

NORTH VIETNAM: LEFT OF MOSCOW, RIGHT OF PEKING

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Since the full-scale involvement of the United States in the Vietnam conflict, and especially with the war's extension north of the seventeenth parallel, the persistent slogan from Hanoi has been, "defend the North, liberate the South, and achieve national reunification." The slogan epitomizes the fact that North Vietnam's entire productive energy, leadership capability, and foreign policy have become centered around the preservation of the state and the accomplishment of its primary national

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objective: to recover the southern half of the country denied the Communists in 1954 and again in 1956. After years of painstaking, often shortsighted efforts at modernizing the economy and administration of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), Hanoi's leaders have been compelled to sacrifice much of the progress that has taken place for the sake of a larger political goal. At apparently great costs to their economic plant and to the stability of their society, they have returned North Vietnam to a war footing.

In a sense, the DRV has sought to fight a three-front war: on one side, sustaining the spirit of struggle and high morale of Party cadres and workers; on another, accepting the heavy damage inflicted by American attacks in the seeming expectation that the determination of the United States to carry on the struggle will collapse before North Vietnam's does; and on yet a third, maintaining sole authority to determine war strategy and the conditions for negotiations without alienating the vital support of the disputing Chinese and Soviet parties. As 1968 began, none of the fronts seemed in danger of being soon outflanked, and the credit for this substantial achievement must be assigned to the Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam, the Vietnamese Workers' Party, and its elderly, but nonetheless agile leader, Ho Chi Minh.

I. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE VIETNAMESE WORKERS' PARTY

The Lao Dong Party, successor to the old Indochinese Communist Party, claimed in early 1963 to have a membership of 570,000, a little over 3 per cent of the North Vietnamese population of approximately 17 million at that time. The

continuity of leadership has remained remarkably stable, enabling the Party to surmount leadership crises without any important purges in its top ranks for many years. A very brief recapitulation of the Party's development will be useful.

In 1930, Ho Chi Minh, or Nguyen Ai Quoc as he was then known, succeeded in fusing three existing squabbling communist groups into a new Vietnamese organization redesignated the Indochinese Communist Party. It was dissolved in November 1945 as a tactic to preserve unity among, and communist control over, the many noncommunist nationalists backing the Vietminh fight for independence. From the time of its formal dissolution until the advent of the Lao Dong in March, 1951, communist organization and indoctrination were maintained through Marxist study groups.

The Vietminh -- that is, the Viet Nam Doc-Lap Dong Minh, or Vietnam Independence League -- carried the banner of the war against French colonialism. It is generally believed to have been founded, again by Ho, in Kwangsi, China in May, 1941. In February, 1951, over three years before the end of the war, the Vietminh was absorbed into a United Vietnam Nationalist Front or Lien Viet (i.e., Mat-Tran Lien-Hiep Quoc Dan Viet-Nam), but the communist component of its membership was consolidated in the new Lao Dong party which appeared the following month. The Lien Viet front had been launched in May, 1946 as a broad base of support for the revolution, and it included mass organizations not only for youth and women, but also for noncommunist parties, such as the Democratic and Socialist

Parties, and for Buddhist and Catholic groups. This front was absorbed, in turn, in the still broader Fatherland Front (i.e., Mat-Tran To-Quoc) which emerged in September, 1955, and which was calculated to appeal also to southerners disaffected with the Ngo Dinh Diem regime. It urged reunification via a transitional stage of collaboration between sovereign northern and southern governments, but it never was regarded in the south as anything more than a tactical arm of Hanoi. Although it still is in existence, it has been eclipsed by the Hanoi-dominated National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLFSV), which has become prominently identified with the goal of reunification.

II. THE LAO DONG: COMPOSITION AND CONTROL

Party membership has been recruited largely from the petite bourgeoisie, a fact blamed by the leadership for ideological shallowness whenever policy disputes arise. A 1953 Cominform Journal article stated that, of 1,855 key posts in the Party, only one-fifth to one-sixth were held by persons of peasant origin, and only one-twelfth by persons from workers' families. The rest were held by intellectuals or men from bourgeois families.¹

The Lao Dong has clearly experienced great difficulty in its attempt to broaden its base of support among workers and even more among peasants. It had a small membership in 1946, reported later by Hanoi to have been only 5,000 (but said by the August 1952 Cominform Journal article to have been 20,000). The Party underwent a purge in 1950 and 1951, but expanded rapidly following its reconstitution as a mass communist party so that by independence, in 1954,

it totaled 400,000. Not long afterward, however, widespread peasant dissatisfaction culminating in the peasant revolts in central Vietnam decreased the rate of growth. By early 1963, the total still was only 570,000.²

The 1956 peasant uprisings were sparked by harsh land-reform measures which owed considerable inspiration to the DRV's Chinese advisers. The Lao Dong was eventually obliged to soften these decrees, and the Party Secretary-General, Truong Chinh, stepped down, offering self-criticism to placate internal critics. The Army, largely of peasant origin itself, had remained steadfast even to the extent of crushing some peasant groups in pitched battles. But the experience shook Army leaders, who for some time remained critical of the Party for having lost touch with the peasants to such a serious extent.

The Party never really made amends to the hundreds of thousands of peasants and other survivors reportedly victimized by the land reform measures. It apparently decided to concentrate on building its strength in urban areas among workers and intellectuals, as well as in the Army, and to count on a longer-range development of proletarian consciousness among the peasantry.

The lack of "class comprehension" among the recent and youthful additions to the ranks of industrial workers has been noted in Party statements. In 1961, "young workers accounted for about 60 per cent of the total number and even 80 per cent in some areas," so that less than 40 per cent of the proletariat was composed of the comparatively class-conscious old-time workers or displaced farmers who had become industrial laborers during the period of French domination.³

Party leaders call regularly for heavier recruitment among youth and women.⁴ The Lao Dong periodically has admitted its weakness among the ethnic minorities who live in the highlands which comprise three-fourths of the land area of the north. Thinness of Party membership is to be expected in remote areas, but a March, 1962 statement claimed that 35 per cent of the highland communities lacked Party cells.

Lax direction of Party cells comes in for continuing criticism. In early 1962, one Party spokesman criticized comrades in "some regions" for failing to convene any meetings for six months at a time or any criticism sessions for two years.⁵ The most astonishingly candid critique of Party weaknesses in recent times was published in the Party journal in March, 1963, in which it was openly admitted that the Party had been seriously damaged over the past few years by a slackness of security precautions, so that bourgeois groups, "anti-Bolsheviks," and enemy ("U.S.-Diem") agents had "succeeded in infiltrating leading organs to carry out sabotage." This resulted in the destruction of "some basic party organs" and "leading organs" as well as "the arrest or death of some cadres." The impression given here was that this anti-Party activity had occurred mostly in the past. More recently, however, during an "ordinary investigation conducted in the party's ranks, a number of persons were unmasked who falsely claimed to be party members and who attended party meetings or fulfilled party tasks for years."⁶ The role of "U.S.-Diem agents" in this picture was obviously emphasized to dramatize the external threat and to gloss over more routine

organizational failings. But the threat of infiltration has evidently caused growing concern as the DRV's own involvement in the Viet Cong insurgency has increased.

