

SOVIET MILITARY BASES IN VIETNAM: Impacts on Pacific Asia Stability

In October 1978, the Vietcongs and the Soviets signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation. Plans were laid out and obligations committed as 2 months later the Vietcong regime invaded Cambodia and established a tightly controlled colonial rule on the Khmer people. Simultaneously, the Vietcongs sent numerous high officials to Soviet Union for training in espionage, security, and military in anticipation of vast demands for such required skills.

One year later, the Soviets executed the modernization plan to convert military bases in Vietnam into Soviet-controlled and forward-deployed bases. Phu Bai air base was turned into an electronic communication center operated by Soviet agents with capacity to reach the Soviet Pacific Fleet, the Vladivostok naval base, and Moscow. Saigon port was enlarged and developed to accommodate the Soviets' military vessels as situation may require. Da Nang, Tan Son Nhat and Bien Hoa air bases were improved for the same military accommodation.

Most important however is the development of the largest forward-deployed Soviet naval and air base outside the Soviet Union at Cam Ranh Bay. Besides the naval and naval air force deployment the Soviets have established regional communication and intelligence-gathering sites. Equipped with MiG-21 fighter-bombers, Su-22, a squadron of 14 MiG-23, and 16 Tu-16 twin-jet bombers, 10 of which capable of carrying antiship cruise missiles, the Soviets acquired a strategic strike capability against all Southeast Asian countries and Northern Australia. More than 20 Soviets ships frequent Cam Ranh base daily, among which are largest warships and nuclear missile-armed submarines. Position of Cam Ranh reinforced the Soviet military belt from the Northeast Pacific to Indian Ocean, enabling the Soviets to support naval operations in the Indian Ocean more efficiently and extending their wartime capability to reconnoiter and to interdict sea lines of communication between North and South Pacific Asia, East and Southwest Asia, and Asia and Europe.

Time ago some analysts argued that the Soviet Union had a complex of being contained and acted along this fear, hence, Soviet military movements should be seen as defensive measures. After the American withdrawal from Vietnam, and especially after the Vietcong cession of military bases to the Soviet Union, it is more than evident that the Soviet military expansion is of aggressive nature.

(continued overleaf)

Acquiring these military bases along with the submission of Hanoi surrogate-regime the Soviet Union is on the way to offensive posture on the following fronts:

1. Exerting coercion against Pacific Asian countries by the sheer presence of formidable forces, not necessarily with military exercises. Adept at exploiting fears of confrontation to expand its coercive territory, Moscow has never hesitate to apply this tactics where it has established military domination.

2. Sowing division among democratic countries in Asia Pacific. Countries closer to the Soviet coercion sphere were more ready to compromise. In New Zealand the Soviets succeeded in manipulating the anti-nuclear sentiments into laws keeping this country a nuclear-free zone. Decision of New Zealand has upset the normal alliance cooperation of ANZUS, prompting the United States to suspend its security obligation to this country.

3. Destabilizing security of Southeast Asia by military and financial supports to surrogate-states or communist organizations in the region. The Soviet aggression on this front is the most threatening. Unrests in Philippines, Burma, and to some extends New Calodenia were related to the expanding presence of the Soviets in Pacific Asia. Communism may well have gnawed beyond Indochina borders had the Soviet Union not encountered so many domestic crises.

Countries in the region are not relieved from fears of Soviet intrusive pressures in spite of Soviet campaign of "glastnos" and several detente suggestions. The Soviet Union however could not proceed freely with their plans because of many domestic crises of gravest magnitude since several decades.

Gorbachev had to propose "perestroika" in this circumstance, and similarly reconsidered priority for many of Moscow strategic goals. Withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan has begun. Military and economic aids to the Vietcong regime, 1.5 to 2 billion annually, may also be under scrutiny. The cost to sustain the failing Vietcong regime is expected to increase as the regime itself showed signs of perishing on all area: weary army and disintegrated administration at all levels, 14 billion- debt economy of no prospect of trade earnings, over 1000% annual inflation in conjunction with lowest productivity of all fields, prevalent resistance movement participated by all strata of the population, etc..

Coordinated sanctions by the world, and the Vietcong's incompetence in nation-building have led the Vietcong regime to this collapsing situation. Contributing substantially to the Vietcong downfall however is the resistance movement that have been ongoing under various forms since 1975 in Vietnam. The resistance movement went under a strategic change after NUFRONLIV proclaimed the Political Program in 1982, calling upon every Vietnamese for a total struggle and bringing scattering groups under unified leadership of Chairman Hoang Co Minh. Without unceasing popular resistance orchestrated in all fields for such long period, the rapid decline of once-powerful Vietcong regime may not have been witnessed.

The demise of the Vietcong regime would warrant the dismantling of Soviet bases from Vietnam, and the termination of Soviet threats to the whole region. The people of Vietnam share the interest with other concerned nations in removing the Soviets from Vietnam. Given crucial role of the Vietnamese population in such solution, cooperation with the Vietnamese Resistance is the least costly option in view. ●

THE NATIONAL UNITED FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF VIETNAM

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PRESS RELEASE

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Re: The Soviet Bases in Vietnam

1. Since 1979, the Vietcong government has allowed the Soviet Union to use several military bases in Vietnam, such as the airports of Phu Bai (Hue), Danang, Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhat (Saigon), and the Cam Ranh naval base.

2. While this fact is continuously denied by the Vietcong government, the Soviets have upgraded these bases and ports for the strategic utilization and have increased their military activities that destabilized and caused security concerns to the Southeast Asian region. Cam Ranh became the largest Soviet military harbor outside its territory, capable of accommodating nuclear-class vessels, and Danang grew into a permanent air base with the nuclear-striking capability against capitals of Southeast Asian countries and Northern Australia.

