

VIETNAM

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The Indochinese Communist Party and Peasant Rebellion in Central Vietnam, 1930-1931

by Ngo Vinh Long

The years 1930-1931 in Vietnam marked the political entrance of the Vietnamese working class and peasantry and the emergence of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) as the workers' and peasants' undisputed leader. Vietnamese historians have generally claimed that this was a period of "revolutionary upsurge" and that the struggles of the period were full-dress rehearsals for the August Revolution of 1945.¹

Until very recently, however, English-speaking students of Vietnam have largely ignored this period in their search for the origins of the Vietnamese revolution. Of those who have recently treated the period in their studies, most have chosen to regard the events of 1930-1931 exclusively from a local or regional perspective, ignoring overwhelming evidence of an effort at national coordination. In fact, most of the studies thus far have touched only on the situation elsewhere in Annam, as well as in Cochinchina and Tonkin. Even worse is the tendency of many students of the subject to treat chronology lightly, to be uncritical of sources despite their often questionable validity, and to misinterpret facts either because of careless reading of the sources or simply because of lack of background on the subject. In any case, every English-language study has presented the movement of 1930-1931 as a spontaneous (or anarchic), local uprising. This shortcoming has affected perception not only of this period but also of later efforts by the peasants and their revolutionary leaders to draw lessons from the 1930-1931 struggles.

Because of the above shortcomings and because most of the misinterpretations have concerned the situation in Annam, the primary aim of this essay is to describe the situation in this region in some detail. We make use of many of the same sources, but we have cross-checked them and compared them with previously ignored Vietnamese sources. We will deal with the situation in Tonkin and Cochinchina only by way of introduction because of the problems of space and because we have discussed the subject in some detail elsewhere already.²

The Unification of the Communist Parties and the "Revolutionary Upsurge"

On February 3, 1930, at a unification meeting in Kowloon, the three communist parties of Vietnam merged into a single party under the name of the Vietnam Communist Party (*Dang Cong San Viet Nam*).³ The meeting was convened by Nguyen Ai Quoc (later President Ho Chi Minh). Their unification under the same party ended a period of competition and brought about the centralized coordination

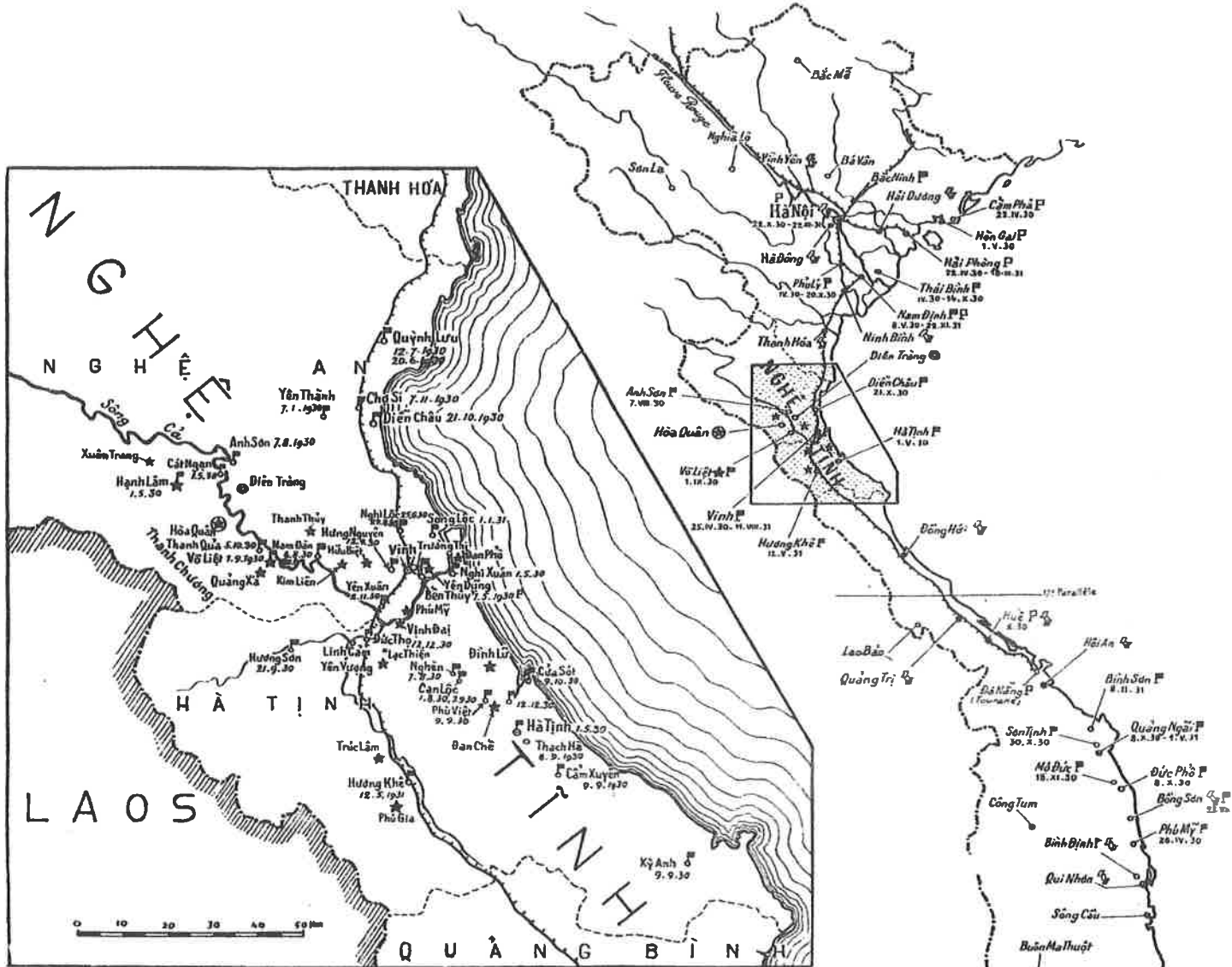
needed for a successful revolutionary movement. The meeting adopted a political program, rules, and strategy for the development of mass organizations such as the Red Trade Unions, Red Peasant Associations, Communist Youth League, Women's Association for Liberation, Red Relief Society, and Anti-Imperialist Alliance.⁴

Better prepared to meet the challenge ahead of them, the delegates to the unification meeting returned to Vietnam in high spirits to lead the fledgling revolutionary movement. Members of the Vietnam Communist Party soon began organizing peasants and workers to oppose "white terror" (deliberate and systematic destruction of suspected persons and villages) and to advance economic demands for improving the livelihood of the people.⁵

A month after the conclusion of the unification meeting, Communist Party members near Saigon received a letter from "Comrade Vuong" (Ho Chi Minh) which instructed them on how they should respond to the new situation. The letter stressed three key points: (1) the newly founded Party should organize the masses to struggle against repression; (2) although the Party did not approve of adventurism (the premature use of violence), its members should nevertheless fully support the Yen-bai "combatants" (these were members of the so-called Nationalist Party who had been arrested after an aborted armed attack on the French garrison at Yen-bai); and (3) Party members should coordinate the struggle against repression with the struggle for the basic rights of the population. From a long-term perspective, according to Ho Chi Minh, the situation at that time was advantageous to the Party because the Yen-bai uprising helped to create a fervent revolutionary spirit throughout the nation. Party members were instructed to take advantage of the situation to carry out their activities; to use all means, including newspapers, leaflets, meetings, speeches, rallies, strikes, market shut downs, demonstrations, displays of force, and so on, to mobilize and lead the masses in their struggles, and to maintain in every way the "revolutionary fire within the masses."⁶

Although pitted against a ruthless campaign of repression at the time of their return from the unification meeting, the delegates nevertheless were able to carry out the unification process quickly and smoothly and at the same time to provide the necessary leadership for the struggles of the workers and the peasants. Thanks to the enthusiastic activities of the members and the unified leadership, popular struggles soon reached an unprecedented level over the entire country. From April 1930 to November 1931, according to most

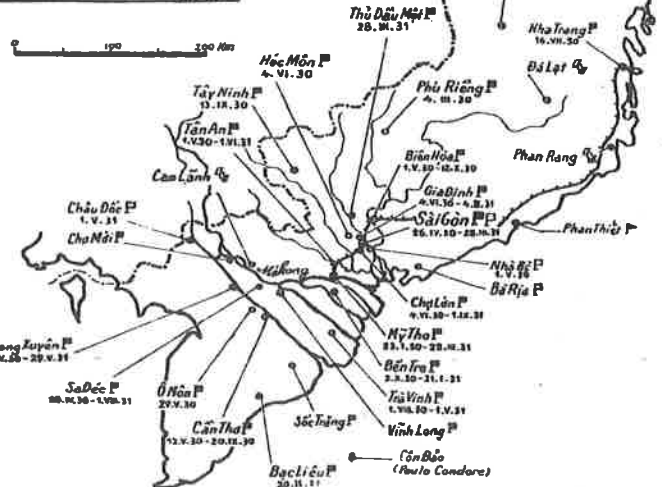
MOUVEMENT DES SOVIETS DU NGHE-TINH DE 1930-1931 AU VIET-NAM



LEGENDES

1. Manifestations
2. Grèves
3. Drapeaux rouges arborés
4. Lancées de tracts
5. Instauration des Soviets
6. Base révolutionnaire
7. Siège du Comité de Nghê-an
8. Chef-lieu
9. Limites de provinces
10. Frontières
11. Cours d'eau
12. Chemin de fer

- P : 1
- P P : 2
- P P P : 3
- P P P P : 4
- ★ : 5
- ☆ : 6
- : 7
- : 8
- : 9
- : 10
- : 11
- : 12



accounts, there were at least 129 workers' strikes and 535 peasant demonstrations,⁷ not to mention hundreds of public meetings and rallies which were also forms of political struggle.

Although the struggles broke out in the three regions of Vietnam almost simultaneously and with coordination, local conditions made the movements in each region distinctive with regard to intensity, duration, and issues involved. In 1930 and 1931 Tonkin was the region with the smallest number of peasant demonstrations. There were several reasons for this including the recurrence of devastating floods and dike breaks which caused widespread famine, the early arrest of many revolutionary leaders, and the swift and brutal French repression. Tonkin was the industrial and administrative center of Indochina and French military power there was quite strong.⁸ Beginning in July 1929, hurricanes killed thousands of persons in the provinces of Kien-an, Nam-dinh, Thai-binh, Tuyen-quang, and Quang-yen. Resulting floods destroyed several million piasters worth of rice crops.⁹ Governor-General Pierre Pasquier, however, was so nervous about the possibility of increased revolutionary activities among the population that he forbade any kind of fund-drives, including play performances, to help the flood victims.¹⁰ In addition, the French stepped up their search for revolutionary leaders. In mid-October 1929 they arrested a high member of the Indochinese Communist Party who gave out, under torture, revealing information about the party as well as locations of party organizations in many provinces of Tonkin. The entire organizational structure of the Party in Bac-ninh province—the base of the Indochinese Communist Party—was eradicated by the French.¹¹

The situation in Tonkin by mid-May 1930 was summarized by the Constitutionalist Party's newspaper, *Duoc Nba Nam*:

*... there have been searches, interrogations, arrests, and imprisonments. Besides the number of people killed, exiled, and tortured, there are now one million persons who do not have enough clothes to wear or food to eat. . . . The provinces most devastated are Bac-giang, Hai-duong, Hung-yen, Ninh-binh, Son-tay, and Ha-dong.*¹²

Because of the need to organize relief for the hungry population and because of the already weakened Party infrastructures, the Vietnam Communist Party chose only two districts in Thai-binh province, Duyen-ha and Tien-hung, to organize a test demonstration on May Day, 1930. The well-organized demonstration involved 1,000 people and caused the village and district officials to flee the area. It finally ended in bloody repression. Soon afterwards, Communists organized new demonstrations in several northern provinces for the month of June,¹³ but decided to call them off because they would have invited increased repression and exposure of revolutionary leaders. Even so, by March 1931, the French claimed that most of the revolutionary leaders in Tonkin had been arrested and that only about 14 districts were still active with Communist cadres. It was not until after the ICP mounted its national appeal for support of the Nghe-Tinh Soviet Movement (discussed below) that another significant test demonstration was mounted in the district of Tien-hai, Thai-binh province.¹⁴

