer, decided to lay a trap for the Vietminh.

He moved his best troops and artillery into a valley at Dienbienphu, built an airstrip and waited for the Vietnamese to attack. He figured once he got them all up in the hills around Dienbienphu he could wipe them out.

The scene was much like Khe Sanh which the American army occupied in 1968.

The Vietnamese, under General Vo Nguyen Giap, prepared well. There were no roads in the mountains around Dienbienphu, so they cut them in by hand. Without trucks, the

soldiers pushed their artillery up the mountainside. (The story is told of one Vietminh soldier who threw his body under the wheels of a cannon to keep it from rolling back down the hill.)

They brought in supplies on their backs and on bicycles. They dug tunnels in the mountains and even under the French base itself. They waited until they were ready and then they opened fire.

On the first day the Vietminh completely wiped out one French stronghold. The French artillery commander, watching this, knew the jig was up. He told his commanding officer that they were doomed, went back to his bunk, and killed himself with a hand grenade.

By the last day, the French base was reduced to the size of a baseball field. The French commander called his general in Saigon and told him it was all over. "Don't surrender," said the general in Saigon, even though he knew that it meant 5,000 severely wounded French soldiers might die. He didn't care.

By 5 p.m. the Vietminh had captured the base.

The war was over.

The Vietnamese people believed more than ever in the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, the "George Washington of Vietnam." They had beaten the foreigners on their own terms.

The West had betrayed the Vietnamese in 1869, when France attacked. They had betrayed them in 1945. Once again, at fantastic sacrifice, the Vietnamese had won their independence. Would they be betrayed again?

Yes.

VI

THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS: THE FREE ELECTION AMERICA PREVENTED

FOR MOST AMERICANS, Vietnamese history began with the Geneva Conference of 1954. It didn't really of course, it began thousands of years ago. For us, most arguments begin with Geneva, because that's where America got directly involved.

We almost got involved in a shooting war with the Vietnamese just before the Vietnamese won at Dienbienphu. This is a little-known part of our history. John Foster Dulles, the super-anti-communist Secretary of State, wanted to send in American bombers to bail the French out at Dienbienphu, but the Eng-

lish cooled him. They didn't want a bigger land war in Asia.

A lot of arguments have been made about what the Agreements at Geneva were, and a lot of untruths have been told about them. Lyndon Johnson said once in a speech that the Geneva Agreements "guaranteed the independence of South Vietnam."

That just isn't true. Rather than argue opinions here, though, we'll let the Geneva Agreements speak for themselves.

The nations taking part in the Conference were: Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of



Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh's government), France, Laos, China, the State of Vietnam (Bao Dai's government), Russia, England and the United States.

At the end of the conference France and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam signed an Agreement. In ordinary words, the Agreement said:

A *temporary* dividing line between the northern and southern parts of Vietnam.

No more fighting.

General elections to unify Vietnam.

No revenge against people of the other side.

No more troops.

No more arms.

An International Committee to see that all this is done. The members of this Committee were selected from India, Canada and Poland.

A Joint Commission, made up of representatives from France and the Democratic Republic to actually carry out the Agreements.

* * *

All the countries at the conference agreed that:

"The military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary."

That's why what Lyndon Johnson said was not the truth.

They also agreed that:

"General elections will be held in July,

1956, under the supervision of an international commission."

* * *

The Vietnamese were overjoyed when they heard the results of the Conference. It wasn't all they wanted. It was a compromise. But it stopped the fighting; it took the battle against the foreigners off the battlefield and into politics. Since most Vietnamese looked to Ho Chi Minh as the father of their country, and the Vietminh as the heroes in the liberation struggle, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that a free election would mean that north and south alike would be unified under the government of the Democratic Republic. Even President Eisenhower thought so. "Had elections been held at the time of the fighting, possibly 80% of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader," he said.

The Vietnamese patiently waited for the free election to take place.

It never did.

What went wrong?

International law is like all law. It doesn't mean two cents if powerful people don't like it and there's no one to enforce it.

The American government didn't like the Agreement. It promised to abide by it, and broke those promises. The International Control Commission (ICC), made up of people from India, Canada and Poland, could not enforce the Agreement. What were they going



VIETNAMESE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

All men are created equal. They are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.



to do, wage war on America?

Bao Dai turned his puppet government in south Vietnam over to Ngo Dinh Diem (more about him later), who was almost completely a puppet of the American government. He refused to even meet with the Democratic Republic to talk about elections. In fact, when the ICC came to Saigon to talk about the elections, Diem staged an attack on the hotel where they were staying.

The American government was all hung up about communism. It said it believed in people making up their own minds, except when people made up their minds to elect a communist government.

The U.S. set up an operation called MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group) which shipped arms and advisors to Diem's regime. The Geneva Agreement said no more arms, no more soldiers. Too bad. The ICC members were not allowed to inspect MAAG planes landing in Saigon.

Who was going to enforce the Agreement? France had pulled out. The American government had moved in. Protests by the government of the Democratic Republic fell on deaf ears. It was like asking a cop to arrest himself for beating up a demonstrator.

A lot of people believe that the United States is upholding the Geneva Agreements and that we were invited to send troops to Vietnam by the "legal government" of that country.

A legal government is a government chosen and respected by its people. Between 1859, when the French conquered Saigon, and 1945, when the Vietnamese took their country back, there was no respected national government.

In 1945, when Vietnam became independent (for a few months), Bao Dai turned his government over to the Democratic Republic of Ho Chi Minh. That was the legal government of all Vietnam; its capital was Hanoi.

The British, French and Americans conquered the southern part of the country and took it away from its government. Today South Vietnam has a real government again, one that is chosen and respected by its people. It is *not* the Saigon regime. It did *not*

invite the Americans in. It is fighting to keep the Americans out.

Its name is the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (PRG). The PRG was selected in June, 1969, by people in the Liberated Zones of the South, as well as many neutralists and sympathizers living in areas held by the Saigon regime.

The PRG includes many members of the NLF and other patriotic organizations. They are negotiating with the U.S. in Paris.

Ngo Dinh Diem, the "legal governor" of Vietnam, who invited the U.S. in, was a small-time dictator, hand-picked by the American government. As soon as he took office he made it clear he was not going to follow the Geneva Agreements. It didn't make much difference. The only government that respected the Agreements was the one in Hanoi.



VII

HOW AMERICA KILLED FREEDOM AND RESISTANCE WAS BORN

YOU DON'T HAVE to convince anybody these days that Ngo Dinh Diem, president of the "Republic of Vietnam" from 1954 to 1963, was a two-bit dictator with no support from his people. Even Wesley Fishel, the American professor who got Diem the job, admitted it after Diem was overthrown. Diem's philosophy, said Fishel, was "peasant-based, revolutionary fascism."

That's *not* what American politicians were saying in 1954:

The United States recognizes that the president of the Republic of Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem, is in the vanguard of those leaders who stand for freedom . . .

That's what Vice President Lyndon Johnson said, in 1954.

Diem was a nowhere man, a hanger-on in the French-run government of Vietnam. He retired in 1933. Twenty years later, President Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Cardinal Cushing and the CIA put him back in office. How did this nobody get such powerful friends?

Diem was rich; he was an anti-communist and he was willing to play ball with the U.S. politicians.

