

HOW THE VIETCONG HANDLE PRISONERS OF WAR ?

In efforts to push for normalization with the United States and to demonstrate the publicized "openness" policy the Vietcong regime was willing to open dialogue on the long evaded issue of POW/MIA. The United States on another hand request the Vietcong government to release Vietnamese political prisoners from "Re-education Camps" as one test of real good will. However, the way the POW/MIA matter is handled currently and over the past 13 years by the Vietcong shows that humanitarian concerns are not exempted from the Vietcong exploitation for political or economic gains.

The following account on negotiation with The Vietcong on the issue of POW after the 1973 Paris accord, extracted from the memoir "Peace & POWs" (Vietnam National Day's Art and Literature Award 1987) by ARVN Captain Phan Nhat Nam who served in the POW Section of the Joint Military Commission, would illustrate the unchanging mentality and behaviors of the Vietcong on this humanitarian issue.

THE P.O.W. ISSUE

On January 27, 1973, The Paris Agreement was signed to put an end to the war in Vietnam. The Agreement consists of nine Chapters containing all the basic Articles to realize the cease-fire and to solve the problems of peace. The exchanges of prisoners between the warring sides are a main feature of the Agreement, and are governed by Article

8 of Chapter III, which gives a general outline, and an Annex consisting of 14 Articles stipulating the duties and responsibilities of each side as well as a number of basic operating procedures. The exchanges of military and civilian personnel between the two South Vietnamese sides were carried out in accordance with Article 8 of the Agreement and the terms of the Annex. We will leave aside the problem of the return of military and civilian personnel of the U.S. and other foreign countries (countries participating in the war on the side of the U.S. and within the framework of the Free World military assistance program to the Republic of Vietnam) captured by the National Liberation Front and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. We will dwell mainly on the issue of military and civilian prisoners of the two South Vietnamese sides as stipulated in Article 8 (a to c). Basic principles to resolve the

issue are provided in Articles 1 and 7 of the Annex.

Article 8 of the Agreement and the Annex defined the terms under which the exchange of prisoners could be efficiently carried out. But on the whole, the entire Agreement and the Annexes are built on certain vaguely defined principles which could lend themselves to various interpretations. For example, the Agreement calls on all sides to resolve their problems "in a spirit of unanimity, of reconciliation and concord between the warring sides, particularly the spirit of national reconciliation between the two South Vietnamese sides." An agreement that is so emotionally based has therefore created right from the start an atmosphere of indecisiveness and confusion with each side coming to a different and sometimes opposite understanding of the text of the Agreement. Thus, Article 8 of the Agreement and the other Articles in the

Annex failed to mention the fact that there are South Vietnamese military and civilian personnel captured and detained by the regular forces of the North Vietnamese Army, that there are soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces captured outside South Vietnamese territory, and that there are South Vietnamese civilians abducted by Communist forces and kept under detention ever since the beginning of the war, and even as far back as the time of the partition of the country after the Geneva Agreement of July 20, 1954. Articles 1 and 7 of the Annex did provide a framework for the exchange of prisoners between the two South Vietnamese sides. **The Articles say that all prisoners captured during the war should be released,** and give a time frame for the completion of the exchange of prisoners -60 days for military personnel, 90 days for the civilian prisoners. But it was just a framework, and it was not enough for a satisfactory solution of the problem of Vietnamese P.O.W.'s. Article 1 of the Annex stated simply : "All captured Vietnamese military personnel, belonging to the regular armed forces or to the irregular forces, will be returned to each South Vietnamese side, those who served under the command of either one of the South Vietnamese sides being returned to their side."

