AD NUMBER

AD351696

CLASSIFICATION CHANGES

TO: unclassified

FROM: confidential

LIMITATION CHANGES

TO:

Approved for public release, distribution unlimited

FROM:

Distribution authorized to U.S. Gov't. agencies and their contractors; Administrative/Operational use; Jul 1964. Other requests shall be referred to the Department of the Air Force, Attn: Public Affairs Office, Washington, DC 20330.

AUTHORITY

31 Jul 1976, DoDD 5200.10; Rand Notice, 14 Jun 1977

AD NUMBER

AD351696

CLASSIFICATION CHANGES

TO

confidential

FROM

secret

AUTHORITY

31 Jul 1967, DoDD 5200.10

AD _____

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CAMERON STATION ALEXANDRIA. VIRGINIA

MEMORANDUM
RM-4140-PR
JULY 1964

THE ROLE OF NORTH VIETNAM IN THE SOUTHERN INSURGENCY (U)

Joseph J. Zasloff

PREPARED FOR:
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE PROJECT RAND

The RAND Corporation
SANTA MONICA • CALIFORNIA

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PREFACE

In the following Memorandum, the author, a consultant to RAND's Social Science Department, examines in depth the role that North Vietnam is playing in the present struggle in South Vietnam, and also discusses the function of Laos and Cambodia in providing passage ways and a safe haven for the insurgents.

This attempt to appreciate the importance of the outside base and nearby sanctuary in a present-day insurgency is part of the overall work on different aspects of counterinsurgency that RAND is conducting for several of its clients. Readers of this Memorandum are referred, especially, to the forthcoming RM-3967-ARPA, "The Border Control Problem in South Vietnam (U)," Secret, by C. V. Sturdevant. The present study, it is hoped, will be of interest not only to the Air Force, which sponsored the research, but to other departments of the government that are concerned with events and policies in South Vietnam today.

No single document, or set of documents, fully reveals the role of North Vietnam in the insurgency. The available factual data, many and diverse though they are, tend to be fragmentary; some must remain unconfirmed, their credibility notwithstanding. In preparing this analysis, the author examined, in addition to the open literature, a great many intelligence reports and studies, both classified and unclassified, and discussed the situation in Vietnam with numerous specialists, including members of the State and Defense departments and others in the intelligence community. His appraisal, therefore, is a composite picture based on several kinds of evidence of varying

levels of precision and generality. For such specific data as the figures cited for Viet Cong infiltration into South Vietnam he has relied on the two MACV* studies on infiltration (dated July 1962 and February 1963, respectively), which show the estimated numbers of cadres sent from North Vietnam to the Viet Cong in the south. A second category of sources consists of reports of isolated events, particular commitments, and individual examples of northern control and support, which, when read together, describe a pattern of the North Vietnamese involvement. Finally, in dealing with such intangible, and yet highly significant, aspects of the total picture as leadership, morale, and ideology, the author has depended largely on inference and extrapolation; wherever possible, he has checked such inferential material against evidence of a less speculative nature.

The present study is the result of a sifting out and synthesizing of these many fragments, including facts and insights obtained through interviews. It has thus been impracticable to document many of the author's statements and conclusions. Moreover, given the swift movement of events, some of the facts and figures cited, including names and organizational details in the several diagrams, are bound to have changed since the date of the information. These particulars are nevertheless included as illustrative of a relationship between Hanoi and the southern insurgents that, in essence, remains unchanged.

*Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

SUMMARY

Much of the strength and sophistication of the insurgent organization in South Vietnam today is attributable to the fact that North Vietnam plans, directs, and coordinates the over-all campaign and lends material aid, spiritual leadership, and moral justification to the rebellion. The communist leaders of the ruling Lao Dong (Workers) Party in Hanoi have committed substantial political, economic, and military resources of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) to subverting the government of South Vietnam, with the aim of making it give way in time to a communist regime. Yet they go to great lengths to camouflage their actual contribution and to pe petuate the myth that they are lending only moral support to the rebellion. As will be shown, this policy affords them several notable advantages and reduces to a minimum the risks attached to their involvement. It benefits the southern insurgents, who have all the flexibility, mobility, and freedom from responsibility of guerrillas (they need not maintain a presence or protect civil order; they can live off the land; and they are able to choose their targets), while enjoying the protective guidance, staff support, and discipline of a conventional military establishment of some 225,000 troops that is relatively safe from attack.

In the DRV, the actual direction of the insurgency lies with the three-man Committee for Supervision of the South, responsible to the Lao Dong Party's Central Committee. The committee adheres to communist doctrine in subordinating military strategy and tactics to political objectives, and nurtures the myth of a southern "war

of liberation." Within South Vietnam, the DRV's instrument of control is the National Liberation Front (NLF), purportedly an indigenous organization that unites Vietnamese of all persuasions and classes in the battle against the American "imperialists" and their puppets in the government offices of Saigon. Militarily, command and control of the insurgency are maintained through a complex organizational pyramid, whose apex is Hanoi and at whose base are the Viet Cong's local cells in the south. A highly sophisticated intelligence organization that draws on all the resources of its Hanoi headquarters, and a well-functioning communications network that permits regular contact between Hanoi and the Viet Cong apparatus, complete the picture of effective DRV control over operations in the south.

One of North Vietnam's major contributions is the organization, training, and supply of insurgent personnel. The three main sources of manpower are (1) the estimated five to ten thousand former Viet Minh whom the Communists ordered to go underground in South Vietnam after 1954; (2) a large pool of southerners, the majority of them Viet Minh troops, who were "regrouped" in the north under the Geneva Agreements; and (3) individuals in the south who are susceptible to recruitment. In a well-developed staffing system, Viet Cong combatants in the south advance from one force level to the next (from militia elements, to regional units, to the main force), and new cadres are selected for the main force from the pool of southerners in the DRV, given thorough guerrilla training, and infiltrated into South Vietnam.

Though the Viet Cong buy or capture most of their supplies, the DRV furnishes or obtains from other countries (notably Communist China and the Soviet bloc) some weapons, ammunition, explosives, and such crucially important items as medicine. These supplies, like the personnel, are sent into South Vietnam by an elaborately organized system of well-staffed and well-secured routes through Laos and Cambodia and, less frequently, by sea.

As important to the insurgents as the material aid is the more intangible political and psychological support of the DRV. The undiminished stature of Ho Chi Minh, a national hero and Vietnamese patriot in the eyes of many southerners, and the revolutionary reputation of other top leaders in Hanoi are among the Viet Cong's great assets. They lend weight to the rebels' contention that the present struggle is but a continuation of the Indochina war against "imperialist" domination; they obviate the need for a new doctrine or indeed for the development of a new, indigenous leadership; and their past success and strength heartens their present followers, just as it discourages their enemies. Furthermore, the DRV has mustered the full power of its propaganda apparatus and is exploiting its diplomatic prerogatives in behalf of the insurgency, and thereby not only has gained support and sympathy for the Viet Cong cause but has tried to create an international climate unfavorable to the counterinsurgent effort of the government of South Vietnam and the United States.

The northern contribution, tangible and intangible, is a major reason for the imposing success of the Viet Cong; without it, the threat to

South Vietnam would be far less serious than it is today. An organization confined to the human and material resources of South Vietnam alone, without the prestige and actual benefits that accrue from having powerful political and psychological support beyond the border, could not command or ever hope to reach the Viet Cong's present strength. In the following, the author has tried to isolate the decisive advantages afforded by the present northern participation in the struggle and, directly or by implication, to suggest what would be the condition of the insurgents without that support.

(1) The leadership of Ho Chi Minh and his associates, and the ideological continuity with the Viet Minh struggle, are unique assets in the sense that no domestic effort could yield anything of comparable value to the insurgency. They have enabled the Viet Cong to bypass the difficult and risky incubation period of a new leadership, and, instead, to capitalize on the successes and build on the experience of the past, to utilize an existing machinery, and to count on the loyalty of former followers.

(2) The nationwide integration of the insurgent effort depends on the DRV's intelligence and communication network and the resources of its army's high command. None of these assets could be duplicated by the south alone; any command and staff elements created in South Vietnam would be vulnerable to penetration and capture; and the absence of a central coordinating headquarters, such as now exists in Hanoi, would mean greater autonomy for individual Viet Cong commanders and thus, inevitably, the fragmentation of the over-all effort.

(3) The DRV has been infiltrating about one-third the manpower for the main-force units, soldiers whose political indoctrination,

military training, technical skills, and, in many cases, earlier experience in guerrilla warfare ensure the high quality, morale, and discipline of the fighting units. Its supplies of money and medicine are vital; those of weapons and scarce ammunition and other equipment, while not so extensive, are crucial in raising both the efficiency of combat operations and the guerrillas' morale.

(4) The various manifestations of North Vietnam's political and psychological support result in a variety of benefits to the insurgents. The ideological framework and moral legitimation of the struggle, the intensive indoctrination of cadres in the north and guidance of training programs in the south, and the constant propaganda emanating from Hanoi strengthen the Viet Cong's loyalty and their resistance to attempts to make them defect; they also weaken the hold of the South Vietnamese government on its supporters and even more so on the uncommitted (including a large segment of the peasantry), and cause many people to maintain a straddling position between the government and the Viet Cong. The DRV's sovereign status adds an advantage that few rebel movements enjoy: it provides legal and diplomatic channels through which to solicit sympathy and even material help abroad, and has enabled the North Vietnamese government to urge the internationalization of the conflict, to second proposals for "neutral" solutions, and to bring inhibiting pressure to bear on the counterinsurgents and their supporters.

(5) Given the situation just summarized, the leadership in Hanoi can raise, lower, or maintain constant the level of the insurgency. Its control over subordinate headquarters in the south

is such that it generally can count on compliance with its orders; it can adjust upward or downward the supply of manpower and matériel; it can intensify or relax its propaganda, both in Vietnam and internationally; it can manipulate the degree of terrorism against government officials and Americans in South Vietnam.

(6) The cloak of secrecy that surrounds the north's contribution to the insurgency is calculated to maximize the advantages and minimize the dangers to the DRV. It helps protect men and supplies against attack by government forces; it feeds the myth of the indigenous rebellion, which attracts many recruits who might not rally to a movement they knew to be controlled from Hanoi; it avoids the embarrassment of being cited by the International Control Commission (ICC) as having violated the Geneva Agreements; and, most important, it protects the DRV against the much-feared escalation of the conflict, and consequently danger of attack on its territory, that could occur if the international community officially became aware of North Vietnam's actual involvement in the insurgency.

The DRV strategy appears to be geared to the demoralization of the South Vietnamese and the collapse of their resistance as well as to the closely related contingency of American withdrawal from Vietnam. In their planning with respect to the United States, the communist leaders no doubt are guided by the experience of the Indochina war, when the Viet Minh relied on the unwillingness of the French people to go on supporting a long and costly "dirty war" and events justified this confidence. Though the United States today is a more formidable enemy, DRV leaders apparently believe that the strategy will succeed

again and that their own will to fight this prolonged war of attrition will outlast that of the Americans. The high financial cost, the loss of American lives, international pressures, and the improbability of an improvement in southern resistance together are expected to put such pressures on the American government that withdrawal will ultimately become inevitable. And if they can cause the United States to withdraw its support from South Vietnam, they will indeed have achieved a political success tantamount to victory in the field. As for South Vietnam, the leadership in Hanoi no doubt is convinced that the combined impact of chronic subversion, Viet Cong military victories, and political instability in Saigon will prove so demoralizing that not only the masses but some of the elite groups will press for a cease-fire and negotiations. These could then be expected to yield a neutral settlement, a temporary solution that the DRV would regard as a large step toward its ultimate goal.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to express his warm appreciation to the large number of colleagues, too numerous to acknowledge individually, who so generously contributed information, guidance, and critical judgment to the conduct of his research and the preparation of the Memorandum. He is especially grateful to Dr. Stephen T. Hosmer of The RAND Corporation for many hours of stimulating discussion of the issues presented here, during which he offered wise counsel and perceptive criticism. And he is indebted to Mrs. Sibylle Crane for her masterful editing of the text.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The leaders of the Viet Minh in the Indochina War, who became the leaders of North Vietnam after the armistice and who today, as this study will attempt to show, are controlling the South Vietnamese insurgency from Hanoi, pursued a single, clearcut goal in their struggle against the French: it was to abolish colonial rule and to establish an independent state of Vietnam organized on the communist model. The 1954 decision of the Geneva Conference to divide Vietnam at the 17th Parallel and to award the northern section to the Viet Minh rulers thus fell short of that goal. However, the communist leaders were willing to settle for such a temporary solution because they apparently expected to gain control of South Vietnam as a result of the elections in both parts of the divided country which were among the provisions of the Geneva Agreements. It was only after it had become obvious that the elections, scheduled for 1956, would not materialize that the leadership in Hanoi must have decided to obtain by subversion and renewed guerrilla warfare the other half of the prize for which it had fought the French.

Having initiated and led the successful struggle against colonialist domination, the communist leaders contend that they have established their legitimacy as the sole builders of an

independent Vietnam, and that their ideology and principles of government ought to prevail in both north and south. This is the claim at the basis of their propaganda appeal for the loyalty of all Vietnamese. It has been accompanied consistently by denunciations of Ngo Dinh Diem and his military successors as puppets of the United States, unrepresentative of the popular will and obstacles to the realization of Vietnam's national destiny. This, then, is the perspective from which one must examine the guiding and controlling role of Hanoi in the insurgency in South Vietnam.

The involvement of the DRV (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) in this rebellion is different from that of other countries that have served as outside bases for domestic insurgencies. Communist China, Tunisia and Morocco, and Albania and Bulgaria -- to name recent examples -- were each helping an adjacent foreign power to which they felt bound by common interest (anticolonialism), tradition (Arabic customs and language), or ideology (communism). North Vietnam, however, does not regard itself as aiding the insurgents of a neighboring power; its mission, as the leadership in Hanoi sees it, is to complete the Viet Minh revolution against "imperialist" domination and achieve the reunification of an independent Vietnam under communist rule.

A fundamental reason for the strength, tenacity, and military and political sophistication of the Viet Cong insurgents is the fact that their operations are planned, guided, and supported from Hanoi. The DRV lends vital material support to the insurgency

in the form of manpower, training, organization, and supplies. Its intangible contribution is equally important: not only is the charismatic figure of Ho Chi Minh an enormous asset to the Viet Cong cause, but Ho and other members of the North Vietnamese government who once were prominent in the Viet Minh movement personify the connection of the present rebellion with the old anticolonial struggle, strengthening the ideological myth of the continuous national revolution. Thus, by providing material aid, spiritual leadership, and moral justification to the insurgent cause, the DRV adds immeasurably to the insurgents' will to fight. And the Viet Cong's morale is further bolstered (and their opponents' correspondingly lowered) by the DRV's skillful use of propaganda and diplomacy in behalf of the rebellion.

The aim of this study has been to gauge the full dimensions of the northern military and political contribution, to understand the rationale of North Vietnam's choice of the particular policy it has been pursuing, and to throw added light on the advantages afforded by the present situation by imagining what would be the condition of the southern insurgents if they were deprived of their outside base.

It should be emphasized that this study is not, and does not attempt to be, an up-to-date intelligence report. Its objective is to provide the framework and focus for an understanding of the north's crucial contribution to the insurgency. The fact that some of the particulars cited in these pages may have changed in the recent past does not invalidate the author's

findings, for the role of the DRV in essence is still the one here described. Hanoi remains, as it has been from the beginning, the center from which the over-all Viet Cong effort and the activities in its support are planned, directed, and coordinated.

II. POLITICAL AND MILITARY CONTROL

Much of the strength of the insurgent effort in South Vietnam can be attributed to the fact that the rebellion has been inspired, commanded, and controlled from North Vietnam. Viewing themselves as the legitimate future rulers of all Vietnam, the Lao Dong (Workers) Party leaders in Hanoi have committed substantial political, economic, and military resources of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) to subverting the government of South Vietnam with the aim of ultimately making it give way to a communist regime. But, while the DRV is undergirding the southern rebellion with its full weight as a sovereign state of some sixteen million people, it is making every effort to convince the outside world that it is providing only moral support.

The insurgents fighting in South Vietnam, therefore, enjoy advantages of guerrillas as well as those of conventional belligerents, and are hampered by few of the liabilities associated with either form of warfare. As guerrillas, the Viet Cong are fully exploiting all the known unconventional tactics. They are mobile and elusive. They live off the land. They can take the initiative to strike at times and targets of their own choosing, selecting weak enemy positions to inflict casualties, capture weapons and matériel, and score psychological gains. Unlike the government, they are not committed to defending any particular territory or to maintaining a presence. Nor are they required to uphold civil order, as the government must do. Indeed, they profit by the disorder and grievances which they create.

At the same time, however, the insurgents are under the military high command of a conventional army of some 225,000 troops. For the Viet Cong operation in South Vietnam is governed by the complex, well-organized military apparatus of the DRV army in North Vietnam, an army trained and tested in the war against the French. Thus, the Viet Cong are not limited by the ordinary guerrillas' narrow view of the world outside the jungle; they see themselves as part of a highly sophisticated military and political structure capable of undertaking coordinated nationwide operations. Moreover, the Hanoi headquarters that controls this apparatus has thus far been safe from attack, and the staff support and other important assets of the powerful northern army continues to serve the Viet Cong with minimum risk of direct counteraction against the DRV.

Needless to say, this system does not operate with unvarying, monolithic efficiency, for guerrilla warfare, even when it is directed from an outside base, has to contend with internal rivalries and factionalism as well as with the common human and technical failings. For example, certain dissident groups that are cooperating with the Viet Cong because they are opposed to the government do not readily submit to communist discipline. Also, the chain of command that begins in Hanoi inevitably breaks down in some regions, and important decisions must be made locally. The organizational charts included in these pages merely show the general command-and-control structure of the insurgency; they are not meant to convey the impression that all tactical details of individual Viet Cong operations are controlled from or even necessarily known to Hanoi.

POLITICAL DIRECTION FROM THE DRV

Hanoi today is directing the insurgency in South Vietnam through a revolutionary organization which, though modified with time and changing conditions, is basically the one that conducted the struggle against the French under much the same leadership. Within the total support effort, several bodies are particularly important in guiding the southern rebellion. The major instrument of political control in the DRV, the communist Lao Dong Party, directs the insurgency at the highest level, governed by its Central Committee. Responsible to the latter is the Committee for Supervision of the South,[1] whose three members, all of them once prominent in the Viet Minh movement, apparently help develop and execute the over-all political and military strategy. They receive guidance from the National Defense Council, which includes not only President Ho Chi Minh (chairman) and Premier Pham Van Dong and General Vo Nguyen Giap (vice-chairmen) but a number of other members of the DRV political and military elite.[2]

Other, less important elements of the government, while publicly demonstrating the DRV's commitment to reunification with South Vietnam, also claim to be giving only moral, not material, support to the southern "liberation" struggle. The National Reunification Subcommittee

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[1] See Figure 1.

