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THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PRG, THE NFLSV
AND THEIR AFFILIATED ORGANIZATION, 1973

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Introduction	1
Profiles	
Huynh Tan Phat	25
Nguyen Huu Tho	27
Phung Van Cung	29
Nguyen Van Kiet	31
Trinh Dinh Thao	33
Thich (Venerable) Don Hau	35
Pham Hung	36
Lieut. General Tran Van Tra	38
Tran Nam Trung	40
Nguyen Van Cuc	42
Vo Chi Cong	44
Tran Buu Kiem	46
Nguyen Van Hieu	49
Nguyen Van Trieu	50
Nguyen Van Tien	52
Tran Bach Dang	54
List of Member of the Provisional Revolutionary Government	57
Leading Body of the South Viet-Nam National Front for Liberation	65
Viet-Nam Alliance of National Democratic and Peace Forces	71

Continued

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PRG, THE NFLSV
AND THEIR AFFILIATED ORGANIZATION, 1973

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Participants in November, December 1972 NFL, VANDPF, PRG	75
Officers of Organizations Affiliated to SVNFL	79
Officers of "Revolutionary Organizations"	86
COSVN - The PLAF and the Peoples Revolutionary Party	91
PRG Diplomatic Representatives	94
Appendix - NFLSV Central Committee and PRGRSV appeal to South Vietnamese People on the signing of the Paris Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Viet-Nam	98

The Leadership of the PRG, the NFLSV
And Their Affiliated Organizations, 1973

Introduction

The core of this research note is a compilation of lists of members of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Viet-Nam, and of the Central Committees of the two organizations from which its members were drawn--the National Front for the Liberation of South Viet-Nam (NFL), founded in 1960-1962, and the Viet-Nam Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces (VANDPF) which came into being shortly after the 1968 Tet offensive. No more recently organized groups are known to have declared their allegiance to the PRG since its June 1969 formation. These lists are drawn from communist, mostly official Hanoi, sources. To them have been added lists of names of officials of organizations affiliated to the NFL, and hence to the PRG, based primarily upon scattered references in Liberation Radio broadcasts. Some of the data in the lists, and editorial material in this introduction and the profiles which follow derives from interviews with Viet Cong military and political cadre who rallied to the Government of Viet-Nam. Wherever possible sources are cited.

Throughout 1972 and the first quarter of 1973 references in Liberation Radio broadcasts and in Hanoi output to personalities among the leaders of southern pro-communist bodies were recorded. No striking changes have been noticed, but the 1972 and 1973 citations showed which of the personalities in the core lists are still "in position." No important figures are known to have died since the core lists were published. Where deaths have been announced they are noted. It is possible that other less prominent individuals whose names appear in these lists have also died.

This publication replaces Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 105 "Leaders of the PRG-NLF And Affiliated Organizations, May 1972," and in a sense is a supplement to No. 101 "The PRGRSV."

* * * * *

The hard core of PRG-NFL leadership is a relatively small group of men and women who were either members of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party (VWP) called the Indochinese Communist Party-ICP before 1951, or of organizations created by it or consciously collaborating with it. At no time since August 1945 when the ICP acting through its Viet Minh front seized control of Hanoi and most of North Viet-Nam has it or the VWP hesitated to assert its leadership over communist activity in Central and South Viet-Nam. Before 1940 there seems to have been a considerable degree of regional autonomy in the ICP, which was sometimes headquartered in Hanoi, sometimes in Saigon. But even then the central organization had the power to reassign political cadre from one region to another. Consequently many of the leaders of the VWP today, and of the civil government and the army of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam (DRV) have worked in two of the three parts of Viet-Nam, some in all three, just as some PRG and People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) personalities have, either as students or as military officers, spent time in the North.

Before 1940, and again in the 1945 to 1954 period, the political environment in South Viet-Nam and that of the North were strikingly different. The ICP established its predominance in left-wing politics in Hanoi during 1936 to 1938 when the Popular Front government was in office in France, while in Saigon the Trotskyite movement gave the ICP effective competition. At the end of World War II the Viet Minh was the leading nationalist force in North Viet-Nam, despite the existence of several Chinese-oriented nationalist parties, while in the South the Viet Minh was but one of many political and religious movements. Furthermore, in 1940 a high percentage of southern communists, particularly in the Mekong Delta area, had been executed by the French for leading an anti-conscription revolt. In North and Central Viet-Nam, on the other hand, a substantial core of cadre was available from the ranks of the war-time underground movement and the leaders whom the French had jailed.

Clearly, the leadership of Vietnamese communism in Hanoi in 1945 had to rebuild its southern cadre structure if it was to incorporate South Viet-Nam into the DRV. A number of Northern and Central Vietnamese trained activists were sent South throughout the succeeding years on that mission, first directing both Party

and Viet Minh activity, then, after 1954 organizing illegal but essentially political mass struggle movements against the Ngo Dinh Diem government until 1959-1960 when the emphasis was shifted to the recruitment of the guerrilla bands which became known as the "Viet Cong." At least three of the 11 members of the VWP Politburo, First Secretary Le Duan, peace negotiator Le Duc Tho and Pham Hung, the present head of the VWP's Central Office for South Viet-Nam (COSVN), have been the political chiefs South Vietnamese communism, and so know the leading Southern cadres.

All the while the Party gave much attention to the building of a series of nominally non-Communist organizations of middle and even upper class personalities--professional men and teachers for the most part--who were prepared to collaborate with it. It is from these organizations, not the Party itself, that most of the names reprinted here i. e. the names of PRG and NFL figures who may be publicized in the coming months, derive. But, their bourgeois origin does not preclude their having had long association with the VWP, and in some cases secret membership in it. Thus the predominantly Southern bourgeois leadership of the NFL-PRG differs sharply in social as well as geographic origins from the lower middle class Northern and Central Vietnamese leadership of the VWP and DRV. Nonetheless, as will be explained, the latter directs the former at the control points in the PRG-NFL-VANDPF configuration, despite the predominance of university educated southerners in the reprinted lists.

The importance which the VWP has attached to cultivating middle class dissidents in the South is attested to not only by the composition of NFL-PRG leadership, but also by several of Le Duan's pronouncements. In a letter to the Saigon Regional Committee of the People's Revolutionary Party in 1966 he said: "In South Viet-Nam the school and university students, the writers, artists, the intellectuals and scientists all enjoy a social prestige vis-a-vis the people of other strata in the cities." (See Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 102 Part I). The First Secretary had said in 1962, prior to the VWP's decision to launch main force warfare in the South: "...We must reckon with our Southern compatriots' revolutionary struggle and act in such a way as will best rally the bourgeoisie with the National Front for Liberation." (See Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 98)

As the leaders of communist sponsored groups were identified as subversive by successive South Vietnamese governments they had to leave Saigon or Hue, the only two cities in which they seem to have had any following, and find refuge either in North Viet-Nam or in the back-country of South Viet-Nam, along the Cambodian border, where the Viet Minh and subsequently the Viet Cong had created sanctuaries--or "liberated" or "base areas."

Many of the original middle class leaders of the Viet Minh in South Viet-Nam, who figured in the 1945-1954 war against the French went North in the years preceding its conclusion. For example, the first Minister of Health of the DRV, Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach was the head of the Vanguard Youth in Saigon which was one of the driving forces in the short-lived revolution in that city. Some of the lesser lights of that youth movement, however, including PRG President Phat, remained in the South. Pham Van Bach, Chief Justice of the Supreme People's Court of the DRV, was once nominal head of the Viet Minh Provisional Executive Committee in the South. Northern-born Ha Huy Giap who was probably the actual organizer of the 1945 August Revolution in Saigon, returned to the North and became a member of the VWP Central Committee and a Vice Minister of Culture. Other briefly prominent southern communists and their collaborators were "elected" to the National Assembly of the DRV in 1946 in southern constituencies and either then or subsequently moved North. One of these was Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thap "elected" to the assembly from My Tho, now a VWP Central Committee member and the President of the North Vietnamese Women's Association.

Consequently when the NFL was brought into being in 1960 its Central Committee and staff had to be drawn from among those middle class pro-communists who had been at best secondary figures in the resistance against the French. The most important organization in which they worked together in those days and after the establishment of the Republic of Viet-Nam was the Democratic or New Democratic Party. It was organized first in Hanoi in 1944 or 1945 as the outgrowth of a Union of New Democrats, an anti-colonialist organization of students and recent graduates of the University of Hanoi. Affiliating to the Viet Minh, its leader, Duong Duc Hien was Minister of Youth in the first government of the DRV and subsequently a secretary of the National Assembly.

Hien is said to have sent a group of southern-born Hanoi University students to Saigon in late 1945 or early 1946 to assist, or guide, in the creation of a counterpart Democratic Party there. Among them were the future Minister of Information of the PRG, Luu Huu Phuoc, and Ung Ngoc Ky, Vice Minister in the PRG President's Office. One of their first contacts was Huynh Tan Phat who had been a pre-war Hanoi University student, and in 1945 was active in a Viet Minh sponsored committee in the South to raise funds for the relief of famine victims in the North. Phat, today Chairman or President of the PRG, is profiled in the pages that follow. He is currently listed as Secretary General of the Democratic Party with Ky as his deputy and Tran Buu Kiem, Minister in the President's Office as Party chairman and head of the NFL's student organization. Ho Thu, a pharmacist, who was also a Democratic Party member is one of Phat's two deputies in his other position, Secretary General of the NFL. Beyond doubt this group which has been associated together, and with the Viet Minh and the VWP since 1945-1946, is the core group of middle class communists around whom the NFL and PRG were built in 1960-1969.

But with the Democratic Party itself suspect as a Viet Minh affiliate, it became necessary for the communists to create other centers of middle class, primarily Saigonese, political activity which it hoped would win legal acceptance after the departure of the French in 1954. It seemed briefly that a "Movement for the Protection of Peace", otherwise known as the Saigon-Cholon Peace Committee, would fill the bill. One of its leaders was a lawyer named Nguyen Huu Tho, who in 1947 urged the French to negotiate with the DRV and led an anti-American demonstration in 1950. He does not seem to have maintained a continuing political schedule as did Phat and other Democratic Party figures, many of whom were full time Viet Minh activists. Subsequently Tho became Chairman of the NFL, with his colleague of Peace Committee days Le Van Huan as one of the NFL's two deputy general secretaries. Huan also appears as President of the NFL-affiliated Patriotic Teachers Association of South Viet-Nam. In a June 5, 1964 Hanoi Radio broadcast Phat claimed the Peace Committee was the precursor of the NFL, listing Phat, Ho Thu, and Le Van Tha, an engineer who became an NFL Central Committeeman and Vice Minister of Justice in the P.R.G., as among its members.

