

By CHARLOTTE FOCIN

This was written by Charlotte
Focin sometime prior to
1970 & hehehe.

She died in a joint
suicide with her lover in
Throokly in 196_?

She had been invited to
VN by the government there and
returned when her physical
& emotional problems became too
great. They asked her to heal...

She had abused childhood
was kicked out of the USSR.

Her story is very sad &
unique...

WT.

Section II

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

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"UNITY IS LIFE, DISUNITY IS DEATH"--

A slogan of the National Front for Liberation
of South Viet-Nam

Dedicated to the people and Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the National Front for Liberation of South Viet-Nam who are an inspiration for the whole world.

Dedicated also to the memory of my beloved father, Samuel Saxe.

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CRITICS and
~~CADILLACS AND CORNERSTONES~~

"Having been all over the world, I can truly say that no issue since the Second World War has so keyed up the peoples of the world as Viet-Nam," ^{said} Mrs. Bernie Steele of the Women's Strike for Peace, ~~said, reflecting a general sentiment.~~ "The stakes have never been higher than in Viet-Nam," President Johnson ~~constantly thundered.~~ And he ~~acted~~ accordingly--staking ~~everything~~ ^{all} on destroying the National Front for Liberation of South Viet-Nam and the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam!

Yet throughout the world, and especially in the United States, few people ~~know anything about~~ ^{have much knowledge of} Viet-Namese revolutionary theory, thought and practice, ~~even though nothing could be more important.~~ ^{"experts"} Even professors I have talked with who tour the country to lecture on Viet-Nam are in the dark concerning the most basic facts ^{in this area.} ~~about it. Why, they don't even know what the very cornerstone of the National Front for Liberation is!~~

~~Surely~~ It is impossible meaningfully to discuss the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the National Front for Liberation without discussing their very foundation? Just as ~~it isn't possible to describe a person with any depth without at least revealing whether that person is man or woman; just as it is impossible to analyze a building without telling about its structure, it is equally impossible to write about the NFL without discussing its gender--class gender-- and economic~~

~~and political structure.~~

Contrary to prevalent belief, the NFL is not an amorphous coalition. It is so purposeful, so cohesive, because it has a definite base. That base is the Worker-Peasant Alliance--the cornerstone of the Front.

To ~~file~~ and say the NFL is a loose coalition goes over well with liberals, while the term "worker-peasant alliance" sometimes causes consternation because of its marxian connotation.

~~Still fresh in my mind is the image of a sardonic Catholic who, wealthy and wishing to become the Benefactor of a cause, almost any cause, unfortunately picked ours. Constantly he loaned his cadillac and threw intimate little "steak suppers" for the U.S. Committee to Aid the National Liberation Front. At one of them, he wondered whether the Communists in the NFL might ever "dupe" the others. I said, that is highly improbable since nearly every book, document and speech by an NFL or DRV leader openly states that the Front is based on the worker-peasant alliance, led by the working class.~~

~~Hearing this, the catholic, who had graciously said Grace only a few minutes before, began braying like a berserk baboon. My one innocent little statement set him off on a four-hours' tirade in which he said (about the only thing not unprintable!) that to connect the NFL with the worker-peasant alliance I was a bitch and a murderer and a menace to the world! In you, he said (or rather screamed!) I see all the bloodthirsty purgers since the Russian Revolution which first introduced the cursed concept~~

of worker-peasant alliance .

If liberals are sometimes ~~consternated~~ ^{alarmed} when they find out the Front is based on the worker-peasant alliance, trotskyists and other hyper-leftists are equally ~~consternated~~ ^{alarmed} because they do not know that it is. Unlike the conservatives, they chastise the Front for not being based on the worker-peasant alliance! But their mistake is the same, since the trotskyists too think the NFL an amorphous sort of coalition. ~~Typical~~ Example:

"The politically-amorphous, peasant-based South Viet-Namese National Liberation Front has the same fundamental weaknesses that led to the betrayal and defeat of so many similar movements in other countries."¹

The NFL is not peasant-based, but worker-based. It has none of the fundamental (or even superstructural) weaknesses characterizing revolutions distorted or defeated. It is only because the revolutions in Indonesia, Nigeria, Ghana, Algeria, Brazil and other countries have not followed the Viet-Namese model that they have failed. The only way to achieve Liberation is by practicing Viet-Nam's successful Rules for Revolution, ~~which this book tries to bring out.~~

~~If the trotskyists only knew~~ ^{the trotskyists sound, with} how foolish ~~their~~ constant calls for the formation in South Viet-Nam of "a Party of the working-class" and for "proletarian hegemony" of the Viet-Namese revolution! ~~sounds!~~ Those Rip Van Winkles are calling for something that was established in Viet-Nam almost forty years ago. Since the founding of Viet-Nam's Communist Party in 1930, all of Viet-Nam's half ~~a~~ dozen ~~United~~ Fronts have been led by the working class. Today in South Viet-Nam

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the People's Revolutionary Party carries on that same tradition.

~~Of course~~ Many trotskysts deliberately distort the nature of the National Fronts in Viet-Nam, ~~how else can they have a carte blanche to calumniate?~~ A trotskyst splinter group in the United States, a section of which has declared that ~~they~~ ^{we} and their fellow trotskysts should work for the defeat of the NFL, smugly states:

"Now, but for the small pro-trotskyst MR-13~~0~~ movement in tiny Guatemala, there is virtually no even semi-qualified revolutionary leadership in any colonial or semi-colonial country where ferment is occurring or apparently imminent."²

~~When all evidence shows that Viet-Nam's revolutionary leaders are the most brilliant exponents of contemporary revolution!~~

The best refutation of ~~the~~ ^{lies} mendacities and misconceptions ~~logging down so many in a mental miasma~~ is simply to tell ~~revolution wise~~ what the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the National Front for Liberation really represent. ~~That is the aim of this book. By giving the background out of which Viet-Nam's great coalitions evolved, it presents, in a way, a case history of their struggle.~~

General Vo Nguyen Giap wrote:

"The practice of revolutionary struggle in our country, in new historical conditions, has made an original contribution to Marxist-Leninist theory."³ This book deals with that contribution in its various aspects. It also attempts to give a many-sided treatment of Viet-Nam's new-type National Democratic Revolution, which might be considered modern Marxism except that it has gone beyond it. Viet-Nam became the first nation

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in the world to bring to triumph this revolution, which I believe can bring about the whole world's ~~renaissance~~ ^{renaissance}. The political and philosophic ideas of National Democratic Revolution, now animating the National Front for Liberation, helped lay the foundation for the development of the government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam--a government whose solidarity and spirit of tolerance evoke much admiration from foreign visitors.

Viet-Nam's revolutionary tactics and strategies have universal application. ~~Out of the legacies and lessons of the Viet-Namese revolution emerges a blue-print for the world's.~~ Well aware of this, Washington wars to prevent Viet-Nam's example from inspiring and igniting the revolutionary forces on all continents. How well the oppressed peoples (including the American people) learn to assimilate the lessons of the Viet-Namese Liberation Fronts ~~literally~~ will spell the difference between Life and Death. A revolution incorrectly based and executed is nothing but a costly cipher--in terms of wasted lives. ~~Because whether a revolution is aborted or distorted, it cannot prevent the holocaust of imperialism from unleashing more and more war, obscurantism and misery.~~

* ~~My next book deals with government and humanism in the DRV.~~

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The ~~awful armageddon~~ ^{spectre} of nuclear conflagration ~~also~~ presents a real danger unless all peoples learn to build broad coalitions, à la the NFL, to free the nations from the rule of the war-makers. Capitalism and colonialism are on a collision course with the peoples striving for Liberation; we must race against time to arrive at Liberation before the cadillac clique succeeds with its destruction. Unless the independence struggle in Viet-Nam lives, all hope dies. If this struggle succeeds, mankind will have crossed the threshold into the most enlightened era ~~of~~ of all time.

Footnotes for Chapter One

- 1 "The Spartacists," June-July 1966, p. 6
- 2 *ibid.*, p. 6
- 3 Vo Nguyen Giap, "The Political and Military Line of Our Party," Viet-Nameese Studies ("Problems") No. 7, "Pages of History--1945-54," p. 132.

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A WORD TO THE NEW LEFT

Lately I have begun even more to dislike dogmatism and empty theorizing. As the air war against North Viet-Nam has continued to escalate, emotionally I have found myself turning away from most political books and theory. Because they are words on paper that have not stopped one bomb from falling on the cities and children of Viet-Nam. So that in a very real sense I can sympathize with the New Left's turning off from traditional theory and seeking solutions in the vortex of life.

When a friend of mine began attending a Marxist study group, my reaction was an almost physical disgust. People who could otherwise be "activists" sitting around a comfortable apartment escaping the horror of the Viet-Nam war by discussing political theory from the Nineteenth Century--the very idea gave me a sick feeling.

How could they think of discussing "Surplus value," "The Negation of the Negation," "The Unity of Opposites" when Haiphong and Hanoi had been bombed? It reminded me of Russian aristocrats filling up their lives with escapist hobbies when the Russian people starved in gutters. Somehow I have never been able to divorce the Russian aristocracy's extravagant Rabbit Hunts from today's "Hunter-Killer" millions flown by U.S. aircraft over North Viet-Nam, and U.S. soldiers' "search-and-destroy" operations in the South.

But like everyone else, I'm contradictory. Because I

still find myself thinking about Marxist theory (which I learned as an adolescent) simply because much of it is so beautiful, intricate, and sweeping--like a Viet-Nameese United Front. But although it gives me philosophic pleasure (that is, the part I agree with) I fully realize it is my particular escape from the war.

And yet--is it entirely? Everywhere I look, I see evidence of the validity of Marxism. For instance, the Viet-Nameese people are a living confirmation of the "Unity of Opposites," because they are very emotional, very sensitive at the same time that they are strong and heroic! (Of course, the Unity of Opposites concept is much more involved than that, and my simplistic example has on a higher philosophic level distorted it).

The present book presents only theory which has already demonstrated definite pragmatic value. I have made every effort to omit anything esoteric or extraneous to our contemporary experience. The conventional type Marxist study circle may become important again after the war. Now, it would seem more important to set up Viet-Nam study groups, which in addition to teaching about the Viet-Nam war, its causes and course, would study a living Socialist state--the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. Since DRV society and contributions are highly inspirational, learning about them would give people abroad a new perspective. Vital to an understanding of the DRV and of the whole struggle in the world today are the theories that form the keystone of DRV beliefs and practices. This book attempts to provide insight into them.

Unlike the works of the Founding Fathers of Marxism, whose writings showed such peerless insight into man and society, ~~such encyclopedic knowledge of history, science and philosophy, unfortunately~~ much Marxist writing today is both mediocre and irrelevant. Little wonder it doesn't "switch on" the present generation. ~~This is not true only of Marxist writing, of course. Contemporary defenders of the Western way of life evoke disgust not only by the tedium of their leaden cliches but by what George Orwell called their Defense of the Indefensible.~~

~~Sadly,~~ Few political leaders or theoreticians, whatever their political persuasion, can deal in anything but dull dogma. Ho Chi Minh is one of the unique ones who, as James Cameron said, "rises above the grey desert of dogma."

Another was the late Nguyen Chi Thanh, eminent DRV General, Statesman, Party Secretary and Politburo member, who died on July 6, 1966 of a heart attack at age 53. His writings, his speeches were profoundly original, ~~kissed~~ ^{laced} through and through with warmth and wit. His compassionate humor ^{gave} ~~insights~~ ^{into} man's foibles ~~and the broad spectrum of human nature~~ in a way that ~~was seldom~~ ^{may never} be equalled. One of Nguyen Chi Thanh's witty ~~After-Dinner~~ Speeches is worth many thousands of dull-as-dishwater tracts by Party hacks. ~~Near the end of this book I have included a chapter giving excerpts from Nguyen Chi Thanh's speeches and writings.~~

~~The "mild rebuke" of the New Left which follows was written before the bombings of Thai-Nguyen, Haiphong and Hanoi, and before I had discovered Nguyen Chi Thanh. But although since~~

~~then my outlook has changed considerably, causing me better to comprehend the New Left's rejection of abstract study and dogmatic-style writing, I still honestly feel that they go too far. For their refusal to read "anything political" cuts them off from a Nguyen Chi Thanh as much as from the writings of a doctrinaire politician. Their rejection of "theory" cordons them off not only from the "abstract, irrelevant" brand but from concrete, modern theory with concrete possibilities of application, without which it is impossible to change the world at all. So now let me now present this chapter as I originally wrote it, since I believe it still has validity.~~

~~I hope the New Left will not take offense at my criticism, since my purpose is only to be helpful. Please keep in mind that I'm not some senior member of the Old Left lecturing the young. All who know me consider me a member of the New Left, and I would certainly describe myself as such.~~

In the United States many on the Left have disdain for the working class; they would deny to it any important role in bringing about a Socialist revolution. Part of this attitude stems from the middle classes' traditional contempt for working class values and people, whom they look down upon as inferior and anti-intellectual. But who actually is anti-intellectual? Most of today's New Leftists are so down on knowledge that they decline to pick up a single political book. Void of theory or any philosophy of life, structured or unstructured, they resort to rationalizations:

"All that Marxist jargon is so meaningless for us," they

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say, not realizing that this is the case only because they have not taken the trouble to learn it. "We're activists, we don't need boring theory."

Way back in 1925 Ho Chi Minh seemed to have foreseen the ideology-nil groups on the New Left when he wrote in The Revolutionary Path:

"A party without ideology is like a man without intelligence, a vessel without a compass."

But today's young radicals contend that Marxist theory is old hat. "Can't you substitute something for those awful clichés like 'worker-peasant alliance'?" But ask them to suggest a phrase that means the same, and ~~naturally~~ the New Left can't. Socialism is, among other things, the science of the workingman's struggle. Yet many people actually resent the fact that

Marxism-Leninism has evolved a number of ^{theoretical} definite concepts in *They flinch from the knowledge that these concepts require disciplined, intense study.* the course of its history and development. They don't realize what is clear to any schoolchild in the rest of the world:

Because Marxism-Leninism is a political science, it must use the jargon of a political science. Americans would hardly expect to pick up an advanced physiology textbook, or Second Year German and without previous study be able to comprehend it right off the bat. But when for the first time in their lives they glance through a book of Marxism they ~~have the affrontery~~ to say, "It's no good, because it uses all that jargon; it's political."

I have talked with college students and other New Leftists who condemn the Marxist-Leninist literature they have merely looked through because as one of them put it, "we are artists,

we are esthetic and those books don't use literary language."

Any Viet-^Namese peasant ^{Knows} is ~~savvy to~~ much more political terminology than almost anybody on the New Left. And if one of them ~~wasn't~~ ^{did not}, he ^{would} have enough respect for ^{Scholarship} ~~the study of~~ ~~politics~~ to want to know what terms like "National Democratic Revolution" meant. ~~Recall the portraits of Lenin with the Russian peasants looking up to him and what he was teaching them with absolute reverence.~~

Now nobody is asking for that. But so much of the New Left has gone to the other extreme and is rootin' tootin' proud of its anti-intellectualism which it ^{is} was like a way-out hippie badge.

Lately a number of learned ~~Leftist~~ Professors admired by the New Left have condemned the latter's ^{rejection of} ~~mindless nihilism~~ theory.

OK ~~In a report delivered at a forum of "The Cause of the Month" (yes, in New York there is actually a club which meets every month to examine in the hopes of championing a different cause every month.)~~ For example, Professor Eugene Genovese ^{has} said:

"Most of the New Left prides itself on its pragmatism which in this case means mindlessness, and its freedom from Marxian dogma. Actually, it has no theory at all; nor an understanding and respect for history; nor even a knowledge of what it does not know. The New Left, notwithstanding the efforts of "Studies on the Left" [a monthly journal] and a number of individuals, is more violently and stupidly anti-intellectual than the Old Left ever was.

"Consequently, the New Left may know that American society is unjust and sick, but it hardly knows why. It has no theory

of society, no theory of social change, and no understanding of the nature and promise of Socialism, which it is incapable of discussing apart from the experience of the present-day socialist countries. Its concern with the deterioration of moral values lacks focus, either historical or theoretical.

"If the Old Left constantly trampled on individuality in the sacred name of the collective good, the New Left constantly tramples on the collective good in the sacred name of individuality. I am not certain that anything has been gained by this swing of the pendulum, for neither is much good without the other. The Old Left understood organization, discipline, the prerogatives and the legitimacy of leadership and authority. If it pushed these things too far, it at least understood that the world cannot be run without them in a manner fit for civilized men and women."²

~~Typical were the New Leftists and apolitical young people who worked with the U.S. Committee to Aid the National Liberation Front. When I used to ask them whether they had any interest in Socialism, they'd say, "Nah! I don't care anything about sectarian arguments from the 1930's."~~ *I personally* ~~Sometimes one long~~ to *New Left* say to them: "We, who know what the National Liberation Front represents, who believe in different groups and political tendencies uniting together ~~in a far embracing coalition~~, hate sectarianism worse than you do. But what has that to do with learning ~~something about~~ *the basics of* Marxism-Leninism, which would *enable* ~~give you the wherewithal~~ to comprehend life and the world in so many of its manifestations? Even if it did not open up a new and

necessary dimension for you (~~which it certainly would!~~) it would still be of tremendous value as a discipline ~~anyway.~~ ~~So you~~ Read Lenin's great polemics with the philosopher Mikhailovsky in the former's book What the Friends of the People (Narodniks) Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats. ~~Even were some of~~ The debates ^{are not} outdated, (~~but they're not in this book~~) Lenin answers almost every argument conjured up by today's anti-Marxists; ~~it would still be the greatest discipline for your mind;~~ You would be reading something on the level of Socratic dialogue, only with far more possibilities of modern application. It would equip your mind with logic and the ability to win arguments. ~~You would then be able to comprehend anything better~~

I'm not advocating that you accept Marxism-Leninism, ~~not at all.~~ (Especially as I myself have discarded much of the textbook kind which cannot be translated into reality.) Without knowing it, however, you lack all option of rationally accepting or rejecting it or any part of it. "

~~Strangely, the middle-class New Left and apolitical "No-Left" people who worked with the Committee to Aid the DRV often helped sell the political literature that they couldn't understand and refused to read.*~~

*The causal relationship is simply that when they couldn't understand a word or term, anti-intellectualism and/ or ego-pride stood in the way of their looking it up or asking. So out of frustration they stopped reading, "throwing the baby out with the bath." Since this section of the book both explains and simplifies some important DRV political thought as well as telling lessons of the Viet-^Namese revolution, it has an important by-product: the reader who could not do so before will be able to comprehend almost any DRV political book and extract from it most all its meat and meaning. While I consider DRV political

~~literature among the most brilliant and significant in the world (something that unfortunately cannot be said of the bad translations of it) this book will also help people to comprehend progressive political literature from other countries as well.~~

Every contact with them proved the validity of Le Duan's analysis of the bourgeoisie as a vacillating class. Such persons are at first effusive in their support of the NFL's struggle to liberate the people; they are for self-determination for Viet-Nam, which is all they know, or care to know. Later they begin to waver, to become poisoned by their own middle-class conditioning and slowly turn against progressive Viet-Nam's position. The ones I knew were always ranting about "objectivity," harping on the "two sides to every story" bit. Epitomizing that objectivity for them is The New York Times which gives "the facts." Every book from a Socialist country is full of "propaganda" and cannot be believed! (As if everything were not "propaganda" since the word simply means something propagated, or spread; yet people have been conditioned to attach a bad connotation to it, not realizing that propgganda can be truthful as well as mendacious. Personally I like Herbert Aptheker's definition of "objectivity" as "partisanship with the oppressed." As Dr. Aptheker puts it, "If you had perfect partisanship with the oppressed, you would have perfect objectivity." In the broader sense, "objectivity" does not exist and will not till the day the world ends and "all the fact are in.")

About Viet-Nameese poetry, telling of the sufferings of a nation at war, some said, "These poems are about the war;

therefore, they're political; therefore, they can't be poetry!" (Strange logic!) Meeting such people always made Le Duan's words on the bourgeoisie come absolutely alive for me. (What he wrote on the subject will be quoted in a later chapter.)

Not only the New Left but many of the older radicals turn up their noses at the suggestion that they should share power and influence with workers. (One of these doyens even said at a Socialist Conference that in the U.S. marxists should seclude themselves to study and formulate Marxist theory, but never become active revolutionaries. He argued vehemently against the concept of marxists working with the people in building a revolutionary movement. So many American radicals lack balance, to say the least; either it is all theory with them, or else all practice--the twain seem destined never to meet.)

The Viet-Namense revolutionaries have no use for theory that isn't full of pragmatic possibility. In my opinion, they have made Marxism really relevant by taking from it only those parts that when put into practice give the highest benefit to the people and the nation. They have supplemented this Marxism-in-action (words sans deeds will forever be worthless) with the wisdom gleaned from their own traditions and those of other nations, which they try very hard to live up to. Much of the matchless organizational propensity that the Viet-Namense display in the creation of their United Fronts results from their choosing principles and procedures on the basis of their work-ability. Duplicating the Viet-Minh experience, cadres in South Viet-Nam set their political programs to the tunes of the most popular songs because

that way when they have singin's the words will stick in the people's minds. The people will become politicized without half the effort! But the political words become meaningful within the context of the villagers' lives only because they deal with their local, day-to-day problems.

In the same way, the working class in Viet-Nam has always led the Revolution not because some Marxian dogma decrees it, but because it revolved out of their own experience and works out in practice to the benefit of the whole nation.

Ho Chi Minh once said that to help bring about unity between the classes in society the intellectuals should go to the workers and peasants, should take the first step towards them. I have no doubt, he went on to say, that the workers would welcome this first step. But U.S. Marxists only wail and whine about how ignorant and unprogressive and American working class is, not realizing that as intellectuals it is their duty to do something about this--by spreading revolutionary ideas among them. Yes, it is their duty to take that first step; the proletariat will always be an elephant which does not realize its own strength till it is taught to.

Most Marxists seem to have forgotten--if they ever knew--the inspiring saga of how Russian revolutionaries from the aristocracy went among the workers to enlighten them. (Also to learn from them--such interaction alone produces true revolutionary perspective.) Why should American radicals do any less? Even Russian babushkas selling bublitchkas were better revolutionaries--the spunky old women hid political pamphlets under the bagels they pushcarted to the factories!

Ho Chi Minh always advised his followers to write simply and succinctly so that the working people might understand and retain their ideas, and he himself has always practiced what he preaches. Every one of his articles, speeches and books is a model of simplicity, conciseness and compelling logic. Like Lenin, Ho Chi Minh has the facility for making complicated matters simple, of expressing the essence of anything in a few deft lines. He has set an example that revolutionaries the world over could benefit from emulating.

But radicals in the West tend towards extremes. Either they reject all theory and take pride in their ignorance, or else they show they have ego problems by writing in such a pedantic and esoteric way that even many Marxists, let alone ordinary people, are unable to understand their works. ~~(Maybe this is what they want!)~~

Like it or not, since in this technological age only the proletariat plays the main role in society, only that class can play the main role in Twentieth-Century socialism. Middle-class radicals might ponder to advantage L. Duan's statement that "Without the working class standpoint and ideology we cannot understand socialism." Yes, cannot understand socialism--let alone try to bring it about!

Footnotes For Chapter II

- 1 President Ho Chi Minh. By Pham Van Dong, etc., op. cit., p. 59
- 2 "Genovese Looks At American Left--New and Old," The National Guardian, Feb. 19, 1966, p. 6

RISE OF VIET-NAM'S WORKING CLASS

The French colonialists could not dream that their introduction of capitalism to Viet-Nam would spread the seeds of their own destruction. Ironically, by bringing about the growth of the Viet-Namese Proletariat, they unknowingly benefitted Viet-Nam. The paradox was that the whole of French colonial policy was geared solely to benefitting the Mother Country.

Even the little industry the French developed in Viet-Nam-- only seven "major" industrial enterprises and thirty repair shops--never benefitted the Viet-Namese. The colonialists took all the rich raw materials and minerals they could out of Viet-Nam, out of the whole of Indo-China, to batten imperialist industry in France. The last thing France wanted was Viet-Namese native industry as competitor. According to Len Fox, under French colonialism the people in the North and Central part of Viet-Nam were forced to eat insects, because the colonialists exported so much rice to the Metropolitan country!

Typical is the colonialist mentality impelling the French after their defeat in 1954 to burn, bomb and sabotage what little industry they had built in North Viet-Nam--to prevent its benefitting the Viet-Namese "natives." Taking all the machinery they could out of Viet-Nam before their withdrawal, and wrecking the rest, the French even destroyed the plans for these enterprises, believing that in this way the Viet-Namese would never be able to rebuild them! It would be mammoth understatement to say that they were wrong. Not

only did North Viet-Nam rebuild such establishments--notably the Haiphong Cement Plant and the Nam Dinh Textile Mill--but greatly enlarged and expanded them. On the ruins of a weakening war the North Viet-Nameese built thousands of modern factories and enterprises that made their nation the only industrialized one in the whole of Southeast Asia. No wonder the United States ~~destroyed~~ sent its bombers to smash the industries, hospitals, schools, the economic and social accomplishments which had made the fledgling DRV the soaring inspiration for all Asia, Africa and Latin America!

How did the French sow the wind that reaped the whirlwind? The growth of French capitalism following World War I brought about the ruin of the small productive branches in the Viet-Nameese countryside, resulting in tens of thousands of peasants streaming into the towns. French exploitation on the rubber, rice and coffee plantations and in the few industrial enterprises the French built in the North turned hundreds of thousands of these peasants overnight into workers.

But soon after leaving their feudal farms to try their luck in the cities, the peasants became disillusioned and despairing. They found city life, with its scourge of starvation and unemployment, so intolerable that almost without exception they wanted to return to their farms again.

But it wasn't so easy. Colonialist police terror, hunger and unemployment buffeted them from one job to another. Most were forced to remain in the cities merely to keep alive. The French made them work in virtual slave labor, denying them the permission, the money and the sheer energy of trying to struggle

back to their farms.

In North Viet-Nam, in the coal mines of Hong Gai and Campha, in the Nam Dinh Textile Company, the Haiphong Cement Plant and other enterprises, the young Viet-^Namese working class under French colonialism suffered especially severely. Nguyen Cong Hoa, now Vice-^Chairman of the Viet-^Nam Federation of Trade Unions, worked at the Haiphong Cement Plant under French rule when the plant was very backward and "all day long the workers lived in a cloud of dust."² He relates an incident there that typifies the brutalities the Viet-^Namese suffered under French colonialism:

"... a 'mad' Frenchman ordered his 'yes men' to stuff cement into the mouth of an old worker because the latter, owing to his weak eyes, failed to salute him. [All Viet-^Namese were forced to salute the French.]

"The poor man was suffocating and about to die, so they pretended to take him to the hospital but actually threw him into a remote storeroom, where he died the next day. Deaths by labour accident happened every week. Run over by wagons: death. Fallen from broken scaffolding: death. The workers' lives were not worth much."³

Working 12 to 17 hours a day, seven days a week in abominable sweat-shop conditions, the Viet-^Namese workers still never earned enough to keep very far above starvation. Workers and their families had to rummage in garbage heaps for food and resort to eating rats--if they were lucky enough to eat at all! Every year 300,000 to 400,000 North Viet-^Namese starved to death. (Over two million persons died of starvation

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in North and Central Viet-Nam in 1945.)

On the job, there was no break for lunch. The Viet-Nameese workers had to sneak a little food behind the back of the overseer.

The gruelling overwork and under-nutrition robbed the Viet-Nameese of so much energy that even if they had had any leisure time they could not have enjoyed normal relations with their families nor with other people. Child labor was widespread. The colonialist overseers often beat the workers, including the women and children. In fact, the children were beaten worst of all.

Exhaustion led to a fantastically high rate of accidents on the job. To make matters worse, the French set work quotas for the Viet-Nameese, and imposed heavy fines on those who could not fulfill them in a set time--which usually wasn't long enough for the fatigued and malnourished workers. At the end of the week when the "fines" were added up a worker often wound up with only one day's pay!

Of course, all the benefits the government of the DRV brought the workers--the seven and a half hour day with Sundays off, full pay during illness, free medical and hospital care, social security pensions (to which, by the way, the workers had to contribute not a single penny), paid vacations, nursery schools for the workers' children, hot showers in the factories and mines, recreational facilities, rest homes, modern apartments--all these would have seemed miracles to the Viet-Nameese, back in the days of French colonialism. Now U.S. bombs have destroyed the DRV's factories and cities such as

the twin mining towns of Hong Gai and Campha and together with them, all the benefits that the workers enjoyed.

Outside of Hanoi and Haiphong, not one North Viet-^Namese city remains standing, U.S. bombs have rendered them rubble. Everything built by the DRV government in the last dozen years, every factory, every building, every power station, every cultural facility--everything that gave the people's lives comfort and charm--has been specially singled out for destruction.

Consider Hong Gai and Campha. The coal from their open-cast mines, the largest and richest in the world, besides being one of the DRV's leading industries and an important source of power consumption, also was essential to its foreign trade. The U.S. has made those mines a prime target.

The Second Investigating Commission of the Bertrand Russell International War Crimes Tribunal pointed out in its report that time and again, U.S. planes purposely disgorged their deadly bombs just when the workers' shift changed. "Many were caught eating in the town restaurant; others were caught on their way home." ⁴ Sometimes at lunch, sometimes at dinner, but always, always at mealtime, bombs blotted out the workers' lives. The same at Thai-Nguyen Iron-and-Steel city, at Viet-Tri, at Hanoi, at Haiphong, at all North Viet-^Namese industrial areas... (It has reached the point where here in New York, I cannot watch the workers blithely eating in their cafeterias, everything reminds me. I hurry home so that I shouldn't see them and the bright lights, hurry to pull down my window-shade. But in my mind I see it all the same, workers eating in the cafeterias when the bombs struck...)

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In the little mining town of Ha Tu located in the Hong Gai region, within a radius of less than one kilometre 64 people were killed. Another day at lunch, 16 people were blasted to bits. 1,000 and 2,000-pound bombs, incendiary rockets, high pressure air burst bombs, anti-personnel steel-pellet bombs--every weapon in the American arsenal has been directed against the DRV's workers and their industrial enterprises. There at Ha Tu, according to the official report of the Second Investigating Commission of the International Tribunal, "A magnificent cinema and workers meeting hall, a public library high on a hill, a large infirmary and a kindergarten and rows of obviously well-built homes, are mere ruins." ⁷⁵ Another day at the lunch hour, the Tribunal reported, forth workers were killed, 24 wounded. "A large and impressive Senior High School was irretrievably damaged." ²⁶ Halong Ha Long Bay, the World's Eighth Wonder, were ~~hotels~~ ^{hotels} and resorts for foreign tourists as well as for Viet-Nameese. Bombs have left them a shambles.

Clearly, there is a method to U.S. madness. According to the conclusions of the Second Investigating Committee the United States "has attempted to single out and destroy precisely those things about which the people and government of North Viet-Nam are most justifiably ~~proud~~ ^{PROUD}." ⁷⁷

Since 1954 North Viet-Nam had undergone, in the words of the War Crimes Tribunal, "an astonishing reconstruction. It is the shining example which this reconstruction presents to the under-developed nations of the world which the U.S. imperialists are trying frantically to destroy with fire and

~~is~~
steel."

The Viet-Namense fight with such conviction because they are painfully and angrily aware of the enormity of the loss they have suffered at American hands. Julius Lester, SNCC Field Secretary who spent a month in the DRV as an investigator for the Bertrand Russell War Crimes Tribunal, was told again and again by the North Viet-Namense people:

"Under the French, we had nothing. After Liberation, we had everything. Now, it has all been taken from us."