[2] Military command over the insurgent forces is exercised by the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), headed by General Giap. Needless to say, all the aforementioned governmental bodies cloak their participation in the southern insurgency in the greatest secrecy, never admitting direct involvement. See U.S. Army, Area Handbook for Vietnam, prepared by the Foreign Areas Studies Division, Special Operations Research Office, The American University, Washington, D. C., 1962, pp. 94-95 (Secret Supplement).

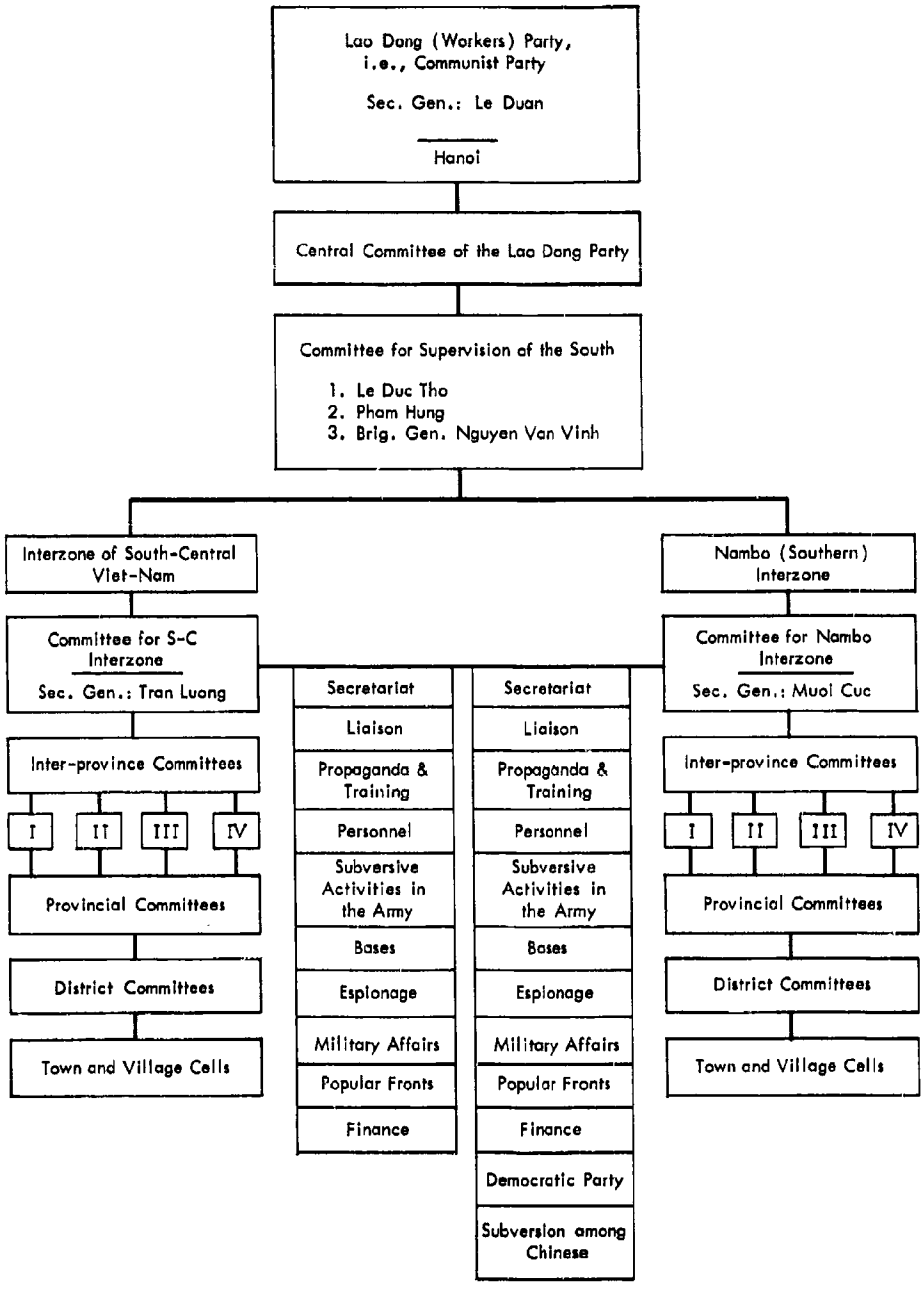

Fig. 1—The political organization of the Viet Cong*

*U. S. Department of State, A Threat to the Peace: North Viet-Nam's Effort To Conquer South Viet-Nam, Department of State Publication 7308, Far Eastern Series 110, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1961.

of the DRV National Assembly, for example, is supposed to enable the Assembly to "follow the struggle for reunification of Vietnam."[3] (The Assembly actually is only a façade. To demonstrate that all Vietnam is represented in it, more than one-fourth of its members are southerners, who either were retained on the basis of an election prior to the 1954 partition or have been elected since then from among southerners who moved to the north.) The Council of Ministers of the Government has reporting to it the National Reunification Committee. This committee may actually have some minor functions, but like the activities of the other agencies, they are shrouded in mystery.

Hanoi has been faithful to communist doctrine in subordinating and adapting military strategy and tactics to political objectives, and zealously nurturing the fiction that the struggle in the south is an indigenous "war of liberation." The National Liberation Front of South Vietnam has been the political device by which the DRV camouflages its own part in the insurgency and at the same time creates the impression of a spontaneous southern rebellion.

THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT

In December 1960, simultaneously with a powerful new effort at subversion in South Vietnam, Hanoi announced the formation of the National Liberation Front (NLF). Like its predecessor, the Viet Minh organization, the NLF purports to unite Vietnamese of all backgrounds and persuasions against an oppressive government. To demonstrate that it cuts across social, occupational, religious, ethnic, and regional lines, the Front

[3]See Figure 2 for the structure of the DRV government and the location of the several reunification committees.

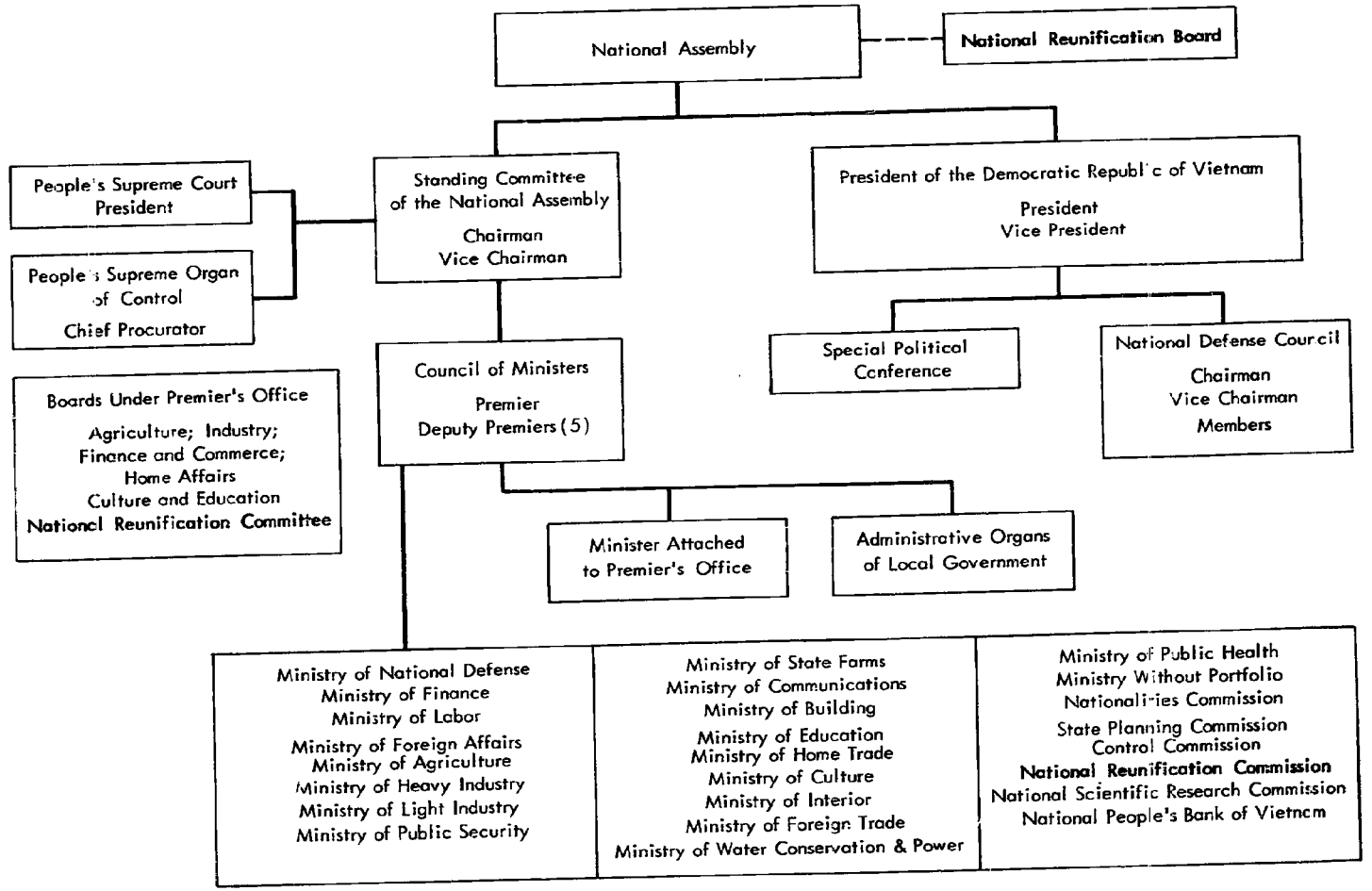

Fig. 2—The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, 1960*

*Based on U. S. Army, Area Handbook for Vietnam, prepared by Foreign Areas Studies Division, Special Operations Research Office, The American University, Washington, D.C., September 1962, p.237.

points out that its member associations include the following: Students and Pupils Union for Liberation; Labor Union for Liberation; Peasants Union for Liberation; Youth Union for Liberation; Association of Patriotic and Democratic Journalists; Writers and Artists Association for Liberation; Vietnamese Nationalists of Chinese Origin; Association for the Restoration of Buddhism and Hoa Hao; Radical Socialist Party; South Vietnam Democratic Party; and Vietnam People's Revolutionary Party. The NLF's first congress (February 16 to March 3, 1962) chose its leaders so as to confirm the impression of a broad popular base. According to a Hanoi news release, the officers of the Central Committee of the NLF included a lawyer, several professors, a doctor, a journalist, a playwright, a student leader, a Cao Dai leader, a Cambodian intellectual, a Buddhist monk, a "patriotic" Catholic, an Ede (mountaineer) Protestant, a Khmer Buddhist leader, and "six famous bourgeois and intellectual leaders," who could not be named because they were "in action in the big cities." From time to time, the Front's clandestine radio announces conferences of specialized groups (such as the Congress of South Vietnam's Patriotic and Democratic Journalists, which met from August 26 to September 5, 1963) or reports on mass demonstrations in "liberated" areas of South Vietnam.

The Front's program, designed to win popular support, has a democratic and nationalist ring to it. For example, on November 9, 1963, after the military coup in Saigon, the NLF Central Committee issued a proclamation of these six urgent demands: (1) destruction of the policies and organizations of the Diem regime; (2) prohibition of "any form of family rule or military dictatorship," and the establishment of democracy; (3) an end to "U.S. aggression" in South

Vietnam and the establishment of true independence and sovereignty; (4) a rational economic policy to raise the standard of living and eradicate unemployment and poverty; (5) restoration of peace and public security; and (6) negotiation among "responsible parties" in South Vietnam with the aim of achieving a cease-fire, a solution to important national problems, and progress toward free general elections for the establishment of "a national coalition government composed of delegates of all patriotic forces, parties, and tendencies in South Vietnam."[4]

THE DRV'S MILITARY ORGANIZATION AND THE INSURGENCY

The Viet Cong military organization owes much of its sophistication and successful integration to the guidance, albeit clandestine, of the large, battle-seasoned People's Army of Vietnam. The organization chart of the military high command of North Vietnam[5] suggests the extent of its resources and controls. The over-all strategy of the Viet Cong in South Vietnam is laid out in Hanoi by staff officers experienced in insurgency, who base themselves, not only on information from South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, but also on political data that the DRV intelligence apparatus draws from sources all over the world. Tactical

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[4] Sources for above discussion of the National Liberation Front include The United Front in Communist Strategy: Tactics in South Vietnam, December 1962. (No author, place of origin, or affiliation is listed on this excellent 22-page pamphlet. However, State Department sources reveal that it was produced by a British office in Singapore which has access to British government sources, both classified and unclassified.) Also consulted were: P. J. Honey, "North Vietnam's Workers' Party and South Vietnam's People's Revolutionary Party," Pacific Affairs, Vol. 35, No. 4, Winter 1962-63, pp. 375-390; Area Handbook for Vietnam, pp. 321-324; USIS Special Projects Report, Saigon; FBIS Daily Summaries; and J.P.R.S. translations and publications from Hanoi (especially, The U.S. Military Adventure in South Vietnam and Eight Years of Struggle of the People in South Vietnam).

[5] See Figure 3.

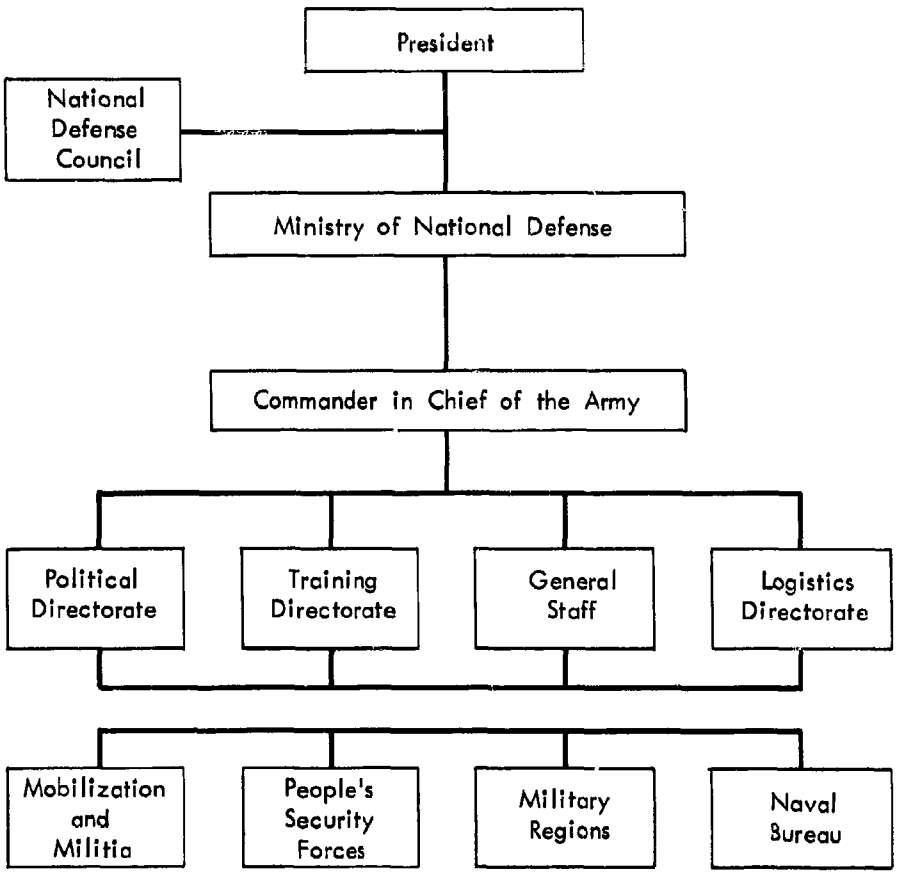

Fig. 3—Organization of the military high command of North Vietnam, 1961*

*Area Handbook for Vietnam, p.497.

decisions generally are within the competence of local commanders in the south. But tactics as well as strategy are the subject of continual study in the DRV headquarters, which receives the written and oral reports of operations in the south.

There is evidence that the Viet Cong organization has a complex instruction and reporting system. A report on the Ap Bac engagement, for example, in which the Viet Cong commander gives a thorough evaluation of the battle, reveals the tight supervision as well as the military professionalism that prevail within the Viet Cong command structure. Another indication of the insurgents' high caliber of instruction has been their increasingly effective resistance to helicopter operations. When first introduced by the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam), helicopters caused fear and consternation among Viet Cong troops, who were unable to cope with them. It was only a matter of months, however, before staff studies of the problem had been made, and written instructions were issued, through channels, on measures for countering heliborne attacks, including details on the proper selection and preparation of terrain, the use of appropriate weapons, the firing lead necessary, and other specific data. Similarly, there have been searching staff studies of the effect of the South Vietnamese government's[6] strategic hamlet program, and instructions have been sent down from the highest level on desirable countertactics. Even without such specific data, the military analyst, knowing that the DRV high command fully supports the insurgency in the south, can infer a great deal about the logistics, personnel, training, and intelligence -- in brief, the total military contribution -- of the northern military leadership. That leadership,

[6]Hereafter shortened to "GVN."

capable of enforcing its will through a well-disciplined organization, and operating as it is from a secure base outside South Vietnam, is responsible for the excellent coordination and nationwide scope of the rebellion in the south.

VIET CONG OPERATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Organization

The primary instrument by which Hanoi maintains its control of insurgent operations is the Viet Cong apparatus in South Vietnam. From the apex of the organizational pyramid in Hanoi down to its base in the hamlets of South Vietnam, a chain of command enables the Lao Dong Party to issue orders, enforce discipline, and obtain needed information.

Until a reorganization in March 1962, the top command of the Viet Cong in South Vietnam had two major divisions: the Nambo Interzone (southern region) and Intersector V (South Central Vietnam).[7] These in turn were subdivided into interprovince military zones, numbered from 5 to 9. Each zone was directed by an interprovincial committee of ten to twelve members, including a secretary, a deputy secretary, and a commissar for current affairs. Under these committees came the Current Affairs, Military Operations, and Military Intelligence staffs, as well as various functional subcommittees. The latter's duties included training, administration, and the penetration of selected target groups, such as military units, youth associations, or labor unions.

