

TRUONG CHINH

The August Revolution

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Truong Chinh, member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party (Workers' Party), Vice-Premier of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, wrote the "August Revolution" in 1946, on the occasion of the first anniversary of this momentous event, the cornerstone in our history.

Since then, great changes have taken place in our country. Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva Agreements have brought the long war of resistance to a victorious end. Under the leadership of the Lao Dong Party and President Ho Chi Minh, our people are now waging a peaceful struggle to unite their country and build up socialism step by step in the completely liberated zone of North Vietnam.

We deem it right to say that although this book was written in 1946, it still has high interest, not only because of the importance of the events it deals with, but also because of the personality of the writer who, in his capacity as General Secretary of the Indochinese Communist Party, played a prominent role in the August Revolution in 1945.

PREFACE

to the 1946 Vietnamese edition

Dear readers,

This little book is a collection of articles published in the newspaper "Su That" (The Truth) on the occasion of the first anniversary of the August Revolution. The articles have been revised, and filled out. Some passages have been re-written.

Our only aim is to relate the history of the heroic struggle of our people, to submit it to an impartial criticism, to determine the character and the significance of the August Revolution, to outline its development for the future and, lastly, to reveal to our compatriots the immediate main tasks in view for the realisation of national independence, freedom and happiness.

At the present time, there are people who have not lost a drop of sweat for the revolution, or who have acted and are acting as traitors, who try to deny the importance of the August Revolution. They pretend that our people did not struggle so hard and that they got possession of power by "chance". Against this point of view, which stems from an obvious bad faith, we have only to remember here the phases of our people's struggle in the "Great National Salvation Movement against the Japanese Fascists" as well as in the August General Insurrection: we stress particularly the leading role and organising work of the Indochinese Communist Party and the Vietminh Front as well as their skilful agitation tactics in the preparatory period of the insurrection.

Besides, to check the policy of the French colonialists — a policy of aggression and of successive encroachments in the

military field, and of division and deception in the political one — we outline the details of this single path for the salvation and building of the country at this stage, the path of union and of struggle mapped out for our people by President Ho Chi Minh.

The August General Insurrection, like the Great National Salvation Movement against the Japanese fascists, is a struggle with a variety of forms and rich in content. This book would not dare pretend to contain the full story of its manifold experiences. We hope that the fighters in our national liberation movement will draw further experiences from it in order to complete this book.

In any case, the following pages will be of some use if they succeed in strengthening the reader's faith in the success of the task of national liberation, and help him to understand better his civic duties: to fully understand the policy advocated by the communists in our country for the present period and the great effectiveness of certain Marxist-Leninist methods of mobilizing the masses, adapted to the situation in Indochina.

The August Revolution is only one of the first victories of the national liberation movement. We shall have to fight harder battles to safeguard our national sovereignty and territorial integrity, to consolidate our democratic republican regime and to achieve our total independence.

The struggle for national liberation is extremely hard, but it will surely achieve complete victory. We firmly believe this and now invite the reader to review with us our recent heroic struggle so as to prepare ourselves for future struggles.

TRUONG CHINH

Hanoi, September 29, 1946

A GLORIOUS PAGE IN OUR HISTORY

The high tide of the anti-Japanese movement

On March 9, 1945, in Indochina, the Japanese fascists swept the French colonialists out of the political arena. In less than twenty-four hours, in all the main towns, the French colonialists laid down their arms and surrendered to the Japanese. Some French units scuttled to the frontier. At Cao Bang and Bac Can, others made an attempt to cooperate with the *Liberation Army* in the fight against the Japanese fascists. At Bac Can, a "Franco-Vietnamese resistance committee against the Japanese fascists" was organized. But after a time, the French left us and fled to China (1). It can be said that the French troops in Indochina did not resist the Japanese, and that the Resistance was only our own people's work.

On the very night of March 9, the Bureau of the Central Standing Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party, at a meeting held at Tu Son (Bac Ninh province), about 20 km. from Hanoi, decided to give a strong boost to the "Great National Salvation Movement against the Japanese Fascists".

The next day, in the Hoang Hoa Tham resistance zone (High and Middle Regions of North Vietnam), the guerillas took the isolated posts by storm, disarmed a

(1) Although Major Reul at Cao Bang and Lieutenant Pontiche at Bac Can ordered their troops to cooperate with the Liberation Army, it was to avoid being disarmed by our forces rather than to carry on the struggle against the Japanese fascists. Therefore they fled before waging even a single battle on our side.

number of French soldiers and of Bao An (2) units to prevent their arms from falling into the hands of the Japanese; they attacked the Japanese troops moving along the roads of Tuyen Quang, Thai Nguyen, Bac Can and Cao Bang provinces, harassed them even in the chief town of Bac Can province, and launched sudden attacks against their base at Cho Chu, etc... In North and Central Vietnam, thousands of paddy stores set up by the Japanese were stormed by the people and their paddy stocks distributed to the poor. In this way the famine was relieved by revolutionary means. In Bac Giang, Thai Nguyen, Bac Can and other provinces, peasants rose up, seized and distributed land held by the Japanese and French.

