

INSIDE NORTH VIETNAM - SEATO 1957

As recent events in North Vietnam, notably the widespread intellectual revolt against the Hanoi authorities and in particular the outspoken criticism voiced by Mr. Phan Khoi and his associates are of more than passing interest, we have taken the liberty of including in this issue of "Inside North Vietnam" an introduction of our own as well as a narrative pieced together from the Communists' own admissions.

The introduction is intended to indicate briefly the causes of the demand for intellectual sincerity and freedom within the Sino-Soviet bloc; to show that the revolt in North Vietnam is all part of a pattern, which is clearly discernible in Poland, in Hungary and even in Russia, which many people believe will emerge in other satellite states; to indicate the springs from which Mr. Phan Khoi and his associates drew their inspiration, and to put before the free people of Vietnam, and perhaps some who are not free too, the dilemma which Soviet Russia and Communist China have created for themselves and the Communist satellite states.

What is this dilemma? The Hanoi authorities now face the same problem as Communist Governments face everywhere. They cannot do without the intellectuals. The very intricate technical civilisation of to-day depends on them, but if the intellectuals are allowed freedom they begin by questioning the validity of Communist premises and end by denouncing them. On the other hand if they are suppressed they become sullen and withhold their co-operation. Industry, economy and the whole application of modern techniques are then all endangered.

There is no solution to this problem on Communist lines. They are up against one of the contradictions in Society - a contradiction which they delight in detecting in non-Communist societies, but which they now find in their own.

Mr. Phan Khoi and his associates were true Vietnamese patriots. Their names are now enshrined with those who have

fought for freedom against foreign domination and against blue prints alien to the national character everywhere. His newspaper, of which 5 issues appeared before it was finally suppressed, by decree of the Hanoi authorities, on December 15th, 1956, was aptly called "NHAN VAN" (Humanism)

As the whole fight for freedom by the intellectuals in North Vietnam unfolds itself in "Inside North Vietnam", may those who have yet to learn the true nature of the Communist regime in North Vietnam understand its ramifications and may they come to their own conclusions.

That is our prayer, for the flame lit by Mr. Phan Khoi, now temporarily extinguished, will certainly flare up again and will again have the support of all freedom-loving peoples.

We are indebted to Radio Hanoi for calling the whole episode to our attention. Without the doubts and fears it expressed during the period when NHAN VAN was still publishing, as exemplified by numerous broadcasts of articles in NHAN DAN and its own commentaries, without the regime's attempts to sabotage the paper and whip up hatred against Mr. Phan Khoi and his associates, and without its attempts to justify the suppression of NHAN VAN and the removal of Mr. Phan Khoi from public life, the whole episode might have passed unnoticed.

March 1st, 1957

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THE DEATH OF STALIN

Stalin's death at first brought only slight changes in the procedure of Communist control of satellite states. The satellite leaders chorused their approval of the new blue print for "collective leadership" but took no steps which materially affected their own positions of power. Only in Hungary was any important change made and there, although Rakosi had to relinquish the Premiership to his Communist rival Imre Nagy, he continued to dominate the Party machine.

NEW TACTICS IN SOVIET POLICY

Krushchev's faction introduced in 1955 new tactics in Soviet policy which brought repercussions in Eastern Europe. Recognition of Tito's independence stirred nationalist aspirations within satellite parties. The gradual weakening of the secret police after Beria's fall encouraged intellectuals and workers alike to voice their grievances more openly.

20th SOVIET PARTY CONGRESS

The repudiation of Stalin at the 20th Soviet Party Congress in February 1956 had the effect of stimulating revolutionary forces by lowering the prestige of satellite Party leaders and their henchmen. The shock was indeed great when Krushchev told his amazed audience at the 20th Congress that the mistakes and misdeeds of the past could now be freely laid at Stalin's door. Among them he listed the deportation of minorities; the physical elimination of political opponents, innocent Party members and army officers; mismanagement of military affairs and failure to take the imminent threat of Nazi invasion in 1941 seriously. In fact, he repeated some, if not all, the accusations levelled at Stalin by outside observers for the past twenty years.

THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

In his speech, Krushchev described the personality cult as the sole cause of all errors and crimes committed by the USSR in the last two decades of Stalin's life. He said that the purpose of the personality cult had been "to elevate one person, to transform him into a superman, possessing supernatural characteristics akin to those of a God". "Such a man", he said, "supposedly knows everything, sees everything, thinks for everyone, can do anything and is infallible in his behaviour".

KRUSHCHEV'S MOTIVES

It is impossible to be certain about the motive which prompted Krushchev, acting presumably with the knowledge and the authority of the Politbureau, to make this speech. In view of the growing restlessness of the people, particularly in Eastern Europe, he may have judged that the time had come when the circus of de-Stalinisation had to be staged as a substitute for the bread the Communists could not provide.

CHANGE IN POLICY

The 20th Soviet Party Congress approved two major amendments to the Stalinist interpretation of Marxist doctrine. These may be summarised as the reassessment of the class struggle within a society engaged in the building of "socialism" and the renunciation of the inevitability of violence as the means of world revolution.

THE NEW DOCTRINE

Internal reforms had to follow the repudiation of the Stalinist thesis. JUSTICE where there was the greatest room for improvement; POLITICAL DEMOCRATISATION; ECONOMIC DEMOCRATISATION; FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT; FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND INFORMATION - all came under scrutiny and some alterations were made in the Soviet Communist structure with almost immediate repercussions. Those who were offered a measure of justice and freedom almost immediately asked for more.

THE INTELLECTUALS

In the field of arts and letters in Soviet Russia the thaw soon became apparent, despite the fact that Soviet

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censorship continues to function and deviations from the Party line are excised from all printed publications. While the treatment of political issues is as rigidly controlled as ever, in the field of arts and education, controversial matters have been aired from time to time and this movement has gained momentum.

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COMMUNIST CHINA

These more liberal Communist conceptions were examined in Communist China. How did the Chinese Communist Party endeavour to harness the measure of Communist freedom which arose from the 20th Soviet Party Congress to its own machine?

THE HUNDRED FLOWERS BLOOMING POLICY

On the 25th of May 1956, Lu ting Yi, the head of the Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, made a speech at the Huai Jen Hall in Peking, which clearly showed that the Chinese regime was adapting itself to the new Communist trend.

This meeting was attended by natural scientists, social scientists, medical doctors, writers and artists, Party members, representatives of small political parties and people who belonged to no party at all. Lu ting Yi, as title for his speech, chose an eight-word couplet which may be rendered, literally, in English: "Harmonious display of a Hundred Flowers, Clamorous Discussion of a Hundred Schools". He said that the couplet had first been recited by Mao tse-tung and went on in his speech to say (textual translation of excerpts-Ed.): "For the prosperity of literature, art and sciences, the variety of a hundred flowers and a hundred schools is needed. Some years ago, some were still opposed to the acceptance of Peking Opera. The Party launched the 'hundred flowers' policy and to-day not only the Peking Opera but all kinds of popular dramas are flourishing in happy competition".

"Two thousand years ago, in the 'SPRING AND AUTUMN' and 'WARRIOR STATE' periods, there was a great diversity of schools of thought. (The Chinese expression 'hundred schools' is usually applied to the schools of these periods-Ed.). In those days the Hundred Schools were spontaneous and were not under an ideologically unified leadership. To-day..... the People's Democratic Dictatorship has already been established and

consolidated. The free discussion of the hundred schools, therefore, is developing within the framework of the long-range plans for scientific work".

Literature

"Literature, art and the sciences are indeed weapons of class struggle. In literature and arts, this is evident; there exist harmful factors like Hu Feng and the immoral yellow fictions which have to be exterminated like flies, mosquitos, rats and sparrows. There are indeed different kinds of literature: on the one hand, there is the literature of imperialism, of the landlords, of the bourgeois class; on the other, there is the literature which serves workers, farmers and soldiers".

Natural Sciences

"Natural sciences in themselves have no class character but the political attitude of the scientists, their possible worship of American thoughts, or their indifference to politics, are also objects of criticism and of class struggle".