The structure was similar at the province and district levels, where it has not been changed. Below the district level, at the base of the Viet Cong organization, are the party cells. They may

[7]To follow this explanation, see especially Figure 4 ("The Viet Cong Command Structure").

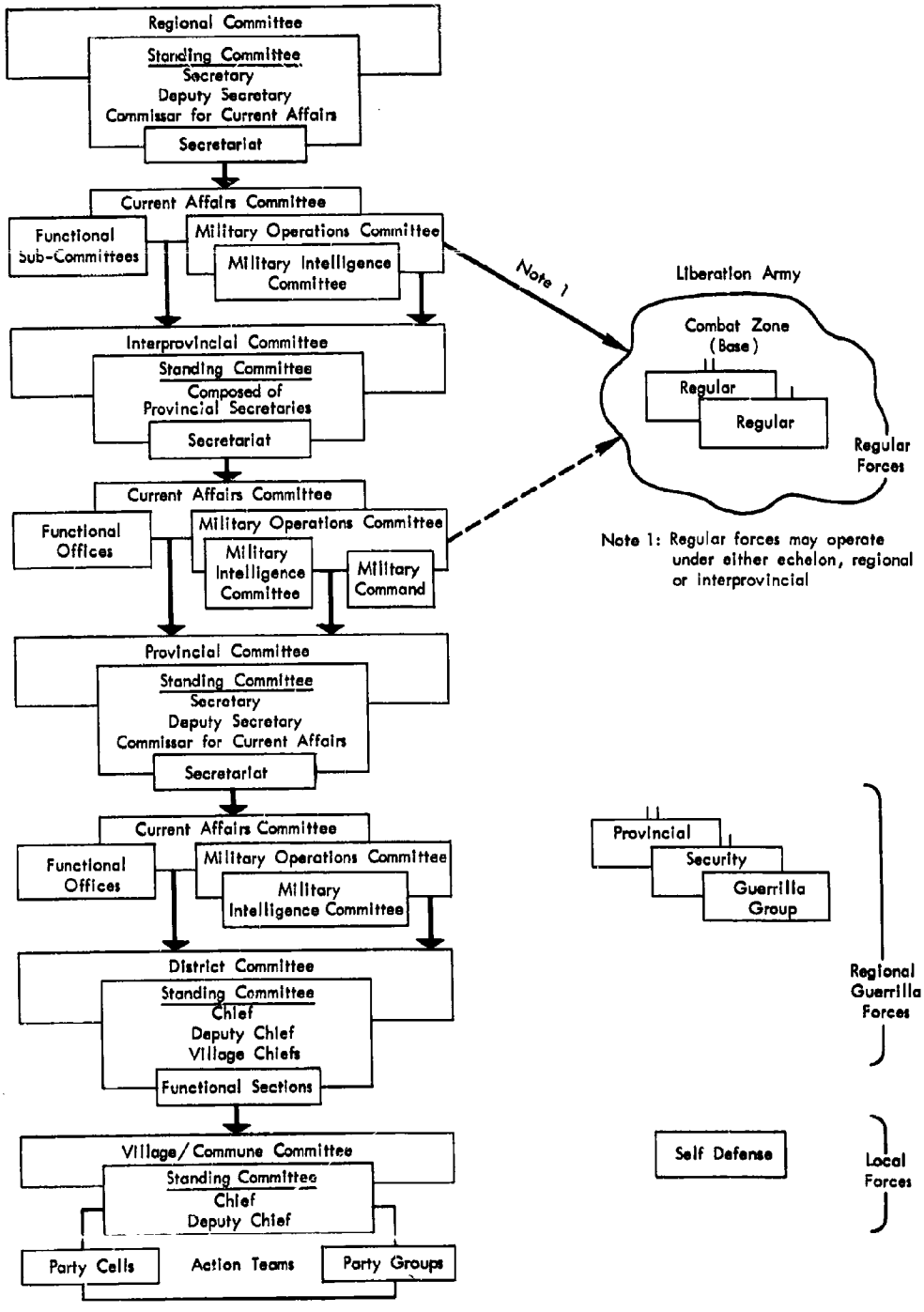

Fig. 4—The Viet Cong command structure

be found everywhere; in villages, towns, and city wards; in government offices, military units, plantations, schools, and business enterprises; in youth groups, women's organizations, peasant societies, and religious orders. Thus, the Viet Cong are continuing the development of "parallel hierarchies," which proved so effective in their struggle against the French.[8] This strategy of organizing their cells both on a regional basis and in occupational and social groups affords them a dual system of control.

The reorganization of March 1962 seems to have been aimed at consolidating the Viet Cong's top-level command and control within South Vietnam without altering its lower structure. The two major commands, Nambo and Intersector V, have been fused into one, called the Central Office for South Vietnam, and new leadership cadres have been infiltrated from the north to augment its staff. South Vietnam has been divided into six geographical areas: those numbered 5 through 9, and the Saigon/Cholon/Gia Dinh special zone.

According to one intelligence report, the new Central Office for South Vietnam is organized as shown in Figure 5. This single command structure seems to have improved the ability of the command elements to coordinate their military efforts. Tactical units are now subordinate to the headquarters of the military region, which

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[8] For an excellent discussion of Viet Minh organizational techniques in the struggle against the French see J. Hogard, "Guerre Révolutionnaire et Pacification," Revue Militaire d'Information, No. 280, January 1957, pp. 7-24. See also the article by a group of officers, "La Guerre du Viet-Minh," ibid., No. 281, February/March 1957, pp. 25-42, and Bernard Fall, The Two Vietnams, Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., New York, 1963, pp. 137-138, 364.

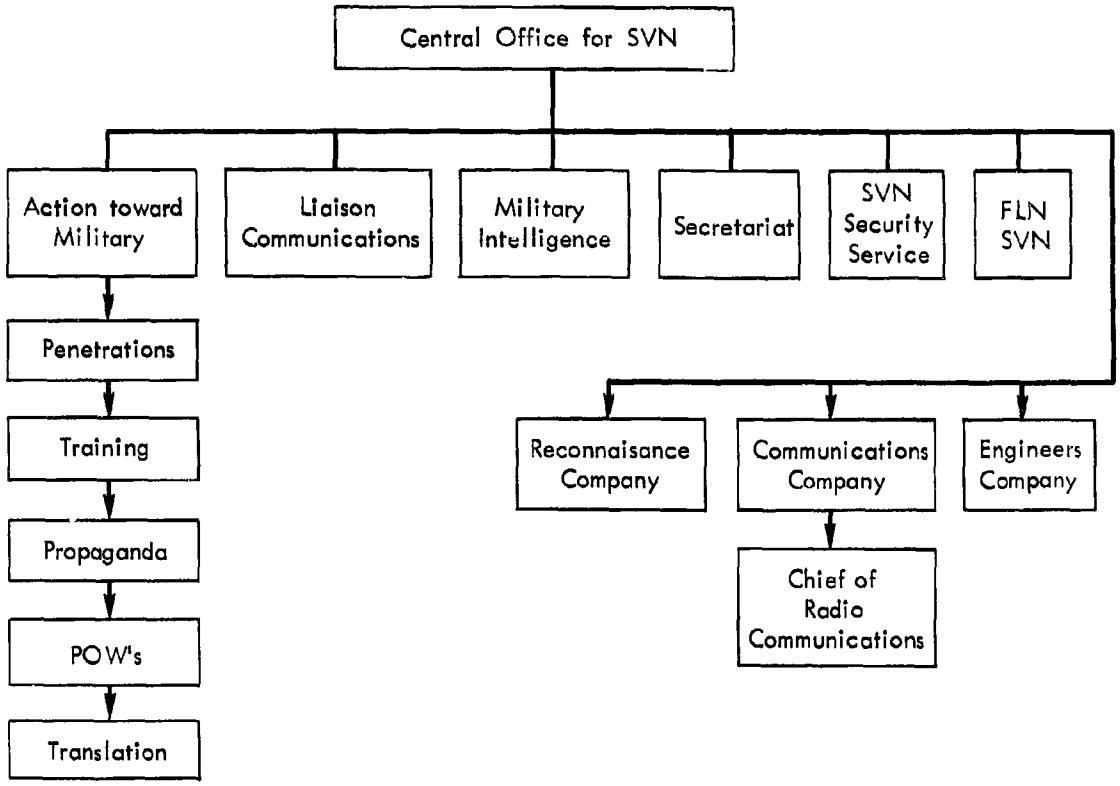

Fig. 5—The probable organization of the Vietnamese Communists' Central Office for South Vietnam

may in turn relegate control of local units to a lower-echelon command. One of the goals of this reorganization appears to have been to create units of regiment size that would operate at the regional level, with battalions operating at the provincial, and companies at the district level. As of mid-1963, however, battalions numbering between 350 and 400 men were the largest units, though there have been some operations carried out by multibattalion groups, and Viet Cong communications have made reference to regimental units. The Central Office and subordinate military staff leaders are reported to be physically located within the various southern "war zones."[9]

Communications

The active role of DRV military leaders in the southern rebellion is dependent upon their ability to maintain communications with the field. According to intelligence reports, the Viet Cong have developed a reliable radio communication system, which satisfies their present administrative, political, and tactical requirements and could be expanded to support larger tactical units. Captured stocks show that most of the equipment is of American, Japanese, or French manufacture, and probably was obtained from South Vietnam commercial sources. In addition, the Viet Cong have captured from GVN forces a large number of radios supplied by the U.S. Military Assistance Program (MAP). Most small Viet Cong units are equipped with commercial transistor radios over which they can receive instructions. In addition to the equipment, the Viet Cong appear to possess considerable skill in technical

[9]See Fig. 6. (For a fuller description of these "war zones" see p.49.)

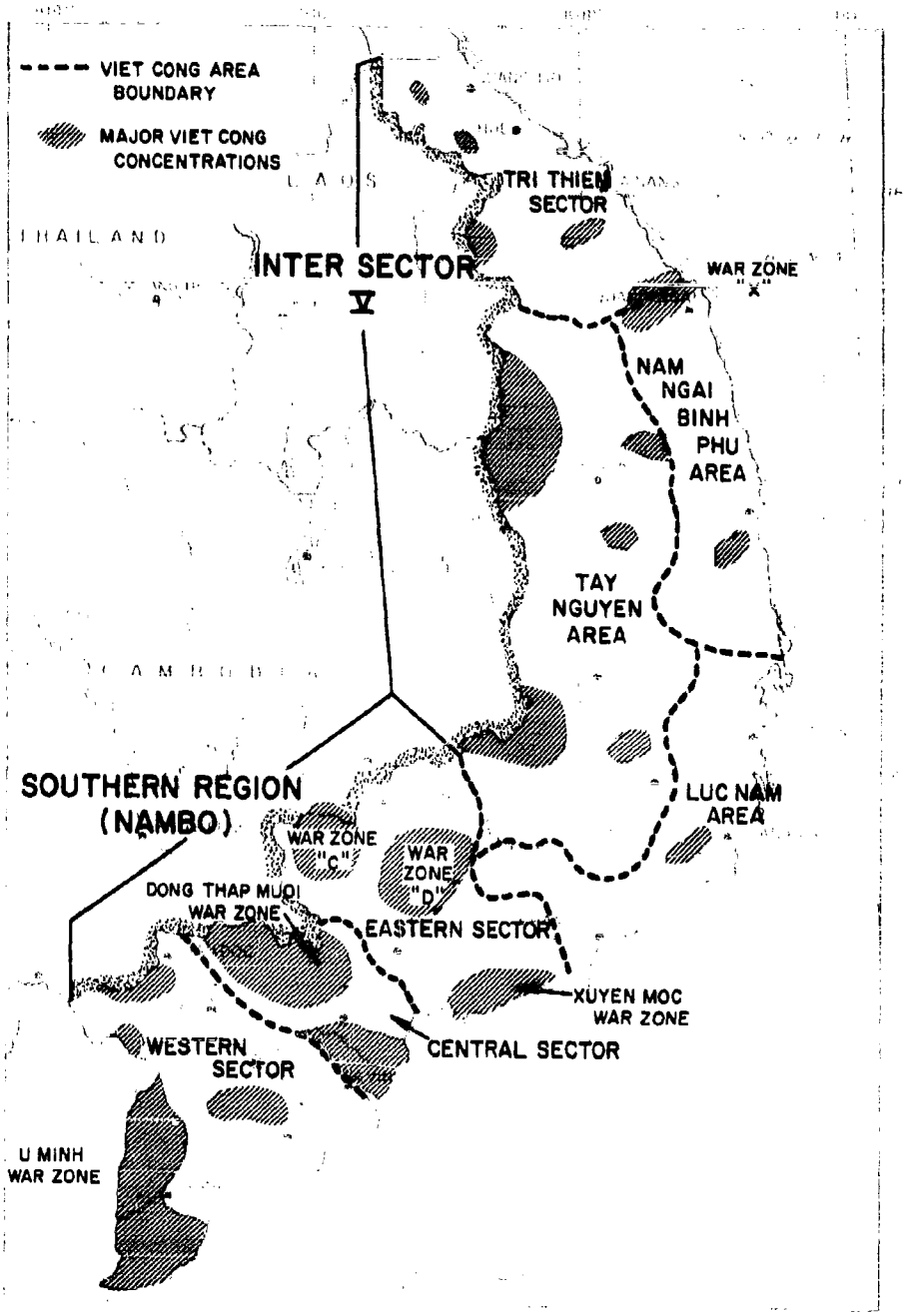

Fig. 6—Viet Cong concentrations and administrative divisions in South Vietnam, 1962

communications; thus, in one major engagement, they were reported to have effectively jammed the GVN radio broadcast.

Contact between the field and Hanoi seems to be frequent and varied. A PAVN[10] communications officer captured in the south reported that the fifth military region headquarters of the Viet Cong was in touch with higher headquarters in Hanoi by radio three times each day, and that, in addition, Hanoi had a station operating twenty-four hours daily for emergency communication with any place at any time. Messengers regularly move back and forth between North and South Vietnam. A maritime courier service, composed primarily of the PAVN 603rd Battalion and the communications section of the DRV intelligence service is maintained by special infiltration units, which operate boats disguised as fishing craft and carry false identification papers. Couriers travel across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) as well as through Laos and Cambodia, and, from time to time, senior personnel are smuggled out to Hanoi for instructions and back again.

To support the communication system in the field, communication specialists trained in North Vietnam are infiltrated into the south to serve as cadres, technicians, and instructors for the insurgents. Occasionally, the DRV provides important specialized equipment as well as technical guidance. The result is an efficient communication network, which permits Hanoi both to receive intelligence on operations in the south and to expedite its own instructions, information, warnings, and guidance, thus enabling it, in short, to exercise control over its field units.

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[10] People's Army of /North/ Vietnam.

Intelligence

Another element that is essential to Hanoi's command and control of the southern insurgency is a good intelligence organization. The complex, sophisticated intelligence system that operates from its secure base in North Vietnam with frequent and rapid communication to the field is a most valuable asset to the insurgents in the south. The Viet Cong organization can depend upon Hanoi to notify its agents in the south of its particular requirements. Once collected, the individual intelligence data can be analyzed in Hanoi and collated with reports from other parts of South Vietnam as well as from abroad. The information may then be stored in safety and called upon for reference when necessary. Or, Hanoi can disseminate it with a view to keeping sector commanders informed not only about their particular region but about the total operational picture of the insurgency. Thus, campaign plans can be drawn up and targets selected on the basis of a broad perspective.

Unusual tactical advantages arise from having safe headquarters in North Vietnam that can receive intelligence reports by rapid radio communication. Viet Cong agents will relay to Hanoi any information concerning projected ARVN[11] operations, and headquarters, in turn, will warn any insurgent groups endangered by such plans. There is evidence that some governmental and military units in the south have been penetrated by Viet Cong agents, who are a steady source of information on counterinsurgent operations. But, even without such

[11] Army of the Republic of /South/ Vietnam.

penetration, careful observation and continuous reporting of ARVN movements by civilian collaborators may be sufficient to reveal large military operations. Time and again, a South Vietnamese force planning a major offensive will arrive at a site where the Viet Cong have been reported in strength, only to find that they have disappeared.

The security and technical resources of North Vietnam favor the establishment of special training programs for the support of intelligence activity in South Vietnam. According to a U.S. estimate, intelligence training is being given in permanent establishments in North Vietnam and Communist China, and at temporary locations in South Vietnam. The principal intelligence school is reported to be in Thai Nguyen, north of Hanoi, where prospective agents are receiving training in languages, intelligence techniques, and operational situations. According to the U.S. report, the courses last six months, and many of the instructors are Chinese. One example of the training available in North Vietnam was the program for espionage given in May 1961 at Dong Hoi, forty miles north of the DMZ, to fifty youth and labor organization representatives, who received instruction in recruiting, setting up clandestine organizations, and the operation of communication and liaison systems. That same month, twenty Lao Dong Party cadres were trained at the Ho Xa intelligence center in Vinh Linh zone for operations in South Vietnam. Selected students are sent to Communist China for specialized training. By comparison with the programs in North Vietnam and Communist China, training given to intelligence agents in South Vietnam is quite brief. To avoid detection, it takes place at temporary sites, often near the frontier.

As the organizational charts demonstrate, the DRV intelligence apparatus which serves the southern insurgency is comprehensive and sophisticated.[12] The Central Research Agency (CRA), with its base of operations in Hanoi, is responsible for the collection of intelligence throughout the world, but its main focus is on operations in South Vietnam. Its first function there is to coordinate the material received from the intelligence resources of both the DRV armed forces and the Lao Dong Party. The agency's six sections -- administration, cadres, communications, espionage, research, and training -- and its coding unit all have subunits with specialized areas of concern. The research section, for example, includes a political, an economic, and a military affairs unit.

The CRA also supervises the following centers for overseas operations: (1) special units in Hai Phong and Hongay, which have contact with Hong Kong, Paris, and other overseas points; (2) a special center at Vinh, responsible for intelligence operations in Cambodia and Laos; and (3) a unit, based at Vinh Linh, that handles activities along the DMZ and is also responsible for sending agents and supplies to South Vietnam by sea, across the DMZ, and through Laos and Cambodia, wherever intelligence bases are located.

Within South Vietnam, the Viet Cong maintain a network of base points, whose duty it is to receive any agents arriving from the north and help them to move on, to feed and give instructions to groups infiltrating from North Vietnam, and to relay equipment from North Vietnam to Viet Cong units in the south.

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[12]See Figures 7, 8, and 9.

