

'A nation's victory' from L'Humanité (24 January 1973)

Caption: On 24 January 1973, the French communist daily newspaper L'Humanité welcomes the agreement recognising the independence and sovereignty of Vietnam.

Source: L'Humanité. Organe Central du Parti Communiste Français. 24.01.1973, n° 8 844. Paris: L'Humanité. "La victoire d'un peuple", auteur:Fajon, Etienne , p. 1.

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A nation's victory

by Étienne Fajon

At this long-awaited moment, all our thoughts are with our brothers in Vietnam.

The nation's devastated landscapes have been ravaged by war for 27 years. After the failure of the French colonialists and the fall of the puppet governments installed by foreign powers, from 1962 the country faced direct intervention from the US imperialist giant.

In this conflict, the longest in the United States' history, it made massive use of the most modern and the most barbaric methods of destruction. It lost tens of thousands of men and an entire arsenal that was thought to be invincible. It squandered vast sums of money, somewhere in the region of 200 billion dollars. All in vain.

And now the weapons that once rained down on the country are to be replaced by the silence of peace — a silence that most Vietnamese have never experienced.

The peace agreement recognises Vietnam's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. That was the aim of the superhuman struggle of its people from day one. And today this is their victory.

It is a victory that has been won through immense sacrifice. The air forces of the aggressors dropped seven million tons of bombs on Indo-China, three times what was used in all the theatres of operation throughout the Second World War. Their artillery and navy fired 7.5 million tons of shells and rockets. Two million hectares of forest and farmland were destroyed by toxic herbicides.

And most importantly, according to figures provided by the United States itself, the massacre of civilians left some 350 000 dead and almost a million wounded, in addition to those killed in battle.

The Vietnamese people, few in number and stunted in their economic development by colonial oppression, held firm and overcame, thanks to their unwavering courage and ingenuity and to the judicious, strong leadership of the Vietnamese Workers' Party and the National Liberation Front.

They held firm and overcame with the political, military, economic and technical assistance of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, and with the solidarity of the forces of progress and peace on all continents.

This victory has considerable international implications. It demonstrates that in this day and age it has become impossible for even the most powerful imperialist forces to subjugate a nation that is determined to gain or maintain its freedom.

Nevertheless, it would be a grave error to conclude that the Vietnamese people are no longer in need of assistance.

The United States will sign the agreement, but we must make sure that they and their agents comply with its terms and apply its clauses.

And if lasting peace is to be secured, Vietnam must bind up its wounds, rebuild its war-ravaged towns and villages, restore its national economy and move forward towards the happiness that it so richly deserves. And to do so it needs everyone's support.

Our Vietnamese brothers have paid tribute in all manner of circumstances to the strength and steadfastness of the effective solidarity shown by the French Communist Party and the people of France for their just cause. May we reassure them, now that their heroic efforts have been rewarded with peace, that this solidarity will not fade.

As the peace agreement is implemented and Vietnam rebuilds itself, we will remain vigilant and ready to act.