of Economics and Finance, and the Superior School of Physical Education and Sports. In 1966 four additional university-level institutions were opened: the College of Building, the College of Mines and Geology, the Army Medical College, the College of Water Conservation and Power, and a Normal College in the Viet Bac Autonomous Region.

The country's most modern institution of higher learning is the Hanoi Polytechnical College, opened late in 1965. Built and equipped entirely with funds and machinery donated by the Soviet Union, the University has faculties of mechanics and metallurgy, electricity and radio, building and civil engineering, hydraulics, and mining, and chemistry. In addition, evening and correspondence courses are offered, including radio and mechanical engineering, chemical engineering, civil engineering, and economics. Although the Polytechnical College was among the institutions of higher learning in Hanoi which reportedly were closed down in 1965 because of United States air attacks against North Vietnam, government sources in 1966 claimed that 300 students were enrolled in the faculties of building and civil engineering, electricity and radio, mining, and chemistry.

Government and Party officials have repeatedly expressed concern with the low level of teaching in higher education. Official spokesmen stated that, although the expansion of facilities and the increase in enrollment on the university level have been impressive, "the quality of the teaching . . . still remains below the standard required by socialist production." Because of the lack of university-level teaching personnel, university students often begin teaching at institutions of higher learning immediately following their graduation. In 1964 the bulk of university teaching was carried out by 3,000 of these "young teaching cadres." Another major handicap has been the absence of university-level texts in Vietnamese. The regime has launched a major campaign to translate scientific terminology into Vietnamese, but such translations were frequently incomplete and confusing. Only a few university students are capable of reading university texts in Russian or Chinese.

In order to form a cadre of teaching and research experts, students of high academic standing and those with a proficiency in a foreign language are sent to the Soviet Union and other Communist countries to earn advanced degrees in science and technical subjects. Party leaders have emphasized, however, that they intend to improve university teacher training and research facilities so that high-level cadres may be trained "in the national
environment.” The government reported that about 20 to 25 percent of students engaged in higher learning attended universities and technical colleges abroad. In 1968 some 3,000 of a total of 5,000 North Vietnamese students abroad were attending Soviet institutions of higher learning. In 1968 about 100 selected students pursued studies leading to the Ph.D. degree in the Soviet Union.

**Ethnic Minority Schools**

The government has made special efforts to expand school facilities and increase enrollment among the ethnic minorities. Since 1961, according to Hanoi press reports, 61 new schools were built for ethnic minorities in the highlands north and west of the Red River Delta. In 1968 it was stated that level II schools operated in nearly every other district, and that in Lang Son, Bac Thai and Cao Bang Provinces, north of Hanoi in the Viet Bac Autonomous Region, every other district had a level III school. In 1966 the regime maintained that the majority of villages throughout the mountain regions had level I schools.

The curricula of ethnic minority schools stress technical subjects, cultural educational and “revolutionary morality.” A few texts have been written in some of the ethnic languages (Tay, Nung, and Meo). Special efforts have been made to develop economic production units (vegetable gardens, animal breeding facilities, workshops) in conjunction with ethnic minority schools. Government officials have expressed hopes that the financial returns from such units will eventually enable the schools to function on a self-sustaining basis, without government subsidies.

Although the regime regularly publishes statements reflecting the quantitative and qualitative progress of education in the mountain regions, the program in these areas has evidently encountered many difficulties. In the fall of 1964 the Central Committee of the Party severely criticized Party cadres for failing to understand the role of national minorities and for lagging behind in their efforts to raise education in the mountain areas to the level of that in the Red River Delta region. They also asserted that ideological education, “revolutionary zeal” and the implementation of political and economic tasks in ethnic minority schools were inadequate and that the curriculum failed to consider the cultural characteristics of the region. The schools also have been criticized for not carrying out adequately the “work while you study” principle.
Teachers and Teacher Training

In the expanding school system teachers are inadequate in number and deficient in training. The majority are trained in 62 secondary level normal schools. Of these, 33 train teachers for level I schools, offering a 3-year course to students who have completed the fourth grade of level I (primary) schools, and a 1-year course to graduates of grade 7 of level II schools. In 19 of the normal schools graduates of level II schools are trained in a 3-year course to teach level III schools. The remaining 10 normal schools train teachers in special subjects. University-level normal schools operate in Hanoi and Vinh and in the Viet Bac Autonomous Region. A large majority of the teachers, however, are trained in institutions below the university level. Most level I teachers, therefore, have a total schooling of 7 to 8 years, and level II teachers not more than 10 years. An official government publication in 1965 reported a total of 75,000 teachers in the three levels of general education schools and 2,200 teachers in institutions of higher learning. A progress report on education in 1966 claimed that the number of general education teachers had increased to 100,000. Of this number, 8,000 were qualified to teach in level III schools.

The stress placed on ideological indoctrination during the few years of average normal school training undoubtedly contributes to the admittedly low academic level of teachers. Party leaders, while recognizing and criticizing the presence of insufficient academic background of teaching personnel, have continued to emphasize the supreme importance of political and ideological education in teacher training. In a speech at a teachers’ conference in September 1966, To Huu, a member of the Secretariat of the Lao Dong Party’s Central Committee, stated that future teachers must master the basic theories of Marxism-Leninism so they can give their students “a deep understanding of the policies and viewpoints of the Party” in order to train a young generation “absolutely loyal to socialism.” Moreover, the Party has continued its policy of assigning responsible posts in the school system to teachers who were admittedly “insufficiently competent” but who were “animated by revolutionary zeal.”

Reliable figures reflecting the teacher-student ratio are not available. General education teachers, however, must carry heavy class loads and, in addition, are frequently called upon to conduct evening classes in adult education programs.
LITERACY

Party leaders consider literacy to be of primary importance in "improving the political and ideological consciousness . . . of the great masses." The literacy campaign has been a subject of the regime's special attention since 1954. President Ho Chi Minh himself has repeatedly expounded to the population that attainment of literacy is equivalent in importance to participation in socialist construction.

Literacy classes have been organized mostly on worksites, notably in agricultural cooperatives, factories and workshops. When no rooms or buildings were available, literacy classes were held in designated private homes. The courses were given after work for urban workers or at the midday break for farmers to avoid interference with production. Incentive awards were offered to those who attended the classes regularly. Slogans and visual aids were posted everywhere praising the virtues of literacy. Whenever a group had mastered reading and writing, parades were organized and the literate persons were marched under "arches of honor." Emulation drives were launched, and medals were awarded to villages and districts that exceeded the targets of the literacy drive or completed them ahead of time.

To enforce participation in reading and writing classes, control examinations were given at checkpoints near bridges, roads and marketplaces, and persons unable to spell were prevented from passing. In some areas, the homes of illiterates were marked with black circles. Such coercive measures were later denounced by the Party as "deviations from the mass line."

Literacy courses—except those given in level I schools—are practically never taught by general education teachers. Most of this instruction is given by persons who have only recently become literate. President Ho Chi Minh has urged "simple methods" in fighting illiteracy and exhorted "husbands to teach wives, youngsters their elders, sons and daughters their old parents." Literacy courses are also taught by special Party cadres and by members of women's youth groups of the Vietnam Fatherland Front.

Because the Vietnamese language employs a romanized writing system, literacy in Vietnamese is acquired more easily than in other Asian languages. Officials assert that it takes an average of 72 days for a Vietnamese to learn to read and write. When emulation drives are announced the courses are often shortened. To gain official approval, persons are frequently reported to be
"literate" when they are able to read and write a few Communist slogans.

In December 1958 the regime reported that although literacy work had "only been partially completed in the highlands," more than 93 percent of persons between 12 and 50 years of age in the Red River Delta area could read and write. In 1966, Party officials asserted that "illiteracy was basically eliminated" in the country. Such statements, however, are apparently exaggerated, as they conflict with the regime's occasional admissions of difficulties in introducing literacy among adults of ethnic minority groups and among older people in general.

ADULT EDUCATION

The formal school system is supplemented by an extensive program of adult education designed to "raise the cultural level" of the population to the equivalent of school levels I and II without disrupting production. Once a person has begun to work in industry or agriculture his enrollment in adult education courses is preferred to entering level II or III courses in regular schools. Some comprehensive full-time courses are available, however, mostly to Party cadres who "would have difficulties working and studying at the same time."

The courses, given after working hours at worksites or at special schools, provide a mixture of indoctrination, basic education and vocational training. Graduates attain the equivalent of a level I or level II education and become eligible to enter vocational secondary schools or to enroll in level III courses. The curriculum of level I schools may be completed in 3 to 4 years, by participating in two evening sessions per week of 5 to 6 hours duration each.

The basic subjects are Vietnamese history and geography, simplified arithmetic and science, and "citizens duties" (indoctrination). The science courses vary slightly, depending on the needs of rural and urban workers, respectively, as determined by the regime. The science program for workers stresses mathematics and physics. In some branches of industry workers also receive training in elementary mechanics and electrical engineering. For agricultural workers, the science courses include elementary chemistry and biology combined with vocational courses in agricultural techniques and animal husbandry. Science subjects taught to both groups include elements of hygiene and the exposition of popular superstitions.
According to government reports, more than 3 million persons attended adult education courses between 1961 and 1964. Of these, 1.2 million completed level II courses. The majority of persons enrolled were industrial workers and cadres of agricultural cooperatives. Government publications appraising educational progress have indicated that the number of farmers enrolled in adult education courses is below official expectations.

EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

In implementing its educational goals of political indoctrination and economic utility the government has established tight control over every aspect of academic and vocational training. The schools must comply strictly with government directives concerning the content of teaching, administrative organization, extracurricular activities and policies governing the grading and advancement of students and teachers.

Party propaganda dealing with educational progress and with the origins of the North Vietnamese school system claims that in some areas local populations have established schools with “help and inspiration from the Party” and that these schools, although under state control, continued to function as “people-run schools,” enjoying some degree of independence. In fact, such schools are usually operated by local groups of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, and state control over them is just as stringent as over other schools. Some attempts have been made, however, to have schools finance their own maintenance and operation with the profits obtained from “economic production units” operated in conjunction with them.

