

# La Lutte and the Vietnamese Trotskyists

Monday 20 August 2007, by [HEMERY Daniel](#) (Date first published: 1975).

**In the 1930s in South Vietnam (Cochin China), the Indochinese Communist Party, the Vietnamese Trotskyists and independent Marxists formed a united front to engage in legal work in the French colony. They published together a newspaper, *La Lutte* (*The Struggle*). The website “Marxistes” has published an English translation of a small part of Daniel Hémery’s study of this unique experiment in united front which lasted five years (1933-1937). We are reproducing it below.**

Several articles of Daniel Hémery are posted on ESSF website (in French): see [HEMERY Daniel](#). It includes a paper on *La Lutte*: [A Saigon dans les années trente, un journal militant : « La Lutte » \(1933-1937\)](#). A partial bibliography of Daniel Hémery’s works is available as well on ESSF: see [Daniel Hémery : une bibliographie partielle](#)

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## Presentation from “Marxistes” website which prepared and published this translation

The following extracts have been translated by Ted Crawford from Daniel Hemery’s book, *Revolutionnaires Vietnamiens et pouvoir colonial en Indochine*, which is published by F. Maspero (1 Place Paul Painlevé, Paris 5) in 1975. We are greatly indebted to both author and publisher for permission to reproduce them in English garb here.

[...] Daniel Hemery’s book is based formed part of the doctorate he submitted to the University of Paris in 1973. He lectures at the Université de Jussieu, and has also written an account of the thought of Ta Thu Thau before he became a Trotskyist, *Ta Thu Thau: L’itinéraire politique d’un révolutionnaire vietnamien*, in Pierre Brocheux (ed.), *Histoire de l’Asie du sud-est*, Lille, pp.193-222. The snippets that we produce here reflect only a fragment of the massive research of Hemery’s 526 page book, and hopefully will tempt confident French readers to study the rest.

As is our custom, the notes have been renumbered, though it should be possible to find them very

easily in the original from the page references which we give. Unless otherwise stated, the notes are the author's own, but we have cut out or reduced some notes that do not deal with the Trotskyist theme that is our concern here.

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## **1. An ambiguous approach to national reality?**

[\[1\]](#)

It is surprising that the writings of the group attach little importance to this issue [the national question - Eds.]. The evocations of national history, which one can read in 1925-27 from the pen of Tran Van Thach or of Ta Thu Thau, cease. The key words of the national question, 'fatherland' or 'independence', are hardly used. *La Lutte* always writes in the language of class struggle, it hardly borrows from that vocabulary, however rich it is in French, and only once mentions the word Vietnam. Furthermore, when this lack of interest ceased, it was tempted to give way to iconoclasm. Did they not write in April 1935 that "for a long time in this country patriotic sentiments have not had any sort of echo"? However, the readers were not deceived, and some of them questioned this. A retired teacher, interviewed by a reporter of the journal on the question of the language of education, confessed his astonishment:

*I know that you are not nationalists at La Lutte, but all the same I swear to you that above all I love my country, our country. You seem, all of you, to ignore the fact that we are a conquered people.*

In 1934-35 Vietnamese Marxism seemed to put itself at the opposite extreme to patriotism. Can we see here the existence of a Vietnamese version of Luxemburgism, or even a national nihilism? The reader of the journal must look carefully at these impressions. One could talk of the national issue being half-hidden, rather than there being an absolute silence on this question. The nationalist demand is actually put forward in *La Lutte*, but in counterpoint, at once as an implicit element of the general theme of the journal and the group, and as a minor motif in its explicit discourse. It can come up swiftly in different random contexts when national oppression is shown. Thus, of a Vietnamese journalist, victim of a beating up, *La Lutte* justified its protests in these terms: "The group around *La Lutte* is one of the many efforts which our people make to gain respect. The national theme pushes out things not found in the international rubric in the form of a constant reminds: of the right of colonised peoples to independence. It also takes a cultural or educational detour. One of the slogans of the journal is for the adoption of Vietnamese (but it is still called 'Annamite') as the official language in the colonial legislatures, and as the language of education.

The national language is expressed in *La Lutte* [\[2\]](#), but its occurrence is weak. In the 21 months up to June 1936, it only produced about 20 articles on this. [\[3\]](#) Statements on the national theme can be classified in general into two categories. The first is set around the criticism of the patriotism of the bourgeoisie, and seeks to show the role which it plays in the alienation of the working classes. Even in an oppressed country, the *La Lutte* people thought that the patriotism of the ruling class was an instrument of oppression. This did not mean, however, an absolute condemnation of patriotism, because its positive value was affirmed in the statements of the second category. *La Lutte* thus made a distinction between two historical varieties of patriotism, one being the alienating patriotism of the bourgeoisie, the other being in the interests of the majority of the nation, the patriotism of the working class and its allies. These statements forcefully claimed an identity between the national cause and the interests of the working class. But several of them ... gave them less importance and

showed the necessity of an intransigent class struggle. For the group this was certainly the principal weapon of national liberation. To emphasise all the more the importance of this dialectic of class and nation, *La Lutte* even bent the Stalinist definition of the second of these two themes. "We know", it said in April 1935, "that a nation is not necessarily a community of race, language or religion. To have a joint future it must be an economic unity."

## **2. International links**

[4]

Through Gerard Rosenthal [5] *La Lutte* corresponded with the International Secretariat of the Trotskyist movement, and at the beginning of 1936 received the publications of the different national Trotskyist groups – Belgian, Chinese and Australian – as well as the French paper of the Spanish POUM. But the references in the journal to Trotskyism remained very discreet for a long time, the first only appearing in March 1936 with some extracts from *Révolution*, the paper of the French Revolutionary Young Socialists (JSR). Eventually, the political contacts of the group spread to the whole political spectrum of the French left, the pacifist movements, and above all, the Comité d'amnistie aux Indochinois, and the Ligue Anti-Imperialiste [6], movements which were promoted by Francis Jourdain, the most active Paris correspondent of *La Lutte*, as well as, through the intervention of Daniel Guérin, the Colonial Committee of the SFIO. Guérin became one of Ta Thu Thau's correspondents at the end of 1936, and the spokesman of the group in the SFIO.