At the same time, the extension of the war to the North meant that organizational lines had to be tightened if the society was to hold together under the impact of "imperialist" attacks. Consequently, during 1966 and 1967, numerous articles appeared stressing, on the one hand, the importance of close party relations with the masses and, on the other, the necessity for cadres to maintain absolute discipline so long as the threat to the national security remained. On the first score, there has evidently been some concern in Lao Dong Party circles that cadres, as in the past, have become overly bureaucratic and authoritarian. According to Le Duc Tho, a member of the Central Committee Politburo, "a small number of cadres and party members, who are entrusted by the party and people with leading functions in the party, state organs, and mass organizations, have degenerated into bureaucratic, dictatorial, and arbitrary elements concerned only with their private and individual interests." Instead of having a "high sense of responsibility to the party and people," he wrote in late 1966, these functionaries were superficially going about their jobs. He reported instances of corruption and immoral personal behavior.⁷ A movement was therefore undertaken to improve the "mass line" by encouraging more open criticism of cadres by the masses and by reemphasizing self-criticism among all Party workers.⁸ On the related second point, stricter Party control of the army was promised to combat

evident tendencies toward "individualism and liberalism" among political and military cadres. Inasmuch as the armed forces, in a war situation, have to set good examples for others, it was argued, army cadres were urged to abide by the strictest discipline and to work closely with the masses.⁹

Party Leadership: The Question of Factions
and Identity

The striking tradition of political unity among Vietnamese communist leaders has been a factor of inestimable strength to the Vietnamese movement. Where important differences of opinion have arisen, the identity of opposing personalities and the nature of opposing standpoints have been carefully hidden from Party outsiders. Nevertheless, there has been a tendency among analysts of North Vietnamese politics to identify key Party figures by their supposed "pro-Soviet," "pro-Chinese," or "neutral" affiliations. This type of breakdown, however, seems to distort the nature of the debates that take place in the Politburo by implying that ranking Vietnamese officials give first priority to non-Vietnamese interests in reaching decisions. In recent years, members of the Politburo do appear to have divided over such questions as proper war strategy, economic policy, and, perhaps, the timing of negotiations. But the critical point is that such differences have been thrashed out within the framework of discussion concerning where North Vietnam's, rather than Moscow's or Peking's, interests properly lie. The ultimate criterion, in other words, has always been the furtherance of Hanoi's objectives; disputes have apparently revolved

about the best means to achieve them, with the question of means frequently running parallel to the question whether the "line" of China or the Soviet Union most promotes North Vietnamese ambitions.

Decision-making is, of course, the exclusive property of the Lao Dong Party. The party's Central Committee appears to have about 100 members, although the only officially revealed membership list, of 1960, named only 71. Forty-three are full members and the others are alternates.¹⁰ The Politburo has 10 regular members since the death in 1967 of General Nguyen Chi Thanh, whose replacement, if any, is unknown. The membership includes President Ho Chi Minh (but not the aging figurehead, Vice-president Ton Duc Thang) and two alternates who serve ex officio from their top posts in the security apparatus. The 10 full members are the following:

Ho Chi Minh: Chairman of the Lao Dong Central Committee; President of the DRV.

Le Duan: First Secretary of the Party; chief of the Vietminh resistance in South Vietnam from 1949 to 1951.

Truong Chinh: former Secretary-General of the Lao Dong; Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee; Chairman of the Nguyen Ai Quoc training school for Party cadres.

Pham Van Dong: Premier

Vo Nguyen Giap: Minister of Defense; Commander of the Vietnamese People's Army; a Vice-premier.

Le Duc Tho: chief of the Vietminh resistance in South Vietnam from 1951 to 1954, after clashing with Le Duan, the earlier chief.

Nguyen Duy Trinh: a Vice-premier and Foreign Minister.

Pham Hung: a Vice-premier.

Le Thanh Nghi: a Vice-premier who heads the Industrial Board under the Premier's office.

Hoang Van Hoan: specialist in international affairs and diplomacy; former Ambassador to China, now Vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly.

Ho always has been the moderator of factional tension, although he himself has been regarded as particularly friendly to the Soviet Union ever since his original training there in the early 1920's. He has had the political sagacity to plot an independent Vietnamese course between the Sino-Soviet antagonists whenever possible, and he has done much to dampen factional conflict within the Lao Dong. He even attempted strenuously to mediate between Mao and Khrushchev, as at the 1960 Congress of the 81 Communist Parties in Moscow. At this writing, Ho is 77 and has spells of poor health. Although he still appears in public, his participation in important diplomatic trips abroad and the enunciation of important policy statements in his own right has declined.

Le Duan, a founding member of the Indochinese Communist Party, has risen rapidly in Party councils since 1951, when he was relieved of his command of the Vietminh resistance in the south and replaced by Le Duc Tho, and particularly since 1957. He has traveled abroad, as member and leader of DRV delegations to important conferences, and he led the early 1964 delegation to Moscow (with stops in Peking) on the ticklish business of seeking increased material support from the Soviets while the DRV was

responsive to the Chinese line in the dispute within the communist bloc. His policy statements have been accorded the prominence due a very powerful Party leader. Whereas his speeches have hinted at support for the Chinese line, as in 1963 and 1964, he has been careful to give the Soviet Union its due for earlier revolutionary inspiration and for diplomatic and economic assistance to the DRV. He has continued to express hope for Sino-Soviet solidarity and to direct moderate pleas to Moscow to see the error of its "modern revisionism." Le Duan and Le Duc Tho are known to have retained a mutual antagonism from their earlier clash in the south, but the implications of this to the rift in the communist bloc are not clear.

Truong Chinh (an alias meaning "long march"), the Party's leading ideologist, cultivated a strong following in the Party during his lengthy tenure as Secretary-General from 1941 to 1956. Later he developed his new post of Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly into one of new authority.

General Vo Nguyen Giap, the brilliant soldier, retains the strong affection of the people of the North as the hero of Dien Bien Phu. He and Truong Chinh, once close collaborators, are now considered to be arch foes. Giap may be the chief architect of present Viet Cong-North Vietnamese Army strategy in South Vietnam.

Premier Pham Van Dong is a diligent administrator identified mainly with carrying out policy for Ho, apparently including Ho's balancing of Party factions. He does not have a personal following in the Party, but is evidently respected by others who do. Dong is also an experienced negotiator (he represented the Vietminh at Geneva

in 1954) whose presence at future peace talks would seem fairly certain.

Whatever the precise areas of disagreement among these top leaders, there seems to be unanimous concurrence among them that the Lao Dong Party has developed from an organization dependent for advice and guidance on Moscow and Peking to one of extraordinary ideological and practical creativity. Since 1963, but particularly after the spring of 1965 when the maintenance of a balance between Moscow and Peking became especially important, the North Vietnamese have been proclaiming that their party has correctly adapted Marxist-Leninist principles to the special conditions prevailing in Vietnam. In 1963, for instance, Truong Chinh told Party cadres that the Vietnamese (August) Revolution differed from its Soviet and Chinese counterparts in that the revolutionary impulse could flow from rural to urban areas or vice versa, or it could even become manifest simultaneously in rural and urban areas.¹¹ The North Vietnamese were not then prepared to overthrow completely Mao's notion of the rural areas invariably rising up to engulf the cities. But in 1966 Le Duan, in a speech significantly not published for five months, went the whole route by proclaiming that the peasants in Vietnam never have led and never could lead the revolutionary struggle; while numerically the most numerous force, the peasants must be led by the working class.¹²

This important theoretical departure -- which, as will be brought up again subsequently, had relevance to Sino-Vietnamese differences -- was coupled with another

relating to the doctrine of "people's war." While the Chinese have consistently harped on the originality of Mao's military theory, the North Vietnamese have laid claim to sole responsibility for communist successes in South Vietnam. In the most remarkable such instance, Brigadier General Hoang Minh Thao wrote in 1967: "The people's war outlook of our party is a new, creative development of the Marxist-Leninist ideas of revolutionary violence and revolutionary war." He referred only to "our theory" on people's war and gave no credit to Mao or Lin Piao, China's Defense Minister.¹³ In short, Hanoi has stressed that its historic struggles against foreign domination have succeeded because the Lao Dong's leadership, not the specific guidance of non-Vietnamese parties, has pursued the correct revolutionary course.