3. In the recent visit to Siberia, Soviet Secretary-General Gorbachev announced a 7-point program concerning the Pacific Asia, proposing the Soviet withdrawal from Cam Ranh if the United States dismantle Clark air force and Subic naval base in Phillipines.

4. Despite Gobachev's acknowledgement of Cam Ranh as the Soviet permanent military bases, Vietcong Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach tried, on September 20, to disclaim its proxy role and maintained that the bay is merely a technical and supply station for the Soviet naval fleet.

5. On the issue of these bases The National United Front For The Liberation Of Vietnam reaffirms the position of the Vietnamese people as following:

First, the Vietnamese people condemn the Soviet use of these bases in violation of Vietnam's territory rights and threatening peace and stability of the Southeast Asian region.

Second, the Vietnamese people reject every agreement between the Vietcong government and the Soviet Union, and demand that the Soviets withdraw unconditionally all their forces from Vietnam; Their destabilizing presence in these bases cannot be used for any bargaining or negotiation.

Third, the Vietnamese people maintain that peace for Indochina and stability for Southeast Asia are realized only when the Soviet Union abolishes its expansionist policy in this region and ceases to assist the Vietcong regime means to threaten neighboring countries.

RESISTANCE NEWS IN VIETNAM

Vietnamese Resistance Radio established by NUFRONLIV in late 1983 broadcasts 8 times daily on the 30m and 40m wave bands (10.3 MHz and 7.4MHz) to inform and mobilize the Vietnamese at home on the liberation struggle. Due to limited space, we can only excerpt part of the VRR daily news programs.

Following are selected news bits of the Vietnamese Resistance Radio broadcasts of July 29, August 19, and September 23, 1988.

Resistance group incorporated in Dong Thap Province

In April the Dong Thap Province RAC incorporated a resistance group called Organization of Soldiers for Nation-Restoring in Eastern Region into NUFRONLIV. The group lead by ARVN ex-officer Nguyen Van Chien and active for last 3 years wanted to join as it recognized the sound strategic plan and policy of NUFRONLIV for liberation and nation-building.

Mobilization activities in Cuu Long and Lam Dong Provinces

Mobilizational activities have been carried out in districts of Duyen Hai, Vu Liem, Long Ho, and Tra On in April and May where peoples have participated by dispersing about 900 NUFRONLIV leaflets and organizing a ceremony on the NUFRONLIV-promoted National Day. On this occasion the people delivered more than 400 kilo of dry

food and medicine to the NUFRONLIV resistance fighters (KCQ). In the same month KCQ in Lam Dong Province have stopped 2 interprovincial buses on the Saigon-Dalat route to inform passengers of NUFRONLIV purpose and activities. The people contributed on scene and took NUFRONLIV handbills for redissemination.

Skirmish in Dong Nai Province

A unit of the Dong Nai Province ARF has ambushed a Vietcong unit in Long Dat District in June, killing 4, wounding 1 Vietcong, and seizing one anti-tank gun B-40, 3 machine guns AK-47, 1 rifle CKC, and various medicine and documents after a short 10 minute encounter. The NUFRONLIV unit lost 1 KCQ. The wounded Vietcong soldier was given medical care and released.

Flyers disseminated in Da Nang

In second quarter of this year NUFRONLIV members have done many mobilizational missions in Districts Hoa Vang, Dien Ban, Yen Vang, Tuyen Phuoc, Que Son and Tra Mi, and disseminated handbills in Cities Hoi An and Da Nang. Several power posts of the Phu

Ninh power station supplying to the Vietcong facilities were destroyed. The NUFRONLIV local organization also received rice, dry food, and medicine supplies from the province's population.

Lumber kolkhoz attacked in Song Be Province

A lumber kolkhoz of Loc Ninh District was recently attacked by an ARF unit, the Song Be Province ARC reported in August. The NUFRONLIV KCQ took control within a few minutes, killing one Vietcong. A youth in the kolkhoz requesting to join the unit was allowed to take off with the KCQ.

Kolkhoz raided in Gia Lai Province

The Gia Lai Province RAC reported that in mid-July an unit of the Province ARF has penetrated and attacked the Vietcong in their kolkhoz in Man Giang district. 2 Vietcong cadres were killed when they fought back. Being informed of the resistance in other provinces, members of the kolkhoz pledged to bolster sabotage activities from their inside positions. The unit seized a rifle, ammunition, and documents and destroyed Vietcong equipments and machines before returning to sanctuary.

5 Vietcong returnees in Dong Thap Province

A mobilizational campaign was actively carried out in the past months in districts of Thap Muoi, Hong Ngu, and Tam Nong, the Dong Thap Province RAC reported. People were guided the best ways to rescue their sons from the Vietcong ranks. In July the RAC received 5 Vietcong soldiers under Sergeant Nguyen Van Huong's command returned to the Resistance. These 5 returnees brought along 5 AK-47, two grenades, ammunition, and documents, and said that the Vietcong soldiers are severely dispirited and ready to join the Resistance. The report also mentioned of a young man hurling a grenade into the Public Security post of Tan Quoi district, killing 1 agent and wounding 3 others.

Vietcongs Ambushed in Minh Hai Province

A unit of Provincial ARF has ambushed a group of Vietcongs on the National Highway 4 of the Vinh Loi District, the Minh Hai Province ARC reported. 4 Vietcong soldiers were killed and their jeep was destroyed. No casualty on the ARF side. The unit seized 1 AK-47, ammunition and documents, and before leaving, dispersed leaflets calling on the Vietcong soldiers to refuse engaging in battle with the ARF. In July the ARC also received several youths into the NUFRONLIV ranks as well as into the Armed Resistance Forces, among those are 3 former Vietcong soldiers, 2 village guards who brought along one AK-47, one M-16, 2 grenades and numerous documents.