Because schools, literacy campaigns and adult education classes are used as important channels of indoctrination, the regime makes special efforts to expose every member of the society to one or more formal courses of instruction. Exhortations urging young and old to go to school are linked to the universally popular theme of patriotism. “To study is to love the fatherland,” is one of the oldest and most durable slogans of the regime. Particularly after the initiation of aerial attacks against North Vietnam, education was also portrayed as an indispensable instrument in “the anti-United States national salvation drive.”

Party policies seek the complete eradication of traditional educational goals of scholarship, personal prestige and economic advancement. Instead, service to the Party and contribution to socialist construction are recognized as the only valid objectives
of education. Students are constantly reminded of the supreme value of "correct ideological attitudes" and "revolutionary zeal." Ideological assignments, as well as political and propaganda tasks, take up most of the study hours and pervade extracurricular activities. The importance of academic achievements, strongly valued in the Vietnamese as well as in the French educational tradition, has declined. The Party's theoretical journal, Hoc Tap, announced in 1966 that some 400,000 "distinguished students" were awarded the title of "Uncle Ho's meritorious nephews and nieces." These students, the journal reported, volunteered "in helping families and production and assisting policemen and the military in seeking and catching spies."

In addition to "correct" political attitudes, the social origins of students and teachers are the main considerations in their advancement to higher levels of education and to responsible teaching posts. It was reported in 1964 that students of worker-peasant origins represented 25 to 30 percent of the total in level II schools and 75 percent in secondary vocational schools. At Hanoi Polytechnical College, 52.5 percent of the students came from peasant families, 9.6 percent were children of urban workers, 8.6 percent came from the "poor strata of urban population" and 29.3 percent from "other social strata."

The regime also maintains that it has diminished the prejudices against education of women. It reported in 1965 that women constituted 45 percent of the general education students (in levels I to III), 20 percent of the students enrolled in secondary vocational schools, and 15 percent of the students in institutions of higher learning.

The vigorous propaganda efforts to promote Communist educational policies have not resulted in their universal acceptance by the population to the degree desired by the government. An article by Nguyen Si Ty, assistant director of the Institute of Educational Research, published in the December 1964 issue of Hoc Tap, indicated that traditional concepts linking the goals of education to scholarship, social prestige and economic advantages prevail among many students and their families. Appraising the problems which confront the implementation of the Party's educational policies, the author expressed concern over the general reluctance of combining intellectual pursuits with manual labor.

The author further stated that the arbitrary interruption of schooling to send youths to the countryside to work in agricultural production or on the highland settlements has proven to be particularly unpopular. The move, accompanied by the Party slogan
"youths go everywhere they are needed, especially where there are difficulties," has caused much resentment among both urban and rural students. Those residing in the cities have no wish to go to the countryside, and educated rural students dislike having to stay in the country. The author denounced the unwillingness to work in rural areas as the result of "a relatively prevalent erroneous view among students and their families that the purpose of their going to school is not to become production laborers but to acquire honor and position." At the same time, however, he admitted that young people put to work before they have attained minimal educational and technical skills are of little use in production work (see ch. 30, Labor).

The subordination of education to the interests of production has also been responsible for a considerable loss of interest in the pursuit of studies. Large numbers of students have dropped out of school and have voluntarily gone to work, seeing little need to advance beyond the primary grades since arbitrary work assignments seem to be inevitable. Party officials have complained that "thousands" of students drop out before even finishing level II courses (grades 5 to 7), noting that among those who leave school before going on to higher grades or to universities are many of the bright students who have the intellectual and technical talents needed to meet the severe shortage of intermediate and high level cadres.
CHAPTER 9

ARTISTIC AND INTELLECTUAL EXPRESSION

Literature and the arts since 1954 have been utilized by the Communist government for its own purposes. Writers and artists are encouraged, criticized or condemned according to whether and how well their work is judged to serve official policy. The mass production of novels and short stories containing officially approved themes is heavily subsidized by the government.

Since the intensification of the war in South Vietnam the arts have been vigorously exploited to serve as channels for the government's anti-United States propaganda. Literary works, songs, plays and dance compositions have accentuated the theme of hatred against "aggressors" and have extolled the spirit of sacrifice in the presence of overwhelming odds. According to a resolution of the twelfth Plenary Session of the Party Central Committee, issued in 1965, "... all art forms must be turned into aids in the teaching of hatred toward the American gang... every poem, every painting and every song book... must be a bullet shot directly at the enemy." The same resolution encouraged the expansion of nonprofessional cultural activities, including group singing, poem recitals and solo performances by amateurs.

Art and letters, like all other fields of endeavor, are highly regimented. There are associations for writers, for "progressive journalists," for "artists," for "peace," and so on.

The pervasive surveillance and control maintained through these organizations of the ruling Party roused a storm of protest during the spring and autumn of 1956 when the government briefly invited criticism from the people on the equally brief Chinese Communist "Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom" policy of that period. The Nhan Van-Giai Pham affair—from the names of two sharply critical journals, Nhan Van (Humanist Knowledge or True News) and Giai Pham (Literary Masterpieces)—was met with strong disciplinary action against the participants and suppression of the offending publications (see ch. 22, Public Order and Internal Security).
The Vietnamese fondness for drama is utilized particularly in the military forces as an aid to political indoctrination. Many mobile theatrical groups travel from unit to unit, concentrating on such propaganda themes as condemnation of the United States and the "Ky Clique" in South Vietnam, denunciation of capitalism and promotion of current Party policies and programs.

The Communist takeover also deprived the country of its most outstanding institution for the preservation of the artistic and literary heritage, the Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient (EFEO). Through Vietnamese and French scholars the EFEO carried out research in East Asian antiquities and performed excellent work in studying and preserving the relics and architectural monuments of Vietnam's past. Many old Vietnamese manuscripts in Chinese characters were collected and preserved in its libraries. Although the EFEO continued to operate in Hanoi for a while after 1954 under special arrangements with the Communist government, subsequent conflicts with Communist officials forced the removal of its headquarters to Paris.

The Communist government in 1954 inherited the benefits accruing from a 1,000-year-old cultural tradition that the Vietnamese are eager to preserve. Despite the influence of the European culture of France and the latent effect of Western education on traditional values, Vietnamese art forms basically reflect the Chinese heritage with a strong Confucian influence running through the whole fabric of artistic and intellectual life. Combined with this fundamental Confucianism, recognizable in the emphasis on hierarchy and duty, are elements of two great Asian religions: the Buddhist belief in the spirit world, the reward of good and punishment of evil and the reincarnation of the soul, and the Taoist tendency to conform to nature. Underlying these influences are traces of even more ancient aspects of Vietnamese character: a strong love of independence and a note of realism—or even pessimism and cynicism—about life (see ch. 6, Family, Religion and Social Values).

Vietnam under the emperors was acutely conscious of its cultural heritage. Writers and poets, particularly, were held in high regard. Nearly every village of any size had its own Temple of Literature dedicated to the cult of Confucius and maintained by the scholars (see ch. 8, Education; ch. 6, Family, Religion and Social Values). The center of this cult was the imperial court, which maintained a national Temple of Literature and
enshrined the names of leading scholars. The last three emperors of independent Vietnam—Ming Mang, Thieu Tri and Tu Duc, who reigned in the nineteenth century—were themselves outstanding scholars, and for many centuries the imperial government was the chief patron of literature, learning and art. Temples of Literature still exist in many villages as public monuments, but the national cult of Confucius no longer functions.

LITERATURE

The first written Vietnamese literature, dating from the 1,000-year period of Chinese rule (111 B.C. to A.D. 938), was composed in Chinese characters and based on Chinese literature. Subsequently, a new form of writing called chu nom was adopted. It continued to employ Chinese ideographs but made some of them stand for sounds rather than complete words so that certain Vietnamese words could be written phonetically. The script was well developed by the fourteenth century and, after the Chinese withdrawal, was proclaimed the basis of the new Vietnamese literature. Chinese continued, nonetheless, to be the language of scholars, and Vietnamese writers produced large quantities of literature in both languages. Literary production was stimulated by the adoption of the Chinese system of examinations for all officials, under which the candidate was required to have mastered the great bulk of Chinese and Vietnamese literature.

Vietnam lagged behind China in introducing the printing press for general use. One result was that early Vietnamese literature remained by and large in manuscript form and was thus more subject to deterioration in a tropical climate and to damage by insects, humidity and fire. A new era began with the arrival of the Europeans. Their initiative in devising the quoc ngu, a Roman-letter script, and the more extensive use they made of the printing press stimulated the growth of popular literature and encouraged efforts to reduce illiteracy.

Poetry was among the most admired of the scholarly accomplishments, and the Vietnamese have retained a special gift for this medium. The popularity of poetry at all levels is still reflected in the frequent appearance of poems in practically all kinds of newspapers and magazines. Although the long narrative poem is common, most poetry is short and pithy, characterized by a special proficiency at expressing several different meanings in a short phrase of few syllables.
Modern Western influence on Vietnamese literature stems from the translation into Vietnamese of European works during the colonial period. These works—particularly the novel, which became a popular literary form—had great influence on Vietnamese writers. They also brought about an important change in Vietnamese poetry, which retained its vitality and gained new breadth and a greater freedom from Chinese models and traditions.

**Traditional Literary Themes**

The most famous and influential of all Vietnamese literary masterpieces is the long (over 3,000 lines) narrative poem, *Kim Van Kieu*. Written by Nguyen Du (1765–1820), this story of unhappy love and undeviating loyalty shows a deep psychological insight as well as a beauty of imagery and style that won it lasting popularity. There are few Vietnamese who cannot recite some verses from this great work.

Romantic sentimentality, a theme sometimes found in Vietnamese literature and lore, sounds wistful to American and European ears and reflects a contemplative mood somewhat at variance with the Vietnamese everyday character. Although preoccupation with the supernatural world of spirits and genii, both good and evil, permeates the popular literature, much of Vietnamese literature is concerned with life here and now; genii may interrupt the action from time to time, however. Rarely do vague metaphysical or abstract ideas predominate.