Relation to Politics

"It should be noted that literature, art and sciences although related to class struggle cannot be identified with politics. To say that they are identical with politics is as false as to say that they lack all relation to politics and should be practised for their own sake".

"Freedom, therefore, and independence in discussion and the right of maintaining personal opinions must be promoted in literature, art and science".

Lu ting Yi explained that the CCP 'advocated freedom of independent thinking in the works of literature and art and in the work of scientific research, freedom of debate, freedom of creative work, freedom to criticise, freedom to express one's opinion, and freedom to maintain one's opinion and to reserve one's opinion', but he said "a strict distinction must be drawn between the ideological struggle within the ranks of the people and the struggle against the counter-revolutionaries".

Lu summed up by saying: "The Hundred Flowers and Hundred Schools policy is a policy of freedom to criticize and freedom to answer criticism. The present forms of criticism

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usually frighten people; if they do not frighten, they are monotonous and banal. There are two kinds of criticism: criticism of an enemy and criticism of a good man. Criticism of an enemy 'beats to death with a single cudgelstroke'; criticism of a good man is benevolent: after the struggle it will bring him back to the fold". He added that "art and literature are to make use of traditional Chinese works and also of foreign works, whether Communist or non-Communist", and concluded by saying "the slogan 'To Learn from Soviet Russia' is correct; not to learn from Soviet Russia is a basic error; yet this should not imply dogmatic, mechanical imitation (this has often been said before). A similar attitude must be taken up towards the People's Democratic countries (Eastern Europe). These are friends; but we should also learn from our enemies - not their reactionary systems but valuable points on administration and science and technique".

"The spread of the Hundred Flowers and the Hundred Schools policy involves other problems. These will have to be solved one by one".

Lu ting Yi's speech was not released till the second half of June; but already on May 21 and 23, 1956, the Peking Kuang Ming Daily editorials had dealt explicitly with the new policy of the Hundred Schools. The May 21 editorial made some points clearer than did Lu ting-Yi himself. On the 18th of the same month, a meeting of the leading University professors was held under the aegis of the September-the-third Learned Society. "During the past few years", the report says, "the learned world has lived in subdued silence; discussions have been very rare".

COMMENT ON LU TING-YI'S SPEECH

This speech of Lu Ting-yi's is a strange pronouncement indeed. The distinction between the 'political idealists' who are counter-revolutionaries, and erroneous thinkers within the ranks of the people, is subtle, and it is impossible to say where the dividing line is to be drawn. The criterion is, of course, support or non-support of the political regime; but the practical decision on what is and what is not support is in the arbitrary hands of the rulers.

THE COMMUNISTS SATELLITES

There was little in the way of organisational change in the satellites to suggest an attempt to strike a more

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democratic note after the death of Stalin. Such changes when they came later were the result of local rather than Soviet initiative.

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Poland

Poland provided the first test case. Recognising, after the risings in Poznan, the strength of nationalist opposition, the Soviet leaders attempted (rather clumsily) to curb the trend. But the success of the nationally-minded members of the Polish Politburo in paving the way for Gomulka's return apparently caught them unprepared. They found themselves presented with a political fait accompli consisting of Gomulka, a national Communist, brought back to power by a majority Party decision and with country-wide support. After some sabre-rattling, the Soviet leaders decided to cut their losses and accept Gomulka with the best grace they could find. Gomulka, for his part, was careful to save their faces as far as possible and to offer them no avoidable pretext for intervention.

Hungary

A few days later the Soviet leaders were confronted with the Hungarian rising. For some days they appear to have taken the view that the rising could be reduced to the proportions of the Polish struggle for independence. But when Nagy bowed to growing popular pressure for true democracy and national independence, the Soviet leaders ordered their troops, by this time heavily reinforced, to renew their onslaught.

In Hungary the struggle was started by the writers. Their first move was in the Autumn of 1955 and though it did not seem to have achieved much at the time it was a significant step towards revolution. It was the most considerable, organised, open movement against Party discipline which had occurred for many years; and it also reflected the shape of things to come in another way. In June 1956 the renewed revolt flared up once again, within the Writers' Association, led and inspired by Gyula Hay. He wrote a strong and in many ways beautiful article demanding freedom of the press and absolutely unfettered literary freedom. The revolution against Communist tyranny in Hungary still goes on.