Pictures of: Vietnamese Resistance.



NUFRONLIV President Hoang Co Minh gives a prize to an Armed Resistance Forces Unit on the NUFRONLIV - promoted National Day of 1987.



NUFRONLIV Commander of Armed Resistance Forces General Dang Quoc Hien reviews an ARF Unit's munition capture.

OVERSEAS NEWS



Vietnamese demonstrators fencing in front of Nam Thai Store, a Vietcong-controlled business in Vancouver B.C., Canada.

Campaign Against Vietcong Financial Activities

Vietnamese demonstrations have taken place in Melbourne, Australia, Vancouver B.C., Canada, and Seattle, USA, in September in response to the NUFRONLIV year-long campaign against Vietcong business ploys abroad.

On September 10 a group of few hundred Vietnamese in Melbourne gathered in the Vietnamese business area of Footscray for a march against Vietcong ploys to extract money from the refugees. Vietnamese in Vietnam are subtly nudged by the Vietcong officials for money from their relatives abroad. Problems and nuisances are artificially created where only bribes can solve. Money-sending transactions are monopolized by Vietcong outlets or their affiliates. Demonstrators, many of them are elders, women, and children, stopped in fronts of these shops to protest their business connection with the Vietcong

regime. Under instructions of the local Committee Against Vietcong Financial Schemes the demonstrators have marched and protested in peace.

One day later Vietnamese compatriots in Seattle rallied in the business Jackson Square to denounce the Vietcong plan to cajole Vietnamese to travel back to Vietnam. As protest on violations of human rights uproared overseas and undermined the Vietcong claim of "openness" policy the regime tried to overshadow this fact by promoting tour to Vietnam. Its design was however uncovered by the Vietnamese overseas. The demonstrators have taken a march over main thoroughfares of Seattle and scattered into small groups to collect signatures of Vietnamese compatriots and businesses in requesting the U.S. government investigate Vietcong

money-funneling transactions and prosecute those violating the law. The rally was organized by the local Committee Against Vietcong Financial Schemes with participation of 12 other Vietnamese organizations in Seattle and vicinity.

A week later, on September 17, Vietnamese in Vancouver B.C. rallied in the central park of the City for the same campaign. Representatives of local organizations and associations have come to express their support for the campaign and to denounce Vietnamese that affiliated to Vietcong schemes. The mass picketed in front of Saigon Book Store whose owner, Nguyen Van Vang, has reportedly been active in doing business with the Vietcong. The mass later moved on to Nam Thai store, a Vietcong-operated store. Encountering vehement rages of the mass the owners have fled and The Committee Against Vietcong Financial Schemes had to calm the demonstrators to prevent outbursts of violence. Flyers in English were also distributed to Canadian to explain the Vietcong schemes.

The 15-month old campaign is well-responded by Vietnamese communities all over the world where a total of 26 Committees Against Vietcong Financial Schemes Abroad were formed to plan and coordinate activities. For the last 15 months rallies and mass demonstration have been continually organized in Paris, France, Montreal, Toronto, Canada, and Houston, San Jose, Westminster, USA, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Australia. Mass protests were also formulated, although less frequent, in cities where Vietnamese communities are smaller and Vietcong-related businesses are minor. The campaign is one of the NUFRONLIV direct

OVERSEAS NEWS

attacks which mobilize Vietnamese overseas into a common front to weaken the Vietcong power-consolidating plans

Resistance participation Fundraising

The Labor Day is not always for respite, at least for several Vietnamese in Iowa; the long weekend was taken as a valuable opportunity of fund-raising for the Vietnamese Resistance.

With the back-up of the NUFRONLIV Iowa chapter the Resistance-supporters have set up a food stand in the local Festival on September 2 to 5. Almost all members of families involved in the activity: elders staying home to babysit toddlers, women leaving to tend the food stand, teenager children taking the cashier, and men making sure everything needed available. The Vietnamese traditional egg rolls were most welcomed. Funds raised was reported encouraging.

Not long after that, on September 16, Resistance supporters in Wiesbaden, West Germany organized the fund-raising dinner on the visit of NUFRONLIV Deputy Commissioner-General of Overseas Affairs Tran Xuan Ninh to Europe. Speaking on this occasion Dr. Tran Xuan Ninh analyzed the natures of the Vietcong claimed "openness" policies, the regime's perplexities in face of the popular resistance at home and abroad, and the fruit of self-reliance and all-front attacking strategy.



Above: Vietnamese march over main streets of Seattle City, USA in protest of Vietcong tourist-cajoling schemes. Below: Vietnamese in Melbourne, Australia rally to protest Vietcong money-extracting plans

Abbreviations in the newsletter:

ARF	NUFRONLIV Armed Resistance Forces
ARVN	Armed Forces of Republic of Vietnam
CPVN	Communist Party of Vietnam
GD/ILA	NUFRONLIV General Directorate of In-Land Affairs
GD/OA	NUFRONLIV General Directorate of Overseas Affairs
NRC	NUFRONLIV National Resistance Council
RAC	NUFRONLIV Resistance & Administrative Committee
RVN	Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)
VRR	NUFRONLIV Vietnamese Resistance Radio

Acronyms and well-used Vietnamese:

Khang Chien Quan (KCQ) :	Vietnamese resistance fighter(s)
NUFRONLIV:	National United Front for the Liberation of Vietnam
Vietcong (VC) :	Vietnam communist(s)

FOR A FREE VIETNAM:

NUFRONLIV-Proposed Guidelines Of Labor Policy

Under a seemingly progressive cover, the communist theory is nothing but delusion. This delusion has however helped the communists in waging the so-called class struggle and spreading the totalitarian revolution around the world.