Most of the attacks against the paddy stores became armed parades and demonstrations. Armed Vietminh militants harangued the masses at cross-roads and in market-places to win them over to the national cause. The illusion that the Japanese fascists could be useful to us, that they had come to free us, etc... was vigorously combatted by the masses and revolutionary ranks. In main towns, *picked units* of the Vietminh Front, operating under the noses of the Japanese troops, killed the dangerous traitors and the predatory Japanese officers, sowing confusion in the ranks of the Japanese fascists and their lackeys. Everywhere, self-defence units or guerilla teams developed quickly. Everyone feverishly sought to get any kind of weapon so as to be ready to hurl himself at the enemy at the first opportunity. *People's Committees* were founded in the regions controlled by the guerillas. In

(2) Bao An troops ensuring the puppet government's security.

other zones, *Liberation Committees* sprang up like mushrooms and began on the one hand to lead the masses in the preparations for the general insurrection and on the other hand, to train them to exercise power.

The Revolution was gaining an incredible strength. The pre-insurrectionary atmosphere prevailed everywhere, arousing the enthusiasm of the members of organisations for national salvation and winning over even the wavering elements.

In April, the Revolutionary Military Conference of North Vietnam held at Bac Giang, drew up the general insurrection preparatory plan and formed the General Command of the *North Vietnam Liberation Army*.

In June, by decision of the conference of cadres from the six provinces of Cao Bang, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Bac Can, Tuyen Quang and Thai Nguyen, convened by the Vietminh General Committee, the *free zone* was officially founded including the territory of these six provinces and unifying the various regions placed under the control of the revolutionary power. The *New Vietnam* came into being. The people's committees adopted energetic measures to suppress the fascist militarists' forms of oppression and exploitation, actively break the colonialist chains and improve the people's living conditions. A part of North Vietnam was effectively controlled by the revolutionary power, a situation which provided the August General Insurrection with extremely favourable preliminary conditions.

From June on, the Allied Air Forces launched massive attacks against Japan.

In July, at the Potsdam Conference, the Soviet Union decided to participate in the war against Japan.

The Vietminh General Committee, headed by comrade Ho Chi Minh, speeded up the convening of the National Congress. But, because of difficulties of communications, the Congress could not be held until August, in the liberated zone only, and at the very moment of the Japanese capitulation.

The August Insurrection

On August 9, the Soviet Red Army launched a powerful attack on Manchuria, and within six days, the crack Japanese Kwantung Army was entirely routed.

This fundamental victory of the Soviet Army decided the fate of the Japanese fascists and the Soviet Union had actually liberated the peoples subjected to Japanese oppression.

The situation of Japan became hopeless and it was then that the Communist Party, which was at the time holding its National Congress, took a decision to launch the general insurrection and to found the democratic republican regime in Vietnam. The Vietminh General Committee approved these decisions and the *Insurrection Committee* was immediately set up. At the news of the imminent unconditional surrender of Japan, this Committee gave the order on the night of August 13, for the launching of the general insurrection.

In the morning of August 16, the *People's Congress* was held at Tan Trao village, Tuyen Quang province, in the *free zone*. More than 60 delegates from big and small national minorities and of all political convictions in our country, gathering in an atmosphere of friendship and great enthusiasm, approved the Vietminh General

Committee's order for general insurrection, decided upon the domestic and foreign policies of the revolutionary power and appointed the *Liberation National Committee of Vietnam*, i.e. the Provisional Government of the *Democratic Republic of Vietnam*.

After many years of perilous peregrinations and of clandestine activities, comrade Ho Chi Minh appeared for the first time before the people's delegates.

Because the people's Congress opened immediately after the general insurrection order had been launched, it had to hold a "lightning" session allowing the delegates to return quickly to their local regions and, together with the local militants, to lead the decisive struggle. (In fact, as early as August 10, some delegates bound for the Congress received the order to turn back.)

During this historic Congress, the Indochinese Communist Party advocated an extremely clear policy: to lead the masses in insurrection in order to disarm the Japanese before the arrival of the Allied forces in Indochina; to wrest power from the Japanese and their puppet stooges and finally, as the people's power, to welcome the Allied forces coming to disarm the Japanese troops stationed in Indochina.

In numerous localities, taking advantage of the extreme confusion of the Japanese forces, who were conscious of their imminent defeat, the Vietminh militants, implementing the instructions given by the Communist Party in March, took the initiative to lead the people to rise up and seize power even before receiving the general insurrection order: as for example the insurrection at Ha Tinh on August 11, at Quang Ngai on August 13, and the taking of several Japanese posts

in the vicinity of the *free zone* on August 14 and 15. On August 16, the news of the Japanese surrender began to spread rapidly. In all provinces, huge public meetings accompanied by armed demonstrations were held in the public thoroughfares. A great number of factories and public offices ceased work. The gold starred red flag was seen waving everywhere. Many armed demonstrations were transformed into sudden attacks on Japanese posts. On August 17 and 18, hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in Hanoi. A general political strike began. The Vietminh delegates called on the masses to seize power. On August 19, the entire capital rose up. The Bao An troops and police detachments tended towards the Revolutionary forces. The insurrectional forces headed by their vanguard shock detachments of youths and workers and led by the Vietminh cadres, took by storm the hotel where the Imperial Delegate had been residing. The latter, however, had fled with his lackeys. The Vietminh League proclaimed the foundation of the provisional revolutionary power. Faced with the irresistible growth of the revolutionary movement of the entire nation and people, united as one, Bao Dai abdicated. The Tran Trong Kim puppet government surrendered. The Vietminh General Committee sent their delegates to Hue to receive the King's abdication.

The birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

A few days later, almost all members of the *Vietnam Liberation National Committee* met in Hanoi. In conformity with the new situation, the Committee was reformed to include some non-party personalities and

to constitute a provisional unified national government presided over by Ho Chi Minh. On August 29, 1945, a detachment of the *Liberation Army* from the resistance zone, entered Hanoi, hailed by the thunderous ovation of an enthusiastic crowd. On September 2, President Ho Chi Minh appeared before the people in Hanoi's Ba Dinh square where nearly 500,000 people gathered in a huge meeting to hear the first President of new Vietnam read the *Proclamation of Independence* of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to the Vietnamese people and to the world.

On August 23, at Saigon-Cholon, a million of our compatriots demonstrated in the streets. The South Vietnam Administrative Committee was founded. The vanguard youth and militia seized power in the provinces and united together to form the revolutionary troops of the South of new Vietnam.

One after another, from the cities to the rural areas, from the delta to the mountainous regions, the elected *people's Committees* completely superseded the corrupt administrative machinery of mandarins and notables. In less than fifteen days, an entire new administrative machinery had been founded.

The prison doors were opened wide and political and common law prisoners were released by the revolutionary power; but traitors were severely punished. The personal tax was abolished. The former fiscal regime was gradually modified. Land rents were reduced, and communal rice fields distributed more equitably. The French industrial enterprises, in the hands of the Japanese since March 9, 1945, passed into the control of the new power and were temporarily

managed by the people or the Government. Democratic rights had been legally proclaimed and equality was to be practised regardless of nationality or sex. The republican regime with a new democratic character had been established.

With an inconceivable strength, the whole Vietnamese people rose up and did their utmost to break the yoke imposed by the French and Japanese fascists, and resolutely went forward; side by side with the peoples of China and Indonesia, they marched in the vanguard of the Far-East peoples' liberation movement.

The resistance in Nam Bo

People's power had scarcely been founded in Vietnam when the British forces and those of the Chinese Kuomintang, on the order of the Supreme Allied Command, landed in Indochina to disarm the Japanese troops. Just as the French colonialists in Indochina had easily surrendered to the Japanese, now relying on the British forces they prepared feverishly to recover their former position. And the most active among these French colonialists were precisely those fascists of the Petain - Decoux clique who were formerly the most zealous lackeys of the Japanese.

On September 23, armed and protected by the British forces, the French colonialists launched their attack and occupied Saigon. Our people replied by force of arms, and from that moment, our heroic resistance began. Since that time, our compatriots in South Vietnam have endured hard trials, bearing almost all the weight of a revolutionary war which has enhanced the prestige of our people in the international arena, and

set a good example to the smaller and weaker nations of the Far-East.

The Dong Nai (1) land, once drenched with the blood of the colonialist aggressors when they landed for the first time in our country, has today become the strong bulwark of the Fatherland. And continuing the tradition of heroes who, nearly one hundred years ago, sacrificed themselves to save the country, their descendants are today in the vanguard of the fight for the freedom and independence of our people.

Some essential remarks

Reviewing the history of the August Revolution, we can make some essential remarks.

First of all, the triumph of the August Revolution is due to the two following subjective and objective conditions:

Subjective condition: our people are united around the Vietminh Front led by the Indochinese Communist Party. The proletarian class exercises this leadership without sharing it with any other class. It results from this that the revolutionary forces of our people are not scattered, that they have no rivalries or internal conflicts (except in some insignificant cases), and that at the decisive hour, they can be gathered together under the leadership of a single organisation to launch a direct and massive attack against the fortified enemy lines.

Objective condition: World War II created for the Vietnamese people an extremely favourable opportunity:

(1) Dong Nai: name of a river in South Vietnam. Dong Nai land signifies Nam Bo (South Vietnam).

the enemies of the Vietnamese Revolution, the Japanese and French fascists, had exhausted each other and grown weak. Moreover the Japanese were then defeated by the Soviet army; that was enough for the Vietnamese people to fell them with a single blow and to seize power.

Yet, favourable though the objective conditions might have been, they could not have led to triumph without good subjective conditions. That is the truth.

Besides, the August Insurrection was a real revolution. The Vietnamese people, in bloody combat and with arms in their hands, had to struggle against the Japanese fascists to regain their freedom and independence. Immediately after this, to defend these rights, they had to shed more blood. It is by the August Revolution that the dictatorial and fascist monarchical regimes have been overthrown and the democratic republican regime set up.

