HISTORY OF SOUTH VIETNAM 1954-60: Hanoi and its Relationship to the Insurgency in the South
HANOI AND THE INSURGENCY IN SOUTH VIETNAM

A. Character of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Between 1954 and 1960, Ho Chi Minh had to face in North Vietnam, as did Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam, the problem of building a nation out of the ruins of nearly a decade of war. During those years, until the DRV declared its support for the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, Ho seemed preoccupied with the problems of consolidating his regime and securing the foreign aid he needed to assure economic growth. Certainly agricultural shortages and popular unrest in North Vietnam in the immediate aftermath of Geneva were sufficiently serious to have discouraged foreign adventures through 1956. However, by January, 1961, when Hanoi announced the formation of the NLF, the internal difficulties of the DRV seem to have been largely resolved. Inquiry into the timing and extent of the DRV's participation in the insurgency of South Vietnam, therefore, requires assessment of those conditions within the DRV which might have affected its capability and willingness to prosecute a war of aggression.

1. Structure of the Government. He possessed one distinct advantage over Diem; his government had been in existence, in one form or another, continuously since 1945. He and his lieutenants ruled in radically differing circumstances as the status of the regime shifted from that of a state within the French Union in 1946, to a belligerent in a colonial revolution, and back to a sovereign state in 1954, preserving remarkable continuity. The Geneva Conference of 1954 restored its actual territorial dominion to about what it had been in 1954, in that France acceded to a cease-fire based upon a territorial division of Vietnam at the 17th parallel and to Viet Minh "conduct of civil administration" in the regions to the north, pending "general elections." 1/ The withdrawal of French military forces and civil authority from northern Vietnam was coordinated with the DRV forces and leaders so that the latter systematically replaced the former; by the end of May 1955, the DRV had acquired full control of all its territory, and began to act as a sovereign state. 2/ However, formal recognition of DRV statehood dates from January, 1950 (China and Soviet Union), and best information now available to the U.S. Department of State indicates that thereafter twenty-two other nations established relations with it. 3/ Formally, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was organized under a Constitution promulgated in 1946 which, in language echoing Jefferson, guaranteed civic freedoms, and reposed principal state power in a people's parliament. A second Constitution was adopted on January 1, 1960, more explicitly drawn from communist thought, resembling the Chinese Constitution in general, but containing Soviet style clauses on civil rights and autonomy of national minorities.
a. Constitution of 1946

The 1946 basic law declared Vietnam to be a democratic republic in which all power belonged to the people "without distinction of race, class, creed, wealth, or sex." Its territory, "composed of Bac-Bo, or Northern Viet Name (Tonkin), Trung-Bo or Central Viet Name (Annam), and Nam-Bo or Southern Viet Name (Cochinchina) is one and indivisible.... The capital of Viet Name is Hanoi. However, the Constitution of 1946 was never institutionalized; instead, the exigencies of the war with the French eventuated in a government which was literally an administrative extension of the rigidly disciplined political apparatus headed by Ho Chi Minh and endorsed by his colleagues from the Indochinese Communist Party. Pham Van Dong (presently Premier, then Vice President) announced in 1950 that promulgation of the 1946 Constitution had been postponed "because several of its provisions require for their application the cessation of the state of war," and in 1951, after Ho had openly aligned with the Sino-Soviet powers, the Viet Minh radio explained that "a gang of traitors" had been evolved in its formulation, and hence a "progressive character was lacking." In late 1956, the DRV set up a constitutional reform committee. In December, 1958, Ho invited the public to submit recommendations on a new draft basic law, and the second Constitution was promulgated in 1960.

b. Constitution of 1960

The 1960 Preamble speaks of a thousand years of struggle for independence, leads Ho Chi Minh and the Lao Dong (Communist) Party, cites harshly United States "Imperialists" and "Interventionists," and presents this interpretation of the aftermath of Geneva, 1954-1960:

"...In the South, the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen have been savagely repressing the patriotic movement of our people. They have been strengthening military forces and carrying out their scheme of turning the southern part of our country into a colony and military base for their war preparations. They have resorted to all possible means to sabotage the Geneva Agreements and undermine the cause of Viet Nam's reunification...."

"...Under the clear-sighted leadership of the Viet Nam Lao-Dong Party, the government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, and President Ho Chi Minh, our entire people, broadly united within the National United Front, will surely win glorious success in the building of socialism in North Viet Nam and the struggle for national reunification."

Both the opening sentence of the Preamble and Article 1 of Chapter I of the Constitution itself, stipulate that Viet Nam is an entity indivisible from China to Camau in South Vietnam. Chapter II of the Constitution, which precedes the section on human rights, announces step by step that the DRV is advancing from "people's democracy to socialism...transforming
its backward economy into a socialist economy with modern industry and agriculture. ... "Communism" (or a derivative term) is not mentioned as such, but the document is otherwise explicit that the economy is to be state-centered; e.g.:

"Article 12. The state sector of the economy, which is a form of ownership by the whole people, plays the leading role in the national economy. The state ensures priority for its development."

"Article 17. The state strictly...prohibits the use of private property to disrupt the economic life of the society or to undermine the economic plan of the state...."

Chapter III is a hyper-democratic guarantee of civil rights, and the remainder provides for an elected National Assembly and a centralized, statist public administration. 8/

2. Political Parties

a. Lao Dong Party

Unrecognized by the 1960 Constitution except in the Pre­amble's encomiums, the Lao Dong Party (Dang Lao Dong Vietnam, or Vietnamese Workers' Party) is the dominant political power within the DRV. It is an expressly Marxist-Leninist Party which traces its lineage back to the Indo­chinese Communist Party founded by Ho Chi Minh, and although the ICP was abolished in 1946, claims to have been prime mover in the major nationalist "front" movements through 1951, when the DRV "legalized" the Party. For example, Vo Nguyen Giap explained that:

"The Vietnamese people's war of liberation was victorious because we had a wide and firm National United Front...organized and led by the Party of the working class: the Indochinese Communist Party, now the Vietnam Workers' [Lao Dong] Party. In the light of the principles of Marxism-Leninism...the Party found a correct solution to the problems...." 9/

Party statutes adopted in 1960 established a National Congress, and a Central Committee elected by the Congress, as its policy­making bodies. The Congress is ponderous (600 members, meets every 4 years), and the Central Committee in fact governs. More precisely, power is exercised by the Politburo, its steering group. The Central Committee serves as a forum for the discussion of policy, the dissemination of information, and the training of future leaders. Though major decisions appear as Central Committee resolutions, in actuality they originate with the Politburo. The Secretariat of the Central Committee is the principal executive agency of the party, directing subordinate Party organizations in foreign affairs propaganda, organization, inspection (or control), the military establish­ment, the "reunification" movement, industry and agriculture. The Secretariat also appears to control personnel assignments and promotions in the Party's middle and upper echelons.
The Lao Dong internal organizational principle is "democratic centralism," hierarchal subordination of elected leaders of Party entities formed in all geographic, economic, bureaucratic, social, and cultural groups, wherever at least three Party members exist. Membership in the Party is deliberately confined to an elite, and has never amounted to more than about \( \frac{1}{10} \) of the population. 10/
As of 1963, 80% of the Party were members of 10 years or more, less than 10% were women, and no more than 7% were non-Vietnamese. Although an elite, the Party admitted in 1960 that 85% of its members had no more than 4th grade educations. Lack of skill and drive, as well as inadequate strength, handicapped the Party in its attempts to encadre the DRV's ambitious agricultural and industrial programs. From the 1960 admissions, it appears that of 110,000 managerial personnel in the DRV, only 50,000 or so were Party members; about 10% of the Party is then employed directly in management. Nonetheless, the Party has from all appearances succeeded in lodging itself in pivotal positions in every part of the society, and certainly in the DRV's main undertakings.

b. Fatherland Front

One of the fundamental procedures of the Vietnamese Communists has been the forming of a "united front" in which Communist Party members join cause with non-communists, especially nationalist activists. The Party itself has pointed out that this is in proper Leninist fashion:

"The policy of founding the Indochinese democratic front between 1936 and 1939, the Viet Minh front between 1941 and 1951, and the Lien Viet front /1946-1951/; the decision of signing the 6 March 1946...preliminary accord /Ho's accommodation with France/... -- all these are typical examples of the clever application of the...instruction of Lenin." 11/

In 1955 the DRV organized non-communist elements into "mass organizations," within the "Fatherland Front" (Net Tran To Quoc). 12/

SELECTED COMPONENT ORGANIZATIONS
OF THE FATHERLAND FRONT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lao Dong Party</th>
<th>Writers and Artists Union</th>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic Party</td>
<td>Journalists Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socialist Party</td>
<td>Unified Buddhist Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Confederation of Labor</td>
<td>National Liaison Committee of</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Liaison Committee of</td>
<td>Patriotic &amp; Peace Loving Catholics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>Industrialists and Traders Federation</td>
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<td>Women's Union</td>
<td>Peace Committee</td>
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<td>Youth Federation</td>
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The Fatherland Front follows the format of the Lao Dong Party, and Party members occupy the key positions within the Front. The Front composition has not been changed since 1955, but after 1960 it became more active in the "reunification" movement, serving as the proponent, or "externalizing agent" in the DRV for the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. 13/

It should be noted that the Fatherland Front included two nominally non-communist parties, and that it advocated beginning in 1955 an interestingly different scheme for bringing about reunification of Vietnam: two legislative assemblies for North and South, respectively, separate armed forces, and a confederate government. But on all other issues the Front differed not at all from Ho, especially agreeing that: "American imperialism is the chief enemy." 14/ No other deviant view is on record from either the Front or the two "independent" political parties. Moreover, while the DRV government has on rare occasions included Socialist or Democrats, none has ever occupied an important leadership position.

3. Leadership

The most remarkable aspect of the DRV and the Lao Dong Party is stability of their leadership. Most of the top leaders of the Party were old-time communists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership in the Lao Dong Politburo 1951-60</th>
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<td>Source: FIS 43 C, p.26</td>
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[Table with leadership roles and periods]
Moreover, this close knit Party elite controlled the levers of power in the DRV government. The following chart shows that as of 1960 all key North Vietnamese leaders — except one on whose early life U.S. intelligence is not informed — are known to have been in the ICP in the '30s (or even in predecessor organizations).