How did Viet-Namense go from the starvation and scarcity of French colonialism to a society of freedom and abundance? An important role was played by the early Marxist Study Circles that Ho Chi Minh and his comrades, Le Duan, Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, Hoang Quoc Viet and the others set up for the workers, to organize them, to make them politically aware. Study they did. Because the workers had a bone-deep respect for knowledge, and for men like Ho Chi Minh who had mastered it to the hilt. It was not easy for workers suffering from hunger and exhaustion to absorb theoretical knowledge. But though they could scarcely hold their heads up during the sessions, by sheer determination they somehow managed to persist. The Study Circles opened up new horizons for the workers, who at last began to see a way out of their near-hopeless condition.

Many of the workers after "graduating" the study groups went on to become cadres who taught others. Together with intellectuals and students, they went into the coal-mining and factory districts to agitate among their oppressed compatriots.

The U.S. government claims that when the DRV leaders say,

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"The North is the base for the revolution in the entire country" they are speaking subversion. But the sheer logic of Viet-Nam's history shows that the North has always been the citadel for struggle throughout the entire country. The North alone was the industrial part of Viet-Nam, gifted by nature with the coal, anthracite, iron ore, tin, tungsten, phosphorous and minerals of all types favoring industrial development. Nobody could help realizing this, including the French who developed what little industry they did, not in the traditionally agricultural South but in the North. From the very beginning the proletariat was concentrated in the North. Since to the Viet-Nameese only a worker-peasant alliance led by the working class can lead the revolution, naturally the North has always been the fountain-head of the United Front.

It is true that the South's Mekong Delta has always been a glorious base of resistance, revered in the present-day and past history of the Viet-Nameese. In fact, the first really big armed uprising against the French started in the Mekong Delta on November 23, 1940--a peasant uprising against conscription and unbearable taxation. When France attempted to re-take her prize colony of Indo-China back, French troops (with a big assist from British arms and ships) landed first in the South. So it was the Mekong Delta that in September of 1945 saw the start of the Viet-Nameese people's First Resistance War. (General resistance in the North commenced a year later-- December 19, 1946.) In the mid 1950's the first armed resistance to the U.S.-Dien forces again sprung up in that veteran revolutionary base, the Mekong Delta.

But it is obvious that the North has always been the base for the United Front of patriots in the South. The Viet-^Namese know that it was Ho Chi Minh who liberated them from the French; they also attribute to Uncle Ho the creation and perfection of the United Fronts which alone brought them life! (Lack of independence meant death--by starvation both physical and spiritual.) Almost every southerner feels overwhelming love for Uncle Ho, and this enhances the southern people's deep admiration and respect for the North, which traditionally has been more advanced economically, culturally and politically than the South. The Viet-^Namese even settled the North centuries before they did the southern part of their country. Ellen Hammer writes:

"The population had been unequally distributed when the French came, most of them crowded into the north, the ancient home of the Viet-^Namese people, with fewer in the south, which the Viet-^Namese had only begun to settle in the seventeenth century."⁹

Small wonder that in the free and fair elections held January 6, 1946 the Viet-^Namese people North and South voted the Ho Chi Minh government to be the government of all of Viet-^Nam, with Hanoi chosen as the capital.

Even under French colonialism the working class in Viet-^Nam was more numerous than one would expect. Although according to official French figures the working class never numbered more than 221,000 at any one time, these figures, which are in any case too low, cover only Viet-^Namese employed

in European undertakings; they leave out entirely the large group of landless workers who hired themselves out for seasonal labor. But a more significant factor was the large turnover, since mainly because of ancestor worship the Viet-Namese are ~~R~~ooted to their native village. Finding working conditions in the cities harsh and hellish, despite all the obstacles they escaped back to their home villages when they could. "The Annamite working class undoubtedly exists," a French official of the International Labor Office wrote, "and its numerical importance may be assessed by multiplying the figures given in the statistics by four or five."¹⁰

That the working class in Viet-Nam was concentrated in the industrial areas can be seen from the following figures: "in 1927 and 1928 the mining industry in North Viet-Nam concentrated more than 33,000 workers, including 26,000 working in the coal mines. The Nam Dinh Textile Company employed 4,500 workers, the Franco-Annamite Weaving Company had 2,950 weavers working at its plants and placed orders with 4,000 others to process and manufacture goods for it..."¹¹

Between 1930 the year of its founding and the following year, Viet-Nam's Communist Party led the strike of 3,000 workers at the Phu Rieng Plantation, the strike of 4,000 workers at the Nam Dinh Textile plant, and that of 400 workers at the Ben Thuy match factory and saw-mill, to name a few. Revolutionary struggle broke out at industrial enterprises in Hanoi, Haiphong, Nam Dinh, Hongay, Vinh, and Saigon. It also spread to the rural areas both North and South. 1930 alone witnessed 98 workers' strikes. The culmination of the workers' struggles was the founding of the Nghe-Tinh soviets, which will be described a little later.

Footnotes For Chapter III

- 1 Len Fox, Friendly Viet-Nam, op. cit., p. 25
- 2 Great Waves, op. cit., p. 16
- 3 ibid., pp. 16-17
- 4 "Industrial Workers of North Viet-Nam Are Another Prime Target of U.S. Attacks," Viet-Nam Courier, February 27, 1967, no. 99, p. 6
- 5 ibid., p. 6
- 6 ibid., p. 7
- 7 ibid., p. 7
- 8 ibid., p. 7
- 9 ~~Ellen~~ Hammer, Struggle For Indochina, op. cit., p. 70
- 10 ibid., p. 67
- 11 President Ho Chi Minh, by Pham Van Dong, op. cit., p. 54

WHY THE WORKING CLASS LEADS THE REVOLUTION

From many political books I have assembled the various reasons for the working class leading the Viet-Namese revolution. In a broader sense they constitute what I consider the reasons why the working class in all countries should lead the United Fronts.

Lo Duan says that the leading role of the working class is determined not primarily in the political and ideological spheres, but in the economic. He goes on to say that "the working class is the master of enterprises, mines, industrial branches, communications and transport. Without relying upon it there can be no great industry with high technique as a material and technical basis of socialism, nor satisfactory management of industry, etc."¹

Lenin said, "In the last analysis, productivity of labour is the most important, the principal thing for the victory of the new social system."²

In no sense is "worker-peasant alliance" an artificial phrase or cliché without relevance to the Viet-Namese or Third World scene. Only the working class can lead the Front because it alone can take the lead in industrializing the nation once a people wins independence. We live not only in the present but for the future; what other class can possibly play the leading role in economic construction? The worker-peasant alliance carries over into the transformation of the country after victory. In the DRV "The close relationship

between state economy and the collective economy of co-op members is the manifestation of the worker-peasant alliance in the economic field, the corner-stone of the State and the National United Front."

Industrialization meant so much to the Viet-Nameese, so much! Working-class ascendancy--that is to say, industrialization --was the foundation of their political outlook, translated into the concrete reality of power stations, steel mills, factories. Foundation for a prosperous future, foundation of their very lives! Can they pick up the shattered pieces of their loved ones and loving labor and go on? In such circumstances, sympathy alone is not sufficient. They will need help, very much economic and emotional help from the world's people, to cope with U.S. bombs having crushed a whole generation of their labor.

The Preamble of the Constitution of the DRV (adopted in 1960) says:

"Our State is a people's democratic state based on the worker-peasant alliance and led by the working class." Typical of the DRV's democratic tradition, the draft constitution was submitted to the whole people for changes and corrections. Thousands and thousands of suggestions poured into Government bodies and the Presidential Palace, and were voiced at meetings all across the country. Guess what one of the chief complaints was. Many said that the worker-peasant alliance led by the working class wasn't mentioned often enough in the constitution!

Ho Chi Minh says, "The worker-peasant alliance is the

foundation of the Viet-Nam Democratic Republican State." Among the working people he includes handicraftsmen and small traders:

"The working-class unites with handicraftsmen and small traders because they are working people; they willingly take the path of co-operation, approve of and support the socialist revolution."
4

The National Front for Liberation also assigns a hegemonic role to the working class, looking towards the day when South Viet-Nam is free and can engage in socialist industrialization. In fashioning their creative, complex United Fronts, the Viet-Nameese have shown more organizing ability than any other people. Why does the working-class and its leadership have more organizing ability than any other class? Because that's what it takes to organize production, factories, assembly lines! Even today, the National Front for Liberation utilizes some of the skill and techniques of industry. In some ways the NFL resembles a modern factory, with each group and each person in the Front assigned a particular job, which smoothly correlates with the NFL's strategy as a whole. When the Liberation Army plans a battle, it organizes it along the lines of nothing so much as industrial production. The NFL even makes remarkable scale models of each enemy outpost to be attacked; its members devote many hours to discussing how each individual will carry out his specific task, exactly what the terrain, fighting conditions and obstacles are, and how to overcome them.

Only the proletariat could lead the Viet-Nameese national movement because, in Le Duan's words "it was linked with the most advanced form of economy and suffered from the triple

oppression and exploitation of imperialism, feudalism and domestic bourgeoisie."

The essence of Marx's economic theory is that "the relations of production determine all other relations." That is, history has been a succession of different methods of production and of the relationship of people to them. In today's world whether a man owns the means of production (factories, shops, mines, machines) or works with or in them, determines to a great extent his life and outlook. ~~the~~ Take the phrase "to make a living." It means of course to work at your particular job or profession. But both in the literal and in the actual sense, the phrase is really reflective of man's deep-rooted conviction that economics is endemic to a person's entire life. Because "To make a living"--that is, one's job--is really to make one's whole life, isn't it?

You can see how difficult it is to refute Marxism when even the idiomatic expression of the people corroborate it!

Educators and historians, like the intelligentsia as a whole, always reflect the views of the class in power or, as the current phrase goes, The Establishment. As Lenin pointed out in "Three Component Parts of Marxism" and What the Friends Of the People Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats, philosophy, education, literature, psychology, the social sciences ~~are~~ are all superstructures arising from and determined by the economic base. Le Duan quotes Lenin pointing out, "Now as 2,000 years ago, philosophy always bears the mark of partisanship."

Political writers in Western countries think they are

being "objective" in defending their way of life. They do not realize that their whole outlook is conditioned by the system which has shaped them from embryo. Exceptional is the individual who can transcend his class and class outlook. All the more remarkable then that all mankind agrees in naming every period in which man has lived for the economic system dominating it. As every ~~school~~ schoolchild knows, the ages of society have been divided into nothing less than the ways man has made a living: The Age of Slavery, The Age of Feudalism, the Age of Capitalism. Here the bourgeoisie despite itself has confirmed Marxism on the theory that the Relations of Production Determine All Other Relations.

Karl Marx said that what differentiates one economic era from another is the method of production and the means of production rather than the things produced. According to Marx, the Industrial Revolution's main contribution consists in the change from manual labor to mechanization. Capitalist historians have no quarrel with such conclusions.

But though the Viet⁻namese Marxists, like their capitalist counterparts, agree on the classification of past history, e.g. that the era of Feudalism was followed by the era of capitalism, they then part company. Because DRV leaders say that ours is the era of world proletarian revolution. One third of the earth, one billion people, have already adopted Socialism, and in the Third World revolutions are rocking the very foundations of the Capitalist-Colonialist world. But since the capitalists still do hold hegemony over a large portion of the world, Le Duan and his comrades say the present

era really is one of world proletarian revolution and at the same time the era of monopoly (that is moribund) capitalism.

Further developing this reasoning, Le Duan says that only the proletariat can lead the revolution because "political leadership must always be detained by the classes which represent a given social economy. In the feudal society, this role was played by feudalism, in the capitalist society by the bourgeoisie and in the socialist society naturally by the proletariat." ~~As~~ ⁶ As I said the National Front for Liberation of South Viet-Nam, in making the worker-peasant alliance led by the proletariat the cornerstone of the Front is looking towards the future. The Viet-Nam^Nese revolutionary leaders having already identified the proletariat with the Socialist form of economy, that future for South Viet-Nam can only be a socialist one.

It would be a mistake to consider the proletariat only as a small class within the country, the Viet-Nam^Nese say. Because the Viet-Nam^Nese revolution, in Le Duan's words, "has become part and parcel of the world proletarian revolution." He says, "The Viet-Nam^Nese proletariat, though small in number, is however part of the great international proletariat, thus having all the objective historical conditions of a most advanced revolutionary class. The Viet-Nam^Nese proletariat is the only class that has an accurate scientific theory of the national-liberation revolution in line with Marxism-Leninism. Therefore, only under the leadership of the Viet-Nam^Nese proletariat can Viet-Nam's revolution gain complete victory." ~~7~~ ⁷

For the same reason Le Duan in another one of his great books On Some Present International Problems says that though the present trend of revolution in Asia, Africa and Latin America is national democratic, since it takes place in the era of world proletarian revolution it will most likely continue on to Socialist revolution without going through the capitalist phase.

Since only the class representing a given social economy can exercise leadership, and since ours is an era of industrialization, the peasantry cannot lead the Front. According to Le Duan though the peasantry always was and is a "tremendous revolutionary force," it "had no independent political position in history." The peasantry had but two choices: follow either bourgeois leadership or proletarian leadership. In Viet-Nam a small part of the peasantry did follow bourgeois leadership, such as that provided by the Dai Viet (a pro-Japanese organization) and the VNQDD Party (a pro-Chinese Chiang Kai-Shek group). Others joined the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao religious sects which preyed upon the ignorance and superstition of the peasants and their mystical streak. But the overwhelming majority of the peasants ever since the founding of Viet-Nam's Communist Party in 1930 have always followed working-class leadership.

Why?

Under French colonialism the Viet-Namense worker, despite the horrendous conditions described earlier, still had more advantages than the peasant. The cities were cosmopolitan,

bursting with diversions and activities of all ~~sorts~~^{sorts} including political. The peasants stuck down on the farm with no new influences to permeate their lives had no choice but to remain backward. On the other hand, workers in the cities who attended Marxist study circles and mingled with militant elements could rather quickly broaden their scope and become a revolutionary, a leading force.

Realizing its backwardness and also ambitious to become a revolutionary force the peasants readily accepted proletarian leadership. The tiresome argument that since the working class was very small the peasantry should have led the Front cuts no ice. Leaders are supposed to be in the minority. Otherwise, there would be far too many leaders, most everyone would be a leader, with few followers. It is never necessary that a class be numerous to lead a revolution; the prerequisite is that it be advanced.

"Workers and peasants are like twin brothers," the Viet-Nameese leaders say--and it is really so. The workers in the cities, having come straight from the farms, thoroughly understood the peasants' problems and were able to help them. That is why it must never be imagined that the peasantry in Viet-Nam by accepting the leadership of the working class is somehow following an alien influence. They are following peasants like themselves--peasants who though they have gone to the city, become workers and learned advanced techniques have never and can never lose their deep ties to the peasantry.

Only the working class under the leadership of the Party--not even the peasantry itself--could promote slogans reflecting

the peasants' dearest aspirations: national independence and Land to the Tillers. In fact, only the proletariat mentioned in the political platform of its Party these two primary demands of the peasantry. Is it paradoxical that the backwardness of the peasantry led to the workers voicing the peasants' demands better than the peasantry itself? Hardly, since as I pointed out the workers, having just come up from the peasantry, perfectly understood this class and maintained a thousand and one links with it. Under the leadership of the Party, the working class knew how to struggle at the very citadels of power for the peasants' interests. The workers' very close ties to the peasantry made it the most natural thing in the world to establish the Worker-Peasant Alliance.

When the nascent Viet-Nameese working class struggled to develop, what made the workers seem different, "more intelligent" than their country cousins? Simply their new milieu, their having many opportunities not open to the farm-bound peasants. One can perhaps make an analogy between the Viet-Nameese peasants and Western housewives. Tied down to ~~xxx~~ kitchen and kinder, housewives in a bourgeois society have rather narrow links with the big, bustling world outside. The husband in business mixes in that world all day long. But the wife can't go out except occasionally, since she literally cannot afford to leave the chores and children. (Even in the U.S. only the wealthy can hire baby sitters often. At \$1.50 an hour how many families can afford it except on the rarest occasions?) So the housewife's horizons are limited, compared to those of her work-a-day husband.

Yet with the irrefutable evidence of modern anthropology and sociology few would presume to say that woman's mind, her innate abilities and talents are inferior to those of her husband. But as Betty Frieden says in her enlightening book The Feminine Mystique even the college-trained women, when her husband comes home from work, has no experiences and observations to relate to him beyond "The children and I made peanut butter sandwiches today, dear." Similarly, Viet-^Namese peasants (like those everywhere), tied down to their farms, had narrow interests and narrow lives.

Just as women's suffrage only came about in our century, it was not till Marxian theory became widespread that the peasants and poor urbanites were thought of as people. Up to then, the word "people" (especially with a capital "P") was reserved exclusively for individuals of the propertied, the wealthy classes; just as in the West today, when the press writes of "society" with a capital "S" it only refers to "high Society," to the rich. Till the advent of ^Marxism the people of the lower classes were referred to as the masses or "the rabble." Since they did not own property, they were not allowed to participate in government. (The writings of even enlightened philosophers ~~of the time~~ such as John Stuart Mill show that negroes were not even considered inferior--because they were not thought to be human beings, but some species of lower animal!) Only ^Marxism revealed the proper role of the masses as makers of history. The masses are the creators of nearly all folk songs and sayings, as well as of all that keeps society alive; yet they had never been given the slightest credit for

their achievements.

Le Duan said, "The centralized labour and the struggle for daily interests, the organizational spirit, discipline and solidarity in fighting tempered in factories have gradually made the proletariat realize their huge strength and also the role of the masses...

"The proletariat is the first class in the history of mankind to have correctly realized the huge force of the masses, and it is Marxism only, the theory of the proletariat, which can scientifically express the historical creative role of the masses." 10

The Viet-Nam^Nese say that the proletariat must lead the revolution and the United Front because it is the most advanced and revolutionary class, and has the most discipline, organizational ability and creativity. Creativity does not mean that every worker writes a novel or story (though in the DRV many do!). It means the development of creative, diverse, and interesting methods of struggle. The Viet-Nam^Nese people excel at United Front because in this sense they have more creativity than any other people. Having had to contend with heavy domestic oppression and exploitation coupled with the aggression of many foreign nations--France, Japan, China, Britain and now the United States--the Viet-Nam^Nese had to devise a multitude of methods for surmounting them. Adversity really tests people, as Ho Chi Minh said. ("Fire tempers gold, and ordeals are the touch-stone of strength," as he put it on one occasion.) 11
Adversity often acts as a sharp-pronged magnet which, painful though it is, has the power of drawing out latent qualities.

The writings of DRV leaders such as those of Le Duan and the late Nguyen Chi Thanh throb with love for the makers of history and of all wealth in society--the common people.* It is Le Duan's deep conviction that the masses must take the most active part in government, that their creativity must permeate every level of the State.

The Viet-ⁱⁿamese proletariat always had Star quality because the workers had nothing to lose in a revolution. As Marx said, nothing to lose but their chains and a world to gain. This is still true almost everywhere in the world. The peasants have a little more to lose--their land (if they are only land-poor and not completely land-less!); but they, too, are very harshly oppressed. The members of the petty and national bourgeoisie** have a lot more to lose, such as property, possessions, and standing in the community. This makes them more cautious, "wavering." They constantly vacillate between the forward-looking forces and the conservative elements. As a class they can never be as militant as the workers and peasants.

In his book The Revolutionary Path Ho Chi Minh wrote that the workers and peasants are the main forces of the revolution because:

"Firstly, the workers and the peasants are the most

* See for instance Le Duan's article "Revolution Is The Work Of The Masses" in his book On the Socialist Revolution, Vol. I
 ** "Petty-bourgeoisie" is the ~~next~~ internationally-accepted term meaning the lower middle class: the small businessmen. "National bourgeoisie" is the class of middle capitalists who prosper from local industry. These terms will be defined more fully in the chapter "Defining Viet-Nam's Social Classes."

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heavily oppressed people; secondly, they are the most numerous, so their revolutionary strength is the strongest, thirdly they have nothing to lose but their bare hands...therefore they are the most courageous. For these reasons the workers and the peasants are the revolutionary bases. The students, traders and owners of small industrial concerns are also oppressed but not so much as the workers and peasants, consequently these three strata can only be revolutionary friends of the workers and the peasants."

Again, on August 10, 1965 in his Talk with Intellectuals Attending the Political Course of the Viet-Nam People's University Ho Chi Minh said:

"The main revolutionary forces are the workers and peasants. The reason for this is that they are the producers of all wealth that keeps Society alive, and that they make up the most numerous and also the most heavily exploited section of the population. It is also because their revolutionary spirit is firmer and more persevering than that of all other social strata." 12

One could perhaps say that an intelligent human being would die spiritually without some of the books created by members of the petty-bourgeoisie. But without workers making paper from pulp (as they did, for instance, at the DRV's large light-industry Complex at Viet-Tri, destroyed by U.S. bombs); without other workers printing the intellectuals' words upon that paper, the "masterpieces" of the petty bourgeoisie would never see the light of day. No wonder Marx and Engels said the Proletariat could get along without the

bourgeoisie, but the bourgeoisie could never get along without the proletariat!

Only the Proletariat could lead because as a class it was united; the bourgeoisie on the other hand fragmented into comprador, national and petty. The proletariat demonstrates its ability to bring about cooperation among various national elements by arbitrating class conflicts. It alone can lead the nation in a spirit of cooperation so necessary to the building of Socialism. Peasants are more individualistic since they are small producers carrying on business in an individual way. (The same applies to handicraftsmen and small traders.) Their nature gradually changes as they see the benefits of cooperative farming. But until they do they will always have a more or less spontaneous tendency towards capitalism.

(The DRV's humane attitude towards the peasants can be seen from statements such as the one Le Duan made in December 1958 in a speech in Thanh Hoa Province, in which he said that one should not say even a harsh word about or to the peasants. Only friendly persuasion is permitted in trying to win over the middle peasants to more progressive farming methods. Le Duan explained: "As the middle peasants are slow in understanding the advantages of the co-operative we must resolutely convince them, talk to them day after day until we win them over. It is strictly forbidden to speak ill of them. Poor peasants and middle peasants should form a bloc." (13)

"The proletariat stands not only for the interests of the peasantry but also for the common interests of the nation," Le Duan writes. "As it is not the peasantry, the proletariat has the objective condition to see clearly the trend and line

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of struggle between the peasantry and the landlords in the common line of struggle between the nation and imperialism." 17
It falls to the proletariat alone to "mediate" the differences between the peasantry and the landlords. Just as only someone standing outside a quarrel can see it objectively, so only an economic class not involved in the peasant-landlord struggle can see clearly how to smooth over differences and bring about cooperation. Only the proletariat can see the larger interests of the nation, as opposed to the smaller interests of personal and class clashes that impede the national effort.

Though the Proletariat leads the Front as a class, its actual leaders come largely from the petty bourgeois class: Lawyers like NFL President Nguyen Huu Tho, and Tran Buu Kiem, Chairman of the NFL's Committee for Foreign Relations; Professors like Nguyen Van Hieu, leader of the Radical Socialist Party and the Front's Ambassador-at-large, and Le Van Huan, Assistant Secretary-General of the Central Committee of the NFL; Architect Huynh Tan Phat, Secretary-General of the Front, and Pharmacist Ha Thu, Central Committee Member, to mention but a few. It's really quite natural for the petty bourgeoisie to spawn South Viet-Nam's liberation leaders. They are the most well-educated (many of them having taken degrees in France) in a largely peasant nation which even by U.S. and U.N. figures is only 25 per cent literate (at least, that is true of the non-liberated areas of South Viet-Nam. In North Viet-Nam over 95 per cent of the people are literate.)

People ask: how can the Front be led by the working class

when members of the petty-bourgeoisie hold top positions? The answer is simple. The class origin of a man isn't important. That after all is due to an accident of birth. The only really relevant question is: which ideology does he embrace, in the name of what world outlook does he speak? Before President Nguyen Huu Tho was jailed by the Diem puppet regime and assumed leadership of the Front, he was a prominent and prosperous Saigon attorney. Yet when he says (as he does so often) that the Front must be based on the worker-peasant alliance, led by the working class, he is speaking in the name of the proletariat and defending its interests. Nguyen Huu Tho as well as the other NFL leaders recognize that the working class is the revolution's most dynamic driving force.

Should we bar persons from leading revolutions because they happen to have been born into the middle class? Only capitalist societies discriminate against people because of their birth, pigeonholing them in so many ways such as the "I.Q." tests where it is claimed a person's "Intelligence Quotient" is birth-determined, and so immutable. Such tests--geared to upper middle class environmental conditioning--condemn the lower classes to inferior status from earliest childhood. Socialism on the other hand teaches that man's nature and capacity for learning are plastic. Man is capable of constant improvement, the average person possessing every facility for understanding knowledge and the world. Whoever comes to embrace Socialism and the revolutionary outlook at whatever time in life is entitled to speak in the name of the working-class. Why, if we were to exclude from the leadership

of Socialist struggles those who come from the petty-bourgeoisie, whatever would we do with Marx, Engels, Lenin, Castro, Ho Chi Minh and most members of the DRV's Politburo!

While the Front must be led by a working-class outlook the top leaders of the Front do not have to be Communists. Belonging to no political party or religious group, NFL President Nguyen Huu Tho ~~xxxx~~ all the better can coordinate the work of all political parties, elements and tendencies within the Front. Such a position gives him more leverage in straightening out the differences and rivalries that would automatically arise in any organization as large and diverse as the NFL. Viet-Nam's example shows that only those free from sectarianism will be able to lead the United Fronts which all peoples and nations the world over must now begin building.

Le Duan and other DRV leaders maintain that without the worker-peasant alliance neither the August Revolution nor the Resistance War against the French could have been victorious.

Vo Nguyen Giap also considers worker-peasant leadership of the United Front a requisite for revolution everywhere:

"The liberation war of the Viet-Namese people proves that in face of a powerful and cruel enemy, victory will be possible only by uniting the whole people within a firm and broad national united front based on the worker-peasant alliance." (Emphasis Giap's.)

The Revolution brought untold advancements to the Viet-Namese countryside, such as newspapers, movies, theatres, libraries and Palaces of Culture (Hobby-houses where the people pursue music, dancing, science, and intellectual activities

of all sorts). This uplifted the farmer, and helped narrow the differences between town and country. Before the war, all consumer goods were on sale in the villages and even remote mountain regions within a week or so of their appearance in Hanoi. This helps explain why the U.S. bombed North Vietnam's factories--which made the goods--and the bridges and highways--which transported them--as well as obliterating the achievements in the countryside. The plan was to push the North Viet^Namese peasant back to his former intellectual and material backwardness.

Footnotes For Chapter IV

- 1 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 95
- 2 Vladimir Lenin, "A Great Beginning," Selected Works, Vol. II, part 2. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1952, p. 231
- 3 Some Documents of the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, op. cit., p. 43
- 4 Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol. IV, op. cit., p. 408
- 5 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 51
- 6 ibid., pp. 68-69
- 7 ibid., p. 31
- 8 Le Duan. On Some Present International Problems. Hanoi: FLPH, 1964, p. 151
- 9 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 38
- 10 ibid., p. 86
- 11 President Ho Chi Minh, by Pham Van Dong, op. cit., p. 85
- 12 Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol. IV, op. cit., p. 173
- 13 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 62
- 14 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 77
- 15 Vo Nguyen Giap, People's War, People's Army, op. cit., p. 46

FOUNDING VIET-NAM'S COMMUNIST PARTY

Now that we know the importance of the worker-peasant alliance in Viet-Nam, let us trace the evolution of events leading to its becoming the nucleus of the United Front: the founding of Viet-Nam's Party of the working class, its early mistakes, and the events leading it to rectify them.

The first Viet-^Namese Communist Party was established in Bac Bo (North Viet-^Nam), the most revolutionary part of the country, in the summer of 1929. In autumn of the same year, the "Annam Communist Party" came into being in Nam Bo (South Viet-Nam). And in the winter of 1929 the "Tan Viet" meaning "New Viet-Nam") Communist League (later known as the Indo-Chinese Communist League or Federation) was born in the third part of the country--Truong Bo (Central Viet-^Nam).

The three Communist Parties, divided over policies and tactics, often bickered among themselves. Bringing to mind the splitism of the various radical groups in Western countries, each of the three Viet-^Namese Communist Parties said, in effect, "I am the true light and the way, and eternal salvation abides with me alone." Naturally, the working class of Indo-China was divided and confused, not knowing which of the Communist parties to follow.

Ho Chi Minh, then called Nguyen Ai Quoc--Nguyen the Patriot--whose raison d'etre is unity, considered such a situation inadmissable. So on February 3, 1930 while in exile he convened a conference in Kowloon, China to unify these three organizations. To evade the severe police repression, the Viet-^Namese revolutionaries merged their three Communist parties into one

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while sitting on the lawn of the Hong Kong soccer stadium, pretending to watch a foot-ball game! Their hybrid creation was called the Viet-^Namese Communist Party.

Some Western sources such as Ellen Hammer say that Ho Chi Minh had been from the beginning opposed to the open proclamation of a Communist Party. He is said to have felt that the name "Communist" would alienate the large mass of people, most of whom were uneducated and had no idea what Marxism-Leninism was. Even at that time, Uncle Ho was visionary enough to know that Viet-^Nam needed as first priority not a sectarian Party but a national United Front broad enough to rouse the whole nation to revolution. In place of a Communist Party, Ho Chi Minh is said to have wanted a milder, somewhat Social-democratic organization whose appeal would rest primarily on the ideas of social justice.

These same sources say that Ho Chi Minh was unable to convince the young militants, who would settle for nothing less than the establishment of an openly-avowed Communist Party. The young revolutionary hot-heads, so the reports go, carried the day.

Whether these accounts were true or not, certainly Ho Chi Minh would have been more perspicacious than anyone in the world, had he cautioned against the formation of a militant Marxist-Leninist Party in 1930 in favor of a broad United Front with a moderate line. Because that same year the Viet-^Namese Communists tried to set up sectarian "soviets" a la the Russian model, in Nghe-^An and Ha Tinh provinces, with

tragic results, as we shall soon see.

It is also said that the Comintern (Communist International) provided an added fillip for unity by issuing a strong directive ordering the three Viet-Nameese Parties to merge into one militant Communist body on penalty of being expelled from that international Communist organization directed from Moscow.

In October 1930 the name "Viet-Nameese Communist Party" was officially changed to "Indo-Chinese Communist Party," reflecting that it spoke on behalf of the progressive forces in Cambodia and Laos as well as the whole of Viet-Nam.

The merging of the three Viet-Nameese Communist organizations in February of 1930 is an important lesson of the Viet-Nameese revolution; it points the way for Marxist-Leninist parties all over the world. While it is essential that the Communists link up with other progressive groups and form a united front with them, the Communists themselves should be united. The existence of a number of Marxist-Leninist and other radical organizations in a single country, each claiming to be the historically "chosen" one confuses all the people, and weakens the progressive forces by dividing them. To the Viet-Nameese revolutionaries, three Communist parties were too many. But here in the United States especially, the radical organizations are multitudinous--a main reason why the American Left is so weak.*

* Marxist-Leninist parties should not--cannot--unite with "revisionist" ones. But surely in the U.S. there is no reason but sectarianism and petty narrow-mindedness why for instance Workers' World, Progressive Labor, and POC (all of which have much in common) cannot set aside their differences and merge in the interests of strengthening the Left. When will socialists in every country of the world learn from the Viet-Nameese the necessity for Unity?