The Peace Committee came under government surveillance in 1955, and between then and 1961 a number of its members were arrested, usually for brief periods. Some like Tho and Huan joined the NFL. Others remained in Saigon. Among the latter was a lawyer, Nguyen Long, who in 1964 organized a "Movement for People's Self Determination" out of which came a 1965 peace movement called the Committee for the Protection of Peace. Among those associated with this 1964-1965 reorganization of peace and reconciliation advocates in addition to Long, who was jailed for a protracted period, was a Paris educated engineer, Truong Nhu Tang who is Minister of Justice in the PRG, Prof. Ton That Duong Ky, a member of the royal family of the Nguyen dynasty, Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh, the daughter of Pham Van Huyen who fled to the North where he became Director of the Institute of Archeology in Hanoi. Mrs. Thanh, in prison much of the time since 1965, is described in recent Liberation Radio broadcasts as Chairman of the Women's Movement for the Right to Live. Ky, who was deported to the North, has since been listed as Secretary General of the Viet-Nam Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces. Its Chairman, Trinh Dinh Thao, is Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Council of the PRG. Thao was also active in the 1954 and 1965 peace movements. As his diary, published in North Viet-Nam in 1972, revealed he was one of a number of personalities who hesitated until 1968, at the time of the Tet Offensive, to openly throw in their lots with the Communists but had in fact been on the periphery of the Party and the NFL since Viet Minh days.

If the veterans of the Democratic Party who had been active in the Viet Minh are the Southern bourgeois personalities in which the VWP, North and South, places the most confidence, the other founding members of the NFL in late 1960 rate a good second place. Unfortunately a definitive list of them is not available. The list of NFL leaders presented here, published in Hanoi in 1970, is of the Central Committee elected at its second full conference in 1964. (It does not significantly differ from the list published in Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 105, based on a September 1965 booklet published by the NFL in Binh Thuan Province but includes a few additional names.)

Actually the founding meeting of the NFL in December 1960 was assembled hastily, in response to the political resolution introduced by Le Duan at the Third National Congress of the VWP in Hanoi, September 5-10, 1960. (The resolution was reprinted

in Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 91). In addition to the Democratic Party Viet-Minh veterans a number of other middle class radical nationalists were present including Dr. Phung Van Cung, who may have been secretary of the Committee which organized the meeting, today a Vice President of the PRG, and Nguyen Van Hieu who was the NFL's first secretary general. He was named in 1973 the PRG's top negotiator in Paris at the Consultation Conference with the GVN on the future of South Vietnamese politics. The VWP itself was doubtlessly represented but one cannot say by whom. The PRP structure was not created until January 1962. Since that year its chairman, Vo Chi Cong, has been listed as a Vice President of the NFL Central Committee.

Between the December 1960 founding conference of the NFL and its first formal congress, reportedly held in Tay Ninh Province near the Cambodian border, February 16 to March 3, 1962, a number of Hanoi directed organizational moves were made which determined the future control structure of the Southern revolution. As has been noted, the People's Revolutionary Party had been formed. The PRP was simply a merger of the Nam Bo and Southern Trung Bo regional organizations of the VWP, but it did constitute a Party mechanism nominally autonomous of the VWP "Central" in Hanoi, and a "national" Party entitled to affiliate to the NFL. The guerrilla bands, the "Viet Cong", which Party activists had been leading in the provinces since early 1960 were brought together to form the People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) on February 15, 1961. Their first commander may have been "Tran Nam Trung", now PRG Defense Minister who is profiled in this research note. Most significantly, prior to the first formal NFL meeting, probably in February 1961, COSVN had been re-established by the VWP Central Committee. (See Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 40 "The Central Office of South Viet-Nam.)

COSVN in fact has served as the secretariat of the PRP and the headquarters of the PLAF, thereby assuring Party, and, subsequently, direct Northern VWP control over both of these institutions. PRP regional and village chapters directed the work of Party members in local branches of the NFL and its affiliated "mass organizations." The first political officer of COSVN was probably Nguyen Van Cuc, said to have been born in North Viet-Nam, who has spent most of his revolutionary career in the South. He

may have shared his 1931 to 1935 prison years in Con Son with Le Duan and with Vo Chi Cong, who was to be his colleague in the PRP leadership. Cong was listed as Chairman of the PRP and its representative on the NFL Central Committee in 1962, with Cuc holding the more important post of Party secretary. If, as has often been alleged, there are unannounced southern members of the VWP Central Committee Cuc is almost certainly one of them.

However, when in 1963 the VWP decided to send main force North Vietnamese troops into the fighting in the South (see Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes Nos 96 and 98) Cuc was pushed down the COSVN ladder, as was "Tran Nam Trung", when VWP Politburo member Gen. Nguyen Chi Thanh became both political and military head of the organization. At the same time, roughly, two other important North Vietnamese military and political figures were moved to the southern battlefield--Lieut. Generals Hoang Van Thai and Tran Van Tra. Thai was a full member of the VWP Central Committee and Tra an alternate member. When Thanh died in 1967, probably of pneumonia, he was succeeded by Politburo member Pham Hung, who is profiled in this research note, as is Tra.

The second congress of the NFL took place in Tay Ninh Province in early January 1964, prior to Thanh's appointment to COSVN, and before the NFL leadership knew firmly that large numbers of North Vietnamese regiments were shortly to be sent to its assistance. That decision in Hanoi was probably not finalized until after the February 1964 visit to Moscow of a delegation headed interestingly enough by the two chiefs of the first COSVN--Le Duan and Le Duc Tho. But by the time of the second congress the network of NFL-affiliated organizations had been rounded out. Lists of their principal officers, in so far as they are known, are appended.

At the height of NFL strength, roughly 1962 to 1967, the Association of Peasants for the Liberation of South Viet-Nam, which claimed a membership of 1.8 million in 1963, may have numbered a million members if one counts farmers' families as well as the farmers themselves. It claims, perhaps correctly, to have been organized prior to the founding congress of the NFL. Nguyen Huu The, its president, a Mekong Delta school teacher, is a member of the presidium of the NFL Central Committee. Unfortunately not enough is known of him to permit his being profiled.

The other affiliates however, except the Central Highlands Plateau Autonomy Movement, headed nominally at least by another presidium member, Ibih Aleo, aged 71, seems to post-date the NFL's foundation(1), though some of them may have had microscopic communist front existence prior to December 1960.

This is almost certainly true of the Liberation Trade Union Association, whose activities in South Vietnamese cities have been deeply covert and, from the NFL's point of view, certainly disappointing. Its spokesman at the 1969 founding conference of the PRG was the only speaker other than the PRP's to openly identify himself as a communist. Both of them, incidentally, emphasized the verbal moderation of the PRG's social program and the PRP's approval of this posture. (These speeches were reprinted in Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes, No. 101, Part II). After all it is the attainment of power that matters to a trained communist. The implementation of social revolutionary programs comes later. If advertising them along the road to power impedes the journey that is "leftism." Pham Xuan Thai, the trade unions' chairman, is a NFL presidium member, but neither he nor the peasants' association leader hold posts in the PRG.

Many of the NFL affiliates listed here have never had more than a paper existence. The Patriotic Teachers' Association led by NFL deputy secretary general Le Van Huan has however managed to recruit some teachers for schools in the "liberated areas."

The "mass organizations" which have contributed personnel to the PRG are the Liberation Women's Association and the Liberation Students and Pupils Association, both led by persons of middle class origin. The long time chairman of the latter is Tran Buu Kiem, who is profiled in the following pages.

(1) The Party seems to have sanctioned armed struggle in the highlands in response to local discontent there in 1958-1959. It was not, however, developed in the central lowlands or the Mekong Delta until 1959-1960. The movement headed by Aleo should not be confused with the larger or more representative "FULRO" and its precursors.

Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, the PRG's widely publicized Foreign Minister, is the Saigon-born daughter of a non-Communist nationalist leader, who was educated in Hanoi University. She seems to have been the first president of the Women's Association. She was succeeded by Mrs. Nguyen Thi Tu, the daughter of a Can Tho businessman, who yielded place to the formidable Mrs. Nguyen Thi Dinh, who has been, nominally at least, one of a number of deputy commanders of the PLAF. Mrs Dinh, a native of Kien Hoa Province, led the "Ben Tre Uprising" in January 1960, under Party orders, prior to the foundation of the NFL. A March 1973 broadcast confirmed that she is still considered head of the Women's Association.

Not until 1968 was there a publicized accretion of strength to the NFL, when after the Tet Offensive the Viet-Nam Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces was pieced together from among professional people in Saigon and Hue who favored victory for the insurgency. (The record of VANDPF's drawing together with the NFL is summarized in Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 101, Part I. Its chairman, Trinh Dinh Thao, is profiled in this issue.) When the PRG was created out of two organizations, under COSVN guidance, the NFL was favored for actual "cabinet offices" with its older figures and the VANDPF people being designated the PRG's Advisory Council. The average age of PRG "government" members in 1969 was 50.9 years, while the Advisory Councilmen averaged 60.8 (see Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 101, Part II).

Not listed as a PRG member was one of its most important figures, the head of the PRG "Special Representation" to the DRV-- Nguyen Van Tien. After a brief stay in that post he was assigned to the PRG Paris Peace Talks delegation as deputy chief of delegation. Some reporters who covered those sessions believe that he, not Mrs. Binh, was the key person in the delegation. Along with Nguyen Van Hieu, who was designated chief of the PRG delegation to the 1973 Consultative Conference with the GVN, and Tran Buu Kiem, who headed the NFL delegation to the Paris Talks prior to Mrs. Binh's 1969 appointment, Tien is considered by many observers as a key though little known PRG office holder. All three of these men are profiled in this research note.

Its diplomatic performance in Paris from 1968-1973 was in fact the most important activity of the PRG until late in 1972. Its members' names were rarely heard in South Viet-Nam, even in its own Liberation Radio's clandestine broadcasts, save for ritualistic anniversary pronouncements by Phat and Tho. But at the end of October 1972 when it became known that a peace agreement between the United States, the DRV, the GVN and the PRG was in the making Liberation Radio began reminding its listeners of the names of a number of PRG, NFL and VANDPF personalities.

Prior to October 8, 1972 when VWP Politburo member Le Duc Tho, as "special advisor" to the DRV delegation at the Paris Peace Talks submitted privately a DRV draft which started the negotiations leading to the signing of the peace agreement on January 27, 1973 the DRV had permitted Mrs. Binh to take the initiative in the Paris Talks. Xuan Thuy, the head of the regular DRV delegation, played a supporting role. On September 11 the PRG had advanced a restatement of its traditional peace terms (see Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 101, Part IV.) It stressed the PRG's insistence that a peace agreement provide for "the formation a provisional, national concord three-segment government which is to comprise people from the PRGRSV, people from the Saigon administration, and representatives of other political forces in South Viet-Nam." However, on October 26 Hanoi Radio broadcast a DRV official statement summarizing the results up to that time of the private negotiations between Le Duc Tho and Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Special Assistant to the President of the United States for National Security Affairs. It was clear that Hanoi was prepared to settle for a formula well short of the PRG's demand for a "national concord three-segment government."

