COMMUNISM IN NORTH VIETNAM: ITS ROLE
IN THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE

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Chapter 3

FROM CHINESE DEPENDENT TO COMMunist NEUTRAL

The War Against France

The Democratic Republic of Vietnam was officially proclaimed by Ho Chi Minh on September 2, 1945, but since its provincial government lacked all the attributes normally associated with government it is hardly realistic to regard this as the date of its effective establishment. At that time Ho's authority extended over only a small part of Tonking, and it was disputed by the nationalist parties. In December 1946, however, it was Ho who ordered hostilities to commence against the French forces, and he was followed into the countryside by both Communists and nationalists. Until late in 1949 the Vietnamese resistance movement continued as a coalition of these groups, but the approach of a Communist victory in China emboldened the Communists to impose their own control upon the movement. A Vietnamese delegation attended the Asian and Australasian Trade Union Conference at Peking in November 1949 and returned with directives from the Chinese Communists. In Vietnam the Federation of Labor held the first national conference of trade unions for the purpose of implementing the decisions of the Peking meeting. Among those who attended were Truong Chinh and Hoang Quoc Viet, and the latter was elected Chairman of the newly
formed Central Committee of the Federation of Labor. Propaganda and
official statements assumed an unmistakably Communist character at
about that time, and the resistance movement identified itself with
communism. Confirmation of the political shift was supplied in January
1950 when China first and then the Soviet Union accorded official recogni-
tion to the North Vietnam Communist government.

Vietnamese resistance to the reimposition of French rule had won
a large measure of international sympathy, and France, exhausted by the
Second World War, was finding it increasingly difficult to continue her
support for the flagging forces in Indochina. There was a real possi-

bility that the Vietnamese might have won their independence from
France unaided, but Ho Chi Minh decided otherwise. A man of Ho’s in-
telligence and political experience could not but have known that to
transform a nationalist resistance movement into a militant Communist
body was certain to result in the supply of United States military aid
to France. America would provide such assistance, not to rob the Viet-
namese of national independence, for American sentiment was strongly
anti-colonialist, but to fight the spread of communism in Asia. The

consequence of Ho’s decision was to involve the United States and Com-
munist China in the Indochinese war, thereby escalating the conflict
and causing more bloodshed, suffering, and damage to the Vietnamese
people, yet he made it without any apparent hesitation. No evidence
has yet come to light which would show whether he did so at the insist-
ence of the Chinese Communists or simply to ensure that communism, not
nationalism, should emerge the victor in Vietnam. In either case the
decision evinced a callous disregard for the sufferings of his own
people.
As the war dragged on, Chinese aid to Ho Chi Minh increased greatly. Military advisers, munitions, artillery, medicines, and much else reached Vietnam from China, while Vietnamese troops received training on Chinese soil beyond the reach of their enemies. In addition to this purely military aid the Vietnamese resistance movement also received political guidance on a very large scale from the Chinese. Translators worked in shifts around the clock translating study documents and propaganda materials from Chinese into Vietnamese.\(^1\) Chinese cadres advised, lectured, and directed in all parts of the resistance-held territory, while Vietnamese cadres proceeded in thousands to China for political training. All of this proved too much for large numbers of Vietnamese who had supported the resistance struggle from the outset, and those who could manage to do so left the resistance zone in disgust. The remainder swallowed their resentment and accepted Chinese interference as best they could.

Contacts with the Soviet Union were far fewer, and Soviet aid, which reached the resistance forces only toward the end of the war, was very much smaller than that received from China. For that reason there was nothing remarkable in the fact that the DRV delegation to the International Conference on French Indochina, which met at Geneva in the spring of 1954, maintained very close relations with the Chinese delegation but had comparatively few dealings with the Soviet delegation.

Hoang Van Hoan, the DRV Ambassador to China, was a member of the Vietnamese delegation, which leaned heavily upon the Chinese. Clearly

\(^1\) See Nhu Phong, "Intellectuals, Writers, and Artists," The China Quarterly, No. 9, Jan.-Mar. 1962.
the Vietnamese Communists felt much more at home with the Chinese in 1954 than they did with the Soviets, who seem to have been regarded as somewhat remote beings—racially, culturally, and geographically a long way removed from the Vietnamese.