Leading Party members have publicized these "unorthodox" views not only to make clear the DRV's ideological independence but also to infuse in Party workers and cadres a sense of "Vietnameseness." Again, the departures from Soviet and Chinese experiences have been made slowly. In a speech late in 1963, for instance, Le Duan attacked certain Party members who believed that the Lao Dong, "a small party born in a former colony with a backward agriculture and low cultural level . . . can hardly understand Marxist-Leninist science and complex international problems."¹⁴ But the authoritative journal Hoc Tap went much further in 1966 when it specifically enjoined Party personnel from slavishly producing theoretical documents on the basis of the experiences of foreign parties. Whereas previously the Party was merely declared capable of

dealing with complex problems on its own, the thesis now was that while some "selected" experiences of fraternal parties could benefit theoretical work, the primary reference should be to Vietnam's uniquenesses and the Party's inventiveness. The Lao Dong was thus declared to be

a creative party, creative in the association of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the reality of the Vietnamese revolution. Formerly, sometimes faced with difficulties, a few unstable people contended that our party lacked creativeness and theory. Let us ask: If our party were not creative, how could Vietnam, the first colonial country, have raised high the spirit of self-reliance, have defeated Japanese fascism, and have seized power in the entire country? How could it then have defeated the French aggressors? And how could it at present be defeating the U.S. aggressors? . . . The comrades who had the above-mentioned erroneous concepts failed to understand the simple truth that each revolution has its creativeness. This is a rule. Without creativeness, a revolution cannot succeed. With dogmatism, a revolution will fail.¹⁵

Thus, one of the more interesting developments in the Lao Dong Party has been a growing independent-mindedness with regard to the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism, a development that has been assisted by the competition between Peking and Moscow for influence over Hanoi and one to which the Chinese in particular no doubt take strong exception.

III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH VIETNAM

The DRV and its allies in the communist bloc have been determined to make North Vietnam a showcase for communist developmental methods in Southeast Asia. Toward

that end, as well as toward building a socialist North, typical emphasis was initially placed on industrialization. Thus the first five-year plan for 1961 through 1965 (which followed a preliminary three-year plan) "sharply reflect[ed] our Party's line concerning . . . particularly heavy industry." The priority accorded industrialization aroused some dissent within the Party at the same time as it gave rise to certain large projects of showpiece value which apparently cannot always be defended on rigorous economic grounds. In the five-year plan, capital investment in industry was to increase from 36 percent of the total to about 49 percent, about 80 per cent of the latter in production goods. The investment in agriculture was to be "almost doubled" to 28 per cent. Total food production was planned to rise by 32 per cent with most of the increase, however, in secondary crops -- corn, sweet potatoes, beans, manioc, and so forth. The potential increase in rice production is leveling off, even with wider use of fertilizer and multiple cropping, and the campaign begun in 1964 to move one million Vietnamese from the Red River delta to the sparsely populated highlands can enlarge only the cultivation of nonrice crops.

Industrial production was supposed to increase annually by 20 per cent, and agriculture by 10 per cent, but the norms for 1963, a year of calamitous weather, had to be cut to 17 per cent and 6.4 per cent. An average annual food increase of 6.4 per cent is not large, considering the present low rates of consumption and the fact that little of the increase will be in rice, which is greatly preferred over the secondary foods. There was to be a similarly modest increase, 6.7 per cent, in other consumer goods.

Even at the time of the war's extension to the North, the DRV had a spotty record of economic attainment. Rice production, at the end of the preliminary three-year plan in 1960, was about 50 per cent below target. In 1963, industrial output rose a claimed 6.5 per cent, far short of the original goal of 13 per cent and even of the revised target of 7.9 per cent. The totals for rice and all other food production, moreover, dropped about 13 per cent below the 1962 level. Consequently, per capita food production was apparently the lowest since the war ended in 1954.¹⁶

Le Duan said, in April 1962, that a peasant's average monthly income was about ten dong, or about 34 U.S. dollars per year. Workers averaged 27 to 100 dong, he said (the equivalent of \$92 to \$340 per year), but still suffered more shortages than peasants -- a fact, he added ruefully, which the peasants often did not understand.¹⁷ The regular monthly rice ration was supposed to be 15 to 18 kilograms (33 to 40 pounds) per person, depending on his age, physical condition, and so forth, but the ration has been decreased when harvests are poor.

The war has produced some radical changes in the economic picture of North Vietnam.¹⁸ Most significantly, American air strikes have forced the regime drastically to decentralize the internal distribution system. With the disruption of life in the main towns, the recourse was to plan a major evacuation to the rural areas, a move begun in the summer of 1966. Those persons remaining in the cities were gripped by a reported food shortage, especially in fish, milk, and flour; as noted below, the Chinese sent foodstuffs, but evidently not in sufficient quantities. Still, on the average, monthly rations did not

markedly decline: most persons received roughly 28 pounds of rice, whereas students got 33 pounds and soldiers 44 pounds. During 1966, the regime announced that tighter measures needed to be imposed to guard against speculation and hoarding; at the same time, all-out action was begun to organize the society for maximum utilization of civilians on defense-related and economic production tasks.

As for production, it is to be expected that statistics are hard to come by. A major drought during 1967 was followed by reports of a bad rice harvest after two successive years of increased output claimed by the regime. However, the Soviet Union responded with monthly shipments of 20,000 to 30,000 tons of wheat or wheat flour which, together with Chinese rice shipments, gave the DRV some 500,000 tons of additional food.¹⁹ Severe damage to industrial facilities doubtless eliminated any plans to inaugurate a new five-year program. Factories reportedly were dismantled for reassembly in safe rural areas; but no figures are available on the extensiveness of this "regionalization" program or on its impact on production. Interestingly, whether because of or in spite of the bombing, the emphasis in discussion by North Vietnamese leaders of the economy mix shifted from industrialization to agricultural production. In late 1966, for instance, the call went out to institute a "technical revolution," which was defined as giving priority to agriculture so as eventually to develop a mechanized industrial base.²⁰

Collectivization Problems

The DRV's agrarian program has been in trouble for years because of popular resistance or apathy toward the vaunted benefits of collectivization and the frequently

deplored lack of technical and administrative skills to carry it out effectively. The DRV has followed China in the progression from labor exchange teams of 30 or 40 members to lower-, then higher-level cooperatives, and finally to state farms, but it has not attempted to introduce communes. The emphasis on consolidation of the cooperatives during 1962 to 1964 added 2 per cent to the number of farmers involved in cooperatives, bringing the total to 87 per cent. Of the almost 30,000 cooperatives, one-third are of the more fully socialistic, "higher" type. By early 1964, over 10,500 of these comprised entire hamlets and 208 consisted of entire villages,²¹ but the average cooperative in early 1963 was said to have 85 members. State farms were introduced in late 1955, and by 1962 there were 55, the majority being operated by the Army.²²

Some of the highest ranking members of the Party, including Ho himself, have visited cooperatives to encourage greater effort and, in the process, have made some exceedingly candid remarks about recent difficulties. Le Duan, in a November, 1962 visit to Nghe An (where peasant outbreaks occurred in 1956) acknowledged that, the previous year, the peasants had complained to him about being compelled to join. He responded frankly with the collectivist rationale for the gradual erasure of the private plots distributed earlier: "We all know that, following the completion of land reforms, agriculture in the North, with very low average per capita cultivated acreage was divided and barely self-sufficient. Such agriculture cannot satisfy the needs of socialist industrialization . . . "

The highlands which cover three-quarters of North Vietnam have posed special problems for the cooperative campaign and for the five-year plan goal of moving a million lowland Vietnamese to a half-million hectares of new farmland there (this goal was whittled down to 450,000 hectares in 1963). The earliest groups of settlers were relocated in existing communities of ethnic minority peoples, but this caused considerable friction. Later migrant groups were assigned to separate areas, but, because these were not often provided with the favorable terrain and soil feature of the sites already occupied, the result was greater hardship and lower production. By the fall of 1963, only about 50 per cent of the land reclamation and 17 per cent of the manpower adjustment (i.e., resettlement) goals had been achieved.²³

Poor leadership and organization by government cadres have figured prominently in the weaknesses of the collectivization program. The regime admitted, for example, that: "In analyzing the cases of cooperatives which had to close down in early 1963, we have noted that the main cause was mostly that of Party commissioners who gave up their leadership."²⁴

To combat these weaknesses, the Party launched a movement for the improvement of cooperative management and for strengthening state leadership in agriculture during the final two years of the 1961-1965 plan. It decided to assign a large force of administrative cadres to a relatively small percentage of cooperatives to devise a simple but more effective planning and management routine during the first 18 months and, then, during the final 18 months, to spread the new techniques to the rest of the cooperatives.²⁵

The thorny question of farm production incentives drew conflicting recommendations from Party spokesmen in 1963, reflecting the debates in Party councils between the gradualists and the anti-revisionists on Vietnam's ideological position in the dispute among the communist countries and on domestic policies consistent with that position. Proponents of the hard line publicized instances of poor performance and failure in cooperatives, where private cultivation and incentive payments were said to have gradually eroded the collectivist spirit. Yet despite the many difficulties in implementing the collectivization program -- including, in the past year, accusations by Party officials of "commandism" and "bureaucratism" among cadres responsible for administration of the collectives -- the economy as a whole has been flexible enough to withstand the combined pressures of military attack from outside and ineptitude from within.