Remember how the French had fished around before for a Vietnamese "leader" they could use against Ho Chi Minh? They found Bao Dai, the old emperor. When the French were defeated and pulled out, the U.S. government tried to do the same thing. They came up with Diem. But even his supporters admitted he couldn't "win in a popularity contest with Ho Chi Minh."

The U.S. politicians were not interested in what happened to the Vietnamese people. They knew that if elections were held in Vietnam in 1954, the people would peacefully vote in Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh. The Pentagon and the "military-industrial com-

plex" that Eisenhower warned us about had a world strategy called Stopping Communism.

Since that's still the line we are handed about why Americans have to die in Vietnam, we should think carefully about it. It must have seemed strange to the 16 million people living in the north of Vietnam to hear Cardinal Spellman call them "Red rulers' godless goons."

That's familiar language to a lot of Americans. Many union organizers and students have been called "communist agitators" by politicians who want to put them down.

The U.S. politicians (including John F. Kennedy) did not want free elections to be



Diem

held in Vietnam. They wanted the southern part of the country to be a "bastion of the free world." In 1954 that meant putting in power a penny-ante fascist.

The first thing Diem set out to do was destroy the political power of two religious groups, the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, which had a total of two million members. Neither group was communist, and both had fought against the French. But Diem didn't want any competition, so he smashed them.

Then he turned on the rest of the people who had resisted the French. Everyone who had fought against the French, communists, socialists, liberals, even anti-communists, he called "Vietcong." (This is a term of insult, meaning "Viet commie.")

Diem's troops herded whole villages into concentration camps, killed and jailed tens of thousands of Vietnamese patriots. The same puppet troops who had been defeated in the war against the French, entered south Vietnamese towns as victors, massacring people, firing on peaceful demonstrations, and torturing "suspected Vietcong."

Famine set in. Young men in the villages were taken off to jail or killed. Land that had been taken away from the rich landlords by the Vietminh during the war, was returned to the rich landlords. Peasants were forced to pay rent on land which had been distributed to them during the war against France. People had to eat roots and bark for lack of rice.

Children of former resistance workers were banned from going to school. Wives of men who had gone North were forced to divorce them and remarry as evidence of "good faith."

In one mountain province, Quang Ngai, 2,000 people died in epidemics, 600 were killed in mass slaughters, 450 died in prison, 500 were liquidated by Diem's troops, and 500 died of starvation. In one year, 1955.

American politicians knew this was going on. A group of American professors at Michigan State University, headed by Wesley Fishel, were training Diem's police and sending them arms, which were channeled through the university. American taxes were paying for the troops and weapons used to slaughter

Vietnamese, communist and non-communist alike. All this was done in the name of "anti-communism."

This made no impression on the Vietnamese peasants. The only communists they knew were men and women from their villages who had fought bravely against the French. The only "terrorist" action they knew was the killing of their friends and relatives by the Diem government.

Repression breeds resistance. Many people wanted to resist Diem, but Ho Chi Minh and the leaders of the Vietminh urged their fellow countrymen in the south not to fight back. They still hoped that elections would be held and things could be settled peaceably. Years passed, repression and famine got worse.

People can't go on forever, watching their sons and daughters killed and jailed, or their parents herded into concentration camps. They respected Ho and the leaders of the DRV, but the murder had to stop. Village by village, province by province, the people of the south decided to fight back.

The villagers in a tiny village in Gia Dinh province had one weapon, an old U.S. army carbine. They carved wooden dummies to look like the carbine. Then they bought a lot of carbide for bicycle lamps and made carbide bombs out of bamboo tubes. One night when they were ready, they surrounded the military post at Phu My Hung. Exploding the bombs (no more than firecrackers), waving the dummy rifles, and firing a few shots from the real one, they announced on a megaphone that the garrison had better surrender or "be wiped out."

Terrified, Diem's troops filed out and surrendered their weapons. The village was armed.

That's how it started. In hundreds of villages, ignorant of what others were doing. We call it the "Vietnam War." They call it the Second Indochinese War. It began from the grass-roots, against the advice of the government in Hanoi. At the time you might have called it a civil war. Vietnamese were fighting Vietnamese. One side was set up and paid for by the U.S. government. The other side was made up of ordinary people.

A year or so later, in December, 1960, representatives from many communist, non-communist and nationalist organizations met in the jungle and organized the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam.

* * *

Nguyen Huu Tho, a lawyer from Saigon, was in jail while this historic meeting was taking place in the jungle. He was a leader of the Saigon Peace Movement, an organization set up in 1954 to support the Geneva Agreements. When he got out of prison in 1961, he joined the NLF and was elected its president.

American politicians and military men call the NLF "communist." It has many members of the Communist Party in it, who are widely respected, since they have led the struggle for

Vietnamese independence for the last 40 years. What is not publicized here is that most of the members and leaders of the NLF are not communists.

Buddhists and Catholics are members. There are even landlords in the organization. They all share one aim: to overthrow the Saigon regime, drive the occupying army of the United States out of their country, and set up an independent and democratic government.

An Australian journalist, Wilfred Burchett, asked Nguyen Huu Tho about the Front. "The Front," said Tho, "unites all political tendencies, all religions, all sections and classes of the population. We are in favor of land for the peasants, but not systematic confiscation; we are for reduction of rents but



Nguyen Huu Tho (second from left) talking with soldiers of the National Liberation Front.



for the maintenance of present property rights except in the case of traitors. Above all, the Front stands for democratic liberties, freedom of speech, assembly and movement, and in our liberated areas these freedoms do really exist.”

* * *

The sparks of revolt against the Diem regime caught fire and swept through the plains and mountains of South Vietnam. Within two years the NLF governed most of the countryside! Today it controls all of the country except for American military bases, the larger cities and towns and some highways.

When the NLF was founded, the people had few weapons, so they made their own. They made guns out of metal tubes, filling

them with whatever was on hand. They sharpened bamboo spikes and set them in the ground for enemy feet. Small trees became spear-launchers. Some mountain tribesmen even trained bees to attack enemy soldiers!

These are still in use today. They are the weapons of poor people who must use what they have at hand to fight a far more powerful force, armed with the latest weapons turned out in American factories. But they have defeated technically superior foreign armies before: the Chinese, the Mongolians, and the French. They are not fighting for loot or privilege or abstract “anti-communism.” They are fighting for their lives and their freedom.

VIII

WE INTERRUPT OUR STORY . . .

OUR STORY HAS COME a long way, from the year 1 A.D. to 1960. The Vietnamese have fought and defeated many enemies. Now they are about to fight the most powerful nation in world history: America. They are going to defeat this enemy also. Their victory is one of the most amazing events of the 20th Century.

Wars are won and lost by people. This chapter is about the people of Vietnam (and America). It gives some clues about what made this victory possible.

The Mountain People:

America is a "multi-national" country: Irish, English, German, Dutch, black people, Indians, Chinese, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans—all are American citizens. They all have the same rights on paper, but not in practice.



Generally speaking, the whites, no matter what their nation, have privileges that are denied people who are black, brown, red or yellow. Non-whites used to be called "minorities," which isn't really true. Their numbers may be in the minority inside the boundaries of the United States, but if you take all the black, brown, yellow and red people who live on the planet, they are in the vast majority.

Vietnam too is a multi-national country. All Vietnamese are Asians, but they do not all speak the same language or have the same customs. The majority people are the Viets, who have lived in the river deltas and on the plains for thousands of years. They are 87% of the population.