Nonetheless, when the PRG commented on the DRV statement two days later it declared that "the agreement responds satisfactorily to the two basic demands set forth in the September 11, 1972 Statement of the PRGRSV." In fact, according to the DRV statement the most that had been agreed to on these points was that "an administrative structure called the National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord of three equal segments will be set up to promote the implementation of the signed agreements by the PRGRSV and the government of the Republic of Viet-Nam." It soon became clear that some of the members and supporters of

the PRG did not agree that the draft agreement summarized by the DRV met their demands for a share in political power in South Viet-Nam. Consequently an "enlarged joint conference" of the presidium of the NFL Central Committee and the executive committee of the VANDPF was convened. A probably incomplete list of those people who attended the meeting was broadcast. While many of the senior figures in the PRG were present at the meeting they were not so identified in the broadcast. Their PRG offices have been added to the list as reprinted here. The heads of the NFL peasants and workers groups and others who were not PRG office holders also took part.

In any event the published list of attendants at the November 1972 conference was the first intimation for a number of months of which PRG and NFL personalities were thought to possess favorable public images. During the weeks that followed a number of exposures were given to them and some of their colleagues not on that list. PRG titles were included in the broadcasts that followed. Speeches, said to have been made at that meeting by the following personalities were broadcast by Liberation Radio between November 10 and 22:

Nguyen Huu Tho, as NFL Chairman,

Tran Nam Trung, who was identified as PRG Minister of Defense,

Lawyer Trinh Dinh Thao, Chairman of VANDPF, and Vice Chairman of the PRG's Advisory Council,

Professor Nguyen Van Hieu, member of the NFL Central Committee Presidium,

Huynh Van Thi, "old friend of the Hoa Hao religion Pope and member of the PRGRSV Advisory Council",

Superior Bonze Thich Don Hau, Vice Chairman of the VANDPF Central Committee and member of the PRGRSV Advisory Council,

Ibih Aleo "Chairman of the Central Highland People's Autonomy Movement," Vice Chairman of the NFLSV Central Committee Presidium and member of the PRGRSV Advisory Council

Professor Duong Ky, VANDPF General Secretary,

Engineer Lam Van Tet, Vice Chairman of the VANDPF Central Committee, member of the PRG Advisory Council, who spoke to "industrialists and businessmen", and

Thich Thien Hao, a Mahayana Buddhist Bonze, member of the NFL Central Committee Presidium, who spoke for those religious leaders who were prepared "to put aside religious robes and wear uniforms and sacrifice our lives for the fatherland."

Obviously Liberation Radio was appealing to religious and economic interests groups and reintroducing NFL personalities who might in the coming months be given important political assignments. Hieu was the first to receive one. He was appointed on March 10, 1973 a Minister of State in the PRG and its chief delegate to the Consultative Conference with the GVN on the implementation of the January 27 Paris Agreements' proposal that the two set up a Council of National Reconciliation and Concord and discuss the format of future elections in South Viet-Nam. This was all that was left in the final Paris Agreement of the PRG's September 11 demands on the "two key points".

In late November Liberation Radio broadcast endorsements of the PRG statement of October 28 from:

Nguyen Van Kiet, Vice Chairman and Minister of Education and Youth of the PRG, VANDPF Executive Committee member;

Professor Le Van Giap, member PRG Advisory Council, Chairman Saigon-Cholon-Gia Dinh Committee VANDPF;

Mrs. Nguyen Dinh Chi, Vice Chairman of the Hue VANDPF and a member of the PRG Advisory Council;

Nguyen Ngoc Ngoi, Ngoc Dau Su (a Cao Dai title) representing the Tien Thien Sect of Cao Dai, member Presidium NFL Central Committee;

Rev. Joseph Marie Ho Hue Ba, member NFL Central Committee, "representing Catholics in South Viet-Nam who worship Christ and love the country";

Nguyen Van Tu, (secret name), musician, now also identified as a Catholic, a member of the NFL Central Committee;

Mr. Ma Ha Thong, Vice Chairman of the Western Nam Bo NFL, and member of the PRG Western Nam Bo Representation, "representing the Khmer Buddhists";

Nguyen Thanh Cuong "owner of the Phu Huu brick factory in Can Tho Province";

"Old Gentleman" Vo Oanh, an "intellectual and notable", and a member of the NFL Central Committee;

Ngo Tam Dao, "of the Cao Dai religion";

Professor Truong Hoa Thanh, "of the Cao Dai religion";

Thich Phat Dang, presumably a Buddhist Bonze;

Thanh Lan Vo Ngoc Thanh, member of the Standing Committee of the Saigon-Cholon-Gia Dinh VANDPF;

Mrs. Nguyen Thi Hai "representative of the industrial and trade circles in Ca Mau Province";

Nguyen Thanh Tai, a "bourgeois".

(The last six persons named above have not hitherto appeared on available NFL or VANDPF committee lists.) While some of the PRG-VANDPF coterie may still have had some doubts about the draft agreement, it appeared that by the end of November the great bulk of them had accepted the fact that whatever arrangement for peace with the U.S. Le Duc Tho was willing to accept would have to be acceptable to them too. Liberation Radio also reported on November 17 that NFLSV regional committees and the national organizations of the affiliated trade unions, peasants, women's, youth's and teachers associations had "issued statements or sent resolutions to the NFLSV Central Committee and the PRGRSV warmly supporting the statements of the DRV government and the PRGRSV." So did the overtly communist People's Revolutionary Youth League, according to a November 25 broadcast. When the Liberation Peasants Association celebrated its 12th anniversary on

November 22 and 23 "in a liberated area", representatives of the NFL Central Committee, the Liberation Trade Union Federation, the Liberation Women's Union and the Liberation Youth Union attended. Le Van Dang, a member of the executive committee of the Peasants' Association seems to have been the principal speaker. He discussed ways to "foil the Americans' and Thieu's pacification program and Vietnamization policy and realize the profound aspirations and struggle objectives of peace, independence, democracy, a decent livelihood and national concord" within the context of the draft peace agreement.

But while the interlocking directorates of the South Vietnamese insurgency propagandized their followers on behalf of the DRV's position some tensions among them and between them and the DRV were apparent. Nhan Dan in its November 6, 1972 editorial, applauding the joint meeting of NFL and VANDPF leaders had said that they "again demonstrated loyalty to supreme national interests" by accepting the "reasonable and sensible settlement of the South's internal problems" provided for in the DRV's October 26 statement. The implication, surely, was that some of the Southerners needed convincing that the VWP Politburo had kept their interests in mind as well as the DRV's.

Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, the PRG's Paris spokesman, gave an interview on November 28 to a correspondent of the Japanese Communist Party's paper Akahata in which she said:

"Many of our friends in other countries are not satisfied with this agreement [the October 26 DRV statement]. We have a good understanding of their feelings, because they know how long and how courageously we have fought and endured great difficulties. We do not think that this agreement will end the war. Even after it has been signed we will have to continue our struggle so that it will be fulfilled. From past experience we know that this will not be easy at all. Under present circumstances, however, we believe that this agreement is in accord with the desires and interests of the South Vietnamese people."

She went on to stress the importance of the two additional demands--the resignation of President Thieu, and the release of "political prisoners"--that the NFL-VANDPF conferees had endeavored unsuccessfully to get the DRV to introduce into its December-January negotiations with the United States.

Hanoi Radio announced on November 29 that Nguyen Van Tien, a member of the NFL Central Committee, and, like Nguyen Van Hieu said to be a member of the Radical Socialist Party of South Viet-Nam, had returned from Paris to Hanoi to resume his duties as head of the PRG Special Representation there. The Radical Socialist Party, unlike the Democratic Party, post-dates the foundation of the NFL itself, and was probably never more than a paper organization to which the NFL ascribed membership for a handful of trusted intellectuals. Tien's recall to Hanoi from the PRG's Paris delegation may have been prompted by a recognition by the PRG and the DRV that liaison between them needed to be improved. In any event tension between them was not evident between December 1, 1972 and March 28, 1973, when the sixty days period specified in the final Paris Agreement for the completion of U.S. troop withdrawals and prisoner of war release elapsed.

Two meetings of PRG-NFL-VANDPF leaders took place between the beginning of the final U.S. bombing of North Viet-Nam and the conclusion of the Paris Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Viet-Nam. Name lists for both of them are in the pages which follow. The first was the December 20 celebration of the twelfth anniversary of the founding of the NFL. VANDPF and PRG figures as well as NFL founders attended. Huynh Tan Phat whose name did not appear in the November 1972 lists was present. Only meeting presidium names were broadcast by Liberation Radio. There were no surprises. The NFL may, however, have released the names as it did to definitively discredit a news story that had appeared in several Western papers some weeks previously. The story alleged that there had been an attempt coup within the PRG led by "militants" who objected to the pending peace agreement. They were said to have been led by Vo Chi Cong, the PRP representative in the NFL Central Committee, and Tran Bach Dang, Chairman of the Liberation Youth Union. The revolt crushed, the story continued, they were tried by a court headed by Trinh Dinh Thao of VANDPF and sentenced 20 and 10 years imprisonment respectively. The December 20 presidium list reported Cong, Dang and Thao as sharing the same platform.

NFL and VANDPF tried in December 1972 to create a new front to lead the agitation for GVN release of political prisoners.

The Committee was to be chaired by Thao. Of the nine people announced as members five were VANDPF "notables", three were NFL Central Committeemen, and only one man, Reverend Tran Quang Nghiem, does not appear on previous NFL or VANDPF name lists.

The PRG held its usual January Council of Ministers meeting January 8 to 10, 1973. U.S. bombing north of the 20th parallel had been halted more than a week earlier. All the indications were that a cease fire in Viet-Nam could be expected shortly. This may account for the fact that no reports of the meeting were released until January 18 when Liberation Radio broadcast the appended list of speakers who delivered formal reports, and a long political report by Huynh Tan Phat.

A year-and-a-half earlier a rallier to the GVN, a former PLAF company commander and political officer, discussed with an interviewer a number of PRG personalities and their possible roles in a future "coalition" government. He left the PLAF in February 1971, and in July 1971 reported:

"We were told secretly by high ranking cadres that if a coalition government were formed men who were serving in the Provisional Revolutionary Government such as Architect Huynh Tan Phat, Messrs. Dong Van Cong and Tran Nam Trung would be designated to take part in the government. Brigadier General Dong Van Cong has long been a Party member. Mr. Nguyen Van Trieu was the former Chairman of the Military Region 3 Party Committee. Mr. Nguyen Chanh might also be given a role. We were told the Front would appoint these men openly to take part in a coalition government. Of course there will be secret agents, but I don't know how they will be planted. The men whose names I mentioned earlier are holding important positions in the Provisional Revolutionary Government."

Another rallier, formerly an assistant chief in the Indoctrination Section of COSVN's Rear Base Department, who was interviewed in December 1969 and January 1970 also commented upon some of the PRG personalities. They do not participate in military decisions, he said, and added that Nguyen Huu Tho had been made Chairman of the PRG Advisory Council for "propaganda's sake.... In reality he holds no power at all. Huynh Tan Phat is the one who runs the PRG but he also should abide by COSVN's directives."