Aid from Other Communist Countries

As noted earlier, the war over North Vietnam has enhanced the DRV's bargaining room vis-à-vis its Soviet and Chinese partners even as the bombing has sharply curtailed production and caused modifications of the supply system. Not only have the North Vietnamese leaders become able to assert a Vietnamese road of revolution; they have also proved skillful at exacting substantial economic and military assistance from their more powerful allies. Under the banner of "proletarian internationalism," the DRV has at various times spoken out against "modern revisionism" (without specifying the Soviets), but at the same time has upheld Russian appeals for unity in the face of the

enemy.²⁶ Hanoi's request for unity has been ignored by Communist China, but this has not kept DRV spokesmen from harping on the theme, lauding the support of Moscow and Peking, and reaping the benefits of the competition.

Some mention has already been made of the noneconomic aid provided by the Soviet Union and China in food. Additionally, Soviet assistance, for the most part in direct grants, has included medicines and nonmilitary vehicles that are labeled gifts from the Soviet people.²⁷ The DRV's industrial program has been significantly assisted by Soviet funds, reflecting to some extent Moscow's CEMA-based philosophy of economic integration of the communist bloc and specialized production by its members (the DRV is not a member of CEMA, the Council for Economic Mutual Assistance). Along with some of the East European states,²⁸ the USSR has also provided credits for agricultural development and mining, as well as more advanced types of assistance to the economic infrastructure (e.g., electric power and communications facilities and machinery for heavy industry). In October 1966 a broad new aid agreement was announced from Moscow, and while details were omitted, it was apparent that Soviet recalcitrance on aid following the DRV's refusal to sign the test-ban treaty had disappeared, to be replaced with total (military and economic) assistance in excess of the \$500 million granted in 1965.²⁹

The so-called "vast and effective" aid of the Soviet Union has not been matched in dollar amount by the Chinese, but Peking has contributed immensely nevertheless. In the economic sphere, early Chinese aid provided basic construction materials for irrigation and transportation systems and for light industry. Peking has also dispatched more

technicians than the Soviet bloc -- over 5,000 Chinese were said by Ho Chi Minh to have come to Vietnam by May, 1963 and, since that time, roughly 45,000 more have been sent, primarily for road and railway construction that has freed North Vietnamese troops for other duties.³⁰ Chinese aid has also included, besides the large rice deliveries previously mentioned, funds (usually outright grants) to develop the large Thai Nguyen industrial complex of plants producing pig iron and allied products, fertilizers, soft coal, and light machinery. Finally, the DRV transport minister noted during 1967 that China had been training Vietnamese for, and equipping, technical research institutes, professional colleges, and vocational high schools. "The Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Government," he said, "have sent many outstanding scientific and technical cadres and many skilled technical workers to directly help our Vietnamese communications and transport cadres and workers in various fields."³¹ Hoang Quoc Viet, a high-ranking Party official speaking in the capacity of president of the Vietnamese-Chinese Friendship Association, summed up DRV gratitude for Chinese assistance when he called it "generous, selfless, timely, and thorough." "The important political and military successes which the people in the northern and southern areas of our country have won in succession," he continued, "are inseparable from the great support given by the Chinese people."³²

In military assistance no less than in economic aid, the DRV has been able to extract from its fraternal communist parties the kinds of materials they are best suited to provide. Thus, from the Soviets have come such sophisticated equipment as surface-to-air missiles, radar, jet

aircraft, and antiaircraft artillery, with most of these items shipped following the beginning of daily air attacks by the United States. Moreover, the Soviets have, apparently since late 1966, been training North Vietnamese to fly the huge MI-6 helicopters.³³ The Chinese, meanwhile, have concentrated their military aid on weapons and ammunition; but since 1965, they have added MIG-15, MIG-17, and even scarce MIG-21 jets. During 1967, Washington officials also revealed that China was not only training North Vietnamese pilots but was also permitting DRV fighter planes to base in airfields in southern China.³⁴

The North Vietnamese are well aware of the tremendous value of Sino-Soviet aid to their war effort; but they also realize that the greater the aid, the more open they are to compromises on complete control of policies governing war and peace. This point was made in a document captured in South Vietnam and attributed to General Nguyen Van Vinh, a Lao Dong Party member and deputy chief of staff of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). Vinh also said, according to the document, that were it not for the Sino-Soviet dispute, victory would come sooner; he admitted the danger that the rift might someday hinder aid shipments from both allies, leading him to conclude on the necessity of gaining a decisive victory in the South "within the four coming years" (i.e., by 1971) while maximizing bloc support. The evident concern in the Vinh document about how long the North Vietnamese can continue to count on bloc aid -- a concern that must have mounted with the onset of the "cultural revolution" in China -- thus demands that the DRV leaders maintain absolute neutrality in their praise

of Chinese and Soviet assistance even if certain of them happen to "prefer" one or the other side's international line.³⁵

IV. THE DRV IN THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

In tracing the DRV's necessarily zigzag course in the highly volatile Sino-Soviet debate, some points made earlier might profitably be repeated. Hanoi has not been ideologically neutral in the debate, but has chosen positions geared to best serving the interests of the DRV. Inasmuch as North Vietnam's primary concern is that the NLF succeed at "liberating" South Vietnam, it behooves Hanoi to placate both Communist powers where placation seems called for, but without jeopardizing its control over decision-making on overall foreign policy matters, primary among which now are questions of war and peace. As was observed in the discussions of the leadership and aid from the Communist bloc, North Vietnamese attitudes toward the rift in Moscow-Peking relations seem to have a common denominator in the single-minded dedication of Party spokesmen to the goal of national reunification even though differences of viewpoint over tactics doubtless exist. Particularly as the war has expanded in scope and intensity, the Hanoi regime has recognized and exploited the different motivations of China and the Soviet Union to assist North Vietnam's struggle -- and it is precisely in this context that the appearance Hanoi sometimes gives of being "pro-Peking" one year and "pro-Moscow" the next must be understood.

Between 1954, when independence was formally secured at Geneva, and 1960, when the NLFSV was officially formed, Hanoi's standpoint on Chinese and Soviet views of the world situation seemed to swing pendulum-like through periods of inclination toward one or the other party,³⁶ with Ho Chi Minh evidently playing the role of moderator. During 1959 and 1960, however, when various DRV leaders -- notably, Ho and Le Duan at the Third Party Congress in September, 1960 -- indirectly averred an interest in accelerating the southern anti-Diem revolution, Hanoi's interests clearly dictated a move in Peking's direction. The Soviets after all, were preferring a line of peaceful coexistence and evolutionary advancement for the Communist cause that Hanoi could hardly have found attractive given the necessity of backing a militant "liberation" campaign in the South. The Chinese, on the other hand, could only welcome North Vietnamese determination to encourage and support the Viet Cong inasmuch as such action would advance Peking's claims concerning the inevitability of armed struggle against the "imperialist camp" and would hold out the possibility of ousting American influence from an important area of Southeast Asia. By 1961, then, when North Vietnam opened a "Southern branch" of the Lao Dong as the NLF's vanguard element -- the People's Revolutionary Party³⁷ -- and increased the flow southward of ex-Vietminh resisters who had been regrouped in the North between 1954 and 1955, Chinese "support" was certainly more to Hanoi's interests than the kind of reluctant backing for national liberation movements Khrushchev had expressed in his speech of January 6, 1961 to a meeting of Soviet Party (CPSU) organizations.

