

THEY WORK AND FIGHT



VIET NAM FEDERATION OF TRADE-UNIONS (T.C.D.)

THEY WORK AND FIGHT



THEY WORK
and
FIGHT

THEY WORK AND FIGHT

(New series
of
Hammer and Rifle)

Published by the Editorial Board
of the «*Vietnamese Trade Unions*»
VIET NAM FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS-HANOI

THEY ARE
THEY ARE

THEY ARE

Heroic defenders of bridge «May 19»

BRIDGE «May 19» spanning a large river is a crucial construction on the highway running lengthwise from North to South Vietnam. It plays an important role in the supply to the front, national defence, production as well as in serving the people's life.

The bridge is a difficult work built on a rugged terrain, over a deep and swift-flowing river with complex geological conditions. After many months of hard work in the emulation drive in honour of President Ho Chi Minh's birth-day, we, workers and cadres, completed the bridge on schedule. The bridge was opened to traffic just on May 19, 1964, the 74th birthday of President Ho.

In the early days of April 1965, the US sent hundreds of aircraft to attack the newly completed bridge.

Since then through two years of fighting against the US war of destruction, the defenders of the bridge have given battle on several hundred occasions to US marauding aircraft, in daytime as well as at night. The US has dropped over 8.000 bombs and fired hundreds of rockets on the bridge area. There were demolition bombs, anti-personnel bombs, blast bombs, and also water mines. The US sent its best pilots, but to no avail. So far 78 US aircraft of various types have been blasted down and bridge «May 19» continues to stand proudly, connecting the two banks of the rebellious river.

As cadres and workers who had the honour to take part in building the bridge and who had been very happy watching the first train roll past the newly completed bridge, we were enraged to hear of the cowardly attack and we all wanted to have wings and fly back to the bridge to see what had become of it after the bombing. It was our eager wish to be assigned the task of repairing the bridge, and we were overjoyed when receiving order to come back and do the repairs.

We set to work immediately after our return. We initiated a drive of emulation called «General Offensive for bridge repair to chase the US aggressors and save the country». An atmosphere of urgency and great eagerness prevailed at the construction site. The biggest difficulty remained how to switch from peace-time to war-time construction, from methodical work to rush work, surveying, designing and building at the same time. That was the first time we

had to repair a bridge under the threat of bombing, hence shortcomings in the first days was unavoidable.

Everyday the sight of convoys of trucks and trains waiting at both ends of the bridge urged us to overcome all hardships and dangers to do urgent repairs. We set forth the slogan «We won't leave so long as the plan is not completed». The 1st and 4th hauling teams, the two «socialist Labour» teams of our brigade, dug day and night for materials buried by bombs, and transported them to the bridge area. They took advantage of bridge's holes to drop iron beams to built buttresses for piles. Welders and iron workers urgently put right again the beams severed by bomb splinters, volunteering to work in dangerous spots even during alert periods. Le Khac Thu, assistant secretary of the Working Youth Union branch and his fellows disputed every minute and every second with the enemy to mend a damaged pile. When the last concrete pouring had been made and before it was pounded, alert was sounded. To stay back ran the high risk of drawing a bomb on oneself but to leave the place at this moment would take 24 more hours to put in another pouring and therefore delay the date for reopening the bridge to traffic. So he decided to stay and complete the concrete pounding. US planes swooped in two, four then six of them. They made frantic firing and bombing passes. Heavy flak compelled them to climb up and drop their bombs at random. Thu remained firm and calm as ever at his work place. The intense ground fire gave him more

stamina and confidence, and Thu finished the pounding just as the all-clear was given.

In view of the need of urgent repair, the Party Committee and the command of the bridge-repair brigade decided to organize a shock team to work by day and by night, in all circumstances. Thus, the shock group, composed entirely of members of the Working Youth Union, was founded and they stepped onto the bridge carrying with them the spirit of emulation with their « sworn brothers » in the 61st company of the Liberation Army in Western Nam Bo (Mekong river delta). Two days later, the team was already at work right during alert time. It included workers of all kinds: welders, joiners, crane operators, haulers... Once alert came when team leader Hai was welding at a height of 12 metres while Dien, a mechanic, was operating a generator below. Hai told his work mate: « I still have to make an important joint. Don't stop the current ». Second-degree alert. Hai seemed to pay no attention but continued his work because he knew a serious damage would happen if the enemy struck again at this spot before it was mended. Looking up, Dien was reassured to see Hai absorbed in his work. For his part, Hai also felt encouraged by the rumbling of the generator below. The two put all their mind in their work in defiance of the wild roar of enemy planes overhead.

Through strenuous work by day and by night at the bridge, we completed the repair exactly on May 1st, 1965. Trains and trucks again rumbled past the majestic bridge on their south-bound road.

But the Yanks attacked the bridge ever more intensely, resorting to more and more cunning methods, striking at night, in the morning, at noon, at dusk and at moonrise. Our work became more urgent and risky but the examples of heroism and devotion of our fighters in the South exhorted us to redouble our efforts to fulfil our task no matter what might happen.

The Ministry of Communications and Transport set forth the slogan: «If the enemy destroy our roads and bridges, we'll repair and reopen them to traffic; if they strike again, we'll repair again, if they destroy one, we'll build five or ten». Acting along this line, the Party Committee and the command of the brigade put forth the watchword: «Three handy and three quick» to repair the bridge in the shortest time possible.

The «three handy» are:

- To get a plan handy
- To get material handy
- To get cadres and workers handy

The «three quick» are:

- To find out the damage quickly
- To draw up the repair plan quickly
- To do the repairs and clear the debris quickly.

In drawing up our plans we took care to get the most important parts repaired first so that traffic might reopen quickly, the lesser repairs would be done later. We also made ready many blueprints for a good variety of bridges, gave markings to each kind of iron available and even each iron bar, calculated the

resistance of each, worked out various schemes for repair and replacement.. We also made ready plans to use such workers in such and such circumstances etc.

As a result, we could complete the repairs in a few days after an air attack instead of eight or nine days as before. By now the enemy had greatly intensified their attacks. The slogan «If the enemy strike in daytime, we'll repair at night» was no longer pertinent because in this way the repairs would be done very slowly. The Party Committee and the brigade command discussed the solution and took the matter to the workers' meetings. We unanimously reached the decision to work both in daytime and at night, in all circumstances. The slogan was changed to: «If the enemy strike in day-time, we work at night, if they strike at night we'll work in daytime; if they strike at night and in daytime we'll do repairs between two attacks».

To better ensure safety we have devised many precautionary measures: to discuss and agree with the anti-aircraft units on alert signals and organize a three-station alert system, to prepare the quickest way to shelter, to make a rope ladder for quick retreat in case of air raid. We also dug many solid air-raid shelters and got our meals brought to the bridge itself

The more they lost, the madder the aggressors became in their onslaught against our bridge. Our difficulties were piling up. This time we had to repair a crucial section of the bridge which made it very difficult to

go to shelter when the planes came. This caused serious concern to ourselves and to the local population. After each raid the people showed great anxiety when we were late in coming back to the village. Some old people even went to the bridge to see if anyone had been hurt. Once, seeing us hurrying to the bridge immediately after the planes left, a villager called out after us: « Why such a hurry, can you wait another while »? On another occasion, seeing smoke rising in the direction of the bridge, a large crowd including many young men and women rushed out to join us in putting out the fire.

The bridge was seriously damaged but the time allowed for repair was very short. Strictly keeping to the guideline « Defend the main span at all costs and open the bridge to traffic step by step », we worked out a two-stage repair plan and decided to get the trucks pass first and to repair the rail track later.

Under the pressure of circumstances and also thanks to the experience gained in work we introduced many valuable innovations and completed both stages ahead of schedule.

The enemy continued to step up their attacks on our bridge. However, thanks to our effective defence, our experience, good preparations and high determination, the bridge was passable in all circumstances. The fight with the American air marauders heated up with every passing day but finally we have won.

The days that followed saw even more furious bombings by US aircraft. On some days, they made from eight to ten raids. Many times the bridge was

struck anew before a crack made in the previous raid had been healed. The enemy also sent their aircraft to fly over the area day and night for intimidation purposes but we were not cowed.