To mobilize the economically underprivileged, the Marxists call on building a classless communist society. To rally supports from the ruled of colonies, the banner "liberation struggle" is used. To satisfy the yearning for justice, communist leaders talk about "produce according to ability, consume according to needs". The communist theory, despite challenging any reasonable logic, was relatively effective to instigate naive people for political turmoil which creates favorable conditions for communist armed takeover. Soon after victory, the communists always showed their true natures, more dictatorial, more economical unjust and backward than the government they overthrew.

The workers, the social stratum deemed as the leading force of the totalitarian movement and emancipation target of the communist theory, ended up being the target of exploitation wherever they helped put the communists in power. Communist treatment of labor is evidently illustrated by the refusal of civil rights and labor unions.

Communist propagandists have a special talent in misleading public opinion in democratic societies. Vocabulary of the democratic world are used by the communists to indicate completely different things and many times contrary to the concepts that they are universally intended to

convey. The communists would interpret patriotism as one's obedience to communism and the willingness to sacrifice for the party, and explain economic freedom as strict compliance with the party's economic directions.

The right to work is interpreted similarly. Workers in communist countries find working a duty rather than a right. And when it is duty, the work is cut out for them by the party; the workers have no options. Even basic labor rights are ignored. Labor unions are meaningless in the communist societies for one can only join the state-controlled unions, and most of the time forced to be a member of such organizations. Going against these state-defined concepts would invite forceful repression.

Admirable efforts by workers in Eastern Europe, especially in Poland, to fight for their rights in the last three decades are important events, politically as well as morally and conscientiously. The Polish workers stripped the deceitful cover of the ruling Communist party by refusing to join state-controlled unions and instead demanding to form their own union.

Before and even after the birth of Solidarity, Polish workers were terrorized, imprisoned, or quietly eliminated. But determined Polish workers have shown their unity in the struggle against the Jaruzelski regime which appeared tired after many fruitless campaigns to destroy the workers' fight. Strikes that took place throughout Poland two months ago not only disrupted the nation's

economy but also underscored Jaruzelski's inability and frustration in dealing with labor uprising.

The fate of the labor force in Vietnam did not differ from the pattern. The Vietnamese peasants, the majority of the country's work force, were Ho Chi Minh's target of mobilization in the independence struggle against the French Colonialists. The Viet Cong skillfully exploited the farmers's longing for national independence and justice to establish a stronghold in the country side. Soon after securing their power, the Communists started bloody exterminations that lasted for three years throughout North Vietnam. Over a million peasants were murdered in this campaign. The party's hostility toward farmers still exist today although not as violent yet equally repressive by policies outlawing land ownership. Similar to other social strata, the peasants are subjected to continual oppressed by the state secret police force.

The factory workers fare no better than the peasants. The workers, 20% of the population, suffer the same oppression and lowest working and living standards ever. The right to representation is abolished. Workers employed by state-owned factories are required to join unions organized by the regime more for cosmetic reason than employees' benefits. As the Party policy justifies, no independent union is allowed for national security reason.

The struggle for liberation has been ongoing by the people of Vietnam in the quest for a free, democratic, and prosper society. Outlines for such society are proposed by NUFRONLIV in its Political Program, covering all areas of basic concerns, one of which is labor policy.

NUFRONLIV upholds a progressive labor policy that aims to protect the labor, in specific, recognizing the right to form labor unions, the right to labor protest, and ensuring these rights to be justly implemented by subsequent regulations and institutions. NUFRONLIV rejects the notion of class struggle and will abolish all relating vestiges in labor area.

On fundamental labor principles the NUFRONLIV Political Program promulgated on 8 March, 1982, outlines as following:

1. To adopt 8-hour workday; additional work hours shall be remunerated with overtime pay.
2. To encourage workers and management to practice co-ownership, and to cooperate in working and sharing profits in business enterprises.
3. To determine minimum wage and give equal pay for equal work.
4. To encourage modern techniques of production and management to lessen labor effort and at the same time to maintain high productivity and worker's earnings.
5. to establish policies concerning occupational orientation and training in order to promote labor and to provide skilled labor for the demands of the industries.
6. to promulgate progressive labor laws regulating workers' compensation, unemployment benefits, minimum standard living for working peoples, trade-union rights, the right to strike, and freedom of occupational choice.

Basic notion that differs NUFRONLIV's labor policy from the Vietcong's is the indication of labor and the people as the protected not a social class for instigation and exploitation as witnessed under the Hanoi regime. NUFRONLIV conceives that the labor shall enjoy all basic rights as any other citizen in a free enterprise economy based on the individual ownership and self-determination under protection of the law of land. Labor policy shall serve to enhance the people's life only in a free political, social and economic context. In communist society, theoretical objectives and implemented policies have resulted in popular persecution, especially to the labor stratum; publicized propositions are merely propagandistic banners.

Ha Van Lau's retirement:

Career Casualty Of A Vietcong Ambassador

The Paris embassy of the Communist Vietnam had a new ambassador after the VC's Sixth National Congress held in December 1986.

Ha Van Lau, a well-known Vietnamese Communist figure during the Vietnam War and even after Ha Noi's victory in 1975, left his representative post at the United Nations for the ambassadorship in France to replace Mai Van Bo in 1985. This transfer was seen as a promotion for Lau since the embassy in Paris is considered the Vietcong headquarters overseeing Ha Noi's overseas activities.