### LAO DONG - DRV LEADERSHIP IN 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAO DONG PARTY</th>
<th>DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (DRV)</th>
<th>PEOPLE'S ARMY OF VIETNAM (PAVN)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HA DCH MINH</td>
<td>Chairman, CC</td>
<td>President</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LAC CHA</td>
<td>First Secretary, Secretariat</td>
<td>Chairman, National Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>TVUNG CHIT</td>
<td>Chairman, National Assembly</td>
<td>President, Vice Chairman, NDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHAM VAN DON</td>
<td>Deputy Premier; Chairman, Finance and Trade Board, Premier's Office</td>
<td>Deputy Premier; Member, National Defense, Chairman, NDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHAM HUNG</td>
<td>Deputy Premier; Chairman, SPC; Member, NDC</td>
<td>Deputy Premier; Chairman, Industrial Board, Premier's Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGUYEN CHI</td>
<td>Vice Chairman, National Assembly</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGUYEN DUY</td>
<td>Member, Director, Organizational Department, CC</td>
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<tr>
<td>IN TRANG</td>
<td>Member, NDC</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRINH VUONG</td>
<td>Minister, Public Security; Chairman, Home Affairs Board, Premier's Office, Member, NDC</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>HU HUY NGHI</td>
<td>Member, NDC</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CHIEN Sao DENG</td>
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**KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS**

- CC — Central Committee
- NDC — National Defense Council
- SPC — State Planning Commission
- SCC — State Scientific Commission
- SSSC — State Scientific Commission of the DRV

* — ICP pre-WW II
From time to time certain members of this elite suffered an apparent eclipse, but Ho Chi Minh ostensibly intervened on their behalf, mediated the dispute in which they were involved, and restored them to the inner circle -- usually in a different position. Thus, Truong Chinh was "fired" as First Secretary of the Party in 1956 after the Land Reform Campaign had been pressed too far and fast, but after a period of absence from the public scene, re-emerged in 1958 as Vice Premier, and became in 1960 Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly. Vo Nguyen Giap, who delivered a sharp critique of Truong Chinh in October 1956, disappeared for two months in October 1957, while Ho Chi Minh was on a Bloc trip, amid rumors of a realignment of DRV leadership. Ho's return brought Vo's resurrection. Other examples of this phenomenon attest both to the immutability of the core leaders, and to the centrality of Ho to their position. 16/

A similar testimony to Ho's eminence lies in the murky evidence of factional dispute within the Lao Dong. In 1946 Truong Chinh and Giap appeared to foreign observers as "extremists," urging violence on Ho; in 1956 Truong was the Maoist extremist, Vo a Soviet-style moderate; in 1966, Vo was rated a moderate, but Truong had become a neutral, and reportedly himself had come under fire of "extremist" Le Duan. 17/ Increasingly, Ho has risen above the politics of personalities and intramural clashes, and to the extent that he became involved, seems to have mediated and reconciled rather than disciplined. Demonstrably, his personal leadership qualities kept the DRV elite a cooperative, integrated team, with individual ambitions and hardline-moderate factions delicately in balance.

The larger circle of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong exhibited no different complexion from the inner leadership, except that while most of the Politburo members are considered generalists, the 33 other Central Committee members include Party administrators, State specialists, or military and internal security leaders. More than half of the Central Committee have been identified as ICP members before World War II. 18/ The DRV of 1960, was, then, a state dominated by a coterie or revolutionaries of a particularly hardened breed. Ho himself, in a 1960 speech, paid this tribute to his colleagues:

"I wish to remind you that thirty-one of the comrades who are now in the Central Committee were given altogether 222 years of imprisonment and deportation by the French imperialists before the Revolution, not to mention the sentences to death in absentia and the years of imprisonment evaded by those who escaped from prison....Our comrades made up for the years in prison in discussing and studying political theory. Once more, this not only proves that the enemy's extremely savage policy of repression could not check progress, but on the contrary, it became a touchstone, it has further steeled the revolutionaries. And the result was that the Revolution has triumphed, the imperialists have been defeated...." 19/
B. The DRV's Domestic Objectives

Ho Chi Minh was always a revolutionary. Whether he was first and foremost a nationalist, or a potential Tito, or the last of the Stalinists—and arguments can be advanced for each theory—as head of state he subscribed to internal programs for the DRV which were communist in concept and Maoist in execution. In repeated statements on the goals of the regime, he and the rest of the Lao Dong leadership made it plain that they were determined to revise radically North Vietnam's land-holding system, and reconstruct its traditional society along egalitarian and collectivist lines. Further, they were determined that North Vietnam would become agriculturally self-sufficient, and industrialized to the degree its natural resources would permit. In fact, the modernization they envisaged for North Vietnam surpassed in degree and urgency any of the Ngô-Diệm undertakings in South Vietnam. Yet the latter aroused the peasant's apprehensions, and eventually their hostility. What of Ho Chi Minh's internal security? From the record of DRV policy from 1950 to 1960, it is clear that, while "progress towards socialism" in both the agrarian and industrial realms was always one principal State/Party objective, a well-disciplined society thoroughly submissive to Party leadership was another, and frequently overriding goal.

1. Societal Discipline

By no means can it be said that at any time prior to Geneva, Ho and the Lao Dong Party held complete sway in rural North Vietnam. Aside from French supported counter-movements, the Viet Minh leaders had to contend with peasant reluctance to support them, and even outright rejection of their policy. Almost as soon as the DRV "legalized" the Lao Dong Party in 1951, the Party launched a series of land reform schemes which contravened even the popularity Ho et al enjoyed as heroes of the Resistance. Moreover, tensions developed early between the Viet Minh and the Catholics as a group—less apparently over political issues than over traditional Catholic fear of Tonkinese persecution in the absence of French protectors. The Catholics of Tonkin had developed a political and military independence like that of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao in Cochinchina, and resisted the Viet Minh as vigorously as the latter resisted the Saigon regimes. In both land reform and relations with the Catholics, the Party and the DRV encountered stiff opposition.

a. Rural Opposition, 1954-1956

Prior to 1954, the Lao Dong Party experimented in Viet Minh liberated areas of Tonkin with a Maoist-style Land Reform Campaign. Other than the war, Land Reform was the foremost undertaking of the Lao Dong Party after 1951. In essence, the Land Reform Campaign committed the party to an assault on the traditional rural social hierarchy, and to redistribution of land and wealth. Beginning with punitive taxes, the Campaign matured terror, arrests, and public condemnation, trials, and executions. Within the DRV hierarchy, the proponent of Land Reform was Trương Chinh
(born Dang Xuan Khu, party name translating as "Long March"), Secretary General of the Lao Dong Party, who openly espoused the Maoist version of communism, and who relied upon Chinese advisers. Truong Chinh saw land reform as a method of organizing the peasantry under the Lao Dong Party, less important for its economic or social ramifications than for its political and military significance. Truong had warned in 1947 that:

"If we neglect the organization of the people, we cannot mobilize the entire people and the army, and cannot enable them to take part in the resistance in every field. In 1918 Lenin wrote: 'To wage a real war, we must have a strong and well organized rear....' These words constitute very precious counsel for us in this long-term resistance war." 21/

As victory of the Resistance neared, Ho Chi Minh's emphasis on internal reforms, as opposed to martial undertakings, increased. In December 1953, for instance, he stated that:

"The two central tasks in the next years are to do our utmost to fight the enemy and to carry out land reform.... In 1954, we must pay particular attention to three great works:

"To combine land reform with strengthening of the armed forces....

"To combine land reform with the training of cadres and the raising of their ideology....

"To combine land reform with the development of agricultural production...." 22/

Moreover, Ho apparently countenanced harsh measures to carry out both "central tasks." He is reported to have stated his basic strategy to Party cadres in these terms:

"To straighten a curved piece of bamboo, one must bend it in the opposite direction, holding it in that position for awhile. Then, when the hand is removed it will slowly straighten itself." 23/

When the Geneva Conference opened the way to Viet Minh dominion over North Vietnam, and held out the prospect to Tonkinese peasants of migrating to South Vietnam, hundreds of thousands were sufficiently apprehensive over religious persecution, or over "land reform" and other communizing campaigns to the North. There is considerable evidence that many of these fears were well-founded. On the heels of the withdrawing French Expeditionary Forces, Truong Chinh's teams of Chinese advisers toured from village to village to survey for land reforms, and these were followed by an infusion of Lao Dong Party cadres to village level. 24/ People's Courts were activated and the Campaign became the vehicle not only for land redistribution, but for Communist Party penetration into rural society, and a wholesale transformation of
the penetrated community's traditional structure.

U.S. intelligence was not at the time well informed on the ensuring events, but since various sources (chiefly Northern refugees) have filled in a fairly coherent picture. From the farmers' point of view, the regime's Campaign involved three particularly onerous procedures. The first was an attack upon the position and prerogatives of the traditional village hierarchy, accomplished by the cadre's selecting and training several of the poorest, least successful villagers for a Land Reform Committee and a Special People's Tribunal, and soliciting, from the same sources, accusations against the more prosperous, socially elevated villagers. The second was the classifying of the entire populace into such lettered categories as "dishonest and ferocious landlords," "average normal landlords"; "rich peasants"; "strong middle level peasants"; or "very poor peasants." Thirdly, each village Tribunal was then assigned a quota of one landlord death sentence. According to a former Viet Minh, the initial results were displeasing to the "our Chinese comrade advisers," who felt that more "exploiters" should have been found. Accordingly, on orders from the Lao Dong Central Committee, new classifications were assigned which labeled five times the number of landlords. At the same time, the landlord execution quota was raised from one to five per village.

The results of the Campaign were like the outcome of similar procedures in China earlier in the decade: widespread bloodshed. Aside from persons executed on the direct order of the Tribunals themselves, there were countless others who, evicted from their landholds, and ostracized by the community, were condemned to die of starvation. Figures on casualties of the Campaign are inconclusive. George A. Carver states that the killed were "probably on the order of 100,000"; a French professor then in Hanoi estimates that altogether 100,000 were lost; refugees have testified that the countryside of North Vietnam was white with the clothing of mourning; Bernard Fall believed that 50,000 to 100,000 were killed. That there were significant excesses is evident from the behavior of the DRV itself, which beginning in August 1956, moved publicly to restrain Party cadres, to curb the power of the local courts, and to dampen the ardor of the "poor" peasants.

In August, 1956, Ho admitted that "errors had been committed in realizing the unity of the peasants" and promised to redress wrongful classifications and maljudgments by Land Reform Committees. At the 10th Plenum of the Lao Dong Party Central Committee on 29 October 1956, Truong Chinh was replaced by Ho Chi Minh himself as Party Secretary, and the top levels of the Central Land Reform Committee and the Ministry of Agriculture were shaken up. Vo Nguyen Giap, as the Party's spokesman, read a list of errors considered in these changes:

"(a) While carrying out their anti-feudal task, our cadres... have separated the Land Reform and the Revolution. Worst of all, in some areas they have even made the two mutually exclusive."
"(b) We have failed to realize the necessity of uniting with the middle-level peasants, and we should have concluded some form of alliance with the rich peasants, whom we treated in the same manner as the landlords.

"(c) We attacked the landowning families indiscriminately.

"(d) We made too many deviations and executed too many honest people. We attacked on too large a front and, seeing enemies everywhere, resorted to terror, which became far too widespread.

"(e) Whilst carrying out our Land Reform program we failed to respect the principles of freedom of faith and worship in many areas.

"(f) In regions inhabited by minority tribes we have attacked tribal chiefs too strongly, thus injuring, instead of respecting, local customs and manners.

"(g) When reorganizing the party, we paid too much importance to the notion of social class instead of adhering firmly to political qualifications alone. Instead of recognizing education to be the first essential, we resorted exclusively to organizational measures such as disciplinary punishments, expulsion from the party, executions, dissolution of party branches and cells. Worse still, torture came to be regarded as a normal practice during party reorganization."

On 2 November, the DRV announced that its first postwar elections would be held in 1957, and formed a constitutional reform committee as one of several measures aimed at greater freedom in the society.