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Even when Viet-Nam's three Communist Parties were divided, in some ways they were leagues ahead of any Western Communist Party. All three Viet-Nam^Nese Communist parties did their best to agitate among the workers in industrial enterprises. Most American New Leftists won't even go near a factory! Viet-Nam^Nese intellectual and student Party members also took jobs in factories to harden themselves and to become more revolutionary.

But only after the three Communist Parties in Viet-Nam combined could they begin to carry out the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal tasks of the revolution.

The Program of the ~~Go~~ Indo-Chinese Communist Party, like the Program of the National Front for Liberation of South Viet-Nam, contained ten points. It is interesting to compare them with the NFL Program given in the appendix at the back of the book, since some of the points are strikingly similar.

PROGRAM OF THE INDO-CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY (1930)

"Workers, peasants, soldiers, young people and students!

"Oppressed and exploited compatriots!

"The Indochinese Communist Party has been set up. This is the party of the working class. The Party will guide the proletariat to conduct the revolution in order to struggle for the interests of the oppressed and exploited people as a whole.

"From this very moment, we must join the Party, help and follow it in order to implement the following slogans:

1) To overthrow the imperialists, feudalists and counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie in Viet-Nam.

- 2) To make Indo-China completely independent.
- 3) To set up a worker-peasant-soldier government.
- 4) To confiscate the banks and other enterprises belonging to the imperialists and put them under the control of the worker-peasant-soldier government
- 5) To confiscate all the plantations and property belonging to the imperialists and Viet-Namese counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie in order to distribute them to the poor.
- 6) To put into practice the eight-hour working day.
- 7) To abolish state-loans and poll-tax and to exempt the poor from harsh taxes.
- 8) To bring freedom under every aspect to the masses.
- 9) To give education to the entire people.
- 10) To put into practice equality between men and women."

(Excerpt from the Appeal made by Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh) on the setting up of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party.)¹

Footnote For Chapter ~~IV~~ V

- 1 President Ho Chi Minh, by Pham Van Dong, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

THE NGHE-TINH SOVIETS

As soon as the Party was officially founded, it felt it had to do something with its new status. So that very year of 1930 it set about making the revolution! Taking Russia as a model, the Viet-^Namese revolutionaries proceeded to set up their own "soviets" of workers and peasants! They tried establishing them in two of Viet-Nam's largest and most revolutionary provinces: Nghe-An (where Ho Chi Minh and most Viet-^Namese revolutionaries were born) and neighboring Ha Tinh.

Culturally as well as revolutionarily, the Viet-^Namese leaders felt closer to Russia than to China. Ho Chi Minh and other Viet-^Namese revolutionaries when they lived and studied in the Soviet Union, acquired admiration for Russian customs, literature, poetry, ballet, music, as well as for Soviet anti-colonialism. Out of it was born the wish to emulate the Soviet Union by setting up soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers' deputies in Viet-^Nam.

During the period when the infant Indo-Chinese Communist Party struggled to found the Nghe-An--Ha-Tinh soviets (referred to by the Viet-^Namese as the "Nghe-Tinh" soviets for short) colonialist terrorism was at its height. The French mercilessly exploited and suppressed the Viet-^Namese workers, murdering and jailing the most militant. In the prisons, dungeons and torture chambers set up by the French, one vision sustained the Viet-^Namese revolutionaries: the vision of the Socialist Soviet Union where, it was believed, the workers were free, and life was a little like paradise. Naturally,

anything progressive would have seemed like paradise to the Viet-^Namese, languishing in the prisons of the French! And wasn't the whole of Indo-China a prison, really?

But perhaps an even more compelling reason for imitating the Soviets lay in the 1930 world's knowing no other methods for bringing about revolution, for which the Viet-^Namese need was desperate. Desperate needs often lead to desperate actions.

As we saw earlier, the Viet-^Namese, forced by the French to work 12 to 17 hours a day for starvation wages, were often beaten by French overseers in the dark and dingy mines and shops. Fatigue and exhaustion, coupled with the lack of even the most elementary safety devices resulted in an extremely high rate of accident and death on the job. The Viet-^Namese could not indefinitely endure such inhuman conditions. Finally they decided to do something about it. Led by the Communist Party Committee of Nghe An, on May Day of 1930, workers at the Truong Thi Railway workshops and Ben Thuy match factory (Ben Thuy is the seaport of the large city of Vinh, capital of Nghe-An), along with tens of thousands of peasants around Vinh city, went on strike. They demonstrated for higher wages, shorter working hours, lower taxes, the return of land that the French had taken from them, and an end to French terrorism.

Under the leadership of the Party Committees the workers set up "soviets," which organized their own defence forces. The soviets also began abolishing taxes, suspending payments of debts, and distributing land to landless peasants. In addition they struggled against superstitious customs, and encouraged the learning of the Viet-^Namese script. Dockers

from the port of Ben Thuy helped them every step of the way.

Soon the struggle to set up workers and peasants' soviets spread like a fire-storm all over the two provinces of Nghe An and Ha Tinh.

Naturally, the French decided to make short shrift of the ~~nascent~~ ^{incipient} Viet-Namense soviets. Perhaps since the beginning of French conquest nothing had infuriated the French so much as the Viet-Namense daring to duplicate in their colony the example of Communist Russia. Quickly the French moved more troops to stations throughout the two rebellious provinces. By an infamous act that South Viet-Nam puppet president Ngo Dinh Diem was later to repeat, in addition to armed forces the French used aircraft to defeat the Nghe-Tinh uprisings. In other words, like Americans and their agents in South Viet-Nam between 1954-59, the French in 1930-31 waged an open war against the defenceless people of the provinces of Nghe An and Ha Tinh. The colonialists shot down thousands of people during the struggle, arrested tens of thousands of others, and burnt to ashes thousands of homes.

The workers and peasants of Nghe-Tinh were very brave, and tried feverishly to hold out. When one died, hundreds of other comrades rushed to take his place. Four months after the soviet uprisings began, the ruling machine in the two provinces was crumbling. Many of the colonialist district chiefs fled for their lives, others went over to the side of the revolution. Revolutionary cadres took over their functions and began giving land to the peasants struggling to carry out the revolutionary program. The Nghe-Tinh soviets survived for more than three months after the French had concentrated

their forces to crush them.

However, it was not French terrorism, occurring at a time of grave famine, but grave political errors that played the primary part in ensuring the defeat of the uprising. At the time of the Nghe-Tinh movement, the Party Committee of Central Viet-Nam actually put forth the slogan "root out all intellectuals, landlords and notables". The Party thought that winning over only the most militant workers and peasants would make the soviets more "revolutionary," as in Russia. Party members even made a distinction between "blue blouse" and "brown blouse" workers, discriminating against the former for being what in the U.S. are called "white-collar workers." Technically skilled and receiving higher wages, Viet-Nam's "blue-blouse" workers were shoved out of the soviets, the "brown-blouse" workers contending that the former's higher status automatically divested them of revolutionary feeling! As can be imagined, the in-fighting between "blue-blouse" and "brown-blouse" workers caused considerable animosity at Nghe-Tinh and all across the country.

The Viet-Namese discovered the hard way that they could not mechanically follow the experiences of other countries, particularly those of a bygone era. Instead of being more "revolutionary," the Viet-Namese Communists had only shown themselves to be narrow, dogmatic, and infantile left-wing. Of the revolution that was to sweep all of Viet-Nam, Nghe-Tinh was visioned as the spawning spark. But the uprisings could not but fail, for the people never became "switched on" to the

sectarian spark of Nghe-Tinh. Such sectarianism alienated the majority of people. The extremely exclusionary policy that the Party practiced made the members and prospective members of the Nghe-Tinh soviets bitter and angry towards one another.

Such co-ordinated action as did struggle to get started throughout the rest of the country in support of Nghe-Tinh was paltry, and only sputtered feebly. So the enemy could and did concentrate its forces to grind down the soviets at Nghe An and Ha Tinh. At the time, Ho Chi Minh was in Hong Kong. Had he been in Viet-nam, the fiasco probably never would have occurred. To their credit, many Party leaders outside Central Viet-nam (and some inside as well) opposed the orders for the premature uprisings, and tried to have them called off. But the hotheads prevailed.

As the Committee for the Study of the History of the Lao Dong Party puts it, [French terrorism] "was not the only cause of the failure of the [Nghe-Tinh] movement. It was also due to subjective and adventurous thinking, lack of a thorough understanding of the policy of an anti-imperialist national united front and neglecting to carry out the strategy of 'more friends and less foes.'" ¹

The Nghe-Tinh movement had been only the work of a tiny minority, a small sect which had neglected to win over the people. Truong Chinh later was to say that former uprisings against the French failed because of "the lack of an anti-colonialist united national front. These former insurrections were crushed principally because they were the rising of only a sect, a group of militants, or a little vanguard detachment.

...To triumph, a revolution worthy of new times must be a real revolution of ~~the~~ ² broad masses." From the failure at Nghe-Tinh the Viet-^Namese later learned to practice principles like "Win over all those who can be won over, neutralize all those who can't be won over, in order to have more friends and less foes and completely isolate the enemy." At Nghe-Tinh instead of the enemy it had been the people who were isolated! Since the masses were not meshed together in unity, it was as easy to break them ~~in small bunches~~ as Ho Chi Minh and Truong Chinh say it is to snap small bunches of chopsticks. The Viet-^Namese had not yet learned how to coalesce the people into one single bundle of chopsticks that would be virtually indestructible.

The Nghe-Tinh fiasco finally made clear that militant left-wing slogans, far from reaching the people, only cordoned off the revolution, insuring its bleeding to death in isolation. 1930 was not 1917. By 1930 Monopoly Capitalism had become well-entrenched along the lines predicted by Lenin, many important changes had permeated the planet. In fact, world conditions had become so metamorphic that it had become impossible for revolutionaries ever again to take power the way they had in the Russia of 1917. Today the entire world is in debt to the Viet-^Namese for the debacle of the Nghe-^Tinh soviets. Because that egregious experience led the Viet-^Namese to the development of those transcendant United Fronts that have changed the world. But the lesson was a tragically expensive one.

Even without ^{all} the ~~excesses of~~ blood spilled in ill-conceived revolutions throughout the five continents, the experience of

the Nghe-Tinh soviet movement would be quite enough to indict the trotskyst and all other sectarian approaches to revolution. Relying on militant workers alone to effect a revolution instead of on a vast United Front ~~to win over the people~~ can only result in disaster and death for the revolutionary cause. Everything the trotskysts and other extremists advocate has been tried, and died, in Viet-Nam! The adventurism of the Nghe-Tinh soviet movement cost the lives and health of thousands of Viet-Nam's cadres. At the end of the Second Session of the Party's Central Committee held in Saigon in March of 1931, all the members of the Central Committee were arrested by the French, many to be guillotined or tortured to death. Denuded of some of its most gifted leaders, Viet-Nam's struggle became the more difficult. Just as the trotskysts and other ultra-leftists cannot refute the failure of the Nghe-An--Ha Tinh soviets, they cannot point to even one example where their methods have brought about anything remotely resembling revolutionary success.

The course of revolution really is coarse, not smooth. Every revolution experiences what the Viet-Namese call periods of high tide, and low ebb. (Somewhat like a capitalist business cycle! ^Une more "parallel" between revolution and reaction in the age of monopoly capitalism.) After the French smashed the Nghe-Tinh uprisings, revolutionary enthusiasm turned to despair, the revolution sunk into low ebb. With many of their leading cadres jailed and ~~xxxxxx~~ tortured to death, and their dreams of revolution dashed, the mood of Viet-Namese revolutionaries resembled very much that of their

counterparts in Russia after the failure of the 1905 Revolution. The same black mood of disillusion and despondency. The same Sanin-type turning from politics and plunging into escapism. But just as Lenin knew that the 1905 Revolution was but a dress rehearsal for 1917, Ho Chi Minh never lost hope.

After the failure at Nghe-Tinh the Viet-Namese revolutionaries started searching for an alternative to the Soviet method of taking power. They happened upon it quite unexpectedly.

Footnotes For Chapter ~~III~~ VI

- 1 Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, op. cit., p. 36
- 2 The August Revolution, op. cit., p. 36

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DMITROV AND THE UNITED FRONT

At the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) held in July-August of 1935 the Soviet leader Georgi Dmitrov got up to deliver a report. The assembled delegates, who included Ho Chi Minh, could not have imagined that instead of routine rhetoric they would hear words destined to mark a milestone in man's tortuous history. For Dmitrov's report presented them and the world with the first written theory of United Front!

To the amazement of his audience, in his precedential speech Dmitrov said in effect that the rise of fascism made traditional Communism suicidal. No longer is it possible for a small vanguard detachment to seize power in the old way and set up a dictatorship of the proletariat, he argued.

No one realized this better than the Viet-Nameese revolutionaries, after the failure of the Nghe-Tinh soviets. In place of an uprising by a minority, Dmitrov was introducing step by step a different dimension, a whole new concept for revolution in our time. Ho Chi Minh was impressed, very impressed!

So four years after the smashing of the Nghe-Tinh uprising, the Viet-^Nameese leaders became sold on the idea of United Front.

What caused Dmitrov to deliver such a report?

In the 1930's fascism was engulfing Europe. According to Dmitrov, in the age of monopoly capitalism fascism constitutes the main danger. The only way to stop it, he said, is through unity of the anti-fascist forces. In other words, the only

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hope for mankind lies in the building of vast, viable united fronts in each nation.

A giant of intellect, Dmitrov actually discussed country by country, in keeping with the specific national features of each, precisely what forces should coalesce in the setting up of a United Front! Dmitrov's formula was highly Western, and so directed primarily towards the Western nations. All the Communist parties of the West resolved to put it into practice. But the world's history since 1935 is a sorry testimonial to their not having been able to do so. Only one nation possessed a working-class and working-class Party with sufficient integrity and political acumen to lead the people in the building of a broad united front. Only one nation, unpoisoned by bourgeois individualism, possessed the kind of religious and philosophic tolerance that could easily transmute into political tolerance. Only one nation existed where partly because of having fallen victim to so many foreign oppressors the people had developed a whole gamut of tactics and strategies that were consummately clever and efficacious. Naturally, that nation was Viet-Nam.

Exactly one year after Dmitrov delivered his historic report, Ho Chi Minh and other Viet-Nam^Nese revolutionaries set up, in July of 1936, the Indo-Chinese Democratic Front. This United Front was the first in history to inspire and organize a whole nation. Precisely because the Democratic Front and subsequent ones were so successful, the Viet-Nam^Nese people were able to carry out the August revolution of 1945, overthrowing the Japanese fascists. When the French sought to re-conquer Viet-Nam, the solidarity and cohesiveness of the Viet-Nam^Nese people, embodied in their United Fronts, led to Viet-Nam's

being the first oppressed nation in the world ever to defeat a mighty Western nation.

Under Ho Chi Minh's brilliant leadership, from 1936 on Viet-Nam has been able to put into practice all the fundamental theses set down by Dnitrov in his pioneering Work delivered in 1935 and subsequently translated into every language in the world.

Let us examine some important excerpts from Dnitrov's "United Front Against Fascism," keeping in mind that the Viet-Namense Liberation Fronts have pragmatized them:

"Comrades, millions of workers and toilers of the capitalist countries * ask the question: How can fascism be prevented from coming to power and how can fascism be overthrown after it has been victorious? To this the Communist International replies: The first thing that must be done, the thing with which to commence, is to form a united front, to establish unity of action of the workers in every factory, in every district, in every region, in every country, all over the world. Unity of action of the proletariat on a national and international scale is the mighty weapon which renders the working class capable not only of successful defence but also of successful counter-offensive against fascism, against the class enemy."

The United Front would influence not only the Communists and Social-Democrats but in Dnitrov's words "would also exert a powerful influence on the ranks of the Catholics, anarchist

* Directing himself primarily to the Western nations, Dnitrov here does not even mention the semi-feudal countries like Viet-Nam.

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and unorganized workers, even on those who had temporarily become the victims of fascist demagogy. (Emphasis Dmitrov's)

"Moreover, a powerful united front of the proletariat would exert tremendous influence on all other strata of the toiling people, on the peasantry, on the urban petty bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia. A united front would inspire the wavering groups with faith in the strength of the working class."²

Dmitrov also said that the Communists will not dupe the other members of the coalition, and this is a strategical, not a tactical, commitment. ("Strategic"--a major policy to be achieved; "tactical"--a short-range objective) The Communists will not simply use the other groups to take power, and soon afterwards ditch them; only when the majority of people show that they want Socialism will the United Front coalition government take steps along Socialist lines. This is the exact position that the NFL of South Viet-Nam takes today, and that North Viet-Nam has always followed.

To emphasize the need for a Worker-Peasant Alliance, Dmitrov said: "The success of the entire struggle of the proletariat is closely connected with the establishment of a fighting alliance between the proletariat on the one hand and the toiling peasantry and the basic mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie constituting a majority in the population of even industrially developed countries on the other."³

Discussing the peasant question, Marx often used to say that the proletariat must ally itself with the peasantry precisely because in nearly every country on earth, "underdeveloped" and "developed" alike, the proletariat even today

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constitutes a minority and the peasantry or farmers the majority of the population. So that to single out the Viet-Nameese for criticism because they assign a hegemonic role to the working class in a country where the proletariat is much smaller than the ~~proletariat~~ ^{PEASANTRY} is to beat them with a strange stick! Because of their relationship to the means of production, only the workers and their Party can and must play the most revolutionary role. As D^{mitrov} says, "in the struggle for the establishment of the united front the importance of the leading role of the Communist Party increases extraordinarily. Only the Communist Party is at bottom the initiator, the organizer, and the driving force of the united front of the working class."⁴ Certainly, in Viet-Nam this has always been true. The Party has founded every single Viet-Nameese United Front.

Explaining the difference between collaboration and a united front government D^{mitrov} said: "While the Social-Democratic government is an instrument of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie in the interests of the preservation of the capitalist order, a united front government is an instrument of collaboration between the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat and other anti-fascist parties, in the interest of the entire toiling population, a government of struggle against fascism and reaction. Obviously there is a radical difference between these two things." (Emphasis D^{mitrov's})⁵

The National Front for Liberation of South Viet-Nam is a United Front in which the Communists ally themselves with other anti-fascist forces to fight the most revolutionary of

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struggles. Such an organization is vastly different from the relationship of some Communists and stolid Social-democrats in a bourgeois parliament, in what has come to be called a Popular Front government. All forces within the NFL are united around a common purpose: to oust the imperialists. The Communists and social-democrats in bourgeois parliaments or in any Popular Front alliance are certainly not united around a common program, but merely form transitory voting blocs on various issues, mostly minor; their relations are not solidarity of any kind, much less an anti-imperialist alliance! Almost all people in South Viet^{nam} are united around the ten-point program of the Front and would support it with every drop of their life's blood. To compare this to bourgeois "collaborationism," to any sort of Popular Front, is simply absurd.

Fascism triumphed in Germany largely because the Communists countenanced no beliefs but their own sectarian ones. Instead of uniting with other elements who opposed fascism, the Communists castigated the social democrats and others as "social fascists." The Communists and socialists being at each other's throats encouraged the fascists to pounce on everyone's throat. In his report to the Seventh Congress, Dmitrov denounced the sectarianism that had so damaged the Communist movement since its inception.

Even after the most thorough-going revolution, it is not an easy process to change the ^{RELATIONS} ~~relations~~ of production, let alone human relations! Try to do it overnight and chaos results, as in Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution when the

communication transportation and electrical systems sprawled in anarchy, the technicians unwilling or unable to start them operating again. The time during the National Democratic Revolution that it takes to recondition those permeated by bourgeois influence is time well spent. Shove them into Communism right away and they will instantly rebel; the old and rotten way of living has been conditioned into them, and must be conditioned out.

Patience and an un-dogmatic approach is even more necessary in initially winning the people over to the revolutionary cause. One must recognize "where the masses are at," instead of shouting ultra-leftist slogans that as at the Nghe-Tinh soviets, reach none but the smallest exclusionary groups. The people have been brainwashed over a lifetime, their "dynamic stereotypes," as Ivan Pavlov called them, are resistant to change. Only those who work with the people, who present ideas in a way that the people with all their limitations can understand, are worthy of the title Revolutionary.

Dimitrov explains it well when he says a fundamental law of all great revolutions is that "for the masses propaganda and agitation alone cannot take the place of their own political experience, when it is a question of attracting really broad masses of the toilers to the side of the revolutionary vanguard, without which a victorious struggle for power is impossible. It is a common mistake of a Leftist character to imagine that as soon as a political (or revolutionary) crisis arises, it is enough for the Communist leaders to throw out the slogan of

revolutionary insurrection, and the broad masses will follow them. No, even in such a crisis the masses are far from always being ready to do so. We saw this in the case of SPAIN. To help the millions to master as rapidly as possible, through their own experience, what they have to do, where to find a radical solution, what party is worthy of their confidence--these among others are the purposes for which both transitional slogans and special forms of transition or approach to the proletarian revolution' are necessary. Otherwise the great mass of the people, a prey to petty-bourgeois democratic illusions and traditions, may waver even when there is a revolutionary situation, may procrastinate and stray, without finding the road to revolution and then come under the ax of the fascist executioners." (Emphasis ⁶ D_{mitrov}'s)

Later, D_{mitrov} goes on to say that sectarianism "under cover of a formal recognition of the Bolshevik theses, hindered the development of a Bolshevik mass policy. In our day this is often no longer an 'infantile disorder,' as L_{enin} wrote, but a deeply rooted vice, which must be shaken off or it will be impossible to solve the problem of establishing the united front of the proletariat and of leading the masses from the positions of reformism to the side of revolution.

"In the present situation sectarianism, self-satisfied sectarianism, as we designate it in the draft resolution, more than anything else impedes our struggle for the realization of the united front."⁷

Footnotes For Chapter VII

- 1 Georgi Dmitrov. The United Front Against Fascism. New York:
New Century Publishers, p. 28
- 2 *ibid.*, p. 28
- 3 *ibid.*, pp. 36-37
- 4 *ibid.*, p. 83
- 5 *ibid.*, p. 72
- 6 *ibid.*, p. 75
- 7 *ibid.*, pp. 84-85

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PARTY LEADS PROLETARIAT

Over a year ago in the office of what is probably the leftist newsweekly with the biggest circulation in the U.S. I had a long discussion with one of its chief writers. The young man, whose sarcasm ran far deeper than his knowledge, had been charged with writing all the columns about Viet-Nam. Since he had penned next to nothing specific about the National Front for Liberation I tactfully recommended that he begin doing so. The newspaper had never even suggested to its readers that Viet-Nam's United Front was an important reason for the U.S. waging the monster war; neither had it ever hinted that we might learn anything from the Front.

Immediately the supercilious young columnist leapt to the defensive, envious of my knowledge of the NFL--a knowledge which only laziness kept him from acquiring. He would certainly not write anything specific about the Liberation Front, he said; it wasn't necessary to know anything about it since it was "purely Viet-Nameese and has no relevance for us." It has nothing Western about it (sic!), nothing that we could learn anything at all from." Ego goading him to the most nonsensical lengths to try to refute me, his every argument revealed the most astonishing ignorance, especially for a person paid handsomely to be the paper's "expert" on Viet-Nam. Typical remark: "The fact that the Viet-^Nameese may have built a successful united front plays no part in why the U.S. is fighting there. Even if the NFL wasn't so loosely constructed, even if, to assume the impossible, the People's Revolutionary Party was

A MASS Party of the workers and peasants and played a vanguard role, the U.S. would still be fighting in Viet-Nam."

I did not have the heart to tell him that of course the People's Revolutionary Party is the mass party of the workers and peasants and does play the van role in the Front. One could only wonder where this "progressive" newspaper writer had been mentally all these many months and years sitting at his Viet-Nam desk. (He was recently fired!) Fact is, of many "experts" touring colleges and speaking stumps around the country enlightening people about the NFL I have scarcely met one who even knew before my telling him or her that the worker-peasant alliance forms the corner-stone of the Front. Unfortunately, this is true also for the numerous socialist and other leftist groups in New York.

Bourgeois authorities abroad on Viet-Nam know a lot about the Buddhists. But they seem scarcely to have done the slightest bit of research on the politics of progressive Viet-Nam. Nowadays it is the favorite sport of the French authorities on Viet-Nam to speculate about the correlation of forces in the Front and what role the Communist Party plays. How unnecessary, when its role has always been absolutely clear! Obviously, some Frenchmen have not done their "homework." Knowing about the United Fronts in Viet-Nam from 1936 till the defeat of the French in 1954 would have provided them the "magic key" to understanding the present National Front of the South.

In ^a ~~the~~ "New Republic"'s March 6, 1965 article "Who are the Viet-Cong"? Jean Lacouture's elementary lack of understanding leads him openly to wonder why such an "incriminating"

(sic!) Party as the Marxist-Leninist People's Revolutionary Party was formed and joined the Front. Like his colleagues Lacouture tries terribly hard to decipher what to him seems one of the world's most unscrutable enigmas: what role does the Communist Party--that is, the People's Revolutionary Party--play, and how important is it? He continually mulls over this question, and one can picture him tearing his hair in the tiny hours trying to figure it out. What surprise he displays at discovering that top NFL leaders Huynh Tan Phat (Secretary-General of the NFL) and Tran Buu Kiem (Chairman of the Front's Foreign Relations Committee) "are close to the Communists, but not their henchmen"! Scurrying all over the place, he interviews people in a frantic attempt to find out what role those "close to" the Communists play in the Front, and if they follow the line and bidding of the Communists.

But surely, that is the least incredulous thing about the Front! The members of the NFL's Democratic and Radical Socialist Parties, though not in the main Communists, have always been the latter's loyal allies. Lacouture and company ought to know that the Democratid Party in the South is the same as that up North; just as the South's Radical Socialist and the North's Socialist Party spring from similar sources. Can the "experts" have forgotten that cadres of the Viet-Minh played the major role in setting up the Democratic Party? The present head of that Party in the South, Huynh Tan Phat, was an original founder when the Party was formed in 1944 in Hanoi.

All the leaders and members of the three political parties

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in the NFL, though differing in their own internal programs and in degree of militancy, love the North as passionately as do the members of the People's Revolutionary Party. Even if one had no other evidence (and it is over-abundant) NFL writings or films would leave no doubt. Scenes showing leaders of the two non-Communist parties in the South emotionally embracing the leaders of the Lao Dong Party in Hanoi (Radical-Socialist party leader Nguyen Van Hieu's 1962 visit to the DRV, for instance) are more indicative than words. What so astonishes Lacouture--that the non-Communist leaders in the Front "are close to the Communists, but not their henchmen," is a rather good description of the Front's policy. While the new-type National Democratic Revolution which the Front exemplifies is not a Communist one, still it is very sympathetic towards Socialism.

What role does the Communist Party play? Even simply to say (as the "experts" never do!) that the worker-peasant alliance with the working class in the saddle is what the Front is based one, would largely answer the enigma. For it is obvious that the party of the working class can only be the Communist Party. So, to say that the proletariat occupies paramount place in the worker-peasant alliance and in the Front is practically to say that the Communist Party does. The Lao Dong party in Hanoi is the font of all major decisions made throughout the country; all Communists and their sympathizers both North and South feel the greatest respect, love and allegiance for it. "In the course of mobilizing

forces for the revolution," said Pham Van Dong, "our Party has unceasingly endeavoured to achieve and consolidate the leadership of the revolution by the working class, through its political party, the Communist Party, regarding this as a condition ensuring that the national and democratic revolution develops favourably, wins victory and paves the way for the ensuing socialist revolution."

In another sense when ordinary people as well as authorities on Viet-Nam ask, "What role does the Communist Party play in the NFL? Does it dominate it?" strictly speaking the question cannot be answered in that form, because it has not been put right. In Viet-Nam the Communist Party has always been the founder of the United Fronts. To remember that the Viet-Minh was formed when the Eighth Session of the Party Central Committee asked Ho Chi Minh to form it ("I agree to found a Front," said the Old Man) is to remember something significant.

But as the Lebanese poet Kalil Gibran says, once you give birth to children they are not yours anymore. They lead a life of their own, though the ties of course are flesh-close. The Party having given birth to Viet-Nam's half a dozen Liberation Fronts over a fertile 30-year period, its "children" become more or less independent entities with their own will. Ho Chi Minh often has expressed the opinion that the Front cannot be compelled to accept the leadership of the Communist Party. The Party could only win such a role, he said, by its members being the first to sacrifice, to risk

their lives; to volunteer to do the hardest tasks, and set an example by doing them in the most exemplary way. Only then could the Party gain the love and respect of the people, and be entitled to an ascendant role.

DRV publications say that Party members always try to be present at the scenes of bombings, because the people feel calmer, less afraid when they are near. Under bombardment, Party members assume the greatest sacrifices. After a bombing, they sort of synthesize the role of psychologist and priest in trying to comfort the people. The Party cadres lay the first pieces of wood in the building of new houses for peasants whose homes have been pulverized.

But barring some lapses in Lacouture's understanding of revolutionary Viet-Nam, he is still quite knowledgeable in the area--something which cannot be said of most Americans writing in the field. Some American liberals and New Leftists have even had the effrontery to say that the U.S. has every reason to be suspicious of the Front. Why? Well, it seems Ho Chi Minh surprised and betrayed everybody "by announcing in 1949" that he was a Communist and would take his country down the road to Socialism!

First of all, it is none of the U.S. government's business what the Vietnamese government does, since the DRV is a sovereign state not under the tutelage of U.S. colonialism. Besides, any reasonably informed person would know that Ho Chi Minh from age 30 on was something of a Marxist-Leninist. From the earliest days of their formation, the national fronts

in Viet-Nam have continually stressed the worker-peasant alliance and the leading role of the Party. If one is unfamiliar with the history and documents of the Viet-Name^se Liberation Fronts, one might beg ignorance. But if Americans are so ignorant, it is hardly Ho Chi Minh's fault!

Even now with all the evidence before us: the NFL's emphasis upon the worker-peasant alliance, its love and commiseration for the North, the three parties in the National Front for Liberation of the South being identical with the three parties in the Fatherland Front of the North. Even now, ignorance or disregard of such elemental facts will lead liberals and others to accuse the NFL of "betrayal" if after Liberation it guides South Viet-Nam along socialist lines. "Nobody told us so!" they will screech. When as a matter of fact every NFL document told them so.

The role of the worker-peasant alliance in the NFL does not differ a particle from what it was in the Northern United Fronts as the following quotes show.

In the early days of the war against the French Truong Chinh said:

"In its domestic policy, the Indochinese Communist Party organized the different strata of the people into the National Liberation Front: the Viet-Minh Front. (Emphasis added)...

This Front should comprise workers, peasants, petty-bourgeoisie of towns, even national bourgeoisie, and include patriotic personalities belonging to the landlord class.

"Besides this, the Indochinese Communist Party developed

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and consolidated in particular the peasants' and workers' organizations to give a solid base to the National United Front..."³

In his speech before the Second Congress of the National Front for Liberation held January 1-8 1964 NFL President Nguyen Huu Tho said:

"The working class, the toiling people, the peasantry, the patriotic intellectuals and the national bourgeoisie are closely united on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance bloc. Their ties grow stronger and stronger and on the basis of this the national united front grows ever broader..."⁴

Similar, eh?

Lo Duan's speech to the Third Congress of the Lao Dong in September 1960 is always cited by the State Department as "proof" that the North set up the NFL. But the charge that the working class heads the Front "on orders from Hanoi" (so what else is new?) surely comes decades too late, since every single one of Viet-Nam's United Fronts has been rooted in the Worker-Peasant Alliance! As Lo Duan says, during the building of all the United Fronts in Viet-Nam "our Party was consistent in its class viewpoint."

