

have been too much vitiated by the sneers of Marxist amoralism, his consideration for the freedom of speech and writing, are all essentially liberal virtues.

In one of his essays there is a portrait of Dickens which might not inappropriately be applied to Orwell himself.

"He is laughing, with a touch of anger in his laughter, but no triumph, no malignity. It is the face of a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is *generously angry*—in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence—a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our soul." The open fighting, the generous anger, the freedom of intelligence, are all characteristics of Orwell's own writing. And that very failure to penetrate to the fundamental causes of social evils, to present a consistent moral and social criticism of the society in which they lived, which characterised the nineteenth century liberals, has become Orwell's own main limitation.

The Story of Viet Nam

Paris, October 12

"ASIA is awakening and not all the forces of Imperialism can turn back this onward march of history." This is my conviction after having spent two hours in the company of one of the greatest Asiatic democratic leaders since the late Dr. Sun Yat Sen. The man, Ho Chi Minh, is the President of the new Asiatic Republic of Viet Nam. Together with members of his Cabinet, President Ho arrived in Paris last June to negotiate a treaty with the French Government. Negotiations, however, soon broke down and the Vietnamese were on the point of returning to their country to renew the struggle against the French in Indo-China, when a document providing a *modus vivendi* was signed between Ho Chi Minh and M. Moutet, Minister for the Department of Overseas France.

To us who learned from our schoolbooks about Indo-China, the name "Viet Nam" is entirely strange. French intervention in Indo-China actually began on "religious" grounds in 1787, but it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century, at the time when Africa was being carved up among the Great Powers, that France started in earnest on her acquisition of the territories of Cochin-China, Tonkin, Annam, Cambodia and Laos, which make up what is collectively known as French Indo-China.

Cochin-China was annexed outright by Napoleon III, and has since had the status of a Colony, an important fact to remember in connection with the present situation. Tonkin and Annam, which are the two provinces now forming the Republic of Viet Nam, came under French "protection" in 1883, having been reduced by a French expedition. In 1885, however, there were royalist uprisings which were mercilessly repressed by the French. Since then up to the establishment of the Republic the two provinces were administered as "protectorates."

French Indo-China, measuring 285,000 square miles, is about one and a half times the size of France itself, and has a population estimated at about 25,000,000. Of this population, the Annamese, inhabiting chiefly the provinces of Tonkin, Annam and Cochin-China, number about 18,000,000. The remainder is made up of roughly 3,000,000 Cambodians,

1,500,000 Laotians, 1,000,000 primitive peoples, 500,000 Chinese and 30,000 Europeans. As a result of French recruitment, there are today also 25,000 Annamese in France.

Ho Chi Minh's father was a minor official in the Government of the late Emperor Amman; about 1911, his father incurred the royal displeasure, so that he and his family were imprisoned. The young Ho Chi Minh, then about 19, managed to get to sea, and has since had a very varied career. He wandered about Europe, working at odd jobs and landed up in the Soviet Union. He subsequently returned to the East, going to Canton, where he became translator to the Soviet Consulate. For Ho Chi Minh is an accomplished linguist, speaking French, English, Chinese, Japanese and some Portuguese, besides his native tongue. Very early in his life he became a revolutionary, having always as his aim the independence of Indo-China from alien rule. Arrested in Siam for his political work, he spent two years in prison there, after which, in 1930, he went to Hong Kong, from where he led an organized revolt in northern Viet Nam, which failed. During the war he organized the Viet Minh, which was a united front of Vietnamese patriots, who fought to drive out both the Japanese and Vichy France.

I was accompanied to the President's house by a member of his staff, Mr. Lien Dang. Ho Chi Minh was just saying farewell to some representatives of the French Socialist Party, and extending a greeting to me, he took me into his study, where he made me immediately at home. And then, even before I got down to questioning him, he began to ask me about the Negro movement. He was particularly interested in the position of the Negroes in the Southern United States and revealed a remarkable familiarity with their problems. He expressed his indignation and shock at the recent lynchings.

WHAT IS VIET NAM?