On 8 November, Ho abolished the detested Special People's Tribunals, and ordered the wholesale release of prisoners from the regime's detention centers. There followed then a systematic, government-wide "Campaign for the Rectification of Errors." Notwithstanding these admissions, or perhaps because of them, violence broke out in Nghe An, the province of Ho's birth.

b. Peasant Rebellion of 1956

The year 1956 had been a bad one for communist regimes. Obedient to the dictates of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, most communist governments, including the DRV, had launched programs of de-Stalinization and liberalization. In China these took the form of the "Hundred Flowers" movement, and in the DRV, the "Rectification of Errors Campaign." Poland and East Germany, as well as Hungary had experienced violence. Nonetheless, it was with some surprise that the world received Hanoi Radio's announcement of 16 November 1956,
of riots which:

"Broke out when a gang of reactionaries, taking advantage of the mistakes committed during the political implementation of land reform, molested soldiers and cadres of the people's regime, seized quantities of arms and blocked traffic. Many dead and wounded are reported among the soldiers and cadre.... Drastic measures have been taken to maintain security....Regional administrative committees have intensified efforts to correct mistakes committed in the agrarian reform program, and are now satisfying the legitimate aspirations of all compatriots, including the Catholics...." 33/

On 17 November, however, Hanoi disclosed that "troops and cadres... tried to reason with the people but were man-handled. This ended in a clash in which a few persons were killed and wounded, including some army men....Security services are now taking the necessary steps to maintain order and security and to protect the compatriots' lives and property...." 34/

On November 9, 1956, several hundred aggrieved peasants assembled in a market place near Vinh—a predominantly Catholic area—to petition an ICC team to arrange for some of them to migrate to South Vietnam, and for return of confiscated land to others. The following morning a special DRV propaganda team and a contingent of NVA troops arrived, and several arrests were attempted. A riot ensued, which spread into insurrection. On the night of 13 November PAVN troops stormed into the town, scattering the rebels and inflicting heavy casualties. Thousands of peasants then swarmed over their local government offices, destroying land records, and blocking roads. Some militia deserted and joined the rebels, and attacks on nearby DRV troops were attempted. Bernard Fall, in a 1957 article, described four columns of some 10,000 peasants marching in the province capital, seizing arms from troops, and forcing party cadres to sign confessions of crimes. 36/ Two reinforced army divisions, some 20,000 strong, were committed to put down the uprising. 37/

What happened indicates that the populace of North Vietnam must have been living at the time under severe tension. The People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) had been deployed in strength into the rural areas to support the Land Reform Campaign, and it was reportedly through PAVN channels that the DRV first learned of impending revolt. Local garrisons had been reinforced as citizens grew more restive, and units composed of regrouped southerners were sent into exceptionally tense areas.

On 21 November, Nhan Dan, the government newspaper, noted that: "Nghe An is the province in which party organizations existed as early as 1930. But it is in the same province that the most serious mistakes have been made...", and went on to deplore the execution and beatings of party members. 35/

The casualties resulting from the revolt are not known. Fall states that "close to 6000 farmers were deported or executed." 38/ Ngo Dinh Diem in Saigon cited "massacres" in the North, claimed to have
evidence that the entire population of Nghe An had remained ignorant of its right to move to the South in 1954-1955, and called upon the ICC to reinstate Article 14(d). Vietnam Press, Diem's official press agency, on 9 November 1956, quoted Cong Nhan, a Saigon daily as follows:

"In the North, the fall of the illegitimate regime is near...As soon as the people's hatred of the Communist dictatorship is sufficiently mature for it to succeed in overthrowing it, then general elections which are really free will take place in the whole of Vietnam, and will peacefully bring about the reunification of the country.

"If he refuses to have recourse to force in order to liberate the North, while yet realizing the dearest aspirations of the people, the supreme head of the Republic of Vietnam does so solely in order to avoid bloodshed and undesirable fratricidal strife." 40/

c. Reconciliation and Repression, 1957-1959

From the DRV viewpoint the Nghe-An uprising, whatever its dimensions, coincided fortuitously with the Suez and Hungarian crises. The GVN simply could not muster sufficient evidence to compete for headlines, and U.S. attention was on Europe. In any event, Ho and his regime undertook a series of conciliatory gestures which sapped popular resentment, and cooled the situation abroad. Conciliatory gestures were quickly extended to Catholics. Radio Hanoi, which in July 1955, had broadcast a Lao Dong proclamation rejecting the existence of deities consistent with the "scientific principles of the doctrine of Marx and Lenin," on 22 November 1956 announced that:

"...in the agrarian reform, we have committed errors, including errors in the observance of freedom of religion. The people in general, and the Catholic citizens in particular, want these errors corrected. These are legitimate demands." 41/

At the same time the government allocated about 48 million dong (about $15,000) for repair of Catholic churches and a seminary. 42/ On 15-16 December 1956, the DRV convened the National Committee of the Catholic Union, which issued a declaration criticizing the government for having violated the laws on religious freedom, pointing out that:

"...the errors committed during the agrarian reform have violated the policy of religious liberty of the Lao Dong Party and of the Government and have infringed on the religious rights of the faithful...." 43/

Ho Chi Minh personally received a delegation from the Committee of the Catholic Union to express his regret over the "errors" that had been committed, and Nhan Dan, the Lao Dong paper, published a series of articles on the same subject.
The Iao Dong Party itself was purged with particular attention to the demonstrably unreliable rural membership acquired during the latter stages of Land Reform, and Nhan Dan through the spring of 1957 reported on continuing difficulty in restoring the Party's rapport in the countryside. At the same time, the press carried a number of graphic accounts of life in DRV prison camps. 

In early 1957, in emulation of Mao, the DRV sponsored a "hundred flowers" campaign, and as in China, the regime was surprised by the sharpness of intellectual criticism which it evoked. The Hundred Flowers movement lasted in full bloom only about three months, but the literary license stimulated an unusual outflow of verse and fable, in which Land Reform, PAVN, foreign advisers, and the Party cadre were all criticized. Eventually the barbs became unbearable for the Iao Dong, and the flow of newsprint to opposition papers was cut, printers went on strike, and a particularly cutting journal, Nhan-Van ("Humanism," a pun on Nhan-Dan), was forbidden to publish. Arrests and trials followed and by mid-1957 the voice of the intellectuals had all but been stilled. Nevertheless, as late as 1960, official releases were still deprecating literature which did not meet regime criteria for "proletarian writings."

By mid 1957, the DRV had reversed its policy on Catholics--six months after the "Rectification" rapprochement of December 1956. The denunciation of priests was resumed, and the Church was accused of political activities. In 1959, a more intense campaign of harassment was undertaken, including newspaper barrages depicting the Catholic clergy as the greatest obstacle to collectives in farm regions. Church activity was severely restricted; all non-Vietnamese priests and nuns were expelled; and the movement of the native clergy was rigidly circumscribed. Catholic schools closed rather than accept DRV political instructors. Western observers in Hanoi in 1962 noted that congregations in Hanoi were composed invariably of the aged. Fall reported that as of that year there were but 5 bishops and 320 priests remaining in the DRV.

The DRV, like the GVN, also resorted to population relocations: the forced migration of Vietnamese from overcrowded, potentially dissident coastal regions into areas inhabited by minority peoples. The tribal people of North Vietnam comprised about 15% of the population thinly settled over about 40% of the country. These folk had always resisted government from outside their tribal society. The French made only a pretense of governing them. Racially differentiated from the Vietnamese, the highlander-lowlander relationship historically proceeded from hostility on the one hand and contempt on the other. Even Truong Chinh was unwilling to press strongly his Land Reform Campaign against the patriarchal tribal system, but to the extent that he did, violence ensued. In Vo Nguyen Giap's catalog of mistakes recited on 29 October 1956 (supra), these difficulties were admitted, and concessions to the minorities were part of the Rectification of Errors. The Constitution of 1960 guaranteed the preservation of minority languages and cultures, and autonomy for local government. More than 70% of public administration in the northeast border region was placed
in the hands of non-Vietnamese, and the proportion was almost 50% on the Laotian frontier. Minority leaders were given seats in the National Assembly and on the Lao Dong Party Central Committee, and in both the Party and government bureaucracies numerous special minority boards and commissions were formed. Nonetheless, the first DRV Five-Year Plan (1960) included an expanded agricultural resettlement program in which 1,000,000 Vietnamese farmers were to move from the delta into the tribal regions to open new farmlands. In fact, the new farms were seldom self-sufficient, much less a contribution to the national food supply. But they aided internal security: their presence debilitated the traditional tribal society, and provided a quasi-military presence on the borders. In 1959, security forces in the border regions were further strengthened with Armed Public Security Forces to counter alleged airdrops of "ranger spies" from South Vietnam.

In most respects, the DRV had gone further in its self-accusation than had the de-Stalinization campaigns in other communist countries. Its recovery was equally exaggerated. Hoang Van Chi, a former Viet Minh cadre, believes that the Land Reform's advance into mass terror, followed by "Rectification" and reconciliation, had been carefully calculated by Ho as a "bamboo bending" in deliberate emulation of the Chinese, and that Ho, no less than Mao, was fully aware that bloodshed would eventuate. 48/ Aiming ultimately at nothing less than a rapid and total transformation of traditional society, both leaders resorted to terror, followed by calculated relaxation and retightening of government control, as necessary steps to a disciplined populace. If such was in fact Ho's views, events bore him out, for by 1959 the DRV was able to resume a forced advance toward collectivization of agriculture, which, though afflicted with occasional administrative setbacks and by production decreases, did not again prompt revolt. 49/

Other internal security measures taken by the DRV included strict controls over personal mobility, the allocation of large manpower resources to internal security functions, and the employment of the Lao Dong Party as a control mechanism and security censor. The regime eventually acquired, through its duplicate Party and governmental bureaucracies, contacts with and control over virtually every citizen. The formal internal security apparatus was effectively supplemented by population control documentation (identification cards, licenses, travel permits), by incessant propaganda, by networks of informers, and by surveillance in compulsory mass organizations. By 1959, following 5 years of oppression, relaxation, and repression, the people of the DRV were effectively disciplined.

2. Progress Towards Socialism

The assertion of the DRV Constitution of 1960 that the nation was "transforming its backward economy into a socialist economy with modern industry and agriculture..." had substance, but entailed a substantial input from abroad. Though a primarily agricultural society,
North Vietnam emerged from its war with France in 1954 a food-deficit area. Densely populated, war-torn, it found itself more than customarily dependent upon outside supplies of rice and supplemental foods, which it had usually imported from South Vietnam. Soviet stop-gap aid filled the food deficit until DRV production was improved. The negative attitude of the GVN toward any economic relations with the DRV beyond those necessitated by the Geneva regroupment, in which Diem became progressively more adamant, created one pressure upon the DRV to seek dependable sources of further aid abroad. A second stemmed from lack of human and material capital to take advantage of its natural resources: the North contained all the developed mineral lodes and most of the established manufacturing in the two Vietnams, as well as the bulk of electric power capacity in Indochina. The DRV needed substantial foreign aid either to press toward modernizing its basic industry or to collectivize its farms.

a. Agriculture

Foreign aid to the DRV in agriculture, aside from relief shipments of food, took the form chiefly of technical assistance, both in management and technique. Chinese experts in Maoist land reforms figured prominently in the concept and direction of the collectivization drives. Russian advisors are believed to have advocated DRV concentration on mineral and tropical products valuable in communist international trade, and to have furnished methodological assistance in irrigation, fertilizing, and the like, but to little avail: labor intensive, hand tool farming in the traditional fashion persisted. Progress towards collectivization was perceptible. After retrenching in 1957 following the peasant flare-up, the regime moved ahead, although more cautiously. At the beginning of 1958, less than 5% of the farm population was in producer cooperatives; enrollments increased thereafter, and sharply in 1960, from about 55% of peasant households in July to about 85% in December. About one third of the collectives were in advanced stages of communal land ownership and shared production; the remainder represented inchoate socialization, with market incentive still a mainstay. Performance in agriculture was generally poor, output never rising above subsistence levels, and slow and erratic growth depressing progress in other sectors of the economy.