Still, since it elucidates a typical Viet-Namese United Front an excerpt from Lo Duan's famous Report to the Third Congress is worth quoting, even though it refers here specifically to the embryonic NFL:

"To ensure the complete success for the revolutionary struggle in South Viet-Nam, our people there, under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist Party of the working

class, must strive to ~~re~~establish a united bloc of workers, peasants and soldiers, and to bring into being a broad National United Front directed against the U.S. and Diem and based upon the worker-peasant alliance. This front must rally all the patriotic classes and sections of the people, the majority and minority nationalities, all patriotic parties and religious groupings, together with all individuals inclined to oppose the U.S.-Diem. The aims of the struggle of the National United Front against the U.S. and Diem in the South are peace, national independence, democratic freedoms, improvement of the living conditions of the people and the peaceful reunification of the Fatherland. The Front must carry out its work in a very flexible manner, in order to rally all forces that can be rallied, win over all forces that can be won over, neutralize all forces that should be neutralized and draw the broad masses into the general struggle against the U.S.-Diem.

"...Together with their efforts to build and consolidate the North and take it towards socialism, our people must strive to preserve and develop the revolutionary forces in the South, thus creating favourable conditions for the peaceful reunification of our country. We have firm confidence in the victory of our people and in the certain triumph of our policy of peaceful reunification of our Fatherland." 5

But Le Duan placed just as much emphasis on proletarian leadership for the revolution in the South back in 1957, three years before the founding of the NFL:

"The historical lessons of the revolutionary movement for

national liberation in Viet-Nam has shown that for the fulfillment of these revolutionary tasks, all the Viet-Namese patriots must hold aloft the banner of leadership of the proletariat to advance to socialism, liberate South Viet-Nam and achieve independence and democracy throughout the country." X
 (Emphasis Le Duan's)

But the Communist Party's leading role in the Front does not mean that it "dominates" it, for that would be childish. The marxist People's Revolutionary Party never lords it over anyone, never forces people to submit to its will--which is what "dominates" might imply. The anti-Communist Buddhist Vo Thanh Minh, "dean of the neutralists," in his conversations with me expressed it quite well: "The people follow the Communists not because of any coercion, but out of love. When they carry out the Communists' policy, they do so of their own will. The relationship between the Communist Party and the other parties and the people as a whole is exactly like that between the Viet-Minh and the people in the past. It is the relationship between a husband and wife in which the wife cooperates with the husband not out of fear but out of love and a desire for harmony in the marriage."

"Guidance" is the word the Viet-Namese use when speaking of the role the Party has always played in Viet-Nam. And really it is the only accurate word to describe the Party's acting, in Dmitrov's words, as the "originator, organizer and driving force" of the United Front and the nation. Like a great Director, in a sense Party control remains in

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the background. But as the drama unfolds on life's stage, the Director's presence is always felt--pulsating in the programs that guide the people on a long-range basis.

Ho Chi Minh's saying that a Communist must be "the first to sacrifice, and the last to enjoy happiness" has been put into practice both North and South. Suffering heavy casualties, the cadres of the Liberation Army have been the first to risk their lives in battle. They have sacrificed everything for the revolution--everything! Though craving tenderness more than any other people, NFL cadres forty years of age have never known a woman's love, as Wilfred Burchett poignantly relates. Fighting to free their country they have been on the march so long, so long.

Ho Chi Minh said in his speech commemorating the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Party (one of the few times he has ever permitted himself to brag about it!):

"Our Party is as great as the immense sea, the high mountain. It has won so much love in thirty years of struggle and success...Its acts of kindness and service are really great." ~~≠~~ 7

Footnotes For Chapter VII

- 1 Jean Lacouture, "Who are the Viet-Cong?" The New Republic, March 6, 1965, p. 23
- 2 Fifteenth Anniversary of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. 1945-60. Hanoi: FLPH, p. 19
- 3 Truong Chinh, The August Revolution, op. cit., pp. 23-24
- 4 Coup After Coup in Saigon. Hanoi: FLPH, 1964, p. 62
- 5 Third Congress of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party. Hanoi: FLPH, Vol. I, pp. 62-63.
- 6 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 84.
- 7 Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol. IV, op. cit., pp. 428-29

VIET-NAM'S VARIETY OF FRONTS

Some Viet-Namese sources begin the history of Viet-Nam's United Fronts with the years 1930-31 when they say an "anti-imperialist" front was formed. However, I cannot by any stretch of reasoning consider the 1930 creation a true United Front. It was based on the Theses on the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution, formulated in 1930 by the first Secretary-General of Viet-Nam's Communist Party, Tran Phu. While they reveal him to be ahead of his time, even the Theses show little evidence of a correct theoretical appraisal of the alliance of four classes. Most of the emphasis is still on a purely worker-peasant revolution; it would be impossible to consider the 1930-31 Front as anything but the vehicle for a dogmatically standardized 1917-type revolution which time had already antiquated. The years 1930-31 did not see the development of a mass coalition at all; quite the contrary, the "anti-imperialist" alliance was very sectarian, excluding not only the patriotic middle class ~~but~~ (national bourgeoisie) but even the intellectuals and small businessmen (petty bourgeoisie). It was these very mistakes that lead to the tragic Nghe-Tinh soviet failure that same year.

Why did the Viet-Namese form half a dozen United Fronts between 1936 and the present? Because the Viet-Namese revolution went through many stages, legal and illegal. Its slogans and strategies had to be as diversified as the conditions and the nature of the foreign aggressor (or

aggressors!) they happened to be fighting at a given time. The Viet-Nameese revolutionaries' policy towards Chiang Kai Shek's troops could not be the same as that towards the French, nor towards the Japanese which unfortunately the Viet-Nameese were forced to fight at the same time!

Each time the Viet-Nameese formed a new Front it became even broader than the last. Fatherland Front leader Hoang Quoc Viet said,

"Every time the National United Front was broadened and consolidated, our people's struggle achieved new victories. This is a precious historic experience."

Nam Bo (South Viet-Nam proper) saw the emergence in July 1936 of Viet-Nam's first real United Front--the Indo-Chinese Democratic Front. It lasted till the middle of 1939. These were the years of the Popular Front in France. One third of the members of the French National Assembly were Communists, and the lot of the Viet-Nameese people improved during France's period of "liberalization." Some political prisoners were released, French terrorism diminished. The Indo-Chinese Democratic Front was allowed to operate openly.

But the fiery breath of fascism had begun to blow over Europe. 1939 brought ~~the year of~~ Munich, the big Western sell-out to Hitler. The betrayal of the Socialist Party caused the French Popular Front to fall. One year later the Hitler fascists conquered France and occupied Paris, and the Vichyite puppet government brought fierce fascist repression to Viet-Nam.

That is why though the Democratic Front was very successful and the broadest the world had yet seen, it still had to be

replaced in 1939 by another United Front.

One of Marx and Engel's greatest philosophic contributions to the world is their showing that phenomena undergo quantitative and qualitative changes in accordance with changing conditions. No one theory or organization can remain perfect for all times, in all historic circumstances. The Viet-Nam^Nese are one of the few peoples in the world really to practice this belief (just as Le^Duan's writings clearly show that the Viet-Nam^Nese are almost the only real Internationalists left). The Strategic Guiding Principles worked out by the Party have remained steadfast and unchangeable throughout all Viet-Nam^Nese United Fronts. But it is different with tactics. When Hitler's conquest of France installed a fascist puppet government, hundreds of thousands of Viet-Nam^Nese were killed or jailed or tortured. Ho Chi Minh dissolved the Communist Party. In fact, the Party and the United Front went underground. Meeting at Hoc Mon (Gia Dinh province) in November of 1939-- when the Second World War first broke out--the Central Committee of the Party decided to set up Viet-Nam's second United Front. They called it the "Indo-Chinese Anti-Imperialist National United Front." (Mat Tran Dan Chu Bai Phong Phan De). Externally, the Front orchestrated its activities specifically against the French fascists, though the Viet-Nam^Nese never neglected the theme of internal revolution--against the compradors and feudal landlords.

Some of the slogans of the Anti-Imperialist Front were "Oppose Terrorism," "Oppose Fascism and War" "Not a penny nor

a soldier for French colonialism." The Democratic Youth Union became the "Anti-Imperialist Youth Union."

Later, in May of 1941 in the Pac Bo cave of Cao Bang Ho Chi Minh set up the famous "Viet-Minh," whose story I have already told. The new Front's founding was necessitated by Japanese invasion having been added to French colonialism, once more changing the situation. The Viet-Minh's mission was to prepare the people for an armed uprising against the twin tribulations of the French and Japanese occupiers.

After the end of the Second World War in 1945 on orders from the Allies over 200,000 Chiang Kai-Shek troops entered North Viet-Nam, purportedly to supervise the withdrawal of the defeated Japanese fascists. At the same time, the British were entrusted with "liberating" South Viet-Nam from the Japanese. Instead, General Gracey, in charge of the operation, acted naturally in the interests of British imperialism by smoothing the way for the return of the French. General Gracey and his fellows even loaned British warships to the French to help them stage a colonialist comeback in the South!

Slowly the French started re-spreading their sinister skein to strangle South Viet-Nam. In view of that situation, from September 2, 1945 to March 6, 1946 the tactics of the Viet-Namese Communists centered on reaching a compromise with Chiang Kai Shek to oppose the French. Actually the Viet-Namese had little choice. The dragnet of over 200,000 Chinese troops, backed up by the Dragon of China with its 600 million people, made it essential for a prudent Viet-Nam to compromise merely to survive. This was but one condition that made necessary

the founding of the Lien Viet Front (literally: a "joining together"), Viet-Nam's fourth.

Just as "Viet-Minh" is short for "Viet-Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh," so "Lien Viet" is a shortened form of Lien Hiep Quoc Dan Viet-Nam (sometimes translated "National Union of Viet-Nam," sometimes "National United Front," at other times "National People's Union"). The Lien Viet pledged itself to guarantee to "all Viet-Namese citizens political and social-economic rights: the rights of man, such as freedom of political beliefs and religious liberty, freedom of choice, of residence and of movement; political rights, such as the right to elect and be elected, to take part in the government of the nation, and other democratic freedoms, such as freedom of speech, press, organization, assembly, etc; economic rights, such as private enterprise, personal property and inheritance."

To mollify the Chinese Nationalists, who were intent upon overthrowing the DRV government, Ho Chi Minh even took their Viet-Namese supporters into his coalition government. The pro-Chiang-Kai-Shek "Viet-Nam Quoc Dan Dang" (VNQDD) Party refused Ho Chi Minh's invitation to test its strength against the Viet-Minh and other candidates at the ballot box--because it knew that in a free election, its members would lose! Still the VNQDD insisted on representation in the new Government. With characteristic Tolerance and magnanimity, Ho Chi Minh gave them 50 seats in the National Assembly.

But the Viet-Namese revolutionary leaders saw to their horror that the Chinese--the traditional "Devil" enemy of the

Viet-^Namese--intended staying permanently in Viet-^Nam. The Chinese troops lived off the Viet-^Namese land like ragamuffin bandits, robbing and raping, and burdening the poor Viet-^Namese (who were already overburdened emotionally and financially) with the task of feeding and maintaining them. So the Viet-^Namese Communists switched tactics again, reaching on March 6, 1946 a compromise with the French to oust the over 200,000 Chiang Kai Shek troops in Viet-^Nam. (To entice the Chinese to agree, the French promised them special rights of access to Haiphong Harbor, and customs exemptions for goods shipped by rail from Kuming. In addition France agreed to give up her colonialist holdings in China!) The withdrawal of the Chinese troops gave Viet-^Nam, especially the North, a breathing spell in which to prepare for a French attack.

Though the Lien Viet Front was broader than the Viet-Minh, as I said earlier the two Fronts continued side by side till their merger in 1951 when the Viet-Minh ceased to exist. The Lien Viet Front carried Viet-^Nam through its difficult war against the French.

After Viet-^Nam won independence in 1954 a different United Front had to be formed reflecting the character of a peaceful nation geared to forging an independent national economy, to raising the living standards, to building Socialism. The year 1955 saw the birth of the DRV's Fatherland Front (Mat-Tran To Quoc) the present United Front of the North.

Secondarily, the Fatherland Front helped spark resistance to the tyrannical Diem regime in the South. It paved the way for the most recent Viet-^Namese United Front--the National

Front for Liberation of South Viet-Nam (Mat-Tran-Dan-Toc-Giai-Phong Mien-Nam).

Addressing the Fatherland Front at its formation, Truong Chinh said: "The historic experiences of our ancestors as well as of ourselves in recent times show that every time our nation achieved great unity, every time we were victorious whether in the defence of our independence or in insurrection. Now that our country's peace, unity, independence, democracy are being threatened, we are confident that this time the Hanoi Congress will create favourable conditions for the unification of the country, just as the Dien Hong Congress (1284) stirred up the resistance of the entire people, the Tan Trao Congress adopted the order for the August 1945 Revolution, just as the 1951 Congress unifying the Viet-Minh--Lien Viet Association into the Lien-Viet Front speeded up the national armed resistance toward victory."²

Footnotes For Chapter ~~IX~~ IX

- 1 Viet-Namⁱⁿ Fatherland Front and the Struggle for National Unity. Hanoi: FLPH, 1956, p. 15
- 2 ibid., p. 50

DEFINING VIET-NAM'S SOCIAL CLASSES

At this point, it is well to define the social classes in Viet-Namese society since the following chapters on National Democratic Revolution require it.

Both in teaching at the Free University and in innumerable conversations, I have been struck by how few are those familiar with even the simplest political terminology. Most of the "New Left" reject Marxist and all theory. Rationally one would expect them to discard it only after study, but such is not the case, since they have never read or studied it at all. So, such persons have absolutely no idea what they are rejecting! Others are convinced they believe in Marxism. But they also do not know what it is.

The first semester that I taught at the Free School I went along my merry way, talking about the proletariat and the petty and national bourgeoisie. It did not occur to me to define those terms, till noticing absolutely blank looks on the faces of my students. They admitted to not knowing what "proletariat" and "bourgeoisie" meant, and were absolutely lost in my lectures. (Of course, they knew nothing at all about Viet-Nam, the Diem regime, the National Front for Liberation, let alone the meaning of terms like "DRV," "National Assembly," and "Central Committee.") No wonder that when Americans buy DRV political literature they are baffled by it!

In fact, most Americans are so politically unversed that

they can't even tell DRV books are using the terminology of a political science! It never occurs to them that each DRV political term, each slogan (which Americans are apt to think of as "cliches") stands for a much more involved political and philosophic concept. Being the most politically sophisticated people in the world, the Viet-^Namese for their part do not bother explaining terms, attributing to foreigners a political sophistication that the latter lack.*

However, one DRV book, Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, does define the classes in Viet-^Namese society, clearly and cogently. Written in 1930 to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Indo-^Chinese Communist Party (now the Lao Dong party) the book was authored jointly by the Central Committee of Propaganda of the Lao ^Dong Party, and the Committee for the Study of the Party's History. Several Marxist-^Leninists (of the older generation, be it noted!) have told me very matter-Of-factly that they consider this book one of the greatest

Le Kha Ke writes in the DRV magazine "Viet-^Namese Studies (Pr^oblems)^r": "The political level of the Viet-^Namese people is relatively high even when compared with those of the most advanced countries. Every Viet-^Namese knows very well words such as ideological stand, philosophical point of view, materialism, idealism, conception, class, etc. It can be said that in philosophy and politics we have got a fairly complete system of words, most of them already accepted by the general public." 1

pieces of political literature they have ever read.

During feudal times in Viet-Nam society was composed of only two classes, or castes: the reigning feudal aristocracy, and the plebians--the people.

Of the six social classes in Viet-Namese society today (and it should be kept in mind that almost every country in the world has these classes in one form or another), four are warmly welcomed into the National Front for Liberation. I shall name them all first, and then define them: The proletariat, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. They are always listed by the Viet-Namese in that order, beginning with the proletariat, the most revolutionary, and ending with the national bourgeoisie, the least revolutionary class. In addition, there exist two classes which the NFL (like all previous United Fronts in Viet-Nam) has never wanted in its ranks, and which would not join the Front even if asked. These are the feudal landlord class and the comprador bourgeoisie. In fact, the latter two are the Front's class enemies; in addition to fighting U.S. aggression, the Viet-Namese are waging an internal, a class war. Now people don't normally ask their enemies to join their organization, do they? Even if they did, the Enemy would probably refuse. However, though membership in the Viet-Namese United Fronts for the feudal landlord class as a whole is proscribed, a number of rich landlords stood against French rule, as they stand against American rule now. They wanted to and did join the Front in the common struggle to save the whole nation. So did small landlords, and intellectuals ~~whom~~ and students whose parents were landlords. They

became instrumental in forming the Viet-^Nam Democratic Party in 1944.

The students of landlord stock who had learned only a reactionary ideology at home and at school nevertheless had managed to pick up a few progressive sentiments from the Viet-Minh, and were searching. (Just as many university students and other young people in the U.S. today, coming from conservative families who know nothing of progressive thought, still become disillusioned with American life and in one way or another ~~ix~~ are led to the New Left.)

Before defining the social classes I must ask indulgence of those politically sophisticated souls who are apt to be impatient at the elementary definitions of basic terms long familiar to them. I can only plead with such persons to bear with me for a little while. Though parts of it may seem so to you, politically this is no kindergarten book. Stick with it; I guarantee you will learn something--perhaps a great deal more than you bargained for!

The proletariat, as every reader of this book knows by now, is the working class. (Before taking my course, some of my students had the mistaken notion that it included part of the peasantry!) As an earlier chapter explained, the Viet-^Namese proletariat came into being as a result of the development of French capitalism, and actually preceded the advent of the Viet-^Namese capitalist class. You will recall that after World War I, large numbers of Viet-^Namese peasants became bankrupt and drifted to the cities to take jobs in factories, mines and plantations. That served to push the proletariat

into more rapid development, and it soon became a leading force. Except under Socialism proletarians never own the machinery of production. They must sell their labor power to the capitalists, who exploit it to make big profits from the means of production. (Those tempted to condemn that old "marxist cliché" of capitalists "exploiting" workers might reflect that exploit by dictionary definition means to ~~take~~ take advantage of, or to use. Now, I'm no phrasemonger, but what other word would really reflect the French entrepreneurs working the poor Viet-^Namese to the bone? While the French grew rotten rich, Viet-^Namese laborers were working for peanuts or perhaps more correctly, for insects--what poor families sometimes were reduced to eating.)

The Viet-^Namese peasantry always embraced over 80 per cent of the population, and was dreadfully exploited both by the feudal landlords and the foreign imperialists. High land rent and interest (often amounting to over 600 % of the premium!) very heavy taxes, corvees (forced labor), beatings were the lot of the poor peasants, whose conditions of poverty were appalling. The greatest need of the landless and land-poor peasants of Viet-^Nam was and is of course for land, which is why they are the mainstay of the liberation wars; they have always enthusiastically welcomed the Front's policy of giving "Land to the Tillers"--to those who actually till or work the land.

Information about the feudal landlord class will be given in a later chapter. Here it is only necessary to say that having robbed the poverty-stricken peasants of their cash,

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health and land, the feudal landlord class was and remains the most detested class in Viet-^Namese society.

Bourgeoisie, a French word meaning "middle class," is the internationally-accepted term.

The Viet-^Namese bourgeoisie was born at the time the French began their invasion of Viet-^Nam in 1873. But its growth was quite sporadic, and like the proletariat it really became a class only after World War I. The Viet-^Namese bourgeoisie soon split into two parts: comprador bourgeoisie, and national bourgeoisie. The language of political ~~sci~~ science utilizes many foreign words. Just as the French word bourgeoisie has become universalized, so has the Spanish word comprador, which means literally a buyer. And the comprador bourgeois do buy; they buy and sell exclusively to the foreign imperialists. It used to be the French, now it is the Americans whose sole agents the South Viet-^Namese comprador bourgeois have become.

They are the really big capitalists and industrialists who buy local products for the American imperialists, and sell to them manufactured goods; they invest huge sums of money in American industrial and commercial enterprises, or build big projects for them.

The National bourgeoisie comprises capitalists who stand for the promotion of national, or locally-produced industry. To an American the difference between a comprador bourgeois and a national bourgeois is analogous to the difference between a proprietor of a store or small company, and the owners of DuPont. In Western countries the equivalent of the national bourgeois are called middle, or middle-sized capital-

ists, and the comprador bourgeois, like Rockefeller, the big capitalists.

Just as in the U.S. every year more and more small businesses go bankrupt, put out of commission by the chain stores and large corporations, so the comprador bourgeoisie in Viet-Nam bankrupts the national bourgeoisie. Submerged and stymied, the national bourgeoisie cannot assert itself, since it can only prosper on home-grown industry. Because they promote national goods, in that sense the national bourgeois are patriotic, even though they, too, exploit the workers. (That's why the national bourgeoisie is often referred to as "the patriotic bourgeoisie" or "the democratic wing of the bourgeoisie.")

By contrast the comprador bourgeois not only completely cater to the American imperialists, but slavishly copy all their customs and habits, "the better to serve you, my dear." They have become so Americanized that the people of Viet-Nam say they do not even consider them Viet-Namense anymore! Because the same foreign monopoly and foreign goods that make the compradors wealthy kill both the spirit and capital of the National capitalists, the latter can link up destinies with the NFL. Taking full advantage of the situation, the Front makes every effort to win them over. On every level, the Viet-Namense revolutionaries practice their important and highly effective United Front formula:

"Win over all those who can be won over, neutralize all those who can't be won over, unite with all those who can be united, divide all those who can be divided, in order to have

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more friends and less foes and completely isolate the enemy."

Like previous Viet-^Namese United Fronts, the NFL has succeeded in splitting the ranks of the bourgeoisie, sloughing off the national bourgeoisie from the comprador bourgeoisie, for the purpose of weakening the capitalist class by dividing it. Though the feudal landlords comprise the most detested class in Viet-^Namese society, the comprador bourgeoisie now runs them a close second!

Even though the national bourgeois cannot withstand the competition of the compradors and often are forced out of business, it must not be imagined that they are a stable revolutionary force. Large numbers of national bourgeois also have economic relations with both the big, comprador capitalists and with Americans. Many national bourgeois are merchants selling goods to Americans as well as to the local people, and a sizable segment are even landlords besides!

The nature of their economic traffic has given them certain peculiar characteristics. As Thirty Year Of Struggle of the Party puts it:

"Therefore the national bourgeoisie had a two-sided nature: on the one hand they were against the imperialists and the feudalists, approving of national independence and democratic freedoms, but on the other, their attitude was unstable, wavering and hesitant. When the imperialists were strong they easily compromised and advocated reforms, but tended towards the revolutionary mass movement when it was on the upsurge. For this reason the national bourgeoisie could not lead the

Viet-^Namese revolution."²

More recently, a Historians' Conference in Hanoi discussed whether there was a clear-cut line of demarcation between the national bourgeoisie and the comprador bourgeoisie, or whether there existed in fact a single bourgeois class. The report drawn up by the Historians was rather surprising:

"Most Viet-^Namese historians at present held that in Viet-^Nam there was no clear-cut differentiation between the two bourgeois classes. Within the sphere of influence of the French capitalists, some who were at first compradors later became national bourgeois, and vice versa in the case of others. And many among the most important Viet-Namese bourgeois belonged to both categories at the same time. Thus it can only be said that in its evolution the Viet-^Namese bourgeoisie had differentiated, without any clear-cut dividing line, into comprador and national elements..."³

But the bourgeoisie not only fragmented into national and comprador. In a sense it ~~is~~ actually split three ways, since the petty-bourgeoisie is always spoken of as a separate class. As the French word implies, "petty-bourgeoisie" ("petit-bourgeoisie") literally means "little bourgeoisie." Even the national bourgeois are big in comparison to the petty-bourgeois--the smallest of the "small businessmen." This group includes people of various walks: small traders, "hawkers," middlemen, owners of small industrial concerns. (North Viet-^Nam highly values its traders, since "they keep goods in circulation," and are considered by the DRV leaders to be working people.)

In addition to the small businessmen, the petty-bourgeoisie comprises the intellectuals and professional people, such as lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers, as well as the students. Though such a variegated group, its members are linked together by the general instability of their lives: In a non-socialist society these small and wandering tradesmen and intellectuals in precarious positions are always threatened by bankruptcy, unemployment and ruin. Since like the workers they face the threat of job loss and disaster, they have less to lose in a revolution than the national bourgeoisie--which is why the Viet-^{am}ese Communists are absolutely right in considering the petty-bourgeoisie a revolutionary force. But though less than the national bourgeoisie, they still do vacillate, in accordance with the revolutionary struggle winning or losing. Because of their class interests, they like to be on the winners' bandwagon! (In fact, one way of gauging the success of the Liberation Front militarily is to observe which side the majority of national and petty bourgeois have swung to politically. Has any significant shift in their alignment occurred? For the middle classes to move away from the Front would signal that the bourgeois elements believe the Front to be losing.)

In general, the petty-bourgeois have always taken a very active and enthusiastic part in the Viet-^{am}ese revolution and are reliable allies of the working class. Because of their superior education and skills, they make a high contribution to the national cause. It is only to its own detriment that a revolution fails to make a devoted effort to win over the petty-bourgeoisie. By alienating this class (as the

trotskyists deliberately do) one can neither win victory in a revolution these days, nor build a rational and meaningful society afterwards. The soviets learned that the hard way, when after the October Revolution estranged engineers and intellectuals staged an exodus from the Soviet Union or refused to cooperate with the new regime. Without them, Lenin could not get any electric power stations built; he could not even get the lights turned on in the Kremlin, nor make the Kremlin chimes ring--which is why the famous Soviet play by Nikolai Pogodin portraying these events is called "Kremlin Chimes."

To remember Lenin's famous formula that "Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the entire country" is also to see the importance of the petty-bourgeoisie, without whose technical knowhow power stations cannot be built. (It is also ~~xx~~ to understand more deeply the tragedy of U.S. bombings of the DRV's power stationsx including the one in the very heart of Hanoi. As I said earlier, the mighty Uong Bi, Bac Giang, Hong Gai, Thai-Nguyen, Viet-Tri, Haiphong, Hanoi and half a dozen of the other biggest DRV power plants have been destroyed by the U.S. air force because electric-power is the most important branch, the foundation for all other industry. When the DRV said "develop electric power one step ahead of other industrial branches" it was merely expressing Lenin's formula another way.)

In the building of a modern industrial society as well as in the enrichment of culture and life, petty bourgeois technicians and intellectuals certainly play a very important role.

Footnotes For Chapter ~~XXXX~~ X

- 1 Le Kha Ke, "Elaboration of a Scientific Terminology in the Viet-^Namese Language," Viet-amese Studies ("Problems"), "Education in the D.R.V" No. 5, 1965, p. 108
- 2 Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, op. cit., p. 14
- 3 "Ten Years of Historical Research in the DRV," Viet-^Namese Studies, No. 4, 1965, pp. 137-38

The Formula

The Viet-Namense are aware that in the main their theories are applicable everywhere. The imperialists know it, too; that is why they are concentrating all their efforts to try to crush the Viet-Namense revolution. The following excerpt from the article "The Question of National Liberation In Our Time," published in "Hoc Tap," theoretical and ideological journal of the Lao Dong party, explains the ingredients for carrying out and consolidating a revolution in every oppressed country without exception:

"Experiences of the national liberation movement over the past 18 years clearly demonstrate that in order to ensure the success of the national democratic revolution there must be the following subjective conditions in each country:

--"The working class and its vanguard must firmly hold the leadership of the revolution;

--"All patriotic, democratic and progressive classes and strata must be organized and rallied into a national united front which is based on the worker-peasant alliance to direct the spearhead of the struggle against the imperialists and the old and new colonialists and their henchmen; and

--"The people's armed forces must be formed to carry out armed struggle and armed uprising to seize power.

"That the national liberation revolution has not been carried out thoroughly in some countries is usually due to the absence of a revolutionary political Party of the working

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class or to such a Party's failure to have a correct revolutionary line, to hold high the national banner, especially its failure to put forth an agrarian programme. That is why it cannot win over and mobilize the larger force of the people--the peasants--and the leadership of the revolution falls into the hands of the bourgeoisie and the people's revolutionary forces are not mobilized and organized into strong contingents."

A worker-peasant alliance led by the working class is the main feature of the new-type national democratic revolution that Viet-Nam exemplifies. This revolution has two distinctive features. It is first of all anti-imperialist, and centers around building a broad United Front to expel the foreign body. The purpose is, in the words of the Program of the National Front for Liberation, to "wrest back the people's economic, political, social and cultural interests, realize independence and democracy..."² That is its main theme. But the NFL like former Viet-Namese United Fronts in which all political persuasions, all religions, all nationalities work in harmony, as in a well-constructed symphonic work, also has its "counterpoint." Like a Bach prelude and fugue, the national democratic revolution has a subsidiary theme--the Anti-Feudal revolution.*

Some of the theory behind Viet-Nam's National Democratic Revolution is traceable to the "Theses on the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution," mentioned in a preceding chapter and popularly known as the "Political Program." Tragically, its formulator, Tran Phu, brilliant first Secretary-General of

* Land Reform is discussed in a coming chapter

Viet-Nam's Communist Party, was killed off in the prime of life by the French. The Indo-Chinese Communist Party adopted the "Theses" in 1930. (By "bourgeois democratic revolution" Tran Phu meant not the old-type bourgeois-democratic revolution, but what the Viet-Namese now call the people's national democratic revolution.) Some of Tran Phu's teachings have stood the test of time, others have not. Though formulated almost forty years ago, part of the "Political Program" could have been lifted right out of the NFL's program and policies of today:

"The tasks of this revolution are to wipe out feudal remnants, to distribute land to the tillers, to overthrow imperialism and to make Indochina completely independent. Only by defeating imperialism can feudalism be wiped out and only by abolishing feudalism can imperialism be overthrown. The main driving-power of the revolution is the workers and the peasants. The essential condition that ensures the success of the Indochinese revolution is a Communist Party having a correct political line, discipline, close contact with the masses and having matured through revolutionary struggle..."

(For what has not weathered the test of time, ponder the very next line of the Program: "To seize national independence and distribute land to the tillers, a 'peasant-worker soviet power' must be set up." I have already delineated the disasters accruing from this during the Nghe-Tinh soviet uprisings of 1930-31.)

Breaking down the phrase "National Democratic Revolution" word by word makes it easier to grasp its real meaning.

"National" should be thought of in the sense of "national awareness." When a people like the Viet-Namese struggle against an oppressor (usually foreign) they are united in patriotic feeling and love for their national traditions, and animosity towards the enemy who tries to destroy them. Since genuine solidarity is inseparable from internationalism, naturally "national" cannot connote a narrow-minded nationalism.

"Democratic" means exactly what the word would seem to: the widest possible practice of all democratic rights and liberties: freedom of the press, of assembly, of religion, etc. Now that we have the words "National Democratic" what about "Revolution"? In its true sense this refers to a real revolution --a sweeping change in the System that has no other recourse except to come about through armed struggle.

Individuals and classes in society differ from one another in experience, in political outlook, in life-goals. But though much divides them they can all unite around one immense issue: the struggle for democracy.

As a paranoid regards everything outside himself with suspicion, so does the Establishment react towards anyone and anything outside its inner circles. Threatened or imagining itself to be, it tries to "protect" itself by depriving large parts of the population of essential freedoms (which they might use to bring about revolution). It takes away or suspends their civil liberties and practices repression. The degree to which it does this varies from country to country. Ultimately, no

segment of society is free; the small businessman, the worker, the intellectual, if "they know what's good for them" must "keep their mouths shut" and cooperate with the System.