We then got down to the subject of my interview. I started off by asking President Ho whether Vietnamese nationalism was a recent phenomenon. "By no means. We Annamese have always had a deep sense of our own identity which goes back even to before we became an independent people in the year 1931. After the French established 'protectorates' in our lands, our people rose on several occasions to fight for their independence. For instance, there were nationalist uprisings in 1908, under the impetus of Japan's victory over Russia; and then again in 1911 the Chinese Revolution had its repercussions among us, and there was a serious insurrection in 1912."

I learned that the opposition to the French took organized form with the foundation of the Revolutionary Party of Young Annam in 1925 in Hanoi, now the capital of Viet Nam, in the same year as the Indo-Chinese Communist Party was formed. Two years later the Nationalist Annamite Party was founded in Tonkin, and from 1929 almost up to the outbreak of the Second World War there were constant uprisings against French rule. In 1930, the year of famine, there were violent outbreaks in many parts of the three provinces of Tonkin, Annam and Cochin-China. Unarmed processions appealing for relief were mowed down by the machine guns of the French Foreign Legion. This led to a wave of unrest, which the French repressed by reprisals from the air. These revolts continued for almost two years, and the brutality of the Colonial Administrations' repressive measures only strengthened the people's desire for independence. Several attempts were made on the life of the French Governor, which were unsuccessful. As a result, the Nationalist Annamite Party was dissolved in 1933.

But with the coming into power of the Popular Front Government in France, the hopes of the Annamese people rose.

However, nothing happened. It was the threat of war which gave these people the chance of bearing arms, for in 1938 an Annamese Army was created, and there were a number of reforms. Then came the defeat of France in 1940, upon which there were Annamese risings, in which 20,000 were killed. When the Japanese entered the country, the French Army surrendered without the least resistance, and the Japanese handed over to the French those Annamese who had aided them.

Ho Chi Minh explained to me that the French simply handed over Indo-China to the Japanese in 1941, still retaining the Administration under the Japanese occupation. This collaboration continued right up to August, 1945, but the Annamese people refused to accept Japanese domination, just as they had refused to accept French domination. All the national parties united to form the "Independence League," the Viet Minh, which led the underground resistance against the Japanese occupation and worked in co-ordination with the Allied authorities of South China. After the collapse of the Japanese, the Viet Minh declared the independence of their country—which they called Viet Nam—on August 2, 1945. A week later, their Emperor Bao-Dai, abdicated, stating in his Act of Abdication that "We are happy to be a free citizen in an independent country. We will not allow anyone to use our name or that of the royal family to sow dissidence among our compatriots."

After Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten accepted the formal surrender of all Japanese forces in South-East Asia on September 12, 1945, Chinese troops landed at Hanoi, proclaiming that they were there to receive the Japanese surrender, and that China had no territorial ambitions in the region. Then British troops were also permitted by the Viet Nam authorities to engage in the disarming of Japanese troops, but very soon they turned their arms against the Vietnamese, in order to occupy key points in the country until such time as the French would be able to send in troops; they also used Japanese soldiers to guard public buildings as well as in actual fighting. As British troops withdrew, French troops came into Cochin China and fighting took place between them and the Vietnamese, which finally ceased when an agreement was reached between the Viet Nam Government and France on March 6, 1946.

Under the terms of this agreement, France committed herself to the recognition of the Republic of Viet Nam as a free state, having its own Government, Parliament, Army and finances, and being a part of the Indo-Chinese Federation within the proposed French Union, the establishment of which was provided for in the French Constitution which was subsequently rejected. For their part, the Viet Nam Government declared themselves ready to receive French troops, so long as they conformed to international agreements and removed Chinese troops still on Viet Nam territory.

COCHIN-CHINA: THE ECONOMIC CRUX

After the March 6th Agreement had been signed, a conference was held in April-May, 1946, at Dalat, in Southern Annam, to work out the details of Viet Nam's new status. The French and Vietnamese delegates, however, could not agree on the Viet Nam's claim that Cochin-China, on ethnic and economic grounds, should be incorporated into their republic. Conscious of the overwhelming Vietnamese character of Cochin-China's population, the Viet Nam government proposed to the High Commissioner of that province, Admiral Argenlieu, that a referendum on the question should be carried out under the supervision of a joint commission consisting equally of Vietnamese and French. Admiral Argenlieu, however, has refused to commit himself on the question of the referendum. Cochin-China has tremendous economic import-

ance as a rich rice-producing area which supplies both the domestic staple food and sends abroad a surplus amounting to half the export trade of the country. Rubber, the second most important product, made Indo-China the third rubber-producing country in the world after Malaya and the Netherlands Indies. It accounted for 27% of French Indo-China's total export trade and 6% of total world rubber production. Other leading exports are coal, tin, and iron ore.