There was, however, perceptible progress:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Grain Per Capita</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Food Grain Per Capita (in Kilograms)

The DRV gross national product, owing to improvements in both the industrial and agricultural sectors, grew steadily some 6% per year after 1958. The most promising years for the DRV were 1958 and 1959, when performance in both sectors was extraordinarily good; thereafter, consecutive years of poor harvests and rapid population increases cut into gains.
b. Industry

In industry, as compared with agriculture, foreign aid was more relevant, and visibly more effective. The DRV claimed in 1963 that new capacity had raised the total value of factory and handicraft industrial output two and three-quarters times above the 1956 level; an average annual increase of some 20%. Socialization was pronounced: by 1963 state-owned enterprises accounted for 60% of production, and partially state-owned about 6%. The North Vietnamese themselves possessed at the outset little capacity to carry out a balanced program of industrial development; in fact, handicapped as the DRV was by annual fluctuations in their agriculturally based economy and shortages of native technicians, its capability to absorb foreign aid was distinctly limited. Initially, to restore existing industrial plant, to improve communications, and to import consumer goods. Thereafter aid was extended in the form of credits for specified projects. The first DRV long range development plan, a three year program in 1958, proved too ambitious; targets were revised down annually, and at the end of the plan agricultural growth had averaged a little over 4%, compared with 21% for industry. A Five Year Plan for 1960-1965 was designed for more "rational development" of heavy industry, but precisely how this was to be achieved, and the pace of improvement, apparently remained subjects of contention up until the exigencies of the war overtook the plan.

U.S. intelligence is not informed as to how precisely foreign aid was related to either DRV economic plans, but in terms of government budget revenues, the DRV reported that foreign aid and loans comprised 39.5% of its 1955 income, but dropped to only 15.7% of its 1960 income. By contrast, and as a measure of return on both foreign aid and its own investment, profits from state enterprises contributed only 6.5% to 1955 income, compared with 58.0% in 1960. Total aid for 1955 to 1963 was as follows:

**ECONOMIC AID TO DRV**

1955-1963

(In Millions of U.S. Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor (1)</th>
<th>Grants</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communist China</td>
<td>225.0</td>
<td>232.0</td>
<td>457.0</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>105.0</td>
<td>263.9</td>
<td>368.9  (2)</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumania</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Germany</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>372.3</td>
<td>584.1</td>
<td>956.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Albania and North Korea also aided, insignificantly.

(2) Does not include 1962 agreement for agricultural development assistance, value unknown.

(3) Includes $16.2 million extended in 1955 as a consortium.
U.S. intelligence estimated that through 1963 DRV used about $334 million of aid extended by China, $324 million from the USSR, and about $106 from East Europe.

The Chinese Communists played a leading role in assistance for transportation, communication, and the irrigation system. Between 1957 and 1964 they built 13 rice mills, 28 sugar refineries, plus a number of consumer goods factories. A 1959 loan financed expansion in metallurgy, chemicals, and electric power. Chinese trainers, advisers, and technicians averaged 1500 to 3000 per annum. Soviet aid was at first centered on heavy industry. Technicians -- about 150 to 300 persons yearly -- were concentrated in heavy manufacturing, mining and electric power. After 1960, Soviet assistance was also provided for telecommunications and agriculture.

The DRV's foreign trade tripled from 1955 to 1963, and although exports increased from 8% of total trade in 1955, to 37% in 1963, a deficit remained which had to be financed from aid -- from grants in 1955-1957, and from credit thereafter.

The pattern of trade was also Bloc oriented, as follows:

**GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF DRV TRADE**

(1962 Data in Percentages) 54/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communist China, N.K., Cuba</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non-Communist</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Together China and USSR accounted for two-thirds of all trade. Total exports were 60% from agriculture, forestry, fishing and handicrafts, 30% from minerals; 50% of imports were machines and allied equipment. Less than 15% of all trade was with non-communist nations, consisting mainly of manufactured goods and chemicals for DRV coal.

Again, 1959 and 1960 were banner years. Compared with 1955, total trade more than doubled by 1959, and nearly tripled by 1960.
Value of DRV Foreign Trade *

(Millions of U.S. Dollars) 55/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Trade</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>140.5</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>114.5</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>171.8</td>
<td>104.5</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>207.8</td>
<td>127.9</td>
<td>79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>224.2</td>
<td>143.7</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>238.8</td>
<td>149.4</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Derived from DRV data. Total imports are believed to include all goods imported into the country except grant military assistance materiel.

Ho was explicit in spurning Western assistance for DRV development. In September, 1955, he extolled aid from the "other democracies" and pointed out that:

"This selfless and unconditional aid, beneficial to the people, is completely different from the 'aid' conceived by the imperialists. Through their 'aid' the imperialists always aim at exploiting and enslaving the peoples. The Marshall Plan, which has gradually encroached upon the sovereignty of the recipient countries, is eloquent proof of this." 56/

C. Foreign Policy Objectives

In the aftermath of the Geneva Settlement of 1954, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam pursued beyond its borders national objectives which inevitably drew the DRV into a broader, more direct role in the southern insurgency, and, therefore, into conflict with the United States. The following examination of DRV national interests -- perform speculative -- probes maximum and minimum objectives to delimit the range of DRV choice, and to determine the approximate apparent timing of those major foreign policy decisions which took it southward.

1. Independence

From the outset, Doc Lap, Independence, had been the battle-cry of Vietnamese of the Resistance, much as "liberty" rings for Americans. For Ho Chi Minh it was sine qua non: in 1946, he told a U.S. writer that "What follows will follow, Independence must come first." 57/ Independence of Vietnam from foreign domination -- from colonialism in its political forms, its economic exploitation, its military occupation, its social subservience and racism -- has been the primary goal of the redoubtable
revolutionary's entire mature life. His main obstacles, as he saw them, were first France, then a Franco-American combine, and finally the U.S. alone; toward the expulsion of U.S. power and influence from Vietnam Ho, after 1954, directed most of the international power of the DRV. Nonetheless, while Ho's testimony is extensive on his deep antipathy to U.S. imperialism as the major danger to the DRV, his behavior in the Chinese-Russian rivalry indicated that he perceived yet another serious threat to Vietnamese independence in his northern neighbor: China, ancient overlord of the Viet peoples. Accordingly, the foreign policy of the DRV, though pivoted upon anti-Americanism, has guarded against encroachment by the Communist Chinese.

As an upper limit on reasonable expectations after 1954, the DRV might have hoped, in the context of a worsening political climate within South Vietnam, or of some form of plebiscite per the Geneva Settlement, that foreign military forces would be withdrawn from the South and foreign influence attenuated. A Franco-American withdrawal could have acceptably taken place under a neutralization formula, provided that the formula permitted pursuit of other DRV policies, such as reunification, and socialization.

Minimally, the DRV might have been willing to accept a continued foreign presence in the south, especially a French presence, with assurance of eventual withdrawal, and compensatory concessions to the DRV on the issue of reunification.

In the literal sense, the DRV won its independence at the Geneva Conference of 1954, as attested by Pravda upon the close of the Conference, July 22, 1954: "the freedom-loving peoples of Indo-China...have won their national independence." In January, 1957, the Soviet UN delegate requested entry of the DRV into the UN as a separate, distinct state, as it then existed in North Vietnam. But Ho Chi Minh, also on 22 July 1954, issued an appeal stressing the temporary nature of the partition, and the impermanence of the French military presence in the South. Moreover, he said: "North, Central and South Vietnam are territories of ours. Our country will certainly be unified, our entire people will surely be liberated." By 1957 the bar to independence and unification, the baleful foreign presence in Vietnam was plainly, in Ho's view, the US:

"The Vietnamese people have perseveringly carried on the struggle for the implementation of the Geneva Agreement to reunify the country, because South Viet-Nam is still ruled by the US imperialists and their henchmen. In completely liberated North Viet-Nam, power is in the hands of the people; this is a firm basis for the peaceful reunification of Viet-Nam, a task which receives ever-growing and generous help from the Soviet Union, China, and other brother countries. Thanks to this assistance, the consolidation of the North has scored good results."

21
2. Reunification

The goal of independence, because of American "imperialist" support of the Diem government, thus became closely allied with, if not inseparable from, that of reunification. But the DRV-Lao Dong leaders, though widely acknowledged by all Vietnamese as heroes in the struggle for independence, did not win similar acceptance as political spokesmen for Cochinchina or Annam. Indeed, in all the modern history of Vietnam there has been little real unity. Vietnam's record is, rather, one of violence and political division. The conquest of Vietnam's current territory by the Dai-Viet people of the Red River Delta (modern Tonkin) from the Cham (of modern Annam) and Khmers (of modern Cochinchina) took place throughout this millennium: the Mekong Delta did not come under Viet suzerainty until ca. 1780. In the meantime, civil war had fractioned the Dai-Viet; for 150 years (ca. 1640-1790) two high walls divided North from South Vietnam at approximately the 17th parallel. A unified Vietnam came into being in 1802 under the Emperor Gia Long, but scarcely half a century elapsed before the French conquests began. Under the French, Cochinchina, Annam, and Tonkin were politically separate.

Present-day South Vietnam--by Viet Minh terms, Zone V (Annam) and VI (Cochinchina or Nam Bo)--has always been of secondary importance to the DRV. Ho Chi Minh's government can claim to have ruled Saigon, for example, for only twenty days in September, 1945, and neither the DRV government nor the Lao Dong Party ever commanded the strength in South Vietnam that they did in Tonkin. During the War of Resistance, 1945-1954, Zone V was less a theater of operations than a source of supplies and recruits for the Viet Minh in Tonkin, and in both Zone V and Nam Bo the Viet Minh practiced economy of force: only some 20% of organized Viet Minh military units were in either at end 1953, even though the areas supported nearly half of all Vietnam's population. Douglas Pike's study of the Viet Cong led him to conclude that:

"The Cochinchinese regarded the resistance as Northernoiented: the center of fighting was in the North, the Vietminh was strongest in the North, most of its leaders were Northerners, and the French were most vulnerable in the Red River delta. The South had less tradition of revolution, and inevitably a variety of North-South policy conflicts arose. The communication channel between Hanoi and Saigon was undependable, and liaison within the South was difficult. The Northern leadership exhibited little knowledge about southerners and even less patience with Southern lethargy...." 65/

Even Ho Chi Minh was fairly explicit in assigning to South Vietnam a lesser role in the revolution. For example, in his December, 1953, address to the National Assembly on Land Reform, he was careful to point out that Zones V and VI were not yet ripe for "progress toward socialism":

---
"Land reform is a policy applied throughout the country, but it must be carried out step by step; first in localities where sufficient conditions have been obtained and then in other localities....

"The Government will deal with the regions inhabited by the national minorities, the Fifth Zone, South Viet-Nam, and the guerrilla bases later on. In guerrilla--and enemy--occupied areas, land reform will be carried out after their liberation." 66/

Nonetheless, though South Vietnam had been relegated to a low operational priority, its eventual unification with the DRV became an article of faith which the Lao Dong leaders repeatedly and solemnly affirmed; for example, Ho Chi Minh:

"Our compatriots in the Southern area are citizens of Vietnam. Rivers can dry up and mountains wear away, but this truth stands.' [Letter to Southerners, May 3, 1946.] 'Each day the Fatherland remains disunited, each day you suffer, food is without taste, sleep brings no rest. I solemnly promise you, through your determination, the determination of all our people, the Southern land will return to the bosom of the Fatherland.' [October 23, 1946.] 'National reunification is our road to life. Great unity is the power that will surely triumph. Thanks to this great unity, the Revolution was successful and the Resistance victorious. Now, with great unity, our political struggle will certainly be victorious, our country will certainly be reunified.' [July 5, 1956.] 'South Vietnam is our flesh and blood....Vietnam is one country. South and North are of the same family, and no reactionary force can partition it. Vietnam must be reunited.' [September 2, 1957.] 'Every hour, every minute, the people of the North think of their compatriots in the South. The South Vietnamese people relentlessly have fought for nearly twenty years, first the French colonialists, then the American-Diemists. They are indeed the heroic sons and daughters of the heroic Vietnamese nation. South Vietnam truly deserves the same: Brass Citadel of the Fatherland.' [May 9, 1963.]