The Return of Peace—Predominant Chinese Influence

Following the signature of the armistice agreements and the division of Vietnam into two zones, the DRV leaders devoted their attention to the immediate tasks facing the new Communist state in North Vietnam. If they resented the fact that the Soviet Union had compelled them to accept and sign so unsatisfactory an armistice agreement at Geneva, they showed no signs of this in public; but it is possible that they had been compensated by promises of economic aid. Eight years of war had left in its wake immense damage; almost all the railway lines had been destroyed, roads and bridges had suffered heavily, large areas of agricultural land had been left untilled and had become overgrown, the few French-owned industrial installations were badly run down. The bulk of the restoration work in its early stages at least was of a fairly elementary nature and did not require highly trained technicians to complete. China was able to supply the labor foremen, the semi-skilled technicians, and the simple tools necessary for the work, while North Vietnam supplied the coolie labor. The Chinese also provided large quantities of rice, cloth, medicines, and other commodities which were in desperately short supply in North Vietnam. Chinese aid, indeed, far exceeded the total aid received from the Soviet Union and the rest of the Communist bloc put together.
If China provided the major portion of foreign aid to North Vietnam, she was also the model upon which the Vietnamese based their own planning and policies. It is not possible to divine whether the adoption of Chinese methods was the result of a free choice on the part of the Vietnamese Communist leadership or whether Chinese economic aid was made conditional upon North Vietnam's following Chinese patterns. Certainly Truong Chinh and his collaborators evinced very great enthusiasm for the Chinese way of doing things and threw themselves into the agrarian reform campaign with a fervor which cannot be doubted, but what of the rest? Vo Nguyen Giap and his friends are likely to have opposed any strong Chinese influence simply because it was Chinese. In between these two extremes there must have been many who hesitated, who entertained doubts about the wisdom of applying such an extreme measure as Chinese-style agrarian reform and about permitting China to exercise so much influence upon Vietnam. In the last resort it was Ho Chi Minh who made the decision and, whether bowing to strong Chinese pressure or because he considered it best, he gave orders to copy China.

Agrarian reform was ruthlessly enforced under Chinese supervision, and a census operation was begun. Private businessmen and traders were stripped of their wealth and their accumulated stocks by deliberately ruinous taxation, some undertakings being forced to close their doors and others becoming joint state/private enterprises. Street traders and most of the artisans were squeezed out of their occupations and considered themselves fortunate if they were able to secure employment as unskilled manual laborers in the war damage repair projects. Many could find no work and died of starvation, their deaths swelling still
further the numbers already killed in the course of the agrarian reform. In the late summer of 1956 yet another Chinese policy, Mao's "Hundred Flowers" campaign, was put into effect in North Vietnam.

Meanwhile roads were being returned to a usable state by Vietnamese workmen under the supervision of Chinese technicians, some of the most vital bridges were rebuilt, and railway track was being laid. The country was returning to some kind of normalcy, and the time had come for decisions to be taken about the most desirable and profitable direction for future development. Already some of the basic facts of economic life in North Vietnam were impressing themselves upon the minds of the Communist leaders with a painful insistence, and none more than the difficulty of feeding the population. Whatever the plans for developing the North Vietnam, they would have to provide sufficient food to keep the people alive and capable of performing useful work. Moreover, because the DRV was faithfully following the path of China, she had introduced agricultural collectivization, moving rapidly from mutual aid teams to cooperatives with results which were most disappointing. Despite the vigorous expansion of the area of land under cultivation and the completion of large irrigation projects, it became increasingly obvious that the Vietnamese peasants, like peasants elsewhere, had no love for collectivized agriculture and were not prepared to work so hard in the cooperatives for the profit of the government as they had formerly done on their own land for their private advantage. The tasks of maintaining dykes around ricefields, of manuring the fields, of pest eradication, and so on were skimmed or neglected. Worse still, the peasants were unwilling to sell the fruits of their work to
the government at the unrealistic prices officially laid down. Instead they sold rice, meat, and vegetables on the black market or concealed their produce from the government cadres and retained it for their own consumption. Yet another complicating factor was the rapid rise in the birth rate, which meant more mouths to share an already inadequate food supply.

These are some of the factors which influenced the DRV leaders when they evolved development plans for North Vietnam. Events in South Vietnam also played their part, for the United States left no doubt that it was prepared to supply whatever military and economic aid might be necessary to ensure the survival of the anti-Communist government of President Ngo Dinh Diem. So long as Diem remained in office there could be no hope that trade relations might be opened with the South or that Northern coal might be bartered for Southern rice. North Vietnam had to overcome her shortage of food by herself without help from the South, and all the signs were that this state of affairs would persist indefinitely. Moreover China was desperately short of food, and agricultural difficulties were chronic in the other countries of the Communist bloc with the exception of Poland. It was therefore decided that North Vietnam should press forward with a rapid and large-scale program of industrialization.