Even though the Vietnamese like to see good win over bad, they display in their folklore a high regard for craftiness, subtlety and successful lying—especially when these are used to combat the brute force they abhor. Accustomed to yielding to force, they nonetheless ridicule it, particularly when it is accompanied by what they regard as stupidity. Although one very often finds in Vietnamese literature a strong admiration for the scholar, there is also an occasional voice of resentment on behalf of the poor rice farmer who toils forever in the rice fields while the scholar sits and reads. Filial piety is another constantly recurring theme, and, together with devotion between wife and husband, one of the most admired.

**Nationalist Literature**

Since the turn of the century, the rising tide of nationalism has been reflected in new forms of literature, ranging from
propagandistic tracts to historical dramas and novels. Revolutionary themes became increasingly popular but were usually disguised by being placed in an historical framework. A number of novels written by members of the Tu Luc (Self-Strength) group, whose leader, Nguyen Tuong Tam, used the pen name Nhat Linh, were especially popular. The most widely read authors of popular historical dramas which flooded the market after World War II were Luu Quang Thuan and Hoang Cong Kanh. Tran Trong Kim was the best known twentieth-century historian.

Literature under the Communist Government

Since 1954 the Communist government has ostensibly encouraged the study and rejuvenation of the literary heritage. Many of the traditional literary themes, however, have been altered and adapted to the content of Communist propaganda and utilized for political indoctrination.

A number of the leading figures in the regime have literary reputations. President Ho Chi Minh, for example, has been writing for publication for many years. His Nguc Trung Nhat Ky (Prison Diary), published in 1960, is a collection of about 100 poems in Chinese, written in 1942 and 1943 while he was being held by the Chinese Nationalist authorities. It has been hailed throughout the Communist world as a major literary contribution. An 800-page volume of Ho's selected works also appeared in 1960. As president, he sometimes addresses his countrymen in verse, aware that poetry in the popular style, with the use of familiar images, constitutes an effective propaganda instrument in any attempt to influence the Vietnamese.

The memory of the war against the French is kept alive by the continuing publication of the memoirs of Communist militants who took part in the struggle. Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap, minister of national defense and commander in chief of the armed forces, has published, among other works; People's War, People's Army and History of Dien Bien Phu. The latter is his account of the battle in which he commanded the Viet Minh forces.

The poet laureate of the regime is To Huu, whose real name is Nguyen Kim Thanh. Born in 1920, he began his career as a Communist poet-agitator at the age of 17. His collected works include Viet Bac (North Vietnam), published in 1954, and Tu Ay (Since Then).
Official favor has also been won by such "reformed bourgeois poets" as Xuan Dieu, Huy Can, and Che Lan Vien. A well-known satiric poet is Tu Mo (Ho Trong Hieu). Formerly a writer of anti-French and anti-Bao Dai verse, he now directs his caustic pen at the "United States and its South Vietnamese puppets."

In 1966, Nguyen Dinh Thi was known as the country's foremost poet and novelist. He was the general secretary of the Union of Vietnamese Writers and the author of Under Fire, a novel dealing with the daily lives of soldiers in antiaircraft defense teams. Under Fire was the most widely read book in 1966 and was translated into Russian. Huy Can's novel, The Sun Rises, exalts the work of miners and has been acclaimed by Party critics. Also well received by Party literati and allegedly popular with readers were Castle of Cards, a novel by Dao Vu describing life in the cooperatives, and The Couple Aphu by Tao Hoai, a story of life among the highland Miao minority group. The government has also praised Souvenirs of Fighters, a collection of short stories and poems written by young soldiers.

The struggle to "liberate the South" and anti-United States themes have been prominent in novels published since 1965. The government asserted that most popular among these were Tu Tuyen Dau To Quoc (From the Frontline of the Fatherland) and Song Nhu Anh (A Life Like Yours). The latter is a biography of Nguyen Van Troi, executed in South Vietnam for acts of terrorism, including the attempted assassination of United States Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Stories based on the war in South Vietnam include Ta Thi Kieu (Sister Ta Thi Kieu), Anh Hung Nup (Nup, the Hero) and Nhan Dan Ta Rat (Our People Are Most Heroic).

The government has encouraged the study and reading of Nguyen Du's Kim Van Kieu after reinterpreting its theme to suit the official line of revolutionary struggle against the oppressor. The work has been translated into several Western languages, including German. A much-publicized celebration was held in November 1965, attended by high-ranking Communist officials and literary proteges of the government, to commemorate the anniversary of the birth of Nguyen Du, author of Kim Van Kieu.

A five-volume history of Vietnamese literature embodies the Party line on this subject as laid down by Truong Chinh, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, and by To Huu. Tran Huy Lieu, who is in effect the regimes official historian, has written a three-volume History of the
Eighty-Year Struggle Against the French. Also well known in this field is Tran Van Gian, author of *The Vietnamese Working Class* and editor of a seven-volume *History of Vietnam*, for university use.

Publishing has been greatly expanded since the acquisition in 1954 of extensive printing facilities in Hanoi and Haiphong. More than 28 million copies of books were published in 1963 by the Foreign Language Publication House and the Giai Phong (Liberation) Publishing House, both located in Hanoi (see ch. 13, Public Information and Propaganda).

Many works by Russian and Chinese authors have been translated into Vietnamese. All the basic Marxist writings from those of the founder to Stalin and Mao Tse-tung have been put out in translation, frequently in multiple editions. Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism*, for example, has been reprinted at least seven times. Russian classical authors translated and published include Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Chekhov and Gorki. Translations from Chinese range from the early colloquial classic, the *Romance of Three Kingdoms*, to the works of such modern Chinese writers as Lu Hsun, Kuo Mo-jo, Tsao Yu and Mao Tun.

**THEATER**

The most popular medium for expression of the traditional themes is the theater. The three main types of theatrical performance are the traditional Hat Boi or Sino-Vietnamese theater, the Cai Luong or reformed theater, and the Kich or modern theater. Best liked is the Hat Boi, which is a Vietnamese adaptation of Chinese theater. The Cai Luong, which also is popular, is usually a comedy of manners, but the dialogue is interspersed with songs accompanied by orchestras, as in European operetta. The Kich, modeled after the modern French comedy, appeals chiefly to the Westernized Vietnamese and is not greatly enjoyed by those unaccustomed to a play without singing or musical accompaniment.

Since 1954 the government has made extensive use of the theater as a propaganda channel. The plots, poems and songs of traditional plays have been revised and new ones written to extol what Communists call the virtues of production and fighting and collective living. Vilification of "United States aggressors" has been a favorite theme since 1964. Traveling theater troupes have been dispatched to every province to perform to village audiences, cooperatives, factories and schools. Since 1965
special performing troupes have been dispatched to entertain antiaircraft units, work camps and factories. According to an editorial in the newspaper Nhan Dan, in September 1966, the members of theater troupes in Quang Binh, Ha Tinh, Nghe An and Thanh Hoa Provinces participated in antiaircraft operations and production when not performing.

MUSIC AND SONG

Music is an important part of the theater, and many dramas are, in effect, operas, the orchestras and singers improvising more or less at will. To the Western ear Chinese-style music, based on a five-tone rather than an eight-tone scale, at first seems harsh, discordant and monotonous. Few Westerners have learned to appreciate it.

The principal musical instruments, borrowed for the most part from the Chinese, are: various types of string instruments (some similar to guitars and mandolins, but played with a bow); a wide variety of percussion instruments, including tambourines, castanets, drums, cymbals, and gongs; and a smaller variety of wind instruments, limited largely to flutes and woodwinds. Western influence has led to the introduction of such instruments as the piano and violin.

The government has encouraged the composition of music based on popular themes. Do Nhuan, Nguyen Xuan Khoat and Luu Huu Phuoc have been commended by Communist officials for their musical work.

Nearly all Vietnamese enjoy singing. Their working chants seem to be a legacy from very remote antiquity. Workers carrying a load to market often sing rhythmically, and chants—coming alternately from the men and women—frequently are heard in the fields. The words are often meaningless, and the tune is usually sad and in a minor key. Group and choir singing have become widespread due to French and Catholic influences.

The North Vietnamese leaders have made mass singing one of their best psychological weapons. Troops sing on the march, as do workers on their way to factories, and military band music is appreciated by the troops and the public. A whole new generation of marching songs has developed during the 1960’s glorifying combat and production, praising the deeds of Viet Cong guerrillas in the South and lauding the fight against “United States aggressors.”
DANCE

Dancing, though not a traditionally popular recreation in Vietnam, is found in the Chinese-style theater, where the acting often is practically a form of acrobatic dancing. Ritual dances are used in some religious ceremonies and once formed a part of the state ceremonials around the emperor.

European-style dancing, which brings male and female into close contact, profoundly shocks the Vietnamese as vulgar. Traditionally a man and his wife are not even supposed to sit on the same mat in their own house.

Ballet and other forms of stage dances have been exploited for propaganda purposes. In the winter of 1966 several ballets were shown in Hanoi theaters featuring scenes of combat against the United States and portraying the sacrifices made by the people in the war.

PAINTING

Of the two main schools of painting, one is influenced by the European Renaissance and modern French art and applies European techniques to traditional themes; the other gives an Oriental touch to paintings styled after the European masters. Chinese-style painting originally was divided into two classes. The higher was the art of the scholar whose great skill in calligraphy was often turned to painting impressionistic nature scenes. The lower was on the level of the craftsmen who produced the stereotyped ancestor paintings on silk or painstakingly fashioned with delicate and elaborate inlay work and painted on screens, boxes, enamelware or lacquerware, often in slavish imitation of traditional patterns. Many well-to-do homes were adorned with scrolls inscribed with a Vietnamese motto expressed in Chinese characters. Produced by craftsmen specializing in the art of lettering, these scrolls were valued both for their beauty of design and the poetic nature of the text. During the French administration the old art forms were practiced on a much smaller scale, although painting on silk and the production of lacquerware murals remained popular.

ARCHITECTURE

Vietnam's finest architecture is found in its temples, pagodas and tombs—sometimes in wood, sometimes in stone, but nearly
always elaborately carved and painted. Some temples, rebuilt over and over in nearly identical form, represent ancient styles. Thus, the one-pillar Buddhist shrine in Hanoi looks much like the original eleventh-century structure.

Pillared porches, great peaked gables, gracefully sweeping eaves and corners with dragon peaks are featured. Vertical lines are rarely accentuated, and Vietnamese architecture blends well with the natural surroundings, an impression fortified by careful landscaping.