We entered a very crucial period since there was an almost round-the-clock alert in the bridge area, and it was very dangerous to work at night because the sparks emitted by the solder-rods would make the bridge an easy target for the aircraft. It was in those days that President Ho Chi Minh issued his earth-shaking appeal: «Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom». It instilled extraordinary strength into the whole of our unit. Acting upon President Ho's appeal we pledged to «stick to the bridge and repair it at all costs».

To effectively cope with the intensive attacks by the enemy and ensure timely repair of the bridge, the Party Committee and the command of the brigade called for the formation of a «death-defying volunteers'group». Everybody asked to join. The group worked from 12 to 16 hours a day on the bridge and took very efficacious steps to handle the situation whenever an air raid occurred.

Our work proceeded at a quicker pace since the founding of the «death-defying volunteers'group». As a result, we completed the repair one day ahead of schedule. The trains again crossed the river carrying supplies to the front.

One day, the pirates came and fired several rockets on the bridge while we were reinforcing the newly repaired section. The bridge was again damaged

and the trucks were stopped on either side of the river. We were in the season of spate which rendered the crossing by ferry boats very hazardous and time-taking. But we did not lose heart. After only two days of intense work we put things straight again.

On another day, the enemy sneaked in and fired three rockets while our entire unit was working on the bridge, killing some of our men and wounding several others. Those heroes died in a most worthy manner, still holding their tools in their hands. The wounded displayed exemplary courage. They helped one another to safety at a moment when the planes continued to roar frantically overhead. At the hospital, everyone of them was eager to get back to work.

We disputed every minute and every second with the enemy. Whenever they destroyed, we rebuilt. If they destroyed again, we rebuilt again. We have completely defeated the US aggressors on the communications and transport front. The important bridge continues to stand erect, proudly on the river to connect both banks and ensure the steady flow of our goods to the front.

In two years of hard trials, all of us, from the political cadres to technicians and workers, have been well tempered and matured in all fields: ideology, technique and culture. From a small unit we have grown into a big brigade in charge of the construction and repair of many bridges in the area. Our Party cell has been recognized as a «four good» cell. The Working Youth Union branch and the trade union branch have also been cited as «four good» units.

The bridge building and repair unit has been conferred a Labour Order, First Class, by the government, allowed to keep the challenge banner presented by President Ho to the «Congress of Model Workers Determined to Defeat the US aggressors on the communications and transport front», and given the banner bearing the effigy of Hero Nguyen Van Troi offered by the Central Committee of the Vietnam Working Youth Union.

The cultural and material life of the workers has not been affected by the fierce fight and hard work. We have grown vegetables and reared hogs to improve our usual fares. We have dozens of hogs in our sties, some weighing as many as 80 kilograms. Many teams are also raising poultry and growing beans and bananas. The complementary education courses have been functioning regularly and our amateur art troupe has not ceased to create interesting items.

All of us are very optimistic and enthusiastic. The fight will be long and hard and require more sacrifices. But we are firmly confident that we will win.

(Excerpts from the report of the «May 19» bridge building brigade, Hero Unit of the Communications and Transport Service, at the 3rd Congress of Heroes and Model Workers in the antic-US resistance, for national salvation, 1967)

Ensuring continued production

DURING the past two years, our factory which covers barely one square kilometre has been attacked nearly 200 times by US aircraft with thousands of bombs. At times, they made ten raids a day and four or five raids in a night.

The bombing level has considerably increased in recent days. In only three days and nights, they launched 27 air raids against our factory, releasing nearly 500 bombs of various sizes.

The US aggressors have reckoned that with such intense bombing they could destroy every trace of life and turn our factory into a heap of rubble. But they have grossly miscalculated. During the last two years our factory has stood firmly and functioned uninterruptedly to serve production, fighting and the people's life.

Right at the outset of their onslaught against our factory the US imperialists sent more than one hundred

modern aircraft to carry out an intense bombing for two days and nights in succession against the factory site and populated areas in the neighbourhood. They came in several waves and at different altitudes. In those first encounters with the enemy our workers proved exemplary courage and nobody left his post.

At the sector of the factory most savagely attacked by the enemy, the two men on guard duty, Pham Dinh Quê and Vuong Quốc Thanh, stuck to their machines till the last plane had left the area. Quê was knocked out of his senses by a bomb blast and fell beside the switchboard. Thanh, after taking his mate to a first-aid station, returned to his machine, sheltering in bomb craters to fire back at the diving planes. Later while the planes continued to bomb, he calmly drove to safety two trucks left by a friendly unit on the roadside.

That night, the Party Committee met and decided that the first thing to do was to reassure some of the workers who showed signs of nervousness before the ferocious attacks of the enemy and to gather those machines and materials damaged by the bombs for repair. With the devoted assistance of the Ministry, the department concerned and the local authorities as well as the help of other factories of the same branch and the local population we worked night and day with all our might and main and succeeded in completing our repair work 19 days ahead of schedule.

Shortly after our factory resumed operation the enemy renewed their attack, this time with even

greater intensity. Once, they made as many as 15 raids in a day. Under the slogans: «The factory is our battlefield and the machines our weapons» and «so long as men and machines remain we'll not leave our post, unless ordered», we continued to stand beside our machines and kept strictly to the eight-hour working program without flinching an inch even when time bombs fell right at four or five yards away from us.

In another drive of attacks which lasted seven days the enemy made clear their intention to level out our factory and its surroundings. Two of our workers were killed right in the first raid, another was buried in the heap of rubble. The Party Committee decided that we should recover his body at all costs. This was a very difficult job since the yard and most of the trenches and shelters in the factory compound had been destroyed by the bombs. In addition the enemy planes came in every fifteen minutes, by day and by night, bombing, strafing and dropping flares.

But braving all dangers we persistently carried out the search for several days and nights. Our persistence deeply moved the army units nearby who took our deed as example to educate the combatants in class solidarity and unity of mind and action.

Before we could find out the body of the buried worker, at three o'clock in the morning, one day, the enemy struck again, and a bomb exploding near the factory buried four workers on combat-duty Le Chinh, one of the four who managed to get out, ran 400 metres back to the factory to summon a rescue team

which he led back to the caved-in trench. He fell on the ground and fainted away on arrival. Only then did the others realize that Chinh had an arm broken. His high sense of self-denial has helped save the life of two comrades. At one hour in the morning of the third day of the search we finally found the body of the comrade killed in the earlier raid.

During this seven-day attack the enemy caused heavy losses in lives and property to our factory and the population of the neighbouring hamlets and co-operatives. Many farmers and children were also killed or wounded. In spite of these painful losses we were not frightened and continued to operate our machines while co-ordinating the fight with the army units and rescuing the victims among the coop farmers.

Following this intense drive of attacks by the enemy, the Party Committee met and decided to reorganize the working force, adapt the activities of the factory to the new conditions, increase the safety of such community places as the dining-halls, the dormitories, and encourage the entire personnel to continue fulfilling their tasks in all circumstances.

Some comrades wanted to transfer the machines elsewhere to avoid the bombing. At an enlarged meeting of the Party Committee, however, the majority proposed that repairs should be done on the spot. This suggestion was heatedly debated and finally was unanimously adopted.

In keeping with the desire of the majority and in view of the urgent necessity of uninterrupted

production, the higher-level authorities accepted our proposal to do on-the-spot repairs.

Before the repairs started, a conference was called between technicians, trade union organisation and the Working Youth Union branch under the sponsorship of the Party Committee to discuss the methods to be followed to reach unity of mind with regard to the principle of self-reliance.

As the «rehabilitation campaign» rolled off, the trade union organisation launched an emulation drive to win the title of «Côn Co Fighter» (Côn Co is a small island off North Vietnam coast, famous for its tough resistance to American bombing – Ed), organized the study of the Vietnamese working class's tradition and the examples of courage and dauntlessness of the South Vietnam Liberation Armed Forces. The Working Youth Union branch founded a shock team composed of twenty most able-bodied young men and women including two Party members who were also qualified and trusted technicians. This shock team restored nearly 500 metres of cable at the pumping station – one of the places hardest hit by the enemy – in only seven days, eight days ahead of schedule.

We also reinforced the teams for mechanical and electrical repair and the designing and supply sections. Most of the men and women assigned to the new jobs were technical workers not used to heavy manual work. Nevertheless, prompted by a deep understanding of the urgency of their work all team members worked day and night with might and main at every post they were assigned.