During 1930 and 1931, Cochinchina witnessed the most widespread peasant protest in all of Indochina. Tens of thousands of peasants participated in fierce mass demonstra-

tions in 13 of the 21 southern provinces. A tabulation of reported cases in public newspapers reveals that there were at least 125 mass demonstrations during the period from May 1930 to May 1931.¹⁵ Provinces without demonstrations were those which were seriously affected by floods and those in which the ICP was still unable to establish their infrastructures as a result of tight control by the large landlords and the colonial administration.¹⁶

The peasant struggles in Cochinchina during this period were organized and coordinated by the ICP from beginning to end and can be divided into three stages. The first and fiercest stage began on May 1 and culminated quickly in August and September when there were 66 large demonstrations involving from several hundred to several thousand participants. In the second stage, from October 1930 to January 1931, demonstrations diminished in number and intensity. There were 10 reported cases in October, eight in November, and none in December. Possible reasons for this may be that the protest movement had come too quickly for the communist infrastructures to establish good coordination and also the French response was quicker and more effective in Cochinchina than in the other two regions of the country. The third stage lasted from February to May 1931 when there were

By thus staging the markets and by getting the workers to return to the factories, the demonstration coordinators were able to get thousands of demonstrators to the target areas without being detected. "This was a most beautiful maneuver by the Communists," lamented the French Resident.

again large-scale demonstrations in central provinces of Cochinchina, which were organized to support the Nghe-Tinh Movement in Annam. But these demonstrations were smaller than those during the fall of 1930 and occurred mostly at night. So while they presented the French administration with considerable headaches, they neither brought about a general uprising nor diverted French troops from Nghe-Tinh.¹⁷

Although peasant struggles in Annam were not as widespread as in Cochinchina, they were the most intense in the provinces of Nghe-an and Ha-tinh where the peasants and revolutionaries drove local authorities out of villages and districts and established their own revolutionary power. The intensity of the struggles in Nghe-an lay mainly in the fact that peasant organization and revolutionary infrastructure were quite developed there.

Nghe-an province, for example, had a considerable revolutionary infrastructure before 1930. Through the mutual aid societies and peasant associations, those who tilled the soil had begun openly to oppose and organize against landlords, officials, and other local despots. For example, through mutual agreement, they set wages for plowing and rice-planting and any landowner who did not meet their wage levels went with uncultivated paddy fields.

During the 1920s the peasants organized themselves into "residents' leagues" (*phe ho*) in opposition to the "wealthy clique" (*phe bao*). Formal complaints were filed against village and canton officials for embezzling public funds, excessive taxation, and usurpation of communal lands. In some districts, the "residents' leagues" appointed their own tax collectors who brought the taxes directly to the district headquarters, circumventing the local officials. In others, the peasants tied up corrupt village chiefs and carried them on poles (like pigs on their way to market) to the district seats "to turn them in to the government." Peasants rose up to fight against the bureaucrats, local officials, and landlords who stole their lands. By the end of 1926, the movement to get village officials to divide communal lands fairly among the inhabitants had made good progress in many villages of Nghe-an province. By 1929 there existed a province-wide Federation of Peasant Associations.

In addition to these struggles, the peasants also fought against pernicious social customs such as wasteful spending for funerals, weddings, religious sacrifices and festivities, and rain-making ceremonies. The peasants also formed weaving and farming collectives. Twenty percent of the income from the crops went into a common fund, with 30 percent going to the individual tillers and 50 percent to production and land improvement. According to a Vietnamese historian who has done intensive research on this period, peasants who used to think of nothing but their daily work were meeting in groups to discuss revolutionary activities and politics.¹⁸

Revolutionary activity in the form of demonstrations and leaflets were also on the increase. According to a confidential report of the French Resident of the province to the Resident-Superior of Annam, since 1928 there had been endless small demonstrations at the district seat of Thanh-choung.¹⁹ (Thanh-choung was the largest district of Nghe-an, on the west bank of the Song-ca river.) The peasants were influenced by factory workers from Vinh who came out at night to talk with them and help them organize, as well as by members of the various predecessors of the Viet Nam Communist Party such as *Viet Nam Thanh Nien Cach Mang Dong Chi Hoi* (Vietnam Revolutionary Youth Comrades Association) and *Tan Viet Cach Mang Dang* (New Vietnam Revolutionary Party).²⁰ Another French internal report stated that "communist tracts" were found in the city of Vinh and the villages of the interior in July and August 1930.²¹

The French reports stated that after a few months of propaganda work through clandestine newspapers and the like, the Communists moved into direct action, with a number of "assassinations and attempts to create administrative incidents."²² A partial listing of these incidents and assassinations showed that from November 1929 to April 1930, there were 30 incidents at 12 "pagodas" and one "Confucian temple" as well as three assassinations. Since September 1929 there had been a "sense of panic" among the inhabitants of the province because of increased revolutionary activities.²³

The newly-founded Vietnam Communist Party sent one of its Central Committee members, Nguyen Phong Sac, to work with the worker's movement at Vinh and Ben-thuy. In February 1930, the Party provincial committee of Nghe-an came into being; it helped to increase the number of cells in the cities and villages. Clandestine mass organizations such as Red Workers' Unions and the Peasant Associations as well as legal organizations such as mutual aid societies and sports associations also blossomed.²⁴

The Nghe-Tinh Soviet Movement

The above activities and infrastructure laid the groundwork for the first outbreaks of mass protest that eventually led to the establishment of the Nghe-Tinh Soviets in September 1930. From the end of April to the end of August, local demonstrations were staged almost daily in the districts of Nghi-loc, Anh-xuan, Nam-dan, Do-luong, and Quynh-luu, each involving up to several hundred persons. There were also more massive demonstrations, which involved thousands of participants, staged weekly or biweekly.²⁵ Unlike most of the earlier marches and demonstrations which had been held within the confines of a village or district, the new wave of protests involved participants who moved from one district to another, from the countryside to the cities, and in good coordination not only with each other but also with workers, students, and people of other occupations. We will describe a few of these demonstrations below to illustrate the nature of the struggle.

The first wave of coordinated demonstrations occurred on May 1, 1930, and involved 10,000 peasants and 1,200 workers from the two provinces of Nghe-an and Ha-tinh. The peasants marched five abreast in a kilometer-long column to the office of the French Resident of Nghe-an in the city of Vinh. Workers marched as guards at the head, the tail, and on both sides of the peasants. The demonstrators marched under the red hammer-and-sickle banner of the Communist Party and carried placards with slogans calling for pay raises, reduction of working hours and of taxes, opposition to white terror, and compensation for families whose relatives had been killed during the Yen-bai uprising.²⁶

On the same day, nearly 400 workers marched to the front of the sawmill at Ben-thuy. When soldiers killed four and wounded seven, 1,500 peasants from the surrounding villages arrived, which led to further violence. Seven more were killed, 18 wounded, and scores arrested.²⁷

About 50 kilometers northwest of the city of Vinh, 3,000 demonstrators gathered to attack the plantation concession belonging to one Ky Vien, a former Vietnamese secretary in the French administration. He had usurped most of the lands in the area and had blocked the way to the forest so that the peasants could no longer gather firewood.

The peasants of Hanh-lam and Yen-lac villages demanded that their usurped lands be returned to them and that the route to the forest be reopened. Ky Vien refused. The peasants then ransacked the buildings, burned down defense installations, and took away buffaloes, cows, and horses, sacks of rice and coffee and farm implements. Then the demonstrators planted a hammer-and-sickle flag on top of the main house. The chief justice (*an sat*) of the province of Nghe-an later testified, however, that "the Communists went to Ky Vien's concession to destroy it and not to plunder it. They destroyed

*By "pagodas" and "Confucian temple" was meant the village communal houses (*dinh*) which served as village administrative headquarters and as places of worship for all gods and deities from Buddha, Confucius, the Goddess of Mercy, and Kuan-yu to the Spirit of the Soil, the Spirit of the Hearth, and the Village Guardians.

the plantation and felled trees, but they did not commit any theft. . . ."²⁸ The French Resident of Vinh ordered an Inspector Petit to lead a military expedition to the area to gather information because he was getting no information from the provincial mandarins.²⁹ On May 4, Inspector Petit and his soldiers fought their way into Hanh-lam village and occupied the communal house. Petit later recounted that the village notables were uncooperative. Then,

Without being called, 400 inhabitants of Hanh-lam gathered in front of the communal house. . . . [Petit] had the demonstrators come before him and asked them the following question: "Would you tell me why you have come in such large numbers without being summoned?" Answer: "We have come, first of all, to complain about the exactions made by the land concessionaire Ky Vien; and secondly, about the arrest of the officials of our village." When [Petit] asked who burned the concession, the reply was: "All of us and the inhabitants of the village of Yen-lac committed this act, and we all assume the responsibility for it." Question: "Besides you, there were about 20 individuals who were strangers to the villages of Hanh-lam and Yen-lac." Answer: "That's not true."³⁰

Facing this hostile crowd, Petit waited for military reinforcements. In the meantime, he released the village chief. The next day the village notables were re-arrested. The villagers again unanimously declared that they themselves and the inhabitants of Yen-lac were responsible for the incident. They stated they had lodged many complaints against Ky Vien but the mandarins had rejected their claims out of hand. The demonstrators demanded their village officials be released, Ky Vien be ejected from the concession, and that the land be returned to them. According to the chief justice of Nghe-an, the peasants "were surging in front of us. They opened their jackets and shouted 'Kill us! Release the village officials or else arrest the 3,000 of us!'" According to the Resident, "the crowd was getting bolder and bolder and about to engulf the troops," so a warning salvo was fired. Then shots were directed against "the leaders" who were inciting the crowd. "Only 16 persons were killed." A report from the chief of police and Sûreté claimed that 20 persons had been killed and 20 others wounded. A military outpost was immediately set up near-by to maintain order in the two villages.³¹

Within a week, collecting intelligence had become difficult for the French because informers were being intimidated. The police claimed that "the communist organization in Nghe-an has become quite serious; and under various labels, it is gathering many followers."³²

It should be noted that even before the events of May 1, there was already massive support from the general population for demonstrations as a plan of action. The Resident had expected trouble since the beginning of March. Besides having taken economic measures such as forbidding the export of rice from the province and getting the directors of the Truong-thi railway workshop and SIFA (Indochina Wood and Match Company) to sell rice to their workers at the reduced price of 10 piasters per 100 kilograms, the Resident ordered military reinforcements and searches of the population. On April 24 and 25, leaflets were distributed calling for demonstrations to support the striking workers at Ben-thuy factory. The French discovered two mimeograph machines and numerous printed materials in a district in Ha-tinh province which foreshadowed

the coming events.

On April 28, the Resident was alerted to the comings and going of a great number of people between Nghi-xuan and Yen-dung districts to the northeast of Ben-thuy; he thought that the moment had come. Patrols were sent out to search the bamboo groves and paddyfields. A police captain, Phan Chau (who was later discovered to be an agent of the revolutionaries), came with his soldiers and guards and told the patrols that he had been patrolling his sector and found nothing unusual.

On April 29 the French received what was to them reassuring information: A floating market was planned at Yen-dinh on the 30th at Vinh on May 1. This helped explain why there had been large movements of people. As a result, the French relaxed their special alert, since the peasants were obviously depending on these large markets to sell their rice from the first harvest. In addition, the manager of the match factory and the director of SIFA both assured the Resident that the workers (who had been striking) had all come back to work peacefully. The same good report also came from the railway workshop at Truong-thi.