Phuong explained that Phat was chosen Chairman of the PRG over Tho because "It's...the prevailing principle which requires that the Party retain real power. The Party would never allow a non-Party member to hold the power." He was not sure whether or not, as other ralliers have claimed, Tho has joined the Party, but in any event, "Phat is a veteran Party member and has good achievements [sic] for the Party." Tho's speeches on Liberation Radio are written for him, Phuong declared.

The former COSVN cadre was even more contemptuous of Lawyer Trinh Dinh Thao and VANDPF. He said that he had not met them himself, but "the cadres dislike them very much because they are considered backward [sic] people. These people might be openly praised by the cadres, but in private, the cadres disliked and criticized them a lot."

As an example, he mentioned Dr. Duong Quynh Hoa, who spoke at the January 1973 meeting, a VANDPF committeewoman and Minister of Public Health, Social Welfare and Disabled Veterans in the PRG--an attractive, young, Paris-educated, Saigon intellectual. Phuong said: "The cadres considered her an intellectual who had not participated in the struggle and that she did not even know the Vietnamese well. She also was criticized for her style of dressing, for her make-up, and especially for asking the servants to bring water to her for washing her hands. In COSVN territory, this is quite unusual and insulting. The servants who are also Party members complied with her requests but in private they were most angry at her." (Phuong's point is corroborated by the fact that shortly after the proclamation of the PRG in 1969 COSVN issued two directives to Party members designed to quell their resentment at the overwhelmingly 'bourgeois' composition of the PRG. They are reprinted in Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 101 Part III "The First Nine Months of the PRG.")

Those PRG members mentioned by the other rallier are worth noting. Trieu who spoke at the January 1973 Council of Ministers meeting is listed as Vice Minister of Economy and Finance of the PRG. His formal biography states that he was born in 1917 in Gia Dinh Province, and initially worked for the French-owned Bank of Indochina. In 1945 he participated in the Viet Minh uprising, then, as a rallier said, became an important leader in the resistance in Nam Bo. PRG Economy and Finance Minister

Cao Van Bon, ten years Trieu's senior, reportedly died in 1970, and it is quite possible that Trieu is the PRG's leading economic administrator.

Tran Nam Trung is profiled in this publication. Dong Van Cong and Nguyen Chanh, both southern-born, are listed as Vice Ministers of Defense in the PRG, but both actually served as troop commanders under North Vietnamese Lieut. Generals Thai and Tra. Little is known about Le Chan who delivered the defense report at the January 1973 PRG meeting. He is said to be the PLAF's political officer. There is no reason to assume that he had displaced Trung, Cong or Chanh in the PRG's military hierarchy.

In any event, the January PRG meeting did not produce any new policy papers, nor were any personnel changes reported. Several passages in Phat's political report are nonetheless important. He declared that:

"The problem of administration is a fundamental problem of all revolutions. Therefore, once the people have been liberated and have gained mastership rights, the revolutionary administrations must be built up and consolidated immediately, and we must strive to develop the role of these administrations, step up the offensive and uprising movement, build a firm and stable rear and care for the people's livelihood in all aspects. Moreover, we must actively and intensively build and consolidate the liberated areas; eliminate spies and lackeys left by the enemy; start a movement to maintain public order and security and protect the masses' property and lives; build combat villages; guard against the enemy's counter-attacks and nibbling operations; step up production and thrift; improve the people's living conditions; support the frontline; develop culture, education and public health; carry out social tasks and care of wounded combatants; build a new happy and sound way of life and unite with one another in mutual love and assistance....

"Our most important and most fundamental task at present and in the future is to broaden the national unity front and rally all patriotic, democratic and peace and national concord forces of different social classes, political tendencies, religious communities and nationalities in the struggle against the U.S. aggressors and the stubborn and bellicose Nguyen Van Thieu lackey clique." (That Phat's report adequately reflected COSVN policy is established by Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 110 "PRP Plans For Controlling Liberated Areas in South Viet-Nam").

Phat was acknowledging that the peace agreement about to be concluded would not provide for the creation of a national "coalition government," as the PRG had long advocated. Consequently neither he nor any of his colleagues in the PRG were en route to national office in South Viet-Nam. The PRG for an indefinite future seemed destined to remain a shadow government with some vague supervisory power over those underpopulated enclaves in South Viet-Nam where PLAF and North Vietnamese troops had established "liberated areas."

Phat's report was broadcast on January 19. That same day Nguyen Van Tien, the PRG's liaison chief, in Hanoi told a Japanese communist journalist that "there is worldwide speculation that an agreement is likely to be concluded." Five days later the PRG along with the other three parties to the Paris Peace Talks announced that an Agreement to End the War and Restore Peace in Viet-Nam had in fact been reached and that a cease fire would come into effect on January 28.

Its Article 12 provided that "immediately after the cease fire, the two South Vietnamese parties shall hold consultations in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord, mutual respect and mutual non-elimination to set-up a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord of three equal segments." It was to operate on the basis of unanimity. After the National Council was formed "the two South Vietnamese parties will consult about the formation of councils at lower levels." This was as close as the PRG came to getting its "coalition government" at the diplomatic bargaining table. As has been noted, Nguyen Van Hieu headed the PRG delegation to the talks in a Paris suburb which opened on March 19 in an effort to implement this section of the Agreement.

By March 29, just one day off schedule, the Four-Party Joint Military Committee which did not succeed in effecting a total cease fire in Viet-Nam, but did effectively administer the exchange of military prisoners of war, and witnessed the withdrawal of the last U.S. armed forces from South Viet-Nam, wound up its work. It gave place to a Two Party Joint Military Commission of the two South Vietnamese parties, on which the PRG will be represented again by Lt. General Tran Van Tra of the North Vietnamese Army,

an alternate member of the VWP Central Committee. (2)

Nguyen Huu Tho, who had not been heard from directly since December 1972, granted an interview to the Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett, a long time partisan of the NFL and the DRV, which Liberation Radio broadcast on March 23, 1973. In reply to Burchett's question "What are the main tasks of the NFLSV and the PRGRSV since the signing of the agreement?" Tho said:

"The South Vietnamese people's struggle in the new stage, though enjoying many basic advantages is still difficult, complex and violent. The reactionary militarist and fascist forces that depend upon foreign countries still nurture many sinister schemes to jeopardize peace and oppose independence, democracy and national concord.

"The NFLSV and PRGRSV will strive to lead and encourage the southern troops and people to strengthen and expand the great national solidarity bloc, raise high the banner of peace, independence, democracy and national concord, resolutely maintain peace, achieve genuine freedoms, improve the people's living conditions and scrupulously and thoroughly implement and perseveringly struggle to demand implementation of all provisions of the signed agreement."

Publicly at least the PRG position had not altered since the leaders of the PRG-NFL issued their January 28 appeal to the "compatriots" in South Viet-Nam. It is reprinted as an appendix to this research note. Coupled with the section of the Huynh Tan Phat January report quoted above it seemed to constitute an adequate summary of the PRG-NFL leadership's stance at the conclusion of the first two months of the cease fire in Viet-Nam. Nguyen Van Hieu's first five presentations to the Consultative Conference closely followed the rhetoric of Tho's interview and the January 28 Appeal.

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- (2) Tra returned to Hanoi on March 30, but a Liberation Radio broadcast of that day listed him as chief of the PRG team on the Two-Party Commission with Maj. Gen. Hoang Anh Tuan as deputy. The addition of a major general to the delegation suggested that perhaps Tra would be free to undertake another assignment.

The biographical sketches which follow were compiled from communist sources in so far as possible. Profiles issued by the PRG itself and broadcast over Liberation Radio in June, 1969, subsequently reprinted in French in Hanoi as "Biographie Des Membres du Gouvernement Revolutionnaire Provisoire De La Republique Du Sud Viet-Nam et De Son Conseil Des Sages" is a principal source for those persons which it included. Valuable details were contributed by the rallier interview report cited. Scattered references and identifications appearing in Liberation Radio broadcasts and Hanoi press and radio output have been folded into the notes.

The profiles which follow are of men who seem to be influential members and officials of the PRG and its directing and supporting organizations. More correctly, they are those who meet that description and about whom sufficient information is available to form the basis of a biographical sketch. An attempt has also been made to show the different experiences of persons of various political sub-groups. The chiefs of the NFL affiliated organizations of peasants and workers are omitted as so little is known about them.

VWP Politburo member Pham Hung, who rallier reports indicate was functioning as head of COSVN at least as late as August 1972, is included because he has been the director of PRG activity since its formation in 1969, and was very likely one of its principal architects. Lt. Gen. Tran Van Tra is profiled because he typifies the North Vietnamese army officers, frequently of Central Vietnamese origin, who played so large a part in the 1964 to 1972 war in Viet-Nam, as well as because of his prominence as PRG representative on the Four Party Joint Military Commission in February and March 1973.

The selections having been made, it was noticeable that almost all of those chosen fell into three distinct political-social generational groupings. The eldest group, all born between 1901 and 1908 includes two of the three Vice Presidents of the PRGRSV, the Vice Chairman and one of the few truly distinguished members of its Advisory Council, all of them professional men and so far as can be ascertained of middle class families. They had settled into professional careers during a nadir in Vietnamese political life, particularly in the South. Their politicalization came relatively late, after the communists and their allies had replaced the

individually prominent but poorly organized nationalists as the dominant force in Vietnamese anti-colonialism. Total identification with the communists did not come easily to these men, but ultimately it was the course that at least three out of the four followed.

The second clearly defineable group consists of five full-time revolutionaries all but one of whom was born in 1912 or 1913. The exception--Tran Van Tra--was born in 1918. All seem to be of peasant, working class or lower middle class families. None of the five, so far as can be ascertained, aspired to any profession other than revolution. All but Tra, who may be said to have become a professional soldier in North Viet-Nam, have remained communist political functionaries. This group is the controlling element--the chieftians of COSVN, the People's Revolutionary Party and the People's Liberation Armed Forces. They were all politicalized by the Indochinese Communist Party at, roughly, the age of 18. This is the element in the South Vietnamese communist movement which has most in common psycho-sociologically with the leadership of the VWP-DRV, as well as being the group it relies upon to direct and discipline the NFL-PRG. Even its average age, 60 plus, corresponds to that of the Central Committee of the northern party.

A third group of four was born between 1917 and 1922, of middle class Southern families, received college or equivalent educations but was swept into the post 1945 resistance to the French reoccupation of Viet-Nam before they became established in their professions. More the products of the Viet Minh Front than of the ICP, all of them, plus the one younger man profiled, who was born in 1925, have joined either the PRP or organizations knowingly affiliated with it. They are the technicians of the PRG, but technicians with revolutionary credentials. If, as is unlikely, a revolt against the northern-prompted cautions of the old revolutionaries should develop it will more likely come from within this group than from among the southern representatives of the VWP.