We actually ran into many technical difficulties that even many of our technicians and workers considered unsurmountable and proposed that the department concerned should send specialists to give a helping hand.

But the Party Committee thought differently. It saw that these technical problems could be solved by our own technicians and workers. Moreover, the Department still had to look after many other factories like ours and as such could not make specialists available at any moment. We called a conference to discuss a solution. The conference was divided in opinions and broke without reaching any definite decision. We then thought of seeking advices from the veteran workers with many years of experience. Finally, we held a joint meeting between experienced workers and technicians and came to the unanimous conclusion that we were able to solve the problems with our own means. When the work began, everyone showed unusual zeal, we worked day and night without taking a rest. Some set moving examples. Take Le Kim Hong who has been cited «model worker» at the factory for five consecutive years, a father of five, who moreover had to support his old mother and his crippled wife. Braving all these difficulties, he did not shrink an inch but readily ascepted whatever job he was assigned. Everytime enemy planes struck and the lights in the factory went out; be it in day-time or at night, and no matter how ferocious the bombing, he would rush in to do anything necessary.

With this spirit of emulation to fight the Yanks and save the country and with our selfless labour, we

completed the repair program in only 24 days as against 40 days as planned. Our factory again resumed operation to serve production, fighting and the people's life.

After the factory's operation had returned to normal, we began to re-organize the whole management, especially technical management, in the light of the new situation created by the continual air raids. Formerly, when a section of the factory ran into trouble because of some mechanical break-down, it was readily assisted by other sections. Now, this mutual assistance was not forthcoming since all sections had their own problems. So we put forth the slogan «Each section sees to its safe and continued functioning». Thanks to better technical management, this had been achieved in the worst conditions of the war of destruction.

In the process of rehabilitation we made it a point to modify the technical process and gave the workers intensive training on how to cope with the most undesirable situation. The slogan «proficient in one trade but able to do many jobs» was eagerly responded to by the workers. As a result, after a short period, simple operators could do the job of shift leaders and pump men were also able to replace the main workers at the turbine when need be. We also took into our hands the training of specialized workers. For instance, many welders of the 2nd grade are now able to do the job of 3rd, 4th and even 5th grade welders. In two years we trained five shift leaders, ten production team leaders, two assistant

superintendents to replace those cadres and workers who had been sent to refresher courses or to other assignments.

Every year, all of our cadres and workers are promoted to higher form of their general education. All the complementary courses from the 4th to 10th forms are functioning regularly. There have been only a few mechanical break-downs in these last two years.

Whereas in the peace-time years, every section in the factory had to stop work for three or four times each months due to mechanical failures, in 1966 there were only a few cases of deficiency of boiler pressure due to the bad quality of coal.

There are in our factory some crucial spots like the pump station which we call «bomb pockets». At least five or seven bombs were dropped on the pump station during each air raid. A break-down might easily happen if those working at the pump station lacked self-control or were ignorant in technical matters. In all the months of fierce bombing by the enemy, no break-down occurred at the pump. That is thanks to the high sense of responsibility of those who run it. Comrade Tho who had worked many years at the pumping station, volunteered to stay at his job till the day of peace comes when learning that a batch of newly trained workers were to be assigned to run the pump in his place. He said: «These young workers would need some technical help because this pump is one of the most important links in the whole factory. If something goes wrong with the pump, the

damage caused to the factory will be incalculable. As a Party member, I ask to stay at the station to work with the young comrades ».

We have also done our best to cut down the rate of coal consumption. This was a very difficult job which required many complicated processes and above all, we must see that someone be always present beside the furnace, even during alert time, in order to regulate the amount of wind blown in. Acting upon the slogan «Let's regard coal as our own blood» we have managed to keep the rate of coal consumption to the same level as in the peace years. At present we are studying the use of coal mixed with slag and also of locally extracted lignite to cut down the transport cost and save more coal for the State.

In regard to labour management we are working along the guide line: dispersion of the workshops, concentration of production teams and wider power for the teams in labour distribution, personnel management and other jobs that can be handled by the teams themselves.

Along with the rehabilitation and construction work we also attach great importance to the defence of the factory and the safety of the workers. After each fight against enemy aircraft we would hold a conference to review the experience and start consolidating the combat trenches as well as the shelters for men and machines. This accounts for the fact that in the last two years, our factory though subject to most intense raids with hundreds of tons of bombs

and rocketes, has stood firm and suffered relatively small losses both in terms of property and human lives. We have also built large shelters which can serve as dormitories to spare the workers the fatigue of frequent runs to air-raid shleters.

The self defence force at the factory has worthily contributed to these successes. When fighting erupted, apart from the men and women on combat duty, there are also first-aid teams, ammunition supply teams and reservist gunners standing at the ready. All the self defence men and women at the factory have received intensive training in anti-aircraft artillery. Most of them have taken a direct part in the fight against enemy aircraft. Many examples of heroism have emerged during such fights, like comrades Loi and Duong. The latter, after having an arm broken, continued to feed a gun with his legs. He was later awarded an Exploit Order Third class by the government.

On the other hand, we pay great attention to the workers' life, and particularly encourage art and sport activities of the masses. The wall newspapers in the factory have hundreds of articles in each issue, reporting on the emulation movement and extolling the examples of courage and devotion of the workers. Ping pong, rifle shooting and national wrestling draw a large participation.

We have also launched a movement of livestock breeding in the factory. On an average, every ten persons are rearing a hog. We also rear thousands of fish and have reaped four tons of rice paddy

and several tons of vegetables. As a result, after days of hard work and courageous fight we have had something to replenish the strength of our workers. In spite of a most ferocious and sustained attack by the enemy, the health of our workers has been ensured and the sickness rate is lower than in peace time.

In two years of work and fight, our cadres and workers have been tempered and considerably matured in all fields. Many have been admitted to the Party or Working Youth Union. One workshop has been cited « Socialist Labour » workshop. Many production teams have also been given the title « Socialist Labour » teams and many workers elected « Model workers ». We have many « Four Good » Party cells as well as « Four Good » trade union branches. The homeguard unit of the factory has been cited a « Determined to Win » unit.

(Excerpts from the report of the
« April 4 » factory, a Hero Unit, at the
Congress of Heroes and Model Workers
against US aggression, for national
salvation, 1967)

Giving her all for the task

*(Summarized achievements of Labour
Heroine **Dao Thi Hao**, production team
leader at the Nam-dinh Textile Combinat)*

IN mid 1956, at exactly 18 years of age, Dao Thi Hao began her career as a weaver, continuing the trade taken up by her mother twenty years before. But there is a much wider gap between the life of the two: the gap of two regimes. For Hao's mother, to be a worker solely meant to earn a living and accept every kind of humiliation destined for a woman in the old colonial-feudal regime. Today, for Hao, to be a weaver means to devote all her youthful energy and abilities to the building of socialism and the cause of national reunification.

That girl with a rosy complexion, bridled eyes and a very intelligent look captured the sympathy of all

the very day she entered the weaving mill. As an apprentice, she followed her elder work-mate like a man and his shadow. She watched every movement of hers, from the way she walked to the way she handled a spindle. During the breaks, Hao would hang around the veteran workers and inquired into each small experience. In her pocket there was always a ball of yarn. She took her time out of every meeting and every break in her work to practise linking and she would be seen running her lovely fingers on the yarn as nimbly as a pianist ran her fingers on the key board.

At first, when it came to running the threads across the fabric, she could only take one thread whereas her work mates like That, Ty, Ha... managed to pass several threads at the same time. Later Hao also succeeded in mastering the threading through the the warp and woof and in linking rapidly the broken thread, thus cutting down the time for linking thread from 12 seconds to 9 seconds and that for making a round of the machines from three to one and a half minutes, setting a new record at the factory.

Her persistency paid off. Only three months later Hao already could handle four looms. Early the next year she became a production leader, the youngest in the factory, entrusted with nine looms.

But Hao was far from satisfied. The factory was expanding, more workshops were being created and more looms were being installed. The Party Committee called on the workers to take charge of more looms and spinning frames and increase work productivity.

Hao asked to handle 12 looms. At first the leadership hesitated, fearing that she had not yet got enough experience for the job. But afterward, seeing that she could handle 9 machines while providing assistance to others, they agreed to her proposal.