North Vietnam

In North Vietnam it was started by a Vietnamese Gyula

Hay, called Phan Khoi, and the group of intellectuals he gathered
round him. Now read on

NHAN VAN's Editor

Mr. Phan Khoi, a 70-year old scholar from Quang Nam, who was a well known journalist in Saigon before and during the second World War, founded NHAN VAN (Humanism) in September 1956 as a forthrightly newspaper devoted ostensibly to cultural matters. The first number carried an article attacking the management of the official cultural paper VAN NGHE (Arts and Letters) and calling for more freedom for the artist using the thesis of the "Hundred Flowers Blooming Policy" to support the case. The article in question, called "For the revision of a literary judgement", examined the case of young poet, Tran Dan, who had, while in the People's Army, been unjustly condemned and brutally re-educated by the Vietminh. It was signed by Mr. Hoang Cam, not by Mr. Phan Khoi himself. It took, however, the same line as an article written by Phan Khoi entitled "A Criticism of the Arts and Letters leadership", which was published, shortly before the appearance of NHAN VAN's first number, in another magazine - one of the autumn numbers of a monthly called "Giai Pham" (Selected Literary Pieces). Phan Khoi's editorial influence was conspicuous in the first two issues of NHAN VAN. This set the tone for later issues of the paper.

His theme

NHAN VAN's main theme was the pursuit of democratic liberties. The fourth issue on November 5, 1956, took as its text Khrushchev's call for "socialist legality" at the 20th Party Congress in Moscow, and demanded specifically that the D.R.V. National Assembly should be re-activated and pass laws to re-establish individual freedom and the rule of justice so as to render impossible a repetition of the kind of "mistakes" made during the Agrarian Reform. The fifth issue on November 20th, pursuing this theme, gave warning that in the absence of such democratic measures North Vietnam might undergo the same troubles as Poland and Hungary.

Official sabotage of NHAN VAN

It may well be considered surprising that five issues of a newspaper which advocated freedom and justice should have been allowed to appear in North Vietnam. According to an editorial "Letter to our readers" which appeared in the third issue of NHAN VAN, the first issue sold 2,000 copies and the second 6,000 copies, each in one day. This rapid sale showed, as the editor pointed out, that "the opinion of the people, the cadres and the press has been greatly stirred by our review since its first issue". In another article in the same issue called "Dissatisfaction" by Sy Ngoc, the author said: "If the staff of NHAN VAN are wrong, the masses I am sure will be perspicacious enough to realise this. They cannot be easily fooled; they know who tries to fool them and what runs counter to their interests". He went on: "We are dissatisfied because we are not satisfied with the present situation and because we do not like to see private interests run counter to the masses' interests".

In these circumstances the Hanoi authorities obviously thought it best to use covert means to sabotage NHAN VAN. After the publication of the first issue it suddenly became difficult for the publishers to obtain their quota of newsprint at the controlled price. Then some promised financial backing was withdrawn; it was alleged in a later issue of NHAN VAN that this was due to threats by a well known 'agent provocateur' called Hoang Dao. Then there was interference with the distribution of the newspaper by the Central Post office and attempts were made to disaffect the printers. At the same time organised attacks against NHAN VAN were started in NHAN DAN (official organ of the Lao Dong, Communist party) and other newspapers. These attempts to sabotage NHAN VAN, no doubt with the hope of making it "appear" that it had died a natural death through financial or organisational difficulties, all failed. They were so highly organised, however, that Mr. Tran Duy, Mr. Phan Khoi's manager, about whom little is known, but who is a competent writer nevertheless, stated in an article entitled "The sincere struggle for democratic freedoms" published in the fourth issue of NHAN VAN: "Since the first issue of this paper it has undergone so many trials, so many difficulties, that we are tempted to say that they..... have tried to destroy it. These destructive acts, though separate and of ill-defined purpose, have been perpetrated with such systematic correlation, so methodically, that we are

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forced to conclude that they are the result of some definite leadership". In the same issue of NHAN VAN, in a section devoted to "Humorous stories", the following anecdote was published amongst others in the same vein:-

"A customer entered a bookshop at Hong Quang. 'Do you sell NHAN VAN?'. 'No sir', was the reply. 'Well, I have heard that it is very interesting; why don't you order it?'. 'In selling NHAN VAN you run the serious risk of dying early', answered the bookseller slowly, stroking his moustache."