Since French colonial architecture took little account of the native building style, the more modern sections of most Vietnamese cities look like small towns in southern France.

SCULPTURE

Sculpture and the plastic arts have had mainly a religious motif and have been highly stylized. Both wood and stone have been used in carving symbolic religious images, altars and furniture in the Chinese style; only occasionally does the ancient Indonesian or early Vietnamese influence show. As in architecture, style has changed little with time. Some modern artists still employ themes introduced by the Chinese over 1,000 years ago. The temples and tombs abound with statues of rich imagery representing mythical or real animals, genii, and the figures of both legendary and recorded history. Often these figures are richly encrusted with stone, ivory, or metals, or, are colorfully painted.

Immediately after the arrival of the French, there was a rapid decline in the number and quality of sculptors and carvers, who had ranked only as craftsmen and depended chiefly upon patronage of the wealthy. To prevent the traditional skills from becoming extinct, the French established arts- and crafts-training centers and arranged for the sale of their products.

OTHER ARTS AND CRAFTS

Of the crafts, Vietnamese lacquerware probably has the highest standards. First developed in the fifteenth century and more modest in appearance than that of Japan or China, it is usually inlaid with ivory, horn, or mother-of-pearl. Carved lacquerware is rare and usually is in low relief. Originally used chiefly for decorating pagodas, it now is used on panels, screens, furniture, jewel boxes, and similar articles. Ivory carving is a flourishing
trade, based until recently on elephant tusks obtained from Central Vietnam. Carving of tortoise shells and buffalo bones are two other important crafts.

Craftsmanship is fully displayed in the jewelry. Silver, brass and copper are commonly used as settings for ivory, jade, and gems. Needlework is also an important form of commercial art, as is the weaving of reeds and bamboo into mats, baskets, and panels. Enameled china and porcelain provide another minor art form. It is perhaps in the minor arts that true Vietnamese taste is best revealed.

Cheap Western machine-made products have had a deadening effect upon the once lively artistic traditions. The deterioration has continued since 1954 when Party policies required the substitution of traditional patterns with simple pictorial representations which are meaningful within the Communist ideological context.
SECTION II. POLITICAL
CHAPTER 10
THE GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM

The formal governmental structure, as defined in the 1960 Constitution, is distinct from that of the ruling Communist party, known as the Lao Dong Party, which is not mentioned specifically in the Constitution as an integral component of the governmental system. Nevertheless, the formal machinery of government is supervised and controlled by the Party, particularly when Party leader and government official are the same person.

The government is controlled by the Party through an interlocking system of parallel hierarchies which extend down into the lowest territorial units. At the highest level, ranking members of the Party's Central Committee and Political Bureau (Politburo) hold key positions in the central government. Various functional departments or bureaus of the Central Committee in turn control and supervise the operation of their counterparts in the government, usually called ministries and commissions. At the local level the Party's lower committees similarly control the activities of local government machinery (see ch. 11, Political Dynamics).

In 1966 the government was headed by Ho Chi Minh, who served concurrently as president, chairman of the Central Committee of the Party, Supreme Commander of the armed forces and chairman of the National Defense Council. He has been the country's undisputed leader continuously since the end of French rule.

BACKGROUND

Capitalizing on the political disruption in the wake of Japan's defeat, the Communist-led Viet Minh acted quickly to establish, on August 29, 1945, a Provisional Government of the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam," with its seat in Hanoi. Better organized than any other political group at the time and popularly identified with the struggle for national independence, the Com-
munist leadership under Ho Chi Minh effectively controlled nearly all of North Vietnam, with only nominal opposition from non-Communist nationalist groups. On September 2, 1945, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the founding of the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" and declared the independence of the country.

Viet Minh-sponsored elections for a constituent assembly were held in January 1946 in Tonkin, in Annam, and in the parts of Cochin China where the French had little control. Two months later, a Communist-led coalition regime, designed to attract broad popular support, was formed under Ho Chi Minh. It included many non-Communist elements. In the following November, a constitution, establishing a system of parliamentary government, was adopted and promulgated.

This 1946 Constitution was written with the sensitivities of the non-Communists in mind, and—more importantly—it was intended to serve as a democratic facade in the Viet Minh's early negotiations with the French (see ch. 3, Historical Setting). Avoiding references to economic theories or Communist stereotypes, it included an impressive number of provisions relating to human freedoms and welfare, such as: freedom of assembly speech and press; the right of election to public office; and the right to employment, free education and ownership of property. In practice, however, the constitutional provisions served as a subterfuge for the use of a Communist regime in transition toward a totalitarian society. The 1946 Constitution formally remained in effect throughout the areas controlled by the Viet Minh during the Indochina War. Thereafter, it was effective only in the area north of the seventeenth parallel, until January 1, 1960, when it was replaced by an entirely new document. The 1960 Constitution, the drafting of which began in 1957, was explicitly Communist in character, and it officially placed North Vietnam in the ranks of the Communist nations.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Constitutionalism, as it is understood in many Western democracies as the basis for the separation and limitation of powers and as a standard for the protection of the basic rights of citizens, does not exist in North Vietnam. For example, an article in an official publication of the Hanoi regime in 1964, asserted that "a number of people [who] are still influenced by the bourgeois theory of separation of three powers" tend to regard the law as "omnipotent" and use it "as a substitute for party leadership." In keeping with this attitude, the decisions and directives of the Party usually take precedence over the law.
Hence, the Constitution serves the regime largely as an educational and propaganda document, designed to impress the people. It sets forth the values and principles of a governing state calculated to have general mass appeal and to gain popular approval.

In style, substance, and basic principles the Constitution of 1960 strikingly resembles the Chinese Communist Constitution of 1954. Its preamble defines the North as a “People’s democratic state, based on the alliance between the workers and peasants, and led by the working class.” The United States, labeled as an imperialist power, is strongly indicted for its “scheme of turning the southern part of our country into a colony. . . .” Asserting that “the South is still under the rule of the imperialists and feudalists,” the Preamble also exhorts the people to complete “the tasks of the national people’s democratic revolution throughout the country” and establish “a stable and strong North Vietnam as a basis for the struggle for the peaceful reunification of the country.”

The Constitution makes no sharp distinction between legislative and executive authority (see fig. 9). The National Assembly is designated as the highest organ of the state. In theory, it enacts laws, supervises enforcement of the provisions of the Constitution and elects the president and vice president. A Standing Committee, elected by the Assembly, acts as its permanent executive body. In practice, supreme political power rests with the top leaders of the Party, all of whom hold key posts in the government. The government itself is essentially the administrative arm through which the Party controls the country (see fig. 10).

The Constitution enumerates freedom of conscience, worship, speech, press, and assembly and the right to employment, rest, leisure, social insurance, education, and freedom from arbitrary arrest, but, in fact, the Party dispenses or withholds all “rights.” All citizens have the rights to vote at age 18 and to run for election at 21. In the economic realm, citizens, including “national capitalists,” are permitted to own and operate commercial or industrial enterprises, provided they do not disrupt the economic life of society or undermine the economic plan of the state. The main forms of ownership during the present so-called period of transition to socialism are, according to the Constitution, “state ownership, that is, ownership by the whole people; cooperative ownership, that is, collective ownership by the working masses; ownership by individual working people; and ownership by national capitalists.”

The rights of citizens to possess lawfully earned income and
Convened when necessary by the President. The first conference was held in March 1964.

Figure 9. The Formal Governmental Structure of North Vietnam, 1966.
Lao Dong Party is an extraconstitutional body, the principal members of which also occupy all key government positions.
to inherit property are guaranteed. Privacy of correspondence is protected, and all citizens have the right to petition or lodge complaints with the government. All citizens are proclaimed to be equal before the law, and women are promised equal pay with men for equal work. All of these fundamental rights are made conditional, however, by Article 38, which warns that “the State forbids any person to use democratic freedoms to the detriment of the interests of the state and of the people.”

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

National Assembly

The unicameral National Assembly is stated to be “the highest organ of state authority” and is vested with “the only legislative authority” of the state. Its 453 members, including 91 deputies from South Vietnam, are elected for 4-year terms through universal suffrage by secret ballot; the South Vietnamese deputies, elected in 1946, have been allowed to extend their terms because of “temporary territorial partition.”

The Constitution gives the Assembly broad powers, including the power to: amend the Constitution; elect the president and vice president of the Republic, the president of the People’s Supreme Court and the chief prosecutor of the People’s Supreme Organ of Control; make the laws and pass resolutions; determine the national economic plan; examine and approve the budget; fix taxes; establish or change territorial or administrative units in the country; grant amnesties; and decide upon questions of war and peace. The Assembly may extend its tenure in the event of war or other exceptional circumstance for the duration of the emergency.

The actual powers of the National Assembly are limited. It is convened only twice yearly for brief sessions upon the decision of the Standing Committee, which it elects as its permanent executive body. While in session, the Assembly is aided by several commissions variously dealing with legislative proposals, planning and budget, national minorities and cultural and social matters. In May 1963 a National Reunification Commission was added to help the Assembly and its Standing Committee adopt “an attitude and resolutions and issue statements and appeals on the reunification problem.”

During the long recess periods most of the powers of the National Assembly are exercised by the Standing Committee. In April 1965 this committee was delegated additional powers by
the Assembly to meet "the new tasks in production and fighting." Despite its impressive formal powers, the Standing Committee, headed in 1966 by Truong Chinh, was actually controlled by the Politburo of the Lao Dong Party, of which he was a ranking member.

The President and the Council of Ministers

The president, officially described as "the representative of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in internal affairs as well as in foreign relations," is elected by the National Assembly for a 4-year term corresponding to that of the Assembly. The Constitution provides no explicit restrictions on the exercise of presidential powers other than a vague stipulation empowering the National Assembly to "remove" the president. It is not specified as to how and under what circumstances the president may be removed.