What is significant for a proper understanding of Hanoi's position at this time and since is that even when North Vietnamese interests dictated (as in the period 1960-spring of 1963) heightened support for China, Hanoi was careful to leave ground for retaining close relations with the Soviets. Specific support for the Chinese position was evidenced with regard to India and Laos. In the former case, the DRV became furious with the Indians when their delegate sided with the Canadian member against the Pole in the results of an investigation by the International Control Commission for Vietnam. The ICC, charged under the 1954 Geneva accords with investigating and reporting violations of them, condemned the DRV in June, 1962 for subversion in South Vietnam through the dispatch of men and munitions. The sudden change of heart by the previously reluctant Indian representative paved the way for the DRV's sympathy toward the Chinese in the Sino-Indian border war that October, as well as for subsequent DRV endorsement of Chinese policy in the Himalayas.

Even more important, Soviet policy in Laos had brought a military air supply channel through Hanoi to Kong Le, but Hanoi saw this favorable situation end with the new Geneva accords which formally ended the Laotian conflict in July, 1962. Thus, the Soviets, after lending direct support to the Lao insurgents, had led the communist negotiators at Geneva in the quest for a formula to guarantee a "neutral, sovereign and independent" Laos. Hanoi undoubtedly could foresee that the new state of affairs would permit continued DRV troop infiltration into Laos and thence on into South Vietnam. But even so, Hanoi may well have concluded that the settlement represented a final

degree of Soviet willingness at that time to assist the Vietnamese "national liberation" struggle.

The DRV's stance in favor of China was also revealed indirectly on the heated topic of "modern revisionism." The DRV had followed Moscow's early lead in the reconciliation with Tito; but when Tito published his Draft Program in 1958, his brand of revisionism was savagely attacked. The North Vietnamese press carried parts of a Peking editorial condemning Tito under the title, "Modern Revisionism Must Be Criticized." In 1962, when the Chinese made Titoism the scapegoat for their thinly-veiled diatribes against Khrushchevism, the Lao Dong Party joined in with zeal. An article in the November issue of Hoc Tap flailed away at peaceful coexistence on the basis that: "The transition to socialism is not a spontaneous . . . phenomenon but is the result of a fierce class struggle between the socialist and capitalist systems and . . . of socialist and national liberation revolutions . . ." Revisionism was labeled "the principal danger at present," while dogmatism and sectarianism were called only secondary dangers. Always hedging their bets, however, the Party was careful not only to avoid attacking the Soviets directly, but even to continue to emphasize the value of Russian power. "The force protecting world peace is now formed by the socialist countries, of which the USSR is the core," Hoc Tap added.

North Vietnam's unwillingness to go as far as China in scoring the USSR was demonstrated again in late 1962, when Hanoi supported the Soviet withdrawal of missiles

from Cuba as well as the demands in Castro's "five points." Moreover, the visits of two important pro-Soviet delegations to Hanoi also brought expressions of favor. In December, 1962 a military group under General Batov along with members of the Supreme Soviet traveled to the DRV capital, and in January, 1963 Czech President Novotny joined with President Ho in a final communiqué that contained certain obviously pro-Soviet overtones. The Chinese showed their dissatisfaction with this state of affairs by ignoring the February 3rd anniversary of the founding of the Lao Dong. This, together with a deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations at the East German Party Congress in January -- to a point where both antagonists appeared determined to widen the rift inexorably -- seems to have shocked the DRV Politburo into remedial action. A statement was drafted appealing to the communist bloc nations for unity and recommending, specifically, an end to recriminations, a world conference of communist parties, and the acknowledgment of major responsibility for the meeting by the Soviet Union and China. The DRV Politburo revealed that it had made the first two proposals in letters to communist parties in January, 1962. It repeated its determination to continue playing the strongest possible role in the quest for unity. The statement was careful to pay roughly equal compliments to both the Soviets and Chinese, although it still called the CPSU "the vanguard of the international Communist movement."

This statement was the first official DRV acknowledgment of the seriousness of the communist split. It served

to heighten political and factional tensions at various levels, within and outside the Party, to such a point that Vo Nguyen Giap, considered by some analysts the leader of the "pro-Soviet" faction, released an article apparently intended to confirm that the Politburo statement had truly expressed the sentiments of unity within the leadership.³⁸

A Sharper Turn Toward China: April, 1963

China's disturbance at the course Hanoi was following evidently produced a reaction within the Lao Dong Party leadership in favor of more open avowals of friendship for the Chinese international line. Such expressions did not come easily, it would seem, for as Nguyen Chi Thanh admitted in a speech March 14, 1963, "leftist" as well as "rightist" tendencies within the Party existed. Typical of the dilemma, as well as of the fact that at least some Party leaders still wished to straddle the fence between Moscow and Peking, was Le Duan's address in Hanoi on March 13. Yugoslav "revisionism" was strongly castigated; but peaceful coexistence remained "a form of class struggle" between different social systems, and was not in conflict with struggles for liberation. While armed struggle to gain power could never be ruled out (and Khrushchev had not done so at the 1960 Moscow meeting), peaceful transition to power was regarded as the best tactic "even when there is one chance in a hundred . . ."³⁹

Le Duan's middle-road formulation was, nonetheless, not entirely at variance with Pham Van Dong's speech to the National Assembly in April in which he repeated DRV agreement with the policies of China on the Sino-Indian border conflict, Taiwan, and UN membership. The

culminating move to heal any breach with Peking remained for May, however, when CPR Chairman Liu Shao-ch'i and Vice-premier Ch'en I arrived in Hanoi for a six-day visit that was the occasion for great fanfare and warm displays of Sino-Vietnamese amity. The visit, perhaps Hanoi's way of mitigating Chinese anxiety over the Soviet and Czech stopovers in previous months, provided a platform for aggressive, but still veiled, anti-Soviet statements from the Chinese. The DRV backed some, but not all, of these, hewing to the line set down by Pham Van Dong in his April speech. Liu gave two major talks, one at a mass rally and the other at the Party's Nguyen Ai Quoc School for cadres. He attacked Khrushchev's modern revisionism on grounds of crucial importance to his hosts -- "whether the people of the world should carry out revolution or not, and whether the proletarian parties should lead the world's people in revolution or not." The second speech, particularly, was a fiery one which frankly avowed that the fight against revisionism would be "protracted and complicated."⁴⁰

The joint communiqué⁴¹ issued by Ho and Liu at the end of the visit revealed that certain tensions remained unresolved. The DRV went along with the Chinese attack on revisionism as the "main danger" (the Yugoslav version of revisionism was overtly excoriated), but a paragraph also explained why "it is also necessary to combat dogmatism." The principles of "unity," "independence and equality," and "unanimity" were held to govern relations and policy decisions within the communist bloc, clearly a pro-Chinese position since the Soviets had substituted "a single view" for "unanimity" in their reporting of the Lao Dong Politburo statement of January. Both sides

desired "the development of nuclear superiority by the socialist countries" -- the plural form here anticipating the DRV's later rejection of the Soviet Union's test-ban treaty argument that it could furnish single-handedly whatever nuclear capability might be required for the defense of countries in the communist bloc.

Liu's line on support of the war in South Vietnam was significant because it remained essentially the Chinese position into early 1964, when the Vietnamese tried to secure more specific guarantees. The communiqué said:

The Chinese people firmly support the heroic South Vietnamese people's just and patriotic struggle against U.S. imperialism and the Ngo . . . clique, and regard this struggle as a brilliant example for the oppressed nations and peoples . . . fighting for liberation.

In their editorial comment on the visit the Chinese stressed the importance of national liberation struggles so heavily as to give the impression that the DRV had agreed with the sharp opposition expressed by Liu to Soviet interpretations of peaceful coexistence. The actual treatment given these two key concepts in the communiqué was as follows: "[Socialist countries] must strive for peaceful co-existence with countries having different social systems on the basis of the Five Principles, and must support the revolutionary struggles of all oppressed nations and peoples." The DRV did not come around to the bellicose Chinese position until July, when an unsigned article in the Party journal (described below) took a harshly militant stance on revolutionary struggle.

