COMMUNISM IN NORTH VIETNAM: ITS ROLE

IN THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE

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Chapter 4

THE DIFFICULT MIDDLE PATH

Following the Middle Road

While justifying Cambodia's neutralist stand in the struggle going on in the world between East and West, Prince Norodom Sihanouk once said, "When elephants fight, then the ant must stand aside." North Vietnam must feel dwarfed like an ant while the Soviet Union and China are engaged in a struggle against one another, but it is not always possible for her to stand aside. She would seem to have reached the conclusion that the next safest spot is the neutral ground between the combatants, and this is the place she invariably seeks to occupy. However, even an ant has to attend to the running of his own ant hill. His principal concern while the two Communist giants are locked in combat is almost certainly for the safety of his ant hill, and his efforts will be directed to ensuring that neither combatant damages or destroys it.

This analogy provides a fairly accurate description of DRV behavior from late 1958 until the present time. She has on more than one occasion been subjected to pressures from either side, has been cajoled or threatened, has had to face demands from visiting delegates which have sometimes been embarrassing, has had to participate in international Communist meetings, and so on. Throughout she has sought to avoid
causing offense to either the Soviet Union or China and, at the same time, to extract the maximum benefit for North Vietnam from their dispute; but always the primary consideration has been to preserve her own independence and freedom of action. Nevertheless it should not be forgotten that Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues are Communist political leaders and, like all politicians the world over, will spare no effort to remain in power. Any weakening of the Communist bloc would inevitably weaken their own authority in North Vietnam and would encourage their opponents. Consequently, the Vietnamese Communist leadership has a very real interest in upholding the strength of communism in the world, an interest which stems more from personal considerations than ideological conviction. This factor exercises an important influence upon the actions and policies of North Vietnam.

Unlike the previous year, 1958 saw the anniversary of the October Revolution celebrated in North Vietnam with considerable pomp and circumstance. There were mass meetings, addresses by Communist leaders, theatrical performances, film shows, banners, press and radio tributes, and the rest. Pham Van Dong, in his dual capacity as DRV Premier and member of the Politburo, wrote an article for the newspaper Nhan Dan in which he described the Vietnamese August revolution as a "tributary" of the October Revolution. Later in November the Su That Publishing House produced the first volume of the first edition of Mao Tse-tung's Selected Works in Vietnamese, and Nhan Dan described Mao's writing as "classics of Marxism-Leninism linked with the practice of the Chinese revolution." The balance was being maintained.

1Quoted by VNA, Nov. 7, 1958.
Closer relations with Albania seemed to occupy an important place in the minds of the DRV leadership during the closing months of 1958. In October an Albanian military delegation visited North Vietnam, and its leader, Defense Minister Balluku, made an important speech in Hanoi during the course of which he said, "Although standing at two opposite ends of the socialist camp, Albania and North Vietnam are close to one another in a common struggle against the enemies of Marxism-Leninism and for a socialist life." Referring to imperialist attempts to divide the socialist front and the international Communist movement, he criticized the modern revisionism of the Tito clique, which, he added, has shown itself "very skilled in the service of the US dollar."2 A protocol on cultural cooperation to implement in 1959 and 1960 the provisions of the long-term cultural agreement, concluded in Tirana the previous year during Ho Chi Minh's visit to Albania, was signed in Hanoi on November 24. The document provided for exchanges of delegations, scholars and students, research material, and literature.3 In the course of a banquet in honor of Albania's National Day Premier Pham Van Dong congratulated the Albanian people on their achievements and their ceaseless efforts against the plots of imperialists and revisionists.4

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3 Ibid., Nov. 25, 1958.
4 Ibid.
Meanwhile, to the accompaniment of surprisingly little propaganda, the important business of building up the North Vietnamese economy with the help of foreign aid was proceeding. Chinese technicians began arriving early in August to commence work on the construction of consumer goods enterprises,⁵ and the completion of a broadcasting and receiving station for the Post Office was announced at the end of the same month.⁶ In December a trade protocol was signed with the Soviet Union which provided for a 70 per cent greater exchange of goods during 1959 than during 1958.⁷ Agreements governing Soviet technical and economic aid to North Vietnam as well as scientific and technical cooperation were signed in March,⁸ and trading exchanges with China were increased by mutual consent later that month.⁹

North Vietnamese Problems

Whatever progress was being made in the field of industrialization in North Vietnam—and there is ample evidence that this failed to come up to expectations—the results of the collectivization of agriculture and the imposition of a socialist pattern upon the country made it perfectly plain by 1959 that North Vietnam was showing no signs of achieving economic self-sufficiency. The demands of the North Vietnamese

⁵VNA, Aug. 1, 1958.
people were not great and did not extend to luxury goods or even the kind of consumer goods which are considered necessities in the more advanced bloc countries. Nevertheless they required food and clothing, peasants could not work in the fields unless they were enabled to replace worn out implements, and households demanded a basic minimum of domestic utensils for cooking and eating. It was proving impossible to satisfy even these modest demands, the major problem being food.

Ho Chi Minh had never entertained any hopes of being able to conclude satisfactory agreements concerning the reunification of Vietnam with President Ngo Dinh Diem, but he clearly hoped—and not without good grounds—that Diem's regime would be overthrown and replaced by a government which would prove more amenable. The first requirement of North Vietnam from South Vietnam was food, for North Vietnam had long been a food deficit area. By 1959 it had become obvious that, thanks to generous United States aid, President Diem had consolidated his position and had effectively silenced most of the opposition to his regime, and that North Vietnam was not going to obtain any of South Vietnam's food surplus in the foreseeable future unless she adopted new methods. Moreover hopes of acquiring food from other bloc countries were nonexistent, for agriculture has always been the weakest point of communism and no bloc country had any surplus to export to North Vietnam.

The desperate and increasing food shortage led the DRV leadership to decide—probably at the meeting of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party held in May 1959—to change its tactics toward South Vietnam and to revert to the technique which had served it so well during the
war against France, the "people's war." By using this technique, of which the Vietnamese Communists are the most skillful and experienced practitioners in the world, they hoped to subvert the government of South Vietnam and procure its overthrow while not ostensibly engaging in warfare against that state. The decision was not without risks for both North Vietnam and the entire Communist bloc, but doubtless Ho Chi Minh had discussed the matter with Soviet leaders during his visit to Moscow to attend the Twenty-First Congress of the CPSU and with the Chinese leaders during his stopover in Peking. Thus by the middle of 1959 North Vietnam was committed to the waging of an armed struggle in South Vietnam the objective of which was the overthrow of President Ngo Dinh Diem's regime.

It was a war from which disengagement would be difficult for a number of reasons, the most important being that once the struggle had commenced, any withdrawal would entail the abandonment of North Vietnam's supporters in South Vietnam. Since if these people were abandoned it would be impossible to enlist their support for any subsequent campaign, the North Vietnamese Communists found themselves fighting a war from which they could not disengage, whatever reactions the fighting in South Vietnam might provoke. For this reason Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues could not afford to allow any of the international congresses of Communist parties to condemn the waging of local wars. Because the Soviet Union has always shown herself to be more aware than China of

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10 For an excellent description of this type of warfare see George K. Tanham, Communist Revolutionary Warfare (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962).
the disastrous consequences of nuclear war, or at least has permitted her policies to be more obviously directed toward the avoidance of situations in which there was a risk of nuclear war, the North Vietnam decision to wage armed struggle against the authorities of South Vietnam, even if initially approved by the Soviet Union, still contained in it the risk of possible differences between North Vietnam and the Soviet Union at some future date, particularly if the war went the wrong way for North Vietnam. Signs that such differences were in fact developing became apparent during 1962.