These commodities serve as sources of raw materials for French industries in the metropolis, since every obstacle has always been placed in the way of local industrial development. In fact, the French have always tied up their Colonial possessions to France to a far greater extent than Britain. Hence in Indo-China, it was only in 1938-39 that a very limited programme was proposed for expanding, not basic industries, but merely light industries such as paper, cigarettes, silk, and so forth. In Cochin-China, the big land-owners, with plantations of approximately 1,500 acres, controlled 45% of the rice lands. Sharecropping tenants, working pieces of land of about 25 acres, were obliged to pay the landlord between 40% and 50% of their harvests, as well as heavy interest rates on money which they borrowed from him to buy tools and tide them over until the crop.

The Vietnamese now look forward to industrialising their country. But this programme is in conflict with the whole conception of Colonialism, which aims at arresting the economic development of these backward countries and keeping them politically tied to the industrialized West. The French recognize that if they can separate the rich territory of Cochin-China from the hinterland of Annam and Tonkin, the Vietnamese will, sooner or later, become dependent upon them, and that their free state will become a mockery lacking any independent basis. Thus Cochin-China constitutes the very crux of the future relations between Viet Nam and France.

As far as the "interim" Government in France is concerned, their spokesmen in Paris maintain that a referendum is not possible until a "provisional government" is established in Cochin-China. In order to try and make way for this "provisional government," and as a means of playing for time while French military reinforcements could be brought to Cochin-China, the High Commissioner placed every obstacle at first in the way of the Viet Nam delegation leaving for the Paris conversations, hoping that by the time they were allowed to depart they would be faced with an accomplished fact. Finally their delegation left Hanoi for the French capital, and the very day after their departure Admiral Argenlieu convened a conference at Dalat, collecting for the purpose a number of native stooges, mainly big landlords whose interests are definitely tied up with the French monopolies. This hand-picked assembly of Cochin-Chinese, together with representatives from Laos and Cambodia, was called to discuss "matters of common interest" of members of the Indo-Chinese Federation other than the Vietnamese.

The Viet Nam delegation in Paris protested strongly that this prejudged the issue of Cochin-China. The French delegation, having met together, replied that the question of the Dalat Conference did not come within their competence, and that they could only convey the Viet Nam delegation's protest to their Government.

VIET NAM DEMANDS

What are the Vietnamese demands? They ask the French to recognize their Government as a free sovereign state, as provided for under the March 6th Agreement. However, they are prepared, as President Ho told me, because of their historical ties on the one hand and their immediate technical

and cultural requirements on the other, to remain within the framework of a French democratic union, like the Dominions within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

France, on the other hand, while prepared to recognize the provinces of Annam and Tonkin as a Vietnamese "free State," demands the right of control over Viet-Nam's foreign affairs, defence and external trade and commerce, while retaining complete control over Cochinchina. This the Viet Nam Government is strenuously opposed to. They assert, and rightly so, that to surrender these essential elements of national sovereignty would be to place the country back into its former status of a protectorate.

When I asked what was the general reaction of the French people to these aspirations, Ho Chi Minh assured me that the French people as a whole, especially the sections under the influence of the Communists and Socialists, are in sympathy, particularly since they themselves have recently emerged from a temporary colonial status under Hitler's regime. But there are powerful and influential sections of the French nation, such as the Colonial and economic interests like the big banks and rich merchants, the military caste and higher Colonial bureaucracy, who, though small in number, are fighting a desperate battle to reinstitute their pre-war position in Asia. And since they are able to influence the Popular Republican Movement (M.R.P.), the present Government, which is largely dominated by Bidault's MRP, are reluctant to commit themselves on the question of Indo-China. This accounts for their hesitancy and the breakdown of the Fontainebleau Conference, and their refusal to take action in connection with the several military encroachments which the High Commissioner, Admiral Argenlieu, made upon the Viet Nam Republic during the absence of Ho Chi Minh in Paris, and on the question of the Dalat Conference.