Hao was ever more eager to work and to learn. She inquired into why the yarn broke often. After careful observation she discovered the cause: that was because of the scratches on the shuttles. Thence, Hao always took along a small knife with her and every time a thread broke she would examine the shuttle and polish the scratch on it, if any. That year, Hao achieved nine work days in excess of plan. She was elected model worker and conferred a «Chullima» badge.

Afterward, Hao and other weavers were appointed to follow a course on advanced skill given by Korean Labour Heroine Pak Kim Yun, a member of the weavers' delegation of the Pyongyang Textile Combinat on a friendship visit to the Nam dinh mill. During the course Hao and her mates have summed up the advanced method of their Korean friends in the «Three Quick» motto (quick hands, quick eyes, quick legs). They also realized the benefit of the method of making a round following an 8-shaped pattern and learnt the advanced way to link two threads. But one thing was uppermost in Hao's mind. She held the view that there was no point applying all the experiences mechanically in view of the difference between the machines and materials in her factory and those at the Pyongyang factory. In fact, a number of

workers who strictly kept to the « three quick » guideline failed to get any boost in both quantity and quality of the cloth turned out. Hao thought hard and made elaborate planning. She improved the method of making rounds and increased the inspection of the cloth surface. In this way, the proportion of low quality cloth dropped markedly.

To increase labour productivity, Hao reasoned, one could not work on her own but should closely associate herself with her team. She brought before the team meeting the question of applying the advanced method of work combined with mutual assistance between weavers themselves and between weavers and workers of other sectors. Thanks to the great efforts of each and the spirit of collective emulation, in 1964 Hao's team topped its target by 20,000 metres of cloth, Hao was entrusted with 15, 18 then 24 machines.

Work at her team was proceeding smoothly when she received order from the factory's managing board to go to the training section where she and some other workers were to disseminate the advanced method to all weaving workshops.

Hao was not without some worry when taking up the new assignment. First, she regretted of leaving the comrades of her team whom she loved so much. Second, she did intend to strive for handling more looms. Third, the difficulties her family would meet if she took up the new job. His elder brother was then seriously ill. She had to support her old mother and a younger brother who was attending school. As a result of the increased number of looms she

was entrusted with, her salary had gone up to 70 or even 80 «dong» (Vietnam currency unit. Ed.). Now, as a trainer she would receive only 50 or so a month. Her family would run into monetary difficulties. But the memory of the day of her admission to the Working Youth Union was fresh in her mind. That day, she sworn to be ready to do any job and go to any place she was asked to. She thought of the solicitous care of President Ho and the Party and the devoted assistance given her by her work mates, old and young, in her first days at the factory. Now, should she balk at a request of the factory? No, definitely she could not. When asked by the secretary of the Party cell, Hao joyfully replied:

«I'll do everything I can to fulfil the task the Party has entrusted me».

However, to Hao and all the other young weavers who were assigned to the training section the biggest difficulty did not lie there but in the sneering remarks they got from a number of workers. Some called Hao and her friends «young specialists». One veteran worker went even farther:

«I've been here since she was a kid. Now she is to teach me!».

But Hao was not disheartened because most of the workers viewed her assignment with sympathy and showed their readiness to co-operate.

The first course ended in a virtual failure since most of the trainees were new recruits or incapable men or women who not only failed to profit by the new method but also dropped below the previous

mark when they returned to work. Worse still, the cloth that came out of their looms were not as good as that of the others who had not attended the course. After thorough discussions with the others in the training team, Hao proposed that the students to the course be workers with several years of service who sowed real interest in improving their skill. The method of learning also changed. The trainers no longer spoke alone but let the students discuss every detail. Thus the class became a lively session where people exchanged views on the new method and made suggestions on modification.

But one thing was unanimously approved, that is the necessity to apply the Korean method of making rounds and pinning a silk flower on the cloth surface to mark the duration of a round. Each contributed his or her own experiences and all the experiences were pooled together to become a common asset. After a class everyone would practise the new method there and then. The courses yielded better and better results and the time for a course was also cut to a half. To train a worker, from a novice to a weaver that can handle twelve looms at the same time normally requires two or three months. But under Hao's guidance, it only took 21 days and all the weavers so trained were recognized qualified for the job.

In the period when she was a trainer, Hao helped train more than 300 weavers in the practice of the new method. These were the seeds for a widespread movement to apply the advanced method of weaving throughout the combinat. Now the number of workers

that can handle 15 looms or more is increasing rapidly. Some are manning 18 looms each. This greatly accounts for the quick boost of the overall productivity of the factory.

After succeeding in manning many looms at the same time, Hao, however, did not rest on her laurels. She saw the need to know each loom in every one of its details. But the greatest difficulty, she said, still remained how to know her work mates, every one of them, their life, their feelings, their worries and their difficulties.

Hao went to her mates' homes to inquire into their family life, thereafter she rearranged their shifts to better suit their conditions. She was convinced that if a work team were to be steady, and labour productivity were to raise quickly, the primary condition was to make everyone of one mind.

Besides increasing productivity and improving the quality of the cloth, Hao also paid great attention to sparing material, regarding it as one of the goals of her endeavours. But she quickly realized that she alone could not do really much on this score. So she proposed to the local youth organization to make economization of material a component part of the emulation movement initiated by the factory. She asked for some cast-away cloth to make a bag for each worker to be stuffed with drop-out material they found on the floor during their work. After a year, the team collected 125 kilograms of broken thread, 40,000 lamellas and 18,000 not completely used-up spools which made a net profit of more than 2000 «dông» for the State.

Then came the American bombing. The US many times raided the Nam Dinh city and the textile mill. Hao saw with her own eyes the crumbling of walls, the destruction of machines and many of her work mates killed by American bombs. A Party member, Hao readily joined the «three ready» movement of the youth. A number of young workers joined up and went to the front to fight the Yank aggressors. Hao was more conscious of her duty to turn out more cloth for the fatherland. Hao handled 24 looms and even 30 looms when necessary. She called on those who stayed back to redouble their efforts as the most practical deed to make their sons, husbands and friends feel reassured at their fighting post on the frontline. Now her team was entirely composed of women, eighty per cent of them with babies who were evacuated five to ten kilometres away from the factory. The fatigue of the trips and the fear for the safety and health of their children was not long to be felt on the faces of the mothers. Many simply declared they could not keep up with the production pace in such conditions. Hao took the example of Heroine Ut Tich in South Vietnam, a mother of six who had not for a moment relaxed in her burning determination to wipe out the enemy. Hao also intercalated the able-bodied workers with weaker ones to help them so that in the end the team continued to fulfil its program. Some of the women weavers even topped their norms.

The Americans intensified their bombing every day. Alert was maintained almost round the clock, seriously

compromising the plan. Hao saw all the more clearly the need to make the best of the available time to increase production and reduce the losses caused by the alert periods. She noticed that when the alert siren sounded, power was cut before the machines were stopped and at the all-clear, power was reestablished before the workers had taken their place at their machines. This caused a lot of damage to the machinery and waste of material. Hao wanted to ask permission to stay back when the alert sounded in order to stop the machines and let the others go to shelter first. But she was also a member of the home-guard and as such she had the duty to lead the other workers to the combat-trenches and prepare for the fight. Only after much pondering over the matter did she find the solution: every time the alert sounded the workers would take to shelter by going between two rows of looms and would stop the machines while running out. In this way, no machine would be left running while the workers were out.

In two years, Hao four times changed work and each time she had to acquaint herself with new machines and new friends. She met with many difficulties which at first seemed unsurmountable. However, relying on the collective and using her power of persuasion, every time she was successful and her team became more mature after each trial.

But the intensive air raids did cause serious impediment to Hao's work. Many times she had to stop

working and go out to carry ammunition to the armymen or rescue State property. Once, returning from a night shift, she was making preparations for her mother and brother to evacuate out of the city. When enemy planes came, Hao rushed to the combat trench in spite of her mother's effort to stop her. After accomplishing her task as an ammunition carrier she ran to the factory to move machines and material to safety.

On another occasion, the planes came when Hao was on a night shift. She and some other members of the home-guard rushed out to a bombed place to save men and material. A delayed-action bomb lay on the road. Hao stood in a foxhole on the road side to signal others to stay away from the danger spot. After sappers had defused the bomb, Hao and her comrades, braving the raging flames rushed into the burning workshop to save State property.

In ten years at the textile mill, Hao has steadily grown and matured. She has set a bright example of complete devotion, of creative work and tireless application of advanced techniques and methods, hence her high work productivity and the high quality of her produce.