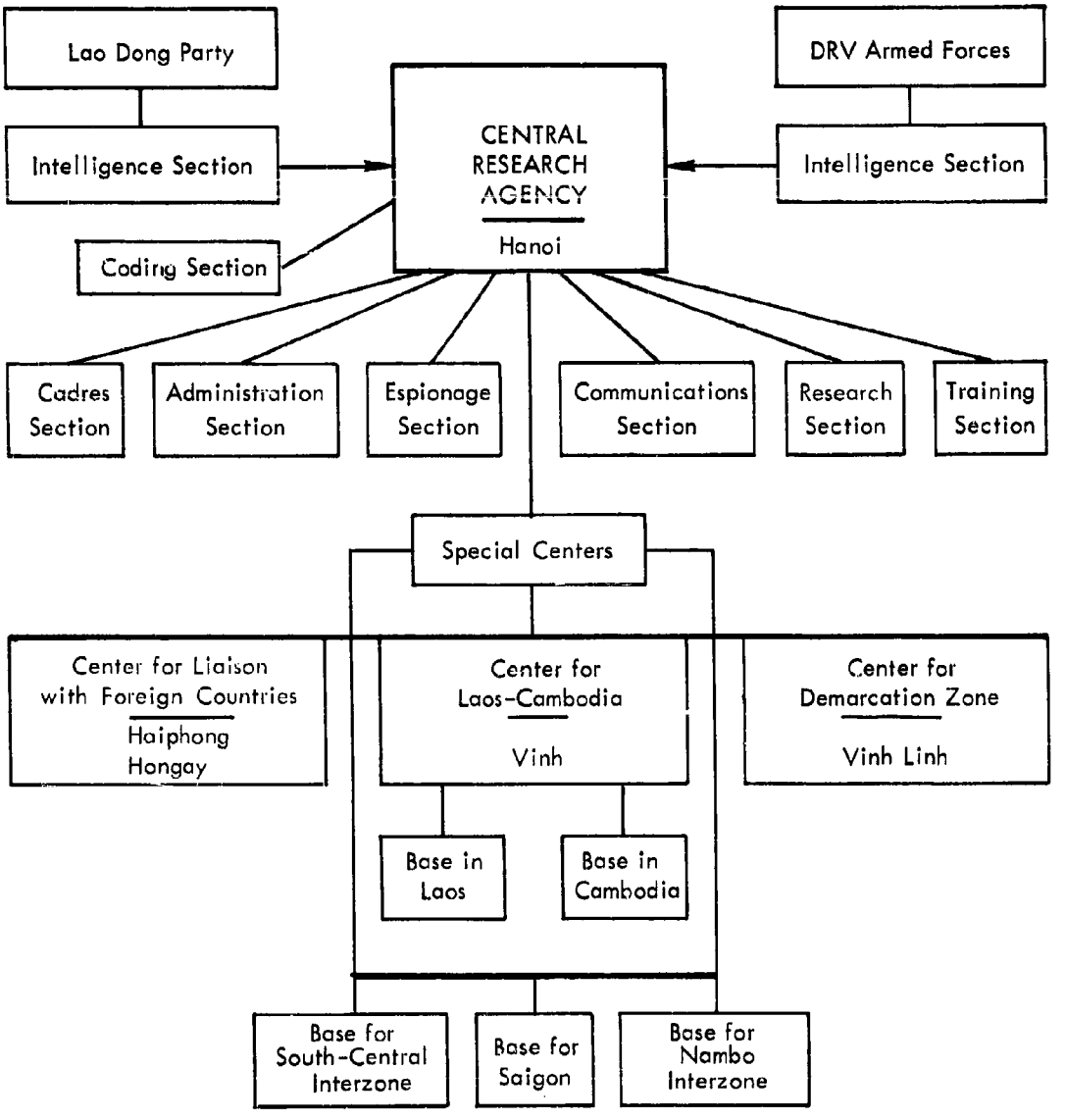

Fig. 7—Organization of the Central Research Agency of the Viet Cong*

*From U. S. Department of State, A Threat to the Peace.

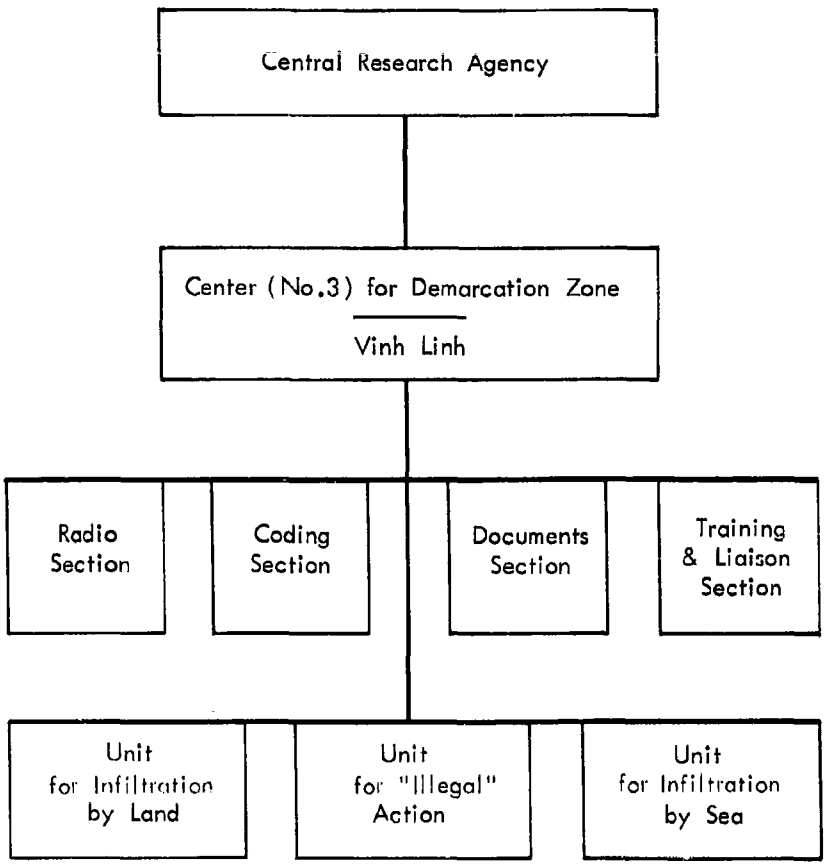

Fig. 8--Organization of a typical Viet Cong intelligence center*

*From U. S. Department of State, A Threat to the Peace.

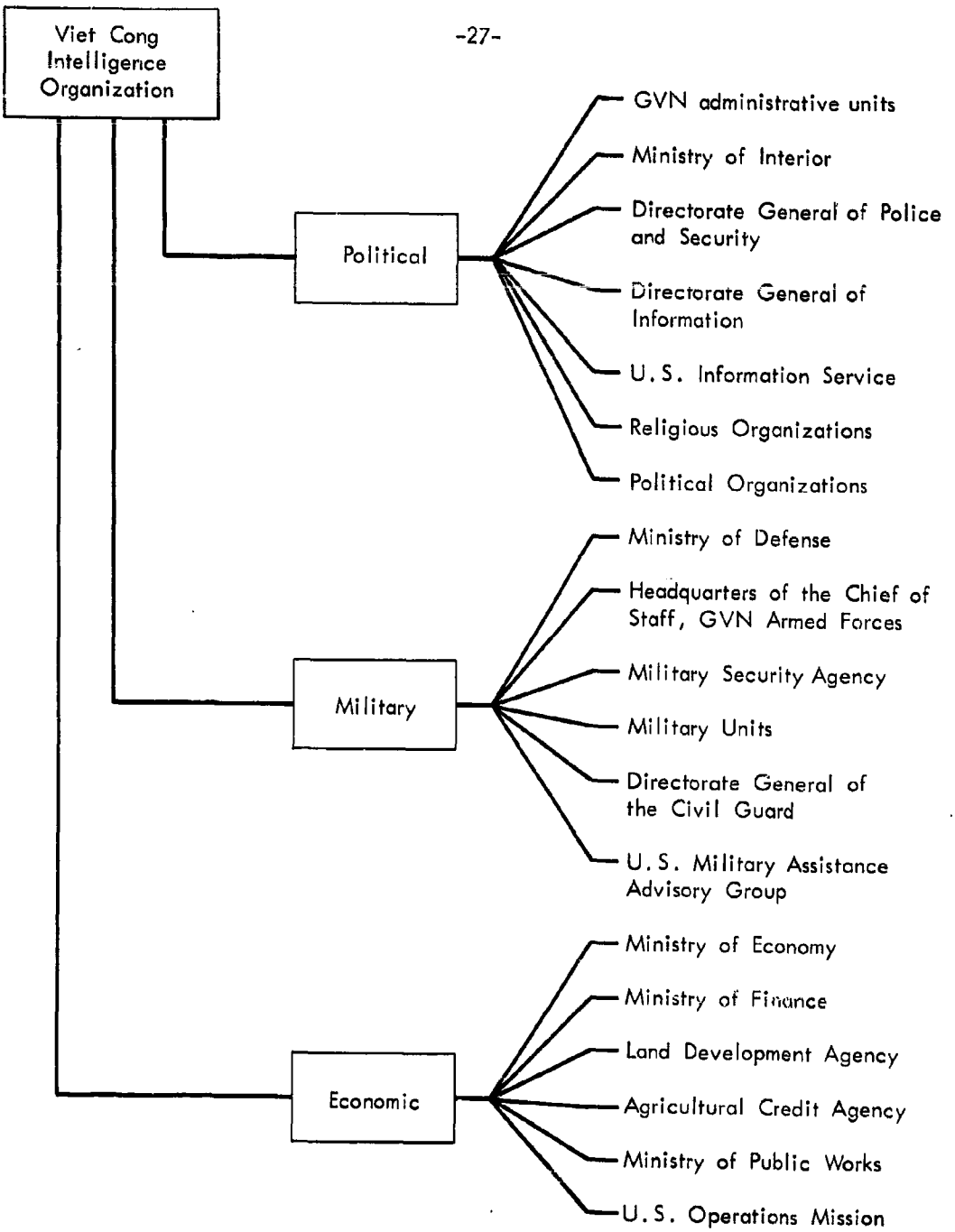

Fig. 9—Special targets for penetration by Viet Cong intelligence agents*

*From U. S. Department of State, A Threat to the Peace.

The CRA main centers are staffed in accordance with their specific functions. Vinh Linh Center, for example, which is responsible for the main infiltration effort from North Vietnam, has sections for radio communications, coding, documentation, training, and liaison, staffed by specialists in those fields, and some of its personnel are especially trained for infiltration through the mountains or by sea and for action in the mountain areas. For its communication needs, the CRA maintains a radio network, and it also employs couriers, who either memorize their messages or carry them in secret writing.[13]

Under the direction of Hanoi, the regional committees of the Viet Cong intelligence organization operate throughout their respective areas, but do not, as a rule, remain in a permanent location. (Exceptions were the small offices maintained by the Nambo Committee secretariat in the relative security of War Zone D, and a rear echelon base in Cambodia.) Intelligence officers often remain apart from Viet Cong military units, whom they may use as decoys if government forces approach their hideout.

The Central Research Agency directs three kinds of operations: (1) those it conducts itself; (2) those carried out by the Foreign Intelligence Service (including the collection of political and strategic information); and (3) the activities of the Military Intelligence Service (that part of the PAVN general staff primarily responsible for espionage in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, whose tasks include collecting strategic and tactical information).

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[13] Material and charts on the intelligence organization are drawn from U.S. State Department, A Threat to the Peace: North Viet-Nam's Effort to Conquer South Viet-Nam, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1961, pp. 20-22 and Appendix B.

According to intelligence reports up to early 1962, most operations in South Vietnam, aside from high-level activities controlled directly from Hanoi by the Central Research Agency and the Foreign Intelligence Service, were directed by either the Nambo or Intersector V regional committee. They include a wide variety of activities, such as penetration of government offices to ascertain plans and capabilities; demoralizing and proselytizing South Vietnamese soldiers and recruiting them for the Viet Cong; guidance of paramilitary operations; espionage; subversion; and other, political operations.

The intelligence cadres trained in North Vietnam are given forged documents, cover stories, and enough operating funds to establish themselves and recruit subagents. Upon arrival in a target area, every agent must establish contact with his superiors and colleagues through clandestine channels on prearranged signals. Some agents have the sole task of spotting sympathizers and recruiting them, thereby paving the way for phased operations by special espionage and sabotage staffs, who will subsequently use the sympathizers so identified and enlisted. High-level agents who are directly responsible to either the Central Research Agency or the Foreign Intelligence Service operate independently of the local regional committees and resort to the Party apparatus only in emergencies.

Their timely and accurate military intelligence has frequently enabled the Viet Cong to stage successful raids at moments and places where they knew the security forces to be weak, and, conversely, to escape impending government attacks. For example, in September 1961, a Viet Cong battalion attacked the capital of Phuoc Thanh province,

having selected a time when the town's garrison forces were thinned out for field operations. On April 8, 1962, a Viet Cong company attacked a youth self-defense unit from Danang city while it was engaged in field training in the country, the location of the area apparently having been revealed by students who had discussed the training schedule and program with their families. Other evidence of the quality of communist intelligence was the contents of documents seized from a Viet Cong underground installation in October 1961, which reflected detailed knowledge of government military units and even included a listing of soldiers being trained in antitank warfare.

III. STAFF AND SUPPLIES

PERSONNEL

Sources of Manpower

The leaders in Hanoi who direct the insurgency in South Vietnam staff the insurgency from three sources: (1) the former members of the Viet Minh who were ordered to remain underground in the south after the country's partition under the Geneva Agreements of 1954; (2) a pool of southerners, most of them Viet Minh troops, who were regrouped in the north in keeping with the Geneva accord; and (3) those elements of the southern population who are particularly susceptible to Viet Cong recruitment.

The Viet Minh Underground in South Vietnam

When the country was partitioned, the Viet Minh ordered some of its hard-core troops to go underground in South Vietnam, there to await further instructions from the leadership. The number of these hard-core regulars has been variously estimated at between five and ten thousand. According to one account, their dependents were sent north, so that the troops would be free to engage in mobile warfare without having to worry about the possibility of governmental reprisals against their relatives. At the same time, the troops' relatives in the north would serve as hostages ensuring their political dependability.[1]

In the first two years, when Hanoi's policy toward the south was peaceful in preparation for the elections for national reunification

[1] Bernard Fall, The Two Vietnams, Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., New York, 1963, pp. 358-359.

that were to be held in 1956 under the Geneva accord, the communist network in the south appeared to be dormant. In 1956, however, when it became clear that there would be no elections, Hanoi apparently decided to strive for communist domination of South Vietnam by subversive methods. Called upon for active political and military duties, these underground agents had a crucial part between 1956 and 1959 in the building up of Viet Cong strength to the point where the insurgents were able to launch the offensive of 1960. They secured arms from several sources: from stocks they had cached in 1954; through infiltration from outside; by capture from government security forces; and by purchase from local sources. They undertook a campaign of selective terror -- assassinations, kidnappings, and bombings aimed at the country's administrative, police, and security personnel as well as the government leadership -- which was designed partly to find recruits and supporters for the growing Viet Cong organization.

As a dependable armed network already in place in the south, familiar with the local situation, politically reliable, and responsive to the discipline of the communist leadership, this initial Viet Cong infrastructure was crucial. Upon this base, Hanoi was able to expand the insurgent organization by adding cadres from the southerners living in the north and new recruits who came largely from the rural population of the south.

Southerners in North Vietnam

Southerners who went to North Vietnam under the Geneva Agreements' provisions for the exchange of population have been the main source of personnel from which the DRV leadership forms cadres for the

southern insurgency. After Geneva, the DRV reported to French authorities that 87,000 Viet Minh troops and 43,000 civilians and dependents had elected to go to North Vietnam. Among them, according to a French writer, were some 10,000 highlanders from the central plateau area.[2] After their relocation in the north, the southern Viet Minh troops were integrated into North Vietnam's regular army (the PAVN), most of them in the Nambo (southern) units.[3] The civilians, including the Can-bo (civilian cadres), found employment in North Vietnam's economic and governmental life.[4] Though some of these southerners had brought their families with them, the majority had left theirs behind in the south, presumably in the hope of rejoining them after the elections they expected to take place in 1956. The number of dependents left behind was all the larger as a result of the many hurried marriages reported to have been contracted just before the troops left for the north. In Quang Ngai, a province in central Vietnam, for example, more than five hundred of these hasty weddings were celebrated.[5] In another province, Binh Dinh, more than three hundred such marriages have been identified.[6] The Communists

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[2]The Two Vietnams, p. 358.

[3]These units had the following designations: 325th Division, 305th Division, 324th Division, 308th Division, and 120th Regiment.

[4]For an account of the discontent of the southern civilian regroupees see Gerard Tongas, L'Enfer Communiste au North Viet-Nam, Paris 1960, pp. 163-168. Tongas is a former Communist who elected to stay in North Vietnam.

[5]Dennis Warner, The Last Confucian, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1963, pp. 119-120. Warner, an Australian journalist with long experience in Indochina, reports that in Quang Ngai province alone some 20,000 families have close relatives in the North.

[6]Wesley Fishel, "Vietnam's War of Attrition," The New Leader, December 7, 1959, p. 17.

were actively promoting them, thus encouraging the production of offspring before the troops departed, no doubt with a view to creating bonds of family loyalty in the southern regions that might some day be exploited to gain political and military support for northern undertakings.

These men who had been moved north provided a valuable pool on which the DRV leadership could draw for service in the southern insurgency, and a great many of them infiltrated South Vietnam in the years following. Some were sent as political agents after 1956 to help expand the Viet Cong apparatus; some went to staff the intricate courier/communication system and to select and establish secure routes for future infiltration. Specialists in guerrilla techniques went south, prior to 1960, to organize Viet Cong training programs; others were the cadres and technicians who, between 1956 and 1959, helped prepare the Viet Cong combat units.[7] From 1960 on, this pool contributed ever larger numbers to the personnel necessary to launching the new offensive.

Recruits from the Southern Population

The communist network in South Vietnam -- former Viet Minh who stayed in the south augmented by southern cadres sent from the north -- has continued to attract fresh recruits within the country. The new support comes largely from the rural population, which constitutes about 85 per cent of the country's fifteen million

[7] "Viet Cong Infiltration into South Viet Nam," Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), July 1, 1962, p. 2 (Secret, Noforn).

people. Certain social groups appear to have been particularly susceptible to Viet Cong recruitment. Under the Diem regime, some adherents of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai -- political-religious sects with autonomous military units -- showed their discontent with their status by cooperating with the Communists; many peasants, particularly the Buddhists among them, found an outlet for protest in the Viet Cong organization. And those Vietnamese who live on the margins of their communities are doubtless susceptible to the communist appeal.[8] But not all the Viet Cong's recruitment can be explained in terms of personal stakes and grievances. Those living in zones that have long been under communist control, such as Zones D or U Minh, must join out of fear or under social pressure. Many are certainly drawn to the Viet Cong through ties with members of their families who have, at one time or another, been associated with the communist movement. Others are coerced into joining.