The National Democratic Revolution is fought to win or win back the basic democratic rights which are the people's birth-right. The battle for democracy cuts through class, color and every other line that monopoly capitalism dividingly draws. People of all positions, professions and persuasions work together to bring about the widest practice of civil liberties: freedom of speech, of religion, of the press, of assembly; freedom from fear, freedom to advocate the most radical ideas and plan for their implementation. According to the philosophy of Viet-Nam's new-type National Democratic Revolution everything about man must be liberated: his heart, his mind, his body, his soul.

Making the battle for democracy the primary pivot of revolutionary struggle endues the people with love for liberty. In Viet-Nam this National Democratic Revolution made meaningful the great value which democratic rights and freedoms should have in society and in the life of every man. And shouldn't that be the goal of every National Democratic Revolution? Spread through the cities and villages by Viet-Nam's revolutionary leaders, the belief that democratic liberties exalt and ennoble man took deep root in the revolution. Such constant emphasizing assured it leaving its mark on the independent Democratic Republic after the revolution. Every citizen of the Democratic Republic enjoys democratic rights and freedoms; he takes them

for granted, considering them perfectly natural. That's why it's so important to emphasize democratic rights in the early phase of the struggle--so that their practice might carry over into post revolutionary society, as they have in the DRV.

The new-type national democratic revolution, for which Viet-Nam is the perfect model, is not like the old-type bourgeois democratic revolutions that occurred one or more centuries ago. The leaders of the DRV are quick to point out that the National Democratic Revolution in Viet-Nam is very different, too, from the bourgeois democratic revolutions "in some Afro-Asian countries, as in Egypt and in Iraq today."³

The so-called nationalist revolutions in Egypt and Iraq as well as in Ghana, Indonesia, Algeria and all over Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East are distorted revolutions. Instead of being led by the worker-peasant

alliance, such revolutions were led from the outset by non-progressive outlooks and elements. Having early wrested leadership of the struggle in these countries, the national bourgeoisie has never relinquished it.

As nothing can be more important for our understanding, I shall let Truong Chinh explain the requirements for a national democratic revolution of the new type:

"...our Party quite correctly assessed: the chief opponent to be overthrown by the Viet-^{am}ese people's national democratic revolution is imperialism and the feudal landlord class. (The comprador capitalist class constitutes the secondary opponent.)

"Who carries out the revolution in Viet-^{am} to overthrow imperialism and feudalism? Four classes among the people: the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. These are our revolutionary forces. But the driving forces of our revolution comprise the working class, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. (Emphasis Truong Chinh's.) The leadership of the revolution belongs to the working class. The main forces of the revolution are the peasantry. The allies of the revolution are the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie, the latter being a casual ally.

"Such an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution carried out by the people is what we call a people's national democratic revolution. It is also a bourgeois democratic revolution of a new type in a colony, led by the working class, unlike the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the old type

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led by the bourgeoisie such as the French revolution in 1789 and the Turkish revolution in 1925. (Emphasis Truong Chinh's)

"The Viet-Nam^ese people's national democratic revolution... [is] aimed at overthrowing imperialism and feudalism, liberating the people, bringing land to the tillers, establishing the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, that is a people's democratic state, and creating favourable conditions for Viet-Nam to advance directly to socialism without passing through the stage of capitalist development.

"The French and Turkish bourgeois democratic revolutions have stopped half way because they were not led by the working class, but by the bourgeoisie. Once the democratic revolution was achieved, these countries embarked on the path of capitalist development.

"The bourgeois democratic revolution in some Afro-Asian countries, as in Egypt and in Iraq today, are indeed different from the former French and Turkish revolutions but, with the leadership and state power in the hands of the national bourgeoisie, they are facing an eventual standstill. That is why the working class and toiling people of these countries are striving to oppose the landlord class, the comprador bourgeoisie and the right wing of the national bourgeoisie, to carry out genuine agrarian reform and secure broad democratic liberties for the people, to demand independent and sovereign development for their economy and culture, and resist the imperialists' policy of intervention and enslavement, etc.

"Unlike the above-mentioned bourgeois democratic

revolutions of the old type, the Viet-Nam⁴ese people's national democratic revolution is led by the Viet-Nam⁴ese working class, therefore it will without fail advance to socialist revolution and in fact it is now progressing towards socialism in the North of our country."

Having violated the principles of the new-type national democratic revolution, countries like Ghana and Indonesia even before "independence" lay plumb ripe for right-wing military take-overs. In every country where the CIA has helped to or in future will bring about coups--or even where native traitors do so alone--the national democratic revolution was never led by the working class. On the contrary, after such a country won independence or was "granted" it, the power remained in the hands of the national bourgeoisie! Actually, no colonialist power has ever bestowed independence upon a country. An imperialist vice is always continued around such countries by the national bourgeoisie who come under the domination of the neo-colonialists.

Prominent DRV leader Le Duan puts it perfectly: "In an attempt to save colonialism from its doom, to thwart the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants and to ward off the influence of the socialist camp, imperialism has hastened to come to a compromise with the national bourgeoisie, its reactionary wing in particular, and has nominally conceded partial independence to a number of colonies and dependencies. But in reality it has done everything possible to preserve its colonial interests in a new form. This gives the lie to the

claim made by certain persons that the emergence of a number of nationalist countries enjoying sovereignty in varying degrees is the result of struggle by peaceful means and of peaceful coexistence between the two opposing social systems. The imperialists never give up colonialism, one of the fundamental bases on which lie their existence and their domination. While capitalism is sinking in a new period of general crisis, and their contradictions are sharper than ever, the imperialists do their best to put into practice their neo-colonialism and regard it as their most efficient talisman. They resort to such means as direct investments, economic and military "aids," setting up of military alliances, seeking to create new social classes at their service, buying off the ruling circles, engineering subversive activities, coups d'etat and when necessary waging aggressive wars, "special Wars" or local wars to suppress the opposition of the people in order to bring the Asian, African and Latin American countries under their economic, political and military sway."

The DRV has consistently refused to accept Western aid "with strings attached." Since imperialist countries cannot give any other type except that which will give them control over the economic and political life of the country, the DRV has not taken a single penny of such money or investments! That is a principal reason why the DRV is being bombed. What they cannot control monetarily, the U.S. imperialists seek to destroy militarily.

As I said earlier, U.S. bombers destroyed, for example, the

Thai-Nguyen Iron-and-Steel Complex--the only one built in Southeast Asia--partly because the U.S. imperialists did not want North Viet-Nam to be self-sufficient in steel. That giant industrial center, sprawling over ten miles, soon would have produced enough steel for South Viet-Nam and all of South-East Asia. U.S. planes wrecked DRV industry and power stations to stop that nation from building "an independent national economy" which had so heartened the oppressed. The downtrodden countries of the Third World have no steel mills, no industry of their own because the United States insists that they import U.S. steel and other products, and continue dependence on foreign monopolies. Devastating the DRV is the U.S. government's way of serving notice on other nations not to initiate a Socialist organization of their economy--on penalty of being bombed to rubble.

The air war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam is the most tragic in history, and there can be no consolation. But having destroyed the concrete gains of the DRV's national independence--cities, factories, schools, hospitals, cultural establishments, and all the amenities of life painstakingly built up for over a decade, the U.S. still is not satisfied. Because it has not succeeded in destroying that national independence itself.

For if a nation follows the Viet-Namese model, its government can never be "overthrown" by any enemy external or internal. What could be more frustrating to U.S. leaders! The most powerful military machine in the world, throwing against

the Viet-Nameese people a plethora of every fiendish weapon, has not been able to defeat a small and weak nation.

That is because the revolution in Viet-Nam is a revolution of the majority.

A revolution in our time, the Viet-Nameese leaders say, must not and cannot be a revolution of a minority. Just as Truong Chinh said in The August Revolution "To triumph, a revolution worthy of new times must be a real revolution of the broad masses..." so Le Duan says in On The Socialist Revolution in Viet-Nam that the revolution "must go through the national-liberation revolution, and bourgeois democratic revolution. It cannot bypass necessary stages. In the imperialistic era, it must be a far-reaching people's revolution and not a revolution of an upper minority."⁶ (Emphasis added). The latter type "revolution" is doomed from birth, because what is to prevent another minority from staging another coup to oust the preceding one? The far-reaching poison of U.S. imperialism can always asphyxiate any revolution not rooted in the majority of people and not based on correct economic and political policies. Usually, the U.S. government does not even have to resort to "force"; the revolution will be its own executioner.

Consider: Why didn't the Indonesian people and their Communist Party prevent over a million of their compatriots from being massacred after the anti-Sukarno coup? The Indonesian catastrophe provides a classic example of a revolution gone

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awry because it violated Viet-Nam^Nese revolutionary teachings.

The PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) had from the outset followed an incorrect policy, substituting Sukarno worship for proletarian leadership of the revolution, and incorporating the dictator's obscurantist religion and idiosyncracies into its doctrine. Ho Chi Minh is acknowledged as the world leader most beloved by his people. Still in 1930 the founders of Viet-Nam's Communist Party wrote into their Party Program: "Revolution is the work of the masses to liberate themselves, no hero can save them." One must rely, not primarily on one individual but on the strength of the majority of people.

Precariously based from the very beginning, the Indonesian revolution put and kept the national bourgeoisie in the saddle. Reactionary generals and officers held military and police power which is real State power. When the right-wing carried out its coup and the military and fanatic religious followers began butchering the people, the cowardly PKI (which boasted of nine million members plus upwards of 20 million in its satellite organizations) did not retaliate. How could it, when throughout its existence it had neither practiced nor even preached militancy, revolution. When Sukarno's power and image went, so did the PKI's flimsy political base.

Reflect on Lumumba's murder. Think of the coups that have recently rocked the Third World: Ghana's Nkrumah, the "great progressive leader of Africa," ousted in disgrace; Algeria's "great liberation hero" Ben Bella, consigned to the ashcan of history; Nigeria's Balewa, the "unifying hope" of his disjointed tribal nation, himself disjointed during his

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savage murder, and so on and on.

Can one imagine a coup against Ho Chi Minh succeeding? It seems absurd even to raise such a question. Washington and the world know that in the event anything happened to beloved Uncle Ho, the Viet-Namense people would quickly quash the quislings the CIA or anyone installed in his place. But even that is too far-fetched; you could not find a single leader, a single citizen of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam who would consent to carry out such a coup and form a new "government."

Senators like Thomas Dodd (censured for corruption by the Senate Ethics Committee) make speeches calling for the setting up by the U.S. and its Saigon puppets of a Liberation Front in the North to overthrow the people's government there.⁷ But look what happened when the U.S. tried! Nearly every one of the "guerilla commandos" parachuted into North Viet-Nam has met his demise. They were thwarted by the fishermen and simple villagers of the North, who for their precious independence now fight with mere rifles against the mighty U.S. air force!

In a world of instability the government of the DRV is so stable because it is truly a government of, by, and for the people; because it has earned the people's love and trust by bringing them independence, freedom, happiness and the economic well-being that can only come about through the building of an independent national economy.

In the coup-cursed countries--that is to say, almost every country of the Third World--bourgeois control of the

government, tied to foreign investments, results in economic stagnation as well as corruption, internecine feuding and oppression. No coup can possibly correct such conditions. Only an uprising of the people under leadership that follows Viet-Nam's revolutionary precepts can do so.

Before Indonesia's right-wing coup, at a militant Marxist-Leninist organization I used to hear the members say: "Indonesia will go Communist long before South Viet-Nam does." All their knowledge of political theory hadn't taught them that the national bourgeoisie can never take a country to Socialism!

The Viet-Nameese revolution teaches that the Party must always control the Army. The coups in Algeria, Ghana, Indonesia and other countries were made possible because military power was held by reactionaries. Had the Army been in Communist hands from the time the liberation struggle began, instead of in the powerful paws of a clique of generals whose interests had nothing in common with those of the workers and peasants, such coups never would have resulted. Even one right-wing

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general occupying an army post presents an obvious danger.

People protest that in Indonesia the PKI was just starting to arm the militia when the right-wing massacre broke loose. But that is too late--much too late! Arming the people must start when the revolution is first fought, when the National Front is beginning! That is how it was in Viet-Nam and must be everywhere in the Third World. Otherwise the revolution's grave is already dug. (Be suspicious of a revolution that does not arm the people, for it means that it does not trust them with weapons in their hands. Only that revolution enjoying the people's real support dares arm them!)

Speaking of the Viet-Nam People's Army Truong Chinh says, "This army was in its essence a worker-peasant army led by the Party, which alone is possessed of a combative spirit and has the ability to lead it to fight till final victory. Our Party must spare a number of able cadres to command the army and never lessen its leadership even for a single minute."⁸

General Vo Nguyen Giap says in People's War People's Army that "our army is a people's army...led by the Party of the working class." (Emphasis Giap's)⁹ As Wilfred Burchett ~~xxx~~ says, the People's Revolutionary Party plays a "preponderant" role in the military. According to a leader of the New Left, this is because, imbued with a militant ideology, the Communists are simply braver than the pacifist Buddhists and various esoteric elements in the Front! Of more significance, the non-Communists in the Front lack the Communists' organizational ability. (The Buddhists in South Viet-Nam don't even have a program, don't even know what they want! They have no concrete

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plan for improving the life of the South Viet-Nam^Nese people if, assuming the impossible, they ever did manage to dominate the government. No wonder they so readily agree to the NFL's Ten-Point Program!)

Most of the youngsters fighting in the Liberation Army of South Viet-Nam--darling little boys as young as fourteen or fifteen--are not members of the marxist People's Revolutionary Party. They are members of the Revolutionary Youth Union--which is, however, the Youth Group of the People's Revolutionary Party! In the Revolutionary Youth Union as in almost everything essential about the NFL, the heritage of the North is evident. The present Revolutionary Youth Union in South Viet-Nam is a direct descendant of the Revolutionary Youth Union (they even kept the name intact!) set up by Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan in 1925. This organization became the forerunner of Viet-Nam's Communist Party.

Making no distinction between the old and new-type National Democratic R^evolutions, the trotskyists indiscriminately condemn them all, lumping those led by bourgeois elements in the same political pile with a revolution led by the Proletariat! While history bears lamentable witness to a long train of bourgeois democratic revolutions gone off the track, they only failed or became fouled up because they did not follow the Viet-N^Namese model but in fact went the opposite way of it! Instead of being led by Communists, in every single country with a distorted national democratic revolution the Government and Army were led by a catastrophic combo of national bourgeois and right-wing elements.

Footnotes For Chapter XI

- 1 "Viet-Nam Courier," No. 8, August 25, 1964, p. 6
- 2 The Voice of Justice. Hanoi: FLPH, 1963, p. 24
- 3 Truong Chinh. March Ahead Under the Party's Banner. Hanoi: FLPH, 1963, p. 85
- 4 *ibid.*, pp. 84-85
- 5 Le Duan. On Some Present International Problems. Hanoi: FLPH, 1964, p. 152
- 6 Le Duan, On the Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 27-28
- 7 "Herald Tribune," Feb. 24, 1965
- 8 Truong Chinh, The August Revolution, op. cit., p. 48
- 9 Vo Nguyen Giap. People's War, People's Army. Hanoi: FLPH, 1963, p. 180

TACTICS AND STRATEGY

Unwilling or unable to distinguish a United Front from an incorrectly-based Popular Front the trotskyists tried to sabotage all United Fronts in Viet-Nam from 1936 to the present. They now try to sabotage the idea of United Front all across the world. "No compromise with the bourgeoisie!" they shout. But the trotskyist position is not only that the patriotic bourgeoisie should be left out of the United Front, though that would be preposterous enough! Incredible as it seems, most trotskyists do not even believe in the worker-peasant alliance!

One of Lenin's most serious arguments with Trotsky took place over this question. Lenin formulated the concept of the worker-peasant alliance convinced that only on this basis could successful revolution result. But Trotsky said, there must not be any alliance with the peasantry because the peasantry is backward! Nowadays when the trotskyists frenetically fulminate against "peasant guerilla wars," or in their current jargon, "fidelista-type peasant-guerilla wars" we must remind them who developed these concepts: Marx and Lenin, whom they profess to follow. Said Le Duan:

"Lenin's great creations, the theories on the role of the peasants in the proletarian revolution, on the relation between the bourgeois democratic revolution and the socialist revolution and on the role of national-liberation in the proletarian revolution, refuted Trotsky's theory advocating the overthrow of the Tsar and the establishment of a workers' state power exclusive of the peasantry--the great ally of the working class."

Even in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America where the working class is so small, the workers were supposed to carry out the revolution--still are!--without any allies. (Or else sit on their hands for a couple of centuries, waiting for the "advanced" countries to revolutionize first, a favorite--and contradictory--trotskyist dogma.)

But doesn't it make more sense to divide conservative elements and "hostile classes" and so weaken their basic hold on the economy, present and future? Isn't that preferable to having the bourgeoisie and the landlords (not to mention the peasantry!) united in a great big bloc to crush the revolution? Otherwise the poor liberation forces have to fight not only the foreign enemy but a strong and united internal one!

Giap said: "The national united front should be a broad front uniting all the forces with whom we may unite, neutralizing all those that may be neutralized, differentiating all those that may be differentiated, in order to spearhead the revolution at its chief enemy, the imperialist aggressors."²

(emphasis added) That is why the Party also differentiated between the various elements of the landlord class by applying different policies to each category of landlords, according to their political attitude, as I describe in a later chapter. Though most of the big feudal landlords seemed beyond redemption, many small and even middle landlords supported the cause of Independence and eagerly joined the Front.

The trotskyists harp on bourgeois elements undermining

the Front. Even if there were such a tendency, it is still better to have such persons inside the Front. Why? Because there they can be supervised, the Party can keep an eye on them. The alternative? Having them run hog-wild outside the Front, carrying out sabotage and destruction against the national cause! In one case the Front has an opportunity of controlling such elements, in the other it doesn't.

In People's War, People's Army Vo Nguyen Giap wrote:

"the policy of broad united front adopted by the Party rallied all the revolutionary classes, neutralized the wavering elements among the feudal landlord class and limited the sabotaging activities of the Viet-^{am} Quoc Dan Dang."³ (emphasis added)

But can ^{one} ~~only~~ really take diverse elements into the Front in Latin American countries, for instance, where the traditions and temperament of the people ~~xxxx~~ veer more towards friction than unity? ~~xxxx~~ ^{True,} the task of building a broad Front there is more difficult. But since the survival of the revolution depends on it, such countries must devote even more time to solidarizing the people. "Practice makes perfect?" Well, maybe not perfect, but it surely helps. That is why the "grind" often does better than the genius.

In the U.S. mountains of books are published on "How To Improve One's Personality." They are usually written by high-ranking business executives, since U.S. monopoly capitalism wants everybody to acquire "The Corporate Personality" (for which it is necessary to have the unctuous "corporate smile" and always be "well-heeled"). Though the books are all the same and their advice addled and assinine,

give them credit for one thing: they realize that to get people to adopt the image of capitalism is a time-consuming, massive undertaking. That's why such books usually advise their readers to "get up half an hour earlier to develop leadership ability, for it is serious business." And they proceed to lay out a detailed Program for equipping the most sheepish follower with all the traits of business executives. Surely United Front-building is a more meritorious mission! But like the making of the Corporate Man, building a Front requires time and effort. In Viet-Nam, the country that least required it, the Party devoted itself exclusively to this activity, working at it night and day. DRV Defence Minister, Minister of Communications, Vice-Premier and Political Bureau member Vo Nguyen Giap explains it in his famous People's Warm, People's Army:

"Holding firmly to the strategy and tactics of the national democratic revolution the Party pointed out to the entire people the aims of the struggle: independence and democracy. It was, however, not enough to have objectives entirely in conformity with the fundamental aspirations of the people. It was also necessary to bring everything into play to enlighten the masses of the people, educate and encourage them, organize them in fighting for national salvation. The Party devoted itself entirely to this work, to uniting the entire people, to broadening and strengthening the national united front-- the Viet-Minh, and later the

Lien Viet-- which was a magnificent model of the firm unity of the various strata of the people..." (Emphasis added) ~~4~~ 4

Vo Nguyen Giap goes on to say that the Lien Viet rallied the patriotic forces of all classes and social strata, all nationalities in the country and "almost all patriotic believers of each and every religion." DRV literature is full of touching stories of how monks, nuns and devout catholic people hid and tenderly fed, clothed and sheltered the Communist cadres who were hounded and hunted by the French.

If it seems sort of miraculous that the United Fronts in Viet-Nam were able to gain the sympathy of almost all religious believers, perhaps much more startling is that they were able to win over almost the whole of the enemy police! Most Marxist-Leninists will tell you it is an ironclad law of revolution that though the Army can be won over, the police can never be. But the Viet-Namese disproved this "fundamental" revolutionary law, as they have ~~disproved~~ many others. Government Minister and Central Committee member Nguyen Khang, in "Uprising in Hanoi"--a remarkable eye-witness account of the August Revolution of 1945--writes:

"We had bases even in the enemy police. On the eve of the insurrection we held in hand nearly the whole of the enemy police. Many times, our friends who had documents or arms on them were helped by the police to get out of danger when rounded up by Japanese troops." ~~5~~ 5

The trotskyists contend that in Latin America one cannot build a Front around a "bloc of four classes." Latin American countries don't have a petty and/or national

bourgeoisie--or so their incredible arguments run. That is not mere nonsense but deliberate deception. I even heard some trotskyists insist that Indonesia could not have followed Viet-Nam's example because it did not have the same social classes. When I pointed out that of course it did (as anyone even slightly knowledgeable about Southeast Asia knows, all the countries in that region have the same class stratification) they reverted to saying that the classes were not in the same proportion!

Almost all countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America have a proletariat, a peasantry, a petty and national bourgeoisie just as Viet-Nam does. Likewise the Western nations have their classes or their counterparts.

Neither can the excuse be used that in some Latin American countries certain social classes are negligible. Truong Chinh emphasizes in March Ahead Under the Party's Banner that the anti-imperialist national united front must rally every national force, no matter how small, in order systematically to isolate the most dangerous enemy. As he often says, fighting the imperialists, already we have enough enemies. It can only harm us to make more!

The trotskyists also malign the National Front for Liberation by saying that it advocates "class collaboration" and a compromise line with the bourgeoisie. But no united front in Viet-Nam, north or south, has ever followed anything but a realistically revolutionary line. Every front of the Viet-Namese people has fought the entire ideology of the big

capitalists and feudalists. As Le^Uuan put it:

"This front cannot be built with a compromise line, still less with the line of co-operation between capitulation and revolution. Inversely the national front should defeat the capitulationist line of the bureaucratic landlords among the people, call it by its name, isolate it, separate it from the people and regard it as the enemy of the nation so as to be able to broaden the national front." ~~6~~ 6

Even the NFL's cooperation with the small landlords "is mainly to differentiate between the landlords, between the enemies and to weaken the economy so as to wipe him out easily. This concession is a form of struggle between the peasantry and the landlords in the national-liberation movement and not a form of alliance by compromise between the peasantry and the landlords. This also means to broaden the national front to win over the democracy-minded elements of the landlord class, the intellectuals of landlord stock or patriotic personalities and make them side definitely with the anti-imperialist people's democratic front." ~~7~~ 7

The trotskyists overlook the essence of Leninism, which teaches that the age and dynamics of Monopoly Capitalism call for the creation of new revolutionary forms in order to overthrow this hated system. They also miss the very philosophic fiber of Marxism--circumstances change as world conditions change! Our tactics must keep pace. No immutable laws hold true for all times and climes. My own belief, explained in the "Parallel Structures" chapter is that monopoly capitalism, with its consolidation of cartels, makes it imperative that the

revolutionary peoples "escalate" their own forms of struggle; that nations pool their people to form mass coalitions counterposed to the corporations. In other words, revolutionary forces must build "parallel structures" to the structures of monopoly capitalism, just as the NFL has done.

Once at a big ~~xxxx~~ saturday night party given by the Committee to Aid the National Liberation Front I was chatting about Viet-Nam with a former boyfriend when he brought up the subject of National Democratic Revolution. Construing it as a standardized bourgeois revolution, he raised his most vitriolic voice against it. I hastened to explain that in Viet-Nam such a revolution is based on the worker-peasant alliance led by the working class. But he was too angrily agitated to let me get in a word. Hearing the phrase "National Democratic Revolution" immediately every trotskyist perked up his ears; soon all of them were cornering me. (I hadn't known there were so many present till they suddenly converged upon me like so many bugs creeping out of unseen cracks.)

Strangely (or maybe not so strangely, ~~when you realize~~ ^{CONSIDERING} their indoctrination) they all pushed the same absurd arguments against the NFL, in almost the same words. All of them had an unfortunate handicap--they were politically deaf, and did not really hear a word I said. One young man for example said, "The NFL is carrying out a national democratic revolution. That means it practices class collaboration, and its revolutionx is reactionary, just like the one in Indonesia. A revolution must be based on the worker-peasant alliance!

Because the NFL of South Viet-Nam isn't, it's difficult to support such an organization."

Again and again, I tried to tell him that the NFL was based on the worker-peasant alliance, and that leftists not knowing this led them to develop all sorts of wrong ideas about it. But for all the attention his mind paid to my words, I could have been talking to the wall. "The NFL should be based on the worker-peasant alliance," he kept repeating, "not upon the bourgeoisie." I soon sounded lik the proverbial broken record--and before the night was over, I felt I had no grooves left! (Besides, it spoiled what might otherwise have been a groovy evening!)

"The Chinese invented the cursed concept of National Democratic Revolution," the trotskyist continued, "and have been fucking up revolutions with it ever since." When I tried explaining that it wasn't the Chinese but none other than ~~V~~A~~L~~A~~D~~imir Lenin himself who formulated the concept of the National Democratic Revolution, at first it was like talking to the wall again. Gradually what I was saying seemed to dawn on him and he ~~became~~ ^{BECAME} testy: "Well, you can't expect me to have read every word of Lenin's, can you?"

Nobody was requiring that, I answered, but it would help to refrain from slandering a revolution before acquiring some knowledge about it.

Minutes later the young man once again began damning the Chinese for having invented National Democratic Revolution! He returned to his old tack that the NFL was "collaborating

with the bourgeoisie."

"Silly to have a National Democratic Revolution," he insisted. "Why not leap right into Socialist revolution?" (Because for one thing, scarcely anyone will leap with you!) I said, because an infant must be a child before he becomes and adult--and quoted Lenin's saying that "you cannot bypass necessary stages" in a revolution any more than you can in the life of an individual. As adolescence is the preparation for adulthood, so the National Democratic Revolution conditions people for the coming Socialist one.

Equally impossible to budge was his belief that only workers and peasants should be allowed admittance to the Front. (It reminded me of the exclusionary policy of the Nghe-Tinh soviets which failed for that very reason.) When I tried explaining why in Viet-^{nam} it is necessary to lead the petty and national bourgeoisie to support the revolution, he said without emotion: "The only place we must lead the bourgeoisie to is the firing squad." My explanation of its being ~~in~~ in the interests of the Front to win over bourgeois elements so as better to keep an eye on them (and by dividing the bourgeois class, to weaken it) got absolutely nowhere with him. He kept rambling that "all bourgeois are ~~many~~ no-good enemies of the people," and "there is no earthly reason why the Front doesn't execute them all, except that it isn't a revolutionary organization."

A Viet-Nameese girl named Josie Lee who knew nothing about political doctrines had been listening, fascinated. Afterwards she asked me in all seriousness: "That man you were talking

to is mentally retarded, isn't he?" His blindly repeating the trotskyist line as if he were speaking a monologue she took, not for indoctrination but for re-tardation! "Far from being retarded," I answered, "the young man is basically more intelligent than I. But the dangerous dogma drilled into him blinds him to all reason."

Far from coincidence, that all the "trots" who talked with me that night used arguments the same as or similar to his. The New Left sometimes find trotskyist ~~arguments~~ difficult to refute because the politically unsophisticated have no idea what terms like "national democratic" or even "proletariat" or "bourgeoisie" mean. The trotskyists on the other hand are familiar with political terminology. All of which goes to show that when the "creative masses" made up the adage "a little knowledge is dangerous" they knew what they were talking about!

But why talk to the trotskyists at all? Because we want to engage in sectarian squabbles? Absolutely not. We must refute the trotskyists because it is a matter of life and death.

First of all, trotskyists slander the National Front for Liberation and the Democratic Republic of Viet^{AM}-nam and try to vitiate their support. (In this sense, they are helping the imperialists.) Those lacking knowledge about the NFL and DRV are liable to be influenced. I have seen many young people in their teens and early twenties, knowing little of revolution and politics but admiring ~~and supporting~~ the

NFL and wishing to follow a revolutionary outlook. I have seen these political neophytes (the only type the trots can reach) having their thinking poisoned and their minds warped by trotskyist lies and incorrect approach to revolution.

Trotskyists the world over also are dangerous because they try to egg on premature uprisings which (as at Nghe-Tinh) are based on such erroneous and exclusionary policies that they stand no chance and are always devoured in blood. The trotskyists and other ultra-leftists who want to bypass the National Democratic Revolution and "leap right into" Socialism want to make a revolution the way they make Instant Coffee. But in making the former, their agents all over the world will spill not coffee grains and water, but much human blood unnecessarily, and thoroughly "make a mess" of everything.

Yes, it is a matter of life and death to refute the trotskyists because if people and their leaders are deluded into following policies that contain no possibilities of success, millions and millions will continue suffering from the slavery, poverty, war, disease and oppression of imperialism. Because never in a million light-years can the ~~antiquated~~ ^{ANTIEDILUVIAN} trotskyist methods bring a revolution to triumph.

The trotskyists claim that the DRV government "murdered" some trotskyist leaders and followers in Viet-Nam back in the forties. They know very well that the government of the DRV did no such thing. No trotskyist was ever executed for being a trotskyist (though some people I know say they should have been!). But when they committed murder, sabotage and

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treason against the infant Democratic Republic, I see no reason why their being trotskysts should have exempted them from the system of justice prevailing over the rest of the people.

The evidence is overwhelming that a large number of trotskysts resorted to sabotage and murder as well as mind-poisoning to try to disrupt, decimate and destroy every one of Viet-Nam's United Fronts, which they infiltrated on every level. Still I repeat the government of the DRV did not kill trotskysts (though the people, taking law into their own hands, sometimes did--so great was their anger at those who sought to sabotage the Great Fronts which alone brought them liberation).

Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party correctly said the trotskysts were "trying by all means to sabotage our Party's line and policy. When the Party called for the founding of the Democratic Front, they advanced the slogan for the setting up of the 'Worker-Peasant Front.' When our Party founded the 'Democratic Youth Association' they advocated the setting up of the 'Communist Youth Association.' When your Party put forth the slogan 'To defend Indochina,' they issued the slogan 'To turn the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war,' etc. " Such tactics typify the trotskysts' extreme sectarianism and clannishness by which they deliberately try to undermine real revolutionary struggle.

The Committee for the Study of the History of the Lao Dong Party also said that "The Trotskyite Han Thuyen publishing house issued books with a 'research' character to slander

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Marxism, making use of "materialism" and the "theory of class struggle" in an attempt to 'defeat theoretically' the national democratic ideology and patriotism advocated by the Viet Minh Front, and at the same time, blemishing the whole history of the war of liberation waged by the Viet-Namense people."