She has also helped train many qualified weavers. In the three-year plan of economic development, she turned out 11,000 metres of cloth in excess of plan. In the five-year plan period she topped her program by 18,874 metres.

At the Congress of Heroes and Model Workers against US aggression, for national salvation in 1967,

Dao Thi Hao was conferred the honorable title of Labour Heroine.

But Dao Thi Hao is not self-complacent. She is resolved to live up to the trust of the Party and her work-mates and to fulfil her task of a Working Youth Union member in the fight against US aggression, for national salvation.

Convoy of fire-line

(About truck driver **Cao Ba Tuyet**, *Labour Hero*)

AS the day broke in the misty morning, the convoy of transport trucks led by Cao Ba Tuyet arrived at trans-shipment point X.

Five IFA lorries moved slowly and swayingly, splashing muddy water on both sides. Suddenly the lead truck stopped. A short, stocky driver got down and ran to the trucks behind.

«What 's the matter, Tuyet? Have you forgotten that the hiding place is still 300 metres away?» asked a driver leaning out of his cabin.

«It's a misty day today. I propose we strive to pass station X and reach H.C. before stopping for rest».

Someone replied sulkily:

«Everyone is dog tired, comrade platoon leader, we have driven all the morning!».

Tuyêt said in good humour! «I know it, but, let's strive one more hour for the sake of the South, men!»

The trucks rolled on. Heavy mist hang on the convoy. For many months now the convoy under Tuyêt's command had been operating on a portion of Road X, engaged in an arduous battle of wits against the marauding US aircraft to gain each kilometre. Very often the convoy was overtaken by enemy planes which dropped flares and swooped down to make diabolical firing or bombing passes. At other times, the trucks were putting on speed to cross a ford when a time-bomb exploded. They rolled on mudly portions of road, stumbling into unexpected bomb craters under round-the-clock surveillance of the enemy planes. But no danger, no hardship could daunt the intrepid truck drivers.

That night, the convoy set out under a moonlit sky. The familiar road spread invitingly before them. The trucks rolled on unimpeded, the speedometre reading 25, 30 miles per hour. In the cabin of the lead truck, Tuyêt sat confidently at his driving wheel. Moonlight filtering through the camouflage branches partly lit his face. His slanted eyes were closely watching ahead.

A good distance ahead another convoy was coming from the opposite direction on the meandering road. The «baselights» traced a luminous line on the road..

Suddenly he saw a truck from the other convoy blink its headlights repeatedly, illuminating a whole stretch of the road.

«What's the use of blinking under such a moonlight?» Tuyêt asked himself quite impatiently.

But hardly had he finished his sentence that flashes of light zigzagged on his windshield. He felt a strong air pressure on the door followed by ear-splitting explosions that made Tuyêt lose hold of the driving wheel. Tuyêt hastily applied the brakes and drove the truck to the roadside. By now, the other convoy had arrived in front of him and the drivers hastily parked their vehicles in disorder. Some jumped out and ran to shelter on either side of the road. The truck that had blinked its headlights was burning. The flame leapt up very high into the air amidst explosions and dense smoke. Tuyêt was dismayed at this scene of confusion. All the twenty or so trucks might be destroyed. He cried out in alarm:

«Don't run, comrades! Wheel back quickly!» A flight of planes flew past very low. A bunch of flares hung menacingly overhead. The road across the bare hill lit up brightly as in daylight.

After some bewilderment, Tuyêt regained his self-control. He stepped out of the dark and waved command to both convoys. His shadow was considerably magnified by the illuminating flares. The drivers who had recognized the signal and their platoon commander who stood firmly in the midst of an enemy attack, sprang to their feet, dashed back toward their trucks and started their engines. The whole convoy rumbled. One, two, three then four vehicles wheeled back.

Tuyêt brought up the rear. Hardly had he made about one hundred metres backward that enemy

planes renewed the attack. Again flashes and explosions. The earth shook violently. Dirt and stones flew all around, Tuyêt ordered the trucks to move another one hundred metres back and together with the other drivers he took shelter in the forest.

The enemy fired a flurry of fluorescent flares that lit up the sky over the drivers. Two jet fighters took turns in diving and firing rockets on the burning truck. Flames shot up from the truck and spread to the road, sending out an acrid smell. Lying on the road-side Tuyêt anxiously watched the trucks standing pell-mell on the road within shooting range of the enemy planes. He got up, went to his truck and started the engine. The other drivers followed suit. The trucks moved farther from the road.

Tuyêt was transported with joy while seeing that the friendly convoy was also wheeling farther back to avoid the strafing. He felt it was a most precious gift he had ever received in his life. Before the last truck of the friendly convoy had rolled off the road, a rocket set it ablaze. Tuyêt looked back at the other trucks. They had come to nestle immobile on either side of the road beneath the thick foliage of trees.

By now Tuyêt's truck had got out of the enemy's shooting range. Still he felt it was too easily detectable. He thought the pilot could see every green leaf of the camouflage. The planes stuck to the convoys like a leech to a man's legs. One, then two hours went by. Still they did not leave. They fired one flare after another and made one bombing pass after the other. Never before had Tuyêt and his

comrades experienced such a prolonged and fierce air attack. Looking at the diving planes he was overwhelmed with anger. He sweated all over his body.

The planes made a few more passes then flew away. The drivers came out of their hiding, calling to one another. Everyone was exhausted and looked haggard. Tuyêt wanted to break this uneasy atmosphere of fear and weariness. He thumped heavily on his belly :

« This 'entrails container' would hurt much more, should the bombing have lasted longer ». A big laughter greeted this rare joke from the platoon commander who normally was as timid and word-sparing as a country girl. Tuyêt added :

« They are really a pack of blind wolves. Such an amount of bombs, rockets and shells for only two trucks ».

The convoy again rolled out onto the road the camouflage twigs quivering in the light of the crescent moon.

The US marauders preyed upon the trucks like a pack of wolves. They dropped flares on the rear of the convoy. The drivers did not mind and rolled on. Even when the planes flew overhead, they remained firm at their wheels, gearing up and outstripped the bombs. When the planes sent down a barrage of flares ahead of them they stopped and jumped down to « stretch your legs for a while ». Should the enemy drop delayed, action bombs in the, roadside the

drivers would slow down and ask the Young Volunteers or militia engaged in road mending about the number of bombs still unexploded and the time of those which had gone off. Then Cao Ba Tuyêt would lead the whole convoy to pass the danger spot at the most propitious moment.

Thus the drivers continued to move up hill and down dale, stopping in day-time to repair their vehicles and change the camouflage and resuming their journey at nightfall. On an average they operated twenty-six days in a month.

An unexpected happy news came to Tuyêt one day. His convoy was assigned to transport an emergency consignment on Highway I which ran past his home village in Nghe An province. Tuyêt was allowed a few hours to drop in and visit his family of which he had not heard in the past few months. He was all the more impatient since his village lies in Ben Thuy, one of the targets of frequent attacks by enemy planes.

His heart beat hard as he entered his hamlet. Lan, his wife, would be nearing her time. A canary was singing on a branch. Militia men and women were busy digging trenches behind the bamboo hedge. Laughter arose every now and then. Enemy bombs had almost completely razed his hamlet. A disused rattan cradle hung in a bamboo grove. It resembled so much the one he had bought in Thanh Hoa for Lan some time before she gave birth to their second son.

Presentiment of a terrible disaster Tuyêt ran as fast as his legs could carry him, jumping over two bomb craters and stopped in front of his home. He

turned pale. The house had been completely demolished. Some of the beams lay among the few wooden pillars that still stood erect on the floor. The roof leaves were scattered everywhere. A bomb crater as deep as a well could be seen in the garden, a score metres from the house.

Tuyêt treaded heavily on the floor, crunching the dry leaves that once covered the roof of his home. He squatted down, holding his head with both hands, sensing a lump in his throat. Before him lay Vinh city in ruins, his village in ruins, his home in ruins. The dark past of his family flowed back to his mind. Before the revolution, his mother, his sister and himself worked year in year out as hired labourers or servants for rich families. His old mother was bent quickly by the years of hard toil. Then came the years of resistance, and the days following the restoration of peace. The port of Ben Thuy and the town of Vinh entered stirring days of reconstruction and expansion. The banks of the Lam river soon were bustling with activity. Smoke rose high into the air from the chimneys of the newly built or reactivated factories. The barbarous American aggressors wanted to destroy everything and dampen the fighting will of the whole nation. They wanted to bring his family back to the miserable past.