A most striking contrast to the outpouring of pro-Chinese sentiment during the Liu visit was presented one week after Liu's departure, in a newspaper article by Vice-president Ton Duc Thang. The occasion was the thirteenth anniversary of the founding of the Vietnam-USSR Friendship Association, and the title was of particular poignance, given the situation: "May Vietnam-USSR Friendship Last Forever." The article injected a wishful implication into Soviet policy when it thanked the USSR for supporting the South Vietnamese people's struggle and then went on to pledge that the DRV would stand with the USSR, China, and other Socialist countries to struggle for the success of the national liberation movement.

In May, however, there appeared another in the series of militant statements by Nguyen Chi Thanh, the authoritative tone and subject range of which indicated that Thanh had regained considerable power in the Party during its shift toward the Chinese position. In these pronouncements, Thanh was to press his earlier demand for ideological struggle, making only passing references to the secondary leftist dangers of dogmatism and sectarianism. Thanh spoke during his inspection of the military and political institute of the Army, especially warning "middle- and high-ranking officers" against any slackening of revolutionary militancy, any tendency toward softness and corruption. As might be imagined, Peking found this speech to its liking.⁴²

The DRV's muted treatment of the July Sino-Soviet talks in Moscow reflected its desire to minimize the ugly fact of disunity, as well as its determination to maintain what degree of independence it could, even while its radio and press coverage of these events clearly showed its

decreased optimism that the talks could succeed. On July 3, Radio Hanoi and the newspapers summarized parts of the CPSU June 21 resolution and the CCP July 1 declaration concerning the talks to begin on July 5, and expressed the usual hopes for unity. These news stories admitted that Sino-Soviet relations had deteriorated, but they were too brief and bland to convey a real understanding of the issues and the bitterness of the antagonists.

Meanwhile, the negotiations for a limited nuclear test-ban treaty had served to impel the DRV even further toward the Chinese position. Official Vietnamese antagonism to the treaty emerged much more gradually than that of the Chinese, again suggesting protracted intra-Party debates on the relative merits of the Chinese and Soviet lines. Hanoi had supported a Soviet Union initiative toward unilateral action to stop nuclear testing in the spring of 1958,⁴³ but six years later the Soviet role in test-ban negotiations perhaps appeared much more threatening in the event Hanoi should ever have need of a nuclear deterrent.

A further leftward impulse in the Lao Dong line was registered in the unsigned July, 1963 Hoc Tap article noted earlier, which adopted the Chinese rationale for class struggle and "just wars," including wars for national liberation. This article, "The Renegade Tito Again Spews the Venom of Revisionism," decried Titoist and, implicitly, Khrushchevian peaceful coexistence, describing as an acceptable version of the doctrine one closely akin to the Peking line. It adopted also the Chinese view of the aftermath of a possible nuclear war: ". . . it would bring about extremely grave consequences,"

but it would result in the eradication of imperialism rather than the human race. Virulent as this commentary was, it still maintained a discreet vagueness in one brief passage which hinted that the test-ban negotiations probably were the major, or at least the latest, provocation.

News of the initialing of the treaty in Moscow was presented on the DRV radio on July 27, in a brief, factual announcement devoid of criticism. Three weeks later, however, the domestic radio service devoted unusual coverage to the signing of the treaty, including excerpts from the Chinese and Soviet statements of July 31, as well as a Nhan Dan editorial. The latter emphasized "U.S. and British imperialists'" attempts to use the test-ban negotiations to "split the socialist camp," implying that the USSR had been a dupe of the imperialists. And in mid-August Hanoi further revealed its distaste for the treaty by announcing its approval of the Chinese call for a conference of all nations to discuss total nuclear disarmament. But again, leaning to the side of China on most international issues still did not lead, as in Peking's case, to frenzied attacks on Moscow.⁴⁴

Through 1963 and into early 1964, Hanoi's relatively hard line on problems affecting the international communist movement remained consistent, falling just short of open attack of the CPSU. The DRV's criticism extended also to a favorite theme exploited by the Chinese: the decisive role in war of men rather than weapons, including nuclear ones. Thus, General Hoang Van Thai, deputy chief of staff, wrote in the September, 1963 issue of Hoc Tap -- in contrast, it might be added, to views he had expressed three years earlier -- that the modern revisionists,

preaching "weaponism," were "relying on their nuclear arsenal to revise the fundamental principles of Marxist-Leninism concerning class struggle." The general's decrying of the notion attributed to the Soviets by China that superior weaponry determines victory in war was echoed by Le Duan. Speaking at the Central Committee's Ninth Session in December, Duan stated the importance of not being mesmerized by nuclear weapons and falling into a "defensive strategy." The socialist world was already sufficiently superior to the capitalist world, he said, to justify revolutionary struggle without being hamstrung by fear of instant world war.⁴⁵

The DRV's closeness to the Chinese international line was clearly to its interests given the optimistic state of the Viet Cong insurgency in the South. Nevertheless, at this time as before and since, state policy did not receive blanket endorsement from all leaders and Party cadres. This much is clear from the admissions in DRV literature that there remained sharp differences of opinion on such questions as private landholdings, the place of ideological training in a society requiring economic development, and the danger of revisionism.⁴⁶ A division seems to have occurred in the Party hierarchy between those militants like Nguyen Chi Thanh who assigned first place to the Viet Cong struggle, and those more managerially-oriented leaders who, according to Thanh, were primarily concerned with increasing agricultural production by drastically modifying the Party's industry-first program and its methods for organizing cooperatives.⁴⁷ The unusual delays in the publication of important documents arising out of the December Central Committee meetings, capped

by the indefinite withholding of a major speech by Truong Chinh,⁴⁸ seemed to reaffirm the existence of factional disputes. Final testimony to the strife within the Party appeared in the differences between the Central Committee communiqué (issued January 20, 1964) and Le Duan's December speech (not published until February). The communiqué, primarily concerned with achieving unity in the communist camp, drew a clear distinction between Titoist revisionism, which had to be exposed, and the "error of [Soviet] revisionism or right-wing opportunism," which necessitated "struggle for the sake of unity." Le Duan, on the other hand, upheld Chairman Mao's claims to theoretical creativity, pointed out the validity of the Chinese revolutionary model "for many Communists in Asia, Africa, and Latin America," and called for "constant attacks" as the best strategy to weaken the imperialist camp while protecting world peace.

Intensification of the War and

Moves Toward a Rapprochement with Moscow

As was suggested earlier, the Soviet Union, apparently in response to Hanoi's marked affinity for such Chinese positions as opposition to the test-ban treaty, sharply cut back aid to the DRV. Aware of the need for Russian assistance at a time when the Viet Cong seemed on the road to victory, the DRV sent a delegation headed by Le Duan to Moscow for a visit that lasted from January 31 to February 10, 1964. Politburo members Le Duc Tho and Hoang Van Hoan (as well as To Huu and Nguyen Van Kinh) accompanied Duan and held "many meetings" with CPSU officials, including a lengthy conversation with Khrushchev

according to a subsequent brief communiqué from Hanoi. But, to judge from the weak wording of the final communiqué, Le Duan's mission had failed to obtain the requisite Soviet commitment of moral and material support for the war in South Vietnam. As a Nhan Dan editorial subtly phrased the meaning of the Soviet pledge that had been given: "We clearly see that, transformed into practical deeds, this statement will be a valuable contribution not only to the revolutionary cause of our people but also to the national liberation movement in the world as a whole." [Emphasis supplied.]

Between February, 1964, when Le Duan's mission returned home apparently empty-handed, and February, 1965, when the United States began daily air attacks on the DRV, relations with Moscow remained rather strained. At the same time, Peking took advantage of the situation, especially following the August, 1964 Tonkin Gulf incidents when the Chinese broadly hinted they would sent troop support across the border if the United States committed (ground) "aggression" against North Vietnam. Hanoi's interests, however, dictated moving rightward to Moscow once the war carried to the North. And while Hanoi suddenly needed air defense and other military support against a new kind of war being waged by the United States, the Soviets were hard put to refuse given the fact that a fraternal socialist state was now fighting for survival. Thus the North Vietnamese apparently found no real difficulty in switching from a staunchly pro-Chinese position to one more closely in keeping with the unity theme DRV leaders had often expounded.