"History teaches us that a revolution has its particular features, the most important of which is the powerful uprising of masses who take their fate in their own hands and prepare the way to progress"

(Maurice Thorez — A French policy)

That is also an important characteristic of the August Revolution.

CHAPTER II

POLICY AND TACTICS OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS IN THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

More friends, less enemies

It is impossible to speak of the August Revolution without stressing the role of its leading core, the Vietminh Front and the Indochinese Communist Party. The favourable opportunity was not enough to assure victory. A just policy and appropriate tactics were very much needed. Nor was the triumph of the general insurrection of August 19, 1945 due to mere chance.

From 1940, the Indochinese revolutionaries were facing two new facts: the world torn by war, the Indochinese people oppressed and exploited by the double yoke of the Japanese and French fascists. The national liberation policy advocated by the Vietminh Front in the recent period was based on these two things.

The war threw into sharp relief the antagonism between the two belligerent camps. The double Japanese and French yoke united rich and poor, equally hurt and humiliated, in the same hatred and the same struggle against the common enemy. At the same time, the conflicting interests of the Japanese and French who ruled Indochina together, violently collided. One of the main tactics adopted by the Indochinese Communist Party and the Vietminh Front in these recent years consisted in fully exploiting this situation.

That is why, in their foreign policy, the Indochinese Communist Party and the Vietminh Front, realising that anti-fascist forces throughout the world were allies of

the Vietnamese people, decided to side without reserve with the anti-fascist camp struggling for a just cause.

In its domestic policy, the Indochinese Communist Party organized the different strata of the people into the National Liberation Front: the Vietminh Front. The programme of this Front assured the protection of human and civil rights and of property, the respect of private property, the liberty of conscience, as well as equality between nationalities and the sexes, with the aim of realising the unity of the whole people against the Japanese and French fascists. Facing the concrete conditions of the revolution in Indochina, the Indochinese Communist Party, promoter and leader of the Vietminh Front, left out of its programme the watchword: Agrarian revolution, (deciding, for the present, not to confiscate land held by landlords), and this with a view to making a differentiation between types of landlords and winning a number of them over to the anti-imperialist cause, widening the United National Front to struggle for independence. This Front should comprise workers, peasants, petty-bourgeoisie of towns, even national bourgeoisie, and include patriotic personalities belonging to the landlord class.

Besides this, the Indochinese Communist Party developed and consolidated in particular the peasants' and workers' organizations to give a solid base to the United National Front, and was determined to struggle against pro-French and pro-Japanese traitors.

On the one hand, the Party fully exploited the contradictions between the two enemies of our people — Japanese fascists and French colonialists in Indochina — to give a vigorous impulse to the revolutionary

movement; on the other hand, it tried every means to isolate the Japanese and French fascists.

When the fascists used repressive measures not only against Vietnamese revolutionaries but also against the progressive democratic French, the Party, in order to increase its own forces in the struggle against French and Japanese fascists, undertook to win over these French progressives to its cause, or at least to induce them to adopt a neutral attitude. When the French who had been overthrown by the Japanese, were no longer really dangerous enemies, the Party strove to unite its action with that of every French element ready to struggle against Japanese fascists.

In brief, the Party always saw clearly the principal and immediate enemy of the Revolution, doing its best to deprive the enemy of its supporters and to find new allies, never deviating from the aim of the National Liberation Revolution.

Flexibility of tactics

The Party had correctly foreseen that the Japanese and French would inevitably come into conflict, and had decided, should this happen, to change its tactics at once and immediately launch the general insurrection.

So, after the coup d'état of March 9, 1945, the Party launched a vast guerilla movement to seize local power and organized in the High and Middle regions of North Vietnam model resistance bases against the Japanese. At the same time it changed its watchwords, forms of propaganda, organization and struggle so as to mobilize the masses more easily, and rapidly lead them towards the insurrection.

At this moment, the indispensable aim of propaganda consisted in unmasking the hypocrisy of the Japanese fascists and militarists and in destroying every illusion that it was expedient to use the Japanese and cooperate with them with a view to obtaining 'reforms' within the 'framework of legality'. This only sowed confusion among the people toward the Japanese and their lackeys.

The propaganda used at that time took the ordinary form of speeches in factories, schools, markets, and public thoroughfares and the formation of shock teams by mobile groups who exhibited flags, banners and placards and distributed revolutionary documents.

A special propaganda form also used was the 'armed propaganda' with all its forms, including armed demonstrations and guerilla activities.

As for the agitation work, it took in hand the vital problem for the masses — to check famine — to lead the masses to seize Japanese rice stocks; according to the situation, these actions could be transformed into armed demonstrations.

The general form of struggle was the armed demonstration. Another special form used at this moment was the guerilla wherever the geography of the country was favourable, and yet another, the elimination of traitors in towns and country by *picked detachments*.

In organization, cleverness was used to transform the 'transitory organizations' (temporary) into real organizations of the local people's power; especially to develop the national salvation and self-defence groups (or guerilla troops) and organize the people's militia.

The general organizational forms were at that moment the association for national salvation, and especially the self-defence and combat groups.