Captured documents reveal that coordi[illegible] Viet Cong [illegible] teams travel widely through South Vietnam, especially in the populous Mekong Delta. Though they aim principally for men between seventeen and thirty-five, they will also take young women, as well as older men and women, for selected tasks. Special targets of the recruiters are young men subject to GVN conscription, who are persuaded that, by joining the Viet Cong, they can serve the true nationalist cause in their own region, rather than risk being sent far from home to serve the foreign-dominated puppet regime in Saigon. The Viet Cong also seek to induce defections from the government's armed forces,

[8] For a discussion of this group see p. 57.

civil guard, and self-defense corps; to this end, they will subject the serviceman and his family to intimidation, if persuasion fails.

The entire recruitment drive owes much of its success to the barrage of communist propaganda that supports it.[9] It appears to have succeeded well enough to provide sufficient manpower from the south to maintain Viet Cong strength constant, if not actually to increase it.[10] One captured document, for example, listed 1300 names, with biographic data, of personnel recruited between March and June 1962, most of them from two provinces in the Saigon area. Other documents show that more than three thousand recruits were trained in Zone D, some 50 miles northeast of Saigon, during the first half of 1962. These figures tend to confirm the testimony of a captured Communist, a high-level regional committee member, who reported that an intensified recruiting campaign in 1962 had greatly increased Viet Cong strength.[11]

The Allocation of Manpower

The Viet Cong organization in South Vietnam has a well-developed staffing system, whose efficient functioning depends, in good part, upon the direction and support it receives from the DRV. Unit commanders in the southern Viet Cong organization put in requests

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[9] Section IV, p. 64, below.

[10] Section V, pp. 79-80, below.

[11] Defense Intelligence Digest, Vol. 2, No. 3, March 1964, pp. 34-36 (Secret, Noforn). Figures and documents cited above are taken from this source.

for personnel (to replace casualties, perform specialized tasks, and increase unit strength). These requests pass through several channels, until they reach higher headquarters in the DRV, which then supervises the transfer of manpower, a process that in most cases raises the Viet Cong combatants involved from one force level to the next higher. At the bottom of the combat force organization are the militia units, centered largely in the villages; above these are the regional groups; and at the highest level is the main force of Viet Cong soldiers. In addition to directing and overseeing this normal promotion process, DRV headquarters sends infiltrators into South Vietnam from its pool of southern soldiers, most of them with assignments to the main-force units. They are selected, trained, and given their specific unit assignments before leaving for the south. They are then guided through established infiltration corridors, where they travel under military discipline, and upon arrival must report directly to the unit to which they have been assigned.

As a rule, the DRV sends PAVN officers and noncoms to the south to form the framework for Viet Cong units, which is then filled out through local recruitment and by promotion from the lower levels of the Viet Cong military structure. The proportion of cadres to local recruits varies with the degree of specialization and expertise required of the unit. In a rifle company, only one-third would normally be cadres; in a technical unit, such as a signal outfit or a heavy-weapons company, the number would be larger.

Selection

Once headquarters has decided on the personnel requirements to be filled from the north, a screening is made to find the most suitable men to be trained for the particular assignments involved. The southern soldiers living in North Vietnam are especially well suited to infiltration, because regional differences between the north, center, and south of Vietnam are such that any guerrilla not native to the south would be at a serious disadvantage. There are great variations in dialects and other cultural traits, as well as in the local economic and political organization of the several regions. Kin relationships, the role of women, religious customs, even the physical layout of villages, differ. For example, a northern village is normally a cluster of habitations, as compared to the southern community, which typically consists of individual dwellings more widely separated from one another and planted along rivers and streams.

A Viet Cong soldier not native to the region he is infiltrating would risk arousing the suspicion and hostility of local inhabitants, and unquestionably would have more difficulty than a native in securing support, supplies, and information from them. Hence the DRV makes it a practice to send infiltrators back to their native provinces, where they can best adapt themselves to the local situation and run the least risk of detection. This practice has the added advantage that in the event of capture or defection -- and these cases have been rare-- the fact that an infiltrator was a native of the south would weaken any charges of illegal intervention

by North Vietnam, since the DRV could claim that the southerner had simply returned to his home region and there had joined the "struggle for freedom."

The family ties upon which southern infiltrators can draw for support afford another noteworthy advantage. Kinship loyalties are strong among the Vietnamese, and these Viet Cong soldiers can use their connections in winning new recruits and obtaining intelligence, supplies, and protection.

The military skills of the southerners in the DRV, many of whom had combat experience in the struggle against the French, have been valuable to the insurgency, as have their technical skills and demonstrable leadership qualities. Experience has proved, moreover, that these men, when sent to the south, are politically reliable, an important reassurance for a Viet Cong unit commander, who must be constantly alert to signs of political unreliability among his troops, especially among the leaders. Finally, these experienced and reliable southern soldiers, who are available in the north, require only a short period of special training for infiltration.

In addition to those southerners who are selected in the north for military tasks in South Vietnam, there are those who are assigned to special political and intelligence functions. These agents may be drawn not only from the former Viet Minh soldiers but also from the civilians, who have been largely absorbed into government service in North Vietnam.

The ten thousand highlanders who were reported to have been regrouped in the north in 1954, as well as the lowland Vietnamese

who have been specially trained to work among the mountain people, are a further source of valuable talent that the DRV can commit to the southern insurgency.[12] Cadres of these tribal groups, and also of the Vietnamese (some of whom had learned to speak mountain languages and had had their teeth filed in conformity with highland practice), have been infiltrated into Central Vietnam to agitate among the mountain people there.

Training

The training that the DRV provides before assigning personnel to combat and subversive activities in the south is a great asset to the insurgency. The PAVN service schools are equipped to provide the technical training. For unusual requirements, there are special courses, such as the intelligence program already described. And a permanent training facility has been set up at Xuan Mai specifically to give final preparation to those about to be sent into South Vietnam.

According to the reports of prisoners, this last training center can accommodate about three thousand men, and trainees are assigned to it in groups ranging from three to five hundred, for a regular training cycle of three months. (Some prisoners indicated that their training had lasted several months longer.) Between March and July 1962, five such groups left Xuan Mai to begin their infiltration journey, and arrived in South Vietnam from one to four months later.[13]

Most of the men who are sent to Xuan Mai are regular members of the PAVN. The military training includes instruction on special

[12]Cf. The Two Vietnams, pp. 358-359 and 365-366, and The Last Confucian, pp. 166-169.

[13]MACV Infiltration Study (Secret, Noforn).

guerrilla tactics (raids and ambushes, fortifications, map drawing and interpretation, and rural organization) and in the use of various weapons (pistols, automatic rifles, machine guns, recoilless rifles, 75 mm artillery, flamethrowers, etc.). Some men are trained as specialists in minelaying and mine removal and as demolition experts. One prisoner reported that he and twenty-nine others had attended a special two-month course in sabotage, where they learned to use explosives such as Nelinide, TNT, and Tolide.

The former commander of the 60th Battalion of the Viet Cong, who defected to the GVN in February 1963, revealed another characteristic pattern at Xuan Mai: all the officers of his battalion had undergone a training program there, and then, in turn, had trained the men of their battalion under the supervision of training-center cadres. After the entire unit had been infiltrated into South Vietnam, its members were used to train other battalions there.

Captured documents reveal the variety of technical expertise that is being developed within North Vietnam. In November 1962, for example, "central assistance" cadres infiltrated from the DRV included the following: 15 experts in entrenchment techniques (dia/dao) and in entrenchment warfare; 5 experts in weapons; 20 experts in signal equipment; 60 infantry officers; 25 experts in military equipment; 20 experts in depth-charge warfare; and 5 medical specialists.

Numbers

Between 1954 and 1956, infiltration from the DRV apparently was negligible, since the leadership was focusing its attention mainly

on preparations for the expected elections and apparently had not mobilized its southern network for action. From 1956 to 1959, there is evidence of infiltration on a small scale, primarily of couriers, political agents, and small numbers of training cadres. In 1960, at the time that the new offensive was launched, infiltration from the DRV seems to have begun in substantial numbers.

Reliable figures on infiltration are available only since June 1961. (MACV[14] began its systematic study on infiltration in early 1962, and its data are relevant for the period beginning the previous June.) According to MACV estimates in the report of July 1, 1962, the rate of infiltration for the period June-December 1961 was between 500 and 1000 per month. From then until late April 1962, it fell to 100 to 200 per month, and then rose sharply to between 1600 and 1800 for the following six weeks. A second MACV report on infiltration, dated February 26, 1963, reaffirmed the general order of these estimates for the first half of 1962. Establishing firm criteria for the designation of infiltrators, MACV stated that for the period January to August 1962 there were 2,657 "confirmed" reports and a minimum of 500 "unconfirmed" reports of infiltrators.[15]

SUPPLIES

Although the Viet Cong organization in the south depends primarily upon local sources for the bulk of its supplies, the DRV provides some matériel and probably substantial funds. The

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[14] Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

[15] Figure 10 shows the infiltration estimates of MACV as published in these two studies.

Fig. 10

INFILTRATION FROM THE DRV AS ESTIMATED BY MACV*

	1961	
	Minimum	Maximum
June	500	1,000
July	500	1,000
August	500	1,000
September	500	1,000
October	500	1,000
November	500	1,000
December	100	200
Total	3,100	6,200

	First Half of 1962	
January	100	200
February	100	200
March	100	200
April	100	200
May to mid-June	1,600	1,800
Total	2,000	2,600

*From the Report of July 1, 1962 (Secret, Noforn).

infiltrators from the DRV carry their own weapons. In addition, they may carry small (or even large) weapons, technical equipment, medical supplies, and money. Though they bring some food with them, they are supported largely by the way stations, whose personnel grow, purchase, requisition, or capture the necessary food supplies.

There can be no doubt that the DRV provides the Viet Cong with extensive funds. This assumption is supported by evidence of purchases of South Vietnamese piastres by DRV agents in Hong Kong and Pnom Penh and by the discovery, in Cholon and Cambodia, of counterfeiters of southern money known to be working for the DRV. Also, Viet Cong intelligence agents have been caught carrying the money that was used to finance their operations.

Though the Viet Cong combat units receive the better part of their arms and ammunition either through capture from GVN forces or by purchase, some of these supplies are sent in from outside. Ammunition, which is difficult to obtain for certain American and French weapons, has been received from the DRV. During the second half of 1962, to judge by the evidence of captured Viet Cong stocks, matériel was arriving in small quantities from other parts of the communist bloc. A U.S. intelligence report of February 26, 1963, listed a variety of arms, ammunition, mines, explosives, and other equipment of Soviet bloc and Chinese manufacture that had been taken from the Viet Cong by GVN forces. More recently, according to reports by Secretary McNamara,[16] the flow of weapons from the outside, particularly those of larger caliber, has increased. Chinese 75 mm recoilless rifles, heavy

[16] New York Times, March 5 and 27, 1964.

machine guns, and tons of explosive-producing chemicals (most of these last manufactured in Red China and the rest from other bloc countries) have recently been taken by the GVN, with evidence that they had been delivered within the preceding six months.

Medicine, a scarce item crucial to the maintenance of the troops' effectiveness, has been procured by the DRV from various sources for shipment to South Vietnam. On February 26, 1963, the Hanoi press announced that North Vietnam's Red Cross Society would send a quantity of medicine and medical appliances to the National Liberation Front to bring relief to southern compatriots suffering from effects of "toxic chemicals" sprayed by U.S. forces. The Soviet Red Cross and an East European government, according to a 1962 intelligence report, had shipped some seventy-five crates of medicine and surgical instruments to the DRV for use in South Vietnam. Still other reports show that DRV agents have been buying medicine in Cambodia for shipment to South Vietnam.

The Movement of Supplies

Personnel and matériel which the DRV commits to the insurgency are sent through a system carefully organized and staffed so as to be able to handle this flow. Overland infiltration routes normally follow the lines of drift southward through the mountain chain in Laos. The borders with Laos and Cambodia, a total of 800 miles, are penetrated at different points by personnel on foot. Viet Cong reinforcements follow trails, both man- and animal-made, through largely uninhabited wilderness. The trails are so well camouflaged, and each is used so rarely, that it has been virtually impossible

to find their precise location by aerial reconnaissance or topographic map analysis.

Most of the limited infiltration of the years 1954-1959 took place through the Demilitarized Zone, the shortest route from North to South Vietnam. During that period, infiltrators were briefed in the city of Vinh Linh (North Vietnam) and then were dispatched across the DMZ, usually in the vicinity of Route 1 or Route 2. Later, after the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh had secured the eastern flank of Laos, an infiltration corridor was established there, with way stations to support infiltration on a larger scale.

One such infiltration route is No. 3, which runs parallel to the DMZ to the Laotian border, then turns southeast near Dan Ralou, and follows the border zone some 12 miles south of International Highway 9 to a point where the route ends and filters into jungle trails and border-crossing sites. Another route commonly traveled, Route 4, follows the DMZ until it crosses the Laotian border, and then turns south, across International Highway 9, to Muong Nong. From there the road separates into branch routes, which give access to South Vietnam through either Laos or Cambodia. Route 5 is believed to be the most recently organized and also the most efficient, since it permits vehicle transport along International Highway 12 from the DRV to as far south as Tchepone in Laos. From there, infiltrators travel on foot to Muong Nong, where they use the branches of Route 4 into South Vietnam.[17]

[17]Cf. Figure 11, showing the Viet Cong infiltration routes as of October 1, 1962. The above description of the several routes is based on MACV reports.

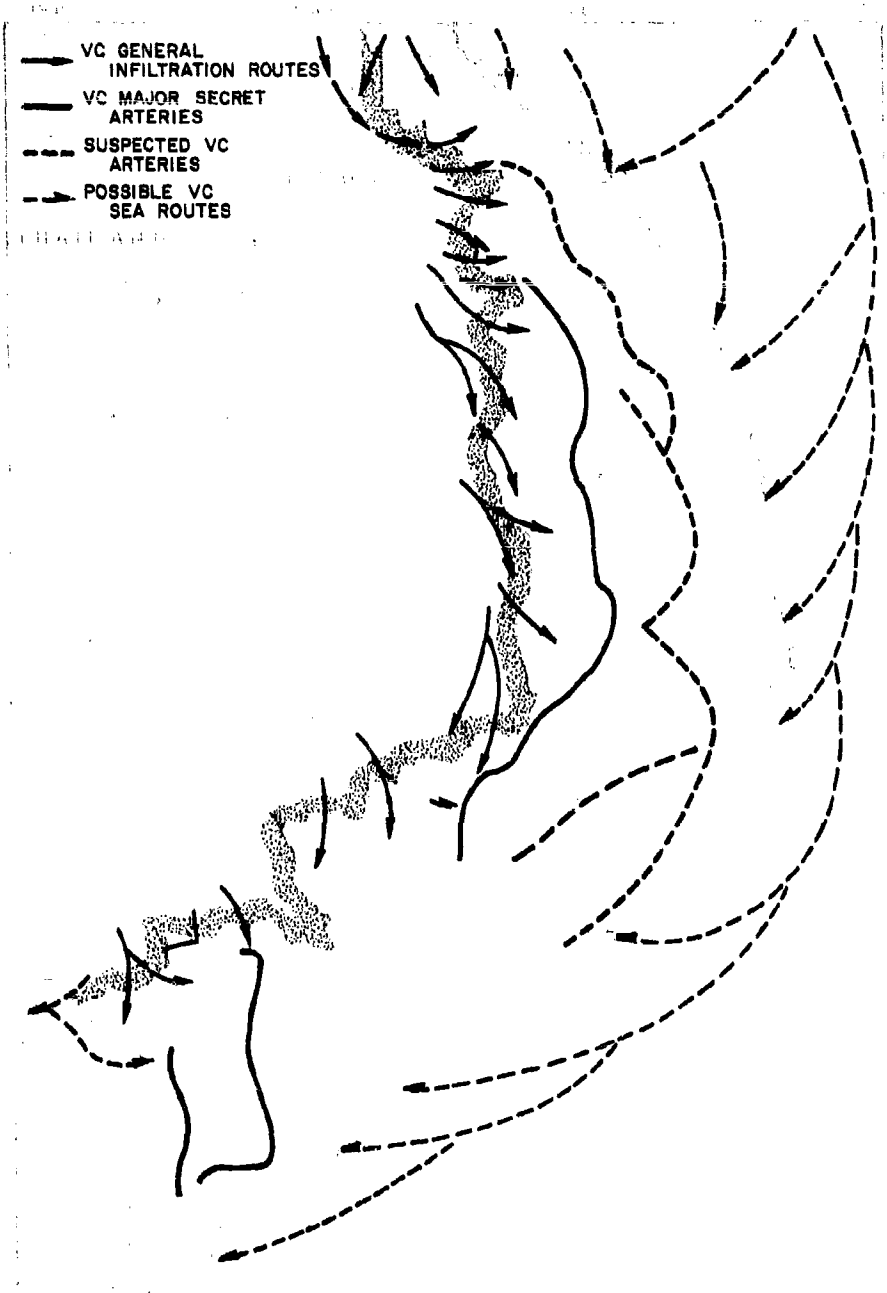

Fig. 11—Viet Cong infiltration routes into South Vietnam

Along the infiltration corridors, a series of way stations, usually a day's march apart, service and supervise the Viet Cong reinforcements. Some of these stations are so placed that they can serve more than one route, usually where the routes cross or run closely parallel to each other, and such stations are likely to be commanded by a noncommissioned officer in charge of fifteen to twenty other personnel. The typical way station supplies food, gives care to the sick and injured, informs the infiltrators about the local security situation, and has guides lead them to the next way station. Captured reports by commanders of infiltration support units show that the entire operation is efficiently organized and well-enough staffed to handle an even larger flow of infiltrators than at present.