When sometimes an infuriated person or crowd in Viet-Nam would kill a trotskyist, it is necessary to understand the people's feelings. Had the trotskyists succeeded, 30 million Viet-Namense--and they knew it-- would have been condemned to continued colonialist slavery. At Nghe-An they had tried the left-sectarian approach to revolution and it had failed utterly. The trotskyist method stood as much chance of lifting them from oppression as a mosquito has of lifting a lion. The only hope lay in building broad-based United Fronts--the sine qua non for revolutionary success. To sabotage the United Fronts meant to sabotage the promise of life, freedom and hope. Had the trotskyists been allowed to succeed in disrupting the People's Coalitions, the North Viet-Namense would still be starving, still be eating rats and insects. Those who lugubriously bemoan the negligible number of trotskyists killed at a time of revolutionary ferment should ask themselves: What gives a murderous minority the right to sabotage the welfare of 30 million people?

The Viet-Namense often speak of "the two paths," by which they mean capitalism and Socialism. Perhaps we should now begin speaking of "the two paths to revolution": the sectarian path, and the path represented by the formation of a broad People's Front.

The trotskyist condemning of the Ho Chi Minh Government for having "invited" in the French in 1946 is still another illustration of their complete failure to understand the correctness and cleverness of the Viet-^Namese revolutionaries. In having the French get the Chinese off their backs, the Viet-^Namese were employing a favorite tactic--playing off one enemy against another! To rid Viet-^Nam of over 200,000 Chiang Kai Shek troops, who were the occupying the Northern part of the country, in exchange for 15,000 Frenchmen was far from a bad bargain. Surely, according to circumstances prevailing at that time the DRV was correct in assuming that 15,000 soldiers would be easier to handle than 200,000!

Had the Viet-^Namese not compromised with the French they would have had two enemies to fight--the French and Chiang! It's simple common sense to prefer one enemy to two! As Southeast Asian authority Malcolm Salmon says in his book Focus on Indo-China "to replace 200,000 Chinese troops by 15,000 French was by no means the worst of prospects for the Viet-^Namese." ¹⁰

It will be argued that the French broke the Preliminary Agreement of March 6, 1946 (in which they agreed to recognize Viet-Nam as a Free State) and tried to re-conquer Indo-China in a long, gruelling war. The Viet-^Namese leadership considered that this might happen. In a speech typically frank, Vo Nguyen Giap told a mass meeting outside Hanoi's Municipal Theatre on March 7--one day after the signing of the Preliminary Agreement:

"We have agreed to the return of French troops because

if we had not agreed they would have come anyway..." They would have come anyway, and they would have come almost a year sooner, in an overwhelming invasion. Never having fought guerilla warfare in a systematic way, the Viet-Nam^Nese did not know how. DRV literature shows that at the beginning of the Resistance War, even the French were better guerilla fighters! The Viet-Nam^Nese committed their forces too soon, unsuccessfully attempting to fight set-piece battles. Till they learned to fight guerilla warfare (and Truong Chinh's works went a long way towards teaching them) the Viet-Nam^Nese were slaughtered, lost divisions wholesale. They very nearly lost the war! At the beginning of 1946 the Viet-Nam^Nese agreed to 15,000 Frenchmen coming back to Indo-China because clearly, it had become a choice between that and an all-out military assault by the French, for which weak little Viet-Nam^N was manifestly unprepared. Though the confrontation eventuated anyway, the friction built up gradually, and the Viet-Nam^Nese had bought precious time to prepare to fight. Had the French launched a massive attack against Viet-Nam^N a year earlier, it would have been a knockout blow.

Besides, Ho Chi Minh had gained an immense moral advantage by showing himself ~~to be~~ conciliatory. French public opinion never forgot--especially as Uncle Ho made such a splendid impression. Eventually it successfully prodded the French government to end the war.

What kind of impression did Ho Chi Minh make in France? Why, the same impression he made everywhere he lived and

travelled! Robert Shaplen describes it in The Lost Revolution:

"In Biarritz, where he first rested, in Paris and then at the conference in Fontainebleau, Ho enjoyed huge personal success. He charmed everyone, especially the press. He distributed roses to girl reporters, signed his name in blood for an American male correspondent. He was widely compared to Confucius, to the Buddha, to St. John the Baptist, to anyone's dotting grandfather, and it was noted that he was an ascetic, since, among other things, he refused to take a drink. Everywhere he went, whether to the opera, to a fancy reception, to a picnic, or to a press conference, he appeared in his simple, high-buttoned linen work suit. 'As soon as one approaches this frail man, one shares the admiration of all men around him, over whom he towers with his serenity acquired from wide experience,' wrote one reporter. Noting his 'tormented face and eyes of blue which burn with an inner light' another declared that he 'hides a soul of steel behind a fragile body.' His wit, his Oriental courtesy, his savoir-faire, his mixed profundity and playfulness in social intercourse, his open love for children, above all his seeming sincerity and simplicity, captured one and all."

Revolutionary movements all over the world would do well to emulate the clever and consistent Viet-^{am}amese policy of playing off one enemy against another to weaken both. Recall that in the 1940's when the Japanese fascists and French colonialists both copperated in occupying Viet-Nam the Viet-Namese opposed both foreign aggressors. But ^{THE} time time arrived when the allied lunge towards victory could no longer

be denied, and the French in Viet-Nam out of sheer expediency began turning against the Japanese. The Viet-Minh Front then switched tactics to throw support to those French elements who were progressive and democratic-minded. They even invited French people living in Viet-Nam to join the Front--a policy that all United Fronts in Viet-Nam have followed! This further led the French and Japanese to loggerheads; they spent so much time fighting each other that they had less energy left to fight the Viet-Namese. When they had the least energy, the Viet-Namese carried out their August Revolution, forcing both the French and the Japanese to leave Viet-Nam.

In March Ahead Under the Party's Banner Truong Chinh explains another guiding principle of the Viet-Namese revolution: never to dissipate your forces by fighting all enemies everywhere: "The immediate actual enemy of the Viet-Namese people is not of course all the imperialists all over the world, but precisely those who invaded our country, oppressed and exploited our people, namely the French imperialists then the French and Japanese imperialists, and today it is the U.S. imperialists." 12

Domestically the Viet-Namese revolutionaries used the same tactic. They did not regard the entire bourgeoisie as their enemy. Instead, they differentiated between national and comprador in order to win the maximum number of people over to their cause. To lash out at every capitalist nation, at every U.S. ally because U.S. imperialism is devastating Viet-Nam would be to facilitate the devastation. For the

Viet-Namese need all the allies, all the help they can get-- from any source.

To divide foreign enemies is a tactic which has long proved its pragmatic value in Viet-Nam. During the Second World War the DRV distinguished between the fascist Petainists and De Gaulle and advocated a conditional alliance with the latter to split the ranks of the French colonialists and hasten victory over the Japanese; today both the DRV and NFL retain good relations with the De Gaulle government--a policy that furthers De Gaulle's exacerbating rift with the United States! As Truong Chinh writes: "Attention should be paid to splitting the imperialists on a world scale and the same must be done at times with the imperialists invading our country."

The Viet-Namese have a remarkable live-and-let-live attitude. During the current war they make a distinction between the American people (whom they cherish friendly feelings for) and the genocidal U.S. government. During the Resistance war against France, Viet-Nam's leaders distinguished not only between the French people and the French government. They even made a distinction between the "bad" French colonialists who fought them and the "good" French colonialists who did not, or might be persuaded not to. Hatred does not come easily to the gentle Viet-Namese. They could not conceive of hating a whole people or nation--let alone an entire world system!

Many American radicals are against imperialism in the abstract without being for anything. They do not wish to know about Viet-Nam specifically (even though that's where the war is) because they claim they are "internationalists"

~~whereas imperialism "in general" Personally I am all for~~

who oppose imperialism "in general." Personally I am always suspicious of such people, who cannot feel anything for a small people being bombed, who cannot focus on a specific country or a specific war. (Most Americans' lives are woven of grey generalities, since they have never experienced anything of significance, & never suffered, never really tasted life.)

The Viet-Namese Communists can cooperate with capitalists and capitalist countries because they truly practice Tolerance and a higher humanism than most people are capable of understanding. The DRV leaders have even said that after the war they expect to have good relations with the U.S. government. To its enemies in South Viet-Nam the Liberation Front says, "We are ready to forgive not only the past but even the present." If such an attitude seems naive, we must also recognize that it is at the same time both clever and compassionate.

When all nations and peoples learn the simple "recipes" perfected by the Viet-Namese, all will be able to bake good "revolutionary cakes." By nature the Viet-Namese are among the most pacifistic people in the world. When first catapulted into war with France they could scarcely fight at all. What accounts for their evolving into the superb fighters they are today is brilliant leadership and United Front! Arab armies made such a poor showing against tiny Israel in the six-day war in June 1967 largely because Arab societies are still feudal. A feudal society can never stand up to a modern Western military machine--so long as it remains organized along feudal lines!

Viet-Nam too once was feudal, till Ho Chi Minh taught it Western techniques of organization. As this book has been saying, United Front is a Western theory that the Viet^N-amese learned while still colonial slaves! Had Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and all the other countries of the Middle East carried out a new-type National Democratic Revolution like Viet^N-Nam did, instead of being led (or more correctly, misled) by the national bourgeoisie, they could have modernized their societies and won their wars.

If the Viet^N-amese can do it, any small and weak people can--provided they master United Front!

Footnotes For Chapter XII

- 1 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 134
- 2 Vo Nguyen Giap, People's War, People's Army, op. cit., p. 45
- 3 ibid., p. 44
- 4 ibid., pp. 60-61
- 5 In The Enemy's Net. Memoirs from the Revolution. Hanoi: FLPH, 1962, p. 140
- 6 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 76
- 7 ibid., p. 78
- 8 Thirty Years of Struggle of the Party, op. cit., p. 61
- 9 ibid., p. 76
- 10 Malcolm Salmon. Focus on Indo-China. Hanoi: FLPH, 1961, p. 101
- 11 Robert Shaplen, op. cit., pp. 47-48
- 12 Truong Chinh, March Ahead Under the Party's Banner, op. cit., p. 93

BUILDING A UNITED FRONT IN WESTERN COUNTRIES

It is not only possible but imperative for Western countries to build United Fronts. That after all was the main idea behind G. Georgi Dimitroff's classic United Front Against Fascism. Seeing the rise and rack of fascism, Dimitroff directed his Western formula for coalescence primarily towards the Western countries. Ho Chi Minh was able to adapt it to Viet-Nam because he is so Western, so worldly in outlook.

What will be the main issues influencing people to join an anti-imperialist coalition? Years ago L. Duane predicted that the Front in Western countries would be set up around the War-Peace question.

The only way the people of the United States and those of other capitalist countries can prevent fascism at home and predatory wars (the manifestation of fascism abroad) is by setting up a wide Front taking in, winning over or neutralizing all those threatened by U.S' imperialism's wars--the overwhelming majority of the people!

But classical marxists say only poverty or direct invasion can provide the proper revolutionary receptacle--are they not correct? No, they are not. Because for the first time in Western countries there is the possibility for reaching people not even sympathetic to socialism on the question of building a United Front to obviate war! Sadly, the war itself with all its hell and horror must be our grim ally for this purpose.

War spurs the building of a Revolutionary Front, according

to Le Duan, because "The war policy is the most dangerous policy with regard to the working class and the labouring people. It daily affects their living conditions and threatens even their life. Therefore, the struggle of the working class and the labouring people against oppression and exploitation by the state monopoly capitalists, especially against their war policy, has the possibility, in certain conditions, to become for the masses so pressing a need that they will transform it into a revolution to overthrow the domination of state monopoly capitalism with a view to stopping short a new world war before it may break out."

Years ago when DRV leaders and theorists first came out with their revolutionary principles for building a United Front in Western countries the war in South Viet-Nam was still simmering low-key; the U.S. naturally had not yet begun bombing the North. So the war-peace issue centered much more around world war and nuclear war than it does today, when Viet-Nam has become the world-wide focal point of the peace and liberation movement. Still, there is definite value, as DRV political literature points out, in persuading people that unless the rule of monopoly capitalism is overthrown, imperialism could plunge mankind into a new world war, a nuclear war, in which hundreds of millions of people will be killed. Even if it is now thought the nuclear war danger has been overrated (as I believe it has) seizing on people's natural fear of it is sound strategy. The war of annihilation against the Viet-Nameese people in which Americans are also dying certainly carries with it the possible risk of world war and nuclear war. In any

event it surely means U.S. imperialism, if not checked, will go on to fight against revolutions in Latin America as well as in Africa and other countries of Asia. Only a broad United Front can prevent such wars and stop those already going on.

To such a Front the middle classes can and must be won over because as Le Duan says:

"Today, as the capitalist countries are in the hands of monopoly capitalists with a fascist tendency, not only the working class and the peasantry are oppressed and exploited but also the interest of the middle and petty urban bourgeoisie is impaired. The Communists in the capitalist countries must realize that at present the main task of revolution is to spearhead their struggle against monopoly capitalism at home which joins hands with monopoly capitalism abroad..."²

This leads Le Duan to posit the form a United Front must take in Western countries. Basically, it does not differ from the Front formula Viet-Nam follows today, and that serves as model for the whole Third World. According to the leaders of the DRV, the Front in Western countries must group together four classes: the workers, the farmers, the small capitalists (petty bourgeoisie) and some sections of the middle capitalists (corresponding to the national bourgeoisie). It must deliberately leave out the affluent big capitalists of the Rockefeller type (who correspond to the compradorist class). This section of the capitalist class is the very enemy whose money-wielding, war-making power a broad coalition of the people must direct itself towards taking away!

People protest: How can Americans, the most individualistic people in the world, form a United Front? Isn't it impossible, when the radical groups in the U.S. are so sectarian, so slanderous towards one another? But the formation of such a Front has already begun! When we think of the Peace Movement in the United States we realize how perceptive DRV leaders like Le Duan are for having predicted years ago--before anybody--that this movement would provide the nucleus for United Front!

In the U.S. the grassroots groundswell of protest against the Viet-Nam war keeps growing. The countless peace groups that have sprung up everywhere and that cooperate together in protest activities have taken the first steps--and the only steps--towards the formation of a United Front. The question of unifying these organizations is recognized as the most important one agitating the anti-war movement today. (The Front and Italian Left are also concerning themselves more and more with United Front.) So even Americans, the people most poisoned by alienation and individualism, have begun grappling with the problems of Unity! The exigencies of the war alone ~~have~~ pushed them into it.

The early bickering and heated debates about which Left and peace groups should coalesce and which should be excluded were but the first growing pains of forming a United Front in the U.S. Time was when many peace groups used to exclude organizations like the W.E.B. Dubois Clubs, Progressive Labor, and the Committee to Aid the National Liberation Front. But the actualities of anti-war activities have caused them to

accept a non-exclusionary policy. Communists and catholics, "revisionists" and "revolutionists" march and work side by side in actions against the war. The carrying of the National Liberation Front and the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam flags-- common sights at most peace marches these days--meets with even conservative peace groups' approval at rallies not noted for their militancy!

Though no longer the problem it once was, having taken a back seat to the serious differences concerning methods and goals, sharp debate still takes place in the Peace-Protest movement between those who support the NFL and those who do not. As the social-democratic leader Norman Thomas expressed it a few years ago in a letter to the New York Times on April 23, 1965 (right after the pioneering "March on Washington" of April 17):

"They [young people in the protest movement] rush emotionally to embrace the Viet-Cong. They seem to love it more than peace and, despite Communism's record, believe that it stands for true freedom."

As much as sympathy for the NFL perturbs Thomas and his cronies, the pro-liberation forces in the U.S. peace movement increasingly resent the hedging of the "old guard" when it comes to expressing unequivocal support for the struggle of the Viet-Namese people. The New Left's identification with revolutionary Viet-Nam has steadily grown since Americans started visiting North Viet-Nam and speaking before enthusiastic audiences about the humanism and heroism of the Viet-Namese. American visitors to the DRV always speak with admiration of

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the Unity of the North Viet-Namense people, as well as their Solidarity and Spirit of Tolerance which more and more of the anti-war movement is now inspired to try to emulate.

It is obvious that the Anti-War movement has burgeoned the beginnings of a United Front which, having already taken some significant steps, now most of all needs proper guidance to turn it into a true Liberation movement. Such guidance will only be supplied when peace and liberation workers study the teachings and tactics of the United Fronts in Viet-Nam and begin applying them.

Viet-Nam's United Front theory has all the more meaning for Americans since oddly the United States combines the features of both a Western and a colonial country. The struggle of the Afro-Americans in the U.S. bears the characteristics of an oppressed colonial people's fight against imperialism. The black liberation struggle, which has increasingly resorted to armed rebellion, will play an important part in the American people's liberation as a whole.

Unfortunately most "radical" organizations are bourgeois to the core--containing only a sprinkling of workers and trade unionists (though the peace groups do better in this regard) and almost no black people. This must change; Left and peace workers must make an effort to draw the black people into a broad United Front. Without them, the revolution cannot possibly succeed. Today Afro-Americans who follow the leadership of militants like Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, E. Julius Lester and some CORE leaders are the most actively revolutionary element in the U.S. Just as the NFL has a conglomerate of

separate organizations belonging to it such as the Trade Unionists Association for Liberation, the Students Association for Liberation and organizations representing the ethnic minorities, so in the U.S. the black people can through their own organizations join the Front and occupy a most important place in it. At the same time, whites and blacks should work together in mixed organizations against the war since in U.S. imperialism they have a common enemy whose demise can only be brought about through common cooperation.

I said before that poverty is not a revolutionary requisite for building a United Front. Yet those who cannot seem to do without that old stand-by must be aware that black people's rebellions in the city streets spring from poverty and sub-human housing ~~the~~ in the gruesome ghettos. Characteristically the U.S. Congress recently voted against allotting any funds for eliminating the rats running rampant in the U.S. which result in so much rat-bite, disease and death. The Rat has become the U.S. Symbol, Lyndon Johnson being the biggest rat of all.

Like the "credibility gap," the cruel contrast between rich and poor keeps widening, inciting deep resentment and hostility among the large segment of "underprivileged." Even a "guaranteed annual income" would not begin to make inroads into the poverty problem in the U.S. (Prices would rise still more steeply, and the poor would still be at the economic ladder's lowest level.) The sops that the U.S. government throws out here and there to stave off revolution will have the opposite effect. Making a small dent in people's poverty

only uncovers the ugliness of the gaping wound. It simply whets the craving for more. And more and more. Only a fundamental change in the whole structure bringing about a different distribution of goods and services can solve the problem.

What could Afro-Americans who took to the streets in armed rebellion expect except to be mowed down by the Power Structure which weapon-wise wields the upper hand? Were they backed instead by the power of a people's coalition--which would struggle for the rights of all the Oppressed and Opposed--oppressed by poverty, opposed to imperialist war--their struggle would not be sporadic and desultory, but really revolutionary. It would form part of a coordinated, well-worked-out plan fitting into the total revolutionary schema.

Whenever I first broach the necessity for studying Viet-Nam's United Fronts so that we can build one right here in our own country, even radicals' response is often to dismiss it by saying, "We can't learn anything from the NFL because they are fighting in the jungle. Guerilla warfare can't be fought in the streets of American cities." Now that Afro-Americans are fighting guerilla warfare in the main streets of metropolitan cities, the dubious are forced to eat crow. Yet I have never advocated that Americans learn from the NFL to fight guerilla war. The military factor is the least important one in a revolution. It's no great shakes to learn to use a rifle. What Westerners need to learn are the Viet-Namese revolutionaries' political skills, for in a revolution it is political struggle that must pre-eminete.

Talking to his countrymen during the Resistance War against France, Truong Chinh said that if the revolutionary fighters had neither forests nor mountains to protect them, the people would act as their forests and mountains! It is the solidarity and unity of the people, laced together in Front organizations from the lowest level up that is important and ultimately decisive. In Western countries the war-makers and dangerous imperialists are small in number and could easily be removed from their positions by a broad Front. If worse comes to worse, how could an imperialist army or police prevail against revolutionary actions backed by an organization of millions and millions of militant people?

The United Front will not immediately bring about Socialism, because many religious people and middle capitalists who must be won over to it do not yet see Socialism's merits, and their wishes must be respected as much as anyone else's. Whatever system the majority of people inside the Front want and democratically choose, that system is what they will get. The most important thing is that the Front, by unifying all forces opposed to imperialist war and the de-humanization of life, will take power away from the picayune group of monopolists whose class interests inexorably drive them towards war. Small and even most middle capitalists constitute no threat; they are not in the same category as the munitions-makers, they can scarcely acquire the power to make war on other nations!

Le Duan makes clear that the building of a broad United Front and Socialism are not mutually exclusive, but completely compatible. Socialism can never come about through "reforms" under capitalism, he emphasizes, but only through real revolution. The national-liberation movements, especially revolutions such as the one in Viet-Nam, play a major part

in undermining monopoly capitalism, ~~especially revolutions such as the one in Viet Nam.~~ The more powerfully such anti-imperialist struggles grow and spread the more it helps impel the struggle in the capitalist countries for socialism and democracy.

Why democracy? Because as the war in Viet-Nam escalates, so concomitantly do controls and repression at home. Le Duan explains:

"To serve the war policy, the monopoly capitalists in the imperialist countries have applied a series of reactionary home policies, affecting the living conditions and political rights of the working class and other strata of the labouring people and even running against the interests of some sections of the middle bourgeoisie such as : increasing taxes, cutting real wages and increasing the work hours of the workers, restricting democratic liberties, applying a dictatorial regime, fascization or encouraging fascism, driving the small and medium-sized enterprises into bankruptcy, etc. Therefore, in many countries there are possibilities to set up broad fronts comprising workers, peasants, urban petty-bourgeois and even some sections of the middle bourgeoisie, in order to struggle against the monopoly capitalist cliques, for democratic goals, against the war policy of state monopoly capitalism, for the defense of world peace."³

Thus, the way out for the United States and the other Western countries is clear: broad united fronts must be set up comprising workers, farmers, petty-bourgeoisie (small businessmen, intellectuals and professional people) and certain sections of

the middle bourgeoisie. The peace and liberation movement should make the people aware that the fascism the U.S. has established in South Vietⁿ-am is a portent of things to come at home. Marx and Engel's dictum remains ever true: "A nation which oppresses others cannot itself be free."

Le Duan cites two conditions that render revolution ripe, but only one need be present to make the development of a broad Solidarity bloc possible:

"From the historical point of view, nationalism and national consciousness manifest themselves clearly and profoundly throughout the people of a nation only when this nation is threatened with foreign invasion, that is when the vital interests of all the classes of the nation are threatened and violated, or they manifest themselves in the period when the classes in the country have their consciousness roused and require a democratic system which guarantees the vital interests of all the classes."⁴ In other words, the repression and erosion of freedoms in the capitalist countries--in the absence of poverty, foreign invasion or any other condition previously considered necessary--is incentive enough for the building of a broad Front. In the United States, the war and the black liberation struggle will bring about a spiraling suspension of democratic rights leading to quasi-fascization as the Power Structure panics. Just as the four social classes that the revolution united in Vietⁿ-am suffered equally from lack of democratic rights, so in the United States the crackdown on "dissent" will bear down increasingly on the intellectuals and students, the small and middle businessmen, the black people and the "poor whites."

If the denial of democracy affected Vietⁿ-amese of all

social classes (and that, after all, is what the National Democratic Revolution is all about!) - why should it not equally affect the American people, who having once enjoyed bourgeois freedoms would certainly be expected to miss them? That is why L. Duan says it is the task of liberation forces in the Western countries to struggle for "democratizing the whole political, economic, social and cultural life, safeguarding national independence and advancing towards socialism...Only by putting forth such a democratic task will it be possible to rally the broad masses into a broad front, to thoroughly isolate monopoly capitalism at home and U.S. monopoly capitalism, to create conditions for the seizure of power by the working class and for socialist transformation."⁵

Footnotes For Chapter XIII

- 1 Le Duan. On Some Present International Problems. Hanoi: FLPH, 1964, p. 172
- 2 *ibid.*, pp. 23-24
- 3 *ibid.*, pp. 121-22
- 4 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 74
- 5 Le Duan, On Some Present International Problems, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24

THE ETERNAL SACRIFICE

Why is anti-imperialist revolution's "counterpoint," the Anti-Feudal Revolution, so necessary? To find the answer, let us look briefly at Viet-Nam as agricultural archetype for the Third World.

Why was Land Reform vital? Why were mistakes made during its implementation? What made villagers kill landlords? Were they justified? We cannot determine this in a vacuum but only by examining the plight of the Viet-Namese peasants under the feudal land system.

In Viet-Nam that land system was so unequal that about 70 per cent of the crop land was owned by French and Viet-Namese feudal landlords who did not exceed 5 per cent of the population. Before land reform, in North Viet-Nam twenty-four per cent of the peasant families--275,000 families--owned no land at all. Another 946,500 families owned four per cent of the land, with an average landholding among them of two-tenths of an acre. Another two per cent of the peasants--17,500 families--owned 20 per cent of the land divided up in lots of from two to twenty acres. What of the remaining twenty per cent of the land? It was owned by 180 families!

The feudalists played the demonic dual role of landowners and money-lenders.

They forced the peasants--the majority of them sharecroppers and tenant farmers--to work like the buffalos they led in ploughing the rice paddies. In addition to ubiquitous taxes, as much as 80

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per cent of the rice cultivated through so much sweat and sacrifice by the peasants had to be handed over to the landlords as payment in kind.

The slave-driving landlords never let up the pressure. They frequently beat and humiliated their peasant underlings. Neither birth nor death evoked the slightest compassion in them. Unlike now in North Viet-Nam where the Trade Unions give women a two-month leave from their jobs before and after childbirth with a generous money grant besides, before liberation peasant women often had to work right up till the very minute they gave birth right in the fields! A few days after childbirth they had to struggle out of bed and go right back to the back-breaking work again, else they and baby would starve.

The peasant worried constantly about the high rent and the many different taxes from which he could never escape. To make matters worse, he was often required to pay taxes and debts "twice over." Inability to pay on time meant the certitude of jail, which inevitably entailed beatings by brutal jail wardens hired by the feudalists!

The peasants' perennial debts became a source of perennial plishment to the landlord-usurers. And what usurers! Rates of interest often reached 600 per cent per year. Instead of "a pound of flesh," it might be more correct to say that the landlords robbed the peasant of his whole life-blood.

Conditions were so bad that "The peasants were often

forced to sell their children--even their wives--to pay taxes,
land rents and debts.²"

The peasant, his wife and children went to bed hungry and woke hungry; they never know the satisfying feeling of satiety a full stomach brings. It was difficult, so difficult to rise to work, to rise above hunger-hurt and the feeling of fatigue it brought. Very many died in their twenties from exhaustion, overwork and diseases like malaria, typhus and bubonic plague that scourged-swept the verminated villages.

"The exhaustion of the peasantry," said one historian, "threatened the very survival of the Viet-ⁿamese people."³

One is reminded of what ~~xxx~~ Oliver Goldsmith wrote during England's Industrial Revolution in his great poem

The Deserted Village:

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made:
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroy'd, can never be supplied."

If the DRV had not carried out Land Reform, its people could not have survived at all.

The population density of the Red River Delta runs between 1,280 and 4,000 persons per square mile (compared to an average of 60 per square mile in the U.S.)--the highest in the world. Yet the average landholding of a Viet-ⁿamese

peasant is only one-tenth of a hectare--one of the lowest in the world (less than one third the land held by an Indian peasant, for instance.) Under the best of circumstances the peasant in Viet-Nam could grow only enough to feed himself. Nothing was left to feed the nation, let alone to develop an industry! As even the late Bernard Fall says, "it was impossible to make a family's living on an acre plot of land and provide a surplus with which to feed the cities and growing industries."⁴

That is why Land Reform was a life-and-death matter for North Viet-Nam. It is in the light of these conditions that the mistakes made during land reform must be appraised.

A revolution is a terrific upheaval. How could one ever imagine that it could happen anywhere, at any time, without violence and commotion! Why, not even a building can be torn down without its making noise! Especially a revolution replacing one economic system by another--uprooting the old building at its very foundation!

H_o Chi Minh said, "Has our Party displayed shortcomings? It has. To transform the old society into a new one is no easy thing. It is like demolishing an old house and building a new palace. In building the new palace, we cannot avoid breaking a few bricks, spreading saw-dust, etc. Likewise in building socialism, some shortcomings and mistakes are inevitable. But whenever it makes a mistake, the Party courageously admits it and resolutely corrects it."⁵

Though the Viet-Namese have made less mistakes than

other revolutionaries, they have made their share. DRV political literature shows an impressive democratic spirit in owning up to them. Paradoxically, one of their mistakes was that in the years preceding land reform, the DRV government had been too conciliatory towards the landlords!

"In the first years of the people's power we underestimated the peasants' role and forces, overestimated the role and position of the patriotic landlords, members of the Resistance, and as a result paid too much attention to persuading the landlords and too little attention to leading the peasants to struggle."⁶

As land reform was gradually implemented it became gradually radicalized. Many landlords, some of the members of the National Front, then tried to sabotage the new land policy. Other landlords, too timid to attempt sabotage but frightened by the land reform program which they saw as a threat to their class interests simply withdrew from the Front. At the time, some landlords disapproving of land reform even occupied posts in the DRV government! Speaking of such people Truong Chinh says "in case they did not withdraw (from the Front or the government) we had to remove them lest they might hamper the agrarian reform."⁷

Critics of North Viet-Nam's Land Reform conveniently overlook the fact that the DRV government had for a long time gone out of its way to be fair and lenient towards the landlords.

To broaden the National Front and win over as many people as possible the DRV government decided to divide the landlords

into three categories, grouping them not as might be expected according to the size of their land-holding, but according to their political attitude! (Another departure from classical Marxism, which of course rates the economic factor as most important, politics being merely a superstructure arising out of it.) The infant DRV government applied different measures to each category of landlords concerning their property and what would become of it. The three classifications were:

1. Landowners who were traitors, reactionaries and local tyrants who had committed many crimes against the DRV government and the peasants.
2. Ordinary landowners who were apolitical or "neutral" during the struggle.
3. Landlords who were members of the National Fronts or who had in any way participated in the Resistance. Even if they had not taken part themselves, if their children had, the landlord parents would get more favorable treatment because of it. This group also included landlords ~~whom~~^{whom} the DRV referred to as "democratic personalities," well-known figures who lent their voices and talents to the support of the struggle for democratic rights and liberties.

Even within the first category, the Government only confiscated the lands and properties of the outright traitors. Property of reactionary landowners and local despots was only partially confiscated. The extent of their crimes determined the extent of confiscation. Only landlords guilty of multiple murders or outright sabotage had all ~~of~~ their property taken

from them without monetary and other compensation.

Concerning the second category--ordinary landlords-- and the third--those landowners who themselves or through their children participated in the Resistance--all were compensated by the Government for the lands, cattle and farm tools as well as for their property and other possessions. Compensation for land was calculated on the basis of the average annual yield; compensation for cattle, etc., was determined on the basis of prevailing prices. The landlords were promised payment by the Government in ten years' time. Meanwhile, the beneficiaries received a yearly 1.5% interest.

The "democratic personalities" and landowners who participated in the Resistance in addition were given the special right of donation. That meant they had the honor of donating the rland to the peasants if they so wished, thus at once gaining the peasants' respect and becoming honored citizens.

As I said in the "Definition of Classes" chapter, many national ~~as well as comprador~~ bourgeois were landowners in addition to being city capitalists. The ^{LENIENCY} ~~lience~~ of the DRV government towards them is further evidenced by its compensating them for their feudal property the same as it did ordinary landlords and patriotic ones. (The wish not to antagonize the bourgeoisie in the National Front naturally motivated this.)

Further, many religious people, especially catholics, had large landholdings; they lived solely on landrent obtained by egregious exploitation of the peasants. But in order "to take into consideration the religious beliefs of the masses"

the Government compensated the religious landlords exactly like it did everyone else in Category Three.