The special forms were the *Vietnam National Liberation Committee*, that is the provisional Government, the *People's Committees*, and the *Liberation Committees*. These Committees had at the same time an administrative, political and military character (that is a pre-governmental character), working in a determined period, simultaneously with the local administrative organisms founded by the Japanese and being transformed, after the general insurrection, into local official administrative organizations; and lastly, the *National Insurrection Committee*, the *Action Committee* for each part of the country or each locality in the decisive hours, etc...

In brief, from March to August 1945, the tactics of the Party had the following characteristics:

First: to fully and at the correct time exploit the situation created by the Japanese coup d'état (March 9, 1945) in order immediately to lead the masses to new forms of struggle and organization of a higher degree; to renounce the old methods, not to sit back facing the new situation, in other words, to know the importance of:

"Putting in the forefront precisely those forms of struggle and organisation which are best suited to the conditions prevailing during the ebb or flow of the movement at a given moment, and which therefore can facilitate and ensure the bringing of the masses to the revolutionary positions, the bringing of the millions to the revolutionary front, and their disposition on the revolutionary front." (Stalin — Principles of Leninism).

Effectively, after March 9, 1945, the forms of struggle such as armed propaganda, demonstrations followed by displays of force, sudden attacks against lonely posts and even the districts in the delta, suppression of the zealous agents of the Japanese fascists, organization of people's militia units even outside guerilla zones, etc... were so many bold blows showing the flexible character of the Party tactics. These tactics sowed confusion in the enemy ranks, developed the spirit of struggle for national salvation and the initiative of the masses, won over the waverers and extended quickly the movement for national salvation all over the country.

Second: in a given situation, to determine during the revolutionary work the fundamental task requiring immediate fulfilment in order to devote all forces to it and to accomplish it at any cost, because it is the best means to push the movement forward.

The insurrection of March 9, 1945, broke out when the famine was causing frightful ravages among the population. Hundreds of thousands of people starved beside granaries full of rice kept by the Japanese and French. At that moment a task of the greatest importance for the communist and Vietminh cadres was to lead the armed masses to seize Japanese rice stores and French concessions full of stocks of agricultural produce. This had the result of inspiring organized and unorganized masses to take an active part in the movement against the Japanese, so that the more actively they struggled, the more they became conscious of their own strength and saw more clearly the real face of the enemy.

It was precisely thanks to these attacks on granaries and colonialist plantations that the national salvation movement could be developed intensely, the people rapidly armed, the self-defence brigades quickly founded where the movement had never been organized, and the Liberation Committees set up in numerous provinces. As Stalin said,

"The point here is to single out from all the problems confronting the Party that particular immediate problem, the answer to which constitutes the central point, and the solution of which will ensure the successful solution of the other immediate problems." (Stalin — *Principles of Leninism*).

Third: according to the situation, to use "transitory organization forms" such as *Revolutionary People's Committees, Revolutionary Workers' Committees, Local Liberation Committees, Vietnam National Liberation Committee*, progressively to gain on enemy power and paralyze its administrative machine. These organizations were very effective. They gave the people the occasion to realize universal suffrage and become acquainted with administrative affairs, led them to direct henceforth their own destiny, and break their chains themselves and ameliorate their living conditions by direct means, not paying attention to the power of the Japanese fascists and their lackeys. These "transitory organizations" mobilized the masses and encouraged them to participate in the revolutionary struggle; they extended to the highest point the National United Front against the Japanese and created the bases for a new Vietnam. Effectively, after the August General Insurrection, these different liberation committees became real administrative organizations. To

use People's Committees and Liberation Committees as springboards for the direct transition to the democratic republican regime, was an extremely interesting characteristic of the communist tactics in the pre-insurrectionary period.

The August Revolution won victories. Is that not due in great part to the intelligent and correct leadership of the Party?

CHAPTER III

THE GOOD POINTS OF THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

A careful preparation

The August Revolution victory was due in great part to the correct leadership of the Indochinese Communist Party, to its work of organization and preparation during the pre-insurrectionary period.

"In every revolution, victory does not come by itself, one must prepare it, win it" (Stalin). How did the Party prepare and win the victory of the August Revolution? It has exploited with cleverness favourable conditions created by the war to carry on fully the preparation of the insurrection. Here is this preparation plan in its main lines :

On the one hand, to unify the people's revolutionary forces, to mobilize manpower and wealth, to stimulate the ardent patriotism of the people, to adjust the different national salvation organizations, to lead the people in the struggle against white terror and for the defence of daily rights and interests.

On the other hand, to develop the para-military organizations such as the self-defence brigades, to train military and political cadres, to procure arms, to organize the army, to establish the resistance zones, to carry out propaganda among the enemy soldiers, to train the people for destruction work and the tactics of scorched earth, etc., to launch guerilla warfare and seize power in different localities.