Once the decision to industrialize had been taken, the first problem to be studied was the means for putting the new program into effect. Where were the complex machinery, the technical knowledge, and the

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2 See Hoang Van Chi, "Collectivisation and Rice Production," ibid.
highly trained specialists to come from? Assistance of this kind was plainly beyond the resources of China and could be obtained only from the Soviet Union and the more advanced European satellites. By the end of 1956 it must have been abundantly obvious to the DRV leaders that the period of Chinese predominance in North Vietnam was nearing its end. The Soviet Union would have to be brought more into the picture. Such a change in foreign relationships was made imperative by economic needs, but there are good reasons for believing that other considerations as well made it welcome. Chinese Communist policies had not only proved unpopular with the people of North Vietnam; they had also proved to be highly unsuccessful. Doubtless land reform of some kind would have had to be carried through in any case, but the particularly brutal form imposed on the North Vietnamese by China had inflicted serious damage upon the prestige of the Lao Dong Party and upon the authority of the Communist regime. More antagonisms had been created by the census campaign, and opposition to the regime openly revealed by the "Hundred Flowers" campaign was so strong that it is still regarded with some apprehension even today.

The Swing from China to the Soviet Union

All Vietnamese, whether Communist or not, must have experienced some misgivings at the presence in North Vietnam of so many Chinese technicians and the very considerable authority they enjoyed. The mere presence of similar numbers of Soviet and East European technicians would of itself reassure the Vietnamese people and could hardly avoid
reducing Chinese authority. The problem which faced the DRV government was one of reducing predominantly Chinese influence in North Vietnam, of increasing Soviet and East European influence, yet avoiding the impairment of good relations with China.

There is no evidence to show how the change was made, but the characteristic pattern of DRV behavior suggests the following method. The North Vietnamese probably presented the Chinese with a list of requirements necessary for the carrying out of their rapid and ambitious program of industrialization and were told that China was incapable of supplying these. They then approached the Soviet Union and the European bloc countries and asked them to supply all the aid needed. A tactic of this kind would have enabled them to make the readjustments they desired and would have denied the Chinese any pretext for objecting to them. In any event, dependence on China was reduced and Soviet and East European involvement in North Vietnam was increased apparently without generating any resentment on the part of China.

The major change in the DRV relationship with the Soviet Union and China took place during 1957, yet the North Vietnamese press and radio gave little indication that such an important switch was taking place. The new development projects undertaken, more frequent references to Soviet and European technicians, and the economic agreements signed offered some indications of the change but the public attitude of North Vietnam toward China and the Soviet Union remained unaltered. It would have been difficult for an outside observer to detect that North Vietnam was systematically reducing its dependence upon China and introducing a greater Soviet participation in her affairs without the evidence of the
figures for aid received by North Vietnam from bloc countries. These statistics provide the clearest and most conclusive evidence that a major realignment was taking place: 3

**COMMUNIST BLOC AID TO THE DRV**
(Millions of U. S. Dollars)

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During the latter period North Vietnam was content to accept what aid China was able and willing to provide, but Soviet-East European aid surpassed that of China both in total amount and in economic importance for North Vietnam's future.

Such a fundamental change in DRV alignment could hardly be effected without major upheavals in the leadership, for there were undoubtedly many leaders who had concluded that the DRV's future lay with China and had taken trouble to cultivate Chinese leaders, confident that these would provide a secure base upon which to construct their future careers. These men could scarcely be expected to view a switch away from Chinese influence with equanimity. Unless they resisted the move, they risked losing their important positions and being overtaken by men who enjoyed stronger Soviet backing. There is no doubt that an

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3 These figures are taken from William Kaye, "A Bowl of Rice Divided," *ibid.*
internal struggle of great importance did take place within the Lao Dong Party, but the Vietnamese Communists successfully confined it to the party, and scarcely any evidence leaked out to provide detailed information about the sides taken by individuals or the form which the quarrel took.