Having learned of the news that his mother, wife and children were evacuated to Nghi-xuân, a safer-place, Tuyêt hurried back to his unit.

Seeing him back, Que, the commander of the unit, asked in astonishment!

« Why are you back so soon ? »

« I met no one there. People said they had gone and settled in Nghi Xuân ».

« And why don't you go and see you dear ones ? »

« But I don't know exactly where they are now. Moreover, I think there is the Party and the people everywhere... »

After this special assignment to Highway I, Cao Ba Tuyêt's convoy returned to its old route. Again the daily and nightly battles against American aircraft. And each hour and each kilometre they rolled was one more hour and one more kilometre they carried the badly needed supplies nearer to the front.

One day, at about one o'clock in the morning the trucks arrived at bridge L. The bridge had been damaged by a bombing raid in the afternoon. The drivers were all tired and wanted to back down to take a rest. Tuyêt looked at his watch then at the bridgehead and thought hard. He went to the right and discovered with great joy a ford that had been left in disuse. After some consideration, he put off his clothes and waded into the stream to sound its depth. The water reached his knees. He cautiously groped his way to the middle of the stream. He tumbled in to a bomb crater. Walking and swimming Tuyêt reached another bomb crater.

After careful survey, Tuyêt walked up onto the road drenched from head to foot. He shivered with cold. He said to the other drivers: « There are only two

bomb craters. The road bed is still firm and the embankment also is not yet damaged. What is your opinion? ».

One driver replied in his gruff, sleepy voice.

« Let's back down. It's senseless venturing down in such darkness. If we tumble into a crater, this will be a choice target for the « Johnsons » (US planes) and there would be more harm than good ».

The others remained silent and looked at Tuyêt inquiringly.

Tuyêt said calmly :

« The craters are not large, comrades. Let's fill them up. I reckon it'll take no more than one hour. That will be much better than stay here and take other risks ».

He put off his shirt, rolled up his trousers, and picking up a rock he went down to the ford.

After nearly two hours of intense work, the craters were filled up. Tuyêt waded into the stream to serve as guide for the other drivers. Another convoy came and both crossed the ford safely.

The day broke after they had made another dozen kilometres. The drivers were dog tired. Tuyêt himself could hardly open his eyes and his hands no longer obeyed his command at the driving wheel. He very much wished to hide the truck and take a nap. But thinking of ford X. and bridge K. he changed his mind. If they could pass these two crucial points this morning they would be able to make a non-stop journey to morrow night. For, if the enemy bombed and destroyed one of these two points, the convoy would be stopped on this side of the river for nobody

could tell how many days. Tuyêt felt all the fatigue had gone and he put on speed.

The watch read six o'clock in the morning after the convoy passed bridge K and ford X. After hiding their trucks the drivers slept soundly, some at their driving wheels. At 3 p.m. two American jets came and released a string of bombs. Bridge K. was knocked down...

November. The cold winter rain made the road sticky. All the streams were in spate. But nothing could stop the wheels of Cao Ba Tuyêt's convoy from rolling on road X. They rolled on and on, guided by flimsy light of kerosene lamps in the villages or the red lights of the militia's air defence stations along the road.

The few baby clothes destined for his newly born child remained slung in the cabin. He had received a letter and learnt that his family was safe and well. His wife had given birth to a girl. Still, Tuyêt could not yet come back to pay her a visit.

The fight goes on...

The ford

LIKE a youthful force the road wound its course around sprawling hills. But it came to an abrupt stop. Before it lay a major stream. The current roared down impetuously although it was now in the heart of the dry season. Foam splashed white on both banks.

The whole group stopped. They put the spades down and everyone looked anxiously at the current. Their pointed iron picks, their dust-covered hoes and axes, their strong, round arms which were at all time ready for action were like hung up in the air.

Before them was neither a steep slope, nor a high mountain, nor a forest. Before them was a stream, a turbulent stream.

The youthful road as well as the bulldozer rumbling behind them seemed to be taken aback and fell silent. The sun was dazzling. The road builders

remained helpless before the rush of water, and the challenging white of the foam splashing against the rocks on the banks.

Dan broke a twig and flung it into the stream. The twig made a few twirls then was swept away, leaving only a green leaf that bobbed up and down in the foaming water.

«Dear me, look how it flows!»

«But the stream is not large, I bet it's only a score metres to the other bank,» said Kim Dung, the company leader, looking over Dan's shoulders with a frown.

«Well, if we are allowed to swim, I'll need only a few strokes to reach the other bank. The Duong river in my village is many times wider, yet we crossed it daily swimming beside our buffaloes».

Kim Dung broke into a broad grin:

«To swim and to build a road across a river are two different things. The trucks could not make a few strokes to reach the other bank as you pretend to do»!

The whole group gathered beside the stream.

The young foreheads knitted and everyone looked anxious. Behind them the newly built road stretched like a silk ribbon.

The meeting broke up. The teams returned to their temporary bamboo huts. To guard against enemy planes, they put out all the lights. In the dim light of the crescent moon, the whole road-mending company

set eagerly to prepare for a crucial job the next day. The baskets for carrying earth were urgently repaired. New handles were put to the spade and hoes. From the smithy came the puffs of Thuc's bellows. He was sharpening the picks and straightening the prising iron rods. The sounds of hammers reverberated against the mountain cliffs in the dark winter night.

No one wanted to sleep. Tomorrow a new campaign would begin. There was too little time left. They felt that so many things were still lacking.

All the members of Company 9 of the Young Volunteers Brigade were highly exalted thinking of the moment when they would move to-morrow the first clods of earth to build a ford at this stream crossing. Everything was new, everything seemed difficult because no one of them had got any experience in this kind of work.

At the command office, company leader Kim Dung was discussing with two other young women entrusted with the building of two new roads: Tran Thi Dieu, assistant secretary of the trade union branch in charge of the « Trade Union Road », and Pham Thi Thanh Tam, secretary of the Ho Chi Minh Youth Union branch, in charge of the « Youth Road ». The three bent over the blueprint, engaged in heated debate.

The crow of a game-cock came from the hillfoot. Kim Dung stood up:

« Well, let's agree on that plan. At four and a half tomorrow morning we'll set out. Don't forget to bring along your flags and banners ».

They broke up and returned to their huts. The tense and stirring atmosphere of the successive debates kept Kim Dung wide awake late in the night. Her daughter had fallen asleep she did not know when and was muttering something in her dream. She tucked her in and bent down to kiss her long then turned to the wall trying to doze off a while.

Dawn broke. The morning mist floated about like white smoke. The young road builders put on each a camouflage cloth on their shoulders and set out in the rumble of drums and in the wake of twenty six banners bearing witness to the meritorious records of the company.

Two shock teams, like two pointed prongs, went some distance ahead, weaving their way amid high elephant grass toward the stream. Company leader Kim Dung and trade union secretary Bich Dan, each holding an iron-beam, prised the first stone into the stream. The stone rolled down with a rattle that was also the signal for the start. Then everyone followed suit by prising and carrying stones, digging and shovelling earth.

Mrs Tham, 44, sprang to the lead of the earth carriers with two baskets dangling rhythmically on the shoulderpole. She did it as nimbly as any teenaged girls. Tra, another member of the company, did not want to be outstripped and she tried her hardest to catch up with Mrs Tham. The previous night, the two had challenged each other to chalk up the highest mark in earth moving. And they vied with each other to carry the heaviest load and make the most trips

A distance away Hong Tan and Bich Phuong, two of the « cultural figures » of the company, in rolled sleeves were prising stones to roll them into the river. Tan began a sailor song that was taken up by the others at the end of each phrase :

« A stone,
« Heave ho !
« To fill the deep stream,
« Heave ho !
« To bash in
« The head of a yank aggressor,
« Heave ho !
« And crush his bones
« Heave ho, ho, ho ! ».

After each « Heave ho », a stone was rolled into the stream. The stones rolled and pushed one another. The picks sparked fire as the « heave hos » became more and more forceful.