The other 13% of Vietnamese belong to 60 different groups. They live in the mountain regions, the largest part of Vietnam. Some live by growing rice, others by hunting, fishing and gathering wild foods. Like the Chinese, black, Latin and Indian people in the U.S., each ethnic group has its own rich folklore, music, songs, arts and literature.

There is one big difference between the minority people of Vietnam and those of America. The minorities in Vietnam have lived there thousands of years. They did not come over in boats, like American whites, or slaveships, like American blacks. Nor were they imported to build railroads, like the Chinese. When the first Europeans came to our country and took the land away from the American Indians, the Vietnamese, Northerners and Southerners, plains people and mountain people, majority and minority were fighting together to keep the Chinese invaders out. The American Indians fought to keep the foreigners out of their country too, but they were defeated.

You hear a lot these days about the "montagnards," the name the newspapers give the mountain people. The papers say that the

minority people in the mountains hate the "Vietnamese" and have joined the Saigon Army to fight the NLF.

Like most things you read in the papers, this is a mixture of truth and lies. The tribesmen of the mountains and the Viets of the plains are Vietnamese first. When their country is invaded, they stick together and fight. Things haven't always been that chummy. White businessmen in America oppress and fight other whites who are workers. Irish don't get along with Italians and fight against one another for positions in city hall, contracts and jobs.

Vietnamese oppressed one another too. Peasants were always on the bottom of the heap, landlords on the top. The mountain people, who were poorer than the peasants of the plains, were on the bottom of the bottom.

The French deliberately increased the hatreds and rivalries of the poor mountain people against the poor Viets. Their policy was "divide and conquer." They figured if the Vietnamese kept fighting one another, they wouldn't have any time left to fight their real enemy, the French.

The French, the rich Vietnamese and the "city slickers" treated the mountain people like savages. The communists did just the opposite. As soon as the Communist Party of Vietnam was formed they said clearly what they wanted: "the unity of all nationalities on a basis of equality and mutual assistance with a view to winning together independence, freedom and happiness."

And they meant it. The mountains north of Hanoi were the cradle of the fight against the French. Many resistance leaders came from here. The mountain people joined the revolution first and fought hard because they were the most messed over by the foreigners.

One of the minority people to join the revolution was Le Quang Ba. Today he is commander-in-chief of the armed forces in Hanoi. He tells his own story:

"We were only ordinary Tay peasants. My mother told me, 'Misery and ignorance have been our lot. The village notables bully us, everybody looks down on us. Study hard, son, so that you may keep your head high.'

"Long before the new harvest was brought in, we had to sell our chickens one after another, in order to get something to eat. After the New Year festival, the only food we had was wild plants and roots if we did not want to borrow rice from the rich at a 100% interest rate.

"Towards 1926, Hoang Ding Rong, the first man in our province to become a communist, began his activities in our region. He first set about winning my friend Quoc Van over to the revolutionary cause.

"Early in 1930, one day when we were returning from the market, Quoc Van told me, 'Our sufferings are caused by the occupation of our country by the French who oppress and pillage our people. In China, the Communist Party is leading the people in a revolution to free the poor. We must do the same in our country, drive out the French, overthrow the landowners and work for the people's happiness.'

"We were much moved by these words . . ."

Le Quang Ba joined the Revolutionary Youth League when he was 19. He and his schoolmates went out on strike against the



harsh treatment by their teachers. After the strike he was kicked out of school.

When he was 26 he was told that "Uncle" was coming to the town he was in.

"We were overjoyed. Since the first days of my revolutionary activities, I had heard of our leader Nguyen Ai Quoc, the first Vietnamese Communist.

"We came into the room. Uncle was sitting on a bed, waiting for us. Although the light was dim, we could see him clearly enough. We were struck by his broad forehead, his sparkling eyes and his features which bespoke great kindness. He invited us to sit down, then poured each of us a cup of tea.

"'We are revolutionaries,' said he. 'We must win the people's affection and confidence; it is in their interest that we are struggling. We must educate them politically. We must respect them.'"

Catholics and Buddhists:

Catholic Vietnamese are a by-product of French colonial rule. Protected by French armies, Catholic missionaries set up churches in Vietnam to "save the souls" of the people who lived there. Most Vietnamese didn't think anyone had to save their souls. They were religious, not "heathens"; they believed in Buddha.

The priests managed to convert about 1/10th of the people to Catholicism. The Church ended up owning one-quarter of the crop land in southern Vietnam. It gobbled up the land of peasants too poor to pay the rent, forced people to cultivate wasteland and then took it away from them, became powerful in politics, and made itself generally unpopular.

When Vietnam was divided in 1955, almost a million people left North Vietnam and went to the South. American politicians and newspapers played this up, saying that this showed that the Vietnamese hated communism and were fleeing to freedom.

Two kinds of people left the North for the South: Catholics and members of the families of soldiers in the native colonial army.

Catholic priests spread the rumor that "the Virgin Mary has gone South" and that Catholic Vietnamese should follow her, because the

"infidels" who stayed would be wiped out with atom bombs. Also, Vietnamese Catholics were given a lot of privileges over Buddhists and had fought against the Vietnamese liberation movement. They were afraid their status would be taken away. When they got South, many Catholics learned they had been tricked and wanted to go back, but the Diem government shot and jailed these "ungrateful" people.

Diem was a Catholic. He put into power many Catholic politicians, more than Buddhists. This didn't go over well—a Catholic government in a Buddhist country, just like an all-Buddhist government wouldn't go over in this country. The Saigon "government" that invited the U.S. in, was made of Diem's cronies and yes-men who had served the French and now were serving American politicians and themselves.

The Buddhist leaders didn't go for this at all. They were religious men, not into politics, and tended to be anti-communist, so they had not joined the NLF. Finally things got too bad to stand aside and be neutral.

Americans first learned about Buddhist unrest in June, 1963, when an old Buddhist priest sat down crosslegged in a major Saigon intersection, poured gasoline over himself and lit a match. Buddhists took to the streets in Saigon and Hue. The U.S. government tried to get Diem to cool things and settle with the Buddhists. They were very embarrassed because the revolt proved that the Saigon government was hated by people who were not in alliance with the communists.

Instead, the Saigon regime sent troops to attack the Buddhist pagodas. That's when the U.S. knew its puppet had to go. The world knew him for what he was, a small-time dictator who didn't even know enough to be a good puppet. Within a few weeks, the CIA engineered an overthrow of Diem. Diem and his brother, the husband of the famous Madame Nhu, were killed by the Saigon army, and several generals took his place.

The long line of Saigon rulers since then haven't been a dime's worth of difference from Diem. Some of them have been worse. General Ky, as everybody knows, said that



Diem's wealthy and aristocratic family were totally out of touch with the aspirations and needs of the people of Vietnam who were living in ever-increasing destitution.

Hitler was his hero. That's the kind of government we've been spending millions of dollars every day to keep "free."

Saigon kept on messing over the Buddhists. Three years later, in 1966, they revolted again. Buddhist students slugged it out in the streets of Hue with Saigon's crack troops. Saigon sent airplanes in to bomb their own city of Da Nang to put down Buddhist demonstrations.

This time, the Buddhists learned that they couldn't go it alone. The U.S. and Saigon beat them by dividing and conquering. Since then, many rank-and-file Buddhists have joined the NLF, whose policy is "unite and win."

Without this unity, the NLF would not have been able to defeat the armed forces of the U.S.

Now back to our story.