Lau quickly pleased the CPVN by staging counter-campaigns against refugees' activities that supported the resistance movement at home. His efforts in drawing foreign reporters to Vietnam for the tenth anniversary of the Communist takeover gave him another credit. Lau's works in disinformation and "active measures" deception, would have made his post more stable had he not faced so many serious troubles for last 2 years from the Vietnamese overseas.

Lau's shortcomings in face of orchestrated anti-Communist activities may well have cost him his lucrative post.

Thousands Vietnamese and numerous associations partaking in festivities of NUFRONLIV-promoted National Day worldwide and particularly in France April last year, denoting the support for the just cause of the resistance movement, was one of many major embarrassments to Lau. The VC's embassy asked the French government to deny visas to refugees outside of France in an attempt to sabotage the celebration. The French State Department apparently turned a deaf ear to this request for thousands of people

crowded the ceremony location; many came from other European countries, some flew in from places as far as Australia and the United States.

Another embarrassment took place just a couple weeks before when a NUFRONLIV-led group of Vietnamese refugees took the stage to denounce the Hanoi regime in presence of VC representatives at a ceremony organized by late Emperor Duy Tan's relatives to return his remains to the homeland. The refugee delegate condemned the Vietcong of their propagandistic exploitation in the occasion.

Troubled by diplomatic failures and public embarrassments, Ha Noi sent a theatrical troupe to Paris in June in hope to salvage its tarnished image abroad, especially in Europe. Again, the refugees led by NUFRONLIV local chapter staged a mass protest outside the theater. The theater that could seat thousands had only a handful of Vietnamese, most of whom left their homeland in 1940's and possessed little knowledge of Vietnamese Communism. The Vietcong embassy later cancelled shows scheduled at other provinces.

Not long after their cultural propaganda fiasco, the VC saw a much more severe disaster. Responding to NUFRONLIV-originated campaign against Vietcong business overseas, Vietnamese groups and organizations throughout France waged a year-long demonstration and protest in front of Vietcong stores. The campaign began in Paris and quickly spread to other nations, wherever large Vietnamese communities exist: United States, Australia, Canada, European countries. In Paris alone, after twenty-six weeks of being persistently ostracized by protests and rallies, Vietcong-owned businesses lost 10 million dollars in revenue.

Constant troubles have led to infighting and internal division. Finally, Ha Van Lau was recalled home for an involuntary retirement in September.

Pham Binh, the Vietcong new replacement for Paris headquarters to battle the rising resistance movement overseas, was perhaps chosen for this post because of his strong background in intelligence career. Worried by anti-regime activities abroad, Vietcong ambassadors are prone to espionage and disinformation activity than the diplomatic works. It is not surprising that sometimes Vietcong "diplomats" may forget their roles to use means and methods of the KGB as the Vietcong third secretary expelled from Britain just did. ●

Playwright TA DUY BINH defects in Australia

Ta Duy Binh must have pondered hard when he went to Sydney to attend the 2nd International Festival of Youth Playwrights. What worried him was not if his play would be selected but how he would manage to defect when he was in Australia.

Born in April 8, 1967 in Hanoi, Ta Duy Binh gained his reputation fast since 1982 as an actor, playwright, and artistic director. In the last few years he has focused on children's pantomime and has travelled to perform in many places including Saigon. He was frequently criticized by the Vietcong government for his "deviant" line of his plays since his adventure to portrait real life of children under the regime. Recently, his play The Little Girl and the Bomb extolling the prevalence of friendship and peace over hatred and wars was strongly reprimanded and censured.

Invited to attend the Festival Ta Duy Binh almost lost the chance come to as the Vietcong government refused to pay for the fare had the Australian Qantas Airline not offered a hand to fly him free. At the Festival attended by 68 young playwrights of 24 countries, Ta Duy Binh's play, Half A Love Flower, was one of seven selected to be performed at the Sydney Opera House.

Three weeks attending the Festival in Sydney was probably



Ta Duy Binh

long enough for the young playwright to examine the escape opportunity. On September 1, Ta Duy Binh contacted the Vietnamese community for help via a phone number broadcast in the Vietnamese-language Radio program. The next day Ta Duy Binh was secretly taken to the Australian capital Canberra where he was assisted by the NUFRONLIV chapter to complete the paperwork for the political asylum.

Speaking through an interpreter, Binh said "I just want the freedom to do what my feelings

tell me. To be able to express myself through theatrical plays without having to exclude certain forms of thought just because the State does not agree with them. In Vietnam now there are many people dying of starvation.

Where is the freedom if you cannot tell the state that people are dying - to tell them they must change and have to change for the good of Vietnam?"

The decision to take political asylum is however not an easy one for Binh as his parent, his older brother, and sister still remain in Hanoi, Vietnam where vengeance and persecution may be well-disguised and concealed from the outside world. Just among the artist circle, leading actor Thanh Duoc defected in West Germany, and then well-known singer Hoa Mi in France, while fear of reprisals to families many other actors and actresses could not. In these instances the Vietnamese overseas and the NUFRONLIV local chapters, though boycotting the propaganda missions of these performances, welcomed and actively helped those whose artistic talents were forcibly exploited for the regime's propaganda purposes. •

Foreign Investment and Vietcong New Code of Investment: PROSPECT or ILLUSION ?

At the height of the campaign for the "openness policy" the Vietcong regime went at length to advertise for its new Code of Foreign Investment. The product came into effect in the early of this year. Cautious, if not to say detached, responses of foreign entrepreneurs to this development testified to the long held view that despite of many manuevers of Hanoi to get away from the mortal predicament the chance for a brighter prospect in Vietnam is very slim.