After the Geneva Conference of 1954, the most Ho and the DRV leaders might have expected was that France and the U.S. would permit a plebescite to occur, or withdraw under some one of the formulas mentioned above, with reunification to follow. However, for reasons which shall be set forth below, the actual course of events forced them to adopt what they probably regarded as a minimally acceptable policy, as follows: 68/

-- Consolidate power in North Vietnam, and expect the South to collapse from internal dissension.
-- Expect general elections, but in prudence, anticipate their not being held, and prepare to take the South by force if necessary.

-- Move north the bulk of the Viet Minh forces in the South, and upgrade as a reserve.

-- Foster strong ties among the regroupees with families in the South.

-- Establish an effective political infrastructure in the South, and work to weaken the government as well as the position of foreign powers there.

In 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem, with patent U.S. backing, refused to open consultations with the DRV preliminary to the expected plebiscite. There followed in rapid succession Diem's own plebiscite, the casting off of Bao Dai, and the withdrawal of the French. When July, 1956, passed, hope that the Geneva Settlement might lead toward reunification waned in the North. It was thereafter increasingly clear that peaceable reunification was not in prospect for the foreseeable future. Ho Chi Minh, in a 1956 letter to the 90,000 to 130,000 regroupees who had gone North in the expectation of returning that year, explained the seeming inaction of the DRV on their behalf as follows:

"Our policy is: to consolidate the North and to keep in mind the South.

"To build a good house, we must build a strong foundation. To have a vigorous plant with green leaves, beautiful flowers, and good fruit, we must take care of it and feed the root.

"The North is the foundation, the root of the struggle for complete national liberation and the reunification of the country. That is why everything we are doing in the North is aimed at strengthening both the North and the South. Therefore, to work here is the same as struggling in the South: it is to struggle for the South and for the whole of Viet-Nam.

"Struggle is always accompanied by difficulties. But your difficulties are our common difficulties. After fifteen years of devastating war, the newly liberated North is suffering many privations....

"...our political struggle will...be a long and hard struggle, then the tendency to become impatient, pessimistic, and to succumb to other cares will disappear.

"The political struggle will certainly be victorious, national reunification will certainly be achieved."
After the internal turmoil of 1956-1957, the DRV's domestic decks were cleared for more direct action abroad. Internal dissension died down as the regime effectively suppressed or mollified the farmers and the Catholics, the epicenters of discontent. Also, privations afflicting the society stemming from the war and the regroupment were somewhat alleviated.

3. Support from Abroad

The DRV, within its own resources, probably could not have achieved or maintained its independence, and it certainly could not look for reunification without foreign support. During the period 1950-1954, the Viet Minh had accepted significant amounts of foreign aid, especially Chinese aid, and the Geneva Agreements were in large measure the product of the diplomacy of the Soviet Union and the Chinese People's Republic, rather than their Vietnamese allies. The DRV, as it emerged from Geneva in 1954, consisted of a society torn by the war and undergoing the trauma of a 900,000 person exodus, a food deficit, a modest and war-damaged industrial plant, and a drastic shortage of technicians and public administrators. Internal and external defense were immediately a principal policy aim -- certainly through the 1956 peasant rebellions, and their consequences. Whatever extraterritorial ambitions the DRV may have had, these were necessarily subordinate to survival as a state. In the view of the Lao Dong leaders, apparently even the realization of even that minimal goal hinged upon the DRV's receiving substantial military assistance from abroad. Additional foreign aid dependency stemming from the broad domestic reform programs which the DRV undertook -- discussed above -- further impelled Ho Chi Minh and his government to turn to the Chinese and the Russians. The DRV's dependence upon its communist allies increased markedly over the decade following Geneva.

a. Foreign Military Assistance

The DRV had sound reason to maintain a large military establishment in the aftermath of Geneva. The presence of the French forces in South Vietnam through 1956, and the US-aided GVN military forces thereafter, taken together with the GVN's claims to DRV territory and people, GVN diplomatic hostility, and GVN belligerent propaganda, probably justified a large army for national defense. Moreover, internal security placed heavy demands upon DRV forces, at first to deal with the exigencies of establishing DRV control, pushing the Land Reform Campaign, and coping with the refugee problem. Large forces were also needed in 1956 to suppress uprisings, particularly in the predominantly Catholic rural areas. Beyond security, however, in orthodox communist fashion, the DRV regarded the armed forces as a primary instrument for indoctrination of the masses and for support of other Lao Dong Party programs; they also served as a reserve labor force to meet agricultural crises. And the foreign policy of the DRV required a military instrument of extensive capabilities in insurgency operations -- subversion, infiltration, and guerrilla warfare.
Manpower for such an establishment was available, although in poor crop years, diversion was necessary. But equipment was in short supply, and extensive training was in order. Most military equipment and supplies had to be imported, as DRV industry was incapable of more than small scale production of rudimentary small arms, small arms ammunition, and simple impedimenta, such as uniforms. 76/ Accordingly, virtually from the moment of its independence, the DRV sought and obtained military materiel from abroad, risking being caught at contravention of Article 17 of the Geneva Agreement to build a large, modernized land army of 10-14 divisions. 77/

b. Solidarity with the USSR and CPR

But military assistance and economic aid were conditioned on the quid pro quo of DRV identification with and support for the "Communist Bloc." The price of Bloc support had been high; it included sacrificing French cooperation after Geneva. 78/ In subordinating its interests to those of the USSR and CPR at Geneva, the DRV impaired its own negotiating strength. Thereafter, similar subordination obstructed its attempts to achieve reunification. It was with France that the DRV had contracted to hold elections on reunification, and it tried after 1954 to pursue a policy calculated to encourage France's honoring its Geneva commitments. Moreover, the DRV, short of human and material capital, wished to maintain access to French economic resources. Pham Van Dong assured the French in January, 1955, that the DRV:

"...sincerely desires to establish economic relations with France for reasons which are both political and economic.... That does not prevent us from establishing relations with friendly countries like China, but we are used to working with the French and can continue to do so on a basis of equality and reciprocity." 79/

But Paris was faced, as Pham put it, with a choice between Washington and Hanoi, though he assured the French that "the unity of Viet Nam will be achieved in any case, with France or against France." The French opted for withdrawal in 1956: the price of protracted intimacy with a solidly Bloc nation proved too high for France, both in its internal politics and in the Western alliance. 80/

For the DRV, solidarity with the Bloc entailed costs beyond French cooperation, for by the test of deeds, neither the Soviets nor the Chinese firmly supported its quest for reunification. It was the DRV's fate that the historically invincible monolith with which it cast its fortunes in 1950 was, by 1957, definitely disintegrating. Soviet policy vis a vis Vietnam had always been subordinated to its European interests. This was evident as early as 1945, when the success of Ho and the ICP were accorded less importance than success of the French.
Communist Party, and in 1954 it appeared that France, by rejecting the European Defense Community bought Soviet cooperation in settling the Indochina War—at the DRV’s expense. 31/ Post Geneva, Soviet support of the DRV came into tension with its strivings toward detente with the U.S. Generally, the Soviets seemed willing to accept the Cold War line SEATO drew at the 17th parallel, and were quite cool to DRV “reunification” talk. But the most disruptive factor in Moscow-Hanoi relations after Geneva was not Washington, but Peking. The CPR, like the USSR, seems to have regarded the DRV as a pawn in a world-wide test of power. The Chinese would probably have been disinterested in having on its southern border a unified, strong Vietnam, even though it were communist. They seem to have always regarded support of the DRV as a way to embarrass the Soviets, to attack the U.S. position in Southeast Asia, and to frustrate the US-USSR detente. Nonetheless, the Chinese had earned high regard in the DRV because they were willing, as the Soviets were not, to succor Ho with military aid in his hour of need. Moreover, Mao’s form of revolution seemed far more relevant to the Lao Dong leaders than the Russian version. Propinquity thus reinforced the attraction of China both as a source of aid and as a socialist model, and offset much traditional Viet-Chinese antipathy. However, like the Soviets, the Chinese maneuvered in Vietnam for broader goals than DRV success. In 1954 and 1955, possibly seeking to encourage an American withdrawal from the Taiwan Straits, the CPR adopted a soft line which blurred their stance on Vietnam just as the Geneva elections came into view. 82/ In 1956, Khruschev’s depiction of Stalin’s monstrous leadership at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union called into doubt the validity of Soviet pre-eminence within the Bloc. Mao’s bids for Stalin’s former position then split the Bloc.

Ho’s isolation was borne home to him within the year after Geneva, as the deadline approached for consultations preliminary to the elections. Although the Soviet Ambassador to Hanoi had joined a chorus of dark threats from DRV representatives that “violent action” would follow if the consultations were delayed, the 20 July 1955 deadline passed while the parties to the Agreement were in the Summit Conference at Geneva on ways to decrease world tensions, and the Bloc did not press the point. Ho took the extraordinary step of a formal appeal to Diem, but the GVN on 7 August 1955 strongly rejected Hanoi’s overtures for talks. 83/ A subsequent DRV appeal to the UK and USSR co-presidents of the Geneva Conference was also of no avail. In January, 1956, China, and then the USSR, did request another Geneva conference; but the USSR and the UK responded only by extending sine die the functions of the International Control Commission beyond the expiration date. 84/

All indications are that Ho preferred to follow the Soviet lead, probably from both repugnance at the prospect of further dependency on China, and realization that the Soviet was in a better position to provide the kinds and amount of foreign aid and trade the DRV

27
required. From 1956 through 1960 Ho, at some cost, honored the
principle Mao intoned at the Communist summit meeting in Moscow in
November, 1957: the Communist bloc must have a head and the Soviet
Union must be that head. Soviet rebuffs of the DRV must have there­
fore been particularly painful for Ho. In the 9th Plenum of the Lao Dong
Party Central Committee (19-24 April 1956) Ho--who was in person the DRV's
prime political asset, especially in view of Diem's ascendency--dutifully
recited the de-Stalinizing cant of the 20th Congress of the CPSU extolling
collective leadership, and damning the evil cult of the individual. Two weeks later, as the outcome of the meeting of Co-Chairmen of the Geneva
Conference at which the Soviets tacitly accepted status quo in Vietnam,
Ho received a message, dated 8 May 1956, signed by A. Gromyko, First Deputy
Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, acting with the authority of his
government, addressed to two sovereign states: the Governments of the
Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam. Immediately after the deadline for elections passed, in August 1956, Ho penned
a Pravda article deprecating notions that the DRV reunification "struggle"
was a Vietnamese affair, denying that the DRV might develop a "national
communism" of the Tito model, and rejecting ideas that the DRV might use­
fully pursue a course independent of the Bloc. The following January,
1957, after a stormy autumn of insurrection, the Rectification of Errors
Campaign, and "Hundred Flowers," Ho was surprised by the Soviet proposal
at the United Nations to formalize Vietnamese disunity by admitting both
the DRV and the GVN as member states. Nor were these the only
instances of tepid support or countervailing policy from the Soviets.
The DRV forwarded messages to the GVN in July 1955, May and June 1956,
July 1957, March 1958, July 1959, and July 1960, urging a consultative
conference on elections, offering to negotiate on the basis of "free
general elections by secret ballot," and urging liberalization of North­
South relations. Throughout, the Soviet Union never went beyond words
and gestures of solidarity.