The DRV also had the good sense to differentiate between rich landlords and rich peasants. The rich peasants in addition to owning land also practiced usury just as the landlords did. Yet the DRV made the very same distinction between rich landlords and rich peasants as it did between the comprador bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. Just as the national bourgeois are warmly welcomed as allies of the workers and peasants, so are the rich peasants--who after all are primarily peasants, not landlords. (Similarly, while the comprador bourgeois and the feudalists share the same ignoble identification with imperialism, the national bourgeoisie's landholdings and dealings with foreign imperialism do not dominate its make-up. Therefore it is considered a progressive force.)

The rich peasants' land was not confiscated. They enjoyed the right to vote and be elected.

Despite the DRV's magnanimity, the feudal landowning class did everything possible to oppose land reform, resorting to the gravest sabotage and murder. Under the very nose of the Government, landlords conspired with the French imperialists. Mistaking the leniency of the young Republic for weakness, they deliberately intensified their exploitation of the peasants.

Even during one of the early steps of land reform, when the landlords were ordered by the National Front to reduce rent by 25% many of those landlords who outwardly complied made up the difference by cheating the peasants, taxing them for wood and even for leaves collected in the forests!

Sometimes when peasants tried to keep the leaves hidden (they used them for tanning) and the landlord found out, he would kill the peasant or beat him severely. The landlords subjected the peasants to every abuse and agony. All the while, the peasants stored up their hurt, till the time when Land Reform gave them the opportunity to lift the lid off the kettle of their boiling anger.

For a long time the Party urged caution in dealing with the landlords. It hoped that persuasion alone would cause them to comply with Land Reform. When that failed to bring the desired results, no other course remained but to break the criminal cycle of landlord murder, terror and sabotage through violence. What was the alternative? To try as long as it took peacefully to re-educate them? But meanwhile, because of the feudal landlords, people were starving! Every day that the Party procrastinated meant condemning more people to death, hurt and humiliation at the hands of the landowners.

Finally in 1953 the Party decided to follow in Land Reform the policy of "the greatest good for the greatest number." In the villages Land Reform Tribunals were set up to try and sentence landlords for their crimes. Peasants got up at meeting after meeting to emotionally denounce bad landlords they knew personally. For the first time, the shoe was on the other foot; instead of the peasants being objects of humiliation, the landlords received a taste of its bitterness.

In the course of land reform, some innocent people ~~are~~

also died, as they do and have always done in every revolution. Fidel Castro, noting that in Cuba innocent persons had been punished by the revolutionary power along with the guilty, remarked that this was tragic but inevitable. How can it be otherwise, in the cataclysmic chaos of revolution's turbulent tempest?

"Purges" seem a dialectical law of revolution, to which history has as yet produced no exception. As Simone de Beauvoir said in The Mandarins, there cannot be "revolution without tears"--that is an outlandish concept. Besides, in Viet-Nam the feudalists had caused the people many tears. How could the peasants be expected to forgive landlords' beating and murdering their loved ones for being too poor to pay back loans or taxes, or too ill to finish their back-breaking work in the appointed time? The revenge on the part of the villagers--whose "excesses" when they took law into their own hands sometimes included flogging feudal landlords in public--was quite understandable.

But since the Viet-Nam^Nese people generally are averse to violence, the Government and the people, especially those in the cities, were shocked by it. The Government had not reckoned with peasant retribution ~~against landlords~~ reaching such a fever. When the situation started getting out of hand, Ho Chi Minh, the Party and the Government sent anguished telegrams to all 23 Northern provinces, and dispatched people to see that the excesses stopped. But it was too late; mob violence had taken over, and was destined to run its course.

Finally the Government succeeded in disbanding the village Land Reform Tribunals.

Comfortable, complacent Americans with their smug self-righteousness (when their country is guilty of the gravest genocide in history!) reproach: "My, how dreadful of the North Viet-Namense to have purged anybody back in 1954." How can people who have never known a day's suffering empathize with the passion of peasant anger against feudalists who had ground them down so long? What contempt the great Soviet poet Mayakovsky had for what he called the "tea-drinkers," those who sit sipping cosily in their cafes, fancying themselves revolutionaries. No wonder he said in one of his poems that he had more admiration for Francois Villon, who after writing poetry went out and robbed a bank! At least Villon could feel for the oppressed, could understand their desperate acts born of desperate sufferings.

Lenin was correct in comparing revolution to the pains of childbirth, for it is as difficult for a new economic system to struggle to emerge as for a baby to come into the world. Should mothers then stop having children since it involves travail? Where formerly the peasant could look forward only to despair and early death, Viet-Nam's land reform revolution brought life. To get rid of a system of land ownership where millions starved to death, where poverty and disease were omnipresent, was worth sacrifice. If a few had to pay with their lives so that every year hundreds of thousands of persons stopped starving; if Land Reform brought many millions of Viet-Namense education, progress and higher human values than

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most of mankind--which assuredly it did--then it was worth the price.

What was that price? Estimates by enemies of the DRV as to the number of people who may have died during Land Reform are invariably wild--and deliberate--exaggeration. The reactionary Donald Lancaster asserted that according to unofficial estimates, 10,000-15,000 people had been killed. But Lacouture and French officials in Hanoi at the time give figures much lower. Even their figures are too high, however, since they confuse those arrested with those executed. Thousands of persons were arrested, but the DRV government soon opened the jail doors to release them all.

Not more than a few thousand people at most could have lost their lives during Land Reform, and a few hundred landlords killed would be a more reasonable estimate. (It is entirely possible that even fewer were killed, since it was the policy of the Land Reform Tribunals in the villages to sentence feudal landlords to five years' imprisonment rather than death.)

Take into account the circumstances of the time. When Land Reform began back in 1953 Viet-Nam's Long War was still going on. When peace came the next year, after fighting so long the Viet-Namense were conditioned to deal with problems in "military" ways. It was difficult for them immediately to switch over to peacetime methods in dealing with enemies, saboteurs and feudal landlords. As Len Fox writes in his book Friendly Viet-Nam: "...the Government and the Party (and the whole people) had to change over from a wartime struggle

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to a peaceful struggle demanding new methods of struggle, new abilities and a new style of work. It was inevitable that mistakes would be made.

"The real question was: Would the Government and the Party recognize their mistakes and (together with the people) learn from them? The answer was Yes." 9 They must have learned well, because even the DRV's most inveterate enemies have to admit that since 1956 these mistakes have never been repeated. Accounts of the DRV's gentle governing deluge one from foreign residents and visitors to Hanoi. Not only are there no political prisoners. DRV jails are virtually empty even of common criminals, and have been for many years. The complete unity of the people of the DRV and the love and devotion they feel for their government--attested to by every foreign visitor--alone has enabled them to withstand the horrors and hardships of U.S. bombing.

Len Fox also relates meeting a woman who had been unjustly criticized during Land Reform and who told them, in front of other villagers, that she is critical of government policy. That was back in the middle of 1957, which goes to show that even then, there was wide-spread freedom in the DRV and people did not hesitate to criticize the government if they happened to have a gripe against it. That women still liked her government (just as parents who criticize their children, and vice versa, do not necessarily hate them) and today is probably supporting it with rifle in hand against U.S. aggression. 10

Why are people not tolerant of mistakes made by Socialist nations? Unfortunately, the answer is simply because those

nations are socialist. (Officials in Washington expressed unrepressed glee over the murder by the right-wing of over a million "Communist" Indonesians, but imagine the outcries if Socialists had done the same to their enemies!) Dr. Aptheker in his course on Marxism and Democracy talked about how readily the world forgave the Anglo-Saxons for over 200 years of terror and bloody purges in the days of the War of the Roses and the Hundred Years' War; for the centuries during which almost no English King survived with his head intact! But thirty years of Stalin's tyranny in a country with obscurantist, paranoid traditions reinforced by a concrete Cordon Sanitaire-- that, somehow, was not equally excusable or understandable. And the poor little DRV is condemned for "excesses" lasting, not 300 years or 30, but less than two! In fact, to a person familiar with revolutionary history, it should seem a near-miracle that the "purge" was so small and of such brief duration, probably the DRV set a record in this regard. When compared to the French, Russian, Chinese and every revolution in the Third World the excesses committed during Land Reform in the DRV seem so slight that they would not even be worth mentioning, if not for the damage deliberately done by perennial fault finders who bloat them out of all proportion.

Immediately after the mistakes were made and even while the villagers were taking law into their own hands, the DRV government expressed extreme regret over them, released prisoners from the jails and made amends to the families of those who had suffered unjustly. The Buddhist Vo Thanh Minh,

"Dean of the Neutralists," with friends both in the National Front for Liberation and in the Saigon government, over two years ago told me that the only thing he objected to about the DRV was the killing of landlords. He showed me a recent copy of a Hanoi newspaper containing a poem lamenting those who lost their lives during land reform.

Over ten years ago, and still they can't forgive themselves! Why must we make the burden more difficult for them? Especially now? "Vo Thanh Minh, these people express such genuine, pitiful sorrow over what they've done," I said. "It happened over a decade ago, and their record of humanism has since been blightless. Isn't it time you forgave them?"

To my surprise, he said, "Yes, you are right." Pointing to the paper: "There are many expressions of sorrow such as this. The Government and people of North Viet-Nam have done enough penitence. I see now that I was wrong in holding it against them so long. I forgive them."

He continued: "I started going on my fast unto death when the United States bombed the little town near Hanoi where I was born. Pray for the people of North Viet-Nam, my child, and do all you can, writexxxx letters, try to persuade American officials to stop the bombings which are tearing up my poor little country and people. While Hanoi and Haiphong have not yet been bombed, there is still time. If and when they are bombed, I would not want to go on living anyway, for the pain of living through it would be much harder than the peace of death." I burst into tears, for he had expressed some of

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my own feelings. And yet--Hanoi and Haiphong have been bombed and Vo Thanh Minh and I, we go on living. It seems incredible.

If ever the world is able to evolve to the point where it gives us "perfect" revolution (wouldn't man himself have to be perfect, though?) greater glory or virtue would not accrue. Only the mistakes of those who blazed new forms and systems may teach later revolutions not to make them. For the sake of the world's liberation, the Viet-Namese have written "How To Build A United Front" ^{with} ~~in~~ their very own blood. How can our hearts help bleeding for them all the more as U.S. bombs blight their lives and land since they suffer, they die for our freedom as well as their own? Victimized for pioneering United Front, the Viet-Namese may yet spare other peoples the horrors of imperialist war. Martyred Viet-Nam is Abraham's sacrifice, the Eternal sacrifice.

In Viet-Nam the mistakes made during Land Reform were but an evanescent, exceptional episode for a Party which before and since has used only the mildest means in dealing with class enemies.

The majority of landlords did not suffer during Land Reform. The Party believed in their rehabilitation, always "leaving the landlords and their families part of the land to open the way for them to work and transform themselves into new men." ¹¹ The Viet-Namese revolutionaries are optimists concerning man's basic nature, his plasticity. In their view the economic system and nature of society determine whether man shall be "good" or "bad," "generous" or "selfish." This is

borne out by their treatment of the capitalists. The Government did not expropriate or nationalize their property, though it often bought surplus property from them at fair prices. How did the DRV help capitalists and landlords to become honest, decent working people? By the exemplification of a changed society, and peaceful, patient persuasion. After a successful three-year plan of economic restoration (1955-57) following the end of the war, the DRV began a policy of "Economic Transformation." (1958-60). The government went into business with private capitalists, many establishments transforming themselves into "joint State-Private Enterprises," owned simultaneously by both private capitalists and the State, they were often formed when the government bought out the private capitalists, who were paid in annual installments of 6% of the purchase price. The old owners had the option, which usually they chose to exercise, of remaining in their companies at salaries commensurate with their abilities. In some State-owned enterprises, capitalists stay on as managers. On the other hand, the government manages some private enterprises, setting a limit on their profits. Since the State is in charge of investments it often participates jointly with the capitalists in managing the joint State-Private enterprises. This of course is State Capitalism.

The leaders of the DRV and foreign observers are unanimous in saying that such a policy was carried out without hardships, because unlike the feudal landowners, the bourgeois willingly acquiesced to the economic transformation. The government of the DRV never used coercion against the capitalists. It did

not need to, as most of them had always been members of the National Fronts, devoted to the national cause.

The mistakes of Land Reform seem all the more negligible when considered alongside its benefits which must be reckoned among the most monumental in modern history.

It is significant that Le Duan in advancing arguments for collectivization of agriculture put the case exactly as did Bernard Fall in a quote cited earlier. "Our per capita land holding is too small: three sao (1,080 Squ metres)," Le Duan said. "With this area under individual farming, a peasant produces enough for himself, the capacity for accumulating funds is next to nil, the main character of an individual economy based on this area is only self-sufficiency, the quantity of agricultural goods will be very small; again an individual economy based on this area mainly deals in food and has little resource to grow industrial crops, etc., and as a result there is no means whatever to develop industry.~~xx~~

"What then is to be done?" Le Duan asks. And he answers:

"The only path is to bring agriculture under co-operativization, rally the peasants to create a new division in production and farming, a new division and a more rational utilization of labour, in order to produce food more abundantly, grow industrial crops, rear cattle, etc., thus providing greater supply of marketable ~~raw~~ foodstuffs and raw materials, and increasing the income of the peasants who will then be able to contribute to socialist industrialization."¹² (Emphasis Le Duan's)

That is why when in 1956 some in the DRV's National Assembly proposed that North Viet-Nam adopt ~~the~~ capitalism,

this was rejected by the workers and peasants. Not on high falutin ideological grounds did the capitalist solution for the DRV meet its Waterloo, but because it remained in Le Duan's words the path "to poverty and death." The DRV leaders say, if capitalism could have worked under our conditions, we would have no objections, but it does not meet the simplest pragmatic test: that of survival for our people and our nation.

Another mistake that some in the Party made during Land Reform was to attempt to introduce the same type of collective farming system as the one in China, since that seemed one way of combatting starvation. This the Viet-Nam^Nese resented, since it did not suit their national traditions and temperament. The cold Commune-type system of farming in China just "wasn't right" for the warm and free-spirited Viet-Nam^Nese. So the peasants naturally were dissatisfied and in one province some of them (mostly rich catholic peasants who didn't want their landholdings tampered with) even "rebelled." Ever responsive to the people's wishes, the DRV corrected this mistake right away, and a system of Co-Operative Farming which met with the peasants' approval replaced Chinese-type collectivization. Since then, miracles have been achieved by the DRV, which had always been a famine-ridden nation. By 1959 North Viet-Nam^N despite its population density and poor agricultural conditions was even exporting rice, and its paddy yield had become the biggest in Southeast Asia!

Over two million peasant families--eight million people--immediately benefited from the achievements of Land Reform.

By late 1960 85.8 per cent of peasant households had joined cooperatives. This is not collective farming--each member still owns the land that he pools together with that of other farming families to bring about more progressive farming methods. The peasant belonging to a cooperative receives from the yield of the land whatever is commensurate with his share of it and the work he has put into it. (Of course, no peasant is forced to join a cooperative, and many choose to just go on working their individual plots of land. In addition to private farming and the farms belonging solely to the peasants combined in cooperatives, there is also a sector of State farms owned by the Government.)

Largely through the co-operative farming system, the DRV has managed to bring the poor peasants up to the living standards that before Liberation only middle peasants enjoyed.

Time was when the death of their buffalo represented a major tragedy to a Viet-Namense peasant family. The cooperatives have banished such hardships, since the combining of resources makes possible advanced methods of mechanization and irrigation, bringing prosperity to every farming family. The cooperative having freed the peasant from hunger and the insecurity of tomorrow, the U.S. determined to bring back these old fears in a new form. Now the peasants must contend with the spectre that American bombers may bring destruction and death to them and their families. (As I write, thirty-five persons in a North Viet-Namense village, 21 of them children, have been killed by U.S. planes as they lay sleeping. Another bombing attack on another village recently killed 62 peasants in the

North. The brutal bombings go on night and day, with the tragic toll of deaths mounting as the U.S. increases its saturation bombing.) Now the peasants are gripped by anxiety that U.S. planes may make major breaches in the dikes, threatening the lives and welfare of millions of people who put so much time and effort into building them. If the U.S. resorts to large-scale bombing of the dikes and dams, the rice-fields will be flooded, causing mass starvation, drowning, and disease epidemics that follow in their wake. And U.S. destruction of the DRV's power stations has not only paralyzed the city industries which turn out the peasants' farm implements and consumer goods. They also make it impossible to operate the electric pumps so essential to irrigation. Washington stops at nothing to try to push the DRV back into the dungeon of feudalism.

Footnotes For Chapter ~~III~~ XIV

- 1 Joseph Starobin, Eye-Witness in Indochina, op. cit., pp. 59-60
- 2 Tran Phuong, "The Land Reform," Viet^Namese Studies, Pages of History--1945-54, p. 162
- 3 *ibid.*, p. 162
- 4 Bernard Fall, "The Other Side of the 17th Parallel," The New York Times Magazine, July 10, 1966
- 5 A Heroic People, Memoirs From the Revolution, op. cit., p. 17
- 6 Truong Chinh, March Ahead Under the Party's Banner, op. cit., P. ~~100~~ 100
- 7 *ibid.*, p. 92
- 8 Tran Phuong, "The Land Reform," op. cit., p. 185
- 9 Len Fox, Friendly Viet-Nam, op. cit., p. 148
- 10 *ibid.*, p. 156
- 11 Truong Chinh, March Ahead Under the Party's Banner, op. cit., p. 35
- 12 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 132-33

THE FRONT'S LAND POLICY

New York Post journalist Pete Hamill, on-the-scene in South Viet-Nam, wrote of the miserable plight of the peasants. "If he (the peasant) is intelligent, a potential leader, a budding poet, or possibly a future surgeon," wrote Hamill, "he has nowhere to go. Except, of course, to the Viet-Cong.

"So we find ourselves as a nation defending the status quo in a situation that begs for revolution. In a country that is 90 per cent agricultural, where 45 per cent of the land is owned by 2 per cent of the people, neither we nor our allies will even whisper the words 'agrarian reform.'* The Viet-Nameese government refuses even to make the simple promise that farmers now squatting on land in Viet Cong territory can take legal title to the land if the VC are driven out. The Viet Cong tell the peasants that the government and their American allies are waging war on behalf of landlords, and certainly from the viewpoint of a man to whom land is life, the argument seems a reasoned one.

"So we use the silken language of the well-fed while talking to the hungry and the dying."

Pete Hamill actually had the courage to end his article by quoting a conversation he had with officers and officials of the Saigon regime, reflecting on the lack of popular support it commands:

* When the matter of land reform was recently brought up in Saigon's puppet Assembly, only three members dared vote for it.

"The man said a leader should be a man of the people, who thought like the people, who got down on the earth and talked with them in their own language.

"There is one Viet-^Namese like that,' someone said. We stared at him for a long moment.

"He calls himself Ho Chi Minh."

What is the nature of land reform policy in South Viet-Nam during the National Democratic Revolution? One of the great NFL slogans is "Land To the Tillers." Never even in its paper pronouncements has the U.S.-Saigon government sought to meet this most pressing need of the peasantry. But the slogan wouldn't mean much unless the peasants were actually given land and the title to that land. Since the Front always practices what it preaches, already it has distributed over 2 million hectares of land to poor and landless peasants.

Why must the Anti-Feudal Revolution be carried out at the same time as the Anti-Imperialist one, with no separation of their tasks? The reason is simple. Unless one caters to the needs of the peasantry--the backbone both of the people and the Liberation Army--the peasants will not be much disposed to fight! Without adequate attention given to the internal struggle against their poverty and the feudal landlords who cause it, the peasants will lack the spirit and energy to struggle against the foreign enemy. Hardly surprising that the Saigon Army has always been so reluctant to engage in fighting and that American troops are doing the lion's share of it! No pacification

program drummed into the heads of America's Saigon quislings stands the slightest chance of succeeding, because the conflict in South Viet-Nam today is a class struggle--with the U.S.-Saigon regime representing the interests of the feudal landlords and comprador bourgeoisie, while the NFL stands for the interests of the workers and peasants. Since these interests are irreconcilable one cannot "serve two masters." That is, those who support the big capitalists and feudalists can't possibly help the workers and peasants; the reverse is equally true. It would be like squaring the circle; wisely, the Front does not even try!

Journalist I.F. Stone, no friend of Communism, wrote in his review of George K. Tanhan's book Men Without Guns: "Mr. Tanhan has long been one of the government's experts in studying Communist revolutionary warfare. These experts pore through Communist literature but seem to miss the elementary and essential points, perhaps because to speak plainly in terms of class interests is regarded today as slightly subversive if not politically pornographic. How can you expect revolutionary change from a government based on the possessing classes? We have been supporting a series of dictatorial regimes based on absentee landlords, military men and urban business types who can no more think in revolutionary terms than a horse can fly." (Emphasis added)

On another occasion I.F. Stone wrote of the U.S. Pacification Program in Viet-Nam: "for all the repeated talk of bringing about a social revolution in the countryside not one word was

said about land reform, or even lower rents for the peasants...
 One honest U.S. adviser, asked whether the CIA¹ trained Rural
 Reconstruction² teams were as good as the Viet-Cong, said
 'not yet' and added that the difference was that our teams
 didn't have a program! How do you make a revolution in a
 peasant country without taking a position on the land question?
 When you stand with the absentee landlords and their military
 men against the landless? Charles Collingwood admitted the
 new program is a lot like those we heard about in the past."²

If the U.S. really wanted to attempt to win over the
 peasantry it would have to do what the NFL is doing: confiscate
 the estates of the absentee landowners, and give them to the
 poor peasants who daily work the fields and are treated worse
 than sharecroppers. For the U.S. and its Saigon stooges to
 do so of course would be for them to commit political suicide,
 since their raison d'etre is to defend the rule of reaction
 all around the world. That is why seriously to discuss
 whether Lansdale's--or Komer's--ideas can compete with the
 NFL's Program or even have the remotest chance of succeeding
 is simply absurd. Why do writers analyzing the failure of the
 U.S. pacification effort never mention the correlation of class
 forces in South Viet-Nam³ese society (and in the whole world,
 really) and tell which side supports which classes? Surely
 it is the most basic of facts that United States interests by
 the simple logic of their class nature can only be bound up
 with the exploitative elements. (Has there ever been a shred
 of evidence to the contrary?)

When Ngo Dinh Diem was president of South Viet-Nam he took

the land away from the peasants. (During the war against France, the government of the Democratic Republic had given them free land.) Was that a fluke? Hardly! Neither was it out of character that Diem's agents even exacted back rent for all the years the peasants had enjoyed free land! Today Diem's successors continue that infamous land policy. They are acting in the only way they can in support of their class positions. Fortunately or unfortunately, the relations of production still determine all other relations after all, just as Karl Marx said.

One is reminded of what the Chinese used to say in the Ideological Debates in reply to the Soviet question, "Can't the U.S. leaders ever be sensible and reasonable"? Yes, of course the U.S. leaders are sensible and reasonable, the Chinese replied--in the interests of their own class! Socialism serve the interests of the proletariat, while Capitalism serves the interests of the bourgeoisie, they pointed out--and wondered how socialists could lose sight of such veritable ABC's of Marxism.

True enough, the interests of the cadillac clique on Capitol Hill are not the interests of the majority of people of the U.S., Viet-Nam or the world. Isn't it a bit thick to imply that the Lansdale--Ladyzhinsky--Komer ideology ever had a chance in South Viet-Nam? The U.S. pacification program's defenders could actually be answered in just three succinct lines from Le Duan: "To defend the existence of the peasantry is to defend the mighty force of the nation. To defend the existence of the landlords is to defend the cruel parasitical

force of the nation. Therefore the political line to champion the interests of the peasantry is progressive and that upholding the interests of the landlords is reactionary."

Le Duan relates how the Communists rejected the erroneous ideas of the Viet-Nam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD) Party that the main forces of Viet-Nam's revolution lay in all classes (including the feudal landlord and comprador!); that the leadership of the revolution must be assumed, not by those speaking and living the ideology of the proletariat, but by the most outstanding figures of all classes. To make a class distinction--so said these bourgeois elements--was to commit a crime. But, Le Duan asks, how could there be "mutual good feeling" between the peasants and the feudal landlords who ruined their existence? When in the larger interests of saving the nation the landlords were called upon to stop exploiting the peasants and to unite with them in struggling for the national cause, naturally they refused. Then what hypocrisy to expect the peasants to unite with their tormentors! Here again is the clearest indication of why the National Democratic Revolution must necessarily be both anti-imperialist and anti-feudal.

Le Duan puts it simply and succinctly: "...there remained only one alternative which was either to protect the landlords' interests and abandon the peasants, or to struggle for the peasants' interests and abandon landlordism." In a sense it was the peasantry, the main force of the revolution, that really made the choice--by refusing to respond to the appeal of the bourgeoisie! That was a root cause of the bourgeoisie's failure ever to lead a successful liberation struggle in Viet-Nam, though

it tried numerous times. On February 9, 1930 the VNQDD led the Yen Bai rebellion, in which the soldiers garrisoned at Yen Bai mutined and shot at the French colonialists. Naturally, the French squelched the uprising in blood. However, the Communists mobilized the people to oppose the wave of arrests, terrorism and torture which followed. And they put forward some of the same slogans we see in the NFL Program today for "the improvement of the people's living conditions."

After 1930 the bourgeoisie never led any revolution at all. If the middle classes really want to be helped, Le Duan says, their future also is bound up with the building of a Front revolving round the worker-peasant alliance. Because only such an organization has proved itself able to lead and liberate the entire people.

To ease the peasants' privation, right at the beginning of the revolution the Front confiscates the estates of the absentee landlords. Point Four of the NFL's Program commits the Front to "Carry Out Land Rent Reduction And Advance Toward The Settlement Of The Agrarian Problem So As To Ensure Land To The Tillers." Section three under Point Four says it is the Front's intention "To confiscate the land usurped by the U.S. imperialists and their agents, and distribute it to landless and land-poor peasants. To re-distribute communal land in an equitable and rational way."

But though the Front makes no concessions to the big feudal landlords, still it is careful to carry out land reform gradually. To avoid antagonizing the small landowners

and the middle classes the Liberation Front does not confiscate everything, but only the estates of the absentee landlords and traitors. The policy is to pay the other landlords for their excess land; on buying it from them at fair prices, the Front will distribute it free to peasants without land and those with little land. As Section four of Point Four of the NFL's Program explains:

"Through negotiations, the State will purchase from landowners at equitable and rational prices all land held by them in excess of a given area, fixed in accordance with the concrete situation in each locality, and distribute it to landless and land-poor peasants. This land will be distributed free of charge and with no conditions attached." Nguyen Huu Tho, the compassionate President of the NFL, superbly sums up the Front's policy on this matter; he also tells of the NFL's inspiring attitude towards democracy:

"Our program reflects the broad nature of the Front and the forces represented in it," President Nguyen Huu Tho said. "We are in favor of land to the peasants for instance, but not systematic confiscation; we are for reduction of rents but for the maintenance of present property rights except in the case of traitors. Landlords who have not supported the U.S. puppets have nothing to fear. We respect the economic liberty of industrial and economic enterprises, legitimate property rights of foreigners and to a certain extent we are not opposed to foreign investments. Above all, the Front stands for democratic liberties, freedom of speech, assembly and movement, and in our liberated areas these basic freedoms do really

exist. People elect those in whom they have confidence, and run their own affairs in a most democratic way. The Front had the immediate support from all patriotic forces from the moment it was formed." 5

After South Viet-Nam's liberation it is conceivable that some of the landlord elements now enthusiastically supporting the Front could become disenchanted when land reform starts bringing maximum benefit to the peasants. Today well over 90 per cent of the people of South Viet-Nam wholeheartedly support the Front and in some way or other take part in its struggle for emancipation. But we cannot automatically assume that in the postwar years this support will remain at such high tide on the part of the more conservative elements.

Why? For one thing, natural forces beyond man's control make it impossible to equitably effect land distribution. The Front's land allotment will be mathematically accurate, so many sao's of land will be meted out to each person to farm. The land now held by landlords in excess of what a farming family needs will be bought at the fairest prices from the landlords and given gratis to the peasants. But the rich have been conditioned over a lifetime to want more than the poor. And although everyone's landholding will be more or less the same, in no country is every inch of soil of equal fertility! So in the parceling out of land, some will inevitably get rocky land or land on which very little will grow. Such unfortunate persons then will be disgruntled. With frustration comes the desire to lash out at somebody--usually the authorities. All economists know this, but those subservient to the U.S.

will never say it. Hypocritically they always condemn the suppression and purging of some landlords and traitors during the early phase of Land Reform (when the alternative is millions of poor peasants dying from capitalist-colonialist starvation!)

Since the Viet-Namense are an exceptionally tolerant people who can live in harmony together, there will be very little of this in South Viet-Nam after liberation. Especially as unlike the North with the world's highest population density, the South is sparsely populated, containing an abundance of land for everyone. In the future the South could be a land of milk and honey. But it would be naive to think that class antagonisms coupled with the mindless forces of nature can be done away with overnight. What is to be done when some of the dissatisfied resort to murder and sabotage? To let a small minority stand in the way of the majority who have starved for centuries, with barely a rag to throw on their backs? For too long a small minority has cordoned off their road to happiness and prosperity. The U.S. has hexed the underdeveloped world with war, hunger, filth, degeneracy, disease and death so that a miniscule minority can continue to grow turgid with profits. The only way to counter such imperialist crimes is to fight against United Fruit with a United Front!

But most landowners and other conservatives will not try to sabotage the Front or withdraw from it. In Viet-Nam at least, the skilful propaganda work done by the cadres, their patience in explaining Front policy and in diligently educating the people will continue to bear beautiful fruit.

As Truong Chinh wrote about the North's experience:

"The Front and the administration lost a few members--the die-hard landlords--but in the course of the agrarian reform we united millions of peasants, organized them into peasants' associations and further consolidated the worker-peasant alliance and the leadership of the working class and the Party. If the 'small unity' was a little impaired, the 'great unity' was all the more consolidated and broadened." 6

Footnotes For Chapter ~~XX~~ XV

- 1 I.F. Stone, "Why We Fail As Revolutionaries," The New Republic, July 30, 1966
- 2 I.F. Stone's Weekly, April 18, 1966
- 3 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 77
- 4 ~~in~~ ibid., p. 33
- 5 Wilfred G. Burchett. Viet-Nam: Inside Story of the Guerilla War. New York: International Publishers, 1965, p. 187
- 6 Truong Chinh, March Ahead Under the Party's Banner, op. cit., p. 92

THE LIBERATED AREAS

Even the most radical Americans tend to be skeptical of all political programs, including the National Front for Liberation's. Because U.S. politicians never make good on their word, Americans assume all political leaders are insincere. The peculiar parochialism of Americans causes them to regard the entire world as an extension of the United States; they ascribe their own characteristics to other ~~xxx~~ peoples, believing them to be universal. The corruption, the slashing hypocrisy of the entire American way of life has led Americans ~~to~~ cynically ^{to} impute low motives to every society and organization.

But the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the National Front for Liberation--free from both bureaucracy and graft--are absolutely the wrong societies on which to graft America's sins!

Far from being "divorced from life," the Program of the National Front for Liberation is actually the most pragmatic of plans. It includes the following Ten Points (written in 1960 when of course Diem was still alive):

PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL FRONT FOR LIBERATION
OF SOUTH VIET-NAM

1. To Overthrow the Disguised Colonial Regime of the U.S. Imperialists and The Dictatorial Ngo Dinh Diem Administration--Lackey of the U.S. And To Form A National Democratic Coalition Administration.