Soviet re-engagement in Vietnamese affairs, and the inauguration of a new period of harmony between the DRV and the USSR, coincided with the American air attacks. A high-ranking Russian delegation under Premier Kosygin had arrived in Hanoi during January, 1965; the air attacks, coming when Kosygin was still there, may have played into the Lao Dong Party's hands by compelling the Soviet leader into renewed aid commitments. The joint communiqué of February 11, in any event, signalled Soviet concern over the fate of the DRV by promising "the necessary aid and support" in view of the American threat to DRV security. Through further negotiations that included a trip to Moscow by Le Duan, Soviet deliveries of jet fighters and surface-to-air missiles began by the end of May.⁴⁹

Since that time, Hanoi has made certain to give appropriate thanks to both partners for their assistance. Proletarian internationalism, rather than modern revisionism, has been the most prominent theme in remarks by Hanoi on the international communist movement. From the Soviet standpoint, as much as the USSR would probably prefer a negotiated settlement that removed the danger of further escalation and possible new demands for support, Moscow has been adamant in publicly backing the DRV's well-known "four points" for ending the war⁵⁰ and the DRV's subsequent insistence that the United States must first cease bombing North Vietnam before peace talks can get underway. In return, the DRV leadership has supported Moscow's persistent call for unity in the international communist movement against the American threat; in defiance of Peking's wishes,⁵¹ Hanoi has chosen to refrain

from committing itself against Soviet revisionism even while remaining firmly opposed to the Titoist version.⁵²

Appreciation for Soviet aid has been paralleled by noticeably cooler relations with Communist China. Not that Hanoi has in any way criticized Peking's line as it did Moscow's in earlier years; rather, Hanoi has mixed praise of the Chinese with efforts to make clear that war strategy and tactics flow from decisions of the Lao Dong Party, not from the advice or ideology of Mao Tse-tung. On the positive side of the ledger, then, North Vietnam has lauded the contributions of China to the world revolutionary movement and greeted every Chinese advance toward the acquisition of a nuclear weapons arsenal with praise for Chinese science and claims that the defense of the socialist world is thereby enhanced.⁵³ In contrast also to the Soviets, the DRV has maintained its solid unity with the Albanians. Finally, despite growing Chinese caution over the Vietnam war to the point where, since early 1966, Peking has turned from the theme of possible intervention under certain carefully phrased conditions to talk again of the war as entirely a Vietnamese struggle, Hanoi continues to rejoice in the "lips-to-teeth" closeness of the Chinese leadership and the spirit of sacrifice of the Chinese people for the sake of Hanoi's struggle.

Nevertheless, important differences appear in the respective approaches of the DRV and the CPR to the war. First, with respect to negotiations, Hanoi has made clear that its "four points" are meant to form an agenda should peace talks take place, whereas the Chinese have

maintained that the "four points" must be preconditions to such talks. Moreover, the DRV has refused to consider the Geneva accords inapplicable since the onset of U.S. attacks. China, on the other hand, has spoken of events since August, 1964 as having "trampled [the accords] underfoot," the implication being that no new Geneva Conference can logically be convened to settle the fighting. Indeed, when the DRV Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, implied on January 28, 1967 that only America's cessation of the bombing stood between the two sides and negotiations, Peking, after considerable delay, responded with a vigorous reprimand that sought to remind Hanoi that only a full-fledged American withdrawal from South Vietnam should pave the way for discussions.⁵⁴

A second important issue has concerned military theory and tactics. The Chinese revolutionary model lauded by Le Duan in 1963 is no longer alluded to by Hanoi leaders. Instead, as observed previously, the DRV now claims its own creativity at conducting "people's war." Interestingly, the DRV has seemed to borrow from the Chinese for the rationale of being independently imaginative at developing guerrilla war tactics. Just as Lin Piao stressed in his famous article "Long Live the Victory of People's War!" (September 3, 1965) that revolutionary movements must rely primarily on their own strength to succeed, so have the North Vietnamese stressed since then the importance of being self-reliant and the secondariness of having international support. As General Van Tien Dung put Hanoi's position recently:

In the fight against the war of destruction [waged by the United States], we must rely mainly on our own strength and, at the same time, strive to struggle for international assistance, especially the assistance of all countries in the socialist camp. These two things are closely connected and insure victory. International assistance is very important, but no matter how great it may be, it must be utilized through our efforts in order to develop its effect. This is the objective rule of revolutionary war. Our party and people themselves have solved all problems concerning the lines, policies, aims, strategy, and tactics of our people's war in a correct and creative manner. . . . All our armed forces and people must be fully conscious of the "rely mainly on our own strength" ideology. . . .55

In practice, Hanoi's disavowal of indebtedness to Mao or Lin Piao for people's war doctrine has evidently been geared to an independent assessment of the tactical requirements for "correct" struggle in South Vietnam. The Chinese, through the open news media, have consistently played up the guerrilla victories of the Liberation Armed Forces (the combined NVA-Viet Cong armies), thereby indirectly indicating their disapproval of the North Vietnamese tendency to rely under certain circumstances on regional and large main forces, and to engage American units in conventional, costly battles. China evidently believes -- but has failed to convince North Vietnam -- that the large-scale presence of well-equipped Americans necessitates a tactical reversion to protracted, primarily guerrilla warfare to wear down the United States.

A third major source of disagreement between the Lao Dong and Chinese Communist parties has arisen since the

beginning of, and conceivably in direct response to, China's "cultural revolution." This difference concerns varying interpretations of Marxist-Leninist ideology and its meaning for revolutionary societies such as China and North Vietnam. First, as noted above, Le Duan came forth to reverse the position he took in 1963 on the role of the peasantry in revolution when he spoke of working class leadership of the overwhelmingly peasant-based Vietnamese revolution.⁵⁶ Secondly, the North Vietnamese have refused to respond affirmatively to the Maoist cult sweeping mainland China. Rarely have DRV leaders so much as mentioned the cultural revolution at home or abroad. Even on those few occasions when they have, they shied away from any endorsement of its aims and from any attempt to link it to China's social and technical progress.⁵⁷ Indirectly, moreover, at least one Hanoi spokesman has gone as far as to attack the Maoist cult by pointing to President Ho as a model leader, one who has not needed to be deified because he has always been close to the masses, advocated policies designed to ensure the indivisibility of the Party and the masses, and preferred collective to individual leadership.⁵⁸ The North Vietnamese have evidently become wary of emulating the all-out Chinese assault on the party and intellectuals at a time when unity and tight organization are essential to an effective war effort.

Finally, the Chinese must find irksome North Vietnam's repeated calls for unity in the bloc. Not only has the DRV reoriented its position of 1964 toward a more genuine neutrality; it has also retained firm relations with the Japanese, Mongolian, and North Korean communist parties at

a time when Peking has attacked them for likewise appealing for united action in Vietnam. Thus, as the Chinese find themselves increasingly isolated in both the communist and non-communist communities of Asia, the North Vietnamese have proven able to exploit the war to improve their position with the Soviet Union, to steer clear of untoward Chinese influence, and to maintain friendship with other communist parties.

IV. NORTH VIETNAM, THE NLF, AND THE WAR IN THE SOUTH

Whether or not differences between Hanoi and the leadership of the NLF exist -- an oft-debated point that may only become known once negotiations begin -- there can be little doubt that the DRV is broadly responsible for strategic direction and material support of the Viet Cong. Working through COSVN and at least eight NVA generals known to be operating in South Vietnam, Hanoi is able to ensure that its directives are carried out. From captured documents,⁵⁹ for example, we know that after the large-scale introduction of American troops into the war zone in mid-1965, the Lao Dong Party decided at its Twelfth Conference in December that the American "special" war had become a "limited" one. The Conference's decisions -- to stick to protracted struggle, but also to seek a "decisive victory in a relatively short period of time"; to build up a total force of about one million in the South during 1966; and to put 50,000 U.S. troops out of action while eroding South Vietnamese strength by one-half -- were adopted by the Fourth COSVN Congress in April, 1966. From then on, Hanoi's assessment that the long-awaited

"general uprising and general offensive" would have to be temporarily postponed became Viet Cong strategy.