IX

SPECIAL WAR VS. PEOPLE'S WAR

IN 1961 THE POLITICIANS in Washington were nervous. Reports from Saigon told them Diem was losing. Local uprisings, demonstrations, riots and strikes were spreading all over South Vietnam. The National Liberation Front, only a year old, was liberating big sections of the country.

The politicians wanted to turn South Vietnam into a new-type colony and military base, but no one knew how to fight against guerrillas. A general, Maxwell Taylor, and a professor, Eugene Staley, came up with a plan.

The Taylor-Staley Plan began what's called the "Special War," which lasted from 1961 to 1965 when it was defeated by the Vietnamese. It called for:

Beefing up the Saigon army, doubling the police force, moving everyone into "strategic

hamlets" in the South, and sending commandos on sabotage raids into the North.

That's when American "advisors" started pouring into Vietnam, along with helicopters, bombers, defoliation chemicals, rockets, and guns.

By June, 1961, half a million people had been herded out of their villages and into "strategic hamlets." The hamlets were simply concentration camps, surrounded by trenches, barbed wire and bamboo stakes, overlooked by blockhouses and watchtowers. Each person was given a plastic identity card and allowed to enter and leave only at certain times.

Saigon troops, armed with all the latest American weapons, electronic devices, helicopters and amphibious vehicles, swept through the countryside, burning houses, shipping the peasants off to concentration



camps, arresting and torturing "Vietcong suspects." The Vietnamese in the Saigon army did the fighting, the American advisors did the planning and supplying. The American generals were using Vietnam as an experiment in anti-guerrilla warfare. They tried out massive bombing raids, defoliation of trees, destruction of crops, napalm and poison gas.

The American planners figured it would take three years to pacify South Vietnam. Then they could move into North Vietnam and mop that up.

Three years later the Taylor-Staley plan was dead as last year's newspapers. All their ideas backfired.

Everything America has done in Vietnam has backfired. Why?

The Vietnamese call the kind of war they are fighting "People's War." This is more than just words. The Vietnamese are a fighting people, proud, sophisticated and tough. The American invasion was no new thing to them, just the last in a long line of foreign invasions. The napalm, helicopters and fancy weapons were new, but they turned out to be no more effective than Kubla Khan's gunpowder.

The real secret of People's War is that *everybody* fights: men, women and children, the old and the young, in whatever way they can.

They fight with arms,

They fight with demonstrations and political action,

They fight by talking with and winning over the enemy soldiers.

To the Vietnamese, fighting with guns is only a part of political action. Here is an example:

Dawn, in the morning mist of January. On the river, thousands of little bamboo boats heading toward the provincial capital of Cao Lanh. In the boats, mostly women and old people. They are shouting, "Yankee, go home!" "Stop bombing our villages!"

Police hiding beside the river open fire. Some people, shot, fall out of the boats. Thousands more on the land run toward the river. The police, outnumbered, flee.

Saigon soldiers, many of them sons of the demonstrators, help pull the bodies out of the

river. They are confused, they don't want to shoot their own people.

Three planes appear and drop hand grenades on the crowd, now moving toward the town. The people keep on going. At the gate of the town they are stopped by a wall of bayonets. A young man steps forward from the crowd and tries to persuade the troops not to shoot. Shots ring out. He falls.

A young woman steps forward. She is shot. The crowd picks up the two bodies and surges forward toward the troops. The soldiers are petrified. Ten thousand peasants push their way through the soldiers and occupy the center of town.

The province chief is forced to talk to the crowd. He promises to stop the bombing of the villages. The people fill the streets, talking to the Saigon soldiers, explaining to them the policies of the NLF, persuading them to stop being puppets of the foreigners. Finally they march back to their villages.

The Vietnamese call this kind of demonstrators the "long-haired army," because they are mostly women. They have seen their brothers, fathers and sisters in the Liberation



Army killed, their children napalmed. They are an efficient "mass political army." They have come bare-handed and lain down in the road to stop armored tanks. They come by the hundreds and thousands to the home of a provincial chief, carrying their dead children or branches of defoliated trees in their hands.

While the men (and many women too) fight in the regular Liberation Army, the old people, women and children at home, carry on this political fight. If you counted them all up, in all the years of fighting the Americans, they would amount to millions.

* * *

South Vietnam is honeycombed with tunnels, dug by the people of the villages. Deep tunnels run for miles between villages. Villagers and NLF troops can live in them for days, under heavy bombing and then come out ready to fight the enemy.

The battle of Apbac in January 1963 was the turning point of the Special War. Saigon sent out 2,000 troops to fight 200 NLF guerrillas. The town was plastered with bombs for



days before. When everything had been flattened and nothing moved, the 2000 troops moved in.

Suddenly they met intense fire from the edge of the village. The 200 NLF troops had come up from their tunnels. The battle lasted for six hours. 450 Saigon troops were put out of action, an American major was abandoned to his fate in a swamp, six helicopters were shot down.

American newspapers reported, "Governmental forces have suffered the most shameful defeat so far, facing guerrilla forces many times smaller."

Meanwhile, the "strategic hamlet" program was disintegrating. The people just took over the hamlets and turned them into resistance bases. Once the Saigon army was kicked out, the concentration camps made nice well-fortified bases for the NLF. Sometimes the people just tore down the camp and went home.

Vietnamese soldiers in the Saigon army were deserting in droves. Every time they went on leave to their villages, the people talked to them and convinced them they shouldn't let themselves be used to fight their own families.

The Saigon government drafted thousands of young men into the puppet army, so an anti-draft movement got started, just like the one in America. People in Saigon and in the smaller towns hid deserters from the army. Thousands split with their shiny new American M-16 rifles and went to join the NLF.

By 1965 the Special War was dead. People's War had defeated it. It wasn't just the fighting skill of the NLF that defeated the Saigon army. It was the fact that in every part of South Vietnam there was a seething mass of people, politically hip and sophisticated, who demonstrated in the streets, faced machine-guns unarmed, went out on strike, and talked constantly with the puppet troops: the "long-haired" army.

There was practically no government in Saigon. Since Diem was kicked out the Saigon "government" had been overthrown 13 times in 20 months, replaced each time, as a student put it, by "a gathering of secret agents, drunkards and former accomplices of Diem."

The bigwigs in Washington stopped being nervous and started getting desperate. That's

when the bombing of North Vietnam began, in August 1964.

There was only one way out the bigwigs could see: abandon the Saigon army and send American soldiers in to fight a land war in Asia.

The advisors left, the GI's came in. A new phase was starting: the American War.



X

THE AMERICAN WAR: HOW THE U.S. DROPPED THE OFFENSIVE AND THE NLF PICKED IT UP

THE AMERICAN GENERALS tried, from 1961 to 1965, to get the Saigon Army to do the dirty work for them, and fell flat on their faces. The Saigon soldiers looked around them and saw that they were hired by foreigners to fight their own people. Their bosses squabbled among themselves over who would get what office in Saigon. Tens of thousands of Saigon soldiers deserted and went over to the NLF or just went home.

It got so bad that American advisors couldn't plan a military action without the NLF finding out before it happened. Who told them? Saigon soldiers (and officers too). Nothing was working out.

What does a big bully do when he tries to get a little bully to beat someone up and instead the little bully gets whipped? He either gives up or takes on the job himself.

General Maxwell Taylor, who planned the Special War against the Vietnamese, was fired and called back to Washington. The "American War" began. The Saigon Army was pushed aside and replaced by American GI's, who came in to save the Saigon Army from disaster.