The intensity of these contacts was uneven. Contacts with the Comité d'amnistie were particularly active, and were founded on mutual confidence. Contacts with the Fourth International, which had not yet been formally established, were very loose. This was for reasons which were not only due to the needs of the United Front. The international contacts of Vietnamese Trotskyism were for a long time of a purely ideological nature, and it always kept total liberty of action. There were a number of reasons for that – the weakness of the Fourth International and the Eurocentric nature of its preoccupations, together with its lack of knowledge, hardly allowed it to intervene in the tactical choices to be made in Indochina. Its leaders seem to have been somewhat reserved with regard to political practice in Indochina, but they had confidence in the Vietnamese Trotskyists and supported them. [7] We must doubtless return to the analysis developed by Trotsky in order to explain the independence of his Vietnamese supporters. Like the majority of the inspirers of contemporary Communism, he never truly suspected the future importance of the revolutionary movements then developing in the great French colonies of North Africa and Indochina, to which his writings only made rare allusions. He had, however, with remarkable perspicacity, criticised in 1930 the reluctance of the Vietnamese Trotskyists in France to take sides on the national question. The later short texts where he dealt with Indochina, all dated in 1939, were in return almost entirely devoted to very specific rather than general questions. [8] The necessity of maintaining the struggle against French imperialism and, above all, of breaking from the policy of weakening the anti-imperialist movement that was then being promoted by the Comintern as far as the Communist parties in the French and British colonies were concerned, was certainly affirmed, but without going deeply into the analysis of the actual developments taking place in Indochina. Above all, he had for a long time thought that the historically decisive battles would take place in the industrialised countries, the Soviet Union, China and India. [9]

## **3. Keeping an eye on peasant life**

[10]

Apart from the personal links of its editors with the countryside, *La Lutte* possessed its own circle of correspondents, who were often village school teachers, sometimes freed political prisoners sent back to their villages who could not start secret activity again because they were watched, or young people, the educated unemployed, of whom an official report in 1936 deplored that they were not assimilable by the established order of the village:

*True pariahs, they could not be classified amongst the dan, and they were rejected by native society which despised them, and which they in turn despised.*

In addition, *La Lutte* could count upon the hidden support of the underground militants of the Communist Party.

This peasant implantation of a workers' organisation was not peculiar to the *La Lutte* group, but was an historic characteristic of Vietnamese Communism. From this period it had a different sociological profile compared to the great Communist parties of the interwar period, the French or German for example. This spread of workers' ideas in peasant or semi-peasant circles certainly echoes the Chinese experience, and even calls to mind the influence of Socialism or Anarchism amongst the workers in semi-rural industry, which played a key role in the nineteenth century in the workers' revolutions and in the birth of trade unionism in Europe. [11] And as far as *La Lutte* is concerned, we must appreciate with more precision the true influence of the legal movement in the rural milieu. It would not perhaps be too much of an exaggeration to say that because of its more obvious urban character, it was able to build an underground Communist organisation.

Its influence was weak amongst the peasantry of Transbassac, but pretty solidly established in the provinces of central Cochin China, that semi-circle which went around the Jonc plain and its moonscape countryside. It was there that *La Lutte* people found both an audience and information about the countryside.

#### **4. Two electoral campaigns**

[12]

From February to May 1935, Cochin China saw a continuous electoral campaign. The *La Lutte* people came near to success in the first round, and carried it off easily in the second.

*La Lutte's* campaign for the colonial elections on 3 and 17 March had only propagandist aims. The group had hardly any serious hope of success, and only put up six candidates, three Communists and three Trotskyists, in the Eastern and Central Provinces. [13] It was, however, not completely absent elsewhere. At Vinhlong, in the third constituency, the advocate Duong Van Giau, a friend of Ta Thu Thau and the group's lawyer, was elected deputy in the central provinces, thanks to the support of the Cao-daists, and another independent candidate Phan Khac Giang, in the fifth constituency (Cantho), affirmed his sympathies for *La Lutte*. Even if the constitutionalists were re-elected nearly everywhere, the elections still represented quite a success for legal Communism. [14] In contrast to the dull campaign of the rural gentry, the *La Lutte* people had shown unequalled cohesion and vigour, and imposed a quite different kind of electoral competition.

As can be read in the confidential report on the election, the Trotskyist leader Ta Thu Thau once again showed himself to be the real head of the revolutionary organisations. After getting to know thoroughly the electoral legislation, they mobilised all the resources of the legal party and its sympathisers, and made contact with clandestine organisations.

After carefully explaining their manner of working on the edge of legality without ever openly breaking the law, they gave everybody different tasks. Some had to make collections among workers who were not electors, collecting the “sinews of war”, whilst others had the jobs of editing papers and leaflets, propaganda and information. [15]

The group was refused the right to organise meetings, but knew how to get its programme known amongst the middle bourgeoisie and the small peasants of the centre and the East. In each county town *La Lutte* had its propagandists, who went by bicycle through the countryside carrying posters, personally visiting each elector, distributing thousands of leaflets, and organising meetings and local support groups. [16] The three principal slogans of the candidates, the ‘Three Whales’ of the revolutionary movement, were first the Amnesty [17], secondly, raising wages, dividing up the great estates, and freedom for the trade union movement, and thirdly, the installation of peoples’ power. They had a real impact. For the first time in Indochina an election took place with a radical challenge to the established political order, and on the claim to a parliament elected by universal suffrage. *La Lutte* had put the problems of ordinary people at the centre of its campaign, and supported a detailed programme of immediate demands. [18] It opposed to the friendly relations of the constitutionalist politics with the French administration a quite different conception of parliamentary activity, and tore to pieces the image of the Colonial Council, saying:

*Can it be said that the Colonial Council represents the people, as it has no power? Even if it did have any of the powers of any European parliament, it would be powerless without a movement organised by the people. We must send to the Colonial Council representatives who can talk loudly to the whole people from the parliamentary tribune and who will help to organise the conquest of People’s Power.* [19]

They vigorously fought the constitutionalists, all of whom sparred with the *La Lutte* people, which earned them a stern call to order from the authorities. The elections of March 1935 marked the end of part of the electoral base of the constitutionalists, in particular the young people of the towns:

*The constitutionalists, taking note of their political work, only pull behind them their personal friends or very respectable electors. They have become leaders, destroyed by their own success, whose supporters, over time, have left them, without yet being replaced by new elements.* [20]

The divorce between the conservatism of the supporters of Bui Quang Chieu and the quickening rhythm of change in the country had become irreversible.