The Middle Road Again

The Twenty-First Congress of the CPSU was attended by Ho Chi Minh himself, and there are many indications that the business of the Congress made a deep impression on the North Vietnamese Communists. On his return to Hanoi Ho Chi Minh addressed a large open air meeting and spoke of the "brilliant success" of the Congress and the "great significance" of the Soviet seven-year plan. An important article in the Lao Dong Party theoretical journal, Hoc Tap, emphasized that the Congress had laid down the rules for the transformation to communism when it stated:

In order to achieve communism and practice the principle of distribution according to needs, a transitional stage is indispensable—the socialist phase—in which the ideological and material tasks of communism are systematically secured.

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At about the same time Premier Pham Van Dong was voicing his support for the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in the Far East, a policy which Khrushchev had strongly advocated in the speech he made to the Twenty-First Congress of the CPSU:

The Vietnamese people and the government of North Vietnam warmly approve and fully support Comrade Khrushchev’s statement on the need to establish in the Far East and all over the Pacific area a peace zone and, first of all, a zone free from atomic weapons.

Early in July Ho Chi Minh again flew to Moscow, where he remained for almost two months, an exceptionally long absence on the part of a head of state who controls the government and party as closely as he does. The reason stated in the press was that Ho had gone to spend his summer holiday in the Soviet Union, but the length of his trip and its timing make this more than a little doubtful. There is no clue to be found in DRV newspapers or radio broadcasts which would divulge the true reason for the visit, but, since Khrushchev was to visit the United States in September and Ho Chi Minh did not leave the Soviet Union until August 20, it seems likely that the two discussed the Soviet leader’s American trip. Doubtless Soviet aid to North Vietnam and the commencement of the armed struggle in South Vietnam also featured their talks. Ho spent four days in Peking before returning to Hanoi, during the course of which he met Liu Shao-chi, Chou En-lai, Chen Yi, and other Chinese leaders. Once again, published and broadcast materials offer

no information about what was discussed, but when Ho reached Hanoi on August 25, all the outward signs indicated that North Vietnam was successfully maintaining good relations with both the Soviet Union and China.

Chinese anger was stirred by Khrushchev's visit to the United States and particularly by his talks with Eisenhower at Camp David. There can be little doubt that the principal reason for his sudden decision to visit Peking to attend the celebrations for the tenth anniversary of the Communist regime was to placate Mao and the other Chinese leaders. Despite the very strained atmosphere in China at the time, or more probably on account of it, Ho Chi Minh also attended these celebrations in person, and the role he played was that of the conciliator. In public he praised Mao and the CPR, saying "Vietnam and China are two brother countries having close relations like lips and teeth," but this was after all a Chinese anniversary. Behind the scenes he probably played an important part in allaying the mutual suspicion and antagonism which existed between Khrushchev and Mao.

North Vietnam celebrated the 1959 Chinese anniversary with all the usual ceremonies but also added a program of specially organized talks on the Chinese people's "great leap forward," held in all parts of the country, and the publication in Vietnam of some works by Mao and other Chinese writers. Three weeks later a similar program was prepared for the forty-second anniversary of the October Revolution, the theme for the talks on that occasion being "Helping Vietnamese to Understand

\[15\text{NCNA, Sept. 29, 1959.}\]
\[16\text{VNA, Sept. 27, 1959.}\]
Better the Historic Lessons of the Revolution.  

These were intentionally transparent tactics to demonstrate to both the Soviet Union and China that North Vietnam did not wish to be dragged into a dispute by either side but wanted to maintain friendly relations with both.

Impartiality remained the constant factor in all DRV actions and pronouncements over the following months. November saw Nhan Dan defending "the Soviet Union's unswerving policy of peace and peaceful coexistence" in a long editorial and, a week later, celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of Albanian liberation. Even the eightieth anniversary of Stalin's birth, though it must have taxed Vietnamese ingenuity, did not find them wanting, and the lengthy Nhan Dan article was a masterpiece of diplomacy. After describing him as an outstanding leader of the revolutionary workers' movement in the Soviet Union and the world, of the CPSU and the Soviet State, and an outstanding theoretician of Marxism-Leninism, the paper recalled that Stalin played a decisive role in the struggle against the White Guards and the Foreign interventionists and showed a firm resolution to abide by the teachings of Lenin concerning the line of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. Stalin's errors in later life were set out, but only in order to demonstrate how the CPSU, with "great determination and courage," had corrected them and achieved "splendid results." Khrushchev's announcement of cuts in the Soviet armed forces was hailed as proof of his determination to achieve peace, and the full measure of indignation was expressed over the U-2 affair.

18 Nhan Dan, Nov. 22, 1959.
19 Ibid., Dec. 21, 1959.
Sino-Soviet Differences

Differences between the Soviet Union and China became more acute than before in the early summer of 1960 and centered around the question of peaceful coexistence. In May Khrushchev heaped scorn on rumors that "other socialist countries" were demanding that the Soviet Union abandon her policy of détente, and the Soviet press in early June dismissed Chinese criticisms of peaceful coexistence and launched vigorous attacks on "left sectarians." It is possible to assess the degree of bitterness by comparing statements made by the two sides. The Soviet disarmament proposal, which was made on June 2, asserted that the "goal ... of banishing war from the life of human society altogether" had become practicable, had become possible to achieve. The People's Daily, however, stated: "To spread any impractical illusion about peace will only lull the vigilance of the masses," and Liu Chang-shen described the Soviet proposition as an "unrealistic illusion." The Congress of the Romanian party at Bucharest offered an opportunity for a confrontation, and Khrushchev, who attended in person, strongly reasserted the Soviet position and countered the Chinese attacks upon it. Although the Chinese delegate was more restrained in his speech to the gathering, he made it clear that China had no intention of retreating from her positions. The communiqué issued at the conclusion of the meeting disclosed every sign.

20 For typical examples, see Soviet Russia, June 10, 1960 and Pravda, June 12, 1960.


22 Speech by Liu Chang-shen, NCNA, June 8, 1960.
of a compromise reached after some hard bargaining, but Chinese and
Soviet statements subsequently made it clear that the dispute continued unabated.

North Vietnam generally subscribed to Soviet statements on peaceful coexistence until the meeting of the Warsaw Pact in February 1960, when the true depth of the difference between Soviet and Chinese views seems to have become apparent to the Vietnamese leaders. Thereafter they carefully eschewed favorable comment about peaceful coexistence but with equal care avoided subscribing to the Chinese thesis that condonation of the imperialists' "peace tactics" would adversely affect the revolutionary zeal of "peoples' struggles." Conflicting arguments put forward by the Soviet Union and China on the occasion of Lenin's Day in April were completely ignored by North Vietnam, which failed to publish or broadcast statements made by either side. Indeed, the issues of war and peace might not have existed at all to judge by the contents of _Nhan Dan_ and—even more surprisingly— _Hoc Tap_.

It is interesting to note at this point that most foreign observers of Communist affairs had already developed their own techniques for assessing the positions taken up by Communist parties other than those of the Soviet Union and China. These generally consisted of studying all the statements of the parties on the most important issue of the moment—in this case the question of peaceful coexistence—and of branding them pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese on the basis of whether they had supported or attacked the contention of either side. Not unnaturally the foreign observers noticed that North Vietnam had supported peaceful coexistence until February 1960 and had then ceased to do so,
a phenomenon which was then construed as meaning that North Vietnam had been pro-Soviet until that date and had subsequently transferred her allegiance to China. Without doubt they were correct in their classification of most other parties by this means, but they had assumed that every party must be a supporter of either China or the Soviet Union, and their technique took no account of the possibility that a Communist party might choose to remain neutral or uncommitted. For that reason their assessment of the position of the Lao Dong Party was incorrect and has usually continued to be incorrect up to the present time.