The president exercises his constitutional powers either in pursuance of decisions of the National Assembly or its Standing Committee or independently as the supreme commander of the armed forces and as the chairman of the National Defense Council (see ch. 23, The Armed Forces). On the other hand, he is required to follow the decisions of the National Assembly in promulgating laws and decrees, appointing or replacing the vice president, premier, vice premiers, Cabinet members and members of the National Defense Council. Such a decision is also required before the president can proclaim a state of war, order general or partial mobilization or proclaim martial law. Presidential ratification of treaties concluded with foreign states and appointment or recall of North Vietnamese diplomatic envoys similarly require the Assembly's decision.

Under the direct control of the president is the Council of Ministers, which embodies the highest executive authority of the state. It is formally responsible to the National Assembly or to its Standing Committee. The Council, sometimes known as the Government (or State) Council, is composed of the premier, five deputy premiers, the heads of the various ministries, the heads of state (or national) commissions and the director general of the National Bank of Vietnam. Most of the Council members hold top Party positions, thus ensuring that the makers of policy can oversee the execution of their own policies.

The Council of Ministers functions continuously; it has direct jurisdiction over all ministries and is vested with authority to annul or revise the decision, regulations or instructions issued
by any lower administrative units. The Council establishes administrative procedures, issues decrees and proposes legislation. Additional powers may be vested in the Council by the National Assembly or its Standing Committee as is deemed necessary. Collectively, the Council operates through the Office of the Premier, which in 1966 consisted of five "boards," dealing with agriculture, industry, finance and commerce, home affairs, and education and culture.

Each ministry is headed by a minister, who is assisted by several vice ministers. The number and functions of the ministries are not prescribed in the Constitution. In 1966 there were 18 ministries: National Defense, Finance, Labor, Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Heavy Industry, Light Industry, Interior, Culture, Water Conservation; Public Health, Public Security, Foreign Trade, Domestic Trade, Education, State Farms, Communications and Transportation, and Building. Ministerial responsibilities tend to be defined on narrow functional lines as is indicated by the existence of a Ministry of State Farms as well as a Ministry of Agriculture, a Ministry of Foreign Trade as well as a Ministry of Domestic Trade and a Ministry of Interior (for civil administration) as well as a Ministry of Public Security (for internal security).

Also under the Council of Ministers are a number of commissions, each headed by a chairman. In 1966 these included: the State Price Commission, the State Planning Commission, State Basic Construction Commission, National Scientific Research Commission, Nationalities Commission, National Reunification Commission, and the National Bank of Vietnam, with status similar to that of a commission.

Other important government agencies included the Geology Administration, the Forest Economy Administration, the Material Funds Administration, the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and the Central Committee for Physical Culture and Sports.

The Judiciary

The judicial establishment consists of the court system and the People's Organs of Control, all responsible, in theory, to the National Assembly or its Standing Committee. All courts are declared to be "independent and subject only to law" in administering justice. In practice, the judiciary serves as an instrument of the government's combined executive-party machinery.
The organization and procedure of the judicial establishment are prescribed in the Law on the Organization of People's Courts and People's Organs of Control, dated July 14-15, 1960 (see ch. 22, Public Order and Internal Security).

The Courts

The court hierarchy consists of the People's Supreme Court, local people's courts, and military courts. Special courts may be formed as needed by decision of the National Assembly to handle extraordinary cases.

The People's Supreme Court is the highest tribunal of the land and supervises its subordinate courts in the enforcement of criminal and civil laws. It is headed by a president (or chairman), elected by the National Assembly for a 5-year term. Other members of this court are appointed by the Standing Committee of the Assembly. The People's Supreme Court has two types of jurisdiction: as a court of first instance, it deals with cases involving high treason and other serious criminal or civil cases which "it may wish to try"; as the highest court of appeals, it reviews cases originating from the decisions of the lower courts. Appeals reach the People's Supreme Court rather infrequently since most of the lower courts tend to function as final arbiters. Additional responsibilities of the People's Supreme Court are to review administrative and procedural aspects of the court system and to supervise the training of judicial personnel.

The local people's courts exist at every level of the territorial administration (see ch. 22, Public Order and Internal Security). Depending on the territorial level, the number and terms of office of the bench vary. Except at the village level, the presidents and judges of the provincial, municipal, district and city courts are elected by and responsible to the people's councils (local representative organs) at corresponding levels. The organization of the courts in autonomous tribal regions is determined by the People's Councils in the respective regions, all dominated by the Lao Dong Party. Procedures pertaining to the military courts are determined by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly.

At the village level, members of the village administrative committee have a judicial function, serving as a primary court or village conciliation committee.

The code of justice, adopted in 1950, is an adaptation of the French Civil Code. All proceedings at the local people's courts are carried out with "people's assessors" participating. The as-
sensors, although without formal legal training, enjoy the same powers as professional judges. All cases are heard in public unless an exception is made by law. Citizens belonging to ethnic minority groups may use their own spoken and written languages in court. Interpreters are provided, if needed.

The People's Organs of Control

The People's Organs of Control, nominally responsible only to the National Assembly or to its Standing Committee, function as watchdogs of the state. They work independently of all other government agencies and are answerable only to their immediate superior offices.

The highest authority of this establishment is called the People's Supreme Organ of Control (also known as the People's Supreme Procurate). Headed by a chief prosecutor (elected by the National Assembly for a 5-year term), the People's Supreme Organ of Control and its local subordinates exercise extraordinary powers of surveillance over public as well as private domain. The People's Organs of Control check on the performance of government agencies at every level, including the court system and other law enforcement organs. The chief prosecutor, for example, may appeal against the judgments or decisions of the People's Supreme Court itself; such an appeal must be reconsidered by the highest court at a plenary session. Officials of the People's Organs of Control represent the state before the people's courts in judicial proceedings.

The subordinate organs of control are established, like the people's courts, at all levels of territorial administration (see ch. 22, Public Order and Internal Security). They report directly to their superior offices at the next higher level and, unlike the local people's courts, are not responsible to the people's councils of corresponding levels.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

Local government units function less as autonomous, self-governing bodies than as the direct administrative arms of the central government. They consist of various People's Councils (representative organs) and administrative committees (executive organs).

For civil administrative purposes, North Vietnam is divided into 17 provinces, two special municipalities (Hanoi and Hai-phong) under direct central government control, two autonomous regions for ethnic minorities (Tay Bac, comprising 3 provinces,
Figure 11. The Administrative Divisions of North Vietnam, Mid-1966.
and Viet Bac, 5 provinces), and one special "zone" (Vinh Linh) (see fig. 11). Each province is divided into districts, cities, and towns; districts are subdivided into villages and hamlets; and cities, into wards. Suburban areas of larger cities are divided into districts and administered by the cities concerned. The administrative divisions in the autonomous regions follow the same structural pattern as elsewhere. People's Councils and administrative committees are established in all of these territorial units.

People's Councils

The organ of state authority, from province to hamlet, is the locally elected People's Council. The Councils of provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions are elected for 3-year terms, and those of district, cities, towns, villages and hamlets, for 2 years. The Council membership varies, depending on the population of each administrative unit: 10 to 20 for villages and hamlets; 20 to 40 for districts and cities; 50 to 120 for provinces and municipalities; and up to 150 for autonomous regions. The People's Councils convene in short sessions two to four times annually.

The People's Councils are authorized, in their respective areas, to implement government laws, draw up developmental plans, review fiscal activities, ensure public order and safety and protect the basic rights of all citizens, as determined by the Lao Dong Party. They are also empowered to issue decisions, but in conformity with laws and regulations promulgated at higher levels. The Councils of higher level may annul or revise decisions of the lower-level Councils as well as those of the administrative bodies at corresponding levels. The powers of the People's Councils are, however, nominal, as in the case of the National Assembly in Hanoi. The actual conduct of local government functions is in the hands of the various administrative committees.

Administrative Committees

The executive nucleus of each People's Council is its administrative committee. It consists of a chairman, vice chairman, secretary-recorder and several staff members, whose number depends on the size of the People's Council in which it is formed and whose members elect it. The rules of eligibility for administrative positions, aside from the requirement that the candidate be acceptable to the Lao Dong Party and from stipulations about age, literacy and mental competence, show the influence of the traditional kinship-oriented society (see ch. 5, Social Structure). A
husband and wife may not serve together on an administrative committee nor may a parent and more than two children.

The administrative committees are dually responsible to the People's Councils of corresponding levels and to their superior offices reaching up to the Council of Ministers. The committees carry out administrative functions assigned them by their superior offices and by the People's Councils of corresponding levels. They may issue decisions and orders "within the limits of the authority prescribed by law" (but determined by the Party) and supervise the work of lower bodies.

Autonomous Regions

The Constitution provides for the establishment of two autonomous regions for the numerous national minorities, namely Tay Bac (meaning North West and formerly called Thai-Meo after the name of the two largest ethnic groups within it) and Viet Bac (North Viet). Some 1.7 million persons, most of them unassimilated and traditionally hostile toward the ethnic Vietnamese, inhabit the two regions, which make up more than one-third of North Vietnam's territory (see ch. 4, Ethnic Groups and Languages).

These areas are held to be "inalienable parts" of North Vietnam, and provision is made for them to administer their affairs based on the "political, economic and cultural characteristics of the nationalities in their respective areas." As a result, the People's Councils and administrative committees in the regions are endowed with broader discretionary powers than their counterparts elsewhere. These local organs are permitted to work out their own economic and cultural development plans and organize local self-defense and public security forces. In practice, however, self-governing powers are narrowly circumscribed and must be exercised "within the limits of autonomy prescribed by law."

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE LAO DONG PARTY

In a formal sense, the Lao Dong Party, as in other Communist-controlled states, exists outside the formal government system, but in practice the Party officials, through their corresponding hierarchical organizations, dictate policy and its execution at all levels of government. The Party, in effect, constitutes a government within the government (see ch. 11, Political Dynamics).

In the top echelons of government, a relatively small group of leaders concurrently occupy high office in both the Party and the
government. President Ho Chi Minh was, in 1966, also chairman of the Central Committee of the Party and head of the all-powerful Politburo of the Party. Almost all the members of the National Defense Council belonged to the Politburo, as did the ranking members of the Council of Ministers (see ch. 11, Political Dynamics; ch. 23, The Armed Forces).

The minimum qualification for public service is acceptability to the Party. The Party itself chooses and provides personnel for positions of responsibility in the various government organs.