There is the gap. The problem of the North Vietnamese prisoners of war will be solved satisfactorily after they have been turned over to the armed forces of the National Liberation Front (FLN). The confusion about their operating areas would be resolved without much problem since their receiving units, even though nominally belonging to the FLN, are ultimately under the political leadership of the Politburo of the Labor Party in North Vietnam. In other words, a Communist P.O.W. who was a soldier with the North Vietnamese 324B division for example, and who was returned to the FLN in Loc Ninh would have no problem in continuing to carry out his duties with his new unit. The gap that

caused great disadvantage for the Saigon government in Article 1 of the Annex has to do with the almost complete lack of clarity concerning the problem of the South Vietnamese P.O.W.'s captured by the North Vietnamese Army, those captured outside the territory of South Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia. This gap also revealed a most dangerous trap in the Agreement : The participation of the North Vietnamese regular forces in the battlefield of South Vietnam is either ignored or completely negated. In this way, the Communist slogan "Born in the North to Die in the South," is not just used for propaganda purpose to heighten the morale of the Communist troops, it also points to a guiding concept of the strategy that the North Vietnamese Communist Party is determined to carry out.

There is another gap in Article 7 of the Annex. The Article does not clearly and definitely specify the problem of the South Vietnamese civilians captured during the 19 years of the war. Article 7 reasserts "the spirit of national reconciliation and concord," but this is not enough to resolve the tragic problems of the South Vietnamese civilians caught in a local conflict of the two opposing ideologies in the world. That spirit of national reconciliation as proclaimed in Article 7 was of no help to the 67,501 civilians and administrative cadres of South Vietnam abducted between 1954 and January 1973. The FLN has stuck to those gaps in Article 7 in order to ignore the fate of these people.

Development:

January 27, 1973 was also the first day to begin the practical steps to restore peace. The United States suspended all bombardment over the entire territory of North Vietnam. The warring parties in South Vietnam put an end to all military operations and troops were ordered to remain in their positions. On the same day in Paris, the Republic of Vietnam handed over to the representatives of the FLN a list of



**A prisoner sat silently in his cell, enduring the psychological torture of isolation.*

26, 734 prisoners and received from them a list of 4,285 prisoners. FLN representative also promised to forward a supplementary list of South Vietnamese prisoners "in order to show goodwill," in accordance with the "spirit of national reconciliation and concord." The Committee in charge of the problems of P.O.W.'s of the 4-Party Joint Military Commission held its first meeting in Saigon on Feb.3,1973. The problem of prisoner exchanges according to the lists that had been made available to each side was now put on the negotiating table.

During the period of 60 days, starting from Jan. 28, 1973, in accordance with Article 8a of the Agreement and Article 4a of the Annex, the Committee held 50 meetings to complete the release of 26,508 military personnel of the FLN, 585 military personnel of the U.S. and other foreign countries, and 4,956 military personnel of the Republic of Vietnam. The prisoners were released in four groups at the following points:

- The Republic of Vietnam returned 26,508 Communist prisoners at Loc Ninh (Binh Long province), Minh Thanh (Binh Long), north of the Thach Han River (Quang Tri province), and Bong Son (Binh Dinh province).

- The Republic of Vietnam received 4,956 prisoners from seven locations: Loc Ninh, Quang Tri, Minh Thanh, Thien Ngon (Tay Ninh province), Bong Son (Binh Dinh province), Duc Pho (Quang Ngai province), and Tam Ky. In particular, at the Duc Nghiep location, in Pleiku

province, despite three inspections, 410 South Vietnamese P.O.W.'s continued to be held by the FLN and they would have to wait until the following year to finally be released, in three batches within one month, from Feb. 8, 1974 to March 7, 1974, with 31 of them still unaccounted for.

- The FLN and North Vietnam returned 585 military and civilian personnel of the U.S. and other foreign countries at Loc Ninh and Gia Lam airport (Ha Noi). There was one Korean soldier released at Duc Pho (Quang Ngai province) and two Thai soldiers released at Gia Lam airport.

March 28, 1973 was the last day in the 60-day period. The problem of military prisoners had concluded with 26,508 FLN released and with the Saigon side receiving in return 4,956 of their military personnel captured by the Communists. Until then, there were still two remaining problems: 410 military personnel of the Republic of Vietnam were still waiting to be released from Duc Nghiep, and 210 Communist prisoners who had been classified as 'returnees' and 28 others who were considered as defectors. In addition, a significant number of military personnel of the Republic of Vietnam continued to be detained by the Communists despite the promise of the FLN that they would provide supplementary lists and the efforts of the Commission to get them released. This problem would drag on past the 60-day period, and the subsequent 90-day period that was prescribed especially for the civilian prisoners, and had to wait until March 3, 1974 before the case could be considered as closed after the FLN had released the last of the 410 prisoners at Duc Nghiep.