Le Duan, who led the DRV delegation to the Bucharest Congress, witnessed the clash between the Soviet and Chinese viewpoints and must certainly have been aware of the arguments going on between the two sides in private over the wording of the final communiqué, yet he adhered steadfastly to the neutral line which his party had elected to follow. Ignoring the major issues which were being debated, he made a speech devoted entirely to Rumanian and Vietnamese affairs. Subsequently Nhan Dan published an article on the Rumanian Congress reflecting the neutral attitude of North Vietnam but laying some stress on the need for bloc unity,23 and a speech which Premier Pham Van Dong made to the National Assembly on the same subject was little more than a paraphrase of the final communiqué. That the Lao Dong Party was deeply concerned about the Sino-Soviet differences is indicated by the long delay before it issued its own statement about the Congress, a document which did not appear until August 14. The statement failed to make any

23Nhan Dan, June 28, 1960.
mention of either revisionism or dogmatism and, like the earlier _Nhan Dan_ article, stressed the need for unity, promising that the Lao Dong Party would "do its best to contribute" to the "unity of mind" of bloc parties.  

However much the Vietnamese Communists may have wished to avoid taking sides in the Sino-Soviet dispute, the internal situation of Vietnam imposed some restrictions upon the attitudes which it was possible for them to adopt. Because North Vietnam was committed to the armed struggle going on in South Vietnam, the party statement was obliged to limit its remarks about the inevitability of war to the simple pronouncement that there were increasing possibilities of averting world war, which made its standpoint very close to that of China. Not only did it refrain from making any mention of peaceful coexistence, but it also omitted the Bucharest communiqué's statement that the struggle for peace was the main task. Curiously enough, the Vietnamese party's statement was reproduced in full in TASS bulletins and published by _Pravda_ but, despite its apparent slight leaning toward China, was completely ignored in China, a happening which may have been brought about by the secret visit which Ho Chi Minh paid to Moscow on the very day the Lao Dong Party statement was issued.

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Preparations for the forthcoming Third Congress of the Lao Dong Party were nearing completion at the time of Ho's visit to Moscow, a trip which would have remained unknown in the outside world—but not, one imagines, in Peking—if it had not been for the apparent carelessness of the Hungarian news agency MTI and the newspaper Népszabadság, which reported his presence at the Hungarian Exhibition in Moscow on August 15, 1960. Possibly the fact that Ho made no appearances in North Vietnam between August 3 and August 24 would have been noticed, but the reasons for his absence could only have been guessed at. Certainly the most plausible explanation for his secret trip in the light of subsequent events—although of course there is no evidence to prove that this is the correct one—is that Ho Chi Minh went to the Soviet Union to conclude an agreement with Khrushchev. Since the behavior of both the Soviet Union and China after the Bucharest Congress suggested that neither was prepared to make concessions to the other, their differences would be hotly disputed at the next Congress to take place, and that chanced to be the Lao Dong Party Congress at Hanoi.

A mark of the rapid deterioration in relations between the Soviet Union and China was the latter's readiness to embarrass the Soviets in full view of non-Communists. The International Congress of Orientalists held a meeting in the Soviet capital which lasted from August 9 until August 16, 1960 and a delegation of Chinese scholars was scheduled to attend. The Chinese failed to appear in Moscow and offered no explanation for their absence. Indeed, the Soviets had not been informed in
advance of the Chinese decision to boycott the Congress and were unaware that they would not be coming. When the Chinese failed to arrive, the Soviet organizers were left to explain to the foreign delegates, the great majority of whom were from non-Communist countries, the reasons for the Chinese absence, and they were not even sent a telegram with a bogus excuse which they might show to the visitors.

In such circumstances it is reasonable to suppose that Khrushchev would seek to muster the maximum support for the Soviet Union. Since the Vietnamese party had remained neutral at Bucharest, it was necessary for Khrushchev to make a special effort to secure Vietnamese support, particularly since the Vietnamese would be responsible for the organization of the Congress, the agenda, the order of speaking, the reporting of proceedings, and so on. In order to win this support in Hanoi, Khrushchev would have to strike a bargain with Ho Chi Minh whereby he would supply the latter with something he badly wanted.

Ho Chi Minh for his part needed nothing so much as massive aid and technical assistance for North Vietnam's industrialization, which, as was to become apparent from the five-year plan announced at the Vietnamese Congress, he intended to push forward at a very fast pace. That Khrushchev did promise such aid is indicated by the vast scale of industrialization envisaged by this plan. It is also significant that Mukhitdinov, the leader of the Soviet delegation to the Congress, went to see Ho immediately after his arrival at Gia-lam airport on August 31 and delivered to him a personal letter from Khrushchev, the contents of which have never been disclosed. Speaking at a Hanoi public meeting on September 1, Mukhitdinov declared the intention of the Soviet government
and party to increase Soviet cooperation with North Vietnam, while Vo Nguyen Giap in his address to the Congress said: "At present, economic construction has become the central task of the party." The same theme was repeated in a number of the speeches.

Space does not permit a detailed analysis of all the statements made in the course of the Hanoi Congress, but the general pattern of behavior was established at the public meeting held in Hanoi on September 1, and it will suffice to record briefly what happened that evening. Pham Van Dong's opening speech, for all its caution, moved away from the earlier neutral position of North Vietnam and closer to that of the Soviet Union. In it he stated:

Nowadays the Soviet Union and other socialist countries are successfully building socialism and communism and have become an invincible force. Along with peace-loving people all over the world, they are able to prevent war, to check the bloodstained hands of the imperialists, preserve peace, and save mankind from a new world war, a nuclear war.

Dong went on to define the present era as one of "transition from capitalism to socialism," the Soviet phrase, and did not use the Chinese phrase "imperialism and proletarian revolution." He also praised "the policy of peaceful coexistence of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp" but ignored the proposal for a nuclear-free zone in the Far East and a Pacific peace pact. This omission was particularly significant because Chou En-lai had laid heavy stress upon it during the April

meeting of the National People's Congress, and China devoted much publicity to it in the months preceding the Vietnamese Party Congress. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, appeared to have lost interest in the plan. In the month of August North Vietnam had on several occasions expressed support for it, but now Pham Van Dong failed to make any mention of it.

Mukhitdinov spoke next and stated the Soviet case with some vigor. "The foreign policy of the Soviet Union," he said,

"aims at ensuring a lasting peace among nations, eliminating the cold war, and ending the armaments race. The policy is winning warm support from the working people throughout the world because it reflects their fundamental interests. The Soviet Union undertakes to create conditions for eliminating the possibilities of provoking war. The clear and concrete proposals of the Soviet government on general and complete disarmament, put forward in various speeches by Premier Khrushchev, is the correct way to create a favorable atmosphere in international relations."

He was followed by Li Fu-chun, the leader of the Chinese delegation, who talked of the "comradeship in arms between the Chinese and Vietnamese peoples" and devoted the greater part of his speech to reiterating the various factors which bound China and Vietnam together.