President Ho believes that if the French can solve their own problem by evolving a really democratic Constitution and electing a Government of the Left, it is possible for an ultimate settlement of an amicable nature to be made between such a Government and the Viet Nam Republic.* But Admiral Argenlieu's aggressive behavior in Cochinchina coupled with the temporizing of the French in Paris, led the Annamese delegation to return home to rally their people against French encroachment. Ho Chi Minh, therefore, signed the *modus vivendi*, which does little more than repeat the terms of the March 6th Agreement. He hopes talks will be reopened in Paris early in 1947.

In a farewell statement, President Ho emphasized that the policy of his Government is consistent with the fundamental programme of the Viet Minh, which is:

(1) *To provide enough rice for the people, so that there shall not be a repetition of the terrible famine which last year took toll of 2,000,000 lives.* With the co-operation of the people, who have worked willingly and hard, knowing that the Government is their own, they have managed to secure a sufficiency of rice which will avoid famine conditions this winter.

(2) *To liquidate illiteracy, which reaches almost 90%.* This is the effect of 75 years of French rule in a country where before it was subdued every citizen, from the poorest to the highest, had free access to educational facilities, and where everyone could read and write and there was an ancient culture. Today voluntary groups of educated young men and women are going into the villages to teach the peasants to read and write. It is hoped, because of the Latinisation of the alphabet, that this task will not be too lengthy.

(3) *To establish democratic freedom.* For the first time

* It will be interesting to see what change in policy, if any, will result from the dethronement of the MRP by the Communists in the recent French elections.—ED.

elections took place recently on the basis of universal suffrage. Men and women were both eligible to vote and to stand for election. Freedom of movement, assembly, and so forth, have all been introduced, as well as the abolition of poll tax and similar levies.

In particular, the Vietnamese desire peace and friendship with the French, but not at the price of their liberties. They hope that through the establishment of a progressive Government in France itself that the French people will aid them to lay the foundations for the political, economic and social advancement of the Viet Nam Republic.

GEORGE PADMORE

THE SOCIAL FORMAT

City Crowds

"Communal soliloquy" — Piaget, describing the conversation of five-year-olds.

"The crowd was good-natured," say the New York papers, accurately. It is worthwhile to define this city crowd, because the crowding is not only an effect but one of the strong incentives to dense centralization.

But let us clearly distinguish the city crowd from the "mob" that is the usual subject of crowd-psychology. The mob is formed in an emotional crisis; the individualities of its members are blotted out; it is in the grip of a mass-suggested image. But the city crowd is habitual in dense populations; its members seek the occasions to form a crowd; their individualities are not blotted out but precisely affirmed in isolation by sharing in the crowd.

Like every stable (neurotic) behavior, this crowding has an expressive and a defensive function; it fulfills libido and wards off anxiety. The city crowd is the means to maintain strangeness and yet combat loneliness. Combining, as in New York, sophistication with childishness, it is a very stable way of life, viable, hard to break by either reason or madness.

Let us begin with some examples of crowding. At the one extreme is the crowding that seems most spontaneous: the people bent on night-pleasure avoid a bar that is half-filled, "it's dead here," and crowd into one already too crowded but equivalent in all other respects. The same apparent spontaneity is only thinly disguised in the crowds of sidewalk superintendents of excavations: the spectacle is not particularly interesting, but it distracts the mind while the soul has an excuse to crowd.

At the other extreme is the crowding that seems forced and unwilling, typically the subway crowd. Here the surface appearance is that each unit is hostile and armored against the rest, it wants to get out of the crowd into which it has been forced by technical reasons. (This hostility is beneath the surface in every crowd of strangers.) Nevertheless, subway-riders avoid an empty car with suspicion, and they choose seats in the more crowded half of the car.

In between is the shopping and window-shopping crowd, people who consciously have some individual business but who cannily choose the time and place where there will be a crowd. So we mill in theater-lobbies for a smoke; no one steps around the corner, because then he will lose the crowd. A wonderful, and characteristically New Yorker, variant is the Garment Center crowd at twelve and five, where the social exchange of news and views is the conscious excuse for the social crowding.

I mention the theater-crowd. Here clearly there is an absorption of private mind and soul in the brightly-lit spectacle;