In accordance with the stipulation of Article 7b of the Annex, within 15 days after the signing of the Agreement on Jan. 27, 1973, the two sides would have to provide lists of civilian prisoners held on each side, and within 90 days from Jan. 27 the two sides would have to complete the exchanges of prisoners as listed. In order to seriously carry out

that Article, the Republic of Vietnam, during the session of Feb. 12, had prepared a complete list of 5,081 civilian prisoners, but since the FLN had only a list of barely 140 people, the exchange of prisoners' list did not take place. According to the Saigon side, *up to 67,501 people had been abducted by the Communists between 1954 and 1973 and the Saigon government had a complete list of their names, their biographical data, and the dates and places of their capture.* Confronted with the logical demand of the Saigon side, the FLN had to come up with what they described as their definitive list of 637 civilian prisoners, adding that there could be more but not many. This was still far from the demand of the Saigon side, but in order to show goodwill and to observe the time frame as prescribed in the Agreement, the Saigon side proposed a schedule for the exchanges of civilian prisoners to start on April 28, 1973. According to the plan, 750 prisoners would be released to the FLN at Loc Ninh and on the north bank of the Thach Han River between April 28 and May 11, 1973 and at the same time 385 prisoners would be returned to the Republic of Vietnam from three locations in Loc Ninh, Quang Tri, and Binh Dinh. But as had been suspected, the other side inserted 128 military prisoners into the group of 385 prisoners to be returned to the Saigon side, an impertinent shuffling in serious violation of the terms of the agreement stipulating exclusively the exchanges of civilian prisoners between the two sides. This, and other deceptive tricks of the Communists resulted in much delay in the exchanges of prisoners. For example, during the exchange of prisoners in Quang Tri on May 9, 1973, when 10 of the first group of 25 prisoners wanted to declare their decision to defect on the spot and refused to go back to the FLN, the Front's delegate insisted that the Saigon side first return to them the remaining 225 prisoners before the group of 10 would be allowed to express their wishes, in violation of the agreement that had been reached in principle at the Joint Military Commission. The

exchange of prisoners then was delayed until May 11, 1973. Because of these and similar problems, the Saigon side announced a suspension of the exchanges of prisoners until the two sides agreed on a basic document regulating the exchanges of civilian prisoners at all locations where prisoners were received or returned.

On June 13, 1973, a Joint Communiqué was signed in Paris in an attempt to get the Cease-Fire Agreement out of the impasse. The problem of the exchanges of military and civilian personnel also received more elaborate treatment in Article 8 of the Joint Communiqué. According to the new time frame, all military personnel should be released within 30 days and civilian personnel within 45 days starting from June 13.

But, as with the Cease-Fire Agreement, the Joint Communiqué, despite all the apparent goodwill and the strict specifications, could not be truly carried out because of Communist obduracy. Moreover, there were still gaps, whether intentional or unintentional, and the Communists were quick to take advantage of them to resist all the logical demands of the South Vietnamese side. As a result, even after the Joint Communiqué, the FLN continued to insist that they would not have more than 637 civilian prisoners to be returned to the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, and since 385 had already been released, there remained only 252 civilian prisoners to be returned to the Saigon side. Once again, in order to prove to the world its earnest aspirations for peace, the Republic of Vietnam proposed another schedule for prisoners' exchanges so that, between July 23 and August 28, 1973, all the remaining 4,331 civilian prisoners would be released at the two locations of Loc Ninh and Thien Ngon, at the same time the Saigon side expected to receive 410 military and 252 civilian prisoners from Duc Nghiep. But this plan was not to be carried out.