By thus staging the markets and by getting the workers to return to the factories, the demonstration coordinators were able to get thousands of demonstrators to the target areas without being detected. "This was a most beautiful maneuver by the Communists," lamented the French Resident. "Their leaders were completely successful in distracting our attention." What seemed to surprise the Resident most was not only how the French and Vietnamese authorities were fooled by the maneuver, but also how, with the extensive network of spies and informers and the family ties of the Vietnamese officials in the villages, the demonstrators could have kept the news of the impending demonstrations a secret. The Resident himself ruefully admitted that "It was only on May 1st that the provincial mandarins and myself realized that we were kept completely in the dark about events occurring in the province despite the ties and relationships some of us had with it."³³ After a visit to many villages, the prefect of Anh-son were also forced to declare: "Now that I have seen it, I am overwhelmed [*bouleversé*]. Since we have to face the disintegration of our family ties by force, I am starting a crusade to arouse my villages against them [the Communists]."³⁴ Most of the mandarins in the province told the Resident that they were quite convinced that the demonstrations were not just jacqueries, but that they were clearly organized by the Communists.

By the end of May a second wave of massive and coordinated demonstrations shaped up. Plagued by a number of serious problems, the farmers and workers at Ben-thuy submitted to the Vietnamese Governor of Nghe-an and Ha-tinh a list of 24 demands which included reduction of various taxes, abolition of the wedding and bicycle taxes, relief in time of famine, abolition of preventive arrest and imprisonment without trial, aid to the families of all those who had been arrested and killed at Ben-thuy and Thanh-choung, and the release of all those arrested at the two places. Workers at Truong-thi presented the Governor with a list of nine demands for themselves and six for "all the brothers and sisters in the provinces." These demands were similar to those at Ben-thuy.³⁵

On May 30, Governor Ho Dac Khai answered the peasant and worker petitioners. He said that the petitions

violated court and military law codes and hence the petitioners could be severely punished. But since the Governor was a good "father" and a kind "shepherd," he was willing to show his leniency to his "children" this one time.³⁶

By posting such a condescending public notice and ignoring the pressing needs of the population, the French and Vietnamese authorities knew full well what to expect. They assigned more soldiers to key areas of the city and sent more patrols into the countryside. The Resident bragged that his tough policy and better precautions had prevented demonstrations in the city on the night of June 1. Special surveillance of the districts were carried out by the mandarins, resulting in only one demonstration in the district of Thanh-choung.³⁷

This demonstration included 2,000 young men, students, old folks, women, and notables, according to the district chief's estimate. People in the more distant villages filed in line first and marched to the district headquarters. They demanded that six requests be transmitted to higher authority:

- 1) postponement of all taxes because of the recent crop failure;
- 2) reduction of all market, salt, alcohol, and tobacco taxes;
- 3) equality in watch duty (up until then the poor were forced to perform the task but the rich were spared);
- 4) compensation to families of the victims of recent uprisings;
- 5) no foreign troops to suppress the people and no use of Vietnamese recruits for military duties abroad; and
- 6) release of all students and revolutionaries incarcerated on political charges.

After some tough talk, the district chief had to back down and agreed to transmit the people's demands to his superiors. He wanted "to avoid exciting the people needlessly."³⁸

On June 11 another demonstration (French estimate: 1,000 persons) occurred in Do-luong. The demonstrators demanded the reduction of all taxes and compensation for the families of the victims of the May 1 incidents. A Vietnamese source states that there were more than 4,000 peasant demonstrators who carried with them placards saying: "Abolish all taxes and compensate the families of the victims of May 1." On the same day more than 5,000 peasants demonstrated in Anh-son.³⁹

These demonstrations were quickly followed by a number of smaller demonstrations of about 600 each in other districts and by a series of strikes in Vinh. In July a general strike lasted 40 days and drew widespread peasant support. The peasants provided the workers with food, money and clothes, and the strikers in turn helped the peasants organize.⁴⁰

On August 1, about 500 peasants, commemorating the International Day of Protest against Imperialist Wars, started a second demonstration in Do-luong, and another 300 persons from Ha-tinh province marched to the district seat. Political slogans were chanted: "Down with French Imperialism! Support the Soviet Union and the Chinese Revolution! Solidarity with the colonized peoples! Down with arbitrary arrests! Compensation to the families of victims of repression!"⁴¹ Due to French precautions and the presence of airplanes overhead, however, the demonstrators failed to rally more people.

Demonstrations continued throughout early August. Several thousand persons marched to the district seat of

Nam-dan where they attacked the administrative office, the post office, and the much-hated bureau of alcohol. They forced the district chief to sign and affix his seal to the list of their demands. More than 1,000 persons marched to Can-loc, Ha-tinh province, and forced the district chief to accept a list of their demands. On the same day, another group of demonstrators in the district of Anh-son were bombarded and two were killed. On August 12, about 10,000 demonstrators marched to the district seat at Thanh-choung with banners and placards. After the demonstrators then broke open the jail and released the prisoners and burned all the documents, the French dispatched their airplanes over the area. The next day, 10,000 persons returned to read elegies for the dead.⁴²



Tran Phu, premier secrétaire général
du Parti communiste indochinois.

The Formation of the Soviets

An intense and decisive period of struggle began late in August and continued through the month of September 1930. Large demonstrations and attacks on governmental offices caused the total disintegration of the governmental infrastructure in numerous districts and villages. Many mandarins and officials fled, while others turned in their seals to the Red Peasant Associations, the new administrative organs in these areas. In the districts of Thanh-choung and Nam-dan over seventy village chiefs turned in their seals.⁴³

Reporting on the demonstrations of this new period, the September 6, 1930, issue of *Nguoi Lao Kho* (The Toiler), a local clandestine newspaper, wrote:

In Nghe-An, on August 29, 500 peasants from the district of Nghe-loc carried red banners and marched on the district headquarters, nearly driving the district chief to panic. On the 30th, 3,000 peasants from the district of Nam-dan waved their flags and beat on their drums while they marched to district headquarters, where they destroyed the headquarters, released the prisoners, and forced the district chief to sign an acknowledgement of having received the demands of the demonstrators. On the 31st, the peasants of the prefecture of Hung-nguyen staged a demonstration. On September 1, 20,000 peasants from the district of Thanh-chuong set fire to the district headquarters, fought and chased the French garrison commander away, thus totally dissolving the power of the imperialists.



Le Président Ho chi Minh, qui militait à l'époque sous le nom de Nguyen ai Quoc.

*The workers of Ben-thuy have opened the way for the struggle! Red banners are fluttering all over Nghe-an. Other provinces are boiling with activity; a period of intense struggle has arrived.*⁴⁴

The situation afterward was described as follows:

In Thanh-chuong and Nam-dan no one now has to pay market taxes and nobody dares collect taxes. There is no patrol, and the soldiers don't dare come back for guard duty. When the imperialists order the soldiers to carry out clear-and-destroy operations, none comply. The brothers and sisters have released all the political prisoners and have divided the Ky Vien plantation and the lands of the big landlords among the poor peasant families. The inhabitants can now demonstrate at will. The laws of the imperialists

*have thus been destroyed. The inhabitants know that they cannot place any trust in the capitalist government, a government which harms the workers and the peasants. Therefore, the brothers and sisters have struggled fiercely and are solving their own pressing problems in their own way. . . .*⁴⁵

The Resident-Superior and the Minister of the Board of Punishment immediately arrived in Vinh to discuss how to deal with the situation. Public notices were posted forbidding any congregation of more than 50 persons. Police and military were ordered to shoot to kill anyone who refused to disperse when ordered. The Resident-Superior and the Minister also ordered that demonstrators pay for any damages caused, that a system of military forts be set up, and that more soldiers be sent to the existing forts.⁴⁶

Protest in Ha-tinh and Nghe-an

Fierce struggles also broke out in Ha-tinh. There were a series of massive simultaneous demonstrations and attacks in four districts and the provincial capital of Ha-tinh in early September. The Resident of Ha-tinh wrote that the revolutionary leaders' plans were "carefully elaborated and expertly executed." The objectives of the demonstrators, he said, was "to destroy and occupy the centers of administration, the headquarters of the prefectures, and the districts."⁴⁷ In each of the various demonstrations, there were usually several thousand peasant participants and fierce struggles with the police and the soldiers. In the capital city of Ha-tinh, for example, the demonstrators burned down the military garrison. At Ky-anh, according to clandestine newspaper accounts, they destroyed the district headquarters and released all the prisoners. The French posted notices in all the public areas of Ha-tinh, ordering soldiers and police to shoot all demonstrators who did not disperse immediately.⁴⁸

While these events occurred in Ha-tinh, larger and fiercer demonstrations broke out in Nghe-an. A typical demonstration erupted in Do-luong. Demonstrators burned the houses belonging to a Canton Chief, and then gathered on a river bank near Do-luong. They marched to the prefect's headquarters nearby; two planes arrived and dropped 16 bombs. About 15 people were killed. The spirit of the demonstrators was fired by this bloody repression. The demonstrators returned to Do-luong, this time in much large numbers and in a more belligerent mood. Some estimates say there were 8,000 demonstrators. Again, planes flew overhead and dropped 10 bombs, killing 30.⁴⁹

Following the events in Do-luong, a demonstration in late September mobilized 15,000 inhabitants of the district who carried banners and sounded drums as they marched through the district's villages. Demonstrators attacked the Legionnaire post at Do-luong, cut the telegraph line, and destroyed many colonial offices.⁵⁰

The struggle in Nam-dan district was just as fierce. During the final week of September, 30,000 peasants held rallies at five different locations. Three thousand peasants from the village of Kim-lien (Ho Chi Minh's birthplace) staged a demonstration to protest the destruction of trees, the killing of buffalos and cattle, the burning of homes, the raping of women, and the killing of an old man. A large number of village chiefs in the district turned in their official seals to the

district chief to protest the beating and torturing of the village chief of Kim-lien who had allowed his village to fall to the revolutionaries. Two days later, 15,000 peasants marched to the district headquarters. When they were lured inside under false pretenses, 23 were killed and 40 arrested.⁵¹

In Hung-nguyen district, the fiercest and largest struggle occurred on September 12, a date that later became the anniversary of the "Nghe-Tinh Soviet Movement." Twenty thousand peasant demonstrators marched toward the city of Vinh to support striking workers and to demand reply to their demands. They marched four abreast under red banners, surrounded by crudely armed red guards. They were confronted with a detachment of colonial troops sent from Vinh. The troops opened fire on the demonstrators but could not force them to disperse. New participants joined in as the demonstrators passed villages along the way. The crowd stretched for four kilometers by the time it reached district headquarters. Several hundred Legionnaires and colonial troops were sent out. Planes were called in. The troops opened fire on the demonstrators and the planes dropped bombs, forcing the demonstrators to disperse. That evening they came back to retrieve the bodies of their dead. By most Vietnamese

The "soviets" thus did not materialize as a result of careful planning by the Communist Party but as a result of the disintegration of the colonial administrative structures caused by the peasant struggles led by local and regional communist cadres. But they were soon exposed to concentrated raids and attacks by the French Legionnaire and other colonial troops. Despite this interference, and despite a lack of uniformity because of different local conditions, the villages carried out significant social, economic, and political reforms.

accounts, 217 demonstrators were killed and 126 were wounded. French official sources claimed that only 150 were killed. This was the single most bloody confrontation up until that time. Fearful of possible retaliation from the peasant demonstrators, the French sent a train-load of Legionnaires from Tonkin to Vinh-Benthuy that night to deal with the situation. A few days later, a warship also arrived and patrolled the coastal waters.⁵²

The most active district in Nghe-an in the month of September was Thanh-choung where there were an average of one demonstration and several rallies a day. People also met to divide up communal rice and to read elegies for their fallen comrades. Some of these gatherings comprised more than 4,000 participants.⁵³

The activities in Thanh-choung also spread across the provincial border to the adjoining district of Huong-son in Ha-tinh province. Three hundred persons from Nghe-an marched to the district of Huong-son, destroyed the telegraph and the house of a mandarin on duty in Nghe-an, and were dispersed only after the planes bombarded them. In mid-September however, 300 persons again came from

Nghe-an to attack the Ferey concession in the district of Huong-son and were dispersed after a fight with the colonial guards. Soon afterwards 2,000 persons, armed with clubs, spears, and knives, attacked the district headquarters of Huong-son several times. According to French reports, seven demonstrators were killed and two were wounded.⁵⁴

Colonial governmental authority disintegrated in many areas throughout the month of September despite French repression. The colonial administration in Thanh-choung and Nam-dan districts totally ceased to function. In Anh-son, Hung-nguyen, and Nghi-loc, over half of the area was in open rebellion. In Yen-thanh, Quynh-luu, and Phu-dien, the rebellion was less severe and in Ha-tinh the situation was less critical; there was no area in total rebellion. In Huong-son, Huong-khe, and Duc-tho, half of the villages still acknowledged colonial authority to some extent. In Can-loc, Cam-xuyen, and Ky-anh, the estimate was two-thirds; and in Thach-ha and Nghi-xuan, about three-quarters.⁵⁵

In early October, a clandestine newspaper noted that in Nghe-an and Ha-tinh:

Since September 1st, the peasant brothers and sisters have struggle most fiercely and have gained much power. In the villages, all governmental power has passed into the hands of the Peasant Associations. Whenever the local despots [former officials] want to do anything, they have to ask for permission first from the Peasant Associations. In some villages, women also participated in the planning of village affairs.