The municipal elections in Saigon of 6 and 12 May accelerated the process. The tactics and general campaign themes of the group were unchanged. *La Lutte* raised the question of the chaos of the colonial city, the growing imbalance between the general underprovision of the urban area and the growth of its working class population, the absence of any cheap housing policy, and the misery of the inhabitants of the shanty towns. The government noticed the reception by the urban masses of this new political language. “For the first time,” they wrote in a report, “they were spoken to in a language made for them.” [21]

## **5. La Lutte’s first balance sheet**

[22]

After 21 months of existence, *La Lutte* appeared as a vigorous political movement which had gone beyond the stage of a simple propaganda group. The confidential reports then used expressions about it which reflected this growth: “legal Communist party” or, “legal movement”. Their tone was

alarmist. All emphasised the dominant influence on the audience that the group was in the process of acquiring in the political life of the South.

What, then, was *La Lutte*'s character? Numerically it was growing. However, one must not see it as a political organism of the European type, highly organised and openly displaying its forces. *La Lutte* can hardly be understood with the help of today's categories of French political sociology. The party, which was actually part of the legal movement, was limited to a strict minimum – elected representatives and journalists – but many militants worked secretly under its direction; plenty of more or less anonymous friends and sympathisers, workers, clerks, school students, village school masters, and smallholders, brought it decentralised and benevolent assistance. On the other hand, it offered a welcoming organisation to ex-political prisoners who were too carefully watched when they returned from France or the Soviet Union to be able to take part in underground organisations. They carried on three activities: the correspondence and collection of information, the circulation of the journal and giving an oral translation of it, and propaganda activity during elections or strikes.

This loose and open structure represented the beginning of the semilegal movements which developed in Indochina during the period of the Popular Front, and the future of which the group foresaw. [23] It permitted great flexibility and popular initiative, which compensated for the weakness of the official group. *La Lutte* functioned as a semimovement deprived of an internal organisation. After it came out of its initial isolation, the circulation of the journal grew a little. Its sale was more than 1,500 copies at the start of the autumn of 1935, a number only appreciated by noting the tiny public Indochinese press. In reality, such a small circulation represented several thousand readers and 'listeners', and an indeterminate number of ordinary sympathisers. The cohesion of the group was its strength. Differences were sorted out by discussion. [24] Thus, as a reader wrote, after the electoral success of 1935, "the political tendencies of the workers' movement came together". [25]

*La Lutte* had a strong attraction in urban society. It re-established the bases for continuous Communist activity in Saigon. What were they? Above all, they were the working class and youth. The group had succeeded in attracting the attention of the workers and the coolies who were crushed by the crisis and by the cumulative effects of capitalist and pre-capitalist methods of exploitation. It was a real part of the workers' movement at the moment that it was retaking the offensive. The administration saw in its militants the "recognised advisors of the needy class". [26] Its working class activity was spread further in May 1936 with the creation of study circles of workers [27], of which the first, for the workers in the Arsenal, met on 16 June at Nguyen Van Nguyen's house. It is true that they had to stop the meetings in July, as its members feared they would be sacked. On the other hand, *La Lutte* had published a series of pamphlets called "The Social Library" in Quoc Ngu, of which the first, edited by Nguyen Van Tao, was sold out in a few days. [28]

The fusion between the intellectuals and the advanced elements of the proletariat was well on its way. *La Lutte* was equally at work among the youth in the schools. The group, which knew how to run its political work through the network of precapitalist socio-economic structures (the market, the shed at the crossroads, the artisan's workshop) was now present inside the national cultural system, notably within the private schools. [29] The Trotskyists of *La Lutte* taught in these places, and had great authority there, above all, Ta Thu Thau, a well-known lecturer by whom young people and their parents wanted to be taught. [30] On several occasions the paper had defended the pupils. [31] It was circulated in the vocational schools, at the industrial and the mechanic schools, and at the Lycee Petrus Ky where Nguyen Van Nguyen led a Marxist study circle in April 1936. In the course of the following years a great number of these students would come to strengthen the legal organisations.

Legal and illegal operations constituted two dialectical aspects related to the same political



phenomenon – that is to say, the rooting of Communism inside the body of Vietnam society. The clandestine activists helped the legal ones [32], and these prolonged and amplified the partial battles which the former organised, such as those of the tobacco growers. *La Lutte* was also a political substitute. Whatever its vitality, the Indochinese Communist Party was convalescent, having to use most of its resources to regroup, and was not without the inherent sectarian tendencies of a period of defeat or isolation. *La Lutte* gave to the party the continuity of Communist action, and despite certain extremist statements, had shown sufficient flexibility to pull moderate and patriotic opinion towards the Communists.

At the same time, the Communist movement had undergone another mutation. Until then, its mass basis had been above all in the countryside, the towns being the strongholds of the colonial system. After 1932 the legal movement enabled it to transfer Communism's centre of gravity to urban surroundings, and to rebalance the relationship between urban and peasant struggles. Urban action allowed the revolutionaries to spread modern forms of political combat through the countryside, and to give them inspiration and continuity. In the pre-war period, and with the birth of the crisis of colonialism, the urban centre had for a time acquired the key role; a new dialectic of town and country which would have its full effect in the revolution of August 1945, which was simultaneous in both the city and the villages. It was only 1946, with a new historical structure – that of the long war – which reversed the balance between the town and the countryside.

These transformations favoured the reorganisation of clandestine Communist organisations after the repressions of April-May 1935 in the South and Annam, and of August-September 1935 in the North. It was precisely in Cochin China that their reconstruction had been most rapid. From July clandestine propaganda was renewed in Saigon, Giandinh, Rachgia, Bac Lieu and Travinh, and in at least eight provinces by July 1936. [33] Underground Communism was weak, but its ability to resist outweighed the efforts of the police to root it out, and gave alarm to the highest levels in Hanoi. On their side, the Trotskyists had been able to rebuild an embryonic clandestine organisation, the League of International Communists (LCI) founded in July 1935. [34] They criticised the strategy of Popular Fronts, and demanded the formation of a mass workers' party and an anti-imperialist front uniting the different tendencies of the workers' movement. At the time of the arrest of their most active leaders [35], most notably Luu Sanh Hanh, Ho Huu Tuong and Ngo Van Xuyet, they had recruited militants in about 40 workplaces.

## **6. The anti-imperialist United Front**

[36]

There was hardly any lasting consensus between the Vietnamese Trotskyists and Communists on the question of political strategy. In Saigon the Trotskyists were inspired by the conclusions of the manifesto *Whither France?*, which Trotsky had published in October. The last lap of the race between Fascism and the workers' revolution had started: no third way was possible but only short detours, which led to one or the other. In the end a recourse to violence was inevitable.