Before the Lunar New Year, the Year of the Tiger, the Saigon side tried

to get the situation out of the impasse with the hope that the exchanges of prisoners could be resumed and completed before the New Year Celebration. But the positions of the two sides remained at odds. The Republic of Vietnam wanted to treat the issue as part of an overall solution of the problem of prisoners of war that would include the release of all remaining prisoners on the lists, the military personnel captured by the Communists in Lower Laos, in Cambodia, and during the Communist Tet Offensive of 1968, as well as all civilians abducted by the Communists since 1954. However, the national Liberation Front only wanted to resume the exchanges that had been suspended since July of 1973, insisting that the prisoners problem could be considered as solved with the completion of that schedule. They also had claimed that the Saigon government was still holding about 200,000 political prisoners belonging to the Third Force and demanded that these prisoners should be released in return for 410 military and 252 civilian prisoners that they still detained. That was a most wicked joke. Who said that the Communists are humorless people?

The new Year rolled by, and there was still no movement. The exchanges of prisoners only resumed on Feb. 8, 1974 and were completed on March 7. In the end, the Republic of Vietnam released all of the 5,081 civilian prisoners and 76 additional military prisoners to the Communists, and received 410 prisoners from Duc Nghiep (less 31 unaccountable) and 252 civilian prisoners. It was a long tug-of-war before the rest of the prisoners were released.

According to Article 8a of the Cease-Fire Agreement, the warring parties were required to immediately exchange complete lists of prisoners and to release all military and civilian prisoners within a period of 60 days from the day of the signing of the Agreement, Jan. 27, 1973.

A 90-day period was fixed for the release of all Vietnamese civilian prisoners who were defined according

to Article 21b of the Geneva Agreement as civilians who, as a result of their participation in the armed or political struggle of one side, were captured and detained by the other side. In other words, their participation may be under various forms so long as they are not soldiers in uniform. The Articles specified naturally that the exchange of prisoners should be carried out in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord!

One of the most painful and concrete issues of the war, one of the most complicated and destructive wars in history, a war of liberation that was waged with such totality and intensity, is dispatched with 11 lines consisting of 195 words in Article 8 of the Agreement and four pages of the Annex which attempt to outline the practical steps to carry out the agreement on the prisoners problem. Because of the lack of clarity, the gaps, and the traps in the Agreement, the Saigon side gradually saw itself as the loser in the exchanges of prisoners, while the other side was enjoying itself over the pain and suffering of the prisoners, the former soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces....

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I wonder if, during the days when they bargained each word and polished each phrase of the Agreement, in order to negate the presence of the North Vietnamese Army, the negotiators of the Agreement realized that they were sacrificing the blood shed by the South Vietnamese soldiers captured by the North Vietnamese Army during the fighting. From a close reading of Articles 1 and 2 of the Annex, it would seem that there are four different categories of prisoners: Prisoners of the U.S. and other foreign countries (which participated in the war on the side of the Republic of Vietnam), civilian prisoners who are foreign nationals (U.S. or others), and military and civilian prisoners in South Vietnam, that is, prisoners held by the FLN. There was absolutely no mention of the soldiers of the regular forces that came down the Ho Chi Minh Trails from North Vietnam to participate in the

fighting at what the Communists called the B-5 Front (covering the Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces), or the tri-border area designated as the B-3 Front. There was absolutely no mention of those soldiers captured on the field, on whose bodies was tattooed the slogan "Born in the North to Die in the South," even though they would not hesitate to make such declarations as this one: "I belong to Division 304b, under the command of Senior Colonel Nguyen Son. My unit was formed in 1965 in Thanh Hoa. We came to the South on Oct. 9, 1967, and were engaged in fighting at Khe Sanh starting from Jan. 19, 1968, etc..." There was not one word in the Agreement to describe this category of prisoners -the captured soldiers of the North Vietnamese Army (sent to B, meaning to the South, in the Communist jargon), and naturally it was deemed superfluous to mention specifically that 304b Division. That is terrifying, that scene of the whole world, including many figures well-known for their works for peace, acting as accomplices to the robbers.