The men coming in from the DRV are part of a disciplined military staff system. The infiltrators are not aimless volunteers but trained professional personnel, who know their destination and specific assignment, and who pass through the well-organized infiltration system with the assurance that they are part of a powerful military establishment.[18]

Travel time by the infiltration routes varies with weather, road and trail conditions, size and physical hardiness of the group, security problems, and other factors. Individuals and small groups have made the trip in less than a week, while larger units have required a month or more. One group, which had been trained at Xuan Mai, spent forty-five days en route from Xuan Mai to Quang Nam; another took more than four months to arrive in Zone D. The journey from the

[18]MACV Infiltration Study, p. 3 (Secret, Noforn).

sendoff point in the DRV normally begins by truck, which hauls the men to a point in Laos from which the journey continues on foot. Once across the border, infiltration routes within South Vietnam operate much like those just described in the Laos corridor; they provide internal lines of communication by way of secret Viet Cong bases and, wherever possible, through areas controlled by the Viet Cong.

Some infiltrators pass through zones that the Communists have controlled since the outset of the war with the French in 1946. Virtually "internal sanctuaries," these sparsely populated zones, with little or no transportation or communication facilities, are used by the Viet Cong as guerrilla base areas. The terrain and vegetation hinder conventional military operations and make it extremely difficult for GVN forces to gain access undetected. Within these zones are Viet Cong command elements, armed workshops, supply caches, training installations, and troop bivouacs. Security and guerrilla units guard the approaches to these facilities, and the villagers are organized and controlled by the Viet Cong in support of the combat effort. Four of these areas (C, D, U Minh, and Dong Trap Muoi) have been war zones since the war against the French; another base area, Do Xa, has been intensively developed during the last few years.[19]

Supply Routes to South Vietnam

The overland supply routes appear to be distinct from the infiltration corridors for personnel. Of the two main supply routes

[19]See Figure 6 for a map showing these base areas.

in operation, one serves the central section of South Vietnam by way of Laos, and the other leads through Cambodia to points in the Delta.

Supplies from the DRV that are brought in by the Laos route are transported by trucks through the Mugia Pass to the Tchepone/ Muong Phine area. From there on, human porters or pack animals must move the matériel into the RVN. Though the exact amount of material that has passed into South Vietnam by this route is not known, we may assume that the area around Tchepone is used to stockpile supplies. Twenty miles from the South Vietnamese border, it has been a staging area for both Pathet Lao and Viet Cong activities. The Pathet Lao advanced into the area in late 1960, and, the following spring, Soviet transport planes lifted supplies from North Vietnam to Tchepone. Since then, there have been frequent reports of important Viet Cong activity around Tchepone, including the stationing of six Viet Cong companies nearby. The Tchepone area has been described as the keystone of the logistic support structure for Viet Cong operations in South Vietnam and as a safe haven for storage depots, rest camps, and replacement training centers.

A supply route to the Delta by way of Cambodia is maintained, in part, through seaborne shipments to ports in Cambodia, which then are moved by truck or river craft to Viet Cong reception points in the RVN. Continuing, though unconfirmed, reports mention the offloading of supplies from ships near Kampot, Cambodia. According to one report, waterproof packages of supplies were dropped overboard from a Western-flag vessel in the Mekong River. Freighters of small

neutral nations or bloc countries can operate out of communist ports and, if they can win the connivance of Cambodian customs officials, can discharge their cargo within easy reach of Viet Cong elements for further transport. Infiltration and supply shipments by sea are the responsibility of two organizations: the 603rd Battalion and a maritime subsection of the DRV intelligence service.[20] Trained agents and cadres, couriers, signal equipment, and medical supplies probably make up the bulk of the seaborne cargo from North Vietnam.[21] The DRV also, it appears, arranges for supplies to be shipped from other countries, particularly from Communist China, either to Cambodia, for transshipment by land, or directly to South Vietnam.

THE ROLE OF LAOS AND CAMBODIA

In 1960, the Pathet Lao forces seized control of the southeastern Laotian corridor. This coincided with the opening of the Viet Cong offensive in South Vietnam, which suggests the possible interrelationship of these events as part of a larger scheme for the domination of all Indochina by Vietnamese communism. Certainly, after the Kong Le coup in Laos, the North Vietnamese leaders were bound to encourage and support the Pathet Lao, whose success promised not only to serve communist interests in Laos but to provide distinct advantages to the Viet Cong as they opened their offensive in South Vietnam.

Since the Pathet Lao have had control of the Laotian corridor, the DRV has been able to send infiltrators through it with little

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[20] See above, p. 15.

[21] MACV Infiltration Study, pp. 3-4 (Secret, Noforn).

fear of their harassment. Way stations and other supporting elements have been virtually immune to attack from local forces. And there is evidence that Viet Cong installations in Laos are supporting not only the insurgency in South Vietnam but also the Pathet Lao operations in Laos.

In addition to safe passage way for the infiltration of men and supplies, Laos and Cambodia offer the Vietnamese insurgents facilities for rest and recuperation, medical care, communications, and possibly training. Because these facilities are small and movable, well camouflaged, and set up in existing huts, air reconnaissance has not been effective in spotting them.

The frequent reports of Viet Cong units fleeing from ARVN attacks across the border into Cambodia and, somewhat less often, into Laos, and the numerous protests by the Cambodian government against ARVN incursions into its territory, testify to the scale on which the Viet Cong are using the sanctuary offered them by those neighboring countries. Safe areas in Cambodia and Laos apparently contain communication centers and relay stations for the Viet Cong command network, and there have been reports that Viet Cong leaders, both political and military, are operating from such areas. Also, there is reason to think that some of the propaganda disseminated in South Vietnam originates in Cambodia.

Clearly, Laos and Cambodia today are valuable assets for the Viet Cong, both in the tangible material facilities that they are making available and in the strong psychological effect that the knowledge of accessible sanctuary has on the morale of troops.

Their importance is very likely to increase as time goes on, for all the present assets lend themselves to fuller exploitation. More men and matériel could pass through the two countries to South Vietnam; supply depots, communication centers, medical facilities, and training stations might be used more extensively; and the value and use of Laos and Cambodia as sanctuary could rise greatly if, for example, the counterinsurgents succeeded in penetrating the Viet Cong's internal sanctuaries, or if the DRV, faced with the possibility of the war's spreading, chose to avoid such escalation and to protect its assets by ordering the Viet Cong forces to retreat to Laos and Cambodia.

IV. INTANGIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS: POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

There are a number of political and psychological elements which, though they may be intangible and difficult to measure individually, add up to a significant contribution by the DRV to the southern insurgency. The northern leadership coordinates and integrates these elements, just as it does the military contributions already discussed, to give strength and sophistication to the rebellion.

LEADERSHIP

The leadership of Ho Chi Minh is a great asset to the communist cause in South Vietnam. During the struggle against the French, from 1946 to 1954, Ho gained widespread popularity among the Vietnamese masses as the father of his country, the charismatic leader of the nationalist movement that was to expel the colonial masters from Vietnam. Moreover, he has nurtured the image of himself as the benign and wise "Uncle Ho" by his unpretentious manner, simple dress, frugal living habits, and easy movement among the rural populace. It is highly probable that Ho has retained his reputation as a national hero and great Vietnamese patriot not only in North Vietnam but also among a large segment of the southern population. Significantly, the anticommunist propaganda of the South Vietnamese government seldom mentions Ho Chi Minh, undoubtedly because officials are aware of his continuing popularity in the south and of the possible boomerang effect of giving currency to his role as the communist leader in the north.

The insurgents derive additional psychological value from the other top leaders in Hanoi. The most prominent personalities in North Vietnam -- Vo Nguyen Giap, Le Duan, Truong Chinh, and Pham Van Dong among them -- represent a continuous, cohesive group of experienced revolutionary leaders, whose proven strength and success in the past are reassuring to their present followers in the south.

The fact that this political elite in Hanoi that directs the insurgency in South Vietnam established itself in the conflict with the French gives the DRV an historic advantage, for many Vietnamese are easily persuaded to view the current rebellion in South Vietnam as but a continuation of the struggle against colonial domination. The leaders in Hanoi have indeed pursued a consistent goal since they first rebelled against the French; it has been to establish communist rule in a unified Vietnam. And not only the leadership but many members of the earlier Viet Minh apparatus are now part of the Viet Cong organization. In the official propaganda, however, this continuity is represented differently. The DRV maintains that, all along, the struggle has been one of nationalist forces striving for independence from imperialist domination. The French of the earlier war have now been replaced by the more powerful United States, and the puppet government of Bao Dai has been succeeded, first, by the Diem regime and, more recently, by military dictators whom the Americans have installed. Members and sympathizers of the Viet Cong organization thus do not see the current revolution as a conflict between the communist north and the anticommunist south; to them, it is a struggle between the nationalist cause, represented by the

Viet Minh, and colonialist interests, represented by the government of South Vietnam. Even some of those not committed to the insurgency apparently share this view, for many South Vietnamese peasants refer to the insurgents as "Viet Minh" rather than by the derisive term "Viet Cong" (meaning Vietnamese Communists) that is used by the government.

IDEOLOGY

Just as the DRV's association with the southern rebellion gives the insurgents the sense that they are only continuing the struggle against colonial domination, so it also provides them with the ideology that defines and ennobles their cause and thus strengthens the insurgents' will to fight what they regard as a legitimate national revolution. The DRV's claim that the communist leadership seeks to fulfill the Vietnamese national destiny and that the rulers in Saigon are tools of the new imperialists has unquestionably gained adherents, and the presence of a sovereign communist government in Hanoi is reassuring to those who accept that claim.

Though nationalism is the primary appeal, it is mixed with Marxist-Leninist themes in the DRV's presentation of the insurgency as a liberation struggle inspired by a noble cause. The ideological indoctrination of the Viet Cong is continuous and pervasive, for the DRV leadership regards it as a fundamental requirement if members of the organization are to develop and maintain the proper attitudes and behavior. With a coherent ideology to sustain them, the insurgents, especially the hard core, have been relatively invulnerable to GVN charges that they are bandits, self-seeking rebels, and plunderers --

accusations that every counterinsurgent power makes in an effort to discredit the rebels.

The Viet Cong undoubtedly draw many of their recruits from the uprooted, the restless, the social misfits, and the chronic rebels and born adventurers. These elements, which are readily recruited for violence, are present in all societies, but they are particularly numerous in nations that are in transition from tradition to modernity. Like the societies of other former colonies, Vietnam has been jolted by the industrial and commercial impact of a modern ruling power. As a result, new cities have sprouted and old ones have multiplied in size; there are new communication patterns; a commercial economy has been grafted onto an agrarian base; and a school system modeled on Western education has displaced traditional learning. As the family system has been altered, as new social classes have emerged and modern ideas have gained currency, new values have clashed with old, and new aspirations are clamoring for satisfaction. A process of rapid change such as this inevitably produces tensions within the society, and these, in turn, erupt in protests which, in transitional nations, tend to be general and unstructured. In South Vietnam, the Viet Cong organization, guided by its northern base, has succeeded in giving focus to this opposition. With the aid of a coherent ideology promulgated by a well-disciplined organization, the aimless discontent has been harnessed to serve the insurgency; the marginal groups have been given a cause, a target for their hostility, and a disciplined revolutionary movement to join.

MORALE

Every contribution that the DRV makes to the insurgency in the south has the added value of boosting the insurgents' morale. Although this aspect of DRV support has been alluded to earlier, and despite the dearth of direct evidence on the subject, it may be well at this point to recapitulate deductions and inferences on the impact that North Vietnam's support is having on the morale of the Viet Cong.[1]

The insurgents doubtless derive confidence from the knowledge that they are being supported from a secure base in Hanoi, which can contribute ample resources of its own and, if necessary, can call upon larger powers for additional assistance. Moreover, guiding their revolution are Ho Chi Minh and others who became national heroes in the successful struggle against the French. The insurgent also is aware of the competence of the command and control center in Hanoi, both in the planning of the over-all campaign and in furnishing guidance to subordinate units, including, as he knows from experience, the ability of the intelligence center in North Vietnam to signal an endangered unit in time for it to protect itself. Frequent communication between rebel units in the south and headquarters in Hanoi adds to his sense of being a participant, not in an isolated guerrilla war, but

[1] Regarding the morale of the PAVN, including those troops in Laos and SVN, the Defense Intelligence Digest contained the following statement: "Among the most important assets of the PAVN is its high morale....Morale may...be a reflection of the effectiveness of the Communist regime in propaganda and control. The ground forces are particularly adept at guerrilla fighting, and under such conditions their logistic requirement would be small." (March 1964, Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 2 (Secret, Noforn.)

in a larger, carefully organized, and well-supported undertaking. And knowledge that behind the effort stands a powerful sovereign government provides incentive as well as reassurance, for the insurgent can readily convince himself that victory of his side will mean position, prestige, and influence for those who have fought faithfully.

The well-trained professional cadres of southerners sent in from North Vietnam, and the arrival of even small quantities of arms, ammunition, and scarce supplies such as medicine, are evidence of outside interest and reminders that assistance is available as needed. Even to the Viet Cong soldier who has not yet crossed the border, there is comfort in the nearness and accessibility of Laos and Cambodia for rest, medical care, and recuperation, and as sanctuary if ever he should be forced to flee.

The knowledge that the insurgency is controlled by a sophisticated organization and that it is being supported with all the resources of the DRV, including the entire staff of a large army virtually immune to reprisal, not only serves to sustain the morale of the Viet Cong combatant but is bound to have an impact also upon the attitude of the general population, whose support any guerrilla movement must win if it is to succeed. Vitally concerned for their own security, the peasants, in particular, carefully look for indications as to which side is the stronger and better able to enforce its will. They are frequently caught between the demands of the Viet Cong and those of the government, and have learned that the former have powerful support from the DRV and are themselves a well-established,

tenacious organization. Knowing that, when an individual Viet Cong agent is eliminated, another is likely to replace him, the average peasant reasons that the organization that can provide such reinforcements also has the power to punish those who betray it. These popular impressions and presumptions, which are due in good part to the fact that the insurgency is directed from Hanoi, inevitably serve the cause of the Viet Cong.

The very factors that reinforce the morale of the Viet Cong and tend to attract the uncommitted are demoralizing to the counter-insurgent side. The constant frustration engendered by the knowledge that the enemy's revolutionary base is on the outside, and thus immune from attack, and that the Viet Cong's methods cannot effectively be turned against them could ultimately lead to a general sense of the futility of fighting under such inequitable conditions. More and more of the defending forces might come to feel that they were on a treadmill: even if they succeeded in clearing out the enemy, the DRV would only send in new troops. Already today, the knowledge of North Vietnam's support probably gives rise to fears among some members of the government forces that the Viet Cong may win and that fighting them is futile and perhaps compromising. To the extent that such attitudes are present, they are apt to create neutralist tendencies in some South Vietnamese and a desire at least for caution in others, lest a reputation for energetic action against the enemy prove harmful to them later on.

INSTRUMENTS AND TECHNIQUES OF PERSUASION: PROPAGANDA AND DIPLOMACY

The DRV has harnessed all available resources with which to exert political and psychological pressure on behalf of the insurgency in South Vietnam. Its propaganda facilities and the country's talent are fully committed to advancing the communist cause in radio, press, books and magazines, training programs, and general political agitation. Radio Hanoi broadcasts seventeen-and-a-half hours weekly to South Vietnam. Also, it would appear, the DRV is supporting the clandestine radio broadcasts that operate within South Vietnam under the call name "Liberation Broadcasting Station." Often, the messages emitted by this station are identical with those broadcast from Hanoi; at other times, their text has been slightly altered so as to give them the appearance of local origin. Occasionally, Viet Cong agents will take radio sets into villages to expose the inhabitants to communist propaganda. Both Radio Hanoi and the Liberation Broadcasting Station tailor their messages and manner of presentation to different target audiences. For example, Hanoi broadcasts in several highland languages, much to the amazement of some of the highlanders who hear their local dialect spoken on the radio.

The DRV has preserved, and in some respects perfected, the organizational apparatus and the techniques that the Viet Minh used in their propaganda against the French. Thus, it has retained the Dich-Van, developed in the earlier war as the control apparatus for "armed propaganda," by which the insurgents draw political and psychological advantage from selective terror, assassination, and kidnapping. For example, the Dich-Van may eliminate a hated government official in order to demonstrate that the Viet Cong supports

the interests of the local people. Or it might choose a villager who has betrayed the Viet Cong, and hold a public execution as a warning and object lesson to others. There are three other Viet Cong propaganda organizations, with cadres from the DRV -- the Binh-Van, the Dan-Van, and the Tri-Van -- which work, respectively, on the military, peasantry, and intellectuals of South Vietnam.

Many of the pamphlets, leaflets, newspapers, and magazines distributed among the southern population are produced in Hanoi, though their origin is deliberately obscured. A report prepared by the U.S. Information Service in Saigon, which had collected and analyzed more than five hundred pieces of such propaganda during 1962 alone, provides some measure of the quantity and variety of this printed material.[2] The insurgent propagandists, the analysis shows, use nationalism as their chief appeal. They represent the United States as the major enemy of the Vietnamese people and demand the withdrawal of the American "imperialists," who are pictured as promoting landlordism, poverty, and the vested interests of the rich and the foreign investors through the puppet governments of South Vietnam. They are accused, further, of committing atrocities against the Vietnamese people, constructing "concentration camps" (in the form of agrovilles and strategic hamlets), encouraging the senseless killing of Vietnamese by Vietnamese, and planning a global war against the forces of peace.

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[2]"National Liberation Front Propaganda," a catalog of communist propaganda obtained during 1962, as analyzed by the Special Programs Division, USIS, Saigon, February 1, 1963.

By contrast, Hanoi's propaganda depicts the National Liberation Front as the harbinger of land reform, democracy, justice for ethnic groups, equality of the sexes, and independence from foreign domination, and as the legitimate spokesman of the South Vietnamese people in demanding reunification with their brothers in the north. A movement with strong popular support and powerful friends in North Vietnam and beyond, the NLF is proclaimed to be well on the way to winning the war. Apart from such general themes, there are individual appeals to special audiences. For the peasant, there is the promise of land, and of the abolition of high taxes, abuses by the military, and the drafting of family chiefs. The soldier is told that he is underpaid, overworked, forced to take risks, and made the dupe of U.S. military advisors, and that, if he deserted, he would find in the NLF a powerful friend, not the enemy that the United States and its Vietnamese puppet regimes have painted. For student audiences, the Viet Cong decry the policies of the GVN that allegedly wants to keep people uneducated, affords students inadequate educational opportunities, offers them no jobs if they succeed in acquiring an education, and unfairly drafts them into the army. And there are still other propaganda themes for religious sects, workers, women, government employees, highland people, and the other special-interest groups.