Nevertheless, North Vietnam has gone to considerable lengths to stress the independence of the NLF. Beginning in 1962, Hanoi fully backed the NLF's claim to be the sole legitimate representative of the South Vietnamese people. In the "four points," it will be recalled, the Party specified that the NLF's program should determine the nature of the war settlement in South Vietnam, and that the question of reunification should be subject only to negotiation between northerners and southerners. Until 1966, however, Hanoi's consideration of the Front as being independent was not paralleled by any effort to promote the notion of autonomous southern governmental authority. Then, in December, Nguyen Van Tien was appointed permanent Front delegate to Hanoi -- but again, the NLF was not treated as a separate entity with provisional or de facto diplomatic status.⁶⁰ Consequently, Hanoi's policy has been to maintain the notion of a post-negotiation Vietnam that will be independent until reunification is settled between the two zones; and in line with that policy, the North Vietnamese have insisted that if the Americans wish to negotiate matters relating to South Vietnam, they must deal with the NLF, not with Hanoi.

For its part, the NLF, no doubt reacting to the publicity attending and the at least partial success of local and national elections in South Vietnam, has attempted to regain the political initiative by offering the people a wide-ranging program of reform. After periods of quiescence in seeking to portray itself as a true cross-section of Vietnamese political life, the Front, in mid-1966, again

stressed that a new national government would comprise "representatives of all social classes, all religious communities, and all patriotic groups," thus omitting only key figures in past and present Saigon governments.⁶¹ Under Front control, the government of South Vietnam would assertedly be neutral, independent, free of all alliances, and prepared to enter into diplomatic relations with all countries on the basis of the principles of peaceful co-existence. Land redistribution would be carried out, but not collectivization of land or socialization of industry and commerce. Foreign investments and assistance would be accepted from all quarters. North-South relations would be renewed during the interim period before negotiations for reunification to permit travel, postal exchange, trade, and cultural exchange between the zones.⁶² Both Hanoi and Front spokesmen have publicly asserted that there need be no haste in reunifying the country.⁶³

Of some importance is the fact that Peking has, as might be expected, given the Front considerable attention and publicity in precisely the period when North Vietnam has ignored Chinese tactical advice. In December, 1967, for example, it was announced from Hanoi that the permanent NLF mission to Peking had been granted full embassy status as an official diplomatic mission.⁶⁴ Thereafter, a large NLF delegation visited Peking and subsequently, during December and January, 1968, toured several of China's major cities amidst great fanfare and laudation. Front leaders no doubt find the hard Chinese line on negotiations much more suited to circumstances in the South than Hanoi's conditional acceptance of negotiations -- and it is perhaps for this reason that the January, 1967 speech of Nguyen

Duy Trinh and others since from Hanoi have not been given special attention in the clandestine broadcasts of the Front's Liberation Radio.

The available evidence seems to demonstrate, however, that the Front is independent to about the extent Hanoi wishes it to be. By playing up the Front's representative nature for South Vietnam, Hanoi hopes to diminish the importance of its own significant contributions to the Viet Cong effort; and by insisting that the Americans talk directly with the Front, Hanoi evidently believes it can control the outcome without disturbing the image of an independent, Communist-dominated coalition that will eventually control the southern zone. As General Vinh commented in the captured document cited earlier, when negotiations come, either the DRV will do the talking while the LAF continues to fight, or "South Vietnam will participate in negotiations but continue to fight." [Emphasis supplied.] Another North Vietnamese general has corroborated this view of a DRV-controlled negotiatory process when he told the NVA 7th Division in August, 1966: "Negotiation or diplomatic struggle is the work of the Central Headquarters and the Politburo [of the Lao Dong]. . . ." ⁶⁵ Clearly, when negotiations do transpire, the NLF, if it participates at all, is destined to play a role subordinate in decision-making authority to that of the North Vietnamese.

As the quoted statements by ranking North Vietnamese military leaders clearly indicate, Hanoi regards negotiations, if and when they occur, as part and parcel of the ongoing struggle in South Vietnam. That struggle, they believe, finds them fighting a defensive war against the

American "invaders" who have linked up with a despotic, unrepresentative regime in Saigon to foil the dream of reunification. As the North Vietnamese view the war,⁶⁶ the fact that the Americans have intervened with great material and manpower strength can only temporarily postpone inevitable triumph, for the "enemy" camp is riven with internal "contradictions" that will eventually erode his will to fight and compel him to withdraw. Protracted struggle combined with pushes for dramatic victories (perhaps small Dien Bien Phus) is the requisite strategy, then, not only because numerous casualties inflicted on the enemy will wear down his fighting capabilities, but equally because over time the contradictions he has created among himself, the people, and the Saigon regime will multiply. The comment of leaders such as General Vinh that "attack and negotiation at the same time is a rule of war" is consequently understandable within the framework in which Hanoi operates: Once the enemy is weakened, military superiority on the battlefield will yield a favorable political outcome at the bargaining table, for negotiations are merely an extension of the protracted struggle.

V. CONCLUSION

The prospects for the internal development and external stability of communist North Vietnam obviously hinge on how and when the war is settled. The slow but identifiable advances North Vietnam seemed to be making toward industrial and agricultural expansion have naturally been blunted to a considerable extent by the war's economic and manpower tolls. Yet the regime's unalterable commitment

to the war in South Vietnam has made those tolls bearable for the Party leadership even though strains have begun to appear in the society's capacity to withstand the disruptive effects of the bombing and to mobilize resources effectively for the southern front. Few can deny, however, the leadership's high threshold of endurance under pressure, an endurance sustained by the full, if somewhat reluctant, support of North Vietnam's Chinese and Soviet allies. In Hanoi's view, the costs of the war to it are probably outweighed by its conviction in the inevitability of victory, by its self-image of defender of Vietnamese sovereignty, and by its proven ability to maintain ideological independence amidst the Sino-Soviet imbroglio without the sacrifice of control over vital questions of war and peace.

The subordination of economic and social programs to long-term political ambitions seems to be accepted by members of the Party leadership. Whatever their individual preferences with regard to proper tactics, the Politburo members evidently share Ho Chi Minh's determination to continue the struggle in the South rather than again accept a divided country. By the beginning of 1968, the pessimism over the prospects for peace deepened with evidence that South Vietnam's destiny also involved, as far as Hanoi was concerned, Laos and Cambodia. Pathet Lao forces, employing if not dominated by North Vietnamese soldiers and cadres, began a new offensive against the government of Prince Souvanna Phouma; while in Cambodia, the Viet Cong's use of Prince Sihanouk's country for sanctuary and resupply was making Cambodian neutrality exceedingly tenuous. As in the early 1950's, when the

Vietminh operated throughout much of the three Indochinese states, the North Vietnamese and their allied forces were posing a difficult choice for their opponents between localized and regional fighting.

Late in 1967, there was some evidence from captured documents that the North Vietnamese command was considering a major strategic shift from protracted war to inauguration of the "general offensive."⁶⁷ The likelihood that such a shift had occurred was strengthened by a broadcast of Radio Hanoi on February 2, 1968 (in the name of the previously unpublicized Command Headquarters of the South Vietnam People's Liberation Armed Forces) that greeted widespread Viet Cong attacks on key cities in the South with the comment: "the long-awaited general offensive against the Thieu-Ky puppet administration has come. . . . We would like to tell our compatriots that we are determined to overthrow the Thieu-Ky puppet administration."⁶⁸ But whether the shift, presuming it is genuine, presages a major military push in advance of negotiations, is a bid to recapture the battlefield initiative, or is an attempt to bolster the morale of war-weary cadres remains to be seen. Whatever the case, there can be little doubt that it is in North Vietnam's hands alone that the decision when and how to cast the die rests.