The mightiest army in the world landed in Vietnam equipped with the latest weapons, planes, helicopters, and electronic computers. One-third of the U.S. tactical air force was



"The spirit of the people is greater than the Man's technology."

sent to Vietnam. Thirty billion dollars a year was taken from American taxpayers to pay for this gigantic effort. Surely America could not lose.

But from the word Go it started losing. The grand strategy of American War lost for the same reason the Special War lost: neither can win against People's War. As Huey Newton once said, "The spirit of the people is greater than the Man's technology." Nowhere is this more true than in Vietnam.

When American GI's arrived in Vietnam, the morale of the Saigon troops got even lower. They saw Americans everywhere get the best houses, cars and girls. Prices skyrocketed. American GI's lived in air-conditioned houses, ate good food, drank the best booze. Saigon soldiers were called "gooks" and treated as if they were the enemy. No wonder desertions increased—113,000 in 1965, 180,000 in 1966.

Some Saigon soldiers mutinied, killing American and Vietnamese officers. In March, 1966, the 1st Armoured Regiment at Phu Cuong revolted. Helped by the local population and a NLF unit, the Saigon soldiers captured armored cars, wiped out the Regimental Headquarters, knocked out a squadron of American tanks, blew up an ammunition dump and went off to join the NLF. This was just one of hundreds of Saigon troop rebellions.

One Saigon officer ordered his men to shoot down American defoliation airplanes that were spreading chemicals over the fields where the families of his soldiers lived!

The powerful American army was like an elephant trapped in a swamp. If the generals ordered the GI's to go out in the countryside and fight, the Vietnamese attacked the base. If they stayed on their base, they lost the countryside. General Westmoreland called for more and more troops, 200,000, then 300,000, then half a million. Still he didn't have enough.

The American army depended on planes, tanks and trucks. It could move fast, but this often meant it moved fast into a trap! It had tremendous firepower, but that didn't help. The NLF soldiers are masters at close fighting.



They stay in tunnels until the Americans are very close, then jump out, cut the enemy to ribbons and disappear. When this happened, the American generals couldn't call in air attacks—they'd kill their own men.

So despite the massive bombings, it was left up to the GI's to fight the war, slogging through swamps in unknown territory, mosquito-bitten, tormented by heat and leeches, walking along paths full of mines and traps. The soldiers felt lost. They had been trained to depend on machines and the machines were no use.

Also, the American GI isn't fighting a war he really believes in. When you get right down to it, beliefs make a soldier. When Americans were fighting fascism in World War II, they believed in their cause and were good soldiers.

That's why the Vietnamese soldiers in the NLF are such good fighters. They know they are fighting for their country, for independence and freedom. They know there will be no freedom and no future for them and their people as long as Vietnam is occupied by foreigners.

American GI's fight only because they are ordered to. Some believe they are fighting communism, but when they get to Vietnam and see that their "enemy" is *everybody*, men, women and children, they get disillusioned.

The American generals have just started admitting that American GI's are deserting in

droves. Many GI's have quit the army and are living with Vietnamese in Saigon. Some are even fighting on the side of the NLF.

The American "offensive" ended two years after it began in a little province called Tay-nin on the Cambodian border. This was the scene of America's biggest military operation, Operation Junction City.

It began with bombing: napalm, cluster bombs (bombs that break open and shoot out thousands of little steel pellets that shred the flesh of anyone they hit), gas bombs and defoliation gas. In one day, American planes dropped 1,000 tons of bombs on this little province. That's the same amount of bombs dropped on Dresden, Germany, during World War II, destroying the city and killing more people than the atom bomb we dropped on Hiroshima.

The American generals thought they could trap and destroy the regular armies of the NLF. As soon as the bombing stopped, thousands of men were parachuted in, armored cars smashed into the province, troops sealed off the entire area.

But they couldn't find any NLF armies! Guerrillas, not members of the regular army, cut them off as they attacked.

Vietnamese soldiers appeared from nowhere, blasting the armored columns and the paratroopers and then disappearing. Slowly, day by day, week by week, the American army was harassed, beaten and turned back.

By the end of Junction City, 10,000 troops, mostly Americans, had been killed and wounded, 1,000 military vehicles destroyed and 100 aircraft knocked out of the air.

That was pretty much the end of the American War. American troops who retreated to Bien Hoa airbase, a few miles north of Saigon, were attacked there just as they arrived. 8,000 napalm bombs and 25,000 gallons of gasoline were destroyed. There was no rest for the defeated Americans.

After that, Westmoreland gave up his grand plans for offensive action against the NLF. American strategy now is called "Clear and Hold." That's a fancy name for making the best of a bad scene. American troops stay on their bases, making them as safe as possible

and rarely going out into the countryside.

The Americans went on the defensive and the NLF took the offensive. In the early weeks of 1968, during the Tet holiday (the Vietnamese New Year), the war turned around.

This amazing offensive, unparalleled in military history, changed the war. The NLF in a few days attacked and mostly seized 140 towns from the far north of South Vietnam to the far south, including 37 of South Vietnam's 40 provincial capitals.

As Wilfred Burchett reported: "In complete secrecy, under the noses of the most sophisticated military machine that has ever taken the field, the NLF attacked the heart of every major military and administrative installation in South Vietnam . . . all four zonal headquarters of the Saigon army, 8 out of 11 divisional headquarters and two American army field headquarters . . .

"Among 18 major targets attacked in Saigon itself were the U.S. Embassy, the U.S.-Saigon armed forces headquarters, the South Vietnam naval headquarters and the Saigon radio station (which was completely destroyed). Thirty airfields were attacked with the destruction of 1,500 planes and helicopters."

There is no doubt that the Vietnamese are able to beat the American and Saigon armies on the battlefield. They could, if they decided to, push both their enemies into the sea. But this would cost them many lives. Already at least a million South Vietnamese have died in the war.

They would rather negotiate a peaceful settlement than cause any more deaths; that's why they are in Paris today. While they *negotiate* for peace, they continue to *fight* for independence and freedom.

While the fighting goes on, the Vietnamese are doing more than fighting. In the liberated zones of South Vietnam and in the whole of North Vietnam the Vietnamese are building a new society.

XI

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF PEOPLE'S WAR

WHAT IS LIFE in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) like? The best reports come from people who have been there. Julius Lester, writer and photographer, visited the DRV in 1967. This is what he wrote when he returned to the U.S.:

It was Easter Sunday, 1967, when I first heard bombing. It was a clear, hot Vietnamese day and I had spent the morning watching peasants working the rice fields a few hundred yards behind the bamboo guest house where I was staying. Around noon they left the fields and a half hour later it started.

WOOM! WOOM!

It sounded like muffled thunder, but I was in North Vietnam and there, all that sounds like thunder may not be thunder.

WOOM! WOOM!

Sometimes it was close enough to shake the ground where I stood. Other times, it was far away. Always it was there.

WOOM! WOOM!

The Vietnamese didn't seem to notice. The woman and little girl picking flowers a few feet away never paused or looked around, even when the three U.S. jets streaked over the trees a short distance away.

It was typical Vietnamese behavior. In Hanoi one could always see lines of people at the flower stands in the evening buying flowers to take home. In the parks there would be couples holding hands. On the sidewalks, children playing. And everywhere, incredibly beautiful women. Often I wanted to





scream, "Hey! Don't y'all know there's a war going on? I mean, come on! Be serious, will ya?" In the evening Hanoi's beer parlors were crowded; theatres packed and the movie house (where a Russian murder flick was playing) was always filled.