* * *

The brothers and sisters have abolished market taxes and ferry taxes. Landlords have to share their rice with the suffering inhabitants because it is nothing more than the stolen fruit of the sweat and tears of the peasants. In many places, the landlords have to agree to share their land with the poor people. . . .

* * *

The brothers and sisters have abolished the patrol duties, and in various villages have themselves organized self-defense squads to watch out for secret agents and to protect the peasant inhabitants.⁵⁶

French reports stated that a "Bolshevik regime" had been set up in Nam-dan and Do-luong; "Soviets" were elected by the population, and market taxes were abolished. Revolutionary tribunals tried government agents. Compensation was given to the families of the victims killed in demonstrations. Landlords seemed to have been required to contribute ten piasters per *mau* (about an acre of land) to the new village administrations, and appeals were made to merchants, notables, and government employees to engage in civil disobedience and non-cooperation.⁵⁷

The Red Peasant Associations Assume Power

With the disintegration of the colonial administration, the Village Sections of the Red Peasant Associations assumed power. They governed according to directives from the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Nghe-an. The Village Section was headed by an executive committee which

was elected by the representatives of a village-wide general

assembly. It [was] responsible to the entire village and to the District Committee and [had] an official tenure of three months. . . . The Executive Committee of the Village Section [was] usually composed of the following sub-committees: 1) secretariat, 2) communication, 3) organization, 4) finance, 5) control, 6) training, 7) investigation, and 8) struggle.⁵⁸

The responsibilities of the Village Sections and the local committees (*chi bo*) of the Communist Party, as defined in a Directive from the Party Provincial Committee of Nghe-an, included: (1) political administration in the village and the organization of self-defense units to provide order and security; (2) Abolishing all taxes imposed by the French colonialists, such as the head tax, market tax, and salt tax; (3) Seizing all public communal lands held by local officials and landlords and redistributing them to the poor, reducing land rents, suspending payment of all debts; (4) Making the notables return all public funds to the people; (5) Taking rice from wealthy households and distributing it to the poor and hungry; (6) Opening schools to teach *quoc-ngu* [the national language] to the people; (7) Abolishing depraved customs and superstitions, and reforming traditional practices concerning ceremonies, weddings, mourning, and worship.⁵⁹

Although the peasants took over complete administrative power, and although the Party Provincial Committee of Nghe-an told them how to organize their new village administrations and how to carry out certain social and economic reforms, they did not know they were establishing "soviets." They called the villages under their control "red villages," and the provinces of Nghe-an and Ha-tinh became known as "Red Nghe-Tinh."⁶⁰

While these events were occurring in Nghe-Tinh, the Central Committee of the Vietnam Communist Party was meeting in Saigon. Most of the members of the Central Committee attended the meeting, and hence were faced with a *fait accompli* when local and regional cadres established the "red villages." Soon after receiving the report from the Regional Party Executive Committee of Central Vietnam, the Central Committee responded in late September that the establishment of red villages and the redistribution of land in Thanh-chuong and Nam-dan

is not appropriate to the situation in our country because the Party and the masses in the country have not yet reached a sufficient level of preparedness and because we still do not have the means for armed violence. Violence in a few isolated areas at this time is premature and is an



du nord au sud à travers l'Annam. — Le pont d'Ham-Rong dans la province de Thanh-Hoa.

Across Annam from North to South. — The bridge of Ham-Rong in the province of Thanh-Hoa.

*adventuristic action.*⁶¹

While criticizing the Regional Executive Committee for its premature action, the Central Committee at the same time pointed out the fundamental tasks which the newly created "soviets" (this was the first official use of the term) should carry out to strengthen and protect themselves:

... At the present time we must do whatever we can to maintain and strengthen the influence of the Party and the soviets among the population so that when the soviets are dismantled by the French with their superior force, the meaning of the soviets will nevertheless have made a deep imprint on people and the forces of the Party and the Peasant Associations will be maintained. ... The redistribution of land has to be carried out by the soviets and has to be done on the basis of the number of laborers in all the poor families and not by parcelling out equal amounts of land to all families. After the land has been given out so that every laborer has enough to work, the excess amount should be turned over to the soviets to manage. ...

Efforts should be made to get poor and middle peasants to support the soviets and to consider the soviets

*as their own government. All actions taken in the village have to be in the name of the soviet and should never be in the name of the Party or the Peasant Associations. ...*⁶²

The "soviets" thus did not materialize as a result of careful planning by the Communist Party but as a result of the disintegration of the colonial administrative structures caused by the peasant struggles led by local and regional communist cadres. But they were soon exposed to concentrated raids and attacks by the French Legionnaire and other colonial troops. Despite this interference, and despite a lack of uniformity because of different local conditions, the villages carried out significant social, economic, and political reforms.⁶³ However, in most villages, the Peasant Association was in charge of keeping law and order. There was real solidarity among the inhabitants, and special efforts were made to raise their political consciousness. Frequent mass meetings were held. Revolutionary books and clandestine newspapers were read and discussed. Social, economic, and political issues as well as the nuts and bolts of political struggles and village administrative affairs were all discussed at these mass meetings. Direct democracy was practiced, and village officials were elected by an all-village assembly. Cadre development was



Le battage des épis de riz.

The beating of the rice-grains.

carried on by the Party and efforts were made to develop mass organizations. Money associations,* mutual aid associations, sport associations, anti-imperialist youth associations, student associations, "red relief associations," women's associations, and so on, were created.

Most popular of all were the peasant associations. Villagers became members by attending mass meetings of the association at which time association rules and regulations were explained. This easy access to membership sometimes led to undesired results. In some villages rich peasants and members of the traditional elite not only easily became members but also were elected to the Village Executive Committees.

Economically, there was redistribution of land belonging to landlords who supported the colonial government and of communal land and public funds previously seized by these landlords. (Land distributed at this time continued to remain in the hands of the peasants in certain villages well into the early 1950s.) Labor-exchange teams, planting and plowing cooperatives, and other mutual assistance measures were organized and instituted. In a number of villages, such as Thanh-thuy in the district of Nam-dan, the entire village population was mobilized to irrigate over 100 acres of paddyfields in one day. Taxes were abolished and debt payments suspended. Landlords were pressured to reduce their rents to 30 or 40 percent of the crop, depending on the village.

Militarily, self-defense units, composed of young males and females, were formed in every village. They were armed with clubs, knives, and spears, and were responsible for protecting the villages, meetings, rallies, and other public gatherings, as well as the peasants' crops.

In the social field, medicine, clothes, personal care, food, and other forms of support were given to the poor, the sick, and the families of all victims of French repression. Whenever a village was burned down, the inhabitants of other villages immediately brought building materials such as bamboo and thatch to rebuild it. For example, the village of Phu-viet, Ha-Tinh province, was completely burned down but within three days it was rebuilt. Landlords were asked to contribute rice to the poor. Women organized teams to assist pregnant women. Work hours were reduced. Petty theft and gambling were eliminated. Disagreements within families were solved with the help of the various youth associations.

A literacy campaign was waged. Classes taught the peasants to read and write. Sessions for reading and discussing books and newspapers, were held in the early afternoons and evenings. In addition, expensive and wasteful practices in weddings, funerals, ceremonies, and other public festivities were either curtailed or abolished.

Defense against French Pacification Efforts

Up until the beginning of September 1930, the size and the frequency of the demonstrations put the French administration on the defensive. Their only response was to try to put down the demonstrations as they occurred. When

Resident-Superior Le Fol and Ton That Dam, Minister of the Board of Punishment and Special Envoy of the Privy Council, arrived in Vinh they found out that the situation had become too critical for such an approach. Therefore, a systematic pacification program which combined political and military measures was carried out.

The French enlarged their network of new forts and dispatched more Legionnaire and colonial troops to the two provinces concerned. Soldiers were supposed to coordinate patrol of the countryside with local forces, put down demonstrations, and come to each other's aid.

Political measures included the creation of an anti-communist political party called Ly-nhan Dang (Propriety and Benevolence Party), the publication of anti-communist books, pictures, and pamphlets, the use of mandarins from the two provinces to govern the local population, and the imposition of collective responsibility on all family members, village inhabitants, and local notables for the behavior of individuals in the villages.⁶⁴

The peasants retaliated by refusing to sell food to the colonial troops sent into the countryside. The villagers also destroyed and burned down the houses of "loyalists." The Governor-General claimed that the peasants had become a crowd of "crazy people" under the influence of agents of the Third International. He accused the Communists of methodically "bolshhevizing" Nghe-An, creating "complete social confusion" and "crowd psychology" which propelled the insurrectionary movement.⁶⁵ By early October, the French were able to install a defense system of Legionnaires which sought to prevent the population from moving from one area to another. Police columns made search-and-destroy sweeps into the "infested" areas.⁶⁶

French residents and provincial mandarins in the region were instructed to inform the people that the destruction of private property would be met with force, that notables collaborating with the rebels would be held responsible, that all villages must organize anti-communist defense forces, that there would be collective punishment of villages taking part in the rebellion, that all Communist leaders would be considered outlaws, that villages must expel outsiders.⁶⁷

Legion-occupied villages were often deserted by their village populations. The soldiers burned down villages, destroyed houses of suspected peasant leaders, made arrests, and forced the villages to submit to their authority. A system of surveillance was set up in the "pacified" villages.⁶⁸

As this was happening (in October), the Central Committee of the Communist Party held its first Plenary Session in Saigon to discuss future strategy and to reorganize the Party to better coordinate work between the Central Committee and the local committees. The meeting also decided to change the name of the Party back to the Indochinese Communist Party (*Dang Cong San Dong Duong*) from the "Vietnam Communist Party."⁶⁹

One of the most important topics under discussion at the session was the Nghe-Tinh Soviets. The Central Committee had sent a directive in early October to all party levels to analyze the mistakes of the regional leadership in allowing the soviets to be formed prematurely. The directive urged all party members to rally support of the entire peasant-worker population in the country to protect and save the lives of the "peasant brothers and sisters of Nghe Tinh" who were in critical danger.⁷⁰ To this end, the Indochinese Communist

* These were money-lending organizations created during times of need, comprising twelve or more members. The pooled money was lent out to each member on a monthly or weekly basis at low interest.

Party launched a nationwide campaign to "share the fire-power" (*chia lua*) of the colonial administration by staging demonstrations and protests elsewhere and diverting the attack of the colonial administration on Nghe-an and Ha-tinh.⁷¹

In order to minimize the damage caused by the French military and political onslaught on Nghe-Tinh, the Party tried to correct what it felt was leftist and rightist tendencies which might weaken the soviets. The Central Committee was critical of organizing and staging continual demonstrations and attacks against the French. A Party directive to the Regional Committee in Annam in October stated that the continuous mass actions caused the people to tire and be murdered by the imperialists. They argued,

*it is not necessary to demonstrate every day. . . . Ordinarily you should only organize conferences in the village to make speeches, to propagandize, and to train the people, and not to carry out unnecessary demonstrations. By doing thus you will maintain the combative spirit [of the people] and keep the struggle alive instead of dying out.*⁷²

According to French colonial sources, the policies suggested by the Central Committee were implemented to a certain degree in Nghe-an and Ha-tinh. Demonstrations were less numerous than in September, but were more "consoli-

dated." Participants in attacks against military posts were "well-trained and disciplined." Young recruits were being trained by the Communists at military training centers in Bo-lu and Xuan-trach, both in Hung-nguyen district, close to the city of Vinh. Also "red leaders have been successful in getting the Annamese [Vietnamese] still loyal to the government to maintain a favorable neutrality which hinders the policing activities of our military posts."⁷³

Nguyen Duy Trinh, currently Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, wrote that in his village in the district of Nghi-loc (north of the city of Vinh) political activity was still going strong after months of repression:

*I can still remember Tet [Vietnamese New Year] of that year. The inhabitants celebrated Tet only on the night of the 30th [February 16, 1931] and on the 1st [February 17, 1931] and did not prolong the celebration as in previous years. The [political] life in the village which usually had been quite active and enthusiastic became even more so during Tet. At the communal house every night it was as merry as if there were festivities. The population joyfully came out in large numbers to meetings to listen to the reading of newspapers published by the Party and explanations of the party program, or to discuss communal affairs. Everybody had the right to speak.*⁷⁴



Un ouvrier.