This complex and sophisticated propaganda machinery permits the Viet Cong to exploit events that reflect unfavorably on the RVN, or whose outcome is to the government's disadvantage, such as the Buddhist demonstrations of 1963 and the several military coups, abortive or successful. By the same token, communist propaganda takes full

advantage of the Viet Cong successes. Recognizing that local triumphs have little political and psychological impact unless they become widely known, the Viet Cong disseminates the news of every military victory through all available propaganda channels. Thus, a substantial success at Ap Bac became the touchstone for an "emulate Ap Bac" campaign -- a device to boost morale, to encourage combatants to greater achievement, and to create the impression that the momentum for Viet Cong victory was gaining.

In the international sphere as within Vietnam, the DRV uses all its resources to gain support for the southern insurgency. Broadcasts in English and French are beamed to Europe and Asia, and books and magazines are prepared in Hanoi for foreign audiences. In its diplomacy as well as in its propaganda, the government seeks to arouse the sympathies of neutralist nations, to draw ever greater support from communist allies, and even to win friends among certain circles in the West. Special events from Vietnamese history typically serve as pegs for Hanoi's propaganda campaigns, as, for example, the ninth anniversary of the Geneva Conference on Vietnam, on July 20, 1963, which became the occasion for the DRV, with strong support from Peking, to launch an international appeal for support and, domestically, to proclaim "a week of struggle against U.S. imperialism."[3] National holidays and the opening of congresses and government assemblies are similarly exploited.

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[3]Radio Propaganda Report, "North Vietnam's Week of Struggle Against the U.S.," FBIS, CD 230, July 29, 1963 (Confidential).

The National Liberation Front is a useful façade, which permits the DRV to appeal for international support to the southern rebellion without revealing the extent of its own implication. According to Radio Hanoi, NLF diplomatic missions have visited at least nine countries (the USSR, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Indonesia, Communist China, North Korea, Algeria, Cuba, and the UAR), and NLF delegations have attended eight international conferences.[4] Permanent representation of the NLF has been established in Cuba and Algeria.[5]

One device for drawing international attention to the southern insurgency is the sponsoring of international conferences. Here, too, the National Liberation Front conveniently masks the authorship of the DRV. For example, on October 20-23, 1963, Hanoi organized a conference under the reported sponsorship of the "South Vietnam Liberation Labor Association," with representatives from thirty-one countries. This conference, which received wide press and radio coverage from Hanoi for dissemination in South Vietnam and abroad, issued a proclamation calling for the withdrawal of the United States

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[4]The Moscow Conference on Disarmament, the Warsaw Conference on World Democratic Youth, the Leningrad Conference of World Students, the Budapest Meeting of the International Organization of Journalists, the Colombo Conference of Asian Economic Cooperation, the Conference of Asian and African Lawyers, the Third Congress of Asian-African People's Solidarity in Tanganyika, and the Budapest Conference of the Executive Committee of the World Federation of Democratic Youth.

[5]Information derived from Hanoi radio broadcasts as reported by FBIS, Far East, Daily Report.

from South Vietnam and asking that the Vietnamese people be allowed to settle their internal affairs on the basis of the 1954 Geneva Agreements. The DRV also used this session to demonstrate its powerful moral support to the southern insurgency by inviting delegates from South Vietnam to be guests of honor at a meeting of the National Assembly, where they received "thunderous applause from the Assembly, stirring comments of support by the DRV government elite, and finally, a public embrace by President Ho Chi Minh."[6]

Through the National Liberation Front the DRV also appeals for international support of the southern insurgency in the form of funds and supplies. A declaration of March 21, 1962, that was issued under the NLF label described the technique:

> The South Vietnam National Front for Liberation will use their legitimate and effective right to appeal to the people and government of North Vietnam, to peace and democracy-loving peoples and governments the world over, irrespective of political system, requesting that active support, including material and manpower support, be afforded to the just struggle of the people of South Vietnam.[7]

The aforementioned conference in Hanoi in October 1963 issued a statement that a committee had been set up "to organize collection of funds, medicaments, and other materials to help the workers and people of South Vietnam overcome their difficulties." And the government of North Vietnam has announced that gifts of medicines and other material aid have been sent to the NLF by the Red Cross organizations of Hungary, the Soviet Union, Red China, East Germany,

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[6]Radio Hanoi, as reported in FBIS, Far East, Daily Report, October 28, 29, 1963.

[7]Cited in The United Front and Communist Strategy: Tactics in Vietnam, p. 16. This 22-page pamphlet, showing no author, place of origin, or affiliation, appeared in December 1962.

and Bulgaria, as well as by the Free German Trade Union Federation and the Council of the National Front of Democratic Germany, and that the Albanian Trade Unions have contributed one million leks to the struggle of the South Vietnamese people.

It is through the NLF, moreover, that the DRV appeals to opinion leaders in the West. In the spring of 1963, for example, Radio Hanoi publicized statements that the NLF Secretary General had addressed to British Labour members of Parliament and also, through the French newspaper Combat, to French residents of South Vietnam, in which he assured the two nations that their economic and cultural interests would be respected after the U.S. imperialists had been expelled from Vietnam.[8] Philosopher Bertrand Russell, in letters to the New York Times and The Observer (London), has quoted statements by the NLF which suggest that he is among those who believe the Front to be the spokesman for discontented southern citizens, not a mouthpiece of the communist leadership in Hanoi. And a respected French scholar on Vietnam, Phillippe DeVillers, writes about the formation of the National Liberation Front in December 1960 as if it had been a spontaneous southern reaction to the repressive policies of the Diem government, which the Communists had decided to adopt only after it was well launched. DeViller's view, which patently ignores the manipulative role of the DRV, is a tribute to the effectiveness of Hanoi's propaganda and its exploitation of the NLF label.[9]

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[8] Ibid., p. 18.

[9] Phillippe DeVillers, "The Struggle for Unification of Vietnam," The China Quarterly, January-March 1962, pp. 15-20. These views of DeVillers are apparently adopted by Oliver E. Clubb, Jr., The U.S. and the Sino-Soviet Dispute in Southeast Asia, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D. C., 1962, pp. 41-46.

In its diplomacy, the government of North Vietnam supports the southern insurgency directly as well as through the NLF. Its foreign servants abroad continually denounce the role of the United States in South Vietnam; its permanent representatives on the International Control Commission frequently protest against alleged infringements of the Geneva Agreements by the United States and the government of South Vietnam.

In addition to initiating active diplomatic moves of its own, the DRV serves as a channel through which Communist China, the USSR, and other communist countries can conveniently supply the insurgents with arms, ammunition, medicine, and other material aid. There is a suggestion, moreover, that Peking and Hanoi collaborate in determining and regulating the tempo of hostilities in South Vietnam; the intensified Viet Cong offensive of late 1963 and early 1964, for example, was accompanied by an increase in the flow of Chinese Communist weapons. Indeed, the DRV occupies a position that would make it easy for Peking -- or for Moscow -- to help accelerate the subversion in the south by giving moral encouragement and material aid to Hanoi. This method of supporting the insurgents would be safe and effective. The Chinese or Russians would be taking minimal risks by dealing only with their ally, North Vietnam, and abstaining from direct involvement in South Vietnam. Thus, they not only would avoid the possibility of a confrontation with the United States, and the dangers that this would imply, but they would be able also to perpetuate the fiction in the international community that the United States was the only outside nation to be interfering in internal affairs

of South Vietnam. At the same time, the DRV, in its propaganda within South Vietnam, could exploit the fact that it enjoyed the powerful support of communist allies.

Still another diplomatic function of the DRV derives from its position as a sovereign power with a legitimate interest in the South Vietnamese problem. Without having to admit its direct involvement in the conflict, the DRV can serve as the diplomatic channel of negotiation and spokesman for the demands of the southern insurgents. Thus, Hanoi has responded enthusiastically to the proposals for settlement of the Vietnam problem that have been advanced by President de Gaulle and Prince Sihanouk. Both proposals aim at the neutralization of Vietnam, and each includes a provision for the withdrawal of American military support, which is also one of the Communists' foremost goals.

The leaders in Hanoi take diplomatic advantage of every international situation that harbors potential benefits for their cause in South Vietnam; Sihanouk's differences with the South Vietnamese government and his altercations with the United States, for example, proved useful occasions to support an enemy of their enemy. The DRV has been coordinating its policy in Laos with that in South Vietnam, exploiting opportunities in either area to promote its position. In its diplomatic advocacy of a possible Vietnam settlement, it has used as a model the Geneva Settlement of 1962 that "neutralized" Laos.

Finally, the DRV uses the prerogatives and resources of diplomacy and propaganda to limit the military flexibility of the

counterinsurgents and their supporters. It has energetically denounced flights by U.S. planes over the probable staging area of Tchepone in Laos, no doubt in an effort to discourage such action in the future. And Hanoi also is responsible for the virulent campaign against the U.S.-supported program for defoliating areas with dense vegetation which the Viet Cong use for cover. This campaign, in which the Soviet bloc and Communist China have joined vociferously, alleges that the United States has been using "noxious chemicals" in a program of "chemical warfare" against the Vietnamese people, and the DRV frequently repeats these charges in radio broadcasts, press releases, protests to the ICC, and representations at diplomatic conferences. This kind of propaganda, like the violent denunciations of American press stories discussing the possibility of guerrilla attacks against the territory of North Vietnam, is designed, at least in part, to restrain the United States from the alleged actions.[10]

[10]Much of the information regarding Hanoi's diplomatic and propaganda measures has been drawn from radio and press reports of FBIS, Far East, and from the translations of the Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS).

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DRV TO THE INSURGENCY: AN ASSESSMENT

With the insurgency in South Vietnam, the communist leaders in Hanoi are seeking to complete an unfinished revolution. After their protracted war against the French for an independent Vietnam under a single, communist government, the Geneva Conference of 1954 awarded the Viet Minh control of only the northern half of that prize. They are committed today to gaining the other half through subversion of the southern government, a means less costly than outright warfare, and one for which they have the appropriate resources.

Its direction by the former Viet Minh leaders gives the southern insurgency an historic advantage. During the successful effort to expel the French colonial rulers, the Viet Minh elite constructed an effective political-military apparatus and won widespread support for national independence. Though its leaders were Communists, the Viet Minh movement used nationalism as the central theme with which it appealed to the masses, and Ho Chi Minh and his collaborators came to command the loyalty and discipline of a large following in all Vietnam. In the present situation, Hanoi maintains that the struggle is essentially the same; only, the United States has replaced France as the imperialist power now dominating South Vietnam, and the former imperialist puppet, Bao Dai, has been supplanted, first, by Ngo Dinh Diem and, more recently, by a series of military cliques.

The total commitment of the DRV to the success of the insurgency in the south is a major reason for the imposing strength of the Viet Cong. If the insurgency were not directed and supported from the north --

that is to say, if it had to depend solely upon southern resources, with only the moral support from the north that the DRV leadership claims to be its sole contribution -- it would clearly be a far less serious threat to South Vietnam than it actually is.

CONTINUITY WITH THE VIET MINH STRUGGLE

The notion of the insurgency today as but a continuation of the earlier one gives both material and psychological strength to the Viet Cong. For one thing, it obviates the need to construct a new insurgent apparatus. Instead of having to recruit a new leadership, build another military organization, and redevelop a popular base, thereby incurring the inevitable risks and committing the mistakes of any incubating revolutionary organization, the insurgents are able to build upon past experience, to use an existing organization, and to command the loyalty of many of the old Viet Minh members, who by their example attract new followers. Moreover, the continuity in the appeal of insurgent leaders means that members of the Viet Cong can be persuaded to look on the present struggle, not as one between the communist north and the anticommunist south, but rather as a conflict between their own "nationalist" strivings and the "colonialist" cause represented by the government of South Vietnam. This interpretation, though easily refuted on the basis of facts, has a powerful appeal to the uncommitted.

If the insurgency had to rely solely upon South Vietnam, it would be compelled to generate a leadership of its own, and to do so from a pool substantially smaller than that from which the Viet Minh winnowed the present leaders in a long, brutal, and costly process.

It is very unlikely that any new, southern movement could produce a leader with the rallying power of Ho Chi Minh, whose personality and reputation are among the DRV's most valuable contributions to the insurgency. The same might be said to be true, though to a lesser degree, of the other experienced revolutionaries who today occupy the top positions in Hanoi. The current insurgency has brought forth no prominent new leaders in South Vietnam. Most likely, the DRV does not encourage the emergence of indigenous southern leaders, who might find that their interests did not always coincide with those of Hanoi and might entertain thoughts of independence. Also, such southern leaders would become prize targets for the government and its forces. Since it is axiomatic that an insurgency deprived of its leaders is easily demoralized and will disintegrate rapidly, counterinsurgent powers always make their greatest effort to capture or kill the enemy leaders or encourage them to defect. Indeed, an important asset of the Viet Cong is the fact that their key leaders are invulnerable, operating as they are from the safety of their revolutionary bases in North Vietnam. This knowledge of their invulnerability strengthens the morale of the Viet Cong, as it weakens that of the counterinsurgents.

The Viet Minh, in their war against the French, performed a remarkable organizational feat in constructing the political-military apparatus that extended throughout the entire Vietnamese society. This organization, and the skills it developed, have been maintained and transmitted to the southern revolution. They are being perpetuated by members of the Viet Minh network who, after

the partition of the country, remained in the south under the discipline of Hanoi, by cadres sent from the north, and by a system of constant instructions issued from headquarters in the DRV. Organizational and administrative skills are a rare and precious commodity in developing countries. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to mobilize the peasantry of transitional societies to work together for a common goal. From the base in Hanoi, today's southern insurgents are receiving the benefit of the earlier revolutionary experience, and especially of the communist organizational techniques. As a result, they have been able to reach a level of strength that an indigenous southern movement of unseasoned revolutionaries could never have attained.

MILITARY ADVANTAGES OF THE DRV BASE

Another outstanding advantage that the insurgents derive from the present situation is the fact that their strategy and, to a lesser extent, their tactics are being developed in the secure base of North Vietnam. An officer staff obliged to work out strategy within the borders of South Vietnam could never match the breadth of intelligence that is being collected in the north; their leaders, if they dared meet to discuss plans, would be in constant danger of capture; and they could not hope to equal the experience and expertise available to the high command of a conventional army. As it is, the PAVN high command can tap the broadest sources of information, knowledge, and experience of North Vietnam and its allies, and transmit instructions to the south accordingly through well-functioning organizational channels. Without such guidance

and channels of transmission, the insurgents alone would not have the time, information, talent, safe location, and facilities for coordination that enable them to adjust tactics to new situations and to respond as cleverly to moves of the government forces as they have done with the help of Hanoi.

The communication network that affords the southern Viet Cong organization dependable and frequent contact with the north is, of course, crucially important in the present picture. It enables Hanoi to integrate operations and to base its instructions on its appraisal of all internal and external conditions. Without such a network and central coordination, the insurgents would have to operate as isolated units, and their contact with other elements would be inadequate. Local commanders would inevitably react in a variety of ways, depending on their differing perception of the situation, and the enemy could exploit their lack of national perspective. Localism would cause fragmentation of the insurgent effort, with pockets of regional and religious jealousies, in which sect leaders, local satraps, and dissident groups could jeopardize the unified endeavor. The Viet Cong have been relatively successful in mobilizing dissidence to their advantage, thanks largely to the integration of the total effort by the northern leadership.

The complex intelligence center which operates in North Vietnam is an obvious and fundamental asset to the southern insurgents. Its records are immune to capture, its penetration by the enemy would be very difficult indeed, and it operates on a vast scope made possible only by its large reservoir of experts and its widespread sources of information. Thanks to these, the best military

and political brains in North Vietnam are able to plot campaigns that are founded on full and skillfully analyzed intelligence; moreover, they can meet to do so in perfect safety. None of these advantages and resources exists in South Vietnam alone, and none could be attained and mobilized there to a degree that would permit the insurgency to progress without the active support from the north. Indeed, the very danger of assembling within the country would so limit the meetings of insurgent leaders and staff officers in the south that many important decisions would have to be left to local commanders, without benefit of nationwide coordination. As it is, however, the southern insurgents are relying upon the DRV command structure for much of their staff work. The excellent communication system between north and south connects what might otherwise be disparate rebel groups and ties these elements together in a large and highly coordinated organization, with clearcut direction and discipline issuing from a secure headquarters.

THE USEFULNESS OF THE DRV BASE IN STAFFING AND SUPPLYING

A revolutionary movement requires a dependable nucleus around which the mass organization can grow up. Being able to call upon an experienced and loyal underground to serve as the base for the Viet Cong structure, the DRV was spared having to create such a nucleus, the most difficult initial step in any revolutionary operation.

The southerners who moved to the north after the country's partition have ensured the unbroken supply of technically trained, politically reliable combatants, bringing to the organization the

crucial skills, experience, and leadership qualities that provide its backbone. Without them, the southern insurgents would have had to select and train local personnel for the tasks now performed by the infiltrators. In this effort, they would have been unable to draw on a reserve equivalent to the present source of politically loyal and technically competent soldiers already experienced in guerrilla warfare.

Moreover, it would be impossible for the south alone to match the training facilities in the north or the variety and degree of specialization of the PAVN's programs, established for the training of its professional army and now preparing men for infiltration. Such modest training programs as the south might be able to organize would be vulnerable to attack and penetration by the enemy. Their staffing would require valuable personnel to be withdrawn from operational tasks, and the weapons, instruments, and explosives needed for training would have to be withheld from combat commitment. Inevitably, the combat effectiveness of units deprived of some of their skilled members, or lacking specialists for want of suitable training, would be impaired; a unit without a communications expert, for example, would be very vulnerable.

In the present situation, the commanders of insurgent units count on a regular supply of professional cadres with potential leadership qualities and of well-trained replacements for casualties, and the knowledge that these infiltrators have been carefully selected for their political reliability as well as on the basis of military competence is an important reason for the high morale of the insurgent organization. The internal security problem -- the danger

of defections and of compromise by enemy counteragents which plagues every revolutionary organization -- is greatly reduced where new personnel is so well tested for dependability. Significantly, extremely few of the soldiers infiltrated from the north have thus far defected or been captured. Also, the Viet Cong hard core, of which the infiltrators form about one-third, have suffered the fewest casualties, partly, no doubt, because of the unusual care taken to protect these units, but partly because these hard-core members are the best soldiers. Those who do become casualties can be expected to be replaced by men who are equally competent and politically reliable. This is an important difference between the insurgency in Vietnam and, for example, the Emergency in Malaya, which showed how much the loss of hard-core elements can affect the efficiency of the guerrillas when it is difficult to find adequate replacements.

Thanks to its over-all direction by the DRV, the Viet Cong staffing process is a highly professional one that permits the co-ordinated allocation of personnel throughout South Vietnam, that is to say, the adding of forces in vital spots, the shifting of units to areas where they will be most useful, and thus, generally speaking, the raising or lowering of the level of insurgency. It would be virtually impossible to establish and operate such a well-integrated staffing system within South Vietnam.