The test of political loyalty frequently brings forward otherwise unqualified men, and in such cases the particular administrative, technical or military official may be provided with an assistant capable of the substantive duties of his office. Sometimes also a popular figure about whom the Party has doubts may be permitted to hold an official post under the eye of a Lao Dong official assigned to keep him from straying from the Party line. This pattern is most common in the villages where the Party, even after eliminating or silencing those hostile to it, has had no choice but to utilize the leadership talent of the local community—a pattern likely to persist in view of the growing manpower shortage throughout the country.

The Party and the government deal with this situation through the so-called cadres (can bo) system, which comprises a limited number of skilled officials highly indoctrinated in Party ideology and policies and trained in the art of bureaucratic management. These officials are known individually or collectively as cadres and are assigned permanently or temporarily to any organization, in or out of government, if their specialized knowledge or skill is required to improve the efficiency and performance of the organization in question. There are, for example, administrative or state cadres (roughly equivalent to civil servants), propaganda cadres, management cadres, financial cadres, inspection cadres, Party cadres within the Party or the armed forces, intellectual cadres, educational cadres and so on.

When, as is often the case on the lower levels of administration, the government official is not a Party member, the cadre system assumes critical importance as the transmission belt of Communist control. The official, aware that his position and perhaps his personal future may be determined by what the cadre reports about his performance and attitudes, has a strong incentive to accept and actively seek the advice of the cadre. The decisions taken are presented to the community as those of the official himself, while the cadre remains in the background.
ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

During the first half of the 1960's the Hanoi government continued to face problems stemming from the lack of communication between the government and the people, the shortage and inefficiency of civil servants, bureaucratic delays and corruption. In July 1962, Nhan Dan (The People), the official daily of the Lao Dong Party, complained:

... There are many instances where governmental agencies lose touch with the people. ... The chairmen of many provincial and district administrative committees rarely greet citizens in their respective areas. ... Some officials meet the people in a high-handed manner or with little courtesy. They also set cadres and government officials apart from the people and prevent all communications of mutually constructive ideas. ... Why is it that our governmental agencies are transformed into inaccessible "mandarin" mansions?

Nhan Dan declared that such a poor relationship was noticeable in the activities of all administrative committees, inspection teams, people's courts and technical services.

The shortage of qualified and efficient government officials is also a source of major concern to the regime. Nhan Dan observed, in October 1962, that a large number of government officials, especially at the lower level, were inefficient, and that many of them tended to rely rather heavily on higher echelons in carrying out assigned functions. It said that capable technical personnel were limited in number and thinned out among too many units. Hence, the official daily suggested that the line of responsibility between higher and lower echelons of government be more clearly delineated with simplified "intermediate echelons"; it also called for firmer discipline for cadres and for more efficient administrative actions by eliminating "red tape and excessive meetings." The need for personnel improvement in the judiciary was similarly suggested by Hoang Quoc Viet, the Chief Prosecutor, who in May 1963 stated that there were "gaps" in the "juridical and general education" of judicial personnel.

The government and Party leaders apparently believed that an improvement in public services was especially needed in the economic sector. In August 1963 they launched a Three Pros and Three Cons movement. The objectives of the Three Pros were to heighten the sense of responsibility, to strengthen economic and financial management and to improve technology. The Three Cons were aimed at the elimination of corruption, waste, and the shortcomings of bureaucracy.

Nevertheless, in February 1964, Nhan Dan stated that "em-
bezzlement still occurs frequently, especially in economic and financial organs and in agricultural and handicraft cooperatives.” It went on to criticize such irregularities, blaming them on “petty bourgeois ideology” attributable to the “former society and regime.” The official newspaper berated the judiciary as well for failure to mete out “suitable and correct punishments” to culprits on many occasions.

The persistence of various problems in government was also corroborated in the September 1964 issue of Hoc Tap (Studies), the authoritative political-theoretical monthly of the Lao Dong Party. An unsigned article in it stated that, despite efforts to train and improve the quality of government officials, “... many weak points still remain.” The article said:

... A number of state cadres have manifested petty bourgeois ideology and the influence of bourgeois ideology—individualism, bureaucracy, the tendency to give commands, corruption, waste, conservatism, shyness, lack of a sense of responsibility, violations of labor discipline, disrespect for the protection of public property, and lack of enthusiasm for patriotic emulation.

In 1966 there was little evidence to suggest that these administrative problems had been successfully overcome. On the contrary, Le Duc Tho, a Politburo member and chairman of the Party’s Organization Department, observed in February 1966 that “this situation [referring to the way administrative, economic and cultural organs functioned], which was already illogical, has become more illogical in the face of new wartime requirements of the country...” Declaring that “in war, the [governmental] machinery cannot be complicated and bulky,” he called for a still more simplified central echelon structure, the rectification of “red-tape centralization,” the delegation of more powers to lower administrative authorities and a more flexible and efficient adjustment to “wartime” conditions. These measures were necessitated by the growing shortage of Party and state cadres, caused in part by an acute need to divert them to military and other branches whose demands are more urgent (see ch. 21, Financial and Monetary System).
CHAPTER II

POLITICAL DYNAMICS

The Lao Dong Party is the sole organized political force, with a claimed membership of nearly 800,000 (December 1965) or about 4.4 percent of the population. It maintains a monopoly of direct and effective control over various aspects of political, social, economic and intellectual life through limited numbers of core members called can bo (cadres), manning a complex network of supervisory, educational and indoctrination activities. The Party's ubiquitous character is potent enough to limit the area within which any social or political conflicts can take place. As a result, few people can remain outside the realm of its all-pervasive influence; organized expression of opposition, therefore, was not readily discernible in 1966.

Although the Party is not mentioned in the Constitution, it effectively rules the country through an interlocking system of control and supervision (see ch. 10, The Governmental System). It invariably claims to be representing the needs and aspirations of the people, and it alone regulates the tempo and character of political and social change. It also serves as the principal channel for social advancement and for attaining power and influence, leaving no other alternative open to the people.

Both the Party and the government are headed by President Ho Chi Minh, who has dominated the Vietnamese Communist movement for the past four decades. Surrounding him, and continuing to form the inner core of the Party's power structure, is a select group of first-generation revolutionaries, all of whom have played prominent roles in the Communist movement since 1930.

The principal determinants of the political trends in late 1966 were those concerning the government's involvement in the Communist insurgency in South Vietnam and the adverse impact of this conflict on the nation's economic life. The Government has frequently hinted at growing domestic difficulties arising from the United States air strikes and from the high cost of sending men and material into the South (see ch. 7, Living Conditions). Externally, in the Sino-Soviet dispute, Hanoi found it
necessary to take a middle position, precarious as it was, to ensure continued political, economic and military assistance from both countries.

THE LAO DONG PARTY

The salient feature of the political processes is the predominance of the Communist party, officially called the Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam (Workers’ Party of Vietnam), better known as the Lao Dong Party. Since political activities seldom take place outside the Party framework, the structure, function and leadership of the ruling organization constitute the key factors to understanding the nation in action.

Background

The Party is an outgrowth of the Vietnamese Communist Party, established on February 3, 1930, by Nguyen Ai Quoc (later known as Ho Chi Minh) in relatively safe Hong Kong. In October of that same year it was renamed the Indochinese Communist Party and had the enlarged responsibility of controlling the Cambodian and Laotian Communists as well. According to a North Vietnamese source, the Party had 211 members in 1930, many of whom were urban intellectuals. Some of these founding members became dominant figures in North Vietnam.

Under French rule the Party, branded as subversive because of its anticolonial and nationalist activities, was suppressed except during the brief period (1936–38) when a popular front (left-wing coalition) government was in power in France. Its liberalized colonial policies, coupled with the support given by the Party, enabled the Communists to stage an unmolested open struggle in Vietnam. Conspicuously minimizing the anti-French aspect of its struggle, the Party attempted to expand organizational strength. This opportunist policy cost the movement a sizable portion of nationalist support.

In efforts to broaden its political base by appealing to nationalist themes, the Party in May 1941 helped to establish, with various non-Communist nationalist groups, the anti-French and anti-Japanese Vietnam Independence League (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh—better known by its abbreviation, Viet Minh). Deemphasizing their radical orientation and outmaneuvering the faction-ridden nationalist rivals, the Communists, by August
1945, were able to emerge as the dominant and cohesive political force within the Viet Minh movement and, hence, throughout Vietnam. A Hanoi source asserts that at the end of World War II the Party had a hard-core membership of some 5,000 persons, plus small guerrilla units (see ch. 8, Historical Setting).

In November 1945, 2 months after the founding of the so-called Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Party "dissolved" itself, presumably to create a nationalist facade. Party functions, however, were carried on clandestinely by the "Association for Marxist Studies," set up in the same month under the leadership of Truong Chinh, who had been secretary general of the Party. In still another attempt to enlist broad popular support the Communists disbanded the Viet Minh in February 1951, by which time the nationalist organization had become widely recognized as Communist controlled. At the same time they established a new all-embracing front organization called United Vietnam Nationalist Front (Mat Tran Lien Hiep Quoc Dan Viet Nam—better known by its abbreviation, Lien Viet). In March 1951 the Communists, in and outside the defunct Viet Minh, reemerged under the new name of Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam. The Lien Viet front was replaced in September 1955 by the Vietnam Fatherland Front (Mat Tran To Quoc Viet Nam).

Role

The Party, more than a political group, is the actual government in being, functioning as the source of law and power and as the decision maker and arbiter of state policies. It has arrogated to itself exclusively the role of leader and protector of the people. It stipulates the standard of morality for all citizens. It is a ubiquitous force, embracing the armed forces, labor unions, managerial elite, intellectuals, professionals, and other elements.

In theory, the Party exists outside the formal governmental structure. In practice, it dictates and supervises the administrative, legislative, judicial, military, cultural and economic aspects of the government through parallel and separate hierarchical organizations extending to the lowest territorial units (see ch. 10, The Governmental System).

Political activities and participation normally take place within, and on terms dictated by, the Party. They seldom assume any competitive or partisan character, since elements of free choice are totally lacking. The people can either support or go through the motion of supporting the Party. For the dissenters, the Party
employs two corrective measures: indoctrination and, this failing, "discipline," meaning punitive action.