A cobbler.

A French police commissioner estimated that 60 percent of the villagers in Nghe-an and Ha-tinh had been enrolled in the various communist organizations by February 1931.⁷⁵ In a report on the overall situation in Ha-tinh, the Resident stated that it was "quite evident that the situation must not be judged according to the number of hostile demonstrators on their way to attack headquarters of the *phu* [prefecture] and the *buyen* [district] or the surveillance posts, but according to the intensity of the underground activity which is gradually spreading." The report added that from December 1930 to April 1931, everything looked calm externally but intense activity was manifested through leafletting, meetings, and conferences, and intensive military preparations. The center of the province was entirely "contaminated," and the districts of Duc-tho and Can-loc were in "latent turmoil."⁷⁶

Although the increased political activity did produce some noticeable success in defense of the soviets, French pacification made itself felt in many ways. Every day scores of peasants were killed and wounded, a much larger number arrested and tortured, houses and whole villages razed, ricefields destroyed, and boats and sampans wrecked and burned. This resulted in disruption of the economic life of the population which in turn produced a worsening food shortage by the end of 1930.⁷⁷

Coupled with their military operations, the French colonial administration and the Vietnamese court also began an amnesty program. Village populations were herded to certain locations and forced to submit; or agents were sent out to persuade people to give up and receive clemency. The colonial administration announced that all "Communists" who had not committed acts of violence would receive full and complete amnesty once they had submitted and that those who had committed acts of violence would still be able to enjoy a generous reduction of punishment in case of submission. Those who had never participated in any demonstration were given yellow cards to serve as proof of loyalty to the government, and others were given green cards as proof of submission. As a result of these efforts, 60,000 persons in Nghe-an received their clemency at various public ceremonies. A number of local leaders also surrendered. By the end of January 1931, over 70,000 persons in the two provinces publicly declared their loyalty.⁷⁸

A large number of peasants who were forced to accept the cards tore them to pieces and threw them away. But in quite a few villages ICP cadres took advantage of the amnesty program and advised the people to keep the cards to avoid the brunt of French repression against their area. The Permanent Bureau of the Central Committee of the ICP quickly criticized this "erroneous tendency" of keeping the cards which they said could bring about the disintegration of the local struggle movement. They issued a directive to cadres at all levels to point out clearly the danger behind the amnesty scheme and to organize the people to resist all attempts at forcible submission.

The French also exploited the personal adventuristic acts of some local cadres. The French administration called upon the population to withdraw their support of the ICP who had murdered French agents. The French also expanded the "service de sûreté" in both provinces and created a local militia system to continuously patrol local areas. Mandarins constantly toured the two provinces and "delegations" were established to coordinate military and administrative matters



Nguyen Huu Bai was the originator of the "Pacification Program" against the peasants of Nghe-Tinh and elsewhere.

at the district and prefecture levels.⁷⁹

New methods of pacification were also carried out. The troops were better equipped and coordinated and constantly went out on patrol. They were aided by reconnaissance planes during the daytime and by martial law and the curfew at night. Second, the arrest of the leaders became a principal focus. Regular troops surrounded suspect villages and set up barriers, while the police and colonial troops searched the village thoroughly and made arrests. Third, the suspected villages would be "recovered administratively" with actual occupation by military units led by French post commanders. After the initial occupation, the commanders tried to sift the bad from the good elements through information provided by informers or through direct interrogation, and then reestablished the former village authorities (if they had not collaborated) or ordered the notables to organize new elections. People who fled from the village were punished. However "sanctions" against them were not carried out by the soldiers but by other villagers who were forced to perform the punishment themselves so that they would be "irreparably compromised toward the ICP and would have a stake in defending themselves against the ICP." Finally, a system of security was

set up in each "recovered" village with the villagers as "local militia." It was their responsibility to defend the villages and to take offensive action against the Communists operating in their territory.⁸⁰

In connection with the pacification effort, Catholic communities and groups (5,000-6,000 groups were listed officially) were organized in Nghe-an into "self-defense" teams to patrol the villages and provide information to the colonial administration. French missionaries and Vietnamese priests were used to lead the pacification teams. A French Catholic missionary who acted as a team leader admitted that in a period of only a few weeks he had ordered the arrest of two hundred persons and, after a "regular trial," had ordered one execution. The missionary admitted, however, that the "Communists" in his district did not have firearms and had not committed any atrocities.⁸¹

Confronted with the new situation in Nghe-Tinh, the ICP Central Committee held its Second Plenary Session in Saigon in March 1931. It was concluded that the time was not yet ripe for a seizure of power. The ICP strongly criticized "leftist tendencies" within the Party and stressed that it was necessary to combine political struggle with the struggle for daily economic necessities. The Central Committee was particularly critical in its denunciation of the terrorist activities carried out against individuals. A number of cadres were expelled from the Regional Committee of Annam for "leftist" mistakes.⁸²

In a directive dated March 20, 1931, the Central Committee ordered the renovation and consolidation of the various regional Party and mass organizations in the Nghe-Tinh area so as to make them more effective.⁸³ With regard to the Red Peasant Associations, the Central Party stressed that while it opposed purging rich peasants from the Association, it suggested that "explanations should be given to the rich peasants to convince them to withdraw of their own free will from the Red Peasant Associations and shift to the mutual aid teams."⁸⁴ The reason given by the Central Committee for this move was:

*If we do not strengthen the position of the poor and landless peasants and train them to assume roles of proletarian [propertyless peasants and workers] leadership in the countryside, then the leadership of the Association may fall into the hands of the bourgeoisie.*⁸⁵

It was not until the end of April, however, that these and other decisions by the Central Committee were transmitted to the members of the Regional Committee of Central Vietnam. As Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh later related, the Regional Committee was

able to straighten out many of the mistakes that the movement had previously committed. Although there were still no concrete plans to maintain our forces intact in face of the wave of all-out repression by the enemy, the resolutions nevertheless stressed the immediate and urgent tasks of consolidating Party and mass organizations as well as the necessity for ideological struggle within the Party. In implementing these resolutions in our district we increased political education and training in order to maintain the morale of the cadres and the population. Although we were being critically harassed by the enemy and therefore had to spend most of our time and strength in dealing with the

*enemy, we still organized many short training courses for loyal cadre and villagers on the Party's strategy, its experiences in dealing with repression, and its clandestine work. I remember that at that time on the front page of the journal Co Vo San [Proletarian Banner], a publication of the Central Committee, there was the slogan: "Ours is the Party of the proletariat. We must not be discouraged because of temporary setbacks. A communist must be resilient in his work until he has achieved his ultimate goal." We often read that slogan to each other to nourish our spirit for the struggle.*⁸⁶

Decline of the Soviet Movement

Despite valiant efforts, it was extremely difficult for the regional cadres to hold the movement together. First of all, virtually the entire Central Committee of the ICP was seized during March and April (1931) because one of its members confessed to the French police. Second, famine worsened in both provinces. In Ha-tinh, the Resident had reported serious famine in the southern districts by the beginning of March.⁸⁷ A French agricultural official acknowledged that "poverty is quite profound in Ha-tinh province; and despite the low price of rice, most of the inhabitants, especially in the southern part, are unable to purchase any."⁸⁸

The famine hit Nghe-an the hardest. Most of the crop since October 1930 had been lost, stocks were depleted, and the peasants' diet consisted of potatoes, corn, and beans. The worse off went to the forests to dig up roots. Peasants sold their possessions to buy food. Their cry had changed from "doi lam" ["we're extremely hungry"] to "doi chet" ["we're dying of hunger"].⁸⁹

Despite the worsening famine there is no record of any kind of relief effort organized by the French administration or the Vietnamese court. Furthermore, there were no rice loans or public works projects instituted by the French. In fact, the colonialists worsened the situation by moving up the date of tax collection to coincide with the spring harvest (the end of April to the end of May). The peasants in Nghe-an were forced to sell their domestic cattle, agricultural implements, and household objects.

In Ha-tinh, the situation was somewhat better. The spring crop was average, but the peasants were forced to pay their dues at harvest-time; which was a disaster for the agricultural economy of the province. The peasants had to sell their paddy or beans at the nearest market, for ridiculously low prices, to pay their taxes. In some areas, peasants were forced to sell their cattle.⁹⁰

The early tax collection was seen by French authorities as a test of their strength, and as "a barometer with which to measure the degree of social disintegration." They also felt that if they could collect the tax, with military help, this would help shore up the flagging notables.⁹¹

As for the ICP, some cadres simply went underground or left for other provinces. Others organized more demonstrations to demand an end to the collection of taxes, for relief, or for an end to French colonial rule. There was still an average of at least one large demonstration each day in one of the two provinces. But they were disastrous in the face of brutal French repression. Scores of people were killed, and hundreds were arrested. When soldiers or government agents were killed during the clashes, the French retaliated with the destruction of whole villages.⁹²

To help alleviate the people's hunger, many cadres also organized small teams of peasants who went to landlords' houses to demand loans of rice and money. French colonial records referred to these activities as "acts of piracy"; some landlords lost from ten to 50 tons of rice and sizable sums of cash. The Resident of Ha-tinh reported in late April 1931, however, that these activities were not acts of piracy "because the ICP does not want to spread the idea that it hurts the people." The Resident added that ICP groups located the stocks of rice and then seized them "in a well-mannered way" and distributed them. Sums of money were also taken and contributions from others who were afraid to attend meetings or participate in demonstrations.⁹³

Later on, during the fifth-month harvest the cadres also organized the rice harvest and the allocation of rent to landlords. In one district, the ICP distributed one-third of the crop to landowners, keeping two-thirds for itself. (Landowners usually took two-thirds of the crop.) The French feared the consequences of these radical measures among the poor, and sent in reinforcement to the affected areas.⁹⁴

Some cadres criticized "borrowing rice" from the landlords feeling the ICP should have focused on the anti-imperialist aspects of the struggle instead. Borrowing rice from "rich and medium peasants" was said to push these elements over to the side of the French. Villagers were often sent to demand rice in another village, and not enough explanation or persuasion was used before such activities were carried out. For all these reasons, the critics later charged, the French and the landlord class were able to exploit the shortcomings of the movement to divide the people.⁹⁵ In the short run, however, the decision of some cadres to divide the rice enjoyed the peasants' support and helped to increase their credibility.