Most foreign observers attribute several political factors to the collapsing economy of the Vietcong regime: The regime's fiasco in redressing the economy is explained as the result of international economic and diplomatic isolation after the invasion of Cambodia. Brain drain following political flight of skilled personnel and professional is also mentioned as the direct cause. Still often cited as the leading source of their failure are the Vietcong leadership's inexperience and lack of knowledge in economy management. To varied extent, these explanations are all correct. However, in explaining the Vietcong failures one often neglects the intrinsic seed of failure within their own correction measures: the anti-economics of all plans and policies based on communist principles, and the inevitable consequence of the prevailing and persistent resistance from the people.

Evidences showed that the resistance of the people, coming in all the forms and methods, have clearly crippled the regimes's consolidating plans and projects. It is conceivable that this course will continue in the future. The matter is not whether the ruling Vietcongs want to struggle out of series of crises but rather they can do it or not. As long as the Vietcong regime maintains its absolute power by force and revises its economic policies for power consolidation it will certainly encounter fierce opposition from the population. The popular resistance is a crucial factor to evaluate the regime's

chance to implement its plans and policies. The effects that the Code of Foreign Investment may bring to the new economic policy need to be considered in this context.

Official boisterous praises for this new code have clouded many other aspects that, to foreign investors, are more important than the Investment Code itself. To attract foreign investment the Vietcong government vaunts on advantages of investment in Vietnam such as cheap labor, abundant natural resources, and political stability. A closer scrutiny on these 3 aspects would reveal the true situation for any business adventure in Vietnam.

Cheap labor as claimed is rather misleading as it has not taken into account the red tape costs involving an array of bribes and various unauthorized fees to get through an unregulated administrative and control system. In addition, skyrocketing inflation and vast discrepancy between official and market rates of exchange would upset all calculations of costs and profit. The controlled exchange rate is only a minor 1/8 fraction of the market rate. Having no way to halt inflation, the Vietcong government is even more unwilling to adjust the exchange rate for fear it would drive up the inflation, and consequently would aggravate the rate difference. With an annual inflation rate of one thousand five hundred (1500%) percent the ominous spiral is unlikely reversible. Real cost of material and labor therefore is a matter of risky guess.

Second, despite of plenty of natural resources Vietnam is not superiorly endowed than many other nations which are in a better technological position to exploit them. More important is the question of available and suitable infrastructure for the implementation of any investment project in Vietnam. After 13 years of economic

mismanagement and the outlaw of commercial institutions, the basic infrastructure, such as banking, transportation, distribution, communication, etc is in total disarray, inadequate for even small-scale projects.

Third, the alleged political stability actually conveys the Vietcong concept of power monopoly by the single communist party, a political situation not necessarily uncontested and unopposed by the Vietnamese people. Popular resistance in all forms have been manifested everywhere, and more notably, within the middle and low levels of the Vietcong government machinery itself. The rule of force has its own backlash. In a system devoid of rule of law, alienated cadres and officials would not hesitate to improvise exorbitant fees or various hindrances to government's projects as a means of self-reward and revenge against the betraying Party. What worth to be mentioned here is that the phenomenon is so prevalent in Vietnam today that this situation alone would severely obstruct any plan to "restructure" the economy. That is not yet counting passive and active sabotages of common peoples employed in these projects. As political instability - is calculated in terms of unpredictable loss due to political situation - from obstruction, sabotages of scale to change of government, regardless what form it may take - the prevalence of guided resistance movement in all the fields and activities is a factor of considerable concern. Since early 1987 the Vietcong regime has secretly put a lot of efforts to conceal than later discredit the existence of the NUFRONLIV-guided resistance movement in Vietnam.

For the same reasons mentioned above the Sweden-sponsored Paper Mill Project in Bai bang, starting several years ago but never finished. Stealing, open and clandestine sabotages, outright obstructions have turned a goodwill gesture into a futile dream. The Tri An hydroelectric plant, engineered and funded by the Soviet Union, had to close just days after its inauguration in May because of construction defects suspected of being sabotaged.

Given this politico-economic situation, privileges offered to foreign businessmen by the Foreign Investment Code would hardly offset the adverse reality now in Vietnam. The Code itself has several hazy areas. For example, any foreign

investment in Vietnam, even joint ventures with local agencies, has to defray payroll in foreign currency at the government-imposed rate of exchange. There is no stated protection or alleviation against excessive change between the controlled and the market exchange rates. On another hand, fraction of profit allowed to bring out of Vietnam is subject to additional tax, of which the rate, the limits, the classification, the imposing authorities are all undetermined. On the limited right to use and exploit land and sea, the Vietcong government sets out no guaranty of duration; neither criteria nor circumstances are indicated for the execution or continuation of this privilege. Similarly, no court nor defined jurisdiction are indicated to solve business disputes with involvement of foreign entities. Without official acceptance of international judiciary these open-ended omissions can be unilaterally interpreted later to the benefit of the Vietcong government. Abundant loopholes in the Investment Code make these obscurities something other than just technical flaws or neglects.

Foreign businessmen to date still kept a skeptical eyes on the investment in Vietnam because of profit-making consideration rather than of political concerns. On record to the mid-1988 there are only 12 outside companies responding to the new policy on foreign investment, among which a large number are Vietcong government-front companies located overseas. A travel agency called Hochimex (presumably named after Ho Chi Minh Import Export Agency) joining business with the Vung Tau Con Dao Travel Company is publicly exalted as a foreign company from Hongkong. The cunning maneuver, however, has not yet squelched skeptics of foreign companies. The Code of Investment has yet so far achieved the intended goal that its authors wish to have.