The documents of the Party and the Vietminh Front such as *Preparations for the armed insurrection, Active*

preparations for the insurrection, Arms to expel the common enemy, Towards the general insurrection, the pamphlets teaching guerilla tactics etc... prove that, besides the psychological preparations, we had to pay special attention to the material ones. The Party realized clearly that for the success of a revolution, the spirit of sacrifice is not enough, a meticulous military preparation is also needed: that is to say, the *founding of bases, the organizing of the regular army, the arming of the troops and the people.* As early as the end of 1941, the Party founded two bases, one at Bac Son — Dinh Ca (Lang Son — Thai Nguyen), and another at Cao Bang — Bac Can. *The Vietnam Liberation Army* was founded during the struggle against the white terror in the Viet Bac (1941 — 1945); *the Vietnam National Salvation Army*, still in an embryonic state at the time of the Bac Son insurrection (October 1940), developed through eight months of guerilla warfare waged at Dinh Ca and Trang Xa (August 1941 — April 1942), and in the second armed struggle at Dinh Ca (at the end of 1944) (1). After the Japanese coup de force, the Ba To (Quang Ngai province) insurrection gave birth to another guerilla brigade. These formations played an extremely important role in the *upsurge of the anti-Japanese fascist movement for national salvation* and in the *August General Insurrection.*

A noticeable feature of the activity of the Party in preparing for the armed insurrection is to have made the masses conscious of the preparations for it and led them

(1) In 1945, these two armies were unified and became "the Vietnam Liberation Army".

to become active participants in it ; simultaneously to coordinate closely the military action of guerilla brigades with the action of the masses, so that the latter, while resisting the terror and struggling for the defence of their rights and immediate interests, may feel the necessity of taking up arms to win national independence. The struggles against the concentration of villages, arrests, requisitions of paddy, forced enlistments and conscription of labourers, crop destructions for the cultivation of jute, the pillage of markets, etc... had hastened the arming and training of the masses for a bold march towards the insurrection.

The preparation, meticulous and in conformity with principle, was one of the good points of the August Revolution.

Promptness and timeliness

The victory of an insurrection depends not only on careful preparation, but also on its timely launching.

As we have seen, the August Revolution broke out at a very good time.

If on March 9, 1945, the general insurrection had broken out immediately after the Japanese coup de force, the Revolution could have lost much and power could not have been established all over the country, because where the revolutionary forces were weak, the Japanese forces, still strong at that moment, would have been able to destroy them. That is why the insurrection was launched only in small areas to conquer local power. However, if after the Japanese surrender, our people had passively waited for the coming of the Allied forces to "liberate" them without rising immediately to conquer power all over

the country, what would have happened then? Two possibilities could have occurred: either the Japanese lackeys would have come on to the stage to solemnly boast of "having no more links with the Japanese" and to parade themselves as the "defenders of independence and democracy", not for liberating the people, but for surrendering to the Anglo-Americans. Or the French would have tried to raise their heads again, gather the remnants of their forces in Indochina, call back the debris of the troops who had fled to China after the blow of March 9, which would have allowed them to found, with the participation of the pro-French traitors, a puppet government over the whole country, and to declare that they had implemented the Proclamation of March 24, 1945, and given autonomy to Indochina (1).

Both these eventualities would have created equally fatal consequences for our country.

But fortunately the Party had led the people's struggle for national salvation and effectively created favourable conditions for the victory of the August Revolution. And just before the Japanese defeat (August 13, 1945), it immediately issued the general insurrection order to conquer power from the Japanese without the least hesitation or weakness, to organize people's power,

(1) It was only after the French surrender in Indochina that the de Gaulle Government agreed to issue the Proclamation recognizing the autonomy of Indochina. This hypocritical proclamation was, for the Indochinese peoples, as stupid as it was ridiculous because it was published just at the time when the French had no more authority in Indochina.

and thanks to the revolutionary forces of the masses to bundle out the so-called "autonomy" proposed by the French!

The leaders of the August Revolution had

"Well chosen the moment for the decisive blow, the moment for starting the insurrection, so timed as to coincide with the moment when the crisis has reached its climax, when it is fully apparent that the vanguard is prepared to fight to the end, the reserves are prepared to support the vanguard, and maximum consternation reigns in the ranks of the enemy." (Stalin — Principles of Leninism).

Promptitude and timeliness, that is another good point of the August Revolution.

The whole people rose up

The victory of the August Revolution was also due to the unity of the whole people and the rising up of the masses.

Truly, the August Revolution induced the great majority of the people to rise up and paralyze entirely the reactionary elements. This is a fact of great importance. If the general insurrection had not won the whole people:

First, the French colonialists could have found a way out, could have won and exploited the elements unfavourable to the Revolution, and basing themselves on the latter's attitude, they would have been able to declare before the U.N.O. and the world that the Vietnamese people welcomed the restoration of their power; at the same time they would have accused the forces of

insurrection, as "rebellious elements", preventing them from disarming the Japanese troops and restoring order and peace in Indochina, etc...

Second: the international reactionary elements in general, could have exploited our lack of unity to dig still deeper the ditch between the various strata of our people. Worse still, they could have provoked a civil war, plunged the country into division and anarchy and worn out our forces to dominate us easily.