In this strictly controlled system, the Party serves as the principal channel for social mobility and political advancement. It embraces nearly all citizens holding key positions in administrative agencies or in the armed forces. Managerial personnel, technicians, union leaders and intellectuals usually belong to it.

Organization

The Party is highly centralized and hierarchical, with committees established at all levels of territorial administration, extending down through autonomous regions, provinces, municipalities (Hanoi and Haiphong), districts, towns, villages and wards. Each Party committee is divided into representative and executive organs. Responsible positions in all of these organizations are held by politically reliable cadres.

The basic Party organization is called chi bo (branch or chapter), established wherever there are more than three regular Party members—in factories, state enterprises, government agencies, units of the armed forces and other security forces, schools, hospitals, state farms, transport and communication units and in the multitude of front organizations. A chi bo is officially described as an organ performing "the task of linking the Party with the masses, implementing the Party line and policy among the masses and reflecting the opinions, aspirations and desires of the masses to the leading bodies of the Party." Responsible to the Party committee of the area in which it is located, it is administered by an executive committee; a larger Chi bo may be divided into cells (tieu-to). A cell has no administrative authority.

Under Article 11 of the Party statute, however, Party committees and their subordinate chi bo within the armed forces are controlled directly by and responsible to the Central Committee; for this purpose, a central military Party committee (sometimes called a council) may be formed by an unspecified number of the Party Central Committee members, both in and outside the army.

According to Party sources, there were 40,810 chi bo in December 1965, as compared with 20,698 in 1960. About 55 percent of the chi bo in 1965 were given "four good" status under the so-called four good chi bo movement, which had been launched in June 1962 to strengthen the basic organizations, to improve the relationship between the Party and the people and to elevate the ideological, cultural and technical standards of Party cadres and
members at the chi bo level. The four good is officially described as meaning: good in leading production; good in leading the execution of Party policy; good in carrying out the mass movement and paying concern to the mass life; and good in the consolidation and development of the Party (see ch. 14, Political Values and Attitudes).

At the top of the hierarchy is the national Party Congress of delegates, convened normally every 4 years. It theoretically is empowered to hear, discuss and approve the reports of central Party bodies and to decide basic Party line and policy. The most recent session—the Third—was held in September 1960, attended by 525 regular and 51 alternate delegates. Between sessions of Congress the Party is directed by a Central Committee, elected by and responsible to the Congress for a 4-year term. At the end of 1966 the Central Committee (constituted in 1960) was composed of 42 regular and 30 alternate members; the regular members can elect the Party's chairman, first secretary and members of the Politburo and secretariat.

The Party's most important and powerful body is the Politburo (11 regulars and 2 alternates), which actually determines policy and supervises its implementation on behalf of the Central Committee. The Politburo decisions are made by a majority vote. Once made, they are transmitted to the secretariat for action. Directives and instructions, formalized by the secretariat, are then issued to appropriate Party departments and committees for implementation.

To carry out policies and ensure coordination among various organizations, the Party relies on 10 functional departments. They are: Foreign Relations, Reunification, Propaganda and Training, Minority Affairs, Control, Military Affairs, Organization, Industry, Rural Affairs, and Finance and Trade. It is through these departments that the Party can also direct, supervise and control the activities of various government ministries and their subordinate agencies.

Membership and Cadres

At the end of 1965 the Party had nearly 800,000 members (4.4 percent of the population), reflecting an increase of some 300,000 members since the Third Congress in September 1960. Membership is based on political reliability and on the principle of quality rather than quantity. Of the new members, 50.08 percent were classified as poor peasants, 27.53 percent as middle
class peasants and 16.34 percent as workers; female members constituted 20.8 percent, as against 9.41 percent in 1961. Members 30 years of age or under represented 81.1 percent, as compared with 49.2 percent in 1961.

An article in the August 1964 issue of Hoc Tap (Studies), the theoretical monthly of the Party questioned the reliability of the large number of members who had joined the Party since 1950 from the rural areas. In February 1966, Politburo member Le Duc Tho voiced concern over the persistence of “a low organizational, disciplinary, and revolutionary fighting spirit” among the majority of Party cadres and members. Another official source suggested that the standard of the cadres and members in the highland areas was even lower than that of the “delta comrades.”

As early as September 1960, Party First Secretary Le Duan declared that inadequacies in ideological and professional standards of the cadres constituted “a great obstacle for us on our path to socialism.” He further stated that:

The problem of cadres is of prime importance in the organizational work of the Party, since the cadres have the duty of propagandizing Party lines and policies among the masses, educating and organizing the masses for their implementation.

The cadres, chosen from among the Party members proven outstanding in the various emulation movements, are trained at various schools, the most prestigious of which is the Nguyen Ai Quoc School in Hanoi, directly under the Central Committee and headed by Truong Chinh, a high-ranking member of the Politburo. Lower institutions are established at provincial and district levels.

The cadres are divided into high, intermediate and low-level categories, according to the level of their training and competence in various fields of specialization. Trained in matters of Communist theories, Party lines and policies, and in managerial, scientific, technical, agricultural and other professional subjects, they are assigned to various Party, governmental and other social and cultural organizations on a permanent or temporary basis. Among the various types of cadres, the “Party cadres” occupy preeminent positions because of their political responsibilities as disseminators of Party lines and directives and as organizers.

Leadership

The Politburo members constituted the inner core of the power structure (see table 1). As founding members of the Indochinese
Communist Party and as the backbone of the Viet Minh movement, these veteran first-generation Communists, most of them in their sixties, continued to dominate the whole range of the power spectrum.

Table 1. Politburo Members of North Vietnam, 1966

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh</td>
<td>Chairman of Lao Dong Party Central Committee; president of North Vietnam; chairman, National Defense Council.</td>
<td>Former secretary general of the Party (1956-60).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truong Chinh</td>
<td>Chairman, National Assembly Standing Committee; head of the Party's Nguyen Ai Quoc Training School.</td>
<td>Former secretary general of the Party (1941-56); leader of the Party's pro-Chinese faction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pham Van Dong</td>
<td>Premier; a vice chairman, National Defense Council.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pham Hung</td>
<td>A deputy premier; chairman of the State Price Commission; chairman, Finance and Commerce Board under the Premier's Office.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vo Nguyen Giap</td>
<td>Minister of national defense; commander in chief of the North Vietnamese Army; a deputy premier; a vice chairman, National Defense Council.</td>
<td>Leader of the Party's pro-Soviet faction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguyen Chi Thanh</td>
<td>One of the two senior generals (along with Vo Nguyen Giap); a member, National Defense Council.</td>
<td>An influential pro-Chinese faction member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguyen Duy Trinh</td>
<td>A deputy premier; minister of foreign affairs; a member, National Defense Council.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Thanh Nghi</td>
<td>Chairman of the Industry Board, under the Premier's Office.</td>
<td>Leading specialist in economic affairs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most influential person in late 1966 continued to be President Ho Chi Minh. There was no one within the Politburo who approached his stature, prestige and popular esteem. Standing above the Party, he, in effect, represented the symbol of unity and loyalty to many in North Vietnam. Consequently, his advanced age (76 in 1966) and reportedly failing health often prompted observers to speculate on the question of who would succeed him and the impact of his loss on the future of the country. In late 1966 often mentioned by Western observers as probable successors to President Ho were Le Duan, Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap and Truong Chinh.

In the mid-1960’s another issue intertwined with the succession problem was the persistence of intra-Party differences. Despite the apparent homogeneity of the Politburo members in terms of common background, factional cleavages were known to have existed for years. According to experienced observers, personal rivalries were evident in early 1965 between Vo Nguyen Giap and Truong Chinh and between Le Duan and Le Duc Tho. These observers were also of the view that the most significant differences within the ruling elite pertained to those issues dividing the Soviet Union and Communist China. According to the same source, the Politburo members could be divided into three groupings: one, pro-Soviet, a second, pro-Chinese, and a third, choosing variously between the first two.

Led by Vo Nguyen Giap, who was highly impressed with what he called Moscow’s “advanced military science,” the pro-Soviet group appeared anxious to hew to Moscow’s lead in domestic and
foreign affairs. Another leading figure in the pro-Soviet wing was believed to be Premier Pham Van Dong.

The pro-Chinese elements favored Peiping’s revolutionary experiences and guidances as more appropriate for North Vietnam. The key figure in this group was thought to be Truong Chinh. Formerly known as Dang Xuan Khu, his choice of Truong Chinh as a pseudonym was one indication of his admiration of the Chinese Communists, since this name in Vietnamese refers to the Long March to northwest China during the difficult years of 1934 and 1935. Other influential elements in this group included Nguyen Duy Trinh and Nguyen Chi Thanh.

The third group was headed by Le Duan, often described as the second man in the ruling hierarchy. Le Duan’s position toward Peiping and Moscow was selective: he aligned himself with either pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese groups, depending on the circumstances. South Vietnamese in origin, he directed the guerrilla war against the French in Cochin China until 1951. Indications in the mid-1960’s were that he has generally favored the militant policy of war to the bitter end in the South—a position similar to that advocated by Communist China. Because of this militant position, it was asserted by some observers that his chance of succeeding Ho Chi Minh would be diminished should the Communist insurgents suffer a major military or political defeat in the South. In late 1966 it could not be determined whether Le Duan’s hard line was the result of any Chinese pressures, was one of his own choice, or was one reflecting the official Party line.

President Ho Chi Minh’s position toward these groupings was one of moderation and conciliation, as was his effort to steer a middle course between Peiping and Moscow. His neutral position appeared likely to continue so long as North Vietnam had to rely on military and economic aid from Peiping and Moscow to sustain itself.

Front Organizations

An important device for ensuring the successful working of the Party is the scheme of front organizations, ostensibly autonomous but supported and controlled by the Party. Embracing all social, occupational and so-called political groups, the front organizations are intended to create the impression that the Communist government enjoys broad popular support. Apart from their showcase function, they help the Party organizations to transmit and implement official policies and to indoctrinate, mobilize and control the masses.
The most notable organization is called the Vietnam Fatherland Front (Mat Tran To Quoc Viet Nam), better known as the Fatherland Front. President Ho Chi Minh is its honorary chairman. Established in September 1955 and led by Ton Duc Thang (vice president of North Vietnam and a member of the Lao Dong Central Committee), it is directed by a central committee constituted by heads of numerous affiliate front organizations. The central committee is in turn represented by a more select body known as the presidium.