The treatment accorded to these three speakers by the Soviet, Chinese, and Vietnamese news agencies is interesting, and it too set a pattern for the reporting of the Vietnamese Congress. Pham Van Dong's speech was reported by all three agencies, but NCNA omitted his references to the possibility of avoiding war. TASS and VNA reported
Mukhitdinov's speech, but NCNA made no mention of it. NCNA reported Li Fu-chun's speech in full, but VNA simply named him as a speaker, giving no details of what he said, although the agency reported separately on the other main speeches. The TASS report of the meeting omitted Li Fu-chun altogether. Of the Congress speeches perhaps the most significant was Le Duc Tho's report on the revision of the party constitution, in which he launched an outspoken attack on dogmatism, although he restricted his remarks to the Lao Dong Party. He said,

Dogmatism is quite serious among the leading cadres at all levels. It is most readily observed in the mechanical study and application of foreign experiences. . . . Dogmatism has limited the creative power of the party and the masses, has hampered the development of the wisdom and experience of our whole party.

An analysis of all the Vietnamese speeches made before, during, and after the Hanoi Congress leaves no room for doubt that North Vietnam had shifted its previous position and had moved closer to the Soviet Union. It is true that no Vietnamese speaker attacked Chinese policies directly, but this has never been a Vietnamese practice. Indeed, North Vietnam has never directly attacked any other Communist state with the single exception of Yugoslavia. Neither has it ever aligned itself irrevocably with one of the two Communist giants involved in the dispute, for Ho Chi Minh is far too experienced and able a politician to make an elementary mistake of that kind. Instead its practice has been to accord praise to the policies of one of the parties while saying as little as is consistent with the minimum standards of
politeness about the other. That is what was done on the occasion of
the Hanoi Congress, with support being voiced for Soviet policies and
comparatively little mention being made of the Chinese position. Within
the limitations of political behavior which have come to be associated
with North Vietnam, it may fairly be said to have swung to the Soviet
side in early September 1960. This impression is strengthened by the
manner in which VNA reported the Congress. The agency reported Viet­
namese and Soviet speakers fully, but devoted less space to Chinese
speakers and, on one or two occasions, omitted to report them at all.
Soviet attacks on the Chinese positions were faithfully reported,
while Chinese attacks tended to be edited out.

In retrospect the Hanoi Congress shows every indication of a
secret agreement having been concluded between Ho Chi Minh and
Khrushchev. Ho had nothing to offer except the support of North Viet­
nam, and this he appears to have given to the Soviet Union within the
limits of political prudence. In return Khrushchev would seem to have
offered promises of technical aid, which North Vietnam badly needed for
her industrialization. It is difficult to understand how North Vietnam
could seriously have approved a five-year plan envisaging so vast and
rapid an increase in industrial construction unless she had first re­
ceived assurances of sufficient technical assistance from the Soviet
Union to carry it out.

The extent of Chinese isolation during the weeks following the
Hanoi Congress was underlined on the occasion of China's National Day,
Albania being the only country of the Communist bloc to send a delega­
tion to Peking to participate in the celebrations. In contrast with
every other year since 1949, Pravda failed to publish an editorial com-
memorating the anniversary, and messages from other bloc countries were
noticeably cool, all of them pointing out to the Chinese the advantages
of cooperation. Polite as always, North Vietnam dispatched a message
which expressed thanks for Chinese aid, but the whole text evinced a
marked lack of enthusiasm and expressed no more encouraging sentiment
than an assurance that China's achievements had "greatly encouraged
the national democratic movement."

Although it is possible for able politicians, by a judicious
choice of words and through frequent resorts to ambiguity, to leave
others in some doubt about the precise meaning of their statements or
policies, the practical application of these policies often tends to
be uncomfortably revealing. This was a lesson which the Vietnamese
Communists were learning in the all too practical activity of agricul-
tural collectivization. A recipient of agricultural aid from both
China and the Soviet Union, North Vietnam had carried through a Maoist
agrarian reform, presumably arguing that the similarity of local condi-
tions in the Vietnamese and Chinese countryside made this most suitable,
and had proceeded through the progressive stages of mutual aid teams,
low-level cooperatives, and so on. By the late summer of 1960 she
found herself in the embarrassing situation of having to reveal to
Chinese and Soviet agricultural advisers whether or not she proposed
to copy the model of the Chinese communes. The avoidance of the term
commune, since it patently displeased the Soviets, did not prove too
difficult, but the practical organization of these collective units of-
fered no such easy escape. It was Ho Chi Minh himself who provided the
solution when he announced that, "at the present time the state farm is the future image of the agricultural cooperative." The use of the term "state farm" suggested that North Vietnamese agriculture was being developed along Soviet lines and was modeling itself upon Soviet state farms. However, he went on to say that the state farms would also operate processing plants for their agricultural products and would "supply industry (presumably home industry) as well as raw materials and products for fraternal countries." Other press and radio pronouncements made it clear that the state farms were going to develop their own militias, would possess an industrial function, and would embody an unspecified degree of communal living, all of which are attributes peculiar to Chinese communes.

This typically Vietnamese ambiguity appears to have satisfied both the Soviet Union and China. The former would have found it difficult to object to a system of agricultural development which used current Soviet terms, while the latter could scarcely criticize something so closely resembling her own communes even if the name was not used. The example of agricultural collectivization has been chosen because it illustrates the kind of problem which DRV leaders were constantly encountering in so many spheres on account of the differences which existed between China and the Soviet Union. They found themselves driven to seeking solutions which were not always ideal for their own immediate internal problems but which were calculated to avoid causing offense to either China or the Soviet Union. Again, the establishment

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28Ibid.
of state farms with commune attributes reveals the sort of deceit and ambiguity to which the Vietnamese had to resort. It must have been a humiliating experience for them, but one which they were obliged to undergo if they hoped to continue to maintain friendly relations with both Communist bloc leaders.

And there was no respite from these pin pricks. They were ever present in virtually every sphere of activity, and, however hard the Vietnamese might try to avoid offending their troublesome partners by passing over matters in discreet silence, either the Soviet Union or China would almost invariably call attention to anything which it construed as a move in its support. Peking Radio, for example, announced on November 2, 1960 that the fourth volume of Mao's works had been put on sale in Hanoi on October 28 and went on to describe how large numbers of eager Vietnamese crowded the bookshops and quickly bought up the entire edition. Failure to offer this book for sale would have offended the Chinese, so the Vietnamese did place it in the bookshops, but they would have sought to avoid publicity for their action lest the Soviet Union take offense. Neither Hanoi Radio in its domestic or foreign broadcasts nor VNA made any mention of the book, but Peking delightedly seized upon the incident and tossed it into the area of the dispute. The North Vietnamese leaders could hardly be blamed if they conceived a heartfelt, if carefully concealed, dislike of both the Soviet Union and China for thus complicating their lives and increasing the difficulty of every problem.
A fresh crisis in the Sino-Soviet dispute arose in November 1960 when the delegations from 81 Communist parties met in a congress at Moscow. In the course of this meeting it became apparent to all that the gulf dividing the two countries was too wide to be bridged. Moreover the Soviets made no secret of their intention to force other Communist parties to make their choice between themselves and the Chinese. In the words of one commentator,

Some parties wanted to patch up a compromise "for fear that similar differences might arise in their own parties," but this would not do. It was impossible for the two views to be reconciled. A choice had to be made, a clear verdict given.  