Finally there are the two men who cannot be easily categorized: the two best known, Huynh Tan Phat, President of the PRG and Nguyen Huu Tho, Chairman of its Advisory Council and of the NFL. Phat was born in 1913, Tho in 1910. Neither meant to become a professional revolutionary in the ICP sense. Both had begun normal professional careers in keeping with their family backgrounds shortly before World War II. The impact of war and anti-colonialist

politics pushed the two in a communist direction--Phat willingly, it would seem, Tho perhaps more by coincidence than design.

Several skeins of personal association can also be discerned in the profiles. Three of the five veteran communist professional revolutionaries worked for several years in the South directly under Le Duan, since 1959 First Secretary of the Viet-Nam Workers Party in the North. So did Phat. In turn most of the younger technicians were men whose first connections with the Viet Minh were in association with Huynh Tan Phat.

If a broader segment of PRG-NFL personalities were profiled it is probable that other personal associational links would emerge, other than, but similar to, those connecting these persons with either Le Duan or Phat. It is doubtful however if a more extensive sampling would significantly modify the political-social generational pattern outlined above

PROFILES

Huynh Tan Phat

Born in the Mekong Delta city of My Tho in 1913, Huynh Tan Phat attended the Hanoi College of Fine Arts during the early 1930's. Exposure to the severity of French colonialist political repression which followed the abortive nationalist and communist attempts at uprising, as well as the presence in Hanoi of clandestine political groups, apparently politicized Phat. He is reported to have been involved in revolutionary activity in the North, although the precise nature of those activities have not been defined. There is no evidence that Phat became a member of the Indochinese Communist Party at this time. However, he can hardly have helped being aware of the Party's existence and goals.

Phat graduated as an architect in 1936 and apparently returned to the South immediately thereafter. It was at this period that the formation of the Popular Front Government in France resulted in the loosening of restrictions on political activity in Indochina. Phat appears to have continued his involvement in politics. His official biography, issued by the NFLSV at the time of the formation of the PRGRSV in mid-June 1969, cites Phat's membership in an organization called the "Democratic Movement Against Fascism and Colonialism", an organization which was probably affiliated with the communist-sponsored Indochinese Democratic Front of the 1936-1939 period.

Nothing is known of Phat's activities in the early 1940's, when both French and Japanese troops occupied Viet-Nam. In about 1944, he had become editor of an anti-French daily newspaper, Thanh Nien (Youth), and, at about the same time, was a founding member of the ostensibly non-communist but Viet-Minh affiliated South Viet-Nam Democratic Party.

His official biography cites Phat as "one of the founders and promoters" of the Thanh Nien Tien Phong (Vanguard Youth) in 1945. The TNTF, described by French historian Philippe Devillers as the Viet-Minh's "only fist" in the South, was effectively controlled and directed by the Viet-Minh's communist elements. Its founder and head, Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach, is reported to have been a secret member of the ICP. Subsequently he went North and became Minister of Health of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. Although

there is no concrete evidence that Phat was anything more than a collaborator with the Party at that time it is not impossible that he became a Party member in 1945.

Phat's official biography also stated that he "actively participated" in preparations for the August, 1945 "uprising" in Saigon. Since the actual "uprising" was more spontaneous than Vietnamese communist historians care to admit, it can only be assumed that Phat was involved in political agitation in Saigon, probably as a Vanguard Youth spokesman.

Following the French reoccupation of Saigon at the end of September, 1945, Phat apparently remained in the city. Late in 1945 and again in 1947, he was briefly jailed for subversive activities. The fact that he was not imprisoned for a longer period may indicate either the failure of French security forces to prove more serious charges or that Phat simply was not as active as has been claimed since by communist historians.

By 1949, however, Phat found it best to leave the city for the Viet-Minh "liberated areas". The Nam Bo Executive Committee, then headed by Le Duan, appointed him Director of the Nam Bo Information Service. A year later, he was appointed a member of the Viet-Minh Resistance and Administrative Committee of Saigon-Cholon, a position he held until the 1954 Geneva Agreements ended the war.

Rather than "regroup" to the communist-controlled northern half of Viet-Nam, as a large number of Viet-Minh cadres did after the war, Phat, possibly on Party orders, remained in Saigon. He opened an office with his brother and practiced architecture. Several buildings purportedly designed by Phat during this period still stand in Saigon. He also resumed activities on behalf of the South Viet-Nam Democratic Party. The Democratic Party continued to claim independence and non-Communism, however, and agitated against the Diem government on that basis. Phat and other Democratic Party members were also active in the 1954-1955 Saigon-Cholon Peace Committee, which its vice chairman Nguyen Huu Tho has described as a precursor of the National Front for Liberation.

However, by 1959, Diem was taking harsher measures against political opposition of any sort and Phat once more left Saigon for the "liberated areas." By this time, he was Secretary-General of the Democratic Party.

When the NFLSV was formed in December 1960, Phat was named a Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee Presidium and Chairman of the NFLSV's Committee for the Saigon-Cholon-Gia Dinh area. In mid-1964, he became NFLSV Secretary-General, replacing an old associate from the Democratic Party, Tran Buu Kiem.

His ostensibly non-communist background made Huynh Tan Phat a logical choice for the presidency of the Provisional Revolutionary Government when it was formed in June, 1969. A rallier who had worked at COSVN at the time of the PRGRSV's formation said that "Phat is a veteran Party member", and attributed his selection as PRGRSV President to "the prevailing principle which requires that the Party retain real power."

There is some question as to exactly when Phat became a Party member, but little doubt that he is. His long identification with the goals of the overtly communist elements of the Viet-Minh and the NFLSV and his association with communist leaders, as well as the Democratic Party's affiliation with the communists, discredit attempts to portray Phat as a non-communist nationalist.

Nguyen Huu Tho

Perhaps the best known, certainly the most publicized, leader of the NFL and the PRGRSV since 1962 has been Nguyen Huu Tho. He was born in Cholon in 1910 in a civil servant family. He studied law in France, returning to practice in Saigon in 1934. There is no record of Tho's having been involved politically in France or Saigon prior to World War II, nor of his having contact with the Viet-Minh prior to 1947. One account places him in Vinh Long Province in that year and it is possible that his politicalization commenced at that time.

The first accomplishment credited to him in his official biography is the leadership of a 1949 demonstration of Saigon intellectuals, students and civil servants against French infringements upon civil liberties. His new prominence was underscored the following year when he led a demonstration against the goodwill visit to Saigon of three U.S. naval vessels. He claimed at the time that he was working for peace between the French and the Viet-Minh rather than siding with the later. Nonetheless he was incarcerated by the French for two years in Lai-Chau prison in North Viet-Nam, where he conducted a hunger strike which heightened his notoriety.

When next heard from Tho was back practising law in Saigon in 1954 and was one of the founders of the Saigon-Cholon Movement for Peace, which via the NFL has provided a number of PRG "ministers". Arrested again he spent more time under house arrest in Phu Yen Province than in an actual prison from 1955 to 1961. Thus he was not present at the founding conference of the NFL in December 1960. His PRG biography states that Tho escaped from Phu Yen with the "aid of the local population" in time to attend the first full conference of the NFL, where he was chosen chairman. Other accounts maintain that he was released on parole, still others that NFL security agents kidnapped him.

In any event he has occupied the chairmanship of the presidium of the Central Committee to the NFL since 1962, and of the Advisory Council of the PRG since its foundation in 1969. He has been said to command little respect from the COSVN-PRP cadres with whom he has lived most of these years, partly because he retains middle class tastes and habits. His speeches are said to be written for him.

Nonetheless his longer established reputation and a peculiar quirk of communist protocol, which ranks party or equivalent figures above heads of government, has resulted in his getting top-billing over PRG President Phat when, as is often the case, the two sign joint statements. Tho has never been formally identified as a Communist party member. Some ralliers have said that he joined the Party during the mid-1960s. Others doubt that he did. His public image remains that of a non-Party

lawyer and intellectual. Even so, as leader of the South Vietnamese delegation to Ho Chi Minh's funeral and on numerous other occasions Tho has hailed the Indochinese Communist Party founder as the symbol of Vietnamese nationalism.

Whether he would be nominated for membership on a National Council of Reconciliation and Concord under the terms of the 1973 Paris Agreement depends largely upon how much status such a council, if it is formed, seemed likely to have. If it was to be simply an electoral commission the PRG would probably not put one of its best known figures forward for membership. If on the other hand such a council appeared to promise changes in the government of South Viet-Nam it is probable that Tho would be named to it.

Phung Van Cung

Phung Van Cung, according to the official biographical sketch released by the NFLSV on the occasion of the June 1969 founding of the PRGRSV, was born in Vinh Long Province, in South Viet-Nam's Mekong Delta, in 1908. Although nothing is known of his family they were apparently well-to-do and sufficiently influential that Cung was sent to study at Hanoi's Faculty of Medicine, from which he graduated in 1937. Although exposed in Hanoi to both the French political repression of the early 1930's and to the political activity of the less restrictive Popular Front period after mid-1936, Cung does not seem to have shown much overt interest in either politics or revolution.

His official biography states that following his graduation from medical school he served within the French colonial administration as Public Health Director for the Mekong Delta Provinces of Rach Gia (now Kien Giang) and Chau Doc. He also served as a physician in the Phuc Kien (Fukien) Hospital in Cholon. Other reports state that he also worked in Hue and in Phnom Penh. In late 1945, Cung is reported to have evaded conscription into the French medical corps. His resistance, however, appears to have been personally, rather than politically, motivated.

In 1955, he joined the Ministry of Health under the Ngo Dinh Diem Government. Although Cung remained overtly apolitical, his official biography reports that "he constantly opposed

the U.S. -Diemist policy of using intellectuals in the repression of the People's Patriotic Movement", and voiced a protest against the mobilization of physicians. U.S. intelligence reports of 1956 identified him alternately as a French agent and as a Communist agent who had infiltrated French intelligence. The latter is the more likely of the two and would, if true, explain his decision to move, complete with family, to a "liberated area" of Central Viet-Nam in 1960.

When the NFLSV was formed in December 1960, Cung was elected a Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee Presidium. One account alleges that he was the secretary of the Committee which organized the meeting. In the years prior to the June 1969 formation of the PRGRSV, Cung participated in a number of NFLSV-sponsored organizations. In 1965, he led a delegation of the NFLSV's Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee to the Indochinese People's Conference in Phnom Penh.

In March 1969, three months before the formation of the PRGRSV, he led an NFLSV delegation to North Viet-Nam which met with leaders of the Viet-Nam Workers Party and the DRV, probably to finalize the plans for the proclamation of the PRGRSV, an assignment that would hardly have been given to anyone with as slight a participation in "the resistance" as is record in Cung's biography. Cung attended the June 1969 founding conference of the PRG, which named him First Vice President and Minister of Interior.