The directors of NHAN VAN at this stage could have had no illusions about the risks they were running but the fight for democratic freedom and justice went on.

Sabotage fails. Hanoi authorities use bogus legal and publicity methods to destroy N H A N - V A N.

After the publication of the fourth issue on November 5th. Mr. Tran Duy was summoned by the Central Press Service and disciplined for breaking regulations. Tran Duy resisted. He appeared only at the third summons. All Hanoi newspapers on November 9th, 1956, just before the NGHE AN rising became known, carried an announcement that NHAN VAN had been officially cautioned and THOI MOI on November 10th published a communiqué explaining "The application of disciplinary measures against the newspaper NHAN VAN". The communiqué stated "In compliance with the regulations in force, each time a newspaper edition is published it must send to the Central Press Bureau three copies simultaneously with its distribution. NHAN VAN issue No 4, dated November 5th 1956, was distributed without copies of this issue being sent to the Bureau for filing purposes".

It concluded by saying "The Central Press Bureau has directly sent a warning to Mr. Tran Duy. At the headquarters of the Central Press Bureau Mr. Tran Duy admitted that he had infringed Government regulations, acknowledged this warning and proposed to the Bureau to publicise this communiqué in the press (November 10th 1956. Signed: The Central Press Bureau)".

NHAN VAN in its fifth issue of November 20th challenged the legality of the Central Press Bureau's action and Mr. Tran Duy denied categorically that he had 'proposed' to the Bureau that their communiqué should be published in the Press.

This article, which was entitled "The disciplinary measures against NHAN VAN by the Central Press Bureau are illegal" said: "The communiqué from the Central Press Bureau saying that we have violated Decree No.18 dated January 31, 1946, is contrary to the truth. We have complied exactly with this decree".

"The supplementary regulations of the Propaganda Ministry dated April 15th 1955, with which we failed to comply by our delay in sending three copies of our issue No.4 to the Central Press Bureau, contain absolutely no clause providing for the punishment of a journalist or publisher who commits a mistake; nor do they contain any clause allowing the Central Press Bureau to enforce disciplinary steps through a warning, a publication of the warning in the press, or in any other form".

"The Central Press Bureau wrote in its report the following sentence, which is not just: "Mr. Tran Duy has acknowledged the above mentioned warning and has proposed the publication of this fact in all the Hanoi daily press so as to extol the law of the Government". It did this only to gain an excuse for issuing a communiqué to destroy this issue (of NHAN VAN) and for an excuse to publish it in every Hanoi daily".

"The true facts are that Mr. Tran Duy only agreed (and did not 'propose') that he himself would write an article admitting the mistakes committed (and not that the Central Press Bureau should issue a communiqué) and that this article would be published in NHAN VAN alone and not in all the dailies".

The Premier's office ordered Mr. Tran Duy to report on November 21st 1956, at 4.30 pm. to discuss the settlement of the disciplinary measures taken by the Central Press Bureau against his paper. Mr. Phan Khoi had not returned from China at this date, where he had been attending celebrations on the anniversary of the death of the poet Lu Shun. An ameliorating statement was issued, but by that time the damage had been done and the organised campaign of vilification had gathered momentum.

NHAN VAN is suppressed by decree of the Hanoi authorities

Mr. Phan Khoi returned from Peking on December 3rd. The sixth issue of NHAN VAN was due to appear on December 4th but it did not appear. We know, however, from an announcement in THOI MOI dated December 11th 1956, by NHAN VAN, that its editors expected to publish issue No. 6 on December 15th and this was to

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be a special issue on Poland; the next number was to be a special issue on "self criticism". These issues were to be followed by special issues on Czechoslovakia, Eastern Germany, etc.