On May 12, 1957 a newspaper article by Ton Duc Thang stated that the imminent visit of Soviet President Voroshilov to North Vietnam was a "most important historical event," and no pains were spared to ensure that the visit, which commenced on May 20th, was accorded the maximum publicity. At the end of June it was announced in Hanoi that Ho Chi Minh had decided to make a foreign tour during which he would visit North Korea, Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Albania, Bulgaria, and Rumania, an itinerary which suggested that he might well be seeking aid from the East European satellites. This was followed four days later by the news that Ho intended to depart from Hanoi on July 5th, only six days after the first mention of the long tour. Chinese Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade Lin Hai-yun disembarked at Hanoi with a Chinese trade delegation on July 2nd, and Ho Chi Minh’s departure was delayed by 24 hours, ostensibly because of bad weather although flying conditions over Tonking appeared perfect. The whole business conveyed the impression of crisis, disorder, and impromptu decisions.

1. Nhan Dan, May 12, 1957.
Although the Soviet Union was not one of the places mentioned as being in Ho’s itinerary, he spent some time in Moscow during July, at the time when Khrushchev expelled Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich, the "anti-party" group, from the Presidium of the CPSU. This could well have been pure coincidence, but it enabled him to acquire first-hand information about the important changes taking place in the Soviet Union. Meanwhile a goods exchange and payments agreement was signed at Hanoi between North Vietnam and China in Ho’s absence. During August Ho visited Yugoslavia, where relations appear to have been cordial, for President Tito was invited to visit North Vietnam and the Lao Dong Party newspaper, Nhan Dan, published an article entitled "A Heroic People" which was extremely complimentary about Yugoslavia and described her as a "united nation which is building socialism." Clearly North Vietnam was tightening her links with the Soviet Union, an impression which was strengthened by an unusually early announcement in Hanoi that the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution would be celebrated in all parts of North Vietnam over a period of six weeks.

Internal Party Conflict

Before returning home Ho Chi Minh spent two days in Peking, where he was greeted effusively, no less than four leading newspapers

8 Nhan Dan, Aug. 1957. (The day of the month has been inadvertently clipped from the author’s copy.)
9 VNA, Aug. 6, 1957.
publishing editorials to welcome his arrival. On the same day the Lao Dong Party newspaper printed a long article praising the success of the tour in which it announced that Kim Il Sung, Zawadski, Dieckmann, Tito, and Yugov had accepted invitations to visit North Vietnam. However, when Ho arrived at Hanoi on August 30th the storm had broken inside the Lao Dong Party, and from that moment onward developments appeared confused to the outside observer. There is little information to be gleaned from the newspapers or the radio broadcasts because the conflict was contained within the confines of the party, but one account of it was subsequently published by M. Tongas, a French teacher who had remained in North Vietnam after the Communist takeover and who appears to have had a number of personal friends among the highest echelons of the party. Although it is not suggested that this account should be accepted without question, for there is no documentary evidence to corroborate it, the relevant parts of it are reproduced below in English translation because of their importance as the only available source and because they are based upon information gleaned in Hanoi itself at the time of the events.

The crisis exploded during the visit to Hanoi, in September 1957, of Marshal Voroshilov, President of the Supreme Soviet, and the drama lasted until December 24th. It reached such a pitch that in November the disappearance of Ho Chi Minh

10 Nhan Dan, Aug. 29, 1957.

from the Vietnamese political scene seemed final and certain. Monster demonstrations had been planned by way of a triumphal welcome for the great Soviet leader. Among others, a mass meeting was arranged in Ba Dinh Square, Hanoi's Red Square. The giant platform erected for the demonstration which had taken place to commemorate the anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic on September 2nd had been left in place for this purpose. Spectacular fetes had been fully prepared by a "Committee of Welcome" (I was in touch with some members of this Committee) set up for this purpose. But Voroshilov's arrival was about as welcome as the intrusion of a dog into a game of skittles. So great was the disagreement among the Vietnamese leaders that all the customary pomp and ceremonial was canceled. Only one public ceremony took place, the reception at Gia-lam airport, where some speeches of welcome were made and Voroshilov replied briefly. The rest of the visit passed off in the greatest secrecy. Some days later, on about October 15th [Author's note: It was actually on October 18th], a new Russian delegation visited Hanoi, a representative group of the Supreme Soviet. There were very few flags and no public receptions except for one of minimal importance held as a matter of protocol by Dr. Tran Duy Hung, the President of the Hanoi Administrative Committee.