For Ho Chi Minh, the major international difficulties
in securing foreign aid had internal ramifications as well. There is
evidence of a rising tide of conviction within the Lao Dong Party that
more forceful measures were necessary towards reunification, which took
the form in 1957 of an attack upon Ho Chi Minh's own position, and upon
the Soviet-oriented faction within the Party elite. There was also
an evident realignment of the DRV hierarchy in which Le Duan, an advocate
of forceful resolution of the impasse with Diem, came to prominence in
mid-1957. (Le Duan who served in the South, through 1956, appears
to have been de facto the Secretary General of the Party 1957-1960; there­
after, he openly held the office, and is considered the second ranking
member of the Politburo.)

Ho Chi Minh, despite rumors that he was dead or discarded,
survived the 1957 crisis seemingly intact.

By 1958 the DRV elite were apparently more disposed to
seek their own solutions in Vietnam, less sensitive to the persistent
coolness of Khruschev, and more responsive to Mao than theretofore. After
in the developing Sino-Soviet dispute, the DRV tended to indorse Chinese doctrine and methods, but was careful to avoid Peking-style abuse of the Russians. Ho, on occasion, served as mediator in the dispute, but on such central issues as disarmament, "peaceful coexistence," and Moscow's call for "democratic centralism" in the world communist movement, Ho's view by 1960 approximated that of Mao: independent, activist and bellicose, at least insofar as Diem's GVN was concerned. Nonetheless, DRV support for the Soviet Union, qualified though it was, paid off. In the period 1954 to 1960, the USSR supplanted the CPR as its prime foreign aid donor:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>China</th>
<th>USSR &amp; East Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955-1957:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>119.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-1960:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The foregoing discussion has been confined to the immediate foreign policy goals of the DRV in the aftermath of Geneva. There remains, however, a more far-reaching objective: Vietnamese domination over Indochina. As mentioned, modern Vietnam is the product of conquest. The Khmers (Cambodians) and the tribes along Viet Nam's Laotian frontier have historic cause for apprehension over Viet forays westward. In the nineteenth century, just ahead of French imperialism in Indochina, Vietnamese forces occupied and annexed contiguous Laotian frontier provinces (those which were roughly the territory controlled by DRV-linked Pathet Lao in 1963). But in current era, the furthest reaching of all Viet expansionist aspirations were those of the Communist Party of Indochina (ICP), which from its foundation aimed at the establishment of political control over Laos and Cambodia as well as Vietnam, and which regarded a workers and peasants government over a unified Indochina both feasible and necessary. According to a Lao Dong Party history published in Hanoi in 1960: "The Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian proletariat have politically and economically to be closely related in spite of their differences in language, custom, and race." The history quoted echoes the sense of one of the earliest known Lao Dong Party directives, captured in South Vietnam, dated November, 1951, entitled: "Remarks on the Official Appearance of the Vietnamese Workers Party." In a section labeled "Reasons for the
"The division into three parties and for the change in the party name," the document states that the Communist Party would continue to promote revolution throughout Southeast Asia as it had in the past, and stressed its essential unity despite outward appearances:

"The creation of a separate party for each of the three nations does not prejudice the revolutionary movement in Indochina.

"(a) In 1930, we recommended the creation of an Indochinese Communist Party, not only because Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos suffered under the same yoke of domination and had the same enemy, but also because at that time only the Revolutionary Movement in Vietnam was in a state of development, while it was still weak in Cambodia and Laos. If at that time there had not been one Communist Party for the three countries, the creation of a Communist and revolutionary movement in Cambodia and Laos would certainly have been retarded.

"Today, however, the situation has changed. The Cambodian and Lao peoples are rising to oppose the French and obtain their independence. Communist party sections exist in Cambodia and Laos and are beginning to grow. Cambodia and Laos already have a united Liberation Front (Issarak in Cambodia; Issara in Laos). Cambodia has a National Liberation Committee; Laos a Resistance Government, etc. Within these organizations there are already groups of faithful Communists who act as Delegations to the Indochinese Communist Party from which they receive directives. For that reason, the creation of a separate Communist Party for the working class of Vietnam does not risk weakening the leadership of the revolutionary movements in Cambodia and Laos or the carrying out of Marxist-Lenin propaganda action. In addition, the Vietnamese Party reserves the right to supervise the activities of its brother Parties in Cambodia and Laos.

"(b) Each nation - Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, has its own party, but unity of leadership and action remain between the three parties. There are several means of unifying the leadership and action. For example, the Central Executive Committee of the Vietnamese Workers Party has designated a Cambodian and a Lao bureau charged with assisting the revolutionary movements in these countries. It organizes periodic assemblies of the three parties in order to discuss questions of common interest; it works toward the creation of a Vietnamese-Khmer-Lao United Front.

"(c) Militarily Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos constitute a combat zone; Vietnam has substantially assisted Cambodia and Laos.
militarily as well as from all other points of view. The crea­
tion of a separate Vietnamese Party will not therefore weaken
the military cooperation between the three Nations in the fight
they are waging against the imperialists. Later, however, if
conditions permit, the three revolutionary Parties of Vietnam,
Cambodia, and Laos will be able to unite to form a single Party:
the Party of the Vietnam-Khmer-Laotian Federation.'

P. J. Honey stated in 1965 that one of the main requirements
of DRV foreign policy was "to impose Communist Vietnamese rule over Laos
and Cambodia," but noted that:

"It is open to debate whether this ambition for terri­
torial aggrandisement springs from the expansionist nature
of Communism, from the imperialist character of the Vietnamese
people which has shown itself repeatedly through their history
over the past millenium, or from the feeling that they had
played the major role in driving out French colonial power and
were therefore entitled to the fruits of their efforts. What
emerges very clearly is that the actions of the Vietnamese
Communists since 1951 are entirely consistent with the aim
set out in the document quoted above/.

"North Vietnam shares a common frontier with Laos and undeter­
dined numbers of North Vietnamese soldiers have been operating on
Laotian territory for several years. Moreover, the nominal head
of the Pathet Lao, Prince Souphanouvong, has spent more years in
Vietnam than in Laos and is the husband of a senior Vietnamese
Communist. For both reasons Laos presents her with the ideal
circumstances for the pursuit of her expansionist aims. Addi­
tionally, the prosecution of the war in South Vietnam requires
that men and supplies be infiltrated into that state, and eastern
Laos provides the most secure and convenient route for such
traffic...

"Cambodia touches the territory of no Communist state and
is, in consequence, not amenable to the same tactics as those
employed in Laos. Instead, the Vietnamese Communist leaders
have attempted to cement relations with the established, non­
Communist government of Norodom Sihanouk in order to induce that
government to create as many embarrassments and difficulties as
possible for the rival Vietnamese regime in Saigon. By exploiting
historic Cambodia antagonisms towards neighbouring Thailand and
South Vietnam, they have achieved the rupture of diplomatic rela­
tions between Cambodia and these two states, but....Norodom
Sihanouk has reached the conclusion that China, not North Vietnam,
will exercise the dominant influence over South East Asia in the
years to come and has evinced a readiness to reach an accommodation
with the Chinese, whose objectives do not necessarily coincide with
those of the North Vietnamese at all points...."
The 1951 Lao Dong document quoted above stipulated that:

"Not only is it our duty to aid the revolutionaries in Cambodia and Laos, but we must also aid the revolutionary movements in the other countries of Southeast Asia, countries such as Malaya, Indonesia, Burma, etc." 101/

Since DRV independence in 1954, its foreign policy has openly supported neutral regimes in Laos and Cambodia, while covertly it has undertaken major politico-military operations in Laos, and supported subversive organizations in Cambodia and Thailand. 102/ It is possible to infer, as has P. J. Honey, that the ultimate DRV objective is Vietnamese hegemony over Indochina: quasi-independent, communist governments controlled by the Hanoi leaders through the Lao Dong apparatus. However, it is also possible to interpret the Lao Dong Party tracts as bombast, and DRV extra-territorial operations as a necessary part of its thrust toward reunification of Vietnam. It is clear that DRV control of the Laotian Panhandle and the Mu Gia and Keo Mu Passes would be essential to any contemplated large scale infiltration of men and materiel from North to South Vietnam.

D. Links With the Viet Cong

From 1954 on, the DRV possessed four principal ties with insurgents within South Vietnam: the Southern Viet Minh who were regrouped to the North; the "Fatherland Front," the DRV mass political organization devoted in part to maintaining identification with Southerners, and promoting the cause of reunification before the world; some commonality of leaders; and the Lao Dong Party. Each of these deserve discussion preliminary to analyzing the extent to which these links permitted Hanoi to influence the form and pace of the insurgency in South Vietnam.

1. Southerners in the North. The estimated 130,000 "regroupees" of Geneva in North Vietnam after the evacuations of 1954-1955 included as many as 90,000 "soldiers," and possibly half that number of dependents. There were among them possibly 10,000 children, and about the same number of Montagnards. Of this entire group, U.S. intelligence estimates indicate that about 30-35,000 have since returned to South Vietnam. 103/ Regroupees provided virtually all the infiltrators in the period 1959-1964. Thereafter, known infiltration has been almost exclusively by Northerners, which has led U.S. intelligence to conclude that the DRV had by 1964 exhausted its "pool" of trained and able manpower among the regroupees. 104/ As of July, 1967, the GVN had only a small fraction of the Southern regroupee infiltrators under its control: 180 POW, and an undetermined (probably very much smaller) number of defectors. 105/ In August, 1966, a DOD contractor published a study based on detailed interrogation of 71 of these regroupees (56 POW and 15 defectors) plus 9 other NLF members. 106/ Two out of three in the sample were Communist Party members; all regroupees had undergone intensive training in the DRV before being sent south. The earliest trip South by any among the group was 1960, the latest 1964. The survey of their experiences and attitudes affords some insights into the policy and operations of the DRV.
Most of the physically fit Southerners had been placed in the North Vietnam Army (NVA) where they acquired military training and discipline, and political indoctrination—the 305th, 324th, 325th, 330th, and 338th NVA Divisions were filled with Southerners, and remained so until 1959, when infiltration started on a large scale. Those Southerners with non-military professional skills were placed in DRV civilian society where they could be useful. But all, no matter where placed, were apparently watched to assess their reliability, and eventually selected for return to the South by DRV authorities. Civilians were urged to "volunteer" to return, soldiers were ordered to do so. Almost all were pleased to comply, not only because it meant a return to family and land of birth, but because few liked North Vietnam, and because they had heard of the sufferings inflicted upon their people by the GVN, and wanted to "liberate" them from Diem and the Americans. The chosen were then sent to special training centers -- the most important of which for the interviewed regroupees was at Xuan Mai -- where they attended courses of several weeks to several months, depending on their background. The emphasis -- about two-thirds of instructional time -- was on political indoctrination. Themes included an impending victory in the South, to be followed by "peace, neutrality, and reunification." They were taught that after infiltration, they were to approach uncommitted Southerners, by stressing the land reform policy of the Viet Cong, by urging families to call back sons serving in ARVN, and by castigating the agrovillage-strategic hamlet program of the GVN. One propaganda specialist related that he was instructed to press three programs: political struggle, armed struggle, and "military proselyting" (vinh van) -- the latter again aimed at sapping the will of ARVN to fight, and causing desertions.

Following training, the regroupees were formed into units of 40 to 400 for the trip south. A few were infiltrated by sea, but the majority were taken by truck through North Vietnam to Laos, and thence walked south on foot. The journey took at least two and one-half months; most reported the trails were well organized, with camps built at intervals, and guides available at each camp to conduct arrivals on the next leg of their trip. Strict camouflage discipline was observed, and conversations with camp attendants or guide personnel was forbidden. On arrival at their destinations in South Vietnam, they were smoothly integrated into local Viet Cong organizations. (Little subsequent friction was reported by the regroupees themselves and the Viet Cong, but some southern VC recruited in the late Fifties or early Sixties, the "winter cadres," have expressed animosity toward the "autumn cadres," as the regroupees were called.)