The tragic and painful consequence of this state of affairs was that the fact of the South Vietnamese soldiers captured and detained by the North Vietnamese Army was tacitly rejected as nonexistent! In other words, the existence of the men who were captured by the enemy during the 1972 offensive and the Tet offensive in 1968, of the men who were sent to fight the enemy in Cambodia, and across the border into Laos was completely denied, negated, nullified. There was no such category of prisoners in the Agreement for Cease-Fire and for the Restoration of Peace in Vietnam. And, it was said, the prisoners "problem would be solved on the basis of the" spirit of national reconciliation and concord, free from hatred, and with a view to alleviate the sufferings and to allow the prisoners to be reunited with their families. The whole world lauded the neatness and the humanity of the Agreement. The South Vietnamese soldier captured by the North Vietnamese Army, where art thou? The whole world

has agreed in unanimity to nullify your existence. While the whole world is celebrating the advent of peace, is there anyone who thinks of the South Vietnamese soldier who, at that very minute, lies prostrate in shackles deep the hills and jungles of North Vietnam? They are the men discarded from the game of peace.

In the exchange of lists, while the Republic of Vietnam made public a list of up to 26,750 Communist P.O.W.'s, the National Liberation Front handed over a list of only 5,018 military prisoners. The 26,750 Communist P.O.W.'s were divided into several categories: Regular soldiers of the North Vietnamese Army, elements that were regrouped to the North after the 1954 Geneva Agreement and returned to the South to participate in the fighting in later years (from 1959), and prisoners who were former soldiers or guerrillas of the National Liberation Front. For their part, the National Liberation Front only indicated that the 5,018 prisoners were captured by the liberation forces during the ten years of war in South Vietnam. Most of the prisoners that would be released by the Communists were prisoners captured during the 1972 offensive, only a few were captured in the earlier years 1968, 1969, 1970, and 1971. Prisoners captured prior to 1968 were not mentioned and their names were not included in the lists.

Most wicked of all, the Communists would not return the South Vietnamese soldiers captured during the cross-border operations, arguing that they were really prisoners of the Pathet Lao and the Khmer Rouge.

The Republic of Vietnam could not accept that 5,018 represented the total number of prisoners held by the other side during the more than 10 years of war. To agree to that assertion would be to act as accomplice to a crime. After the exchanges of prisoners had been completed, a serious discrepancy was discovered in comparing the list of 5,018 prisoners actually released with the names on the list received from the

other side in Paris: There were 29 officers and 1,033 NCO's and privates whose names were on the list but who had not been released! There are two ways to interpret that discrepancy: either 29 officers and 1,033 non-commissioned officers and privates had died and had been supplanted by other prisoners, or perhaps they were subsequently added after the Communists, for some reason, were not able to come up with all 5,018 prisoners as they had announced in Paris. Either way, a conclusion seemed unavoidable: many more soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces were still being detained in Communist prison camps. This is an instance: The 101st Artillery Battalion based at Gia Linh came under attack by the Communists at the start of the offensive in March of 1972. The base was overrun and Lieutenant Thanh was captured and taken to North Vietnam to be detained there. Some time later, Thanh was seen with a group of other prisoners in a picture published in the North Vietnamese Doan Ket (Unity) paper which was circulated in Paris. Thanh's family also heard a message from him over Radio Hanoi. The existence of Lieutenant Thanh was irrefutable and could not possibly be covered up, but he probably had not 'behaved well' in prison and therefore had not been released. The case of Lt. Thanh was brought up at the Joint Military Commission. FLN delegates duly took note and the whole issue quickly lapsed into oblivion "in the spirit of national reconciliation and concord."

The case of Thanh was only one example of the thousands of other cases of ARVN (Army, Republic of Vietnam) prisoners still being held in the 60 prison camps in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, including the 12 prisoner detention centers in North Vietnam. Among those 12 centers, there was one code-named T-2 located between the two villages of Viet Hong and Viet Cuong, in the district of Tran Yen, Yen Bay province. Camp T-2 was set up in April 1971, about two months after the Campaign into lower Laos to hold the