In June the Vietnamese Trotskyists made a similar analysis of the Indochinese situation in their illegal papers and then, only a little later, in their legal journal *Le Militant*, the first four numbers of which were issued between 1 and 21 September 1936.

The economic recovery and the French crisis could only lead to another mass movement in Vietnam, which, supported by the offensive of the French working class, would shake the colonial system. They envisaged the appearance of a revolutionary situation in Indochina and prepared for it. The illegal review *Thuong Truc Cach Mang* (Permanent Revolution) of the Lien Doan Cong San Quoc Te

had put forward the idea of creating action committees in the spring of 1936, which had already been advocated by Trotsky in November 1935. [37] The Trotskyist underground militants thought that in Indochina these people's committees would allow an offensive mass movement to be formed, and so they started to set them up. There was perfect synchronisation of analysis between them and their western comrades. Whilst the Parisian proletariat was occupying the factories, Trotsky ended his article of 9 June with the words "the French revolution has begun"; in Saigon, even as the arrest of their people was taking place on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the illegal Trotskyists circulated an appeal to go forward:

*Comrades, several hundreds of thousands of French workers of the metropolis have struck and occupied the factories. Let us follow them, let us rise up in the factories and plantations in each province and village. Let the workers and peasants elect delegates to form action committees. Follow the workers of France! Down with the imperialist Indochinese government! Long live the independence of Indochina! Seize the lands of the landlords! Long live French and Indochinese Communism!* [38]

The Trotskyist analysis thus included a revolutionary outcome for all the developments of June 1936. The logic of the crisis in the metropolis would set a date for the liberation of the Indochinese peoples. The French revolution would open the way to the Indochinese revolution [39], and they must aim for the conquest of power, and never lose sight of internationalism. Now was not the time to have confidence in the government of Leon Blum, indeed one had constantly to distrust it. In the same way the Trotskyists reaffirmed the double necessity of making practical agreements with the Vietnamese big bourgeoisie, and of maintaining the class struggle, so they thought of the United Front as a tactic of simultaneous alliance and struggle. [40] Anything was possible in France and Spain, and all this would happen in Indochina ... [41]

## **7. The Action Committees**

[42]

The dialectic of the illegal and the legal – "the coordination of open activity and the activity of our party" – according to a document of the PCI – had meant a rapid growth in the movement of the provisional Action Committees. The *La Lutte* group did almost all the work at the centre. They printed innumerable leaflets on behalf of the Action Committees, and in their own name, notably the manifesto Dong Duong Dai Hoi (Indochinese Congress) [43], and their militants knew how to use the most varied forms of oral propaganda (for example, they got theatre groups to put in passages in their plays which mentioned the aims of the Congress), they organised many meetings in the provinces, and started up some of the Committees in the Saigon-Cholon area. [44]

*La Lutte* also published the pamphlet *Cach Lam Viec Cua Banh Hanh Dong* (Method of Work of an Action Committee), an interesting guide to the recently formed Action Committees [45], by the Trotskyist militant Dao Hung Long, just released from prison, and a member of the committee for the convening of an Indochinese Congress. In order not to have to ask for legal authorisation, these Committees could never have more than 19 members. This obligation made discussions and decentralised political initiative easier, and in this Ta Thu Thau saw some of the conditions for success. He foresaw getting thousands of such Committees established. They did not have formal constitutions, and legally had to be temporary, but were, nonetheless, destined to become "permanent organisations of the masses". The pamphlet recommended limiting the numbers of "organisers" to five, and reserving the other places to "representatives of the masses". The spread of the Committees had to obey the rule of fission. When a Committee reached 20 members it had to



split.

Each Committee had great liberty of action. According to the pamphlet – which perhaps put forward a Trotskyist vision of the movement – there would be no leaders or central committee [46], whilst conferences of the Committees would enable coordination and political debate to take place; it recommended having a Committee in each village. Each of these organisations elected a Secretariat which met at least once a week, organised the expression of popular demands, edited a discussion bulletin, drew up lists of resolutions, and arranged to elect the conference delegates. *La Lutte* would manage external affairs both with the French left of the metropolis and Saigon [47], and with the Vietnamese press in the rest of Indochina. It brought valuable help to the foundation in Hanoi of the legal Communist group Travail in September 1936, which resulted in a northerly extension of *La Lutte*'s formula (but with different politics) and of the Congress movement. [48]

The secret organisations played an equal if not more important role. From outside they exercised a critical check on the actions of the group, a double entry check since there were two political lines in the Congress. *Le Militant*, the legal paper of the Trotskyists, warned against holding any illusions in the southern bourgeoisie. [49] The Trotskyists, still just starting their clandestine organisation, actively pushed for the preparation of an Indochinese Congress, and the formation of Action Committees [50], in which they saw the embryonic structures for a situation of dual power.

In the weeks following *La Lutte*'s call, the clandestine Communist organisations set themselves the task of multiplying the Action Committees in the immediate future. [51] The Bureau Abroad [Communist Headquarters – Eds.] followed the development of the campaign and the action of *La Lutte* with attention. Its resolution of 3 October [52] commented favourably on this, but criticised what the Bureau considered as clumsiness: the article of Nguyen An Ninh which denounced the manoeuvres of the President of the Chamber of the Representatives of Tonkin, and the caustic remarks of *La Lutte* about the 'bourgeoisie'. [53] But beyond this critical comment on the movement, the ICP, by far the biggest revolutionary party, favoured the spread of Action Committees with all its forces, the great majority of such owing their existence to it.

In short, the ex-political prisoners who started to return to their villages really made up the backbone of numerous Committees. Because of the surveillance to which they were subject, they were all struck off to run the Committees which, let us repeat, were legal. The police made a partial list of the very numerous ex-political prisoners among the activists at the end of September 1936. In the village of An Truong (Travinh), the old centre of the peasant movement of the South and an area of harsh repression after the great demonstration of 1 August 1931, the Action Committee was founded after the return of a group of freed prisoners who by then had a relationship with *La Lutte*. Ta Thu Thau was seen there on several occasions at the beginning of 1937. [54] Another police source reckoned that 25 per cent of all the members of the Committees were ex-prisoners. [55]

## **8. Repression**

[56]

The colonial government, already certain of the home government's support, immediately struck at the vital centres of the Congress movement. On 21 September the headquarters of *La Lutte* and the homes of Ta Thu Thau and Nguyen An Ninh were seized and searched. Both were imprisoned. On 3 October it was the turn of Nguyen Van Tao. Three days later their demand to be freed on bail was rejected.