Ly wiped the sweat on her forehead and said pantingly :

« Can anyone of you strike another tune ? I'm fed up with her heave-hos ».
« Why don't you do it yourself ? »
« But I am no singer ! »
« Phuong, where is Phuong, why does she not call the tune ? »
« My voice has got gruff somehow I can't ! »
« Stop that rubbish affectation, madam ! »
« Okay, I'll, but will you support me ? »
« Hurrah Phuong, come on ! ».

Phuong heaved up a heavy stone then stretched up to clear her throat. A crystalline voice rose in the dampy morning air :

«Hey, ho! This road I build is a road of affection and love. For your truck to cross ravines and bombs. Hey ho!» Everyone chimed in. The rocks fell like avalanches into the water.

«Look, she's again thinking of her lover. «And the girls thumped at one another back giggling.

The sun had risen above the mountain. The mist was gradually diluted and melted away. The rocks continued to fall into the stream, sending up geysers of crystallike water. Only now could the road builders fully appreciate the velocity of the current. It flowed at a terrific speed. Hardly could any stone resist the flow. Even the heavy baskets of pebbles were swept down to the lower reaches. The stream roared menacingly like a monster ready to swallow up everything the women dropped in. Finally, the jerry-built pier was itself swept away. Tra and the whole 8th group jumped down to plant more stakes and rebuild the pier. The icy cold water made everyone shiver. The women teeth clattered under the impact of cold but their eyes shone with determination and their faces were beaming challengingly.

The day wore on and the sun began to decline. Yet the stream remained indomitable. Some of the girls began to lose patience.

Mrs Ly put the spade down and asked sneeringly :
«When do you think we can finish it, Mrs Dien?

I've told you, it's not a matter to joke with, But you

have let your impulse prevail. Now you can see the result for yourself ».

Dien wanted to recriminate but inwardly she herself felt distraught. She went straight to the rock pile. Since early morning she had been anxiously watching the sluggish pace at which the «trade union road» was built. So much stone and earth had been dumped into the stream without being able to stem the impetuous current.

From the hilltop came the crystalline voice of Nguyet over a loudspeaker. «The shock unit of the youth has set a brilliant initial record: completing the pier and the road bed ».

«So, the girls have outstripped us, Mrs Dien ». Mrs Tham put down the two baskets of earth and ventilated in earnest. She was drenched with sweat although it was in the midst of winter.

«Now, Mrs Dien, as far as I can see, we can't compete with the girls. There must be some other way or we'll only be dropping grains into the sea ».

«Yes, I also want to discuss the whole thing with you and others in the team. Compared with the youth, we are moving at an appallingly slow pace ».

«Look, the stream is as deep as it was in the morning! ».

That night, the shock group held an emergency meeting. But no solution came. Dien was gloomier than before. After entering the mosquito net, she still lay wide awake.

For two months now, she had not seen her four-month-old daughter. She had to send her to grandma.

She could not take her along in such conditions as these.

Either because she missed her baby or was too much concerned over her unaccomplished responsibility, Dien could not sleep. She tossed about all night. Outside, the stream continued its unending, challenging roar.

Before day break, she already set out for the brook and told some of the girls to go into the jungle to fell trees and make a kind of gutter. She remembered she had seen a conveyor belt somewhere at a coal mine. Why not make a stone conveyor here?

After constructing the conveyor Dien climbed up the hill and prised a rock. The rock rolled along the conveyor in the eager expectation of everyone. Arrived at half-way to the brook, the rock suddenly lost speed then came to a halt. What's the matter with it? Dien uttered a sigh of despair. Leaving the pick she ran together with other women to the scene. Someone was giggling behind. Without turning Dien knew it was Mrs Ly, the avowed opponent of the whole project. She frowned and turned to Tra, Tham and Hong Phuong: « We cannot let it fail, comrades ».

Suddenly Hong Phuong cried out with joy:

« Ah, I've seen why it didn't roll on, Dien ».

« Why? » Dien asked anxiously.

Because we haven't got the necessary slope. Look, it's too level ».

Dien clapped her hands:

« That's right! What a blockhead I am! How can it roll on such a horizontal plane? ».

The four of them set to rearrange the supports of the conveyor to make it more sloping. Then they hurled rocks into the conveyors. The rocks rolled down, the one pushing the other, raising clouds of dust. And like a real avalanche they were rushing into the stream, sending up geysers of water which in splashing against the banks, made the reeds bend very low.

Shouts of acclaim arose amidst the frantic beating of drums and gongs. The rock avalanche and the turbulent stream went into a violent clash. Mrs Ly hugged Dien's bony shoulders and said apologetically:

«Will you pardon me, you're really marvellous!»

Further in the rear was the supply service of the campaign. They were the wicker-work team of Nguyễn Thi Hoa and Nguyễn Thi Bích Nu who were splitting bamboo and making baskets with their dextrous hands. Huge piles of baskets were urgently transported to the road building sites. Thousands of bamboo poles were shifted to the front. They worked day and night, in the forest, at their makeshift houses, felling bamboo, plaiting ropes, splitting wicker. The military campaign was urging them to make haste.

From the hillfoot came the endless puffing of the bellows, Thuoc, Nhung and Vuc, three assistant-smiths, their faces smeared with coal-dust were busy repairing heaps of broken spades and hoes sent back from the building sites. Now and then Kim Dung would drop in and ask:

« Are the hoes ready ? Where are our picks ? They are dying of cold over there waiting for your tools ! »

The three could hardly keep up with the rush of the work.

They looked haggard after many sleepless nights. The cooks had to bring the meals to them at the smithy itself.

On the third day of the campaign, Dao, the fiancée of Thuoc, came to see her. Before he had finished asking her questions, Thuoc excused herself and ran to the workshop. Dao was completely put out. Left to himself at the visitors room, he toyed with a pictorial review, leafing it over and over again without understanding a word.

From the smithy hammer strokes continued to resound. Dao sat up and out of curiosity he went down to the hillfoot and entered the smithy. He saw a sweaty, besmeared Thuoc handling a sledgehammer on an anvil.

That night, when taking Dao to the brook, Thuoc recounted to him what had happened in the afternoon. She said that as the road building campaign went into the crucial phase, the three women assistant smiths could not handle the big quantity of broken hoes. Finding a stock of disused picks left over from the time of the railroad building, they decided to repair them to make up for the shortage of picks. « That's how our double-blade picks came into being », she said. Dao felt he had understood the work of his fiancée better than ever before.

The weather worsened with every passing day. The northern wind from the Long Range was biting cold. The road to the construction site became sticky with laterite red mud. Many times a day the cooks headed by Mai Thi Tho slogged under rain across the muddy terrain to bring the meals to the two shock teams. The nearest market was a dozen kilometres away. Yet, Mai Thi Tho went there every-day to buy provisions. One day on her way back from the market Tho was overtaken by a low flying US aircraft. A bomb splinter cut through the conical palm hat on her head. Tho was delighted to see that the baskets of sea fish remained intact. Quickly she stood up and carried the fish home to prepare the afternoon meal.

That was how the men and women in the rear line worked, those who did not take direct part in the fight against the turbulent stream.

Under lacerating rains, in the rumble of falling stones and through consecutive sleepless nights of the road builders, the brook gradually dried up. Then the bulldozer came into action. The driver with a beaming face geared up and drove his machine to the road bed.

The two anti-US roads emerged from the water as if they had been lifted up by some giant, youthful arms. And the turbulent stream finally was vanquished. It became docile, winding its limpid current to newly built culverts.

The courageous women who were rightly called «three responsibilities» women have completed their

work four days ahead of schedule. The two roads built by their hands baptized «Trade Union Road» and «Youth Road» ran parallel like two companions in arms.

On the inaugural day which was a festive day for the road building brigade, a truck driver stopped his vehicle and watched the newly completed fords. As if to test the efficiency of the women's work he drove back then pushed on. The tyres of the heavy truck could only make hardly perceptible dents on the smooth road bed. From the cabin the driver leant out and waved to the girls with his cap then sped off.

The trucks rolled past the fords in endless lines carrying with them the youthful vitality of the roads.

Tran Van Thai, an elite worker

TRAN Van Thai works at the « April 20 » state – farm. He is a 19-year-old lad, fairly tall with shining eyes that spells intelligence and also some mischievousness. He was just a small boy when he came to the farm and was often called « the kid » by the other workers. Yet, after only one year he has grown up beyond recognition, and is held in esteem by everyone for his diligence and his creative spirit. Take the timber-sawing for example. Many had to learn for months without getting the saw-line straight. But it took Thai only half a month to be expedient in the job. His saw line is such that you would bet it belongs to an experienced worker. Thai is as applied in work, as assiduous in learning, and devoted in every job he is assigned to.