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On December 15th the Hanoi Administrative Committee issued an order withdrawing NHAN VAN's publishing licence and requiring all copies of all five numbers so far published to be surrendered to the authorities. There is good reason for believing that the Central Press Service, under instructions from the Party, inspected the proofs of NHAN VAN No 6 to see whether their previous "persuasions" had succeeded in modifying Phan Khoi's editorial line; and that when they discovered that they had not, they took the decision to suppress the newspaper altogether. This view is borne out by an article by Nguyen van Long in the Socialist Party review TO QUOC (Fatherland), which appeared on December 20th and said: "Up to issue No. 5 NHAN VAN did not modify its attitude. In fact it took an even more dangerous step forward. In issue No 6 the articles due for publication were, it appears, of a character designed to sabotage our unity by arousing the people to oppose the authorities".

The suppression of NHAN VAN was explained to the public in an important general Press Decree signed on December 15th, which asserted the principle of freedom of the press in its preamble but then went on to limit this freedom severely in five qualifying articles. On December 19th, the suppression of NHAN VAN and the significance of the new Press Decree were explained in broadcasts by Radio Hanoi. A distinction was drawn between constructive and disloyal criticism of the Party and Government but neither the Radio Hanoi explanation nor the Press Decree would by themselves enable any intending publisher to gauge to which category his criticism belonged.

The Hanoi authorities were frightened of NHAN VAN

Radio Hanoi's broadcast statement of December 19th 1956 said: "During the past two months five issues of NHAN VAN were published. All these issues sowed doubt about the nature of our regime and about the leadership of the Party and Government.

1. One finds that in the first issue there are six articles - nearly all of the issue - attacking Party leadership, the army, the Arts and Letters leadership, the youth union, trade cadres and political cadres.

2. In the second issue there are seven articles attacking the Arts and Letters leadership, security cadres, trade cadres and health cadres.

3. In the third issue there are six articles attacking Party members, the Party newspaper and the trade organ.
4. In the fourth issue there are eight articles attacking the Central Press Service, the State trade organ and its policy, such Party activities as the education of cadres, Party members and the Party newspaper.
5. In the fifth issue there are five articles attacking Party leadership in art, literature and the press, Party members and the Central Press Service".

Repercussions

With NHAN VAN suppressed, its editorial team broken up and a new Press Decree promulgated, the Hanoi authorities apparently thought that it only remained for the jackals to yelp round the kill and for the vultures to tear the last remnants of flesh from the corpse of NHAN VAN. They may have to think again.

There has been no news of Phan Khoi's whereabouts. He has disappeared, probably in spite of his age, to a re-education camp. The rest of the civilised world may want to know his fate. Nothing is known of what has happened to Tran Duy and the group of intellectuals who supported NHAN VAN. Other people, not only in Vietnam, may want to know what has happened to them, too. Perhaps, however, of more immediate concern to the Hanoi authorities is the extent to which they themselves must realise the effect NHAN VAN's outspoken criticism of the regime has already had in North Vietnam.

The danger from within

In an article published in the review TO QUOC of December 20th 1956 by Le Van Chat entitled "A phenomenon of thought" the author, commenting on the NHAN VAN affair, says: "Most of the (Hanoi) newspapers are pointing out that the newspaper NHAN VAN constituted both an internal and external danger for our country We believe that the NHAN VAN group has created many difficulties for us, due to its naive conception that its ideas are just and that its mission is to fight courageously for them.

"Here are a few fundamental points. The newspaper NHAN VAN believed that in present circumstances the ruling cadres constituted the principal obstacle to development of arts and letters, the economy and society, etc. That is why the NHAN VAN group believed that its principal mission consisted of leading the fight against all echelons of the Lao Dong Party, from the ordinary member up to the Central Committee of the Party, in order to make them correct their mistakes.

"This group also considered that the No. 1 enemy of the people in general and the intellectuals in particular was NOT the American-Diem bloc but rather the group of sycophants who blindly follow the Party line and the directors of (the Party line) who have a partisan spirit.

"The tactics employed by NHAN VAN consisted of fighting from the bottom upwards by attacking first of all individual well-known cadres, then different branches of Party activity, and little by little attacking the Party itself.