The interviews with the regroupees suggest that:

-- The DRV quite deliberately organized, and trained an infiltration force of Southerners.

-- The infrastructure for doing so -- the training centers and the infiltration routes south -- indicate extensive preparations for the process before it was started in earnest in 1960.
The DRV had specific political, as well as military, objectives in returning the Southerners, including the overturning of Diem, and eventually, reunification.

The interrogations of the regroupees also indicate that the DRV viewed the regroupees as a long-range political asset, establishing special schools and educational programs for Southern children. A captured Viet Cong Lieutenant Colonel stressed this point, and quoted Phan Hung of the Lao Dong Politburo, speaking at the Third Party Congress in September 1960:

"The Party has tried to develop 10,000 teenage children regrouped from the RVN into a cohesive group of engineers, doctors, professors, and other specialists for the future. This is proof that the Party has looked out for the welfare of the South Vietnamese too." 108/1

The informant stressed that at least until he left North Vietnam in November, 1961, none of this shadow national elite had been conscripted: in his view, the DRV had yet to use a powerful political force, a cadre for South Vietnam whose attitudes had been carefully conditioned by more than a decade of education in the DRV, the Soviet Union, or other communist countries. As of 1968, there is no information that the DRV had committed these cadres in South Vietnam.

In early 1967, at the request of the Secretary of Defense, an interagency study group was convened from CIA, DIA, and the Department of State for a comprehensive review of U.S. intelligence concerning: "The North Vietnamese Role in the Origin, Direction, and Support of the War in South Vietnam." 109/ The resultant study validates the foregoing observations on the regroupees in all respects, as do other captured documents and interrogation reports. Taken together, available evidence indicates that infiltration of regroupees from North to South Vietnam began as early as 1955. For example, a U.S. intelligence report of November, 1955 reported on the arrival of 50 regroupees in October, 1955; and the Lieutenant Colonel mentioned above, an intelligence officer, described trips to South Vietnam and back in 1955, 1956, and 1958.

However, from all indications, the early infiltration was quite small scale, involving no more than a few hundred persons in all. There are no reports indicating DRV preparations of an apparatus to handle large-scale, systematic movements of people and supplies before 1958. Early in that year, according to one prisoner, Montagnards from Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces began to receive training in North Vietnam in the establishment and operation of way-stations and guide systems in Laos and South Vietnam; the prisoner left North Vietnam in March, 1959 with a group of other cadre to organize tribesmen for those missions. He testified that thereafter he made several inspection trips along the routes to check on the building of troop shelters in the encampments. 110/ Several other POW have disclosed that in early 1959 they were chosen to man "special border-crossing teams" for moving drugs, food, and other materiel across
the DMZ into Quang Tri and Thua Thien. In April, 1959, a prisoner reported that the Lao' Dong Party Central Committee directed the forming of a headquarters to control this effort, which came into being on May 5, 1959, as the 559th Transportation Group, directly subordinate to Party headquarters. Another prisoner served with the 70th Battalion of the 559th Group, which was formed in 1959 and sent into southern Laos. The 70th Battalion received weapons, ammunition, mail, and supplies from Hanoi and transported them to another organization in charge of distribution to insurgent units. The 70th Battalion was in charge of 20 way-stations, furnished escorts for infiltrating groups from North to South Vietnam, and transported sick and wounded personnel from Thua Thien Province back to North Vietnam. While the 559th Group was being deployed on land, other prisoners reported that the 603d Battalion was formed in June, 1959, to manage maritime infiltration into South Vietnam. According to prisoners, the 603d Battalion had 250 men upon formation, and by December, 1959, had 11 infiltration "cells" and supporting bases in operation.

Still other POWs stated that in January, 1960, a training center for infiltrators was in operation at Son Tay, northwest of Hanoi, and that in early 1960, the NVA 324th Division in Nghe An was directed to begin infiltrator training. About the same time the Xuan Mai Infiltration Center was established southwest of Hanoi, a school which by 1961 could accommodate several 1000-man classes simultaneously.

Moreover, available evidence points to 1959 as the year in which significant numbers of regroupees began to be funneled from North Vietnam through the way-station system into South Vietnam. George Carver, of CIA, has conservatively estimated that 1959 infiltration amounted to a "few hundred." Altogether, during 1959 and 1960, twenty-six groups of infiltrators, comprising 4500 personnel, were confirmed by interrogations of two or more prisoners from each group. The same sources established that most of the infiltrators were military officers, senior non-commissioned officers or trained political cadre. Captured documents and interrogations also indicate that at least half--military and civilian--were regular Lao Dong Party members. The following table shows U.S. intelligence estimates of infiltration into South Viet-Nam from 1959 through 1965; during 1963 "regroupee" resource waned visibly, and in 1964 apparently dried up; by early 1965 at least three out of four infiltrators were ethnic North Vietnamese.
### Infiltration from North to South Vietnam (1959-1965)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Confirmed (1)</th>
<th>Probable (2)</th>
<th>Total (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>4556</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>4582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>4118</td>
<td>2177</td>
<td>6295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>5362</td>
<td>7495</td>
<td>12857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>4726</td>
<td>3180</td>
<td>7906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>9316</td>
<td>3108</td>
<td>12424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>23770</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>25680</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. A confirmed unit/group is one which is determined to exist on the basis of accepted direct information from a minimum of two prisoners, returnees or captured documents (any combination, in addition to indirect evidence).

2. A probable infiltration unit/group is one believed to exist on the basis of accepted direct information from one captive, returnee, or captured document, in addition to indirect evidence.

3. The total does not represent all the data on hand. In 1965 a "possible" category was added to show units/group thought to be in South Vietnam on the basis of unconfirmed evidence. Adding the "possible" category raises the totals for 1965 to 33,730. Still other information, though available, has been considered insufficient to warrant adding to the totals.

4. The figure shown is for both 1959 and 1960.

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There is no evidence that the regroupees themselves exerted significant pressure upon the DRV leaders to undertake the infiltrations or force reunification by other means. Many were dissatisfied with the North, but there is no record that they openly and collectively agitated for return to the South. Rather, they appear to have been retained in large groups only within disciplined military units, and otherwise they had no appreciable collective identity outside the formal groupings organized or authorized by the DRV. The DRV did appeal to them as a group from time to time, but principally when it wished to mobilize opinion against some deed of the GVN. For example, in December, 1958, in Diem's "political re-education center" at Phu Loi (Thu Dao Mot), just north of Saigon, there was an epidemic food-poisoning in which at least twenty prisoners died. Hanoi launched at major propaganda effort to exploit the mishap, claiming that: 120/

"Six thousand former resistance members and fighters for peace and national reunification, six thousand patriots, men
and women of all ages and ways of life, detained without trial in a concentration camp as an act of reprisal, were victims of a wholesale food-poisoning which resulted in more than a thousand dead on the very first day. The survivors were hurriedly taken to other camps or left dying behind the Phu Loi barbed wire...."

The Phu Loi Massacre became one of the cases which underwrote Hanoi's appeal to the world in 1959 and 1960 to end:

"...this regime of terror and massacre set up by Ngo Dinh Diem in the south of our country at the behest of the U.S. imperialists. It is the duty of all honest people to extinguish this hotbed of war....According to available data which cannot be complete from July, 1954, date of the signing of the Geneva Agreements, to February, 1959, 180,843 former resistance members were arrested, 50,000 others were subjected to a regime of forced labour in the so-called 'Agricultural colonies.' The Phu Loi camp is part of this network of sorrow and affliction which Ngo Dinh Diem, the henchmen of the American imperialists, hopes to quench the aspirations for freedom, independence and national unity of our people.... [Footnote] The famous declaration of Diem, during his visit to Washington in 1957: 'The United States' frontier extends as far as the 17th parallel in Vietnam.' " 121/ At the forefront of the "movement of protest" were Southerners in North Vietnam, who could write or speak with special poignancy about the event. Thus, the regroupees became a strategic propaganda as well as personnel resource for the NVA.

2. The Fatherland Front. Policy on the regroupees, and orchestration of propaganda relating to reunification with South Vietnam, was apparently reserved to the top echelon of the Lao Dong Party. There is some evidence of the existence as early as 1957 of a branch of the Lao Dong Party Central Committee called the "Reunification Department," which had purview over all matters relating to regroupees; the Department or Commission was surfaced at the Third Party Congress, September, 1960. 122/ A prisoner taken in 1964, a regroupee from Binh Dinh Province, indicated that he worked for this Department for some years prior to infiltrating in 1963, with duties of supervising civilian cadres. He described the Department's having a personnel management system, with formal records and reports, education programs for cadres and their children; he also stated that the Committee decided which regroupees would be ordered South. 123/ The head of the Reunification Department of the Lao Dong Party possibly since 1957, and at least since 1960, was Nguyen Van Vinh, an NVA Major General, a Deputy Chief of Staff of the NVA, a Vice Minister of Defense and a member of the Party Central Committee.
Vinh was in South Vietnam up until late 1956. 124/

However, overt DRV political activities with the regroupees or on behalf of reunification, were normally carried out through the Fatherland Front, which, as mentioned above, from its foundation in 1955 advanced proposals for rejoining North and South Vietnam. With the founding of the NLF in late 1960, the Fatherland Front became its DRV counterpart, its propaganda counterpoint, its sounding board, and international sponsor. 125/ In fact the NLF was set up as a mirror image of the Fatherland Front:

SELECTED COMPONENT ORGANIZATIONS

National Liberation Front (South Vietnam)

People's Revolutionary Party (PRP)
Democratic Party
Radical Socialist Party
Association of Labor
Association of Women
Association of Youth
Association of Artists and Writers
Association of Democratic Journalists
Association of South-Vietnamese Buddhists

Fatherland Front (North Vietnam)

Iso Dong Party
Democratic Party
Socialist Party
General Confederation of Labor
Women's Union
Youth Federation
Writers and Artists Union
Journalists Association
Unified Buddhist Association
National Liaison Committee for Patriotic and Peace Loving Catholics
Vietnam-Soviet Friendship Association
Vietnam-Chinese Friendship Association
Vietnam-French Friendship Association
Peace Committee
Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee
3. Common Leadership. North and South Vietnam have shared leaders throughout the last three decades, a commonality which has lately developed into Northerners holding the top posts both within the GVN and within the NLF. Tran Van Cian, an old ICP leader, headed the "front" government in Saigon in 1945, and then returned to Hanoi to hold high DRV posts. His successor was Nguyen Phuong Thao (alias Nguyen Binh), a northerner, who led the Southern Resistance through 1951, and subsequently died in the North. Nguyen Phuong Thao (alias Nguyen Binh) was succeeded by Le Duan, who became First Secretary of the Lao Dong Party openly in 1960, and probably de facto in 1957. Le Duan's deputy was Le Duc Tho, in 1960 director of the Organizational Department of the Lao Dong Party, and a member of its Central Committee. Pham Hung, in 1960 a member of the Lao Dong Secretariat and a Deputy Premier of the DRV, and Ung Van Khiem, in 1960 on the Lao Dong Central Committee, were also among the leaders of the Southern Viet Minh through 1954.