LIVE AT NIGHT

After midnight the streets really came alive as anti-aircraft guns were moved around and supply trucks sped through the streets. I never got a good night's sleep during the month I was there, but awakened each morning with the feeling that half the country had been moved around during the night. This was partially true. Anti-aircraft guns seldom remain in the same place two days in a row. Factories have been decentralized. Hospitals are portable and can be dismantled with all equipment, medicine and patients evacuated in a few hours time.

There is a war going on, but for the Vietnamese, it just seems to be part of a day's

work. They have integrated the war into their lives and are using it as an instrument to accelerate the growth of their country. Production is increasing in all areas—agricultural and industrial. Not that there is much industry. It is still an agrarian country with the work done by people, not machines. In many instances peasants point to new iron plows, harrows and rakes with pride. Wooden farm tools are still common.

LITTLE AID

As a people, the Vietnamese are very reserved, proud, independent and nationalistic. They receive little aid from China and Russia and don't want much. They defeated the French by themselves. They will defeat the Americans by themselves. They are very proud of the fact that although Kubla Khan conquered China, he was defeated when he invaded Vietnam. "We have a long history of defeating aggressors," I was told often.

To see the Vietnamese is to know that

machines and technology cannot defeat people with the correct political understanding. (And we must recognize that there is such a thing as "correct political understanding" and recognizing this, begin to attain it.) I met no Vietnamese who did not know who he was fighting and why. The more political spoke in Marxist terminology, but I remember best the words of one old man in Thanh Hoa Province: "Under the French, we had nothing. Now we have everything. The Americans will have to kill all of us to get it."

BOMBS INEFFECTIVE

The bombing of North Vietnam has been singularly ineffective. Of course, there has been loss of life and destruction of hospitals, schools, churches, villages, cities, highways, railroads and bridges. These have been systematically destroyed, because in the kind of war being waged on North Vietnam a military target is defined for its psycho-social content. Destruction of these institutions is supposed to lower the morale of the people, so the Pentagon postulates. It is a despicable war, one in which ten-year-old boys minding water buffalo in the fields are picked as targets, where dikes are systematically attacked, where night raids were ordered against the populous workers' quarters in Nam Dinh, where roads and schools are bombed at school-opening time. Johnson has said that the targets in North Vietnam are "steel and concrete." This overlooks one simple fact: there isn't much steel and concrete in the country. What little there was is no more. The United States is using weapons against the will of a people. It's a losing battle.

The best evidence of the will of the people can be seen in the small numbers of deaths. This is due to the defense system of North Vietnam, which ranges from missiles to anti-aircraft guns, to teenage girls with rifles to trenches in schools, around hospitals, houses and even underneath beds. The second reason the war of genocide has failed is due to the attitude of the Vietnamese. The U.S. forgets that it was the Vietnamese who learned how to carry a half-ton of supplies on a bicycle during the war against the French. And those

bicycles are once more on the roads, loaded with bricks, coal and everything else imaginable. (The Vietnamese don't have many trucks.) These are the people who, when a bridge is knocked out, build a pontoon bridge every evening and dismantle it every morning. These are the people who fill in the bomb craters on Highway 1 after each day's attack and despite McNamara's claim that the flow supplies has been seriously impeded on Highway 1, it is not true. It is true that the supply trucks and jeeps move slowly, but it's only because there are so many trucks and jeeps on the road. The same is true of the railroad. Lying in ditches alongside the railroad are spare rails and cross-ties. After each bombing new track and cross-ties have replaced the destroyed ones in a matter of hours. Perhaps the Pentagon should send their press releases to the Vietnamese, because they don't seem to understand that the railroad has been made inoperative.



INGENUITY

Because of their pride, their almost fanatical nationalism, the Vietnamese are almost entirely self-reliant. They trust no one completely who is not Vietnamese. Their self-reliance gives them more ingenuity than Johnson has lies. Often they will fill the twenty-foot bomb craters with water, stock the "pond" with fish and a village that had never thought of breeding fish boosts the economy of the country. The scrap metal from planes shot down over the country is used to make medical tools, rings and vases. Bomb canisters are filled with dirt and flowers planted in them.

There is no aspect of the country's life that has not been affected by the war, but an adjustment has been made so that the war becomes as normal as rice-planting. North Vietnam is perhaps best symbolized by the scenes of beautiful, graceful young girls working the rice fields with rifles on their backs. Or the common sight in Hanoi's streets of a man pedalling his bicycle with a baby in a bamboo

chair on the fender, a rifle on the man's back and in his hand, long-stemmed red, blue and white flowers.

There is a war going on in Vietnam and they are using it to their advantage, which is the only way. It would seem that we, living under much less arduous conditions, could use this war to our revolutionary advantage, also. Too, it would be good practice for what is to come.

(Reprinted from The Movement newspaper)

The Vietnamese in the northern part of their country have freed themselves from 2,000 years of foreign oppression, under the heaviest bombing ever rained upon a people on the face of the earth.

They are building socialism in their country. Many countries call themselves "socialist." What it means depends on what country you're talking about. When a friend complains to you about how terrible socialism is, show him this chapter. To millions of people in the world, socialism means simply "freedom."



XII

LIBERATED ARMY, LIBERATED LIVES

THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT has liberated most of South Vietnam; more and more every day. Roughly speaking, they govern at least two-thirds of the country and at least one-half of the population.

Even that doesn't give a real picture. The so-called Saigon-held or "contested" zones are open territory for the NLF. In most contested areas the U.S.-Saigon forces control the area by day, the NLF by night. There (and in the heart of American territory, Saigon itself), the NLF has set up "shadow" governments, often by democratic election of the people in the area. These governments are directing the struggle and only waiting for liberation to come out in the open.

The NLF moves freely in and out of Saigon. Rice is brought from the Mekong Delta, sold in Saigon and the money used to buy American guns on the black market, which are then sent back to the liberated zones. When I met young members of the NLF in 1968 I asked one of them how he got in and out of Saigon.

"Usually," he said, "I wear the uniform of a puppet (Saigon) soldier. Sometimes we just go up to the guard post and say 'We're from the NLF, let us in,' and the guard says, 'Sure, go on in, go on in.'"

What is life like in the liberated zones? Most Americans assume that the NLF has some kind of terrorist dictatorship there that forces the local people to support them. Think about this. When the Saigon government used terror to control the peasants, the peasants revolted. Terror never kept them down. Why don't they revolt against the NLF?

An American AP reporter was mystified when he reported on a battle the NLF had just won:

"According to later intelligence," he said, "only about 200 of the guerrillas were armed, regular Viet Cong troops. The rest were

peasant youths living in the area, pressed into service by the fighters to serve as coolies in digging foxholes and mine emplacements and to carry off equipment and bodies. But none of these 'extras' turned traitor to their bosses, and all of them worked with the same courage and discipline as the regulars."

If the local people were "pressed" into service, you'd think they would run off to Saigon and be free. But they don't.

They support the NLF.

There are two kinds of fighters in the Liberated Zones: the regular army of the NLF and the "self-defense" groups. The peasant youths the AP reporter talked about were actually members of the self-defense group for that area.