The relationship between the Communists and the Trotskyists came under pressure following the

appearance in *Le Militant* of harsh criticisms of Soviet foreign policy and the French Popular Front, and became more bitter in October. On 8 October the Trotskyist weekly made public its decision to suspend publication in order not to handicap that of *La Lutte*. [57] The Central Committee of the ICP added to its circular of 3 November this conciliatory preface:

*If the Trotskyists sincerely enter the Popular Front, we will welcome them with pleasure, but we will always be careful, because we only believe in peoples' deeds, and not their words.* [58]

At the time of this step backward, *La Lutte* appeared more than ever irreplaceable, even in a milieu strongly aligned with the Communist movement. It is remarkable enough that it also had good relationships with the Cao-daists. The government accused the sect of Pham Cong Tac of providing campaign funds to the group [59], a fact which evidently is unproven, but it is symptomatic that Ta Thu Than, Nguyen An Ninh and Nguyen Van Tao had, at the invitation of Ho Phap, joined in the mourning ceremonies for Le Van Trung at Tay Ninh on 26 November. [60]

The arrest of the militants of *La Lutte*, and the hunger strike that they undertook for 11 days from 24 October, caused huge indignation in Vietnamese opinion, both in Saigon and the countryside. In the villages close to Saigon, the merchants and the hackney cab drivers [61] struck on 5 November. In Saigon demonstrations were under way, and the popularity of *La Lutte* had never been so great. [62] The isolation of the French authorities was at its height.

The movement for the calling of the Indochinese Congress was effectively opposed by the neo-colonial policy of the Popular Front. However, Marius Moutet was far from having approved the repressive operations of the colonial government, whom he accused in a long letter of 24 November of having taken unnecessary risks in keeping in prison "three politically important individuals" [63], and of having exaggerated the danger. Pushed by the minister, the colonial government went into reverse and relaxed its grip. It then allowed the publication at Hue of the *Nhanh Lua* (The Rice Seed) of Nguyen Khoa Van on 24 October, whilst on 5 November Nguyen An Ninh, Nguyen Van Tao and Ta Thu Thau were freed. [64] The case against *La Lutte* was also dropped on the orders of the minister. [65] As all three left the main prison, the first great wave of strikes in Vietnamese history had already started.

## **9. The strikes**

[66]

The setting at liberty of the three leaders of *La Lutte* on 5 November opened the second phase of the Popular Front period in Indochina. It marked a pause in the political struggle continuing since August between the national movement and the neo-colonial policy of the Popular Front. This respite itself reflected the extension of the struggle to the terrain of class conflict. From the end of October 1936 to the end of August 1937, Vietnam was shaken by an unprecedented wave of strikes without an equivalent in any other French colony. The Minister of Colonies had been forced to drop the case against *La Lutte* precisely because he feared that the political crisis would develop into a social explosion.

In the same way the strikes imposed pressure on the legal revolutionary movement. The tasks of the hour became to aid the strikers and to organise solidarity around them. From this came the two key tasks which appeared imminent at the end of the summer – the legalisation of the Congress campaign and the proclamation of political democracy.

In the course of the strikes it was clear that the influence of Trotskyism and Communism among the

working class was progressing with giant steps. The strike offensive itself consisted of a great spontaneous impulse. Often the initiative came from the depths of the proletariat, and resulted from collective consciousness, but this 'spontaneity' had joined up with the activity of organisations, and it would have been vain to oppose them. The double structure of the Communist movement, including Trotskyism, had played a profound role, and had given coherence to the push of the working class. Even if documentation is almost totally lacking, one cannot doubt that long before October 1936 the secret trade union nuclei reconstituted by the ICP since 1934 had taken over a large number of strikes, such as that of the sawmen. The November 1936 issue of *Giai Phong*, the underground paper of the Interior Committee of the ICP, gave credit to Communist militants for the leadership of strikes in the distilleries, the clothing industry, the sawmills, potteries and soapworks, but recognised that: "Although the mass movement is boiling up, many strikes and working class struggles have escaped the control of the Communist Party." [67]

In other cases it was Trotskyist militants who had organised the strikes. [68] From the evidence, all the underground organisations, whatever their tendency, had abandoned slow recruitment in favour of joining the workers' spirited offensive.

The activity of *La Lutte* was only a little more understood. Official documents blamed it, with malicious exaggeration, for being responsible for most of the strikes in Saigon. The political report of December 1936 thus conjured up:

*... the double game of La Lutte, the double texture of its work: on the one hand carrying on outside activities on behalf of certain trades and substituting itself for the CGT, which does not exist here, justified by the need to modernise workplace legislation, and the necessity for applying this to the working population in Cochinchina, which is backward on a world scale, and on the other hand carrying on secret underground work and profound anti-French opposition.* [69]

In the end, one of the results of the strike movement was the formation of important underground unions, of which the police took notice at the end of December 1936. The Communists had created the *Tong Cong Hoi* (General Workers' Union), and were represented in at least 11 important enterprises, notably the Arsenal, the F&CI and Shell [70], and had published at the end of January the first number of *Hop Nhut* (The Union). By 1 March 1937 they numbered 800 members in Saigon and 700 others in several sympathising groups. [71] In addition the underground Trotskyist militants were in the process of getting an important audience in the Saigon working class. They were active in the factories, notably the Arsenal – where they were more influential than the Communists [72] – on the railways, in the water and electric companies, and had formed another embryonic general union, the *Lien Hiep Uy Tho Thuyen* (The General Workers' Federation) which, after November 1936, regularly published the monthly *Lien Hiep* (The Union), a union propaganda organ. [73]

## **10. The break**

[74]

The split in *La Lutte* in June 1937 had led within two months to the ruin of the political project that was conceived the year before by the Vietnamese Communists and Trotskyists. The event is not a superficial one in Vietnamese political history. In a sense it opened the way to the ideological reorientation of Communism, which culminated in the foundation of the Vietminh, and through this established new roots in the national revolutionary tradition. Crucially, however, this split brought into play the principle factors which affected the general evolution of the revolutionary parties: the changes in the dynamism of the mass movements on the basis of doctrinal choice, the personality of human beings, and the impact of the policy of the colonial government and of the Comintern on the

course of the national movement, etc. It is still necessary to add that, like all splits during the Stalinist epoch, it harboured no fewer emotional repercussions than reasoned elements. Their combination would result in the widening of the split into an irreconcilable conflict, culminating in its tragic end in 1945.