South Vietnamese soldiers captured during the cross-border operation. Among the prisoners, there were Colonel Nguyen Van Tho, Commander of the Third Airborne Brigade, Major Tran Van Duc, Operations officer, Major Phuong and Captain Phuong, artillery officers of the 3rd Artillery Battalion on Hill 31. The existence of these prisoners had been confirmed by other prisoners who had been released, by the disclosures of 4 returnees who used to work at the prison camps, and by the prisoners themselves who had been brought out to talk on the Radio Hanoi. Despite all the clear and concrete evidence, including taped evidence, the Communists remained totally unresponsive. The FLN took notes of the cases but at the same time they asserted that prisoners such as Colonel Tho, Majors Phuong and Duc, etc., fought in Laos and were captured by the Pathet Lao Forces and, as such, were not under their responsibility. And they would end with a promise, never kept, that "based on the compassion toward fellow-compatriots, they would try to intervene with the Pathet Lao forces to seek their release because, in any case, these prisoners are also Vietnamese"(!)

That was convenient, the FLN and North Vietnam unconcernedly passed over the issue, the more so because the Paris Agreement and the Annex did not contain any mention of this category of prisoners. Also according to the Agreement, the North Vietnamese Army did not go into Laos, did not fight in South Vietnam, and that country and that government stood outside of the war in South Vietnam. That was indeed monstrous and painful especially when you heard so many voices shout words of welcome for peace, for goodwill.... There are many causes for war, and crimes, and among them is the use, or abuse, of names. The Communists, for example, fight for certain names, certain slogans, and use them to cover up the traces of their killings.... Many people do not see the real face of the Communists behind such names as Peace, Goodwill, Reconciliation.... ●

DO MUOI,

The New Sorcerer Of Ha Noi.

The VC Congress met last June to find a man for the premier post vacanted after Pham Hung's death in March. Do Muoi, a Northerner, got the call.

Do Muoi, whose age is 70 according to the official biography recently released by the party yet would be 78 year old based on the party's records maintained during the war, was born in Ha Dong, now a suburb of Ha Noi. Muoi was a painter before he joined the Communist Indochina Party in 1931, one year after its inception. Like most of his comrades, the biography of Do Muoi claimed he was jailed by the French in 1941 at the famous Hoa Lo prison and "escaped" in 1945 just before the Communists marched into Ha Noi in August and took power during a short period of political vacuum. The party afterward made him the party head of Ha Dong district.

In 1956, Muoi was promoted to be an alternate member of the Central Committee. Since 1960, he was appointed to the posts of Vice Minister and then Minister of the Department of Domestic Commerce and Department of Construction. In 1969, Muoi became the Vice-Premier under Pham Van Dong. When the reform program in South VN peaked in 1978, Muoi was assigned to head the Committee for Public and Private Commerce Reform in the South. A former reputed ruthless Minister of Domestic Commerce in the North with the nick name "Crazy Bull", Muoi seems fit for the new job. He implemented reform policies authored by Nguyen Van Linh to ensure private businesses fall in line with party's guidelines. After launching offenses targeting private enterprises, Muoi earned an alternate seat in the Poliburo of the Central Committee, the most powerful body of the party, in 1982.

Although the party skillfully dropped some of Muoi's economic accomplishments in the South from his biography and

moreover some VC papers overseas started to write about a series of economic failures back home, a number of overseas Vietnamese hastily praised Muoi as an economist, even a better one than Vo Van Kiet. After the VC's Sixth National Congress in early 1986 that elected Nguyen Van Linh to be the Secretary General of the party, Do Muoi became an official member of the Poliburo and also a permanent member of the Party Secretary Council.

Some analysts were quick to conclude that Do Muoi's appointment indicated the advancement of the hard liners and expressed concerns that Ha Noi's reform programs would be short lived, thus confirmed their belief in such reforms. This is exactly what the Communists want to hear. Then why would Linh, a symbol of the reform movement, is the top party boss while a hard liner can only be the prime minister. Perhaps the reason can be found in the Viet Cong's "Construct and Persevere Socialism" theory.

The process of building and protecting the party power have two requirements.

First, the ability of the party to protect a social class that rule the populace and protect the power of the party; we are talking about party members. Second, the ability to maintain high morale and to nurture Communist ideology among party rank and file.