One of the few non-Vietnamese to travel in Liberated Zones is the Australian writer Wilfred Burchett:



"In Cu Chi District, virtually all hamlets were interconnected with such a tunnel system into which the self-defense forces could withdraw in case of overwhelming force and within which they could maneuver to outflank the enemy, striking from the least expected places at the most unexpected times, to disappear underground again to explode electrically controlled mines or ambush from underground firepoints within the maze of tunnels and communications trenches of which they were the undisputed masters.

"The self-defense units set up during the campaigns to destroy the 'strategic hamlets' had these immediate aims: to use the guns to defend the new, free life; the fight to live in their former villages, cultivate their old fields and protect the new ones received under land reform; freedom to practice the cult of their ancestors; to resist the tax collectors and landlords' agents and to resist at all costs being herded back into concentration type hamlets."

The first thing the NLF does when it liberates an area is to take land away from the landlords and give it to the poor and landless

peasants. Liberation is not an abstract thing to the peasants. The first thing the Saigon government did when it took over was to take land *away* from the peasants and give it to the landlords. Which would you choose if you were a Vietnamese peasant?

Burchett asked an NLF organizer why the people supported them. This was his answer:

"We help them to start up their vegetable gardens and orchards again, help them to dig fish ponds, plant bamboo and trees, build pigsties and chicken coops. The new administration immediately forms committees for education, public health, economic affairs, defense and security, and people really feel they are running their own lives."

The American army doesn't do that, even in America. What does the American army do for us, except get us killed? The Vietnamese support their liberation army more than we support the American army. Does the American army make you feel you are running your own life? Do you *ever* feel you are running your own life?

Let's compare the Liberation Army of South Vietnam with the American Army.



That'll give you a good idea of life in the Liberated Zones.

The American army is not democratic, to say the least. They'll bust you for handing out a leaflet in the barracks.

The Liberation Army combines democracy and leadership. Before every battle, the officers and men meet in small groups and discuss what is going to happen. As long as any rank-and-file soldier has a question about the battle, they keep talking until all are satisfied.

During the battle, each does exactly what is agreed. Afterwards they meet again and criticize what happened. Sometimes if a commander messes up, his men choose another man to be commander.

In the American army the brass decides who the officers will be.

The soldiers of the Liberation Army *elect* their officers!

American army officers go to academies and West Point and ROTC.

Officers of the Liberation Army rise from the ranks of the people. They have no more money than the footsoldiers. Their parents and congressman didn't send them to any West Point.

The American army has officers' clubs, officers' housing, different food, different recreation, different uniforms.

Officers and men of the Liberation Army dress alike, eat the same food, sleep in the same hammocks, share the same bamboo huts.

Last, and maybe most important of all, every soldier in the Liberation Army knows what he is fighting for. They don't get confused and cynical like American soldiers when they find out what the fight in Vietnam is really like, compared to what they were told during Basic Training.

Which kind of army would you rather be in?

The Vietnamese aren't in this thing for a one-year tour of duty. They're in it for the rest of their lives. Some of them have been fighting in the same area for 20 years. Vietnam is a small country; they could easily walk out of the Liberated Zones. But they don't.

The American army and air force can bomb

villages off the map, destroy crops and slaughter civilians. They can obliterate whole sections of the country. But the people stay and fight.

That's what life is like in the Liberated Zones.



XIII

TRUTH AND LIES: THE END OF OUR PRIMER BUT NOT OF THE WAR

AS I WRITE THESE WORDS, Mr. Nixon is on the tube talking out of both sides of his face about "ending the war." His message to millions of Americans fed up with the war is, "We're going to withdraw all the troops, but I won't say when."

Nothing has changed.

Nixon, like three presidents before him, refuses to accept the facts of life in Vietnam:

Vietnam is one nation.

The Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) is the political coalition that now governs most of southern Vietnam.

The people of Vietnam overwhelmingly support the PRG. It is their government. It is them. It is the natural result of 2,000 years of proud struggle against foreign invaders.

If American troops left Vietnam today, tomorrow the PRG would move its headquarters to Saigon. The war would be over. The people of Vietnam would have peace, independence and sovereignty—the goals they have suffered a thousand years to win.

The businessmen, soldiers and politicians who run America still hope for a "Korean solution," a divided Vietnam ruled in the south by a puppet "free world" regime, a bastion of American imperialism in Asia.

That's what the negotiations and the talk of troop withdrawal are about. Nothing else.

At the rate troops are being withdrawn now it will take hundreds of years to get out. All this talk has one aim behind it—to convince the American public that something is being done, while behind our backs the government tries desperately to do the impossible and undesirable—to support the Saigon regime and divide Vietnam.

Pro-war hawks say that Hanoi is "dragging

its feet at the negotiation table." There's some truth in that. Western powers have sold the Vietnamese out in every negotiation—in 1946, in 1954, in 1969. There is no evidence that America would honor any agreement coming out of Paris. The Vietnamese are winning their freedom. The U.S. wants them to negotiate away their freedom. Hanoi and the PRG are moving cautiously at Paris. You too would move carefully among wolves.

Nixon, Mao Tse Tung and the PRG agree on one thing: the saying "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." As long as American guns remain on Vietnamese soil, U.S. businessmen and politicians have political power there. No negotiations will make this acceptable to the Vietnamese.

The Vietnamese can wait. Their patience has lasted through defeat and betrayal. They are on the verge of victory. For the first time in their history they have the solution to their desire for economic and political independence at hand.

They will not give this up at a negotiation table, in a rigged election, or on the battlefield. They will not be fooled by newspaper reports of troop withdrawal when they see with their own eyes that the troops are staying.

They will not be lulled by a "de-escalation" that drops more bombs on Vietnam and Laos than were ever dropped during escalation.

A thousand years ago, Cao Bien had the good sense to get out when he knew he was beaten. The spirit figure that visited him on the banks of the River Lo must visit the White House too these years, haunting Nixon's dreams.

It is the power of the people.



XIV

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

YOU'VE READ THIS whole book. If you read it carefully, you know more about Vietnam than most people, including the President of the United States.

You also know more about what the people of Vietnam have gone through than you do about the struggles of our own people—Americans. The history books they give you in school tell what the generals, the politicians and the big businessmen have done. *They* aren't the people.

We have a proud history too. We've had great battles, tough fights and big victories—and none of them get in the history books. These are fights *we* fought—against the generals, the bosses and the politicians.

Have you ever heard of places like: Homestead, Coal Creek, Coeur d'Alene, Wounded Knee?

Or struggles like the Pullman Strike, the 1934 General Strike, the Lawrence Strike, the Long March of Chief Joseph, Coxie's Army, Shays' Rebellion?

People like Big Bill Haywood, Eugene Debs, Tecumseh, Denmark Vesey, Joe Hill,

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Frederick Douglass?

These places and people and battles are *ours*. They don't belong to labor bosses and millionaires and the hot-air freaks in Washington. If you haven't heard of them, it doesn't mean you're stupid—it means the people we fought against, the cats who run the schools and boss the factories, don't want us to know about ourselves.

Every day more and more Americans are getting fed up.

Our jobs are boring. We spend our whole lives making other people rich, carrying crates from one end of a dock to the other and back again, thinking up cute advertising slogans for trash that nobody really wants, sticking sheets of metal into machines that punch it into shape to build more machines to punch other pieces of metal into shape, selling trinkets, toys and trash to make a few bucks to buy more trinkets, trash and toys that break down so more of us can go out and repair them.