The questions at issue and the discussion of them which took place are now too well known to require repeating here, but the heat of the disputes and the obvious danger of a top-to-bottom split in the world Communist movement must have been sources of profound disquiet to the DRV delegation led by Ho Chi Minh. It was no longer the moment for placatory verbal ambiguities, for judicious swaying from one side to another in order to preserve a balance which would

produce maximum benefits for North Vietnam. If a schism were to divide communism, then North Vietnam would be among the first of its victims. The danger was real and immediate, and there is every indication that Ho Chi Minh devoted all his efforts in Moscow to attempts at mediation.31

A drafting committee was set up and given the task of producing a final declaration which would satisfy both the Soviet Union and China. Because of the uncompromising Soviet attitude this must have been an undertaking of the utmost difficulty involving lengthy and embittered debate. The details of the committee's proceedings have--understandably--never been disclosed, but there is reason to believe that its final success was due in no small measure to the help it received from Ho Chi Minh, whose long experience and proven ability in the political arena must have been tested to the limit. The document which the drafting committee produced could have satisfied nobody completely, but it did offer an alternative to splitting the Communist world into two hostile factions, and as such it was accepted by all the participating parties.

In the opinion of Zagoria the final declaration was:

... not a real compromise of Soviet and Chinese views, but a collation of them. While the document, in its broad outlines, must be regarded as a Soviet "victory," its ambiguities and qualifications were so numerous that it could hardly serve as a guide for any of the Communist parties. Both the Soviet Union and China could and did derive different conclusions.

from it. The ostensible Soviet victory was thus bought at the very heavy price of an unworkable compromise which served clearly to demonstrate that the Soviets were no longer able unilaterally to dictate law for the entire international Communist movement. 32

Zagoria's judgement was confirmed by the Belgian Communist Party Politburo, which stated that the final declaration was

... so loaded ... that it was possible to quote from it to support the statement, the defense, and the application of political views diametrically opposed and often outrageously divergent. ... 33

If the immediate danger had been averted, this had been accomplished only at the cost of an unsatisfactory statement which permitted the two parties to the dispute to continue along their divergent courses, a solution which delayed the day of reckoning but which ensured that the reckoning would be infinitely more difficult and disastrous when it eventually arrived.

As far as North Vietnam was concerned the acceptance of the final declaration by the assembled representatives of 81 Communist parties in Moscow was a matter for uninhibited rejoicing. The danger of a split in the Communist movement had been removed, if only temporarily, and North Vietnam was still free to continue on her carefully charted course between the Soviet Union and China. An overwhelming feeling of relief is reflected in the almost hysterical reception of the news


in Hanoi. From December 6 onward Hanoi Radio broadcast the whole statement, parts of the statement, comments on the statement, praise for the statement interminably, day after day, completely upsetting the normal schedule of broadcasting. Its daily programs read at dictation speed were lengthened and devoted exclusively to publicizing the statement so that the glad tidings should reach everybody as quickly as possible. Praise for the statement was fulsome and lavish in the extreme, and no adjective was considered too extravagant by the broadcasters and journalists. Since the contents of the final declaration alone could scarcely have provided anyone with cause for rejoicing, one is obliged to conclude that this hysteria in North Vietnam was occasioned by the feeling of having escaped disaster by a hairbreadth, which must have been shared by all the DRV leaders. No other explanation will account for the behavior of Hanoi Radio at that time.

The reactions of the ill-informed peasant or worker to the extraordinary outburst must remain a mystery. It should be remembered that no publication and no radio broadcast inside North Vietnam had yet so much as hinted that anything other than complete unanimity of view on all questions existed between governments and parties of the Communist bloc. In his book mentioned earlier M. Tongas\(^\text{34}\) showed that the North Vietnamese man in the street was not as aware of differences between Communists as might be imagined by outside observers, but the prevailing absence of factual news made him susceptible to rumors. He

\(^{34}\) Tongas, op. cit.
must surely have suspected that something of major import had taken place in Moscow, but we have no information about the nature of the interpretations he may have put on it.

While all DRV newspapers carried daily articles praising the final statement and describing the unbridled joy with which the news of it was received by the population, Nhan Dan published an important article commenting on the document and apparently reflecting the considered views of the party. The most striking feature of the article is the similarity between its language and that of a People's Daily article on the same subject which was published in China on the same day. Although the Moscow final declaration made no reference to China as one of the two largest countries of the socialist camp and did not mention the need for strengthening unity and solidarity between the Soviet Union and China, the North Vietnamese and Chinese articles did both of these things. Both interpreted the declaration as an appeal for increased struggle throughout the world, stressing its "fighting aspects" and its call for "joint struggles." Such similarities are too great to be attributed to pure coincidence and indicate joint discussions of the Moscow declaration by Chinese and Vietnamese leaders. Possibly this interpretation of the document was part of the price demanded of Ho Chi Minh by the Chinese for their agreement to accept it.

After appealing for "solidarity and unity of mind" among the member states of the bloc and among their Communist and workers parties

the Nhan Dan editorial continued:

The Soviet Union is the mightiest country in the socialist camp and the CPSU is the most experienced vanguard party of the international Communist movement. At the same time, the Soviet Union and China are the two largest countries in the socialist bloc, and the CPSU and the CCP are the two largest and most responsible parties in the international Communist movement. For that reason particular importance should be attached to the strengthening of the solidarity and unity of mind between the Soviet Union and China.

The fact that these two countries and their parties were singled out for special comment could indicate to those North Vietnamese readers experienced in reading between the lines of the Communist press that all was not well between them, but whether or not it was understood in this fashion by the readers of Nhan Dan, it must be accounted the first public reference in North Vietnam to the existence of important Sino-Soviet differences.

All DRV references to peaceful coexistence from the second half of 1959 onward have had to be couched in language implying that the war going on in South Vietnam was entirely justifiable, for, although the Vietnamese Communists may shrug their shoulders at the West and deny any responsibility for the fighting, such an attitude on their part would not be accepted for one moment by other Communist countries. It is therefore interesting to examine the Nhan Dan editorial in order to see how it disposed of this thorny question. The argument is somewhat tortuous and runs along the lines that peaceful coexistence and the development of indigenous revolutions in capitalist countries should be practiced simultaneously because "peaceful coexistence is a
form of the class struggle between socialism and capitalism." In "colonial and dependent territories" the revolutionary struggle should take two forms, "peaceful and nonpeaceful," and all efforts must be directed toward "strengthening the united national front." Only after such an introduction does the editorial go on to imply that since the United States is building up an aggressive military base in South Vietnam the war there is entirely consistent with a policy of peace because it is being fought to "prevent the warlike imperialists from launching a world war..." After this example of verbal sleight of hand Nhan Dan went on to argue that "all schemes of war preparation by imperialism should be resolutely smashed."

Some weeks later, when there had been time for the initial Hanoi hysteria to abate and the press and radio campaign to end, Nhan Dan published a further editorial on the same subject under the unwieldy title, "Under the Banner of the Moscow Statement and of the Resolution of our Party Congress, Let Us Unite and Endeavor to Lead Our People's Revolutionary Cause to Complete Victory." On this occasion the polemics had been dropped, together with argumentation concerning peaceful coexistence, and the writer's attention was concentrated upon the more important questions of bloc unity and North Vietnam's maintenance of good relations with both the Soviet Union and China. It stated:

We should close the ranks of the world's Communist parties around the CPSU, the most experienced contingent, which was

the first to have carried high the victorious banner of proletarian revolution and has been marching in the van in the building of socialism and communism. We should unceasingly strengthen our solidarity with the CCP, which has recorded great successes in leading the 650 million Chinese people to carry out the national democratic revolution and to win great achievements in building socialism in one of the biggest countries in the world.