12 No corroboration for the visit of Marshal Voroshilov in September has been found by the author, and it seems unlikely on the face of it that he should have returned so soon after his visit in May. However, it has been established that he was absent from Moscow during the period in question. Yugoslav Vice-President Vukmanovic arrived in Hanoi on September 1st, but his visit was a little too early to be confused with a visit by Voroshilov. If, however, Voroshilov did visit North Vietnam as M. Tongas says, the fact that no publicity was given to his visit by press and radio would accord with M. Tongas's account of the visit.
From all appearances—and I received sure confirmation of this later from the very best sources—the flames of dispute really were burning among the Vietnamese leaders and their beloved Lien Xo (Soviets). This resulted in the departure of Ho Chi Minh, under the most extraordinary circumstances, to participate in the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution in the Soviet Union, accompanied by ten or so members of the Lao Dong Party. He left in conditions of the utmost secrecy, without even the attendance at the airport of the diplomatic corps. Not a single minister or well known personage who was not a member of the party went out to the airport. My questions concerning this strange departure, which had about it the appearance of fleeing, received the answer that Ho Chi Minh had gone to Moscow "in a personal capacity" and not "as Head of State." This was a very poor explanation why the honors to which he was entitled had not been accorded to him, especially when his return was to be greeted with great pomp and all the customary ceremonial.

In the interval between his departure and return—he was absent for roughly two months—the drama reached its highest peak. The Vietnamese leaders, always deeply divided among themselves over the question of relations with foreign states, were split even more profoundly during that period. While some extolled the indestructible friendship with the Soviets, others advanced the cause of Chinese friendship. Thus it was that at the very paroxysm of the crisis the pro-Chinese carried the day and boycotted the pro-Soviet friendship demonstrations. Ho Chi Minh, seeking continuing friendship with these two powerful allies without submission to either, and the protagonist of a policy of fence-sitting between the Soviet

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13 A DRV delegation of 25, led by Hoang Quoc Viet, had already left Hanoi for Moscow on October 18th to participate in the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution.
Union and China, left for Moscow alone. His rivals in Hanoi had no wish at all to talk about his actions and gestures during his absence abroad and, to mark the celebration of the fortieth anniversary, did nothing more than organize a bicycle race around the Small Lake and show a few Soviet films. This fell very far short of the grandiose celebrations for which we had been waiting. Moreover from November 10th onward the DRV press and radio made no mention of Ho Chi Minh, and this unaccustomed silence was destined to last until his return on December 24th.

Everyone soon began to speculate about what had happened. Many affirmed that he was dead. The circumstances of his mysterious demise were accorded varying explanations and commentaries. Some maintained that he had died somewhere in Siberia, purged by the Soviets, while a double was standing in for him at the receptions in the Soviet Union. Others held that he had left Hanoi seriously ill and intended going to the Soviet Union for medical treatment, but that he had been dead when he arrived in Peking and the Chinese had returned his corpse to Hanoi immediately. There it had been embalmed in the greatest secrecy. All these rumors—nobody knew their origins—achieved a very wide circulation, and the cadres, who were well aware of them but themselves had no information concerning the President, did not know what to say or what sort of attitude to adopt.

During all this time a hectic exchange of letters was going on. Ho Chi Minh, in full disagreement with Hanoi, laid down his minimum conditions and refused to return unless he had first received full satisfaction. It is significant that he spent a month's "holiday" at Hankow. Then he waited until the commemoration of December 19th and the anniversary of the foundation of the Vietnamese People's Army (VPA), celebrated on December 22nd, had passed before he commenced his journey home. He arrived back in the capital only on December 24th, and he did not send his customary Christmas greeting to the
Catholics any more than he had done for the occasions of December 19th or 22nd. (Note by M. Tongas: It had always been his custom at this time of the year to send a message on December 19th to Dr. Tran Duy Hung, President of Hanoi Administrative Committee, and to General Vuong Thua Vu, the two instigators of the Hanoi uprising on December 19th, 1946; and on December 22nd he used to send another to Vo Nguyen Giap to mark the formation of the Vietnamese People's Army in that same year.) These three extremely important omissions—they were most untypical of his own habits and of those of the regime—were everywhere remarked upon and indicated a discernible change of attitude.

It must be recorded that the rumors about Ho Chi Minh which had received such a wide circulation, far from saddening the people, rather rejoiced their hearts that at least one of their tyrants had disappeared.