Probably the most important among the Front’s affiliate organizations are the Vietnam General Federation of Labor and the Vietnam Labor Youth Union (founded in 1930 as the Indochinese Communist Youth League and renamed in 1953). With a membership of about 500,000, the former plays a leading role as the economic instrument of the Party and the government (see ch. 20, Labor). The latter organization claims a membership of 1.2 million and has been described by Le Duan as “the right arm of the Party.” A replica of the Lao Dong Party in its working methods and structure, the youth organization provides the principal channel for the political education of those from 16 to 30 years of age.

Among other affiliated organizations are the Vietnam Democratic Party, allegedly representing the so-called progressive petty-bourgeois elements, and the Vietnam Socialist Party, embracing the so-called progressive intellectuals. Various ethnic minorities (including the Chinese) also have their front organizations, as do the Catholics, Buddhists, adherents of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao religious sects, lawyers, journalists, physicians, artists, women and peasants. Other affiliated bodies include the Vietnam Peace Committee, the Vietnam Asian-African Solidarity Committee and numerous friendship associations with foreign countries.

POLITICAL TRENDS

Direction of Involvement in the War

The major national concern in 1966, as a Nhan Dan editorial of February 3, 1966 expressed it, continued to be the task of defeating the “United States aggressors,” defending the North and liberating the South. In tactical terms there were indications to suggest a shift from the past policy of denying Hanoi’s involvement in the insurgency in the South to one of publicly suggesting a direct part in the conflict.

Until the end of 1965 Hanoi carefully measured its words in publicly insisting that the insurgency had been independently or-
ganized and led by the southerners themselves under the so-called National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (see ch. 12, Foreign Relations). It repeatedly pledged itself to support "the liberation struggle of our compatriots in the South," but largely only in terms of readiness to support the cause (see ch. 23, The Armed Forces). Officially, at least, it denied any direct involvement in the conflict.

Beginning early in 1966, however, Hanoi issued a number of statements implying that it was "leading" the "resistance" in the south, fighting "shoulder to shoulder" with the Viet Cong, and prepared to fight for 20 years to "liberate the whole nation."

An editorial in the September 1966 issue of Hoc Tap implied that the self-styled National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam had been sponsored by Hanoi as a "clever application" of Lenin's teaching on revolutionary tactics. It cited the Viet Minh front (1941-51), the Lien Viet front (1951-55) and the so-called National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam as "typical examples of the clever application" of Leninist tactics of dividing and neutralizing enemy forces, befriending and uniting the people and isolating "the imperialists and their most dangerous lackeys" from the people.

Impact of the Sino-Soviet Dispute

Various fragmentary sources suggested in the mid-1960's that Hanoi's latitude for political and military initiative in supporting the insurgency in South Vietnam was substantially limited by the Sino-Soviet differences over general questions of strategy and tactics, including one concerning Vietnam (see ch. 12, Foreign Relations). Militarily and economically weak, North Vietnam has had to rely largely on aid from Peiping and Moscow not only for the support of the insurgency but also for its own survival. As a result, in view of the worsening relationship between the two Communist powers, practical necessity required Hanoi to remain prudently neutral to the Sino-Soviet dispute. Under these circumstances the government was forced to balance its position between the divergent viewpoints of Peiping and Moscow, the former favoring a line of uncompromising, total victory in the South as against the latter's advocacy of more moderate and relatively conciliatory approach.

This dilemma was reflected in internal dissension within the leadership, some apparently favoring Peiping while others opted for Moscow. In December 1963 Le Duan admitted to problems of
disunity within the ranks of the Party, expressing concern over what he called "different, deviationist tendencies, mainly rightist deviations." In February 1964 Hoc Tap criticized, at least by implication, both the "modern revisionism" associated with the Soviet Union and the ultramilitant tactics of violence advocated by Communist China. In late 1966 indications were that hints of factionalism revolved around the central question in North Vietnam—whether to continue fighting or seek to score political gains through negotiations.

Party-Military Relations and their Implications

In the mid-1960's, despite the continued primacy of Party control over the armed forces, Party-military friction was implicit in a number of official statements dealing with the general role of the Army and with other strategic and tactical questions. Tentative indications were that this friction stemmed from divergent Party-military viewpoints regarding various issues rather than from any power struggle between the political and military personalities within the Party. They also suggested that the United States participation in the Vietnam conflict and the pressures of the Sino-Soviet dispute had the effect of complicating Party-military relations (see ch. 12, Foreign Relations).

In terms of the impact on military operations, probably the most relevant aspect of the friction concerned the question of which element—men or weapons—should be regarded as the decisive factor in carrying on the conflict. For example, an unspecified number of professional officers, while paying verbal homage to the importance of the human element in modern military operations, tended to argue that the outcome of modern combat depends on an army's material resources and that this aspect should be given "equal or perhaps greater priority than political considerations." According to occasional statements made on the subject, this professional viewpoint was sympathetically received by some ranking generals, including Minister of National Defense Vo Nguyen Giap, who also heads the Party's pro-Soviet faction.

On the other hand, the Party's official position, made abundantly clear in almost all propaganda media, was that men, not modern weapons, are decisive in war—a position inspired presumably by Mao Tse-tung's dictum that "human, spiritual, and political factors," rather than weapons and technology are the decisive factors in a so-called people's war.

The men-versus-weapons issue in the mid-1960's was affected
directly by the divergent Sino-Soviet position on the same subject. The Chinese assertion that men—not modern weapons—remained the fundamental nature of the people's war was challenged by Moscow, which declared that nuclear weapons change the nature and consequences of war. Hence, between 1963 and 1964, when Hanoi's pro-Chinese orientation was strongly in evidence, a men-over-weapons line was unchallenged within the Lao Dong Party. With the first United States retaliatory air attacks in August 1964 and the subsequent Soviet pledge to increase its military aid to North Vietnam, however, the Hanoi leadership came to realize the importance of modern weapons, such as antiaircraft missiles, which only the Soviet Union could supply (see ch. 12, Foreign Relations). The result was an apparently increased influence within the Party of professional military officers in the determination of military policies.

Hanoi's increased stress on military professionalism and reliance on the Soviet weapons was motivated by practical self-interest. Nonetheless, it had the effect of contradicting the repeated Chinese suggestions, such as Minister of Defense Lin Piao's speech "Long Live the Victory of People's War!" on September 3, 1965, in which he implied that the Viet Cong insurgency was a test case for the "people's war"—a war in which lightly armed but politically aroused guerrillas fight the well-equipped enemy's regular troops.

Furthermore, the government's decision in early 1965 to send some of its crack regular army units to South Vietnam in the hope of a quick victory represented another departure from Mao Tse-tung's revolutionary principles. In justification of this policy, Lieutenant General Song Hao, head of the powerful directorate general of political affairs in the Army, explained in June 1965 that "the liberation war in South Vietnam at present is developing from guerrilla war to conventional war." Some observers suggested that Peiping would more than likely disapprove the new trend since, under conditions of conventional military confrontation with United States forces, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong would have to rely increasingly on the Soviet Union for modern weapons, with a resulting rise in the Soviet influence on Hanoi (see ch. 23, The Armed Forces).

For a different reason, however, the Soviet Union itself appeared, in the mid-1960's, reluctant to support any large North Vietnamese involvement in South Vietnam for fear of broadening and prolonging the conflict (see ch. 12, Foreign Relations). Preliminary indications in December 1966 were that, probably in view of
this paradoxical situation, North Vietnam, which had by then an estimated strength of 50,000 to 60,000 regulars in the South, was inclined to scale down its prosecution of the conventional warfare.

**ELECTIONS**

The electoral process gives the people little alternative but to vote for candidates chosen by the Party. The manner in which the election takes place represents another aspect of the all-pervasive Party control throughout the society.

The Constitution stipulates that election of deputies to all levels of representative organs shall be based on the principle of universal adult suffrage, direct and secret ballot. All citizens have the right to vote at age 18 and to be elected at 21. Under the 1960 election laws, a delegate to the National Assembly may normally represent an average of 50,000 constituents, but in large cities the size may vary from 10,000 to 30,000. In April 1964 there were 8,774,000 registered voters.

In the three national elections held in January 1946, May 1960 and, most recently, April 1964, there was not a single genuine contest in any constituency. President Ho Chi Minh ran unopposed from his constituency in Hanoi, receiving 98 percent of the votes in 1946, 99.91 percent in 1960 and 99.92 percent in 1964. Official statements indicate that the national turnout average was approximately 97 percent.
CHAPTER 12
FOREIGN RELATIONS

Because of similarities in political dogma, economic and social objectives, and the totalitarian exercise of state power, the government is predisposed to collaborate with other Communist nations. It is also involved with Communist China and the Soviet Union in the differences each of them has with the United States and other Western as well as non-Western nations politically aligned with Washington. Small and relatively undeveloped, it depends on Communist China and the Soviet Union for material and political support to meet its internal and external requirements.

In late 1966 the government consistently asserted that it was the victim of United States “aggression” and that the Vietnam conflict was essentially an internal affair, to be settled by the Vietnamese people themselves. It had only a narrow margin of foreign policy initiative and had to adjust its own position to those of the two great Communist powers, in part because of its limited resources and in part because the Vietnam question was intertwined with the frequently clashing policy considerations of both Peiping and Moscow. The widening rift between the Soviet Union and Communist China caused North Vietnam to adopt a prudent and expedient policy of neutrality between them in order to ensure continued military and economic assistance from both of them.

Relations with and attitude toward the United States were subject to the conflicting pull and pressure from the two Communist capitals, with Peiping favoring an uncompromisingly militant anti-American war of national liberation in the South as against Moscow’s seeming preference for limited relaxation of tension. It was, therefore, difficult to ascertain the precise position of leaders on national issues.

One of the basic foreign policy objectives was to obtain maximum assistance and support from Peiping and Moscow by pleading that North Vietnam was fighting at the forefront of a decisive battle between East and West. Leaders maintained that it was the duty of the other Communist nations to assist the Viet-