

Ho's Heirs Are Unlikely to Alter Policy They Helped Administer

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HONG KONG, Sept. 3 (Wednesday)—Ho Chi Minh's death, when it comes, is unlikely to bring about dramatic changes in North Vietnamese policies and practice, at least in the immediate future.

Ho, 79, retired long ago to the role of arbiter, leaving the direction of the country to a collegium of younger associates. This move served him in two principal ways.

It permitted him, in contrast to contemporaries like Mao Tse-tung and Charles de Gaulle, to protect his enormous prestige as "Uncle" Ho, the living legend. Thus he was able to shift the blame to his subordinates for such blunders as an abortive land reform or the unpopular purge of intellectuals a decade ago.

At the same time, his delegation of authority gave Hanoi a degree of institutional stability and experience unparalleled elsewhere in Southeast Asia. This partly assured North Vietnam's survival under the intense pressures of U.S. bombing.

So long as the war in the South continues, it seems probable that their passionate nationalism will hold Ho's heirs together after his disappearance, even though they may have conflicting tactical views.

When the war ends, however, there are prospects that the divergences within

the Politburo of the Lao Dong (Workers) Party could emerge.

Apart from their differences on domestic affairs, Ho's eventual successors are believed to be divided along hawkish and dovish lines. Some critics of U.S. policy in Vietnam submit that these tendencies have been insufficiently exploited in efforts to settle the war.

According to most specialists, the leading dogmatist in Hanoi is Truong Chinh, 60, a Politburo member and chairman of the National Assembly. Chinh ranks second in the formal North Vietnamese hierarchy.

An admirer of vigorous Chinese Communist methods, Chinh composed a brutal land collectivization program that provoked a bloody peasant revolt in 1956. As a result, he was dismissed as Secretary General of the Lao Dong Party.

However, within the past year he has regained prominence as the prime advocate of "protracted war," in which the Communists use their battlefield posture as leverage for their conference table demands.

Other reputed hard-liners in the Politburo are said to be Le De Tho, a senior theoretician; Hoang Quoc Viet, a veteran trade union activist; Hoang Van Hoan, former ambassador to Peking and first vice chairman of the National Assembly, and To Huu, deputy minister of culture.

In relative terms, the leading moderates are considered to be Premier Pham Van Dong and Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap, both old associates of Ho.

Giap's Stature Dips

Now nearly 60, Giap, is

popular for his victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. But his outspoken manner and his reported impatience with ideology has earned him the enmity of Truong Chinh and other die-hards.

Giap's stature is believed to have suffered following the failure of the 1958 Lunar New Year offensive to produce a Communist "mass uprising" in South Vietnam. Unlike Giap, Pham Van Dong is cautious and tactful. He is probably the man most capable of balancing the rival factions in Hanoi. Like Giap, he is reputed to distrust and dislike the Chinese.

Other Hanoi moderates evidently include Deputy Premier Pham Hung; Minister of Interior Ung Van Khiem; the economist Le Than Nghi, and Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh.

Duan's Importance

Between the dogmatists and the pragmatists stands Hanoi's most enigmatic and possibly most important future figure, Le Duan. A Southerner of peasant stock and now the party secretary general, Le Duan has long been identified as a Communist in the tough Chinese style. Informed sources indicate however, that his position is rather a blend of nuances.

As a Southerner who directed the guerrilla war against the French in the South, he has always been fiercely loyal to his native region—an attitude that has marked him as a radical extremist.

He reportedly opposed the 1954 Geneva accords, arguing that the promise of elections to reunify Vietnam could not be fulfilled.

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