It is apparent that after the stormy and anxious period of the Third Congress of the Lao Dong Party, with its short-lived swing toward the Soviet Union, and of the Moscow Congress of 81 parties North Vietnam had returned to the more familiar territory of the neutral ground between the two antagonists and was once again striving to maintain friendly relations with both. There was only one major difference. The Vietnamese Communist leadership had been badly frightened by the possibility of a schism in the world Communist movement and was more aware than ever before of the overriding need to preserve some form of unity between Moscow and Peking no matter what the cost.

**Crisis in Laos**

Fighting in the curious three-sided Laotian war which had dragged on in desultory fashion over a long period reached a critical stage during the early months of 1961. Laotian politics are extremely involved and on occasion baffle even specialists in Laotian affairs. Fortunately it is not necessary to describe the happenings there but
simply to state that the war was of particular interest to North Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and China for different reasons. The Soviet Union, as co-chairman of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina which established independent Laos, carries a special responsibility which she shares with the United Kingdom for developments in that country. China was affected by the fact that she shares a common frontier with Laos and the fighting there had led to the introduction of United States troops into the territory. It is also possible that China regards Laos as falling within her own sphere of special influence and for that reason seeks to exercise some measure of control over the country's affairs, but this theory does not need to be discussed here. The North Vietnam regime founded the pro-Communist Pathet Lao in Laos, trained, armed, and developed it, and provided North Vietnamese troops to assist its military operations. Prince Souphanouvong, the nominal leader of the Pathet Lao, is married to a Vietnamese who has for years been an important member of the Lao Dong Party and has himself spent more time in Vietnam than in his native Laos. Moreover the principal route for the supply of men and arms to the Communist insurgents fighting in South Vietnam lies through eastern Laos; so North Vietnam is committed to the defense of at least that part of Lao territory.

Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia suggested, as is his wont when conflicts occur in any part of the world, that the Laotian situation might be resolved by an international conference meeting at Geneva, and this was the starting point for a complex series of differences between the Soviet Union, China, and North Vietnam. Khrushchev wrote
a letter to Norodom Sihanouk on January 7, 1961\textsuperscript{37} in which he expressed
his support for the suggested international conference. North Vietnam,
which had for some time been advocating in press articles the return
of the International Control Commission (ICC) to Laos and the convening
of the international conference,\textsuperscript{38} supported the Soviet attitude. China,
however, had adopted a different position. Chen Yi, it is true, had
made the suggestion in a letter he wrote on December 28, 1960 that the
ICC return to Laos, but the conditions which he imposed governing its
return were sufficient to ensure that this would be impossible. China
did not support the holding of a conference but rather, in newspaper
articles and broadcasts, advocated a continuation of Lao popular
struggle. Indeed, a People's Daily article on the resolutions of the
Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee Conference pointedly omitted the resolu-
tion which advocated a return of the ICC to Laos and the convening of a
conference.\textsuperscript{39}

The pattern of alignments was changed when the King of Laos made
a declaration of Lao neutrality on February 19, 1961 and was
promptly assailed by adverse comments from the Pathet Lao, China, and
North Vietnam. The Soviet Union ignored the declaration and refrained
from making any comment. In the course of an interview broadcast by

\textsuperscript{37}It was summarized by TASS on Jan. 12, 1961.

\textsuperscript{38}See, for example, the article on this subject published in Nhan
Dan, Jan. 6, 1961, which stated that "the requisite conditions are now
ripe" for the return of the Commission and the holding of a conference.

Moscow Radio on March 22, 1961 the Laotian leader Prince Souvanna Phouma proposed that a cease-fire in Laos should precede the meeting of an international conference. On the following day VNA issued a bulletin stating that Souvanna Phouma had made this suggestion at a "recent news conference in New Delhi," while a People’s Daily article urged the Laotians to "step up their struggle and further develop the great victory recently achieved." The tone of this article made it clear that China was opposed to a cease-fire as a precondition of a conference.

As the wrangle over a cease-fire and an international conference continued, the Soviet Union broadcast a single program in the Vietnamese language which had all the appearance of a direct appeal to North Vietnam, for it was not repeated in any other language. The fact that it was directed to North Vietnam is strongly indicative of Soviet belief that it was the North Vietnamese who controlled the fighting in Laos and who in the last resort would decide whether or not to call a cease-fire. Arguing that the Soviet Union did not demand a cease-fire as a "precondition" and that the international conference on Laos was the "main point" of the Soviet plan, the Soviet radio broadcast then stated that nevertheless "a cease-fire in Laos will help to create a favorable atmosphere for negotiations."^40

Ho Chi Minh was well placed for equivocation about matters concerning Laos because he controlled three radio stations, the Voice of Vietnam, the clandestine Voice of the Laotian Kingdom, and the Pathet

Lao Radio, all of which appear to be transmitted from the same place in North Vietnam. Ho is a past master in operation of this kind and contrived to create an impression of DRV moderation and Laotian impatience by attacking the suggestion of a prior cease-fire outspokenly in broadcasts from the Laotian stations while maintaining a more restrained tone in DRV broadcasts. Answering the Soviet appeal, the Pathet Lao Radio demanded that a cease-fire be concluded "simultaneously" with the convocation of the international conference and adopted a bellicose tone toward the United States and Thailand. If the United States and Thai "aggressors" really wanted a cease-fire, it said, then all they had to do was to stop their attacks against the "legal government" of Laos and withdraw United States, Thai, and Nationalist Chinese personnel, together with their arms, from Laos. Eventually a cease-fire was implemented and the international conference met, but the incident is noteworthy because it demonstrates that North Vietnam is prepared to resist Soviet pressures and to disagree publicly with declared Soviet policies in matters which directly affect her own internal situation—provided she is certain of Chinese backing for her position.

Balance of the Leadership Altered

An important change in the power balance within the DRV leadership took place in the spring of 1961 when Nguyen Chi Thanh, head of the Vietnamese People's Army Political Department and a member of the

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41 Pathet Lao Radio, Apr. 6, 1961.
Politburo, was stripped of his military rank and transferred to other duties. In September 1959 Thanh had been promoted to the highest grade of general, a rank which had hitherto been held only by Vo Nguyen Giap, and his elevation had been an obvious move to reduce the importance of Giap. A close political ally of Truong Chinh, Thanh had long been identified with a pro-Chinese faction in the DRV leadership, but the reasons underlying his replacement are impossible to define accurately because of the scant information. Undoubtedly, since intense rivalry existed between Giap and Thanh, the personal element was involved, but it is still impossible to know whether or not the move was brought about because of the Sino-Soviet dispute.

From early March 1961 the DRV press referred to Thanh as "Rural Affairs Chairman of the Party Central Committee" and ceased to employ his military title. As is usual in Communist states, the shift was foreshadowed by a change in ideological argumentation. During 1958 and 1959 DRV propaganda had regularly attacked the "pure militarists" in the army, by which they meant Vo Nguyen Giap. The impending move was presaged in an extremely tortuous article published in Hoc Tap. Its author, General Hoang Van Thai, revealed that a major shift of power had taken place by demanding modernization and a "mastery of techniques" in the Vietnamese People's Army. Of course this was very dangerous ground in view of the conflicting attitudes of the Soviet Union and China, which explains why the article was filled with double

talk and ambiguities. The statement "Either we shall progress to acquire new techniques or we shall be exterminated" was balanced by lip service to the "decisive role of man," but when the concluding portion of the article asserted, "The fact that we stress the decisive role of man in war does not mean that we deny the important role of techniques and weapons," this was a clear indication that a shift of power had taken place and that Giap—in ideological terms he is represented as the advocate of "techniques and weapons"—had struggled back to the top once more. A few weeks later Nguyen Chi Thanh was dismissed and Giap was once more in control of the Vietnamese People’s Army.