To appreciate the importance of infiltration from the DRV, one might do well to imagine the likely course of the insurgency if it became impossible for an enemy to cross from North into South Vietnam. Any attempt to seal the borders of South Vietnam is probably

impracticable because of its enormous cost,[1] but for analytical purposes the following speculation may be useful.

With their outside supply of personnel cut off, the Viet Cong would depend upon recruitment in the south to replenish their manpower, and upon promotion from the ranks and from the lower force levels to fill vacancies in the hard-core and regional troops. Quite possibly, they would be able to maintain operations at the existing level for some months after their outside source of trained personnel had been closed off. In the period when the Viet Cong organization was growing to its current strength, the cadres of infiltrators were vitally important as the skeleton that had to be fleshed out with local recruits, and the effects of any interruption of their influx would have been felt very quickly. Today, the sophisticated organization of 25,000 hard-core Viet Cong apparently suffers few and minor losses. Therefore, assuming that the level of counterinsurgent operations did not rise appreciably, local recruiting and promotions could take care of this attrition for a while. Over a period of a year or two, however, their capability might begin to suffer, for they probably could not consistently replace their losses with personnel of the high caliber that is now coming from the north. Nor could the Viet Cong hope to raise the level of the insurgent effort and still maintain the quality of their organization without their present source of manpower from the north.

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[1] C. V. Sturdevant, The Border Control Problem in South Vietnam (U), The RAND Corporation, RM-3967-ARPA, April 1964 (Secret).

The current contribution of personnel from North Vietnam, therefore, is clearly valuable and effective. As to its magnitude, it is perhaps at the optimum level from the DRV's point of view. By supplying about one-third of the main-force troops, North Vietnam makes certain that the most important fighting units are of high quality, with adequate training and indoctrination, and that the number of infiltrators in them is large enough to exert the influence and impose the discipline desired. Not surprisingly, there have been reports of friction between newly-arriving cadres and veterans of the southern Viet Cong, as the latter, after years of suffering in guerrilla combat, are understandably resentful of those who move into positions of authority directly from a secure and comfortable life in North Vietnam. Yet, up to the present, this does not seem to cause a serious morale problem, since two-thirds of the main force and all of the supporting element of the Viet Cong forces are recruited in the south and the local character of the movement is thus maintained. This proportion also means that the predominantly indigenous combat units are not likely to count on outside assistance to the point of being helpless without it. For it is natural for these units to live off the land and to reach into the local population for support. Finally, the fact that the number of infiltrators is a minority compared to the total Viet Cong fighting force reduces the risks of having the DRV's true involvement in the insurgency exposed, the more so as the infiltrators are themselves southerners.

Up to the present, the DRV has not furnished the insurgents with supplies on a massive scale, though money and medicine are

important contributions. Rather, its supply system concentrates, in limited quantities, on some of the important matériel that may be difficult to obtain in South Vietnam. Thus, North Vietnam has been an extremely useful source of support for scarce technical equipment, mines and explosives, sabotage devices, and some weapons and ammunition (especially for the main-force units) of which the rebels cannot capture sufficient quantities. Even if the actual amounts of DRV supplies are limited, the fact that the insurgents can put in requests to a dependable source outside the country adds to the efficiency of their combat operations and strengthens their morale.

At the same time, an appreciable increase in the volume of supplies from North Vietnam would entail certain disadvantages. If the insurgents came to depend on their outside base for the bulk of their arms, ammunition, and other supplies, they would be in a less favorable position than they now are. Such large quantities of matériel would be difficult and costly to transport, as well as vulnerable to attack along the long land routes or in the sea channels to South Vietnam. Also, as supplies from the north increased, the DRV's part in the war would become more and more obvious. And guerrillas who are compelled to be aggressive in order to acquire arms and equipment from their opponents are less likely to grow soft than are those who rely on outside support. For these reasons, the North Vietnamese government prefers to let the insurgents make the enemy pay the main cost of supplying them, and to furnish supplemental support only in cases of crucial shortage and need.

VALUE OF THE DRV'S INTANGIBLE SUPPORT

Having the full political and psychological support of the DRV gives the insurgency a strength that an organization confined to the resources of South Vietnam alone could not hope to equal. The most striking advantages of this aspect of the present situation may be summed up as follows:

(1) An important endeavor of any counterguerrilla campaign is to break the will of the guerrilla and drive him to defect or desert. Yet the ideological framework for the insurgency and the moral legitimation that are being provided from the north have helped to make the Viet Cong, in particular its hard core, unusually resistant to this effort. (2) The intensive indoctrination that the southern cadres are receiving in the DRV, and the North Vietnamese guidance of training programs in the south, have done much to foster loyalty among the Viet Cong. (3) The constant propaganda emanating from the DRV is another important factor that contributes to the high morale of the insurgents. (4) By the same token, supporters of the South Vietnamese government are discouraged at their enemy's display of power, as it is being fed by an apparently invulnerable DRV. (5) The evidence of the Viet Cong's powerful outside support influences the uncommitted people of South Vietnam, including a large segment of the peasantry, as they calculate their self-interest in the choice between the government and the Viet Cong.

Last and perhaps most important of all, the insurgent cause derives great benefit from the DRV's status as a sovereign state, an advantage few rebel movements enjoy. The north exploits all

available legal and diplomatic channels to gain sympathy and even material support abroad; it has been encouraging internationalization of the conflict, in an effort to embarrass or immobilize the United States with the threat that its actions and policies in South Vietnam might have international repercussions. A recent demonstration of the effectiveness of the DRV in this role has been its support of the proposals for neutralization that have been advanced by President de Gaulle and Prince Sihanouk.

VI. ALTERNATIVES AND LIKELY CALCULATIONS OF THE DRV

THE OPTIONS

The communist leaders in the DRV have it within their power to increase, decrease, or maintain constant the level of insurgency. To achieve the desired intensity, they need only instruct subordinate headquarters in the south as to the exact pressure that they wish to see maintained against the government, and, apparently, they can count on compliance with their orders. In addition, the DRV can adjust the supply of manpower and matériel from its own territory, as well as of the contributions obtained from other countries.

To raise the numerical strength of the Viet Cong organization, Hanoi could order stepped-up recruiting in the south or commit more soldiers from its pool of southerners in the north. Approximately 87,000 southern soldiers went north after the Geneva Conference in 1954. Even if we assume that 15,000 have already been drawn from that pool and that, say, another 15,000 may have to be subtracted to account for those who, for a variety of reasons, may no longer be available for active insurgent duty, this would still leave a reserve of about 50,000. The quality of these soldiers as guerrilla cadres for South Vietnam would depend, of course, on many factors, including, above all, their will to fight. If necessary, the DRV could smuggle southern rebels across the border for training in the north, but thus far, except for unusual assignments, such "exfiltrations" appear to be rare.

There are indications that the actual fighting power of the Viet Cong has been increasing substantially. The number of troops

in the main-force units, which suffer few casualties, reached an estimated 27,000 in April 1964; the companion forces, for which reliable figures are very difficult to determine, were believed to number between 60,000 and 80,000 in March 1964. The Viet Cong have shown a remarkable ability to replenish their ranks and replace casualties. Moreover, fighting power clearly is not the result of numbers alone; it is the product also of weapons, training, organization, and motivation, and in all these respects the Viet Cong's situation appears to be improving.

With the insurgent network spread throughout South Vietnam, and given their present capability for launching attacks of battalion and even multibattalion size, the Viet Cong are able to apply powerful military pressure on the southern government. From all indications, the DRV plan is to continue to improve the Viet Cong forces and to develop companies at the local level, battalions at district, and regiments at the province level. At the same time, the insurgents are adhering to their past practice of avoiding engagements of a conventional kind except when these promise a clear victory, for they fear that in such confrontations the southern army, with American support, could bring to bear superior firepower, armored vehicles, and air power. In the present style of warfare, the Viet Cong enjoy the advantage of mobility, of striking at targets of their choosing and eluding counterattacks where the enemy may be the stronger. Even if such tactics cannot achieve a full-scale military victory, they may, in the calculations of the communist leaders in Hanoi, create the preconditions for political success.

As mentioned, one of the DRV's means of controlling the level of the insurgency is to vary the supply of matériel to the organization in the south. If the Viet Cong could no longer cover most of their needs from captured equipment in the south, as they now do, or if for any other reason the DRV deemed it desirable to increase the equipment in the south, larger amounts of supplies could be brought in from the outside. It would be extremely difficult, of course, to transport heavy weapons, vehicles, and other cumbersome equipment across the border, and any increase in the supply requirement would mean a proportionate rise in cost to the north, as well as greater vulnerability to attack along the supply lines. The few roads between North and South Vietnam are poor, supply lines therefore are long, and sea transport runs the hazard of capture. Yet it must be remembered that the Viet Minh managed to bring in many supplies, including heavy weapons, which they obtained from the Chinese after 1949 for their fight against the French; the battle of Dien Bien Phu succeeded partly because artillery pieces had been brought to favorable firing sites, having been carried by coolies most of the way from the Chinese border.

There are additional levers of control, besides manpower and matériel, with which to vary the intensity of the insurgency according to the interest and advantage of the DRV. Thus, the leaders in Hanoi can accelerate the rebellion by intensifying their propaganda to the south, ordering more assassinations of government officials, and launching campaigns of terror against Americans, both military and civilian (as was demonstrated in the bombings of the American theater and the American softball field

in Saigon). Internationally, they can augment their propaganda output and make more emphatic diplomatic representations against violations by the enemy's side.

The DRV also has the capability for turning the present insurgency into a more conventional conflict by making a full-scale attack on South Vietnam, as happened in Korea. The regular forces of the PAVN number about 225,000 men, and an estimated 100,000 are in the militia units.[1] Up to the past several years, the strength of the PAVN was judged to be considerably greater than that of the GVN. On the basis of comparative military power alone, therefore, the DRV might well have been tempted to launch such an attack. In all probability, however, its leaders have refrained from such a course on the understandable assumption that it would prompt the United States to enter the area in a full-scale commitment, greatly endangering the territory of North Vietnam.

Even though the possibility of a conventional attack from the north is thus slight, it cannot be wholly ignored, and its threat, however small, has tied down a portion of the southern troops and resources that otherwise could be committed against the insurgents. Indeed, until 1962, some critics maintained that the army's main concern was to prepare defenses against a possible northern invasion, rather than to pursue a vigorous campaign against the insurgents in the south. Since then, at the strong urging of the United States,

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[1] Defense Intelligence Digest, Vol. 2, No. 3, March 1964, p. 2 (Secret, Noforn).

some of the ARVN troops in static defense positions, especially in the northern regions of South Vietnam, have been assigned to mobile counterguerrilla operations.

THE MERITS AND THE METHODS OF CLANDESTINE SUPPORT

Because the DRV finds it to its interest to let the insurgency appear as an indigenous rebellion that is receiving only moral support from the north, it is forced to limit its material contribution and to cloak it in great secrecy. Infiltrators from the north travel in groups small enough to escape detection, and they constantly change their routes. The corridors through which they pass are manned by personnel with strict instructions not to discuss any infiltration information. The guide who directs infiltrators from one way station to the next may not communicate to them any information about the area, and the infiltrators, in turn, are cautioned not to discuss their situation with the guides. The corridors are well camouflaged, with the added precautions that movement is confined to night time, when detection from the air is impossible, and fires for cooking and the drying of clothes may be lighted only within strict security regulations. The writing of diaries, which the Viet Minh used to encourage among its personnel, is prohibited.

The written documents relating to Viet Cong operations, including those referring to infiltration from the north, make such extensive use of code references that they are difficult to decipher when captured. Units are designated by such code numbers as A-21 (for a squad), C-312 (for a platoon), and F-212 (for a company), and the numbers are changed periodically. It thus becomes difficult to

piece together the Viet Cong order of battle and the DRV's commitment of troops even through the interrogation of prisoners. Moreover, few of the infiltrators are captured. As pointed out earlier, the north is careful, wherever possible, to send in only southerners who speak the dialect of the region to which they are assigned, and who often have family and friends in the area willing to protect them.

Great pains are taken to disguise equipment that otherwise might be identified as having originated outside South Vietnam. Markings on matériel from communist bloc countries are obliterated, and equipment from the DRV sometimes is made to look like the American and French weapons known to be already in the hands of the Viet Cong. In several instances, captured matériel contained no markings at all, which suggests that it may have been manufactured specifically for use in South Vietnam.

The leadership in Hanoi consistently denies giving any direct aid, other than moral support, to the insurgency in the south. Ho Chi Minh, for example, in July 1963, replied as follows to the question whether the north was supporting armed resistance in the south:

> The Vietnamese people form a geographical, historical, cultural and ethnical entity. Together, we fought against the French colonialists and against the Japanese intruders. An artificial line along the 17th latitude, drawn in order to facilitate the armistice agreement of 1954, cannot change this. The unity of Vietnam has been recognized and put down in writing in the Geneva agreements. Thus the struggle of our compatriots in the South enjoys the full sympathy and support of all Vietnamese people North and South of the 17th latitude. As far as material support is concerned, the government and the people of the DRV strictly observe the

> Geneva agreements. It is generally known and is even daily confirmed in the U.S. press that the struggle in the South is waged by the people of the South, by the peasants whom the U.S.-Diem regime tries to drive into the concentration camps. The weapons used by them are weapons captured from the U.S. interventionists and their puppets.[2]

The leaders of the DRV are experienced conspirators, to whom secrecy is a normal aspect of political behavior. Under French rule, they built up their insurgent organization clandestinely, and, during the Indochina war, they covered up the part that Communist China was playing from 1949 on. Even after the Viet Minh victory, neither the Chinese nor the leadership in Hanoi ever admitted just how much the Chinese had contributed to that victory, but acknowledged only their general moral support, as Hanoi is doing today with respect to the rebellion in South Vietnam.

Secrecy about the form and extent of its material contribution has certain obvious advantages for the DRV. For one thing, it reduces the danger of attack upon its men and supplies. For another, it makes it possible to go on pretending that the uprising in the south is a spontaneous indigenous reaction against a repressive regime supported by an imperialist power. This myth is useful in several ways: not only does it help win new recruits in the south, who might not be attracted to a movement that they knew to be controlled by the north, but an uprising against tyranny is more likely to engage international sympathy than is an insurgency directed and supplied by a communist nation. Then, too, there are legal reasons in favor of discretion by North Vietnam. The Geneva Agreements of 1954 that govern the division of Vietnam

[2] FBIS, Far East, Daily Report, July 25, 1963, p. JJJ 5.

prohibit the introduction of armed elements by either side into the territory of the other, and the International Control Commission (ICC) in Vietnam polices these agreements. Though the ICC is armed with little effective power, it would be bound to denounce any obvious violation of the agreements by the north, and such a citation would be an embarrassment, if no more, to the DRV government.

But the final, and probably major, reason that North Vietnam chooses to hide its actual part in the rebellion is fear of retaliation against its own territory. International awareness of the DRV's involvement in the southern insurgency would create a climate of opinion in which South Vietnam and perhaps the United States might take direct action against North Vietnam, an escalation of the conflict that is greatly feared by the northern leadership. If it were known, for example, that PAVN troops have been infiltrated into South Vietnam since 1960, this might be grounds for retaliation, at an intolerable cost to the DRV. The northern leaders, though clearly desirous of guiding the insurgents toward victory, are equally eager to contain the war. By continuing their clandestine role in this war of attrition, they can preserve the advantage of being able to control the level of insurgency at minimal cost to themselves.

THE DRV BALANCE SHEET

In deciding on the optimum level for the insurgency, the DRV is bound to weigh possible gains against probable costs, and it is not difficult for us to imagine some of these calculations. The ultimate aim of the northern leaders is, of course, to control all

Vietnam, but this clearly cannot be achieved by a single conventional attack on the south. Nor could they hope to win any kind of clear-cut military victory in South Vietnam (for example, by taking Saigon and the major cities) unless the United States withdrew its support or the southern leadership and army abandoned the counterinsurgent effort -- two interdependent contingencies -- for the military advantage in major cities and along the principal roads would lie with the government forces.

DRV strategy toward reunification under communist rule must, therefore, be geared to the two contingencies just mentioned: (1) the demoralization of the South Vietnamese and the collapse of their resistance; and (2) the withdrawal of U.S. support. Either part of this strategy, if successful, will reinforce the other, as fear of American withdrawal is bound to weaken southern resistance, and a lessening of the counterinsurgent effort, in turn, encourages those elements in the United States who favor disengagement from the conflict.

To the DRV, the United States clearly appears as the major enemy, whereas the successive governments of South Vietnam are being dismissed as puppet regimes. In planning their strategy against the United States, the leaders in Hanoi seem to be guided by their experience in the Indochina war, when Viet Minh leaders relied on the unwillingness of the French people to support indefinitely a long and costly "sale guerre," or dirty war, as the French themselves called it. Events justified that strategy, for, while it is true that the Viet Minh launched a large offensive that defeated the

French at Dien Bien Phu, the chief explanation for France's abandonment of Indochina was the mounting unwillingness of the French to pursue a protracted conflict in which their interests were rapidly diminishing. Though the United States today is a more formidable enemy than France was at the time, the DRV leaders seem confident that their strategy will succeed again. They do not need a military victory; if they can cause the United States to withdraw its support of Vietnam, they will have achieved a political success tantamount to victory in the field.

The costs to the United States of supporting the war in South Vietnam have been high, whereas those of the DRV have been relatively low. The number of men who have gone from North to South Vietnam is probably no larger than that of U.S. military personnel sent to help the south, and U.S. shipments of matériel have been far costlier than the material support from the north. Moreover, DRV leaders apparently expect their own will to fight this prolonged war of attrition to outlast that of the Americans and, therefore, the South Vietnamese; the high financial cost, the loss of American lives, international pressures, and the improbability of an improvement in southern resistance together will put such pressures on the American government, they believe, that withdrawal will ultimately become inevitable.

Part of the policy that aims at demoralizing the United States and the southern forces is the fomenting of pro-communist or neutralist sentiment in South Vietnam by all the known methods of political subversion. In this attempt, the Viet Cong have been helped by a

series of important military victories in late 1963 and early 1964 and by the south's political instability and lack of military success. The DRV no doubt believes that the continuing impact of its subversive tactics will so add to the havoc in South Vietnam that eventually not only the masses but some of the elite groups will press for a cease-fire and negotiations. These could be expected to yield a neutral settlement, a temporary solution that the DRV would doubtless regard as a large step toward its ultimate goal.