Le Duan remained in the South after Geneva, or at least is mentioned in intelligence reports as being in the South frequently through 1957. His return to North Vietnam in mid-1957 precipitated, according to some sources, a struggle among Ho's lieutenants between a moderate faction opposing DRV support of guerrilla war in the South, and a militant faction led by Le Duan. He is also reported to have been sent on an inspection trip to the South in 1958, and in early 1959, to have presented a series of recommendations for immediate action in the South to the Lao Dong Central Committee. General Van Tien Dung, Chief of Staff of the NVA and alternate Politburo member, was reportedly a member of the Party's southern apparatus from mid-1955 through 1956, having been sent south to contract alliances with Hoa Hao and Cao Dai armed bands; Nguyen Van Vinh, one of his deputies, also served there at the same time. Intelligence is vague on Le Duan's replacement in 1957. However, among those northern leaders mentioned by intelligence sources as serving in the South in the period after 1956 are Tran Van Tra, Le Duan's pre-1954 military adviser in the South, and now a NVA deputy chief of staff; and Muoi Cuc (Nguyen Van Cuc), one of Le Duan's close followers.

Both the infiltrated regroupees and the relatively few northerners who accompanied them in the years 1959-1963 were lower-level leaders. As George Carver put it:

"They were not foot soldiers or cannon fodder (at least not until Hanoi began sending in whole North Vietnamese units in late 1964 or early 1965). Instead they were disciplined, trained and indoctrinated cadres and technicians. They became the squad leaders, platoon leaders, political officers, staff officers, unit commanders, weapons and communications specialists who built the Viet Cong's military force into what it is today. They also became the village, district, provincial and regional committee chiefs and key committee members who
built the Viet Cong's political apparatus.

"The earlier arrivals had had at least five years of indoctrination and training in North Viet Nam, or elsewhere in the Communist bloc, before departing on their southern missions . . ." 132/

The monopoly of Viet Cong leadership by the infiltrators from the North became evident after 1960. By 1965, they were clearly dominant. For example, while southerners still controlled the Viet Cong of the Mekong Delta, in the provinces just north of Saigon -- Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Binh Hoa, and Phuoc Tuy especially -- regrouped northerners had assumed most of the principal command positions.

A document captured in January 1966 listed 47 VC officials attending a top-level party meeting for that region, of whom 30 had infiltrated from 1961 through 1965. Seven of these, all holding high posts in the regional command, were North Vietnamese. 133/ U.S. intelligence has estimated that one-third of the infiltrators from 1962 through 1964 were military officers or political leaders. 134/ A high-level defector from the VC 165A Regiment, charged with the Saigon region, stated that in 1965, 8 of its 20 top officers were infiltrators. Other prisoners and ralliers have provided evidence that from one-quarter to one-third of Viet Cong officers in Liberation Army units were infiltrated from the North. At Viet Cong central headquarters in Tay Ninh -- Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) --, Senior General Nguyen Chi Thanh of the NVA and Major General Tran Van Tra of the NVA and the Lao Dong Central Committee, his deputy, both North Vietnamese, held the top positions in the Communist Party Secretariat, under which there was a Military Affairs Committee heavily weighted with North Vietnamese military Officers. By 1966 it was clear that in the northern provinces of South Vietnam, the NVA was in direct command. General Hoang Van Thai, a deputy chief of staff of the NVA, and Major General Chu Huy Man, a member of the Lao Dong Central Committee, commanded all VC/NVA operations there. 135/

4. The Communist Party. U.S. intelligence has been relatively well assured that throughout the years since 1945 the Communist Party of North Vietnam -- in its several guises -- has remained active in South Vietnam and in control of the Communist Party there. Public statements by Ho, by Truong Chinh, and other DRV leaders confirmed intelligence collected by the French that the Party went underground upon its formal disestablishment in 1945, but stayed operational and united throughout Vietnam. 136/ The Party publicly and privately took credit for organizing and leading the Viet Minh in the years 1945 to 1951, and upon the DRV's legalizing the Lao Dong Party in 1951, openly identified the latter with both the Indochinese Communist Party pre-1945, and the covert Party of the years thereafter. By 1954, the Party seems to have asserted itself in virtually all of the Viet Minh's sprawling undertakings. Party members held the key positions in the Front, both in the North and in the South, and Party cadre served as the chain of command for both operational intelligence and decisions. 137/ The Viet Minh administered South Vietnam as two "interzones" or regions (see map), and established
17th parallel: 10-mile neutral zone

Legend:
- Territory under control of Saigon government since July 1954
- Laotian territory under DRVN-controlled Pathet Lao forces
- Inter-Province boundaries
- Inter-Zone boundaries

Note: Hanoi and Saigon are considered as "Special Zones"
a principal subordinate Party headquarters on Ca Mau Peninsula called the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), headed by Le Duan. However, the 1951 statutes of the Lao Dong Party, like other DRV official pronouncements, recognized in principle no separate identity for South Vietnam or South Vietnamese communists. It was the Lao Dong Party cadre which sorted out the southern Viet Minh for regroupment or stay-behind missions, and the regrouped themselves felt that their fate was thereafter in the hands of the Lao Dong leaders.

As the Viet Minh military apparatus was dismantled, COSVN was apparently closed down. There is convincing evidence, however, that from 1955 on, there were two Party headquarters -- or at least communications centers -- in South Vietnam, each communicating directly with Lao Dong headquarters in Hanoi. One of these was located in "Nam Bo" (South Zone), the other was located in "Trung Bo" (Central Zone, Region Five). Captured documents and prisoners indicate that these headquarters were active in handling the infiltration between North and South Vietnam in the years immediately after Geneva; they are also mentioned as the site of conferences between southern Vietnamese and northern leaders like Le Duan and Van Tien Dung. While prisoners and captured documents have established these links between Hanoi and the South, reports are too few in number and insufficiently comprehensive to warrant the conclusion that Hanoi was always in a position to dictate or even manipulate events in South Vietnam; they do offer persuasive evidence that the Lao Dong Party continued conspiratorial, political, and military activities in South Vietnam throughout the years 1954 to 1960. Moreover, the documents and interrogations are supported by circumstantial evidence. The village level organization of the Viet Cong, even that in the early years of the insurgency, used propaganda techniques, and the terror-persuasion methodology employed by the early Viet Cong, all closely followed the doctrine of the Lao Dong Party. The eventual appearance of a "front" structured like the Fatherland Front; the reiteration by Cong of propaganda themes being trumpeted by Hanoi; and indications of preoccupation within the Viet Cong leadership over following the Lao Dong Party line also support the conclusion that the Party was playing a significant role in the mounting rebellion against Diem.

In 1961, when the People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam came into being, there was some effort in both North and South to portray it as an indigenous South Vietnamese party, independent of the Lao Dong. But documents and prisoners have since proved that if this were the case, neither the Viet Cong hierarchy nor rank-and-file believed it so. A document captured in 1962, a provincial party directive, stated that the creation of the PRP "is only a matter of strategy. . . to deceive the enemy. . . Our party is nothing but the Lao Dong Party of Vietnam, unified from North to South, under the direction of the Central Executive Committee of the Party, the chief of which is President Ho." Another party directive captured in 1966 provided that: "the masses who have good sympathy towards the Party should be well informed that the Lao Dong Party and the People's Revolutionary Party are one party headed by the Central Committee with
Chairman Ho at the head." An NVA naval officer captured in 1966, 
a second generation Party member, asserted that: "Once South Vietnam 
has been liberated, the NLF will suffer the same fate as the Viet Minh 
did in North Vietnam after independence was gained from the French. 
The Front will atrophy and quickly disappear . . ." This officer was 
emphatic that: "The Lao Dong and the PRP are one and the same organism 
... the PRP and the Lao Dong will emerge into the open (after reunifica-
tion) as one party . . . under Ho's authority." 

In March, 1962, the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) 
was reactivated, built around the Nambo Inter-Zone Committee, and given 
purview over Cochinchina and Annam. The 1962 reorganization is believed 
to have been intended to improve the coordination of insurgent activity 
and to lend substance to the newly created PRP. 

Available evidence indicates that the PRP is the southern 
element of the DRV Lao Dong Party. But whether the PRP is a subsidiary 
of the Lao Dong Party or merely a territorial department of the Party 
is unclear. Pointing to a parent-subsidiary relationship are the facts 
that membership requirements in the PRP are considerably less stringent 
than in the Lao Dong Party, that the PRP regulations are designed for 
an independent entity, and that the SVN military party system is sub-
ordinate to COSVN, whereas the DRV military party system is not sub-
ordinate to analogous party committees. But Vietnamese Communists 
assert that there is only one Vietnamese Communist Party because Vietnam 
is one country; the Lao Dong party appears to count PRP members in its 
oficial membership figures; and infiltrating Lao Dong Party members 
are automatically accorded PRP membership. The fact that some members 
of the Lao Dong Central Committee are officials of COSVN could be con-
sistent with either relationship; whatever the exact relationship, 
COSVN is the extension of the Lao Dong. COSVN's immediate superior 
in the Lao Dong Party hierarchy seems to be the Party's Reunification 
Department, which is believed to have issued specific orders to COSVN 
based upon the directives of the Lao Dong Central Committee. The 
principal function of the Reunification Department seems to be to act 
as the COSVN liaison office in DRV, where it forwards correspondence 
and recruits and trains political cadre before infiltration south. 
COSVN leadership of the military party system in SVN appears to have 
been subject to the technical supervision of the Lao Dong Central 
Military Committee. 

George Carver has summarized well presently available 
information concerning command linkage between Hanoi and the South: 

"As the organizational structure of the Viet Cong move-
ment has expanded over the past four years, its general outlines 
have become fairly well known. In the insurgency's initial 
phase (1954-1959), the Communists retained the Viet Minh's 
division of what is now South Viet Nam into 'Interzone V'
(French Annam below the 17th parallel) and the 'Nambo' (Cochin China), with each area under Hanoi's direct control. In late 1960 or early 1961, this arrangement was scrapped and field control over all aspects of the Viet Cong insurgency vested in a still existing, single command headquarters, originally known as the Central Office for South Viet Nam (or C.O.S.V.N. --a term still in circulation) but now usually referred to by captured Viet Cong as simply the P.R.P.'s Central Committee.

This command entity, which also contains the headquarters of the N.L.F., is a mobile and sometimes peripatetic body, usually located in the extreme northwestern tip of Tay Ninh province in prudent proximity to the Cambodian border. . . At the 1952 Geneva Conference on Laos, a member of the North Vietnamese delegation inadvertently commented that the published roster of the Lao Dong Party's Central Committee did not include some members whose identities were kept secret because they were 'directing military operations in South Viet Nam.' One of the four examples he cited was 'Nguyen Van Cuc,' which is one of the aliases used by the Chairman of the P.R.P. This Lao Dong Central Committee member, whose true name we do not know, is probably the overall field director of the Viet Cong insurgency in South Viet Nam. The overall commander of Viet Cong military forces (who would be a subordinate of Cuc's within the Communist command structure) is almost certainly the Chairman of the (P.R.P.) Central Committee's Military Committee—a man who uses the name Tran Nam Trung but whom several captured Viet Cong cadre members have insisted is actually Lieutenant-General Tran Van Tra, a Deputy Chief of Staff of the North Vietnamese army and an alternate member of the Lao Dong Central Committee. The director of all Viet Cong activity in V.C. Military Region 5 (the northernmost third of South Viet Nam) is Nguyen Don, a Major-General in the North Vietnamese army and another alternate member of the Lao Dong Central Committee, who in 1961 was commander of the North Vietnamese 305th Division but came south late that year or early in 1962. In short, not only does the P.R.P. control all aspects of the Viet Cong movement, including the N.L.F., and not only is it a subordinate echelon of the North Vietnamese Lao Dong Party, but the P.R.P.'s own leaders appear to be individuals who themselves occupy ranking positions within the Lao Dong Party hierarchy.1487

However, while the fact of extensive DRV control over South Vietnam's insurgents after 1960 sheds light on recent DRV policy, it does not answer the questions of when and why that control was imposed. These are best addressed in the broad context of world events, which, as much as DRV domestic politics, or U.S. and GVN policies, seem to have governed DRV strategy.