It is worth pausing at this juncture in order to consider the role of the Vietnamese People’s Army. This large well-trained military force is unquestionably the most powerful army in South East Asia. At the present time it carries out a variety of different tasks ranging from ensuring internal security and safeguarding the Communist regime to supporting the Viet Cong insurgents in South Vietnam and the Pathet Lao in Laos, but its most important function is, and must remain, the defense of North Vietnam against external aggression. A glance at North Vietnam’s neighbors will suffice to show that the military strength of Laos and Cambodia is slight and that neither country could ever hope to challenge the military might of the Vietnamese People’s Army. South Vietnam commands more powerful forces, but these are far from strong enough to pose unaided a serious threat to North Vietnam. Conceivably, under certain circumstances the South Vietnamese army reinforced by a Western army might attack North Vietnam.
but if this were ever to happen, China would almost certainly come to
North Vietnam's defense—if only to safeguard her own frontiers. If
therefore Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam are eliminated as potential
aggressors—Thailand might be added to this number because her army is
also too weak to offer a real threat to the Vietnamese People's
Army—then only one country remains, China. It was pointed out in
an earlier chapter how strong the traditional Vietnamese fears of
Chinese expansion remain, and there are excellent grounds for the
belief that the principal raison d'être of such a powerful army in
North Vietnam today is to protect North Vietnam against possible
Chinese aggression.

Under circumstances such as these it would be folly indeed for
Ho Chi Minh to entrust the command of the Vietnamese People's Army to
anyone other than a person in whose hostility toward China he could
place full reliance. Giap, more than any other Vietnamese leader, is
just such a person. It may well be that Ho Chi Minh's apprehension
over the growing authority within the army of the pro-Chinese Nguyen
Chi Thanh, and the danger this represented for the defense of North
Vietnamese territory, are the real reasons why Giap was restored to
full and undisputed control of the Vietnamese People's Army in March
1961. If this line of argument is carried a little further, it sugg-
ests that a set of detailed plans for the defense of North Vietnam
against attack by China must lie ready in the DRV Ministry of Defense
at Hanoi. Moreover, in order to be effective these plans would have
to be kept constantly up to date, changing from time to time so as to
take account of new developments in China's military strength; and
that implies the necessity for North Vietnam to keep herself well
informed of all military developments in China, even those of a secret
nature. She can accomplish that only by means of espionage. It would
therefore be surprising if North Vietnam is not now actively engaged
in the collection of military intelligence inside the territory of
her ally China through the agency of spies.

Economic Setbacks

Throughout the year 1960 North Vietnam suffered serious setbacks
in every branch of the national economy and attributed the lion's
share of the blame to "poor agricultural production . . . as well as
weak points and shortcomings in economic controls." In mid-1960
plan targets were reduced and norms were adjusted downward so as to
avoid disclosing the full extent of the failure to reach plan targets
for the year. Once again, in 1961, it was announced that:

In the present practical situation regarding the carrying out
of the State Plan in the last six months of the year, and in
order to avoid unnecessary tensions in the improvement of the
economy and the living standard of the people, the Council of
Ministers has approved the proposals of the State Planning
Committee and the Finance Ministry regarding the sound and
effective adjustment in the norms of the State Plan and the
State Budget for the last six months of the year.\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{\textit{Communique} of the DRV Council of Ministers, Aug. 4, 1961.}

\footnote{Ibid.}
In plain English this meant that the targets accepted as reasonable at the beginning of the year proved to be unattainable and so were being lowered.

Economic failure on a scale large enough to necessitate the lowering of plan targets in two consecutive years cannot but have convinced DRV leaders of the vulnerable situation of North Vietnam and for the pressing need for continued and increased economic aid from abroad. Yet the principal sources of such aid—the Soviet Union and the European satellites on the one hand and China on the other—were engaged in a bitter dispute, the consequences of which were unforeseeable. As North Vietnam's economic needs became greater, the intensity of the dispute increased, and with it the danger of losing a large part of foreign aid.

There is much evidence to show that the North Vietnamese had fallen victims to Communist propaganda concerning the efficacy of aid and had expected far more than they received. Their disappointment was noticeable in their relationships with the visiting bloc technicians and aid administrators. M. Tongas cites many instances of this which he witnessed.\textsuperscript{45} In April 1959 Ho Chi Minh found it necessary to remonstrate with his compatriots and to tell them that they simply had to learn to cooperate with the foreign technicians. Continuing economic failures exacerbated the situation and relations deteriorated further until Truong Chinh made a speech on the subject which received wide circulation in the DRV press. He alleged that

\textsuperscript{45}Tongas, op. cit.
certain cadres and party members:

... lack modesty in their dealings with technicians from brother countries and do not try to learn from them. They do not try to apply creatively the experiences of brother countries to the conditions of our country. They are not friendly toward these technicians and do not respect them. They do not try to create favorable conditions to facilitate the work of these comrade technicians.\textsuperscript{46}

Agricultural collectivization was still proving to be the greatest disappointment of all, and its failure obliged even as highly placed a leader as Le Duan, First Secretary of the Lao Dong Party, to eat his words publicly. In his report to the Third Party Congress in September 1960 he said:

... we must, of necessity, educate and imbue them (the peasants) with socialist ideology; at the same time we must devise appropriate measures to sever their economic ties with the bourgeoisie and to restrict and eliminate their spontaneous tendency toward capitalism.

Less than a year later he was writing:

The tendency to restrict the productive activities and private undertakings of the families of cooperative members—a tendency originating from the fear that cooperative members will enrich themselves in the "capitalist" way—even when these activities and undertakings are not harmful to the cooperative production is obviously unsuitable to the new situation in rural areas.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{46}Truong Chinh, speech to the Party Central Re-education Conference, Mar. 13, 1961.

\textsuperscript{47}Article by Le Duan, Hoc Tap, Aug. 1961.
The disastrous decline in agricultural production was just as rapid as these two dates suggest, and Le Duan showed that he proposed loosening controls still further in order to retrieve the situation. In the same article he stated that private operations (i.e., farming private plots of land) were in 1961 providing cooperative members with some 30 to 40 per cent of their total income even though private plots comprised only 5 per cent of the total area of cooperatives. In 1962, he forecast, private operations would provide cooperative members with about 55 per cent of their income. However, Le Duan still regarded the agricultural situation of North Vietnam as closer to that of China than that of the Soviet Union and implied that the Chinese-style agricultural organization was the only one suited to North Vietnam.

In the Soviet Union and European bloc countries, he said, collectivization was accompanied by mechanization, but in China, North Korea, and North Vietnam a "new situation" existed because collectivization had been carried out without modern farming equipment. These countries have been able to "create a new productive force simply by regrouping the means of production and by reorganizing labor." 48

The war in South Vietnam was a further source of disquiet, for the DRV committal of greater forces in the South had resulted only in increased American determination to defend the government of President Ngo Dinh Diem. More and more United States troops were sent to South Vietnam, and their participation in the fighting there was steadily becoming more direct. Prospects of a quick military victory there,

and the resulting access to South Vietnam's rice surplus, had vanished. Instead of providing a solution to North Vietnam's economic problems the adventure in South Vietnam was proving an ever growing drain on resources and was inspiring Communist criticisms of Ho Chi Minh for causing a build-up of United States military strength in South East Asia.