That is how the events of the fall and winter of 1957 appeared to a resident of Hanoi who enjoyed the elevated status of "foreign technician" and who boasted the acquaintance, if not the friendship, of senior members of the Lao Dong Party. Parts of the narrative, such as the second visit of Voroshilov, are puzzling, and there is a slight error—a matter of three days—in one of the dates, but the absence of press and radio mention of Ho Chi Minh has been found to be correct. Undoubtedly there is some truth in the account, and I entertain no doubts about the honesty or integrity of M. Tongas, whom I have met. It offers an explanation for the most curious behavior of DRV leaders during the period in question. The reader must decide for himself how much of it should be accepted. An additional piece of evidence, which M. Tongas appears not to have noticed, was the failure of the DRV press
and radio to mention the name of General Vo Nguyen Giap, the most pro-Soviet of the DRV leaders, during the whole period of Ho Chi Minh's absence. He was, however, mentioned again on the day following the return of the President. General Giap had not been a member of either of the DRV delegations which visited Moscow, and there is no record of his having left North Vietnam. His whereabouts during this momentous period remain a matter for speculation.

M. Tongas also failed to mention the one public meeting which was held in Hanoi for the visiting delegation from the Supreme Soviet, yet this too is revealing. The order of the DRV leaders on the platform was one which had never been witnessed before and which has not been repeated since. The first place was occupied by the senile Vice-President Ton Duc Thang, which appears reasonable since President Ho Chi Minh was abroad, but the second and third places were occupied by Truong Chinh and Nguyen Duy Trinh respectively and the fourth by Pham Van Dong. Now Pham Van Dong, the Premier, ought to have outranked Truong Chinh and Nguyen Duy Trinh since they are only Vice-Premiers; moreover Dong outranks Trinh in the Politburo of the Lao Dong Party. The principal speech was delivered by Nguyen Duy Trinh, and its content was singularly ill-chosen for a speech on a Soviet anniversary before a Soviet delegation unless it was the speaker's intention to insult the latter, for it quoted extensively from the works of Mao Tse-tung.

In Moscow the Declaration and Peace Manifesto were proclaimed, and the DRV delegation returned to Hanoi on November 28th without Ho Chi Minh. Le Duan made his report on the Moscow meeting to the Party Central Committee on December 4th, and the documents were formally approved
by the DRV government, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, and other bodies on the following day. Addressing a meeting of officials on December 7, Le Duan stated:

The Moscow documents have not only confirmed the line and created favorable conditions for North Vietnam to advance toward socialism, but have also shown the path of struggle for national liberation and have created favorable conditions for the revolutionary movement in South Vietnam.\(^{14}\)

It is difficult to assess the events which took place in North Vietnam during the latter half of 1957 and to place them in their true perspective. Certainly differences existed between the Soviet Union and China at the time, but Mao Tse-tung appeared to recognize the necessity for unity within the Communist bloc and the need for a single leader of the bloc. From all the available evidence he seemed quite prepared to allow the Soviet Union to be that leader, with the proviso that it must provide the right kind of leadership. For this reason it would be wrong to view what happened in North Vietnam in the same light as the same happenings would have to be viewed had they taken place in early 1963. There can be little doubt that very important divisions were present in the DRV leadership and that Ho Chi Minh's position was challenged, but the reasons are probably to be found in personal rivalries which existed between individual leaders, the relations which these men entertained with one another and with Chinese and Soviet leaders, and their personal ambitions as much as in the points of

\(^{14}\) VNA, Dec. 7, 1957.
dispute between the Soviet Union and China. The fact that the crisis came about at the very moment when North Vietnam made the decision to replace predominantly Chinese aid by predominantly Soviet and East European aid can scarcely be attributed to coincidence. More probably the crisis was brought about by that important reorientation and its effects upon existing dissensions within the leadership. But wherever the truth may lie, the return of Ho Chi Minh to Hanoi on December 24, 1957 and the reappearance of Vo Nguyen Giap offered convincing proof that differences had been resolved, the crisis had been averted, and a compromise solution had been reached even if only temporarily.