Ralliers who claim to have known Cung have described him as a fanatic, and a strong believer in terror as a revolutionary tool.

Cung is one of the enigmas of the South Vietnamese Communist apparatus. It is difficult to accept that a man who appeared uninterested in either the nationalist or communist aspects of the Vietnamese revolution, who had in fact worked first within the French colonialist administrative structure and later for the anti-communist Diem Government, should have become so politicized by in the Diem years that he abandoned a comfortable life and his medical practice in favor of the "liberated areas". One is more inclined to believe that Cung had been a secret Communist for a number of years, perhaps as early as the mid-1930's when he was a student in Hanoi, and turned to full time politics and the "liberated areas" when it appeared that he was about to be exposed.

Nguyen Van Kiet

Professor Nguyen Van Kiet, a Vice-President of the PRGRSV and its Minister of Education and Youth was born in Long An Province, just south of Saigon, in 1960. Apparently of a middle or upper class family, he was sent to France for at least a portion of his studies, receiving a Master of Arts at Poitiers in 1931 and his doctorate at Paris in 1933. Away from Viet-Nam during the abortive nationalist and communist attempts at uprising in 1930, as well as during the years of severe political repression which followed, Kiet nonetheless was almost certainly aware of the growth of the Vietnamese revolutionary movement. It is likely that he had at least passing contact with the nationalist and communist revolutionaries then active in the Vietnamese community in France.

Returning to South Viet-Nam in 1933, when the nationalists and the communists were both actively rebuilding organizations that had been nearly destroyed two years earlier, Kiet appears to have escaped any significant involvement with either. Until 1945, he taught at the Phan Thanh Gian and Nguyen Dinh Chieu High Schools in Can Tho and My Tho, and later at the Normal School and Faculty of Letters in Saigon. The official biographical sketch of Kiet issued by the NFLSV in June 1969 makes no mention of his having engaged in political activity during this period. His biography states, however, that "he went to the jungle" in 1945 to join the "anti-French resistance." His stay in the jungle was apparently brief and he returned to the cities--apparently to teaching--and "he continued to contribute to the resistance in Can Tho, My Tho and Saigon." The nature of his contributions is not defined, nor is it said that Kiet formally joined the Viet-Minh or any of its resistance organizations.

In 1955, he was appointed Inspector General of High Schools under the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, holding that position until 1958. Sometime during this period he and a number of other intellectuals published a bimonthly magazine entitled The Intellectuals' Voice, which was suppressed by Diem for its outspoken opposition to the policies of the regime.

At least one report claims that Kiet joined the Communists in early 1960, before the formation of the NFLSV, and in May of that year was named Secretary to the Committee of the Saigon-Cholon Special Zone. Kiet's official biography makes no mention of this and there is no substantiating evidence for the claim. It cannot be ruled out, however, that Kiet during this period collaborated secretly with other opponents of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, including the Communists.

This contention is to some extent supported by the fact that Kiet was one of three PRGRSV Ministers--of the nine named--drawn from the Viet-Nam Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces, rather than from the ranks of the NFLSV. It may be that Kiet was instructed to behave discreetly until 1968 so that he could serve as a contact between the NFL and potential but not yet committed allies among professional men and women in South Viet-Nam.

In early 1968, probably during the Tet Mau Than Offensive in February, when it appeared to some that a Communist victory was likely, Kiet went to a "liberated area ", probably located somewhere along the border between Cambodia and South Viet-Nam's Tay Ninh Province.

His official biography credits Kiet with having been a founder of the Viet-Nam Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces (VANDPF) in April 1968, and he in fact was elected a permanent member of the VANDPF's Central Committee. In June 1969, at the founding conference of the PRGRSV, Kiet was named a Vice-President of the PRG and, at the age of 63, was given the portfolio of Education and Youth.

The intriguing possibility is that just as Dr. Phung Van Cung was instructed to avoid public activity until the time came for the organization of the NFL, so Kiet was held in reserve until the time for a new front, VANDPF, arrived. The designation of these two ageing figures as Vice-Presidents of the PRG would thereby be adequately explained.

Trinh Dinh Thao

Vice Chairman of the Advisory Council of the PRGRSV and Chairman of the Viet-Nam Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces, Trinh Dinh Thao typifies that handful of ageing pro-communist Vietnamese nationalists who, after some hesitation, threw in their lots with the communists.

Born in North Viet-Nam in 1901 and educated in France, Thao spent most of his life as a lawyer in Saigon, also operating a mango orchard in Go Vap, a suburb of the city. One of its lanes was named for Ho Chi Minh, whose early writings (under the name Nguyen Ai Quoc) Thao read when a student in France, he said in a memoir published in the Hanoi weekly Thong Nhat in 1972. It is the source of much of this profile.

Thao's successful Saigon law practice included his serving as legal advisor to the Cao Dai "Pope" Pham Cong Tac and the small Vietnamese Protestant Church in the late 1920s and the 1930s, as well as to some Buddhist groups with whose 1963 campaign against the Diem government he was to be identified. He does not seem to have been heavily committed politically before World War II although he participated in the Indochinese Congress movement, which the communists sponsored in the 1936 to 1939 Popular Front period.

In March 1945 the Japanese occupying forces ousted the French colonial authorities and gave belated recognition to those Vietnamese nationalists willing to collaborate with them. This short lived government was headed by Tran Trong Kim, with Trinh Dinh Thao as Minister of Justice. The communists in the Viet-Minh fought the Kim regime. Thao stated in his memoir that he used his ministerial post to secure the release of a number of political prisoners arrested by the French--including communists. When the French returned to Saigon late in 1945 Thao himself was jailed for a short time, but subsequently was canvassed by the French to assume public office.

Thao maintained contact during the late 1940s with a number of French intellectuals and politicians, at least one of whom he escorted on a visit to the Nam Bo Administrative

Committee of the Viet-Minh in 1949 which included a meeting with Le Duan. He was arrested again but promptly released when the colonial police learned that Thao had personal friendships with several leading French liberal politicians.

With the installation of the Diem government in Saigon, Thao's French friends could no longer provide him protection. His assuming the honorary chairmanship of the 1954-1955 Peace Committee marked him as an opponent of the government. He served short prison terms in 1955, and again in 1965 and 1967, as a result of his continued collaboration with communist-encouraged "peace" movements. Nonetheless successive governments of the Republic of Viet-Nam tried to persuade Thao to refrain from subversive activity. His own memoir reveals that he was not vindictively persecuted.

Communist plans for the Tet Offensive called for the creation of a new front organization of intellectuals and professional people. Thao's memoir intimates he and a few others in Saigon (there was a similar group in Hue) agreed to declare for an uprising in support of the Viet Cong troops and for the overthrow of the government prior to the actual launching of the attacks. When the VC approached Saigon, Thao and his friends, disguised, joined them, and were taken to a "liberated area."

Several months after the offensive had been repulsed these tiny groups of middle class people were pulled together as the Viet-Nam Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces, with Thao as chairman. For a short time VANDPF pretended to exist apart from the NLF, but this pretense was abandoned by the end of 1968. The following year VANDPF and the NLF pooled their personnel to form the PRGRSV, and Thao led one of the last delegations of South Vietnamese which met Ho Chi Minh before his death.

Thao's name has been put before the South Vietnamese people by communist media almost as frequently as have Tho's and Phat's. Most recently, in December 1972, he was listed as chairman of a new committee demanding the release of political prisoners.

Thich (Venerable) Don Hau

The only religious leader listed as a member of the PRGRSV is a member of its Advisory Council--the Venerable Thich Don Hau formerly the chief monk of the Linh Mu pagoda in Hue. Hau was born in Quang Tri in 1904. From late 1963 until early 1968 he was chief representative of the Viet-Nam Unified Buddhist Association for the Van Hanh Region--the provinces of Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, Quang Tin and Quang Ngai. Thus he was his church's senior representative in the area wrecked in 1966 by an outbreak of Buddhist opposition to the Saigon government, but he refrained from active, public participation in it, or in the involved politics of the replacement of a Republic of Viet-Nam corps area commander who was supported by most politically active Buddhist leaders.

Hau had however an established record as an anti-French nationalist, was arrested by the French, and according to his PRG biography, tortured by them in 1947. He was said to have "directed" the anti-Diem campaign in Hue in 1963, which may well be true, and to have continued to direct the Buddhist opposition in that area to successive Saigon governments--a claim which does not gibe with his lack of prominence in 1966.

The PRG biography went on to say that Hau said publicly in 1967 that Buddhism could not tolerate the "presidential regime" in South Viet-Nam, and made contact with "the resistance." When the Viet Cong entered Hue in Tet 1968 Hau left the city, allegedly finding refuge behind their lines, thus escaping the massacre that they wrought in Hue. He became Vice Chairman of the newly formed Viet-Nam Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces.

Former friends of Hau's have speculated that he is as much prisoner as participant in PRG activities. Nationalist and anti-Catholic he undoubtedly was in Hue, where religious rivalries are more bitter than elsewhere in Viet-Nam. But there had been, prior to 1968, no evidence of NFL or pro-communist sympathies in his attitudes. He was in fact considered a "moderate" and was a close friend in Hue of the mother of former Emperor Bao Dai.

It is, however, no wonder that he rather than any of the more seasoned NFL Buddhist adherents was selected for advisory membership in the PRG. Thich Thien Hao, an NFL Central Committeeman since 1962, and the head of its Buddhist "front" was chairman of the obscure Luc Hoa sect, not a leading official in the mainstream of the Buddhist faith as was Hau.

Similarly, the men of other faiths whose religious affiliations are the basis of their billings in NFL Central Committee lists speak only for splinter groups of their denominations if for anyone. It is even doubtful that the Reverend Joseph Marie Ho Hue Ba, the leading Catholic in the NFL was an ordained priest, While "neutralist" sentiment has been rife from time to time among substantial segments of Cao Daiists since the foundation of the NFL, its core organization has not sought relations with the NFL. The Hoa Hao reformed Buddhist sect, anti-government during the Diem period, has become reconciled to the GVN and is strongly anti-Communist.

Thich Don Hau, therefore, remains, willingly or not, the leading churchman in the PRG.

Pham Hung

Beyond doubt the leading Vietnamese communist born south of Saigon, and whose political experience began there--in the Mekong Delta region--is Pham Hung, from 1967 until at least 1972 head of COSVN. Born in 1912 in Long Ho Village, Vinh Long Province apparently of peasant stock, he joined first Ho Chi Minh's Revolutionary Youth League, then the Indochinese Communist Party when it was organized in 1930. Arrested by the French in My Tho in 1931 for complicity in the murder of a French official killed by a crowd which he is said to have dead, his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. So he remained in prison throughout the 1935 to 1939 period when most Vietnamese communists enjoyed their one period of overt political activity. Hung plunged into Viet-Minh activity upon his release in 1945.