For many reasons peculiar to the politico-economic situation and the Vietcong leadership in Vietnam, it is likely that any decision of investment would be reckoned especially carefully than normal, in which questions of profitability, risks, and feasibility are still mind-boggling, to say the least.

Vietcong Openness Policy ?

BRANDISHING GUN, VIETCONG DIPLOMAT EXPELLED

The purported Vietcong "openness" policy was dealt a severe blow early last month as its ambassador in London was summoned to the British Foreign Office for a harsh warning and one of its diplomat was later expelled from Britain.

The incident took place when a group of approximately 50 Vietnamese demonstrated outside the Vietcong embassy in London in protest of the Vietcong inhuman policies in their homeland. Apparently disturbed by this unexpected protest on a reception of the Vietcong Independence Day, Vietcong diplomats and personnel shouted and threw stones in attempt to disperse the demonstrators. A man later identified as Khang Nhan Than, a third secretary of the Vietcong diplomatic corp, took a pistol and made a gesture ready to shoot at the demonstration. The crowd scattered and took cover behind walls and trees. Many Britons working nearby witnessed the incident and photos of the gunman pointing the pistol using a two-handed marksman's grip were taken. The area was later swamped with police coming to intervene and investigate the incident.

Reports and pictures of the Vietcong diplomat's attempt to disperse the demonstration by pistol appeared in most English newspapers. Britain Police Federation chairman Alan Eastwood said the incident was "horrifying" and recalled the killing of WPC Yvonne Fletcher by a shot firing from inside the Libyan People's Bureau in April 1984. British Under

Secretary of State Timothy Eggar has furiously summoned Vietcong Ambassador Tran Van Hung to the Foreign Office for explanation and demanded the Vietcong embassy waive attache Khang Nhan Than's diplomatic immunity, surrender the weapon and explain how he got it. The Vietcong Ambassador was warned of "gravest consequences", implying possibility of his expulsion, if he failed to meet the 3-point ultimatum the next day. It was not the British Government policy to issue firearms certificates to even embassy security staff and no certificate was likely to be issued for such a hand gun.



The Vietcong diplomat taking stand ready to fire at demonstrators in front of Vietcong Embassy in London.

The real Colt-45 was later handed in as a phony pistol first introduced by the Vietcong embassy was disputed by the British gun experts as different from the one caught on the pictures. Khang Nhan Than was later expelled from Great Britain.

As the Vietcong do not acknowledge right of expression as well as other basic human and citizen rights, vividly testified by their diplomats' appalling conduct in face of a small peaceful demonstration, one would question hard on the nature of the Vietcong regime and its intent of claimed new "openness" policy. The Vietcong oppressive conduct once become a norm in terror-ruled society it will not undo itself willingly unless it is forced into doing so. The Vietnamese resistance movement led by NUFRONLIV with the aim to overturn such totalitarian regime is generating that necessary force.

POLICY SWITCHES IN VIETNAM

In late 1986 the Communist Party of Vietnam convened a National Congress and its new Secretary-General Nguyen Van Linh laid out some policies termed "openness policies". Since then, some foreign commentators have stated that the Hanoi regime wanted to change but the pragmatic and moderate faction's efforts were hampered because of opposition from the dogmatists and hard-liners. Based on this assessment some observers have advocated a policy of cooperation with the former to prevent the rising influence of the extremists. Is it really what happens in Vietnam? This matter is untangled via an interview with a Vietnamese of authority on the subject.

Following is the text of the interview with NUFRONLIV Commissioner of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Trong An. Before 1975 Mr. Nguyen Trong An taught electronics at college in Saigon and worked as a researcher on strategic security and Vietnamese communism. He frequently contributes to Khang Chien, a NUFRONLIV Vietnamese-languaged monthly publication.

Vietnamese Resistance: Could you please give a broad picture of the situation of the Vietcong rulers and their implementation of communism over the whole country 13 years after the takeover of the South.

Mr. Nguyen Trong An: Since the application of communism in 1975 regimes embarking on this ideology continuously encountered constant problems of varying graveness depending on geopolitical, historical, etc.. circumstances of each country. Before 1975 the Vietcong also met different kinds of problems which were not correctly assessed and exploited by the world. After more than 10 years imposing the communist rule over the whole country the Vietcong couldn't mobilize the people nor disguise their failures under the worn-out banner "liberation struggle". They faced not by problems but rather by crises which manifested themselves in many areas, the most visible are in economic, social, and political.

On economic area, the Vietcong were hit hard on practice and couldn't rebuild the nation. In fact they brought the country down to the fourth poorest in the world,

and on the verge to bankrupt. National products lagged far behind the increasing population, and on domains controlled by the state, productivity spiralled downward to minimum. Their balance of trade suffers a deficit of 1 billion dollars annually, national reserve remains 10 million, barely enough for 3 days of imported supplies. Foreign debts amount to unmanageable 14 billion dollars.

On social domain, the Vietcong regime is impotent in mustering resources and will of the people. It is a society void of edification momentum and full of distrust to the ruling. The discontent spread across all social strata, even among the Vietcong cadres and Party members. Economic policies of the Vietcong regime rely on forced labor and state-monopolized distribution; as production plunged due to popular resistance the expropriation and distribution network of the state crippled along. Privileges once enjoyed by the security forces protecting the rulers' power were consequentially cut down; and people were more aggressive on their opposition thanks to impassiveness of the dissatisfied security forces. The social unrest is prevalent and the

young population is the most prepared to revolt.