Born in Thailand, his childhood was not a happy one: selling ice-cream, working as a boot-boy,

newsboy, roaming the streets looking for customers. He had long dreamt of returning one day to the country, to his native village. After repatriation he was sent to work at the State farm. Here, an entirely new world was opened to him. Everyone cared for him and was ready to assist him. The Working Youth Union branch at the State farm sent him to a refresher course and took him to youth meetings that made him better understand his task and better love his country and his work. Thai gave his all for the new task like a fledgeling before the dawn of a new day.

But one day the Americans sent planes to bomb him farm. Production activities were threatened. The whole farm embarked on urgent, busy days. Thai was assigned to the homeguard unit of the farm and given a K44 rifle. He was only too happy with his gun and kept it day and night by his side. Seeing a bird flying past or a branch within firing range he would raise his gun and take aim. He was so eager to open fire one day at the marauding aircraft.

To tell the truth, the first time he heard the roar of jet bombers Thai shook in all limbs. Covering his ears with both hands he ran into the nearest bush and came out only after the planes had gone. Now he was ashamed of himself remembering those moments. In fact, things have completely changed now. Side by side with his comrades in the homeguard unit he fought bravely against enemy planes at any moment of the day. The enemy showered bombs and rockets on the farm, killing and wounding many of his friends. His

hatred for the enemy and his desire to avenge his friends gave him strength and courage. Once, during a bombing raid he crossed several hills and brooks to come to the rescue of Mrs Xuan's home which had caught fire. He managed to salvage many things including a sewing machine. Today, Mrs Xuan still spoke of him with profound admiration.

On another occasion, Thai and his group were at work when the planes came. Hardly had they jumped into a ditch that the earth shook violently under the impact of bomb explosions. Stones and dirt fell like showers into the ditch.

«Let's get out, it's too risky to stay here!» he cried out and jumped out only to see that his friends had been completely buried under an avalanche of earth. Without hesitation he sped out. Meeting Công on his way, Thai called out :

«Come on quick, they've been trapped over there, in the trench! ».

The two rushed back and began digging with their hands. Losing not a second Thai ran to the store-house, broke the lock and took out spades and hoes. They dug in earnest and pulled out the first man. They dug on and took out the second then the third.

Thai was startled to see that the man just taken out was his own father. Containing his grief, he went on digging. In the end, the two succeeded in saving all the five victims. Whereupon other workers arrived and gave them a hand. The five soon completely recovered and resumed their work at the state farm. Thai and Công were cited for their devotion and

valour. Sometime later Thai was admitted into the Working Youth Union.

Nevertheless, the fight that left him with the deepest impression was the one against a group of US helicopters on September 20, 1965.

The sky was heavily overcast. Occasionally the sun would peep out of the clouds. At about 2 p.m., no sooner had Thai arrived at his workplace than four «Thunderchiefs» roared in. They came out of the clouds and dived straight on a nearby bridge. Thai ran to a fortification and pointed his gun skywards, ready to open fire when the planes would come within firing range. Anti-aircraft guns of all calibres roared off on all sides. Suddenly Thai saw an F 105 belch smoke then burst into flame... The fireball grew larger and larger quickly and streaked down across the sky. Thai and his friends jumped of joy:

«It has caught fire, hurrah!»

From the fireball ejected a purple parachute. Thai turned to the commander of the local self-defence unit and said quickly:

«Allow me to go out and catch him, comrade!»

Before the commander had answered, Thai already darted off. Before him were precipitous mountain ridge. Normally, to reach the hill-top he had to crawl on his fours with utmost care. Today strangely enough, he crossed them without difficulty, jumping from one rock to another like an antelope.

His clothes had been torn up by the razor-sharp rocks he did not know when. His feet were bleeding. But Thai did not take the least notice because his eyes

were riveted to the falling parachute with the pilot dangling below like a frog hung by a hook.

Group after group of rescue aircraft circled in the sky in an infernal roar. Some of them swooped down very low. But Thai did not fire a single shot because he knew he must spare the ammunition for the hunt for the pilot and the helicopters. Presently, a chopper came looking like a giant dragon-fly. Thai dashed on. Drops of sweat crept into his mouth. Never before had he felt so strong.

The forest where the parachute fell was now only a few scores metres away. The three broke off and closed in from three different directions. Thai already saw the parachute, half of it **hung** on a tree and the other spreading on the ground. The pilot was hiding somewhere. Thai ran to the parachute and gave it a violent pull. Rat-tat-tat... A burst of machine gun was fired from an AD 6. Thai looked up:

«F... your mother! You can't cow me!» He pulled twice more at the parachute. The enemy fired frantically. He pulled harder. The two AD 65 winged over the place and sprayed hails of gunfire. By now the chopper had lowered to almost tree top. Thai held firm his rifle. The chopper continued to lower, its rotors whirring noisily in the air. Thai could see the pilot and other crewmen looking down inquisitively on the bushes. An implacable hatred filled his heart as he thought of his friends Hang, Lien and others murdered by the Yanks. He wanted so much to send them each a round of his rifle. But the recommendations of the commander still rung in his ears: capture them

alive, don't kill them.. The chopper had almost touched down. Gunfire of the militia came from all sides with hissing sounds. Thai also fired at the chopper, very calmly, round by round. The body of the craft had been riddled in many places. Panic could be clearly seen on the crewmen's faces.

«We must fire at the rotor-blades if we want to capture them alive» Thai said to himself.

He aimed at the rotors and cracked two shots.

A hissing sound produced by some flying thing made him duck low. That was a broken rotor blade falling a few yards away. The chopper tried to climb up but soon it lost balance and fell to the ground like a stone with a dull thud. Three Americans crawled out of the wrecked aircraft, each holding a shining carbine. An idea flashed through Thai's mind:

«If I came out now, my rifle would be no match for their quick-firing guns. «Thai stood behind a big tree, his rifle pointed at the enemy.

«We must capture them, not kill them», Thai again recalled to himself.

Hardly had the first American got up that Thai sent a bullet over his head. The man dropped to the ground and rolled into a nearby ditch. The second in his turn was startled by a bullet whizzing close to his chest. All the three rolled into the ditch. Like an arrow Thai sprang up. By now the militia and army-men had arrived and the Yanks were tied up in next to no time. They were marched to the detention place, walking with bent heads between rows of rifles, bayonets, spears and sticks. Thai and

another worker were ordered to stay back and guard the helicopter.

Darkness spread rapidly from the Jungles. A cold wind rustled among the trees. Only then did Thai feel pain all over his body and terribly hungry. He instinctively thought of his family, his mother and younger brothers and sisters at home. At this hour, they must have dined and his mother must be sitting and doing some needle-work near the kerosene lamp while his father would be busy with some small repairs and his brothers and sisters would be learning their lessons or huddling together around a pictorial review. Now the whole family must be enormously fearing for him. One thing is certain: mum could not help crying. She was so fearful of the planes and so quick in tears.

Thai was so eager to relate the whole story to his mother. He would tell her :

«Look, mum, don't be afraid of the Yanks. They are big indeed but have little guts, Your son himself has scared them out of their wits».

Thai smiled all to himself. Thai was so much carried by the joy of victory that all the pain and fatigue of the chase seemed to have evaporated. He turned to his comrade :

«Let's dig a trench to protect ourselves in case the enemy would send planes to destroy the chopper ».

Manh agreed. The two set to dig a ditch. Afterward, they sat huddled against each other, their guns firm in hands. From a nearby jungle came the

braying of a deer followed shortly by the howling of a bear.

Again the AD 65 came and dropped a string of flares that filled the sky with their morbid vacillating light, Thai commented with a sneering laughter :

«Look, they are searching for the pilot and crewmen who must be [now well in a certain prison reserved for them».

A gust of wind shook the branches as if it were a sign of approbation by the jungle.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 - Heroic defenders of bridge "May 19 ".	5
2 - Ensuring continued production.	15
3 - Giving her all for the task.	26
4 - Convoy of fire-line.	37
5 - The ford.	47
6 - Trân van Thai, an elite worker.	59