He worked directly under Le Duan and Le Duc Tho when they were, successively, the secretaries of the first COSVN. Various reports list his titles between 1945 and 1954 as Political Officer of Viet Minh troops in Eastern Nam Bo, head of the

Lien Viet Association, a somewhat enlarged version of the original Viet-Minh, Director of the Security Service in Nam Bo and a member of the Regional Administrative Committee of the resistance. What is certain is that his reputation in the Party was such that when the Viet-Nam Workers Party was formally organized in the North in 1951, he was elected to its first Central Committee.

With the termination of the war with the French in 1954 Hung headed the Viet-Minh delegation on the Cease Fire Committee in the South, and then the short-lived Saigon Liaison Mission with the International Control Commission of the Viet-Minh High Command. He and his colleagues, including the North Vietnamese army's Chief of Staff, Politburo member Gen. Van Tien Dung, were expelled from Saigon for misusing their "diplomatic" functions for political activity.

Once in North Viet-Nam, where his former superiors Le Duan and Le Duc Tho were key men in the Party apparatus, his rise was meteoric. Hung's patron, however, was DRV Premier Pham Van Dong, who appointed him Minister in his office in 1955 and a vice premier in 1958. Meanwhile, in 1957, he had become a member of the Party Politburo. From 1960 to 1963 he was also Chairman of the Agricultural Board in the Premier's Office. It was in that capacity that he addressed the Third National Congress of the Party in 1960 where the decision to assume direction of the southern insurgency was formalized. Then from 1963 to 1966, after main force North Vietnamese troops had been thrown into the South, Hung headed the government's Financial and Commercial Board. When Pham Van Dong was out of the country for several months in 1961 Hung served as Acting Premier of the DRV.

The first Politburo member to head the reestablished COSVN was Gen. Nguyen Chi Thanh, who directed the war in the South from 1964 to 1967. Thanh, more a political commissar than a soldier, had been a rival of Defense Minister Giap's and apparently no favorite of Le Duan's or Dong's. The plan for the 1968 Tet offensive was worked out in 1967, with Giap and the senior politicians of the Politburo as well as Thanh having a hand in it, since it was to involve political uprisings in the South as well as military thrusts. Thanh died of pneumonia before it was put into effect. In the autumn, presumably, of 1967 Hung was lifted out of his economist-manager First Vice Premier role and

sent South to win the "decisive victory." The plan failed, but Hung was not blamed for the failure since so many of his peers had been involved in designing it. To what degree he was involved in the planning of the 1972 offensive which depended heavily upon the employment of North Vietnamese divisions not hitherto operating under COSVN it is impossible to say. His disappointment at the inability of the PRP in the South to produce effective political support for the invasion must have been great.

Hung, once a handsome, slender man, is reported to have become "pudgy" in recent years. He is said to be a "very good husband...and cadres, especially southern cadres pay him great respect. They always called him Anh Hai--Eldest Brother," according to a rallier who worked in COSVN. Southern-born cadres feel free to approach the Eldest Brother when they have complaints against over-bearing Northern officers, it was said.

What the future holds for Pham Hung cannot be said. In 1971 he was dropped from the list of Vice Premiers of the DRV, but there is no reason to presume that he does not still hold his even more significant rank as fourth member of the VWP Politburo--outranking in fact the better known Vo Nguyen Giap. His southern origin and experience, and his popularity with the cadres, not to mention his friendship with the top leaders of both Party and government in the North would, in communist terms, qualify him for the premiership of either North or South Viet-Nam, pending their unification for which he has fought.

Lieut. General Tran Van Tra

The Hungarian communist magazine Magyar Hirlap, No. 41, February 11, 1973, had this to say about "the confident general, 55 years old Tran Van Tra," who had been flown in from Loc-Ninh on an American helicopter to Tan Son Nhut airbase to take his seat as head of the PRGRSV delegation to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission which was to supervise the first 60 days of the cease fire in South Viet-Nam:

"He was born in Central Viet-Nam, in the coastal province of Quang Ngai. In his youth, he worked as a worker on the Indochinese railroads and in the 1940's he joined the Communist

Party of Indochina. At the beginning of the resistance struggle against the French colonialists, which began in 1945, he was political secretary and military commander of the Saigon-Cholon zone. Later, beginning in 1950-1951, he was deputy commander of units of the Vietnamese people's army fighting in Nam Bo, the southern military zone. Following the 1954 Geneva Agreements, at the time of the regrouping of the opposing military forces, he went north to Hanoi with the army. Following this, he developed his knowledge of military science in the Soviet Union and China.

"In the course of the second resistance struggle against the American aggressors, in 1965, when the USA land forces intervened in open war, he returned south, to his homeland, at the call of the NFLSV. At the time of the memorable Tet Offensive of 1968, he directed the attack against Saigon. His fighters occupied the building of the American embassy in Saigon for several days. In the 1972 Easter Offensive, along Route 13, he led the famous battles around An Loc in which Thieu's favorite Fifth Division was completely destroyed."

Information from North Vietnamese publications and ralliers' reports make it possible to add to this communist account.

Tra's 1945 to 1954 experience in Nam Bo brought him into contact with VWP Politburo members who were past or future heads of COSVN, Le Duan, Le Duc Tho, and Pham Hung. It also gave him an understanding of the characteristics and foibles of Mekong Delta people which some Central Vietnamese as well as North Vietnamese communist military leaders who have been assigned to work with them have lacked. Since his return South in the mid-1960s he is said to be second in popularity among Southern cadres only to Pham Hung.

When he went North in 1954 to become a North Vietnamese regular army officer he was promoted rapidly, and given the out-of-country military training the Hungarian report mentions. By 1958 he had attained the rank of major general in the army, an indication of the confidence he had won from Defense Minister Giap. In 1960 he was chosen an alternate member of the VWP Central Committee at the time that the army was given four more full memberships and six more alternate posts on the Central Committee than it had hitherto held. His military assignments included command of the 330th Division, the directorship of the

Institute of Military Administration, a judgeship on the Central Military Court, and the post of assistant chief of the army's Training Department.

The chief of that department was Lieut. General Hoang Van Thai, ten years or more Tra's senior, who at least for five years was to be commander of the South Viet-Nam People's Liberation Armed Forces, with Tra as first deputy commander. Thai, a Party member since 1930 and a full member of the Party Central Committee is northern-born and served in the North during the war against the French. Hence the younger, southern-born Tra was a more logical candidate to head the PRG's delegation to the Four Party Joint Military Commission.

From time to time it has been said that Tra was "Tran Nam Trung" the pseudonym ascribed to the Minister of Defense of the PRG. While it is possible that for some brief period he used that name it was not his for long. When Tra left Loc Ninh for Tan Son Nhut Air Base and the Joint Commission, "Tran Nam Trung Minister of Defense of the PRG" was named in a Liberation Radio broadcast along with PRG President Phat as seeing him off.

Whether Tra continues to sit as head of the PRG delegation on the Two Party Joint Military Commission which took over the policing of the cease fire agreement, or is assigned to other duties, it is not likely that he will again be disguised under the name "Tran Nam Trung" or "Brother Tu Chi", the pseudonym he actually used during his COSVN period.

Tran Nam Trung

The name "Tran Nam Trung", unquestionably a pseudonym, may, over the past decade, have been more attached to a position than to a single person. The position is that of PLAF representative on the presidium of the Central Committee of the NFL, the secretaryship of the Military Committee of the NFL, and more recently Minister of Defense in the PRG. The official biography of "Mr. Tran Nam Trung" published in Hanoi says that he was born in southern Trung Bo in 1913 and became a devoted "militant in the struggle against imperialism, feudalism and fascism in 1930 and was several times jailed by the colonialists. He also took

an active part in the general uprising of August 1945, and consecrated his life to the resistance."

In short, the person bearing the name Tran Nam Trung was an early member of the Indochinese Communist Party, a long time para-military leader whose career culminated in his NFL and PRG positions. But who is Tran Nam Trung? Reports were current in the late 1960's that he was Lieut. Gen. Tran Van Tra, and it is not impossible that Tra used the name for a brief period. The weight of evidence, however, is that for most of the past decade or more the name has been used by someone else, or conceivably by several persons other than Tra.

A recent article in the Hanoi historical magazine Nghien Cuu Lich Su (No. 146, Sept. -Oct. 1972) mentions "Hai, also known as Tran Nam Trung...who became head of the Military Affairs Committee of the NFLSV" and "one of the highest ranking leaders in the South," as having been associated with People's Revolutionary Party Chairman Vo Chi Cong in the western Quang Ngai uprising of 1959. The article was written by three Party members who were also involved in these 1959 events when Tra was pursuing his Viet-Nam People's Army duties in the North.

Ralliers who worked in COSVN have also clearly distinguished between Tra and Trung. One of them declared that Trung's pseudonym was "Hai Hau" and that his real name was Tran Luong adding that he is a member of the Military Committee for the South and head of COSVN's Military Affairs Section. Another specifically identified him as Maj. Gen. Tran Luong, a member of the VWP Central Committee and said that he helped establish COSVN, and the PLAF.

At least there is nothing inherently contradictory in the assertions that Tran Nam Trung is Tran Luong. While it cannot be flatly established that he is, it is at least a good hypothesis.

In any event it was Tran Nam Trung who gave the military report at the November 1972 meeting of NFL-VANDPF-PRG leaders, and who along with PRG President Phat saw Tran Van Tra leave "COSVN territory" for Saigon. One rallier believes he

would be proposed for office by the PRG if its version of a "coalition government" is ever installed in South Viet-Nam, but since Trung has been blatantly associated for so long with the PLAF's ravages in South Viet-Nam this seems unlikely.

Nguyen Van Cuc

There is insufficient information available from which to construct a proper profile of Nguyen Van Cuc, the Deputy Secretary of COSVN's Current Affairs Committee. However, since Cuc, as deputy to Pham Hung, is probably the second most important political figure within the South Vietnamese communist apparatus, an effort has been made to provide what information is available and to at least place Cuc within the context of his associates and the history of the communist movement in South Viet-Nam.

Cuc, who is better known by his alias Muoi Ut, has never been mentioned in either official North or South Vietnamese communist output. He is reported to have been born in North Viet-Nam in about 1913. As a child, however, he was taken to the South and virtually his entire revolutionary experience appears to have been in the Nam Bo area (roughly corresponding to the III and IV Military Regions of the Republic of Viet-Nam--the Mekong Delta and the "red earth" country north of Saigon). Cuc's family background, as well as his educational experience, is unknown. As a young man in his late teens or early twenties, he worked, apparently as a laborer, in a French navy yard, probably in Saigon. Cuc probably joined the Indochinese Communist Party during this period. By 1933, the Party had begun rebuilding its organization in the South which had been almost destroyed in 1931.