Party Unity Restored

A mark of the new stability in the DRV leadership was Ho Chi Minh's decision to visit India and Burma during February 1958, and his confidence was not misplaced, for all appeared to run smoothly during the early months of that year. New trade agreements were signed with the Soviet Union and China during March and April, while a middle-of-the-road political line was followed, with Premier Pham Van Dong informing the National Assembly that North Vietnam supported the Soviet initiative in stopping nuclear tests unilaterally and also supported the Chinese people's struggle to liberate Taiwan and smash the U. S. conspiracy of creating two Chinas. If the swing toward greater reliance upon the Soviet Union is reflected in the 26 slogans proclaimed

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15 New China News Agency (NCNA), Apr. 16, 1958.
for May Day,\textsuperscript{16} none of which referred specifically to China, it would be a mistake to attach too much importance to this. Perhaps the true position was best summed up by the National Assembly Deputy for Phu-yen, Comrade Tran Quynh. In his capacity as spokesman of the National Assembly's Political Sub-Committee he said:

Our firm international position is to stand in the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union. . . . This position proceeds from our people's fundamental interests and from the requirements of North Vietnam's advance towards socialism.\textsuperscript{17}

The new harmony was first disturbed by Yugoslavia, and the sequence of events was such as to make the DRV leaders appear a little foolish in the eyes of outside observers, which probably contributed some extra bitterness to the affair. In the latter part of April Tito was reelected President of Yugoslavia and Popović was reappointed Foreign Minister. President Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong, in his capacity as Foreign Minister, sent a joint cable in which they expressed the hope that Tito and Popović would achieve many new successes in the building of socialism in Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{18} It was unfortunate that only a few days later these high hopes were dashed by the announcement of the Yugoslav Draft Program, which North Vietnam felt obliged to attack. The daily newspaper of the Lao Dong Party published excerpts from an article, "Modern Revisionism Must be Criticized," which had appeared

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} VNA, Apr. 19, 1958.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., Apr. 27, 1958.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., Apr. 23, 1958.
\end{itemize}
in the Peking People's Daily three days earlier and in its own editorial wrote:

It is regrettable, however, that the position and viewpoints of the authors of that Draft Program have departed from Marxism-Leninism. They are the position and viewpoints of modern revisionism—no more, no less.

There followed an anti-Yugoslav campaign, of which abuse and invective are the most memorable features, and the Yugoslav Ambassador departed from Hanoi at the beginning of July.

Still greater strains were imposed on the DRV leadership by Soviet lack of enthusiasm for China's "great leap," her introduction of communes, and the flare-up in the Formosa Straits. Hanoi accorded high praise to China's actions, describing Chinese successes as "the results of the correct leadership of the CCP based on the creative application of Marxist-Leninist basic principles to the practical conditions of China." The communiqué issued after the Khrushchev-Mao Tse-tung talks was loudly acclaimed in North Vietnam, but Vietnamese comment revealed that her interpretation of this communiqué was very close to that of China. Indeed, NCNA quoted speeches made by several DRV leaders.

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21 This quotation was taken from a Nhan Dan editorial published on July 1, 1958, but it can be paralleled by numbers of others from newspapers, public speeches by DRV leaders, and radio broadcasts.
22 NCNA on Aug. 4, 1958 quoted from speeches by Hoang Quoc Viet, Tran Huu Duc, and Duong Duc Hien. On Aug. 5, 1958 the same agency quoted from speeches by Ton Duc Thang, Bui Ky, and Duong Bach Mai, and so on.
On August 24 the Lao Dong Party's publishing house, Su That, published a book describing the achievements of the Chinese people in the fields of agriculture, industry, culture, and education during the "great leap" movement. Throughout September and October full DRV support for China on the question of Taiwan was voiced ceaselessly in the press and radio, and much of it was repeated by NCNA. Even Vo Nguyen Giap, always the most guarded of the DRV leaders in voicing his support for China, threw aside his accustomed reticence when delivering a farewell speech to the Albanian military delegation which visited North Vietnam under the leadership of Defense Minister Balluku. Both the Vietnamese and Albanian peoples and armies, he said, "are always ready by the side of the CPR in its struggle to recover Quemoy and Matsu, and to liberate Taiwan." 

Evidence of this kind might appear to suggest that North Vietnam had moved closer to China than ever before and was wholeheartedly committed to the support of Chinese actions and policies, but such was not the case. Despite the outpourings of written and spoken words, what actually took place in North Vietnam showed that it had no intention of adopting a "great leap" campaign herself and never attempted to introduce communes. This was the first instance of the DRV technique, which was later to become familiar, of responding to pressure from the Soviet Union or China by offering verbal support but taking no action. It is very probable, although not a scrap of evidence has so far come to light


which would corroborate it, that Ho Chi Minh was secretly reassuring the Soviet leaders, explaining that North Vietnam was supporting China only with empty words, while her actions proved that she had not been taken in by Maoist innovations.