On politics, the Vietcong regime is objectionable than ever, communist ideology revealed itself of impracticality and illusion. Leaders of the Communist Party cannot unify on a set of consistent policies. Switching policies were frequently made to achieve 2 conflicting goals: one of communizing Vietnamese society intolerant of ideological deviants and the other of consolidating the ruling power requiring concessive laxation. The plunging economy impelled the desistance of economic centralization and flexibilitas on individual petty business. The situation opened opportunities for party members to corrupt and deviate from official lines, which in turn invited centralized control and dogmatic measures. The vicious cycle continued and ten years after the takeover of the South the Vietcong rulers fell into a dilemma without a consensus for solutions at the highest echelon.

In short the Vietcong rulers are beset in a most fatal crisis, and Nguyen Van Linh was put on power by the Soviet for a switch of policies, but not necessarily without rivalry from other powerful contenders, and definitely still facing resistance from the people.

Q: Let's talk about the rescuing measures proposed by Nguyen Van Linh. What does Linh want for change and what he may get?

Mr. Nguyen Trong An: Linh wants to save the Vietcong regime, and so he had to propose some reforming switches. The motive is to rescue a bankrupt regime, not to better the life of the population. Linh advocated economic decentralization restoring motivations for production, to overcome the collapse of the economy. Discussion and opinions are allowed to give an impression of changes, reestablishing trust to the Party among its members and intelligentsia population. Utmost goal of these measures remain to get over the imminent crisis threatening the regime existence. On politics,



Linh maintains principles of proletarian dictatorship by the Communist Party of Vietnam, of holding absolute power by forces and "centralized democracy". He upholds "international duty" devised by the Soviet Union, accepting to be a loyal client of the Moscow expansion policy. When Linh gets over the crisis, he will return to economic and political centralization to build up a dogmatically communist society.

Q: Do you think Linh would achieve his goals? Could you give an assessment of Linh's policy changes over past 2 years.

Mr. Nguyen Trong An: His policy changes did not bring about any prospect for increasing production, on the contrary, economic decentralization within a context of prevailing social distrusts has augmented more disruption and chaos. The regime is on the brink of disintegration, and it is a false hope that the Communist Party would ever restore the power it once had. The Vietnamese people had had agonizing experiences about switches of policies, such as diversionary measures during the Fall of 1979, they have however taken advantage of these relieves for better protection against foreseeing detriments. They concealed and hoarded goods and food. After Linh's decentralizing measures, the state and the Party apparently could not confiscate-purchase as much products as intended. The market soared up and prices increased. Vietcong cadres and soldiers

suffered profoundly because their wages lagged behind the skyrocketing inflation. The regime has issued more notes to pay the Party members but to no avail for the inflation amounted to triple digits. The state-monopolized distribution system broke down at the over 1000% annual inflation. Cosmetic-intended changes allowing open criticism and discussions were cunningly utilized by disgruntled officials as warranted opportunities to attack the legitimacy of the regime.

Q: And the consequences?

Mr. Nguyen Trong An: The Vietcong cadres and soldiers had maneuvered outside the state system for earnings. And it could only be corruptions, bribes, stealing, defrauding, abuse of power, which is so widespread at all the levels of the system. Restrictions on who decide and how food be distributed were heard among Vietcong generals; Some military units were dispirited and impatient to the point of riot. The fact perhaps explains why the Vietcong government suddenly pleaded foreign aids for a unsubstantiated famine. The morale of Party member deteriorated so badly that purge and rectification campaign were proceeded. The fact Do Muoi replacing Vo Van Kiet is one visible indication.

Q: In another word, you think the Vietcong regime is in a serious crisis and measures proposed by Nguyen van Linh would not save it eventually?

Mr. Nguyen Trong An: In other countries, many communist regimes reformed their policies and overcome serious crises to consolidate their ruling machineries. In Vietnam the Vietcong failed, not because they are more ignorant or less pragmatic than other communist regimes, but because of the uniformed and prevalent resistance of the Vietnamese population.

Vietnam is overdue for a major upheaval, a true revolution with all the necessary characteristics: first, the insurmountable discontent of the population conscious of its power and legitimacy to replace the regime; second, public exhortation for a popular uprising movement taken on laxing measures of a weakening regime; third, the immobility of the regime for countermeasures because of crises on all fronts.

Q: In summary, the Vietcong regime did not look out for real reforms for popular benefits, and Nguyen van Linh's remedial measures were ineffective, then how long may he be in power and what may happen next?

Mr. Nguyen Trong An: Linh's switching policies are too late for the collapsing regime. He may be replaced within a few years upon a utmost turmoil of the Communist Party of Vietnam. The people of Vietnam know of its demise and are unwearied to push for its overturn. ●

The National United Front For The Liberation Of Vietnam (NUFRONLIV) was formed in 1980 to absorb Vietnamese at home and abroad into a mass organization to free Vietnam from the Vietcong and Soviet domination, and to build a democratic and prosperous country for the Vietnamese people.

NUFRONLIV liberation strategy centers on mass mobilization for an all-front struggle that utilizes all available means and imagined methods of the mass to destroy the enemy, in which military operations are conceived supplemental to mobilizational activity.

Overseas the NUFRONLIV has chapters almost everywhere there is a Vietnamese community. Inside Vietnam the infrastructure expands even far deep into the North. Besides the cadres network NUFRONLIV communicates with people inside Vietnam via its Vietnam Resistance Radio, broadcasting 8 times a day for one hour each.

Under the leadership of President Hoang Co Minh, the National Resistance Council directs 3 NUFRONLIV bodies: the General Directorate of In-Land Affairs, the General Directorate of Overseas Affairs, the Armed Resistance Forces.

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