And our bosses lie to us and tell us we are happy.

And they send us 3,000 miles to fight



peasants who want to be free. Whose heroes are the Trung Sisters, the Taysons, Ho Chi Minh and the Liberation Front—people like us, heroes who never get in the history books.

And we get killed because we're flunkies for the law-abiding destroyers, the same ones we pay taxes to—money we never see again because it gets dropped in the jungles and shot and left on the moon and wasted and turned into bombs that kill heroes and into books that lie.

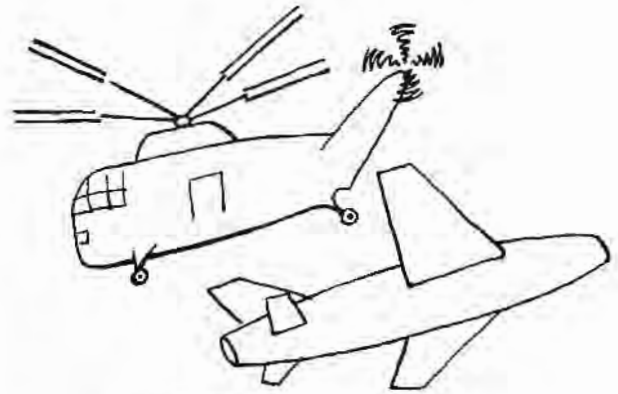
The name of their game is money and power. Power over people is power to make money—not the kind of money we make, our wages, scholarships and salaries. Big money, profits off the work of others.

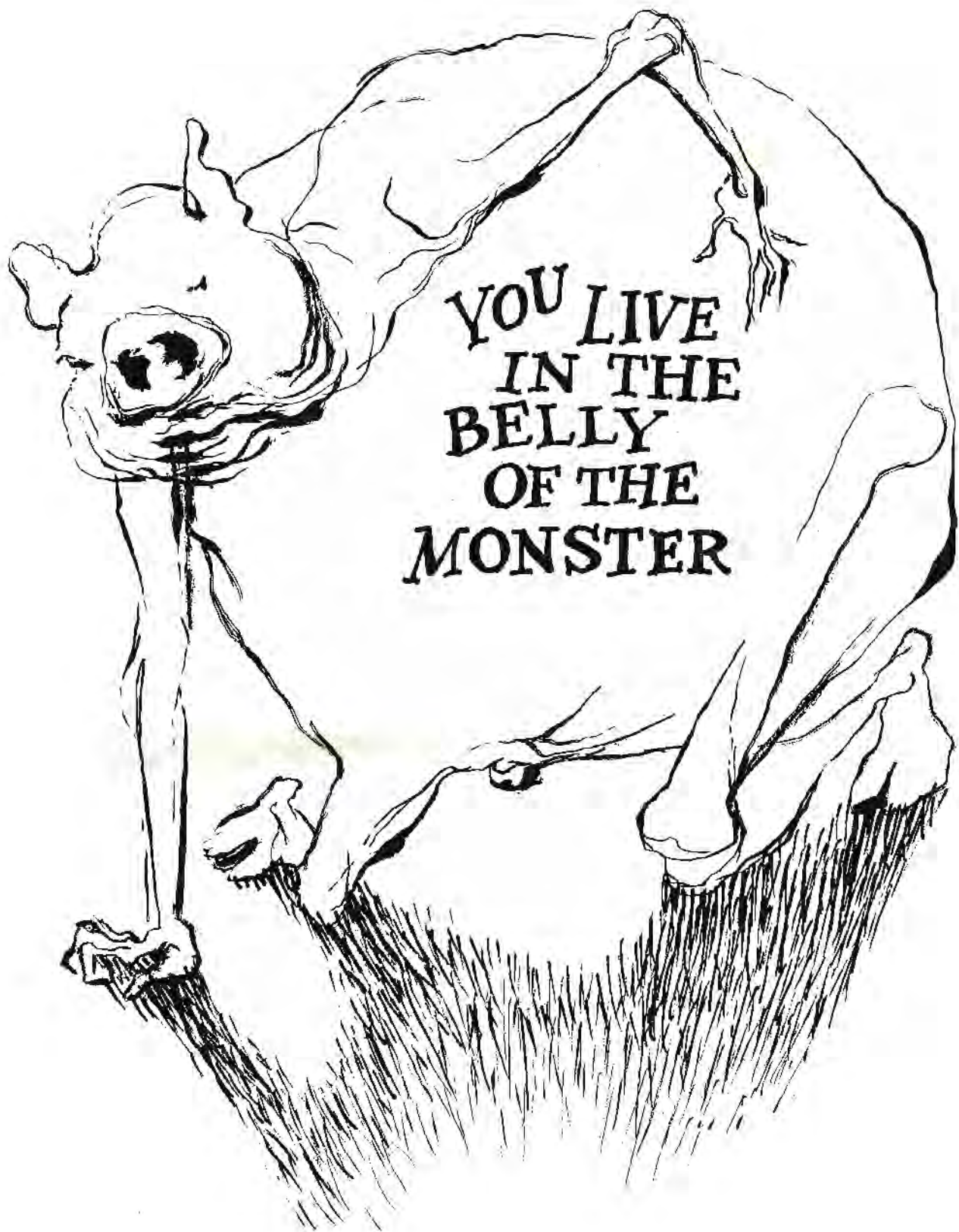
That's what we and the Vietnamese have in common: the companies that run this country make profits off both of us, and neither of us is free. The Vietnamese have a headstart on us in winning their freedom. They're not going to work for bosses: they're going to work for themselves. The word they use to describe that goal is "socialism."

When the American businessman looks at a map of Southeast Asia, he doesn't see people—he sees minerals, oil, rubber, rice. Where do the Asians come in? They're supposed to dig for the minerals and the oil, tap the rubber trees, grow the rice and hand it over. The Vietnamese people are slamming that door shut; their fight is an example to all other Asians. That's why we are in Vietnam.

Vietnam will win. They have been fighting for longer than anyone who reads this book has been alive.

The Vietnamese will win their freedom.
Will we win ours?





**YOU LIVE
IN THE
BELLY
OF THE
MONSTER**

FURTHER READING

Here are some books for those who want to read some more:

Books by Vietnamese are hard to come by in this country. One store you can order from is China Books & Periodicals, 2929 24th Street, San Francisco 94110.

Ho Chi Minh's *Prison Diary* is a collection of Ho's poems, published in Hanoi.

Vietnam—Fundamental Problems (Vietnamese Studies #12). History of Vietnam and the war. Published in Hanoi.

South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation—Documents. Contains the program of the NLF.

The Way He Lived. The story of Vietnamese hero Nguyen Van Troi.

Building an Independent National Economy in Vietnam by Doan Trong Truyen and Pham Thanh Vinh. How Socialism is being built in North Vietnam.

Vietnam, edited by Marvin E. Gettleman. History, documents and opinions on Vietnam and the war. A Fawcett paperback.

The United States in Vietnam, by George Kahin and John Lewis.

Vietnam Will Win! by Wilfred Burchett. Paperback. 1968.

Vietnam, Inside Story of the Guerilla War, by Wilfred Burchett. 1965.

Against the Crime of Silence, Proceedings of the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal. 622 pages long. Available from O'Hare Books, 10 Bartley Road, Flanders, New Jersey 07836.

CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES AND VIETNAM

Showing their relative areas and the major U.S. bases in the Far East.





VIETNAM
will
win