But fortunately, our people, wretched under the double yoke of oppression and exploitation of the Japanese and French fascists, closed their ranks under the gold starred red flag and, relying on their own forces, rose up to win back their liberty.

In August 1945, the *Dai Viet* (1) clique allied to the reactionary elements of the Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang Party (2) and the Phuc Quoc (1) clique asked the Japanese to give them the administrative power in some places (such as Vinh Yen, Moncay etc...), to stand up against the *Republican Government*. But their shabby behaviour as lackeys of a foreign country was so obvious that the whole people had the most profound contempt for them, and their influence, far from extending, withered away.

An overall rising by the entire people, such is the third good point of the August Revolution.

(1) *Dai Viet* : Great Vietnam

Phuc Quoc : national restoration ; two pro-Japanese traitor organizations.

(2) Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang : Vietnam nationalist Party, (a Party which was against the Vietminh).

These three good points were entirely due to the powerful organized forces and the just political line of the *Indochinese Communist Party* and of the *Vietminh Front*.

We can say that without the Indochinese Communist Party and the Vietminh Front, the Revolution would have taken another road. If the Vietminh could not have unified all social classes, had not had prestige among the masses and had not led the insurrection for the conquest of power, the Revolution could have failed.

The former liberation movements of our predecessors against the French failed. One of the main causes of this defeat was the lack of an anti-colonialist united national front. Those former insurrections were crushed, principally because they were the rising of only a sect, a group of militants, or a little vanguard detachment and not "a far-reaching and deep-rooted revolution of the people" (Stalin). To triumph, a revolution worthy of new times must be a real revolution of the broad masses, prepared and led by one or several revolutionary organizations. The August Revolution conquered power, the direct aim of every revolution, because it was the work of a whole people united in the struggle under the leadership of the Indochinese Communist Party.

CHAPTER IV

THE WEAKNESSES OF THE AUGUST REVOLUTION

Unequal degree of determination throughout the country

Besides these good points, has the August Revolution any weak ones? Yes, it has.

First, the general insurrection was not launched with the same resolution throughout the three "Kys" (1); this does not mean that the uprisings should have been carried out in one sweep throughout the whole country. Such an event would present many difficulties because in an agricultural country like Vietnam, the degree of political consciousness and organizational spirit of the people are at different levels in different places and means of communication are still backward. But in the conditions prevailing in our country in August last year, it would have been better to launch the uprisings simultaneously in the main towns, which would allow a more decisive and better managed seizing of power and would end by robbing the French colonialists of all hope. Now, whereas the insurrection was launched simultaneously everywhere in the first week following the Japanese surrender, Saigon waited until the 23rd to rise up. Nam Bo was a little late because among the ranks of the army of insurrection in the South, there were many elements who did not believe in the strength

(1) Vietnam was divided by the French into 3 parts, the 3 "Kys".

of the masses and would rather have used plain diplomacy to persuade the Japanese to give us power than struggle by their own forces to wrest it back or support the diplomatic work with action by the armed masses. Furthermore, they feared the crushing of such an uprising by the Japanese forces, forgetting that the latter were already almost paralysed at that moment and would be even more paralysed before the strong, broad masses of the whole nation.

This weakness is due to the unequal development of the Vietnamese Revolution as well as to the relative weakness of the Vietminh organization in Nam Bo before the zero hour of the insurrection and to the lack of homogeneity in the ranks of the United National Front in the South. Another reason is that Nam Bo is situated far from the national leading organism (1), a fact that proved detrimental to the judiciousness of the instructions given by the Vietminh in the South, preventing them from entirely keeping pace with the general line of the Party. In the South, the slowness in starting the insurrection, the lack of resolution in the seizing of power, encouraged the reactionaries, especially the French colonialists and pro-French Vietnamese traitors.

Lack of a full disarmament of the Japanese troops

The second weakness in the August Revolution was the failure to fully disarm the Japanese troops at the hour of the insurrection before the entry of the Allies.

(1) At this time, the Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party and the Central Bureau of the Vietminh had their headquarters in Bac Bo (Northern part of Vietnam).

into the country. Effectively, this task *was carried out* to a certain extent. But even in many places where our forces prevailed over those of the enemy, we did not use violence to disarm the Japanese; moreover, we did not even cause them any trouble when they remained neutral and let us organize the people's power. Generally speaking, under the circumstances of August last year, that policy was correct, because the revolutionaries have no right to waste the masses' blood and throw themselves into hazardous undertakings, out of mere conceit.

Our weakness did not consist in negotiating with the Japanese, but in failing to make the fullest use of the armed masses to support the diplomatic action and force the Japanese to surrender more arms; furthermore, we did not act in time to prevent them from destroying a great many up-to-date armaments.

Now, each time we consider the lack of modern arms, we cannot in retrospect help regretting that in many places, the insurrection troops missed a very rare opportunity to secure the necessary arms.

We admit that, because of the extremely intricate situation of our country and the relatively limited strength of the Vietnamese Revolution, it was not possible to carry out a systematic elimination of the counter-revolutionary elements on Jacobean or Bolshevik lines. The Vietnamese Revolution was not opposing only the counter-revolutionary forces at home; other forces were intervening from abroad in favour of the French reactionaries and other traitors. It was due to this that the latter were able, in certain places, and at certain

moments, to equal, and even to overpower the revolutionary forces (in Saigon, for example).