"The second idea of the NHAN VAN group was to demand from the Government a reorganisation of its dictatorial powers and more particularly an enlargement of democracy.

"The NHAN VAN phenomenon has not shown itself only in NHAN VAN. It is a phenomenon of thought which is born of our present social situation. It is developing in fact in a number of different works and newspapers, and in other branches of activity.

"It is our duty to fight against these wrong thoughts, realising that the fight will be long, difficult and complicated".

This well known phrase, known better in another context and often reiterated by Ho chi Minh and his entourage since July 20th, is indeed apposite in this context. The fight will not only be long, difficult and complicated; it is so difficult and complicated already that it may be considered a lost battle.

The Hanoi authorities' FEAR of the wider movement for intellectual freedom and justice which Mr. Phan Khoi and his associates started is exemplified in a passage from Nguyen van Long's article in TO QUOC of December 20th 1956. Referring to liberalism and the newspaper NHAN VAN he stated: "If one allowed it to go on it would finish one beautiful day by destroying our regime and at the same time our true and legitimate democratic liberty would disappear".

C O N C L U S I O N S

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Political- Mr. Phan Khoi and his associates never advocated any more radical changes in the domestic policies of the so-called Democratic Republic of Vietnam than Tito or Gomulka in their countries. The political conclusion may therefore be that Phan Khoi's ideas were evidently more than the Party thought the badly woven fabric of DRV society could stand at present and since he would not soften his line "voluntarily" after several warnings, he had to be silenced altogether. The attitude of the Hanoi authorities may, however, have been conditioned by Moscow, as the lesson which the Communists drew from the revolt in Hungary was one of a need for stricter control and the suppression of any opposition to the Party line. It may well be that the Hanoi authorities, obeying Communist global orders for a policy of re-Stalinisation decided, when Phan Khoi and his associates interpreted events in Hungary as indicative of a need for greater liberalisation, that they had ranged themselves on the side of Moscow's enemies and therefore they had to be suppressed.

Administrative

A widespread demand for liberalisation existed in North Vietnam in November/December 1956 which has now been temporarily suppressed by force. Truong Chinh, ex-Secretary General of the Lao Dong Party, admitted this in a Tet (Vietnamese New Year) message to the people, published in NHAN DAN on January 31st 1957. In this NHAN DAN article Truong Chinh omitted, of course, all the clandestine efforts made by the Party to suppress the intellectuals and NHAN VAN before December 15th 1956, branded the latter as reactionaries and exhorted the people to support the Party. Here are some excerpts from the article:

"In the North the reactionaries hid themselves under the religious cover to undermine our agrarian reforms; they issued a "common letter" taking advantage of the declaration on correction of errors by our Party and Government to urge that the latter correct errors in accordance with their own desires". 24

"In some places they forced the farmers who had participated in the denunciation campaign against landowners to make confessions and make amends for their mistakes" .

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"Everywhere the landowners tried to revolt. Some of them even baited and insulted the farmers and illegally seized their lands. It is unfortunate that in some regions the farmers were wrongly beaten and the landowners were well treated, while in other places the landowners were incorrectly denounced".

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"At that time, in the cities, some bourgeois circles believed that our party was isolated and weak, so they profited from this situation to make public their petitions. On the political plane, they clung to the slogan "Democratisation" to present proposals in accordance with the bourgeois democratic point of view and to demand the re-establishment of a backward legal code".

"On the economic plane, they clung to the slogan "Free markets" to attack our state-owned trade and industry, indirectly to ask for the restriction of the power of the leadership".

"On the cultural plane, they began to attack the vanguard literature and arts of the friendly countries and to praise the backward bourgeois arts and literature. What was worse was that a group of writers profited from our criticism and self-criticism and our extension of democracy to publish the paper NHAN VAN and the GIAI PHAM to attack the party and the regime".