This resurgence of open activity in the spring of 1931, and its resultant short-term success, engendered greater French repression. There was a concerted effort by French and Vietnamese officials to enlist the support of Vietnamese intellectuals and the propertied class. The administration and the court at Hue also ordered

*all mandarins and scholar-gentry, in office or retired, who originally come from the province of Ha-tinh, to go back there under the protection of the military, to remain in villages where they have families and property, and to conduct anti-communist propaganda.*⁹⁶

As a result of the mass arrests, the French held 3,000 to 4,000 political prisoners, many of whom were Party cadres and members of the Red Peasant Associations.⁹⁷ The two top regional ICP leaders (Le Viet Thuat and Nguyen Phong Sac). The arrest and death of so many cadres caused the movement to lose its focus and coordination. In March and April before the arrests, for example, the demonstrators were careful to appeal to the conscience of the officials and soldiers. Handbills passed out during this period called upon the soldiers not to carry out their repression against the peasants and workers who had to demonstrate because soldiers were themselves once peasants and workers. One leaflet said: "We're dying of hunger! We have to demand food! Brother soldiers, you must not kill us! You must support us." Another: "Listen, brother soldiers! We can only put up with so much oppression! We have to fight back! You must not kill us! You must support us!" Appeals written in French and German were sneaked into

Legionnaire posts, presumably by Vietnamese women who were living with the soldiers.⁹⁸

After the arrest of the cadres, the direction and many of the tactics of the movement changed. Some of the leaflets were written in provocative language and stated unrealistic goals. Slogans were used which implied a general uprising was imminent. In May a Catholic church was attacked and a French priest and four Christians were killed, a number of tax collectors and officials were executed, and a French sergeant was hacked to death. The French reactions were swift and harsh. Hundreds of villagers were killed, thousands were driven into the woods where they either starved or had to come out to surrender. Villages and paddyfields were destroyed. Tax collection was stepped up as a tool of pacification. By the end of the first week of June, the Resident of Ha-tinh reported that despite resistance and "despite the economic situation which was as bad as it could possibly be," the government collected taxes in most of the villages. In his view, this success impressed the population more than police operations. He argued that the administration was correct in moving up the date of tax collection. Although there may have been "a few inconveniences, some even serious in a number of poor districts, these were of less consequence than allowing native taxpayers to default, since they consider taxes as the most tangible sign of government power."⁹⁹

The tax collection and the occupation and destruction of the villages increased hunger, which in turn contributed to the break-up of the movement. The situation in Nghe-an in June 1931 was described as follows:

The people are extremely hungry. The inhabitants of Quynh-luu and Phu-dien have to go up to the Quy-chau area to dig for roots or to look for dried-up potato vines to eat. In Da-phuc, Nguyet-tinh, and Hung-nguyen, nine or ten families crowd into one or two houses and dismantle the other houses to sell as firewood. . . . Because nobody will lend them money, the peasants have had to sell their children.

The harvest has been bad, and yet during tax collection time prices of rice and potatoes were drastically lowered. Marketplaces are packed with hungry cattle and buffaloes. Ordinarily each cow or buffalo would cost from 30 to 40 piasters, but during tax collection time they are sold for only seven to eight piasters each. The streets are filled with people carrying their cooper trays and pots and pans which usually would cost from three to four piasters each, but are sold for only seven to eight hao during tax collection days. The situation has become so bad that in the village of Bo-duc, Nam-dan district, there are two men who have been forced to sell their wives because they could not find the money to pay their taxes. . . .*¹⁰⁰

The famine and the increasingly brutal repression made the movement become less and less coordinated and the defense of the soviets more and more difficult. By the first week of July, the rebellion was restricted to a few cantons and even to a few villages within districts. It had become easier to detect the presence of the Communist leaders.¹⁰¹

* A piaster (*dong*) consisted of ten *hao* or 100 *xu*.

By mid-July, the French also began to organize free food distribution in certain villages to try to win the population over. The food distribution, called "soupe populaire," was supposed to be carried out in 20 locations and cost the French administration a total of 70,000 piasters. Each ration consisted of 600 grams of rice and beans, 100 grams of meat and fish, and a spoonful of *nuoc mam* (a Vietnamese condiment). The carrot-and-stick strategy seemed to work. An increasing number of soviets disintegrated and their leaders were arrested. Although the Regional Committee of the ICP in Annam still maintained its headquarters in Nghe-an and still tried to coordinate the movement until November of that year, it was already clear by the end of July that the Nghe-Tinh Soviet Movement had, for all practical purposes, been defeated. Revolutionary activities slowly withdrew into secrecy, and the remaining loyal cadres were trained to protect the infrastructure and maintain the support of the population while waiting for better days. The relationship between the cadres and the village inhabitants during this period is recalled by Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh:

*Despite the extremely brutal repression by the enemy, the hearts of the people never left the banner of the Party. The fish-and-water relationship between the people and the Communist combatants was already very warm and deep during this period.*¹⁰²

Other Struggles in Annam

After mid-September 1930, there were attempts to organize demonstrations throughout Indochina to support the Nghe-an combatants and to win some breathing space in the repression for them. Leaflets were distributed throughout Indochina telling of the victory of the peasants and workers in Nghe-an and Ha-tinh. They called upon people to demonstrate their support for "the comrades of Nghe-Tinh."¹⁰³

The extent to which people elsewhere lent support to Nghe-Tinh depended, however, on the state of the anti-colonial struggle in their own areas, the infrastructure there, the nature of French repression, and their physical proximity to the two embattled provinces. Most of the troops used for the repression in Nghe-Tinh came from Annam or Tonkin, so the potential for struggle in Annam or Tonkin to "share the fire-power" (*chia lua*) was presumably greater than in Cochinchina. We will examine only the situation in the other provinces of Annam.

Before the ICP mounted its "support" campaign, there were already isolated struggles in other provinces in Annam. For example, on July 16, 1930, a group of over 700 peasants marched to the district of Ninh-hoa, Khanh-hoa province, and presented the district chief with a list of demands. He was forced to accept the list and promised the demonstrators that he would forward it to his superiors. On July 17, another demonstration with over 1,000 male and female participants carrying red banners surrounded district headquarters of Tan-dinh (the district adjacent to Ninh-hoa) for three hours. They presented the district chief with a list of demands, including the release of political prisoners. French repression was swift, as over 100 men and women were arrested.¹⁰⁴

In Quang-ngai province, a revolutionary infrastructure was already in place. According to the French Resident there, revolutionary organization and propaganda had been pro-

motated by Communist leaders who had come to Quang-ngai from Nghe-an early in 1930. A communist cell was founded in the district of Duc-pho in March 1930. By the end of March, three villages were won over to the ICP and there were 20 members in the Peasant Association. In April another cadre arrived in Duc-pho, and soon communist cells were established in several villages. A *huyen bo* (District Executive Committee) was created. By this time (again according to French reports) there were about 20 Party members and 200 members of the Peasant Association in Quang Ngai. In July and August, an ICP cadre carried out a province-wide inspection and concluded that the situation was ripe for demonstrations.¹⁰⁵

It was not until October, however, that the first demonstrations occurred. By this time the French administration was alerted to the possibility of rebellion in other provinces of Annam, especially the southern provinces, because they had discovered that large numbers of cadres were moving into these areas and were planning demonstrations. Although the French prevented demonstrations from occurring in some areas, in Quang-ngai the movement was deep-rooted. The first large demonstrations broke out in early October 1930, and continued steadily until the middle of May 1931.¹⁰⁶

The first demonstration, including about 1,000 people, marched to Duc-pho district headquarters, broke down the doors, and burned the archives. Although the demonstration was well-planned and trees had been chopped down to block the roads behind them, some 12 demonstrators were arrested. In the district of Son-tinh in late October, about 1,000 demonstrators from various villages marched to the district headquarters and demanded to see the Resident of Quang-ngai to voice their grievances. The Resident ordered his troops to fire into the air to disperse the demonstrators. Ten were arrested. Farther to the south, in the district of Mo-duc, on November 11, 500 persons marched to the district headquarters and made demands similar to those posed in Nghe-an. They were beaten back by soldiers and 19 were arrested. A few days later, they came back again and again were driven away.¹⁰⁷

Although the Resident of Quang-ngai claimed that the ICP was badly disorganized by the repression and that the remaining cadres were mostly uneducated peasants from the districts of Mo-duc and Son-tinh, the struggle became more intense in January 1931. The movement spread to other areas such as Tu-nghia and Binh-son, the district of Nghia-hanh, and the highland sector of Son-ha. People's tribunals were held in many villages to mete out punishment to village chiefs who supported the colonial administration. Although some village chiefs were given death sentences, their sentences were later reduced to flogging and their houses were burned. In the district of Son-tinh, from mid-January on there were several demonstrations daily. On January 16, a large group of demonstrators tried to overrun the headquarters of the prefecture of Binh-son but were repulsed. That night a group of about 3,000 demonstrators met at the village of Ha-nhai to listen to speeches and get instructions before attacking the district headquarters, but they were dispersed by soldiers and 30 persons were arrested. On the same night, demonstrators from the villages of An-ky and An-vinh marched to Ky-xuyen and destroyed the official village archives. They also burned down the houses of the village chief and another official. Early in the morning of January 17, another group of demonstrators

burned down the house of the village chief of Sung-tich. On the same morning, a group of more than 2,000 demonstrators attacked the district headquarters of Son-tinh but were broken up by the colonial troops, leaving six dead and 14 wounded. The next day hundreds of demonstrators came back with coffins containing the corpses of two of their dead comrades and marched around the district headquarters. Again they were shot at and were forced to withdraw. The following day, January 19, 2,000 demonstrators surrounded the district headquarters but were fired on and were forced back, leaving one wounded. Meanwhile many other groups of demonstrators were forming about five kilometers west of district headquarters. One of the groups, estimated at about 300 persons, ran into a detachment of colonial infantry commanded by a French lieutenant who ordered his troops to shoot into the crowd. Four were killed, six wounded, and 35 arrested.¹⁰⁸

Although demonstrations in other districts were less frequent, the struggles were no less intense. For example, on January 25, 1931, several thousand persons from the villages of the area of Tu-nghia, the region east of the city of Quang-ngai, marched to provincial headquarters. Two kilometers from the citadelle (the Resident's office) they were fired on by soldiers; six were killed, six were wounded, and many arrested. On February 9, one demonstration marched to a military post and burned down a guard post and the house of a village chief.

By mid-February the demonstrations decreased in size, but they occurred almost daily until the middle of May. Houses of officials were razed, guard posts destroyed, official buildings seized, and a number of officials were killed. Also during this period, a number of officials gave open support to the peasants. For example, when colonial troops stopped the inhabitants of the village of Dai-loc (Nghia-hanh district) from setting fire to the house of a school-teacher thought to be an informer, the village chief and the commander of the village guards refused to feed the troops. This forced the French to send in reinforcements who arrested all the notables.¹⁰⁹

Just as in Nghe-Tinh, the French moved up tax collection time to April to test the strength of the government. The Resident-Superior of Annam made an inspection tour of Quang-ngai in mid-April and concluded that the situation was improving because taxes were being collected without any problems. Tax collection had a deleterious effect on people's nutrition, as in other areas.¹¹⁰

But open struggles continued. There was another wave of demonstrations, each involving from several hundred to several thousand persons, in early May. The fact that demonstrations could be organized at all meant that there was still a good deal of support among the population. The Resident of Quang-ngai complained that it was impossible for the colonial administration to obtain any information in Son-tinh district until the end of June 1931. Ninety percent of the population in Binh-son were said to be "communist sympathizers." A French missionary reported that European troops had to be kept in the province to forestall the outbreaks of violence.¹¹¹

Plans for demonstrations in some areas were foiled because the French found out before time. Twenty-five persons were arrested in the vicinity of Hue for planning a demonstration for December 20. In Phan-thiet, three cadres

were arrested for a similar purpose. Twenty-two cadres, most of them from the northern provinces of Annam, were arrested in Phan-rang; 20 persons in Nha-trang and Ninh-hoa were discovered planning a large demonstration on October 20.¹¹²

Nevertheless, leaflets continued to be distributed, red banners hoisted, and posters put up in Phan-rang, Dalat, Qui-nhon, Tuy-phuoc, Tourane, Song-cau, Thanh-hoa, and elsewhere. They called on the people to support the Nghe-Tinh Soviets and to "do away with the barbarous French imperialists and the Vietnamese court."¹¹³ Isolated demonstrations occurred from time to time. A group of demonstrators attacked the French salt office in Bac-ha, (Khanh-hoa province) in April 1931, injuring a French customs officer. A large demonstration in Bong-son (Binh-dinh province) attacked the Catholic mission, blocked the highway, destroyed French motor vehicles, and punished pro-French village and canton officials who had treated the population unjustly.¹¹⁴ On the whole, however, these activities were uncoordinated and isolated. Although they expressed the peasants' grievances against the authorities, they were unable to divert the French from Nghe-an and Ha-tinh. ★



Address on the hillside in the north.