The French jailed Cuc on 1935, presumably for political activities, although there was probably also a civil crime involved since Cuc was not released along with other strictly political prisoners in the 1936-1939 Popular Front period. (The same fate befell COSVN head Pham Hung and North Vietnamese President Ton Duc Thang, both of whom were convicted of having had some role in politically-motivated murders.) One report has it that Le Duan, Vo Chi Cong and Hai Van were prison-mates of Cuc's. Hai Van has served on COSVN's staff and is said to be head of

the NFL "trade unions" under the name Pham Xuan Thai. Cuc is reported to have escaped in 1944 and to have been active in the Viet-Minh movement in the South from then until the end of the war in 1954.

Details of Cuc's rise within the Viet-Minh structure are not available. It was rapid, conceivably due to his alleged friendship with Le Duan. In 1954, the first COSVN was dissolved and replaced by the Nam Bo Regional Committee of the Viet-Nam Workers Party. Reports from about 1956 noted Nguyen Van Cuc as a member of the Nam Bo Committee and as Secretary of its Saigon-Cholon area chapter. He was therefore in effective command of the southern communist apparatus, and unquestionably a ranking member of the VWP. One report states that at the VWP's Third National Congress in September 1960, Cuc, who may have actually attended the Congress, was named a "secret" member of the Party Central Committee.

In 1961, the Nam Bo Regional Committee was once more converted to COSVN. Cuc apparently, although not certainly, became senior man in the new apparatus. Some reports have also claimed that Cuc became Secretary of the People's Revolutionary Party, the ostensibly independent Southern arm of the VWP when it was established in January 1962. It is unlikely that he is so listed in any official document. The fact is that as Deputy Secretary of COSVN's Current Affairs Committee charged with political, propaganda and organizational work, Cuc is de facto Secretary of the PRP.

Cuc probably directed all communist operations in the South from his position in COSVN until sometime in 1964 when, concurrent with the VWP's decision to increase the level of North Viet-Nam's military involvement in the war in the South, North Viet-Nam People's Army General (and VWP Politburo member) Nguyen Chi Thanh arrived to take charge of COSVN. The South Vietnamese Communist apparatus was not in good shape. It had suffered from the increasingly effective police operations of the Diem regime and from internal disputes over strategy to the point that it was unable to take advantage of the political turmoil that characterized Diem's last years culminating in his overthrow in late 1963. It will probably never be known to what extent

the VWP Central Committee held Cuc responsible for this failure. Cuc remained at COSVN as General Thanh's deputy for political affairs. One report even claims that in February 1967, Cuc was secretly given full membership in the VWP Politburo.

Perhaps because of the predominantly military nature of COSVN activities during the mid-1960's, however, Cuc was judged incapable of resuming the sole direction of COSVN. When General Nguyen Chi Thanh succumbed to pneumonia in July 1967, Cuc was acting chief of COSVN for a few months before Pham Hung, a fellow Southerner and colleague of a decade earlier, arrived to assume the late General Thanh's titles and duties. Cuc remained as Hung's deputy for political affairs.

No specific information on Nguyen Van Cuc's recent activities is available. However, there seems little doubt that he is a more important figure than PRP Chairman Vo Chi Cong, the only other long-time southern communist revolutionary with stature. Cuc may become more important still as the military element of COSVN's activities is deemphasized (and if COSVN itself is reorganized) in order to direct the "political struggle." From the VWP's point of view, he would appear to be the ideal candidate to take charge should Pham Hung be recalled to Hanoi.

Vo Chi Cong

Like Nguyen Van Cuc, People's Revolutionary Party Chairman Vo Chi Cong differs from the majority of NFLSV-PRGRSV leaders in that he is a veteran revolutionary of neither bourgeois nor intellectual origins. His background and experience parallel those of most of the leaders of the VWP in North Viet-Nam more than those of the middle class southerners with whom he sits on the NFL Presidium.

Born in the Central Vietnamese province of Quang Nam in 1912, Cong was active in the revolutionary movement in Cochinchina (South Viet-Nam) and Annam (Central Viet-Nam) as early as 1930. Unlike nationalist contemporaries, Cong was committed not only to Vietnamese independence from French colonial rule but also to the overthrow of the monarchy. As such, he was probably an

early recruit for the Indochinese Communist Party. Cong's early communist affiliation is evidenced by the fact that in 1936 he joined the Anti-Fascist Democratic Front, the ICP's response to the Franco-Russian alliance against Hitler. When the Soviet-German non-aggression pact of 1939 ended the ICP's tactical tolerance of French rule, Cong resumed his anti-French activities. Arrested in 1942, he was, according to one report, held under house arrest in Central Viet-Nam until 1945. During this period, he is reported to have acted as an "adviser" to revolutionary groups. A conflicting report states that he was sentenced to life imprisonment and actually jailed. In 1945, however, he was released.

When the initial victories of the Viet-Minh in the South proved of brief duration, Cong resumed his clandestine revolutionary activities.

Little is known of the substance of Cong's career during any particular period and almost nothing of his activities between 1954 and 1960. He appears to have remained in the South and to have been active in Central Viet-Nam.

One source claims that Cong served as Party Secretary of Military Region V (Central Viet-Nam below Hue), an area that has been administered militarily from North Viet-Nam rather than by COSVN) until 1966, when he went to North Viet-Nam for medical treatment. That Cong was active in the MR V area is substantiated by a North Vietnamese magazine article detailing revolutionary activities in Quang Ngai Province after 1954. The article called Vo Chi Cong "the key leader in Central Trung Bo."

Cong is known to have been one of the founders of the NFLSV in late 1960 and later became a Vice-Chairman of the Front's Central Committee Presidium. He was almost certainly involved in the rebuilding of the COSVN apparatus in 1961 and is known to have been one of the founders of the People's Revolutionary Party the following year. During the early years of the NFLSV, Cong apparently served as the NFLSV's Chief of Security and supervised organizational work. He was present at and reported to both the first and second formal congresses of the NFLSV in 1962 and 1964.

Cong has been identified by NFLSV and Hanoi publications as Chairman of the PRP. How long he has held this position is not known. At least one source has identified him as a one-time Deputy Secretary of the Party, although the reference is unclear and may refer to his ranking within COSVN, an organ sometimes difficult to separate from the PRP. Most recently, Cong represented the PRP on the Presidium of a NFLSV conference held in December 1972 to commemorate the Front's 12th anniversary.

Although unquestionably an important figure in the South Viet-Nam communist apparatus, Vo Chi Cong is probably not the ranking Party man in the South. As Chairman of the PRP, he executes rather than formulates policy and exercises much less authority than his title would imply. This judgement is confirmed by the fact that within the COSVN structure--which has been characterized as the effective Central Committee of the PRP-- Cong has been identified as a Second Deputy Secretary of the Current Affairs Committee, with proselyting and organizational responsibilities.

Within a communist government in South Viet-Nam, Vo Chi Cong would undoubtedly occupy an extremely important position. But he is unlikely to be put forward by the NFL or PRG as a public figure in any of their discussions with the GVN about the future of Vietnamese political life.

Tran Buu Kiem

Tran Buu Kiem, Minister in the President's Office in the PRGRSV, was born in 1921 in "the capital of the Mekong Delta", Can Tho. Like a number of other leaders of the NFLSV-PRGRSV, Kiem was of bourgeois origins and his family probably had more than passing connections with the French colonial government. These connections helped in his being sent to complete his education at the Faculty of Law in Hanoi in the early 1940's.

The official biographical sketch of Tran Buu Kiem released by the NFLSV on the occasion of the founding of the PRGRSV claims that in 1945 he was active in the Indochinese Students'

General Association. In 1945, the Hanoi branch of the Association played a role in blocking any possible Viet Minh participation in the newly-formed Bao Dai Government, a participation to which Ho Chi Minh does not seem to have been dogmatically opposed. Arrested by the French before the Japanese coup d'etat of March, 1945, Kiem was probably released when the Japanese took power.

Precisely when Kiem returned to South Viet-Nam from Hanoi is not known, but it can be assumed that it was shortly after his release from prison. Nor is it known whether his return was voluntary or whether, by that time, his connections with the Communist Party were such that he was ordered to the South. His official biography notes his participation in "building" the Vanguard Youth Movement. Kiem also joined the Democratic Party, perhaps in the North, where it has been active for several years. His biography cites him for "positively contributing" to the "August uprising in 1945."

His activities in the South in the Vanguard Youth and the Democratic Party put him in close association with Huynh Tan Phat, the President of the PRGRSV, who was at that time active in both organizations. Kiem's abilities impressed his superiors. In 1946, at the age of 25, he became Secretary-General of the Nam Bo Resistance and Administrative Committee, then headed by Le Duan, now First Secretary of the VWP. He held this position until 1949. A year later, in 1950, he was made a Vice-Director of the Nam Bo Economic Office, a position he shared with the PRGRSV's current Vice-Minister of Economy and Finance, Nguyen Van Trieu. His apparent demotion is unexplained. Presumably, he continued to work in the Economic Office until the end of the war in 1954. Thus, Kiem has worked for both Le Duan and Le Duc Tho during the periods in which they respectively headed the organization in the South.

At least one source has reported that Kiem was among the Viet Minh communist cadres who "regrouped" to North Viet-Nam following the partition of the country. Other reports claim that he remained in the South to help organize guerrilla units. His official biography makes no reference to his activities during this period, stating only that he has been "engaged in the anti-U.S.

national salvation struggle... since the U.S. intervention" in his capacity as Deputy Secretary-General of the Democratic Party.

Whether Kiem spent the years between 1954 and 1960 in the North or the South, by late 1960 he was in the South and participated in the founding conference of the NFLSV in December of that year. Although the Central Committee--if any--which was chosen at that conference was not publicly announced, Kiem was noted as a Central Committee member at the first normal NFLSV Conference in early 1962. His current NFL presidium listing describes him as "President of the Federation of School and College Students for Liberation". In 1963, he was named Chairman of the NFLSV's newly-organized External Relations Commission.

In August 1963, Kiem cumulated his position as effective "Foreign Minister" of the NFLSV with the Secretary-Generalship of the Front. He held the latter position only until the Front's 2nd Congress in January, 1964, when it passed to his long-time associate Huynh Tan Phat.

Kiem has retained the Chairmanship of the External Relations Commission of the NFLSV. In that capacity, he led an NFLSV delegation, of which Nguyen Van Hieu was a member, to Phnom Penh in February 1965 for talks which preceded the Indochinese People's Conference in March, remaining to participate in the Conference itself. Between 1965 and the establishment of the NFLSV's "permanent representation" in 1968, Kiem and Hieu were responsible for the sometimes delicate relations between the NFLSV and Cambodian Chief of State Norodom Sihanouk.

When, in January 1969, the Paris talks between the United States and the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam were enlarged to include the Republic of Viet-Nam and the NFLSV, Kiem was named to lead the Front's delegation. Replaced by Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, Foreign Minister of the newly-formed PRGRSV, in June 1969, Kiem returned to Viet-Nam to serve as Minister in the President's Office in the new government, a position he continues to hold.

No adequate explanation of why Mrs. Binh was chosen Foreign Minister of the PRGRSV rather than Kiem, who had had more experience has been advanced. It may be that the President of the