Underground Trotskyism did not have the same strength. In Vietnam, as in many other countries, it seems, moreover, to have always kept a group structure without ever truly acquiring that of a solidly organised and geographically spread party. [75] Ta Thu Thau was above all an orator, perhaps by personal temperament and certainly as a result of his role in legal political life. Nevertheless, since the scuttling of *Militant* in October 1936, the illegal Trotskyist group of Ho Huu Tuong, because of the difference in its experience in 1931-32, had succeeded in providing a complete system of both legal and underground publications, and it was in the process of becoming a force to be reckoned with. [76] It published its constitution in the May 1937 issue of its paper, *Tien Quan* (The Vanguard). The Trotskyists had won young followers in the Saigon factories in which they had done their best to build trade union committees. These, the embryos of a working class trades unionism, absorbed most of their efforts, apart from propagandist action in Saigon-Cholon, as well as in some central provinces like Mytho and Travinh [77], and some help they gave to the Action Committees.

In the spring of 1937 their members had set up a trade union federation of Nam Ky (Lien Uy Tho Thuyen), whose rules were published and adopted on 1 May. [78] It had active organisers in at least 39 workplaces in Saigon and Cholon: the Arsenal, where they were particularly influential, the French Est-Asiatique, the FACI, the railways, rubber manufacture, the tramways company, Indochina distilleries at Binh Tay, the water and electricity company, Franco Asiatique oil, the rice mills at Hiep Xuong, Duc Hiep, Extreme Orient and Hang Thai at Cholon, among the dockers, the labourers in the ricemills, and among the workers in the potteries and the sugar mills of the provinces Cholon, Giadinh and Thudaumot. [79]

Fairly numerous documents show that the Trotskyist worker militants and their sympathisers played a leading part in the organisation of strikes in 1936-37 in the South. In the absence of sufficiently conclusive pieces of evidence it is difficult to be more positive, but it is probable that their role was considerable in the great strikes from May to July 1937. [80] The Vietnamese Trotskyist movement – the expression already corresponds to reality – had from the beginning a successful implantation in the Saigon region, whose importance moreover can be measured by the frequent warnings against Trotskyism in the underground Communist press.

This double development had significant consequences. The underground groups now had the necessary resources to keep the autonomous legal organisations alive, but the latter had to show themselves to be more willing to conform to the orientation of the underground groups. The relative independence from which *La Lutte* had benefited could only be put into question in the long term.

The aborting of the Indochinese Congress and the disappointments caused by the Indochinese policy of the Leon Blum government had brought into question the unconditional acceptance of the Trotskyist and Communist lines. Since the reappearance of *Militant*, the legal Trotskyist weekly, on 23 March 1937, the publications of the Indochinese Communist Party denounced the campaign conducted by the Trotskyists against the Popular Front, and in parallel, against the Moscow Trials. At the centre of this polemic there was the attitude to be adopted vis-a-vis the Popular Front. Thus the 15 May 1937 issue of the Trotskyist paper *Tien Quan*:

*The supporters of the Third International persist in supporting the Popular Front, alleging that it is not responsible for the actions of the Popular Front government and the government of Indochina. The reality is that without the support of the Popular Front, there would not be a Popular Front government, and that, without the confidence accorded by it to Brevie, and without the confidence*

given in his turn to the local administrative heads and so on, there would not be the repression from which the Indochinese are suffering. [81]

This analysis of the real relations between the different levels of the pyramid of colonial power undoubtedly rings true. For the Trotskyists, imperialism under a Popular Front government was still imperialism. There were thus no new variables to be introduced into the tactics of the revolutionary movement. After 1936, just as before it, these consisted in preparing the working class and the peasantry through the daily experience of class struggle and anti-imperialist conflicts for the distant future perspective of a revolution with a proletarian direction and content. All the same, it remained for Vietnam to resolve the near-Sisyphean tasks which were posed at the same historical moment, and presented to all the sections of the international Trotskyist movement, that is the construction of workers' parties, at once both revolutionary and connected to the masses.

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## Footnotes

[1] From pp.105-7.

[2] Let us above all recall that the group included men who were radical patriots such as Nguyen An Ninh, Tran Van Thach and Le Van Thu. There is nothing to suggest that they felt uneasy with the Trotskyist or Communist critique of nationalism, and everything to suggest that their sympathy for the two varieties of Communism took root in their patriotism.

[3] Significant of this reserve is the restrictive title of the most important of these articles, *Let us Talk about National Aspirations*.

[4] From pp.140-1.

[5] He participated in the first activities of the Vietnamese Trotskyists in Paris (he was arrested in the course of the demonstration outside the Elysee), and he was active in the Comité d'amnistie aux Indochinois.

[6] The League Against Imperialism came out of the Liga Gegen Koloniale Unterdrückung (which emerged in Berlin in 1925), and was founded at the Brussels Congress (10-15 February 1927). Ta Thu Than spoke at the Second Congress (Frankfurt 20-30 July 1929), and Tran Van Thach wrote in the first number of its bulletin in 1928. In 1934 it had a Vietnamese section in Paris with a paper Phan De (*The Anti-Imperialist*). Its French section disappeared in 1936.

[7] According to Pierre Naville, *La Lutte* appeared too 'populist' and they had reservations about the alliance with the Communists.

[8] Or at least those that have been published.

[9] Naville recalls that the correspondence which he had with Trotsky defended the opposite idea, according to which the major crises of French capitalism would be found on its colonial periphery. Trotsky did not allow himself to be convinced.

[10] From pp.199-200.

[11] We should recall the Jura Federation in the First International.

[12] From pp.253-56.

[13] The administration did not allow Nguyen Van Tao, Tran Van Thach, Nguyen Van Nguyen and Ho Hun Tuong to stand, as they were not old enough, but they stood for the principles of *La Lutte*.

[14] The following were elected: Tran Van Kha, Vo Ha Tri, Tran Van Sang (first constituency); Nguyen Phan Long, Huynh Van Chin and Nguyen Dang Lien (second); Bui Quang Chien, Thuong Cong Thuan at Gocong, Bentre, Travinh and Vinhlong; Le Quang Liem, Nguyen Tan Duoc (fourth, Rachgia, Longxuyen, Chaudoc Hatien and Sadoc); Huynh Ngoc Nhuan, Tran Trinh Huy, Truong Dai Luong (fifth, Cantho, Soctrang, Baclicu); Duong Van Giao (in the third) and Pham Van Tiec (in the fourth) seem to have been the only independents elected.