View of the sea from the coast.

Notes

1. Tran Huy Lieu et al., *Tai Lieu Thăm Khảo Lịch Sử: Cách Mạng Cận Đại Việt Nam* [to be referred to as CMCDVN] (Hanoi: Ban Nghiên Cứu Văn Sử Địa xuất bản, 1956), Vol. VI, p. 51. Le Tan Tien, *Nhìn lại những bước đường lịch sử của Đảng* [Looking back at the Historic Paths of the Party] (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Su That, 1965), p. 18. Tran Van Giau, *Giai-cấp Công-nhan Việt Nam, Tập I, 1930-1935* [The Vietnamese Working Class, Vol. I, 1930-1935] (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Su Hoc, 1962), pp. 66-67. *Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, Book One* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), pp. 31-32.
2. Ngo Vinh Long, *Peasant Revolutionary Struggles in Vietnam in the 1930's* (Harvard Ph.D. thesis).
3. CMCDVN, Vol. VI, pp. 51-52; Le Tan Tien, pp. 12-15; *Thirty Years . . .*, pp. 24-25. The three communist parties were: The Indochinese Communist Party (*Dong Duong Cong San Dang*), the Annam Communist Party (*An-nam Cong San Dang*), and the Indochina Communist Federation (*Dong Duong Cong San Lien Doan*.)
4. CMCDVN, Vol. VI, pp. 134-140 for the originals of these documents.
5. Le Tan Tien, p. 18; *Thirty Years . . .*, p. 32.
6. Nghia, "Góp thêm một ít tài liệu về tổ chức và phát động phong trào đấu tranh ở Nam-ky sau khi Đảng ta vừa mới thống nhất ra đời" [Adding a few more documents on the organization and mobilization of the struggle movement in the Southern Region after our Party was newly unified and established], *Nghiên Cứu Lịch Sử* [Journal of Historical Research, to be referred to as NCLS], no. 67, October 1964, pp. 58-59.
7. Le Tan Tien, p. 19; Tran Van Giau, pp. 97-132; Vu Huy Phuc, "Vài ý nghĩ về Giai-cấp Công-nhan Việt Nam Những năm đầu duôi sự lãnh đạo của Đảng Công San Đông Duong" [A few observations on the Vietnamese Working Class during the first years under the leadership of the Indochinese Communist Party], NCLS, no. 131, March-April 1970, pp. 24 & 33.
8. Le Thanh Khoi, *Le Viet Nam: histoire et Civilisation* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1955), p. 420 and Paul Bernard, *Le probleme economique Indochinois* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1934), p. 33.
9. *Phu Nu Tan Van* [Women's News], August 22, August 29, and October 17, 1929. This was the largest magazine in Indochina. It was published in Saigon by a group of upper middle-class women.
10. *Phu Nu Tan Van*, October 24, 1929.
11. *Thức Nghiệp Dân Báo* [Professional People's Newspaper, Hanoi], January 17, 1930; CMCDVN, Vol. VI, pp. 108-110.
12. *Duoc Nba Nam* [The Torch of Vietnam], May 15, 1930. This paper was published by a group of landlords who were French citizens and members of the Colonial Council.
13. For details on the demonstration see: *Duoc Nba Nam*, May 14, 1930; NCLS, no. 50, pp. 46-46; *Dem Ve Sang* [Nights into Days] (Hanoi: Thanh Nien, 1975), pp. 137-145. (This is a book based on the compilations of the Committee on the Research of Party History of Thai-binh province on the history of revolutionary activities in the province from 1925 to 1930.) Also: AOM: SLOTFOM (Fonds du Service de liaison avec les originaires des territoires de la France d'Outre-Mer, 27, rue Oudinot, 75007 Paris), Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques" covering events from June 15 to July 30, 1930.
14. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III: Carton 48, "Notes politiques," March 15 to May 30, 1931; To Minh Trung, "Tai lieu tham khảo về lịch sử địa phương; Phong trào nông dân Tien-hai 1930" [Reference sources on local history: The Peasant Movement in Tien Hai in 1930], NCLS, no. 52, July 1963, pp. 60-62; Den Ve Sang, pp. 146-171.
15. This tabulation is made from *Duoc Nba Nam*, *Luc Timb Tan Van* [News of the Six provinces. Official newspaper published by the colonial government.], *Cong Luan* [Public Discussion, Official newspaper], and *Tieng Dan* [Voice of the People, a reformist newspaper published in Hue] from May 1930 to June 1931 by this writer. Daniel Hemery, in *Revolutionnaires Vietnamiens et Pouvoir Colonial en Indochine: Communistes, Trotskytes, Nationalistes à Saigon de 1932 à 1937* (Paris: Maspero, 1975), p. 22, states that he makes a similar tabulation from *La Depeche d'Indochine*, *L'Impartial*, *L'Echo annamite*, and *Le Courrier saigonais* and comes up with 124 cases of peasant demonstrations during the same period. It should be noted that not all peasant demonstrations were recorded, and only a very small number of the public meetings and rallies were ever reported.
16. *Phu Nu Tan Van*, August 22, August 29, October 15, and October 24, 1929.
17. *Duoc Nba Nam* and *Luc Timb Tan Van*, August to October 1930; AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III: Carton 48, "Notes politiques . . .", September 15 to October 31; Hemery, pp. 22-23. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques . . .", September 15 to October 21 and November 1 to December 15; *Duoc Nba Nam*, September 30 to December 29, 1930; and *Luc Timb Tan Van*, October 1 to December 29, 1930.
18. Ngo Van Hoa, "Những tiền đề . . .", second part, NCLS, no. 153, November-December 1973, p. 49.
19. AOM: ICNF (Indochine Nouveau Fonds), Carton 334, Dossier 2688, report of the Resident of Nghe-an of May 13, 1930, to the Resident-Superior of Annam.
20. NCLS, no. 153, pp. 48-51.
21. AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dossier 2688, Report of the Residence of Nghe-an at Vinh on the chronology of events in the province from 1929 to 1931. August 1 was the International Anti-Imperialist Wars Anniversary.
22. AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dossier 2688, report of the Resident, May 13, 1930.
23. AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dossier 2688, report of the Residence at Vinh on the chronology of events from 1929-1931.
24. Tran Huy Lieu, *Les Soviets du Nghe-Tinh de 1930-1931 au Viet-Nam* (Hanoi: Editions en Langues Etrangères, 1960), p. 19.
25. *Tieng Dan* [Voice of the People. Newspaper published in Hue] April-September 1930; Trung Chinh, "Tinh Chat Doc Dao của Xo-Viet Nghe-Tinh" [The Unique Characteristics of the Nghe-Tinh Soviets], NCLS, no. 32, November 1961, pp. 8-9.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 9; *Thirty years . . .*, pp. 32-33; CMCDVN, Vol. VI, p. 62; NCLS, no. 32, p. 9; 131, 24-25; Tran Huy Lieu, *Les Soviets . . .*, p. 20.
27. *Ibid.*, Tran Huy Lieu, *Les Soviets . . .*, p. 20.
28. CMCDVN, Vol. VI, pp. 62-63; AOM: ICNF, Carton 333, Dos. 2687, testimony of Ha Xuan Hai.
29. AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dos. 2688, report of Resident of Nghe-an of May 13, 1930.
30. Telegram included in report of the Resident cited above.
31. *Ibid.*; CMCDVN, Vol. VI, p. 63; AOM: ICNF, Carton 333, Dos. 2687, testimony of Ha Xuan Hai; also Dos. 2688, May 8, 1930, note on the general situation in Nghe-an and on the situation on May 1 in particular by the chief of police and Surete; also report of the Resident of May 13.
32. AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dos. 2688.
33. *Ibid.*
34. AOM: ICNF, Dos. 2688, May 15, 1930, conclusion of the Resident to his May 13 report.
35. See full translation in AOM: ICNF, Dos. 2688.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. See report of the district chief to the Vietnamese Governor-General of the two provinces of Nghe-an and Ha-tinh on June 1, 1930, in AOM: ICNF, Dos. 2688. For a newspaper report of the same incident and the list of demands see *Tieng Dan*, June 14, 1930. This newspaper maintained that there were about 3,000 demonstrators, including about 100 women.
39. AOM: SLOTFOM (Fonds du Service de liaison avec les originaires des territoires de la France d'outre-mer), Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques", June 15 to July 30, 1930; CMCDVN, Vol. VI, p. 63; NCLS, no. 32, p. 9.
40. CMCDVN, p. 64; NCLS, no. 32, p. 9, no. 131, p. 28; Tran Van Giau, *Giai Cap . . .*, Vol. I, p. 100-101; pp. 115-116.
41. Tran Huy Lieu, *Les Soviets . . .*, pp. 21-22; AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques . . ."; *Tieng Dan*, August 9 and 27, 1930.
42. CMCDVN, Vol. VI, pp. 64-65; Tran Huy Lieu, *Les Soviets . . .*, p. 22.
43. Le Si Toan, "Vài ý kiến góp vào tác phẩm 'Giai Cap Công Nhân Việt-nam' của ông Trần Văn Giau" [A few opinions contributing to the manuscript "The Vietnamese Working Class" of Mr. Trần Văn Giau], NCLS, no. 68, November 1964, p. 27.
44. Cited in Tran Van Giau, *Giai Cap Công Nhân Việt-Nam: Su Hình thành và sự phát triển của nó từ giai cấp "tự mình" đến giai cấp*

"cho minh." [The Vietnamese Working Class: Its formation and development from a "by itself" class to a "for itself" class] (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Su That, 1957)

45. Cited in Trung Chinh, "Tinh chat hien thuc cua Xo-Viet Nghe-Tinh" [The Realistic Nature of the Nghe-Tinh Soviets], NCLS, no. 30, September 1961, pp. 4-5.

46. *Tieng Dan*, September 10, 1930; *Duoc Nha Nam*, September 1, 1930; September 4, 5, 9, 11, and 15, 1930. Also see AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques..." covering events from August to September 15.

47. AOM: ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2690, Overall report on the situation in Ha-tinh in the years 1930-1931 by the Residence of Ha-tinh.

48. *Vo San* (Proletariat), issues of October and November 1930. Cited in NCLS, no. 32, p. 11. Also see *Tieng Dan*, September 17, 1930; *Duoc Nha Nam*, September 11, 1930; AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques..." covering events from August 1 to September 15.

49. *Tbanh-Nghe-Tinh Tan Van*, [News from Thanh-hoa, Nghe-an, and Ha-tinh. This is an official newspaper published by the French administration.] no. 8, September 9, 1930. See similar report in *Duoc Nha Nam*, September 26, 1930; also *Tieng Dan*, September 17, 1930.

50. NCLS, no. 32, p. 11; AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques..." covering events from September 15 to October 30, 1930.

51. NCLS, no. 32, p. 10.

52. Ibid.; Tran Huy Lieu, *Les Soviets...*, pp. 25-26; AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques..." covering events from September 15 to October 30, 1930; AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 42, telegram by Governor-General Pierre Pasquier of September 16, 1930. Also *Tieng Dan*, September 7 and September 27, 1930.

53. NCLS, no. 32, pp. 9-10. *Tieng Dan*, September 10-October 18, 1930.

54. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques..."; *Tieng Dan*, September 27, 1930.

55. AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dos. 2688, reports of October 1-3 of the Inspector of Political and Administrative Affairs to the Resident-Superior of Annam.

56. Cited in NCLS, no. 30, p. 5.

57. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques..." covering events from September to October 30. See section on "observation on some general aspects of the rebellion."

58. NCLS, no. 32, p. 12.

59. Cited in Tran Huy Lieu, "Van de chinh quyên Xo-viet" [The question of the Soviet government], NCLS, no. 33, December 1961, pp. 1-7.

60. NCLS, no. 32, p. 12.

61. Quoted in Trung Chinh, "Tinh chat tu phat cua Xo-viet Nghe-Tinh" [The spontaneous nature of the Nghe-Tinh Soviets], NCLS, no. 31, October 1961, p. 5.