Truong Chinh's apologia for Hanoi misrule and feeble exhortation to the masses will however deceive no one who was aware of the true facts in North Vietnam at the time. Outside North Vietnam it does precisely the reverse of what the Hanoi authorities intended it to do in North Vietnam. It admits that there was a state of open revolt in North Vietnam in November-December 1956 which was by no means confined to the intellectuals. It proves beyond all possible doubt that the Hanoi authorities are not ruling in accordance with the aims and aspirations of the people.

Truong Chinh stated: "From the work of oppression against the reactionaries in Quynh Yen and Cau Giat and the suppression of the paper NHAN VAN, it is clearly seen that if the people's democratic regime did not ceaselessly attack the anti-revolutionary forces it would be overthrown by them".

This last statement is indeed TRUE. Truong Chinh and the Party for which he speaks might do well to remember, however, that no group, no political party, no set of Communist thugs

can use indefinitely organisational and military techniques to keep people, once roused, in a state of slavery.

Economic

What are the economic conclusions to be drawn from this suppression of the intellectuals in North Vietnam? In an article entitled "We should make use of intellectuals in a decent way" which appeared in TO QUOC in October 1956 by Mr. Nguyen Xuyen, Secretary-general of the Socialist Party, the dearth of intellectuals in North Vietnam was revealed.

Nguyen Xuyen said: "Our country has need of many intellectuals, but they are not too numerous From the August Revolution (1945-Ed.) up to the present we have not been able to increase the number of younger intellectuals; our intellectual strength is still weak. There is only one doctor for every 100,000 inhabitants and one dispenser for every 20,000. There are barely 150 technicians in North Vietnam. We have not enough to carry out major projects which call for thousands of workmen and millions of piastres. The number of professors responsible for specialist teaching at the University and the number of writers is minute".

In these circumstances the suppression by the Hanoi authorities of the movement for greater freedom by intellectuals in North Vietnam may be tantamount to Ho chi Minh and his entourage signing their own death warrants. Those intellectuals who are true intellectuals may certainly be expected, after the NHAN VAN affair, to become sullen and withhold their co-operation. Industry, economy and the whole application of modern techniques in North Vietnam may then be expected to founder.

Social

There is, however, more to the NHAN VAN affair than its political, administrative and economic implications. Phan Khoi and his associates were not only political beings; they were, above all, human beings. Animated by the spirit of freedom and justice, they sought to preserve the integrity of the human spirit, believing that if this abode it could blossom like "a hundred flowers" and believing that the time for rebirth was ripe.

Their purpose was to arouse people by means of simple words, not to any act of violence, but to a discernment of the grave evils in North Vietnam. They called for a return to clear

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moral principles, to a constitutional state, to mutual trust among men. This is not an illegal aim; on the contrary it means a restoration of legality.

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Mr. Phan Khoi and his associates have lived for the last two years under Ho's puppet communist regime in North Vietnam. They have seen for themselves the crimes which this regime has committed and for which Ho chi Minh must be held responsible.

They may have realised that Ho chi Minh and his entourage have used an alien communist blue-print to usurp and retain power which belongs to the Vietnamese people. They certainly saw how the Hanoi authorities rule by deceit and force and how this form of dictatorship has destroyed intellectual sincerity and trust between one man and another.

The NHAN VAN affair indicates, once again, that a father can no longer feel safe in the presence of his son in North Vietnam. Mr. Phan Khoi's son is one of the editors of NHAN DAN, the Party organ which through its columns did its utmost to destroy him and destroy those ideas of freedom and justice for which the NHAN VAN group of Vietnamese intellectuals stood.

There is a point of no return for the true intellectual, beyond which all communist so-called legality becomes false and immoral, namely when it becomes the cloak of cowardice, of a lack of courage to take action against evil and deliberate breaches of justice. It may well be that that point had been reached and Mr. Phan Khoi and his associates were inwardly compelled to act and write as they did.

The Hanoi authorities are now physically the masters of these brave men. They might do well to remember, however, that a state that brands any morally justified criticism, any suggestion for betterment, as "dangerous" and therefore subject to the severest penalties, breaks an unwritten law that has always been alive and must remain alive.

The seeds which the true intellectuals have sown in North Vietnam can never be "suppressed" for they are the eternal seeds of freedom and justice. They will blossom like "a hundred flowers" again.