It would be surprising indeed if the worsening economic situation, the inefficacy of aid from abroad, and personal antagonisms between the North Vietnamese people and the foreign technicians who had come to educate and help them did not cause very serious worry to Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues. Even if untroubled unity existed within the whole Communist bloc, the situation of North Vietnam would give cause for some alarm, but unity had long since been shattered and both China and the Soviet Union had showed every sign of persisting in their quarrel regardless of its consequences for other Communist countries. Some of the latter had shown themselves ready to take sides in the dispute and to take part in the mutual recriminations too. North Vietnam could afford no such indulgence because she badly needed all the economic assistance she could obtain from every quarter. To antagonize any Communist country would be tantamount to inviting that country to cease supplying aid, and the serious economic failures in North Vietnam simply would not permit this. Consequently Ho Chi Minh found himself in mid-1961 more heavily committed than ever before to his policy of remaining on good terms with all Communist countries, of avoiding any participation in the dispute, and of using any means at his disposal to bring the dangerous conflict to an end.
October 1961 was from beginning to end a month of unpleasant shocks for all Communists, with the removal of Stalin from the Kremlin mausoleum, the attacks on Albania at the Twenty-Second CPSU Congress, and Chou En-lai's walkout from the Congress. Even early in the month the signs were ominous, for Khrushchev's attack on the Albanian leadership was published in Tirana and a counterattack was launched. Fuel was added to the flames when a Chinese delegate to a Congress of Albanian Women praised the "correct leadership of the Albanian Workers' Party headed by its long tested leader, Enver Hoxha." It was no surprise when Ho Chi Minh decided to lead the North Vietnam delegation to Moscow in person and broke his journey at Peking to confer with Mao Tse-tung and other Chinese leaders. The proceedings of the Congress are already too well known to require further description, with Khrushchev unleashing new attacks on Albania and Chou En-lai walking out in the middle of the proceedings after appealing for an end to open polemics and laying flowers on the grave of Stalin. Of the 66 speakers at the Congress, only 22 avoided reference to Albania, among whom were numbered the North Vietnamese.

Ho Chi Minh was in a most difficult predicament because, whatever his actions, they were likely to be misconstrued by the leading antagonists. To have walked out of the Congress with Chou En-lai would have caused serious offense to the Soviet Union, while his continuing presence there might prove equally offensive to the Chinese. Ho escaped from his dilemma in the most diplomatic way
open to him by proceeding on a tour of the Soviet Union. His attitude toward the whole business was summed up in a cable, which the DRV National Assembly dispatched to the Congress, pledging the Vietnamese people to struggle in order to strengthen the unity and uniformity of mind inside the socialist camp—a praiseworthy ideal, but one which the events of the Congress rendered a shade impractical. No matter how hard one tried to avoid the subjects in dispute, there was always a danger that one might commit oneself unwittingly, and this seems to have happened to the ultra-cautious Ho Chi Minh during a Moscow Radio interview on November 6 which was broadcast to Vietnam. His reference to the "12 states" of the socialist camp was excised from the version of the interview broadcast on the Soviet Home Service although the rebroadcast was postponed until November 10, the day after Ho concluded his final meeting with Khrushchev. He left Moscow on the following day and spent four days in Peking conferring with Chinese leaders, but the subjects of these discussions have never been disclosed.

DRV reaction to the happenings at the Twenty-Second Congress was circumspect in the extreme. Reports on the proceedings were publicized by both press and radio—not to have done so would surely have aroused suspicions in the minds of the North Vietnamese people that all was not well—but these omitted the references made to Albania. Although the meeting was hailed as a brilliant success, as all Communist meetings invariably are, and Congress documents were published in Nhan Dan from November 4 onward, none of the individual decisions was accorded DRV approval with the exception of the CPSU Program, which was called
the "Communist Manifesto of Our Era." A hint of discord was perceptible in the speech made by Nguyen Duy Trinh on the anniversary of the October Revolution in which he described the "ideological unanimity of all parties" as basic and argued that "we" should resolve "contradictions" and "try our best to avoid losses to international solidarity."

From all the DRV comment made about the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU the two features most clearly discernible were embarrassment and apprehension.

The anniversary of the Albanian Party of Labor falls on November 8, and in 1961 it coincided with one of the highest peaks of the Sino-Soviet dispute to date. Among the parties of the Communist bloc countries only three sent telegrams of greeting to the Albanian party that year, the Chinese and North Korean parties and the Lao Dong Party. The CCP voiced full support for Albania and exploited the occasion to engage in indirect attacks on the Soviet Union, while the North Korean party dispatched a correctly formal message of greetings to the Central Committee of the Albanian Party of Labor and thereafter ignored the anniversary. The DRV telegram was careful not to express any opinion about the correctness or otherwise of the Albanian leadership, but North Vietnam marked the occasion with copious and fulsome praise for the Albanian party. The first impression created by this flood of approbation was that North Vietnam had decided to align herself with China on the Albanian question, but closer study revealed that great care had gone into the wording of every statement made. The Albanian party was so highly praised that approval of the leadership might seem to be implied, but no approval was stated. Indeed, no judgement at all of Enver Hoxha and his colleagues was made.
By this uneasy compromise solution Ho Chi Minh indicated unmistakably to the Soviets that he disapproved of their attacks on Albania and that North Vietnam would continue to regard Albania as a full member of the socialist bloc whatever the Soviet Union might think. On the other hand, by his failure to endorse Hoxha's leadership or to express any opinion concerning its correctness he left China in no doubt about his disapproval of her wholehearted espousal of the Albanian cause. This attitude was obviously the outcome of careful consideration of the dispute by the DRV leadership, and it is one from which North Vietnam has not deviated since that time. Since no responsible Communist could approve, in theory at least, of a quarrel which endangered bloc unity, the conciliatory attitude of the North Vietnamese leaders would be difficult to attack. In fact neither the Soviet Union nor China has attacked her stand over Albania although it is one hardly calculated to afford much comfort to either of these countries.

Increased Chinese Pressures

By exploiting to the full the military situation in South Vietnam, where United States aid to the South Vietnamese authorities continued to increase steadily and to enable the South Vietnamese forces to inflict some heavy defeats upon the insurgents, China attempted to establish closer ties with North Vietnam with the apparent intention of winning Vietnamese support in her dispute with
the Soviet Union. When replying to a note of October 30 which North Vietnam had sent to 103 governments complaining about United States aggression in South Vietnam, China stated that the CPR government and people "cannot remain indifferent" to United States action in South Vietnam. Only a few days after this Chinese reply the United States State Department published a "White Paper" containing much documentary proof of DRV participation in the war being waged in South Vietnam, an act greeted with volumes of abuse in North Vietnam and one which was described by a spokesman of the DRV Foreign Ministry as "preparing the way for United States intervention" in North Vietnam. On December 7 and 8 respectively NCNA and VNA announced that a Chinese military delegation would visit North Vietnam.

The different reasons given by the two countries for the visit indicate that the arrangements had been made hurriedly and suggest that the Vietnamese were not entirely happy about this new Chinese initiative. VNA asserted that the Chinese delegation would visit North Vietnam to celebrate the seventeenth anniversary of the Vietnamese People's Army (the anniversary falls on December 22), while NCNA described it as a "friendly visit." In a newspaper article about the visit General Le Quang Dao wrote the customary clichés about its "significance" for strengthening "the long standing friendship between the peoples and armies of Vietnam and China"—astonishingly, in spite of all the historical evidence of its inaccuracy, this statement is repeatedly made by DRV leaders—but carefully avoided any reference

49 CPR note to the DRV government, Nov. 29, 1961.