62. Quoted in NCLS, no. 30, September 1931, p. 3.

63. NCLS, no. 32, pp. 15-16; CMCDVN, Vol. VI, pp. 69-71; Nguyen Duy Trinh, "Tu Kham Tu Vi Thanh Nien den Truong Hoc Xo-Viet-Nghe-Tinh" [From Jail to Juveniles to the Training Ground of Nghe-Tinh Soviets]. This is a memoir by the present Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam published in *Con Duong Cach Mang* [The Revolutionary Path] (Hanoi: Thanh Nien xuất bản, 1969), pp. 38-97. Details of the Soviets are located in pages 67-83. NCLS, no. 33, pp. 1-7.

64. AOM: ICNF, Carton 332, Dos. 2684, declaration of Resident-Superior LeFol. Also see AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques...", September 15 to October 30, section on military actions.

65. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 42, telegrams from the Governor-General on September 13, 1930.

66. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques...", September 15 to October 30.

67. AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dos. 2686.

68. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 42; CMCDVN, pp. 76-77.

69. CMCDVN, pp. 53-56, 141-166.

70. NCLS, no. 30, pp. 2-3.

71. NCLS, no. 31, p. 5; AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques...", September 15 to October 31, 1930.

72. Tran Van Giau, *Giai Cap...*, Vol. I, pp. 144-145.

73. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques...", November 1 to December 15, 1930.

74. *Con Duong Cach Mang*, p. 72.

75. AOM: ICNF, Carton 333, Dos. 2686, declaration of the special commissioner of the Surete at Vinh.

76. AOM: ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2690.

77. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques..."; AOM: ICNF, Cartons 333, Dos. 2687, and 334, Dos. 2688; *Con Duong Cach Mang*, p. 75.

78. AOM: ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2690, Report of the Resident of Ha-tinh on March 9, 1931; AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 42, telegrams of acting Governor-General Robin, January 1931; Carton 48, "Notes politiques..."

79. AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dos. 2688, report of Lieutenant Colonel Barbet: Carton 335, Dos. 2690, Report of March 9, 1931, by the Resident of Ha-tinh; SLOTFOM, Carton 332, Dos. 2684, declaration of Resident-Superior LeFol.

80. AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dos. 2688, report of Lieutenant Colonel Barbet of May 1931; .

81. Ibid.; AOM: ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2689, declaration of the French missionary of Ky-anh.

82. *Con Duong Cach Mang*, p. 80.

83. Ibid.; NCLS, no. 33, pp. 5-7.

84. *Thirty years...*, p. 35.

85. NCLS, no. 30, p. 3.

86. *Con Duong Cach Mang*, p. 81.

87. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques..." covering events from April to May; ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2690, report of March 17, 1931; NCLS, no. 33, pp. 6-7.

88. ICNF, Carton 334, Dos. 2688, report from the Chief of the First Agricultural Sector of Annam.

89. AOM: ICNF, Carton 333, Dos. 2686, declaration of M. Dulce, French Municipal Councilor of Vinh, Dos. 2687, testimony of the Inspector of Agricultural Services.

90. AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dos. 2688, report of the Chief of the First Agricultural Sector of Annam.

91. AOM: ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2690, report of May 12, 1931.

92. *Con Duong Cach Mang*, p. 81; AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques..." covering events from March 15 to May 1st; and Carton 49, "Notes politiques..." covering events in May. Also see AOM: ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2690, weekly reports from the Resident up to June.

93. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques..." covering events from March 15 to May 1, 1931; ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2690, report of April 20, 1930, by the Resident of Ha-tinh.

94. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 49, "Notes politiques..." covering events of May 1931 in Nghe-an and Ha-tinh. The report of Lieutenant Colonel Barbet of May 1931 on the situation in North Annam in AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dos. 2688 also stated that communist bands forbade landlords and the Catholic missions to reap their crops.

On the assigned day, the communist bands would go with their leaders to harvest the paddy and would carry out the sharing of the crops, handing over to the landlords only one-third.

95. Cited in CMCDVN, Vol. VI, pp. 81-82.

96. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 42, telegram of acting Governor-General Robin of May 12, 1931.

97. AOM: ICNF, Carton 333, Dos. 2686, statement by Dupuy, the Inspector of Political and Administrative Affairs of Annam.

98. AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 48 contains many handbills, leaflets, and appeals of this period in the original Vietnamese and in French translation. The French translations usually show discrepancy when compared with the Vietnamese originals. Key sentences were taken out and replaced with French sentences that do not even show the most remote relationship to the originals. Also see Carton 49, "Notes politiques..." covering events of May 1931. See section on communist propaganda.

99. *Con Duong Cach Mang*, p. 82. CMCDVN, Vol. VI, pp. 87-91. This source (p. 87) documents that during this period the slogan "root out all intellectuals, wealthy people, landlords, and notables" (tri, phu, dia, hao, doa tan goc tan re) was also passed around by word of mouth. Also see AOM: SLOTFOM, Series III, Carton 49, "Notes

politiques . . ."; ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2690, reports of the Resident of Ha-tinh on May 12, 17, 24, and 31, 1931.

100. *Tieng Dan*, June 27, 1931.

101. AOM: ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2690, report of the Resident of Ha-tinh on July 5, 1931.

102. AOM: ICNF, Carton 334, Dos. 2688, reports of the chief physicians of Vinh hospital on visits in Nghe-an in July and August 1931. In AOM: ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2693, there is a report by the Chief Physician in which he states he had never seen so much destitution in his life, that at the "soupe populaire" there were "thousands of emaciated people who did not have anything to eat; they were really corpses whose ribs stuck out from under their skin." In only one week "over 300 persons died of starvation in the districts of Diem-chau, Anh-son, Yen-thanh, and Quynh-luu."

In the two provinces of Nghe-Tinh the hunger situation has reached such proportions that people would sell anything they own in exchange for a potato or a handful of rice. There is an old man who owned 5 mau (about 5 acres) of paddy fields, 7 buffaloes, and five houses. But he had to sell everything for 25 piasters to pay taxes; and since there was nothing left for food, the whole household of five persons has separated, each going his or her own way to beg. . . .

Tieng Dan, August 15, 1931; September 16, 1931. Also see *Con Duong Cach Mang*, pp. 82-85.

103. AOM: SLOTFOM, Série III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques . . .", September 15 to October 31; "Notes politiques . . .", November 1 to December 15, 1930.

104. *Tieng Dan*, July 23, 1930; August 9, 1930.

105. AOM: ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2691, declaration of the Resident of Quang-ngai.

106. AOM: SLOTFOM, Série III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques . . .", September 15 to October 31, 1930; ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2692, "Liste chronologique des evenements."

107. AOM: ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2692, "Liste chronologique . . ."; SLOTFOM, Série III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques . . .", November 1 to December 12, 1930.

108. AOM: ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2691, declaration of the Resident of Quang-ngai; SLOTFOM, Série III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques . . .", December 15 to January 31, 1931; and ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2692, "Liste chronologique . . ."

109. *Ibid.*; also see "Notes politiques . . .", December 15 to January 13, 1931; ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2692, "Liste chronologique . . ."

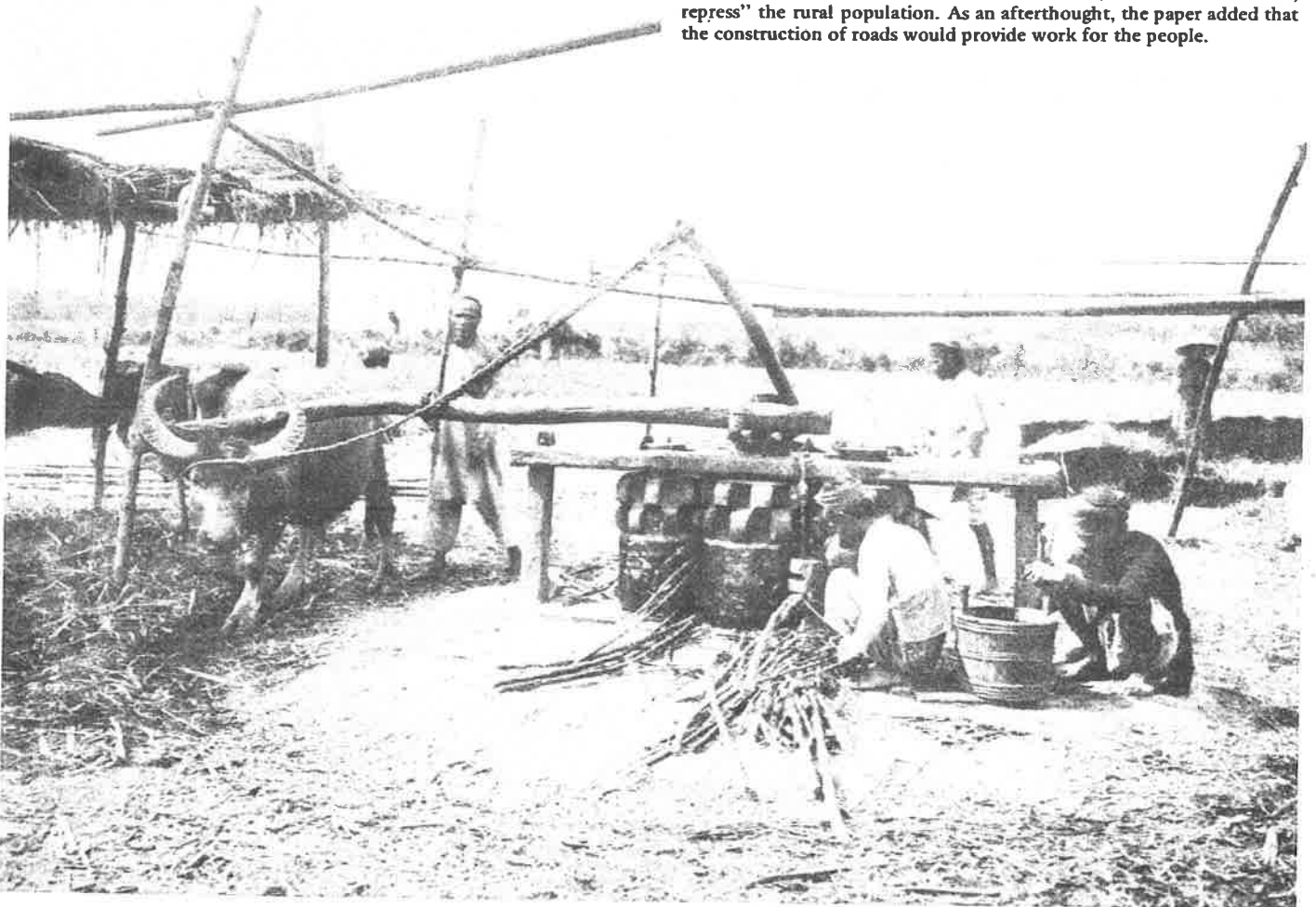
110. AOM: SLOTFOM, Série III, Dos. 116, telegram from acting Governor-General Robin to the Ministry of Colonies on April 18, 1931; and ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2693, report of the "Medecin general, Inspecteur des services sanitaires et medicaux."

111. AOM: SLOTFOM, Série III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques . . .", March 15 to May 1, 1931; ICNF, Carton 335, Dos. 2692, "Liste chronologique . . ."; Dos. 2691, declaration of the Resident of Quang-ngai and reports from members of the "Chambre des representants du peuple" of Annam who were living in Quang-ngai; and a report of French missionary living in Son-tinh district.

112. AOM: SLOTFOM, Série III, Carton 48, "Notes politiques . . .", September 15 to October 31, 1930.

113. *Ibid.*, "Notes politiques . . .", November 1 to December 15, 1930.

114. *Ibid.*; "Notes politiques . . .", March 15 to May 1, 1931; and SLOTFOM, Série III, Carton 116; Dépêche d'Indochine, July 31, 1931; *L'Opinion*, August 11, 1931. The editors of *L'Opinion*, August 11, 1931. The editors of *L'Opinion* advocated the construction of new roads with tax monies to facilitate "control, and when need be, repress" the rural population. As an afterthought, the paper added that the construction of roads would provide work for the people.



The treatment of sugar cane.