However, it is to be regretted that energetic, timely and necessary measures to counteract all possible dangers in the future were not taken immediately upon the seizing of power and before any foreign intervention; at a time when the reactionaries in the country were still at a loss and had no time to reorganize themselves. This does not mean that after the general insurrection, we should have imprisoned all the French, or put to death all elements who had collaborated in any way with the French or the Japanese. No! We regret only that the repression of the reactionaries during the August Revolution was not carried out fully within the framework of its possibilities.

Revolutionary power should willingly pardon the guilty who repent but it must be firm with all traitors.

For a new-born revolutionary power, to be lenient with counter-revolutionaries is tantamount to committing suicide. Did not the Paris Commune commit a grave error in failing to pursue and eliminate the "Versaillais"?

Failure to seize the Bank of Indochina

The fourth shortcoming of the August Revolution: the forces of insurrection failed to seize the Bank of Indochina and suppress the privileges of the magnates of the money-market in Indochina; moreover, they failed even to gain control of the Bank. The colonialists availed themselves of this opportunity to attack us later on in the financial field: as for example by the rejection of 500 piastre notes, thus placing more difficulties in our path. In the same way, the Paris Commune met with so

many obstacles precisely because it failed to seize hold of the Bank of France.

The Japanese and the French bequeathed to our people's power an almost hopeless economic and financial heritage. But we were able to hold our own because of the sacrifices made by our workers, public servants and soldiers, and because of the industrious and devoted efforts of the government and the whole people.

This fourth shortcoming was not due to any underestimation by the leaders of the August Revolution of the financial question, but due rather to the fact that the Bank of Indochina is a financial institution acting not only on behalf of the French and the Japanese but also of other countries.

If we were not able to sweep away all the French imperialists in one blow, how could we hold out firmly against several other imperialists as well?

The four above-mentioned shortcomings of the August Revolution each had their reasons. But, in an objective criticism, we cannot fail to point them out frankly.

We admit that, for this reason or the other and taking into account the conditions of the August Revolution, it was difficult to avoid them. But the error of our revolutionaries consisted in failing to avail themselves of the high tide of the revolutionary movement and of the people's spirit of sacrifice in the decisive hours, so as to reduce to a minimum the extent of these shortcomings.

The pro-Japanese puppets have repeatedly upbraided the Vietminh for behaving too harshly towards the

Japanese and killing many of them in various places, thus provoking them to destroy many good quality arms. These "good" people asserted that, in the conditions prevailing last August, if the Vietminh had not intervened, they would have been able to "negotiate" with the Japanese and get many arms from them within a few days. We regret having to put it to these gentlemen: if the Vietminh had not led the whole people in the general insurrection, permitting them quickly to seize a portion of the Japanese arms held by the "Bao An" units and Japanese troops, when these "gentlemen" expected to be given these "begged-for" arms by the Japanese; and if they had succeeded in getting them, we can be sure they would have used them with an object other than establishing and consolidating the democratic republican system and the people's power, or expelling the foreign aggression and checking the counter-revolution!

This failure to completely disarm the Japanese troops was due to the subjective conditions of the August Revolution. In plain words, when you have only a small capital, you cannot expect to make big profits: and without tanks and heavy cannons, we could not take possession of the Japanese tanks and heavy cannons.

What happened was that in many regions, immediately after the insurrectional forces had occupied a town, either by a sudden attack from outside or by an inner uprising, the Japanese entrenched themselves in their blockhouses and made ready to defend themselves; and while they had enough supplies and munitions to hold out for a long time, our troops merely encircled them and, for want of good tactics, failed to destroy their fortifications (as for example, the seizure of Thai

Nguyen) ; whatever the case, it must be admitted that with more promptitude and boldness, we should have been able to disarm the Japanese troops from the very beginning of the insurrection. Were not the insurrection troops successful in many places without any bloodshed or hard fighting? It seemed that the forces of insurrection were breaking a butterfly on the wheel : faced with an exhausted and already defeated enemy, they failed to avail themselves of the situation and, by taking a further step, should have been able to snatch the arms from the hands of the Japanese. For in fact, our military task in that period consisted more in disarming the enemy than in casting him down.

That shortcoming is one of the reasons why the August Revolution did not take on as heroic a character as that of the great revolutions in other countries.

Lack of firmness in the repression of counter-revolutionary elements

Here is the third weakness of the August Revolution. Immediately after the establishment of revolutionary power, we did not firmly eliminate the various categories of traitors and failed to take sufficiently energetic measures against the French colonialists and their agents. Only in some regions such as in Quang Ngai did the forces of insurrection carry out the policy "Sweep away all reactionaries", but they did it in an extremist way; almost everywhere else we were conciliatory to the point of weakness, forgetting that "a victorious power must be a dictatorial one" (Lenin).

The more democratic the power, the more dictatorial it must be -- that is, it must exercise the democratic