Unfortunately, a collapsing backward socialist economy does not enable the party to provide much to its members. The campaign "Private ownership and enterprise transformation" bankrupted people and deprived them the profit opportunity thus destroyed any motive to produce. All this happened from 1975 to 1979 and the Communists called this period "Construction phase". To salvage the situation, Ha Noi relaxed the control over a period of four years from 1979 to 1982. This was the openness period and is quite similar to the recent so-called glasnost copied from Moscow. The party during these four years encouraged limited private enterprise, which it saw as the only way to rescue the sagging economy and to find some resources to support party members whose morale almost hit the bottom thanks to a hard life and disastrous wars with China.

Nonetheless, the party soon discovered the impacts of control relaxation. An easier, although to a limited extent, life corrupted party members who found comfort in bourgeoisie lifestyle. Ha Noi had to order to return to the construction phase to continue the Communization process from 1982 to 1985. A two-fold campaign was carried out



during this phase; one was aimed at strengthening the Communist ideology among party members and the other targeted the populace who consequently faced more severe oppression.

Then again, in the VC Sixth National Congress, Nguyen Van Linh and the new ruling class in Ha Noi declared another period of reforms and openness. In reality, the reforms are only a repeat of what took place several times before 1982. A *deja vu*. The same problem prevailed when control is loosened. Party members become corrupted; morale is low; and ideology gives way to immediate desire for a materially comfortable life. The populace, after experiencing this sort of so-called reforms, knows better what to do; goods somehow find safer ways to the black market. The volume of goods and produce bought by the regime from producers with low price was never lower in the past. This failure to collect from the people hence weaker supports for party members reinforces corruptions among the rank and file.

Facing the same old problem, what does the party do this time? There are two options.

The party can change its policies- this the Communists have been and still are doing, or change people- this was proven by Do Muoi's appointment. And this appointment might do the propaganda trick for the party since Muoi's background as a hard line Marxist will conveniently underscore Nguyen Van Linh's so-called reform-minded and progressive spirit.

Again, the main and critical problem Ha Noi encounters is the contradiction between "protecting the regime" and "building a socialist society". These two issues have conflicting consequences. Protecting the regime will require relaxing political control and socialism building will, on the other hand, adversely affect the morale of party members, who have lost faith in party leadership.

Perhaps the new sorcerer sitting in Ha Noi can tell the regime its days are numbered. Those who are supposed to protect the regime no longer trust their leaders and lost faith in the ideology, and those who are ruled to provide the ruling echelon with ruling means have begun to refuse to be ruled.



Widespread Soviet Influence In The South Pacific.

While new political trends inside the Soviet Union riding high on glasnot and perestroiska created a false impression of a new detente between the free world and the Communist bloc and compelled world political analysts to reassess the threat of international Communist expansion, a more subtle yet powerful Communist expansion of influence is taking shape in different forms in various corners of the world where armed revolution is not necessarily the most effective method.

In the South Pacific, Moscow's intention to expand its influence in this part of the world is often underestimated. The underestimate appears to be originated from a wrong perception that has been in existence for the last several decades of a relative regional stability and security; the strategic geography of countries in the area, except for Australia and New Zealand, and their relatively insignificant roles in the international economy are responsible for this misperception. For the most part, these nations became independent only in the last thirty years through peaceful means, do not have control of important sea lanes used by super powers and are hardly considered by industrialized countries as critical supply sources of natural resources.

The second contributing factor to the misconception comes from the perception that free and strong nations in the South Pacific already did something about a potential Communist threat such as the establishment of Anzus, a defense alliance of which the United States, Australia and New Zealand are members. The third reason for the misconception is Moscow's apparent reluctance to start a power struggle thanks to the great distance from its military bases back home.

All this has changed in the last ten years:

First, the issue of strategic importance of South Pacific region has in the last few years gained some well deserved attention from concerned nations after irreconcilable disagreements among ANZUS members as a result of



different strategy concepts caused division among them. Moscow no doubt saw the exploitable vacuum in the alliance when New Zealand departed the group and inaugurated a nuclear free policy. In addition, a bourgeois anti-war attitude in Australia reflected by its education and security policies also played a role in opening Moscow's eyes for the opportunity. It couldn't be a coincidence when Gorbachev, in a speech delivered in Vladivostok last July, announced the Soviet Union's new goal of being a Pacific superpower.