[15] Report of Governor Pages, 11 March 1935.

[16] n Cai Bó the electoral address of *La Lutte* was written by hand and taken to the electors' homes by schoolboys. On 1 March the police seized 8,000 leaflets in Vietnamese at the printshop, but *La Lutte* was able to produce several dozens of thousands of leaflets.

[17] A demand personified by the candidature at Giandinh of Nguyen Van Nguyen, who had just been released from the Poulo-Condore.

[18] Let us just cite the matter that interested the peasantry - the remission of rents and debts until the end of the crisis, the division of the cong dien and the cong tho among the agricultural workers, the distribution to the poor of 300,000 hectares of abandoned rice land and the stocks of rice belonging to the dien chu, the abolition of the poll tax, and the exemption from the land tax for those with less than five hectares.

[19] *La Lutte*, 19 February 1935.

[20] Police report of 15 May 1935.

[21] Report on the Saigon electoral college sent by Pages, 9 July 1935.

[22] rom pp.263, 270-1.

[23] According to the police archives of June 1936, Ta Thu Thau had the perspective of gathering together a large legally recognised Communist Party, and would have proposed to the constitutionalists the calling of a conference of their party, which would have created a useful precedent. At the very most this is only a hypothesis.

[24] he only conflict appeared after 21 months. Tran Van Thach was opposed to the idea of negotiating with the other Vietnamese and French councillors for the election of Ta Thu Thau to the post of first assistant, and the appointment of Nguyen Van Tao and Tran Van Thach as delegates to the Administrative Council. The *La Lutte* people had spoiled their ballots at the time of the Mayor's election, and Tran Van Thach had been publicly reprimanded.

[25] *La Lutte*, 25 June 1935.

[26] Police archives, November 1935. "Mixing closely in the life of the workers, denouncing all the abuses of which the humble are victims, leading strike movements, the young men of *La Lutte* have become the idols of the Annamite population." (*L'Oeuvre Indochinoise*, Hanoi, 9 December 1935)



[27] "Ta Thu Thau had great hopes for this sort of propaganda. He thought it would be a step in reaching out to all classes of the Annamite people." (Police archives, March 1937).

[28] *Le front populaire et les aspirations des masses Indochinoises*, published 8 July 1936. Other titles were *Le Fascisme et la guerre civil en Espagne* (Fascism and the Spanish Civil War) and *Etude sommaire de la lutte des classes* (A Short Study of Class Struggle) which appeared in 1937.

[29] Founded in great number after the First World War, often at the initiative of the constitutionalists, who had at that time perhaps seen in them a way of establishing a centre of cultural resistance.

[30] Phan Van Hum taught Vietnamese language and literature at the Lyceum P. Downer, from which he was sacked in 1935 after a strike by lecturers. Ta Thu Thau taught French, ethics and history in the Institute of Huynh Khuong Ninh, Chau Thanh and at Nguyen Trong Hy school in Giadinh. Anh Van, who was his pupil, has a moving portrait of his old teacher. The police accused Ta Thu Thau of having led the pupils of Chan Thanh on a hunger strike at the end of 1934 (Police report, fourth quarter 1934) but this hardly agrees with the recollections of Anh Van (Hoang Don Tri).

[31] In particular against the tyrannical principal of the Mechanics School. See the letter from the pupils in *La Lutte*, 10 January 1935.

[32] Then the police arrested at Song Phuoc (Mytho), two militants who had escaped from Paulo-Condore who were persuading a farmer to vote for *La Lutte's* candidate. (Political report of December 1935) According to the police reports of December 1935, the leadership of the ICP in the South still hesitated in February 1935 whether to support the *La Lutte* lists, but the Bureau in exile gave Tran Van Giau the task of organising the illegal organisations' participation in *La Lutte's* campaign.

[33] At this date (June-July 1936) the police reckoned the effective members of the Indochinese Communist Party in the South to number 70, and the unions of peasants and workers to be 7,000. (Note on the ICP and unions much abbreviated ' Eds.)

[34] By Luu Sanh Hanh, released from prison at Cap St Jacques and a journalist on *Duoc Nha Nam*. The chief members of the group were the white collar worker Ngo Van Xuyet, the students Trinh Van Lau and Ngo Chinh Phen, the returnee from France, Nguyen Van Nam, the printer Ky and the coolie Don. With the help of Ho Hun Tuong from October the Ligue published the review *Cach Mang Truong Truc* (Permanent Revolution) and the paper *Tien Dao* (Vanguard).

[35] The Arsenal, the tramways, the petrol stores at Nha Be, the aerodrome at Cat Lay, etc. Their trial took place on 31 August 1936. (Seven were found guilty and sent to prison from six to 18 months).

[36] From pp.285-7.

[37] We have not been able to find this document, and we have relied on the recollections of Ho Hun Tuong and Ngo Van Xuyet.

[38] He saw in this a way of breaking what he called "the anti-revolutionary resistance of the party and trade union apparatus" and of preparing to arm the workers, anti-Fascist self-defence and the general strike. The idea of elected Action Committees had also been put forward by

Dimitrov in his report to the Seventh Congress, but was then abandoned by the Communist International. At any rate, Action Committees were created by the Vietnamese Communists for some years. Thus, at the beginning of 1936, the Provisional Committee of Nam Ky recommended the formation of Action Committees in each village against the tax system.

[39] From *Dépêche d'Indochine*, 15 June 1936.

[40] And vice-versa, we are tempted to say. But no text or document justifies this supposition.

[41] Cf. the article *A Tous* in *Le Militant*, 8 September 1936.

[42] From pp.314-318.

[43] At least that of the *La Lutte* action committee which had, according to the police, put out at least 20,000 leaflets, and which was the active antenna of the Organising Committee of the Congress.

[44] Nguyen Van So was a member with Dao Hung Long of the provisional Action Committee of the neighbourhoods of Cho Dui, Cau Ong Lien, Cau Mui, Cau Kho and Choquan. Ganofsky and several other supporters of *La Lutte* belonged to that of the outer suburb of Dakao. Tran Van Thach, Ho Huu Tuong, Ninh and Hum led the Action Committee of *La Lutte*, Nguyen Thi Luu that of the women of Saigon, Le Van Thu Ca, that at Choquan, Truong Thi Sau, wife of Nguyen An Ninh, that of the village of My Hoa, and Duong Thi Lai, wife of Phan Van Hum, the Action Committee of An Thanh (Thudaumot) etc. "The *La Lutte* group controls to our knowledge about 200 Action Committees in the Saigon-Cholon region and its outskirts." (All from police archives).