New political developments in the last decade in East and South Pacific regions tipped the power balance toward left. The biggest development is the victory of the Communists in Viet Nam. Soon after their takeover, the Vietnamese Communists revealed their heavy dependence on USSR for survival as well as their forceful adherence to the International Communist principle of 'liberating the world'; Moscow is not just Ha Noi's master in the area of ideology: After invading and colonializing Cambodia and annexing Laos, the Viet Cong government, through something they prefer to call internationalist duty have expanded their power base in Indochina. In the mean time, the Soviets obtained the right to use military bases in Viet Nam. An agreement signed in 1978 by leaders of the two Communist governments gave the Soviets two strategic bases, Cam Ranh and Da Nang, which they quickly turned into largest and most important military bases outside the Soviet Union. Moscow's major obstacle to expanding in the South Pacific, long distance from supply bases, has been resolved.

For the time being, the Soviet Union is working on building an influence base through a number of phases, instead of creating a regional military war in which its intention would be so obvious. First thing first, Moscow has signed a number of economic treaties with nations in the region to strengthen its influence base. A new fishing agreement with Vanutu and Australia allows Soviet ships use these countries' waters; with high-tech espionage technology, these ships can easily monitor all activities on the

sea lanes as well as those in military bases. The Soviets with faithful assistance from Libya and the Vietcong government now can start planting revolution seeds in targeted countries. The Fiji army captured boats loaded with weapons from Libya; these boats made stops in Australia before their capture. Stripping the economic cover off its peaceful looking image, one can see Moscow starts the next phase of its offensive plan, subversive activities.

Libya has recently stepped up its efforts to penetrate in various fronts. Besides talking to Vanutu and supplying weapons to the rebels in Fiji, Libya has vigorously aided revolution movements of the leftist Kanak in Nouvelle Calédonie. All this shocked Australia and Canberra ordered the Libyan embassy closed in May last year after warning other countries of dangers in diplomatic relations with Libya. In reality, the offensive was not originated in Libya; it came from the Communist regime in Viet Nam. The regime finances, trains, and assists the insurgents in Thailand, the Philippines, and Burma. The weapons captured by the Fiji army might have been loaded on board at a Vietnamese port. In reality, anti-terrorist experts have detected in various parts in the Middle East and Africa weapons the Americans left behind in Viet Nam after 1975. They were then given by Ha Noi to local terrorist groups. This act of supplying arms is what the Viet Cong call internationalist duty.

The closing of American bases in the Philippines is coming close to being a possibility. This new security vacuum will be filled with an increase in Moscow's activities to expand its influence in the South Pacific, directly or via puppet regimes. Until Australia and other nations in the region see through Moscow's true intention here and their security at stake, the Soviets have all the advantages to conquer the region in the long run. All regional concerned countries should regard the presence of the Soviets and that of their puppet Viet Cong are something out of the ordinary that need to be taken care of. ●

— The National United Front for the Liberation of Viet Nam (NUFRONLIV) was formed in 1980 by the Vietnamese people, inside Viet Nam and abroad, to liberate their country from the Vietcong, and to build a free and democratic nation. Under the leadership of President HOANG CO MINH, the National Resistance Council directs the three branches of NUFRONLIV, the General Directorate of In-land Affairs, the General Directorate of Overseas Affairs, and the Armed Resistance Forces in mobilizing the Vietnamese people in every way and by every means to overthrow the Vietcong. Throughout the country, from North to South, the General Directorate of In-land Affairs has developed resistance network, in which mobilization activities are carried out under the protection of the Armed Resistance Forces. Directed by the General Directorate of Overseas Affairs, NUFRONLIV chapters have been formed and are active around the world wherever Vietnamese are resettled.

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To present background information on Vietnamese liberation struggle, "THE VIETNAMESE RESISTANCE" is published monthly by the overseas Directorate of Information, and sent to a selected readership. Also available are publications in Danish, French, German, Japanese, etc., and "KHANG CHIEN", the most widely read monthly tabloid among the Vietnamese overseas.

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