[45] Abbreviated translation in the police archives.

[46] Only this would avoid the dissolution into the party of the Committees which were more rigidly structured.

[47] Cf. the friendly exchange in *Agir*, 3 August 1936, between Ta Thu Thau and C. Metter, who attacks the *La Lutte* people for allying with the Vietnamese bourgeoisie ("the marriage of the carp and the rabbit"). Ta Thu Thau replied to him that the progressive elements of the bourgeoisie, like the working class, wanted democratic liberty, and that the Organising Committee had made provision for the French left equal to the other ethnic minorities, and invited him to take part in the *La Lutte* Action Committee. Cf. *La Lutte*, 2 and 9 September 1936.

[48] According to Ho Huu Tuong, during the summer of 1936, the legal Communist activists of Tran Huy Lieu sent Dang Thai Mai and Vo Nguyen Giap (released from prison 18 November 1931) to Saigon to consider with the *La Lutte* people the creation of a legal paper in the North. Dang Thai Mai was stopped at the frontier, but Vo Nguyen Giap was able to get to Saigon. He met Ta Thu Thau, Nguyen Van Tao, Ho Huu Tuong, etc. Hanoi being under direct French rule, it was possible to publish a French paper there. The *La Lutte* people would have passed on the name of the experienced Trotskyist militant, Huynh Van Phuong, who finished his law studies in Hanoi in 1935, and two other Trotskyist sympathisers, Tran Kim Bang and Le Cu. If the participation of the two latter in editing *Le Travail* is uncertain, that of Huynh Van Phuong did take place. So the *Travail* group had a few Trotskyists and a majority of Communists and their sympathisers, including Giap, and without counting the clandestine editors: it was in regular correspondence with *La Lutte*. *Le Travail* came out from 1 November 1936 to 16 April 1937. Tran Van Thach wrote several articles for it. From the summer of 1937 until 1945 there was a tiny Trotskyist

group in the North.

[49] Cf. for example *Bilans et perspectives*, 15 September 1936. The paper, edited by Ho Huu Tuong, contains Trotsky's main articles written at the time.

[50] Among the Action Committees led by Trotskyists which the police mention are those of the Saigon pupils led by the young Nguyen Van Cu, that of Giarai (Baclieu), organised by Nguyen Van Dinh, who had returned from France, the provincial Action Committee of Camau with Tran Hai Thoi, the provincial Action Committee of Cantho in which Tran Van Hoa (alias Tu Thai Mau) was active, and that of Thoi Thanh (O Mon, Cantho province) with Tran Van Mao.

[51] Cf. the leaflet *Tuyen Ngon* (Manifesto), spread massively through the South.

[52] *Doi voi phai phu hao* (With Regard to the Bourgeoisie), op. cit.

[53] To which articles did this allude? However, let us quote Ta Thu Thau's sarcasm to Nguyen Phan Long on 7 November, who had demanded "stopping all propaganda relating to class struggle, for we work in a spirit of concord". The reply of Than was "that is a little inexact, for we organise numerous public meetings all the same to accustom the masses to this revelation". (Police note of 3 October 1936)

[54] Police sources.

[55] Note on revolutionary propaganda in Indochina, April 1937. Police sources.

[56] Police sources.

[57] *La Lutte*, 1 October 1936.

[58] *With Regard to the Bourgeoisie*, op. cit.

[59] Political report of December 1936 by Pages.

[60] In the Chomoi region the Action Committees contained quite a number of Caodaists, *La Lutte*, 25 March 1937.

[61] Note by translator: I have translated 'cochers de "boites d'allumettes"' as hackney cab drivers, since a coach which is a 'box of matches' seems to be that.

[62] "Ta Thu Than, Nguyen An Ninh and Nguyen Van Tao have become legendary heroes for their hunger strike which they undertook during their incarceration" wrote the police (December 1936). When they came out, the Vietnamese journalists organised a party in their honour and declared them to be "inspirers of Vietnam".

[63] "If things had gone wrong you would have had to account for the situation in which you had put the government", he wrote about the hunger strike of the *La Lutte* leaders.

[64] They stopped their hunger strike at the demand of Duong Bach Mai (cf. his telegram of 3 November 1936. "Good policy. Suspend the hunger strike.") in order not to upset his mission.

[65] Cable of 21 November 1936.

[66] From pp.333-5, 367.

[67] *Giai Phong*, 7 November 1936.

[68] According to the underground fellow-travelling paper *Tan Cong* (The Offensive), 1 February 1937 (in police archives), the workers' list of demands in COFAT had been drawn up by the Trotskyists.

[69] Report sent by Pages.

[70] Police archives January 1937. Other enterprises concerned were the Garage Scama, the Ardin printworks, Le Bucheron (timber), Garages Chamer, the Port of Commerce shipping, Stacindo (piping and building materials manufacturers) and the Orsini Shipping Co.

[71] Police report derived from ICP documents.

[72] A note by the police states (even if this is doubtful), that the underground Trotskyist group, the Lien doan Cong San Quo to Chu Nghia (League of Communist Internationalists) had become numerically the rival of the underground Communist party.

[73] Police files February and March 1937.

[74] From pp.395, 398-400.

[75] A hypothesis which a study of Vietnamese Trotskyism at its height between 1937 and 1939 would be able to verify.

[76] *Tap Chi Noi Bo* (Workers' Fight), no.1, 1 December 1936, *Lien Hiep* (Workers' Union), no.2, 4 December 1936. On 1 February *Tho Thuyen Tranh Dau* was replaced by *Tien Quan* (The Vanguard) which appeared regularly until the autumn of 1937. Furthermore, Ho Huu Tuong ran the publishing firm Quang Min (The Light) and edited *Le Militant* (no.5, 23 March 1937) of which the managing editor was the French returnee Nguyen Van Cu.

[77] At Nam Ky in the North, Trotskyism was still organised in illegal conditions.

[78] Police files.

[79] They were discovered during a police raid on an underground meeting in the village of Binh Hoa Xa (Giadinh). Forty-three delegates from workplaces were arrested. (Police files)

[80] See Appendix 24 in the original.

[81] In July 1937 the police reckoned that "there was increasingly a larger working class element in the Trotskyist party than in the Dong During Cong San Dang", which cannot be proved on the evidence available. But a more detailed analysis of these sources, which is not part of this work, would throw a general light on the broad evaluation of the national movement.