12/1/90

The present regime in South Viet-Nam is a disguised colonial regime of the U.S. imperialists. The South Viet-Nam administration is a lackey which has been carrying out the U.S. imperialists' political line. This regime and administration must be overthrown, and a broad national democratic coalition administration formed including representatives of all strata of people, nationalities, political parties, religious communities, and patriotic personalities. We must wrest back the people's economic, political, social and cultural interests, realize independence and democracy, improve the people's living conditions, carry out a policy of peace and neutrality and advance toward peaceful reunification of the Fatherland.

II To Bring Into Being A Broad And Progressive Democracy

1. To abolish the current constitution of the Ngo Dinh Diem dictatorial administration--lackey of the U.S. To elect a new National Assembly through universal suffrage.
2. To promulgate all democratic freedoms: freedom of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, of trade union, of movement... To guarantee freedom of belief; no discrimination against any religion on the part of the State. To grant freedom of action to the patriotic political parties and mass organizations, irrespective of political tendencies.
3. To grant general amnesty to all political detainees, dissolve all concentration camps under any form whatsoever. To abolish the fascist law 10-59 and other anti-democratic laws. To

permit the return of all those who had to flee abroad due to the U.S.-Diem regime.

4. Strictly to ban all illegal arrests and imprisonments, tortures and corporal punishment. To punish unrepenting cruel murderers of the people.

III To Build An Independent And Sovereign Economy, Improve The People's Living Conditions

1. To abolish the economic monopoly of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen. To build an independent and sovereign economy and finance, beneficial to the nation and people. To confiscate and nationalize the property of the U.S. imperialists and the ruling clique, their stooges.

2. To help industrialists and tradespeople rehabilitate and develop industry both large and small, and to encourage industrial development. Actively to protect home-produced goods by abolishing production taxes, restricting or ending the import of these goods which can be produced within the country and reducing import taxes on raw materials and machinery.

3. To rehabilitate agriculture, and to modernize farming, fishing and animal husbandry. To help peasants reclaim waste land and develop production; to protect crops and ensure the consumption of agricultural products.

4. To encourage and accelerate the economic interflow between the town and the countryside, between plains and mountainous areas. To develop trade with foreign countries without distinction of political regimes, and on the principle of equality and

mutual benefit.

5. To apply an equitable and rational tax system. To abolish arbitrary fines.

6. To promulgate labour regulations, that is: to prohibit dismissals, wage cuts, fines and ill-treatment of workers and office employees, to improve the life of workers and public employees, and to fix wages and guarantees for the health of teen-age apprentices.

7. To organize social relief:

--Jobs for the unemployed.

--Protection of orphans, the elderly and disabled.

--Assistance to those who have become disabled or are without support owing to the struggle against U.S. imperialism and its steeges.

--Relief to localities suffering crop failures, fire and natural calamities.

8. To help displaced persons return to their native places if they so desire, and to provide jobs for those who decide to remain in the South.

9. Strictly to prohibit forcible house removals, arson, usurpation of land, and the herding of the people into concentration centres. To ensure to the country-folk and urban working people the opportunity to earn their living in security.

IV. To Carry Out Land Rent Reduction And Advance
Toward The Settlement Of The Agrarian Problem So As To
Ensure Land To The Tillers

1. To carry out land rent reduction. To guarantee the peasants' right to till their present plots of land and ensure the right of ownership for those who have reclaimed waste land. To protect the legitimate right of ownership by peasants of the plots of land distributed to them.
2. To abolish the "prosperity zones" and the regime of herding the people into "agricultural settlements." To permit those forcibly herded into "prosperity zones" or "agricultural settlements" to return home freely and earn their living on their own plots of land.
3. To confiscate the land usurped by the U.S. imperialists and their agents, and distribute it to landless and land-peer peasants. To re-distribute communal land in an equitable and rational way.
4. Through negotiations, the State will purchase from landowners at equitable and rational prices all land held by them in excess of a given area, fixed in accordance with the concrete situation in each locality, and distribute it to landless and land-peer peasants. This land will be distributed free of charge and with no conditions attached.

V. To Build A National And Democratic Education And Culture

1. To eliminate the enslaving and gangster style American culture and education; to build a national, progressive culture and education serving the Fatherland and the people.
2. To wipe out illiteracy. To build sufficient general

education schools for the youth and children. To expand universities, vocational and professional schools. To use the Viet-^Namese language in teaching. To reduce school fees; to exempt poor pupils and students from paying fees; to reform the examination system.

3. To develop science and technology and national literature and art; to encourage and help intellectuals, and cultural and art workers to develop their abilities in the service of national construction.

4. To develop medical services in order to look after the people's health. To expand the gymnastic and sports movement.

VI. To Build An Army To Defend The Fatherland And The People

1. To build a national army to defend the Fatherland and the people. To cancel the system of U.S. military advisers.

2. To abolish the pressganging regime. To improve the material life of the army men and ensure their political rights. To prohibit the ill-treatment of soldiers. To apply a policy of assistance to families of poor army men.

3. To award and give worthy jobs to those officers and soldiers who have rendered meritorious services in the struggle against the domination of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen. To observe leniency toward those who had before collaborated with the U.S.-Diem clique and committed crimes against the people but have now repented and serve the people.

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4. To abolish all the military bases of foreign countries in South Viet-Nam.

VII. To Guarantee The Right Of Equality Between Nationalities, And Between Men And Women; To Protect The Legitimate Rights Of Foreign Residents In Viet-Nam And Viet-Namese Living Abroad

1. To ensure the right to autonomy of the national minorities.

To set up, within the framework of the great family of the Viet-^Namese people, autonomous regions in areas inhabited by minority peoples.

To ensure equal rights among different nationalities. All nationalities have the right to use and develop their own spoken and written language and to preserve or change their customs and habits. To abolish the U.S.-Diem clique's present policy of ill-treatment and forced assimilation of the minority nationalities.

To help the minority people to catch up with the common level of the people by developing the economy and culture in the areas inhabited by them, by training skilled personnel from people of minority origin.

2. To ensure the right of equality between men and women.

Women to enjoy the same rights as men in all fields: political, economic, cultural and social.

3. To protect the legitimate rights of foreigners residing in Viet-Nam.

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4. To defend and take care of the interests of Viet-Namense living abroad.

VIII. To Carry Out A Foreign Policy Of Peace And Neutrality

1. To cancel all unequal treaties signed with foreign countries by the U.S. henchmen which violate national sovereignty.
2. To establish diplomatic relations with all countries irrespective of political regime, in accordance with the principles of peaceful co-existence as put forth at the Bandung Conference.
3. To unite closely with the peace-loving and neutral countries. To expand friendly relations with Asian and African countries, first of all with neighbouring Cambodia and Laos.
4. To refrain from joining any bloc or military alliance or forming a military alliance with any country.
5. To receive economic aid from any country ready to assist Viet-Nam without conditions attached.

IX. To Establish Normal Relations Between The Two Zones And Advance Toward Peaceful Reunification Of The Fatherland.

The urgent demand of our people throughout the country is to reunify the Fatherland by peaceful means. The South Viet-Nam National Front for Liberation undertakes the gradual reunification of the country by peaceful means, on the principle of negotiations and discussions between the two zones on all forms and measures beneficial to the Viet-Namense people and Fatherland.

Pending national reunification, the governments of the two zones will negotiate and undertake not to spread propaganda to divide the peoples or in favour of war, not to use military forces against each other. To carry out economic and cultural exchanges between the two zones. To ensure for the people of both zones freedom of movement and trade, and the right of mutual visits and correspondence.

X. To Oppose Aggressive War, Actively Defend World Peace

- 1. To oppose aggressive war and all forms of enslavement by the imperialists. To support the national liberation struggles of peoples in various countries.
- 2. To oppose war propaganda. To demand general disarmament, prohibition of nuclear weapons and demand the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.
- 3. To support the movements for peace, democracy and social progress in the world. Actively to contribute to the safeguarding of peace in South-East Asia and the world.

Not only the laborers and farmers but large sections of the middle classes in all countries sympathize with the Viet-Namense independence struggle, and protest the dreadful war. This is the first time in history that a socialist-oriented movement has met with such wide-ranging support. It is a tribute to the correctness of Viet-Nam's new-type national

Democratic Revolution which makes an appeal to the middle classes at home and abroad. Not only does the NFL invite middle-class people to join its struggle--it actually safeguards the rights of their industrial enterprises! To encourage membership, the Front offers tangible inducements to the businessmen, the majority of whom have been victimized and pauperized by the U.S. imperialists and their agents, the comprador bourgeoisie. The U.S. press constantly carries reports that inflation in South Viet-Nam is sky-high, that the economy of that star-crossed country has been ruined by American intervention. The Buddhists as well as the businessmen complain about this most vociferously. With U.S. surplus goods glutting the market, economically the national bourgeoisie is stifled, strangled. Without the help and support of the Front, which nurtures their hope for home-produced industry after Liberation, the national bourgeoisie would be a class without a cause!

That is why Point III of the Front's program, To Build An Independent And Sovereign Economy, Improve the People's Living Conditions, specially speaks to the patriotic bourgeoisie's condition. Of Point Three's nine subsections, the first two most pertain to the middle classes. Let us recall:

1. To abolish the economic monopoly of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen. To build an independent and sovereign economy and finance, beneficial to the nation and people. To confiscate and nationalize the property of the U.S. imperialists and the ruling clique, their stooges.
2. To help industrialists and tradespeople rehabilitate

and develop industry both large and small, and to encourage industrial development. Actively to protect home-produced goods by abolishing production taxes, restricting or ending the import of those goods which can be produced within the country and reducing import taxes on raw materials and machinery."

While the Front will definitely confiscate and nationalize the property of the U.S. imperialists, their Saigon puppets and the compradors, it is determined to help the rest of the bourgeoisie build a national industry.

Almost every sentence of the NFL's Program and pronouncements reveal the most perceptive understanding of the realities and needs of every segment of South Viet^Namese society. The NFL recognizes that each of the four classes in the Front, the proletariat, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie, will contribute something different to the struggle, each in its own way. Since each gives to the Front in accordance with its ability, each receives from the Front in accordance with its own particular needs! The petty and national bourgeoisie contribute towards broadening the Front in order to completely isolate the enemy. The national bourgeoisie also contributes its money, while the petty bourgeoisie provides the doctors, lawyers, educators, technicians, engineers without which no society can function and which is indispensable to the future liberated South Viet^Nam.

The trotskyists say, "Absolutely no concessions must be made to the bourgeoisie." But would the petty and national bourgeoisie contribute anything to the Front if they received

nothing in return? Hardly! So the Front makes an appeal to them on the basis of their own class interests, and promises that in a Liberated South their talents and abilities will be appreciated in the building of a national economy. This is what Vo Nguyen Giap means when he writes in The South Viet-Nam People Will Win that the Program of the NFL "conforms both to sense and sentiment." The aim is, as Truong Chinh puts it, "rallying all national and democratic forces, and gaining allies, however small or unstable and temporary, with the aim of depriving the enemy of their supporters and making more friends so as to have additional strength to overthrow the enemy." This is what Ho Chi Minh's popular slogan during the First Resistance War, "Unity, U_nity Great U_nity-- Victory, Victory, Great V_ictory" means. In unity there is strength, the kind that will lead to victory. As I said before if the Front had not won over important elements of the bourgeoisie and landowning class, it would have enabled those forces to become strong in their unity against the Front! The Viet-Nam^Nese have built the broadest united front because they were determined to take in almost the entire population, they gave this principal priority. That was their plan and purpose or, as the Viet-N^Nam^Nese would say, their guiding principle.

In every respect the Viet-N^Nam^Nese have put into practice their belief that "revolution is the work of the broad masses of people and not of the communists alone."²

Why are barbarous daily saturation bombing raids by B-52's

being carried out against Liberated territories? Why is it U.S. military strategy to use every weapon short of atomic weapons--and to send in massive numbers of U.S. troops to try to wrench the entire country-side from the Liberation forces? The United States government follows a policy of "burn all, kill all, destroy all" because it knows that Liberated territories in South Viet-Nam represent the first flashes of an iconoclastic and inspiring way of life that a majority of mankind will want to follow. The Front has even put into practice a kind of advanced anarchism, with "self-management committees" elected by the villagers; such matters as public health, education, culture, information are run by the people themselves, with few or no orders from above!

As the U.S. military is using Viet-Nam for a chemical lab to test out every new horror weapon, so the National Front for Liberation is using the Liberated areas as a testing ground of a different sort. It is testing out its beautiful and just Programs and Policies regarding democracy, the economy, agriculture, religion, relations among the minority groups--seeing how they work out in actuality, and making re-adjustments where necessary. That is why the U.S. is waging genocidal war against the Liberated villages; why U.S. marines march into them with matches and flame throwers, so intent are their leaders on putting to the torch the Front's pioneering practice of democratic Socialism!*

* Entire South Viet-Namese villages like Vinh Quang, Phuong Dinh, Thanh Son have been wiped out by U.S. troops. In Binh An villages alone (located in Binh Dinh province) U.S. forces killed 394 inhabitants during a two-day raid in February 1966 including 130 women and 100 children. 3

As Vo Nguyen Giap says:

"The liberated areas are not only firm guerilla bases, but are also built to become shining models of a new life, of a new regime in opposition to the gloomy state and stifling atmosphere of the enemy-controlled areas.

"Under the direction of the Front, the people of the liberated areas are obviously masters of the land and are doing their best to manage and build their life along progressive lines. Democratic liberties, freedom of belief, freedom of business, equality between nationalities are respected and widely implemented. Cultural, social, educational activities and the health service are progressing. A healthy patriotic art and literature of a mass character contributes to the mobilization of the people for the struggle.

"Here, our compatriots are freed from the plunder and exploitation by the enemy; they are enthusiastically tackling production, improving their method of work, raising their livelihood and at the same time actively pooling their efforts to wage the war of resistance. Here, the economic, agrarian, and religious policies of the Front, and the policy dealing with the bourgeois and foreign residents, the policy regarding the puppet soldiers and officers who go over to the side of the people are clearly defined and readjusted.

"At present the liberated areas have played their strategic role in the liberation war and have brought great influence to bear on the inhabitants of the enemy-controlled areas including the towns. The liberated areas are precisely the first pictures of free and independent South Viet-Nam in

future; they will certainly be expanded and consolidated and will become the regions in which the future regime of the South will be applied after the victory of the liberation war."⁴

Tragically, a few short years after Giap wrote those words, massive contingents of U.S. troops have invaded long-standing NFL strongholds and bases previously untouched. The entire free portion of Viet-Nam--80 per cent of the territory and where ten million persons live--has been declared by the U.S. a "free-bombing zone"; monster U.S. air and fire-power has made life itself impossible in many areas. No longer free to live and build unmolested, many liberated areas are prevented by mass annihilation from continuing their sweeping programs of social justice, though they do try. Naturally, that is the U.S. plan, for nothing so beautiful and far-reaching as these NFL experiments in living can be tolerated by the Establishment.

Still, the Front continues to build. It builds schools for the children, to keep the light of learning alive. Conditions are so poor that the NFL can only give the children manioc to use as chalk, and can only make writing books for them out of banana leaves. As in the North, very many schools have been bombed, with heavy loss of life. Yet somehow, children and parents still struggle on.

U.S. bombing strategy is geared to forcing millions of people to flee the Liberated areas for what U.S. officials themselves describe as the "pig-pens" of the refugee camps. In this way, the U.S. contrives the Front's surrender by trying to decimate and dilute its mass support. The Program of the

NFL envisages no Grand Designs for building Marble Palaces in some distant future (which Dostoevsky so deplored in Notes From Underground and Brothers Karamazov). Its promise rests in the here and now. Without the liberated areas, without the countryside in which to practice its Programs and policies, in effect the NFL would cease to exist, being denied the base and basis which constitutes its very purpose. That is what the U.S. government is counting on. But once again, it has miscalculated.

Imbued with the Front's ideology, the new "refugees" will spread it even more thoroughly to the millions in the cities, making new converts and contacts! The cities will become even more constant centers of resistance to the fascist puppet regime.

People always wonder how in spite of the severe losses the Liberation Army has sustained it goes on fighting. Plagued by malaria and other illness, forced constantly on the march by merciless bombardment, and suffering from hunger, fatigue and lack of medicines, often Liberation Armymen's ideals alone keep them going. "When one dies a hundred others rise to take his place," say the Viet-Namese, and from the first days of the war against the French until now, the fact that the Liberation Army even exists testifies to this. For a hundred to take the place of one fallen Liberation fighter, you must have people's war, and the struggle in South Viet-Nam is exactly that: a war of the entire people. Because of the increasing genocide, Jean Lacouture has raised the tragic question: what will happen in Viet-Nam when so many are killed

that when one perishes, a hundred others can't take his place, or even ten, because they will most of them be dead. The macabre massacre by the U.S. of North Viet-Nam and its people evokes the same fear.

Though lacking all materials and with only the most rudimentary tools at its disposal, in the villages the Liberation Front built not only schools, but medical dispensaries, theatres, and even economic establishments. The Southern people had been so inspired by Socialist construction in North Viet-Nam that in an elementary way they had tried to emulate it. Jungle forges turned out simple products. The Front even set norms for production, and drew up crude plans for industrial development. North and South Viet-Nam, linked together by tradition and hope, agony and grief. In the Liberated zones of the South as in the industrialized North, so much life and labor both are perishing.

But never do they lose sight of the promise of Tomorrow. When recently a Philosopher's Conference met in Hanoi, the DRV said its very holding signified confidence that there would be a free and independent Viet-Nam to philosophize about in the future! In South Viet-Nam despite the cauldron fires of war spilling over the Liberated areas, such is the Liberation Front's spirit and outlook that it determined to hold a competition for literature and the arts. It awarded the Nguyen Dinh Chieu Prize to no less than 54 literary works ranging from poetry to the novel. (Nguyen Dinh Chieu was a great South Viet-Namese writer who lived between 1822 and 1888.) All these prize literary creations, written both by

professional men of letters and by novice Army-men, reveal the humanism as well as the heroism of the South Viet-Namense people. Here is the first of three poems awarded the Nguyen Dinh Chieu prize in the Poetry division. It touchingly tells of first love, giving a glimpse of the village people's simple lives, now turned to ashes by the war. Too, it says something of the tastes of the National Front for Liberation which awarded it First Prize:

MY NATIVE LAND

(From the book of poems by the same name)

by

Giang Nam

When I was a boy, and to school went twice a day,
 I loved my native land through what books had to say
 "Who says buffalo-boys lead a hard life?"
 Dreaming, I listened to the birds that sang on high,
 Often played truant,
 Catching, near the pond, the butterfly,
 And was caught by Mamma...

Hardly had the whip licked at me
Then already I wept: Hee, hee, hee!...
The little girl next door
Looked at me and chuckled. Oh, what a bore!

Then the Revolution broke out
And the long War was brought about.
My native land was plagued by the enemy.
Leaving Mother, I went away.

The little girl next door--who would believe it?--
Also joined a guerilla unit.

The day we met, she chuckled too.
Her eyes were round and black--levelly and true!
But we were to fight, and no word was said.
As my unit passed, I turned my head...
Though rain filled the sky,
Warm was my heart, I knew not why...
When peace was restored I returned again
To the old school, to the furrows, the sugar cane.
Again we met.

Confused you hid behind the deer...
And you laughed, when I whispered:
"Are you married?" --"It's so hard to say, brother."
Trembling, I took your hand so fine,
And you left it, left it burning there in mine.
Today I heard of you.

How hard to think! Yet, it's true...

They shot you, and threw you away.
Why? "You're a partisan," they say.
Pain tears my heart, half-dead am I!

I once loved my native land for its birds and
butterflies,
For the days when I played truant and was whipped by Mother.
I love it now, for on each cled of earth there lies
Part of the flesh and blood of the girl I'll love for ever. 5

1960

Ordinary people in the North write equally touching
poetry, as they also did during the war against the French.
The Australian authority on Viet-Nam Lon Fox quotes a poem by
a Northern worker Mai Trong, which appeared in a book published
by the Trade Union Confederation of the DRV:

MY WORKSHOP

My workshop
is by the clouds protected
and by the mountains hidden,
Its roof of woven bamboo
with forest leaves
conceals it.

These leaves which camouflage it
are sometimes fresh
and sometimes faded,

The rocks surrounding
are sometimes blue
and sometimes white,

But my workshop
keeps its fiery heart

Which neither hunger nor riches,
neither ugliness nor beauty
will ever trouble.

The night goes gently,
the sky is softly starred.

Our love for Humanity
will never be extinguished.

Today, we build tomorrow.
Clothes soaked in sweat,
we sing of Liberty.

We love the red of the flag,
The voice of the machines
singing in the reeds.

Morning and evening
my workshop is busy,
Its heart intoxicated
with Love of Country. 6

These poems give a small sampling of the vast flowering of culture during the new-type National Democratic Revolution, the period when "all voices are heard." These are the inspiration-tinged years when people are learning to find themselves and their talents, and to express them many-sidedly. A plethora of political tendencies vie with each other in the marvelous market-place of ideas, adding to the multi-dimensional enrichment of life. In North Viet^{nam} this cultural flourishing was even enhanced when it carried over to the Socialist stage. (DRV poetry, short stories and novels are among the most beautiful and touching I have ever read.)

Footnotes For Chapter ~~XIII~~ XV

- 1 The Voice of Justice. Hanoi: FLPH, 1963, pp. 23-32
- 2 Truong Chinh, March Ahead Under the Party's Banner, op. cit., p. 48
- 3 "Viet-Nam Courier," No. 60, May 26, 1966, p. 6
- 4 Vo Nguyen Giap, The South Viet-Nam People Will Win, op. cit., pp. 59-60
- 5 The Song On Both Sides Of The River. Poems. Hanoi: FLPH, 1963, pp. 51-52
- 6 Len Fox, op. cit., pp. 61-62

cc WE DO NOT STOP HALFWAY 22

Both Le Duan and Vo Nguyen Giap say that the revolution in Viet-Nam (as revolution anywhere) must coordinate its action with the world revolution. Le Duan adds that without the support of the world proletariat, the liberation struggle in Viet-Nam can have no chance of success. But he is confident that the world will provide such support.

Speaking of the present National Front for Liberation of South Viet-Nam, Vo Nguyen Giap says, "the guiding line of the Front is very correct and creative and is able to combine the experiences of revolutionary struggle of our people with those of the brother countries." ¹ By brother countries he of course means Socialist ones, and a reading of NFL documents and speeches also reveals some coordination of Front policies with those of the Socialist Camp.

The Declaration of the First Congress of the South Viet-Nam National Front for Liberation * contains some quite radical statements, considering the time it was written (the Liberation Front was less than two years old) and that every line had to meet with the approval of the bourgeois and religious elements in the Front:

"The socialist camp including 12 countries and 1,000 million people, with the Soviet Union as the centre, is

* The Congress took place February 16-March 3, 1962, ~~contains~~



obviously a historic reality and constitutes very mighty forces. It is the principal opponent of the aggressive bellicose colonialist forces. The existence and the growth of the socialist forces are factors of paramount importance and most beneficial to the movement for national liberation, independence, democracy and peace in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America and in all other parts of the world.

"The imperialist and colonialist countries headed by the U.S. have unmasked themselves as warmongers and aggressors, oppressors and exploiters of the peoples." It is evident that from the moment of its inception the NFL was decidedly leftist; Viet-Nam's National Democratic Revolution has marked socialist overtones.

Le Duan's point that the peoples in the colonial and semi-colonial countries struggling for liberation are the greatest allies of those in the economically developed countries is certainly an important one. Revolution in the capitalist countries is unthinkable, he believes, without the closest support given to the oppressed peoples fighting for liberation. He quotes Lenin saying: "The revolutionary movement in the advanced countries would indeed be a mere deception if complete and close unity did not exist between the workers fighting against capital in Europe and America and the hundreds and hundreds of millions of colonial slaves who are oppressed by that capital."

Lenin was convinced that revolutions in Asia, Africa and Latin America would progress from anti-colonialist to anti-capitalist:

"...In the impending decisive battles in the world revolution, the movement of the majority of the population of the ~~globe~~ ^{GLOBE} which at first is directed towards national liberation, will turn against capitalism and imperialism and will, perhaps, play a much more revolutionary part than we expect.³

So, as necessary as the new-type National Democratic Revolution is, the Viet-Nam^Nese revolutionaries do not visualize it as a permanent part of the historic process. The thesis that a revolution does not stop halfway, that revolution must be carried through to the end, is very important to North Viet-Nam's leaders. That is why they say that the new-type bourgeois democratic revolution in South Viet-Nam, today, which follows the same lines as the previous national democratic revolution in the North, will inevitably be followed by Socialism. "The National Democratic Revolution is followed by the Socialist revolution," as the DRV constantly says. Or, to put it another way, "The National Democratic Revolution precedes the Socialist Revolution." That seems to the North Viet-Nam^Nese to be an ineluctible historic law.

Le Duan quotes Lenin saying "The bourgeois democratic revolution being completed, we do not stop halfway, but immediately advance to socialist revolution by relying on our own forces, on the forces of the proletariat which is organized and conscious of the need for revolution."⁴

This great DRV statesman devoutly believes that South Viet-Nam must and will take the same road to Socialism that the North took. "The road to liberation for the southern people can be none other than that mapped out by Lenin for the national-

liberation revolution..."⁵ he says. Again: "Following the road blazed by Lenin our southern people have built their revolutionary forces, united all patriotic forces opposed to the U.S.-Diem clique within a broad national united front on the basis of a firm worker-peasant-soldier alliance, and applied various adequate forms of organization and struggle, and in this way they will certainly bring to completion their glorious cause of liberating the South and bringing about the reunification of the Fatherland."⁶ (Emphasis added)

Hanoi hands down the laws governing revolution in the entire country. "Though the present situation and condition differ from the past the revolution in South Viet-Nam still follows the general law of national democratic revolution," Le Duan said. "Our Party's mass viewpoint in the national democratic revolution still suits South Viet-Nam in the main."⁷

This book has already examined circumstances necessitating the North's being the base for the revolution in the South.* CIA-man Douglas Pike in his book Viet-Cong attributes Northern influence to what he describes as Ho Chi Minh's remarkable genius for organization, which is unequalled by any other leader in the world. Therefore only Ho Chi Minh could have created the United Fronts, Pike says, including the present one in South Viet-Nam--an organization of such intricacy, such perfection.

* And my next book on government and democracy in the DRV will bring out still other aspects of this question.

Now the United Fronts are not quite the one-man creation that Pike makes them out to be; because no matter how great a leader of genius, his programs must evolve out of people's real needs and conditions, or else they wouldn't get very far. Ho Chi Minh is a true man of the people who has always gone among them to learn as well as to enlighten. He draws his source of strength from the wisdom of the practical-minded, pure-hearted common people who certainly contributed much to United Front theory and practice.

Still, Ho Chi Minh's organizational genius is without equal. As those mechanically inclined are fascinated by taking apart a clock, he has always been fascinated by organizational forms, by analyzing governments and societies to see what makes them tick. In pursuit of this "hobby" he spent many years in different countries of the world delving deeply into the intricacies of societies and State structures. His own government is a Great Composite drawing upon both Western and Eastern forms for its component parts.

Viet-Nam's United Fronts never would be the matchless models they are for all the world if Ho Chi Minh had not coalesced both the Viet-Namese people and their contributions to form these consummate coalitions. So the North is the base for the revolution in the South partly because no other leader can compare in prestige with Ho Chi Minh, a northerner who contributed more than anyone else to the building of the United Fronts.

I have already dealt with other reasons for the North being

the national citadel, e.g. its containing the centers of working-class concentration, in contrast to the agricultural South. In the working-class cities such as Hanoi, Haiphong and Nam Dinh where Marxist study groups proliferated, they spread South the ideas of United Front. While some United Fronts ~~first~~ began in the South, the most famous ones were set up in Cao Bang and other Northern regions.

For over 900 years--since the year 1010 when Ly Thai To became King and made Hanoi his capital-- beautiful Hanoi has been the political and historic as well as the cultural capital of the whole country. Hanoians have always been considered the most politically sophisticated people in Southeast Asia. The legacies and teachings Hanoi hands down are traditionally regarded with pride and affectionate respect by the whole Viet-Namese people.

When Hanoi was first attacked, the National Front for Liberation in anger and anguish said that the U.S. had bombed "the most beloved and sacred part of the Fatherland." The South has been able to build such a superb organization as the NFL only because it has drawn extensively upon the traditions of the North. General Vo Nguyen Giap says in The South Viet-Nam People Will Win:

"The southern people clearly realize that unity is strength, unity is the main factor of victory. Though the enemy is materially strong, he is constantly divided by inner contradictions while the southern people on the contrary enjoy a tradition of broad unity established throughout the first

sacred Resistance war. (Emphasis Giap's) In the first years following the restoration of peace, the struggle was fraught with difficulties and hardships, the southern patriots though at times severed from one another organizationally, are closely bound to one another morally. The love for one's own fellow-countrymen, the national pride and solidarity, and the pursuit of common revolutionary goals are sources of strength encouraging our compatriots firmly to maintain and actively to broaden unity. If the South Viet-Nam Liberation National Front has grown rapidly and enjoyed such a great prestige among the people, it is mainly due to the experiences gained in the past and the traditions of national unity, and to the development and application of these experiences to the new historical conditions. (Emphasis added)

According to Giap the National Front for Liberation has won over all sections of the petty and national bourgeoisie, the ethnic minorities traditionally suspicious of the Viet-Nam⁹ese, even the pro-French elements and most of the Catholic refugees! On-the-scene-observers constantly confirm it. Even the American pacifist leader and editor Dave Dellinger says that the Front enjoys ^{the} support of over 90% of the people.

The principles of Viet-Nam's liberation struggle have been so thoroughly inculcated that the Viet-Nam⁹ese villagers long ago learned them by heart. True of South Viet-Nam today, it pertains equally to the period of the First Resistance War. Books like In The Enemy's Net * reveal that the Party

* exciting true stories from the lives of Viet-Nam's revolutionary leaders, published in 1962 by the Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi

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cadres sent into the villages of the South during the war against the French sometimes became bored because as far as political indoctrination went, they had very little to do. The people had already been converted!

Vo Nguyen Giap sums it up:

"After a national democratic revolutionary struggle fraught with sacrifice and hardships, and a great patriotic Resistance war, the lofty national democratic ideals broadly disseminated by the Party since 1930 have taken deep root into the heart and mind of the masses of people."¹⁰

Later he goes on to say:

"...the South Viet-Nam~~am~~ people are by tradition indomitable in political struggle and have a very high political and organizational spirit. Once the people have a high revolutionary spirit, they are always a huge force, play a decisive role and are a deciding factor of the revolutionary struggle.... our people have been tempered for decades in political and armed struggles; while the administration and army serving the U.S. imperialists are very weak in the political field, our people have ample possibilities to develop extensively their political strength and to exploit the great shortcomings of the enemy in order to secure victory for us."¹¹

In The South Viet-Nam People Will Win Vo Nguyen Giap examines the policies and political superiority of the NFL, showing how to the highest degree they conform to both "sense and sentiment." It is because Giap has set up previous United Fronts that he so thoroughly understands the NFL. One receives

the decided impression that analyzing the concepts and contents of the national united fronts is much dearer to his heart than military matters. From the warm, sensitive and extremely knowing way he writes about the NFL it would be surprising if he did not have some hand in setting it up! It seems only natural for Giap in two sentences in a row to refer to the Southern struggle as "our" liberation war!¹²

Giap also put in the same book these world-famous words frequently quoted by the State Department:

"South Viet-Nam is the vanguard fighter of the national liberation movement in the present era." Or in other words, "South Viet-Nam is the model for liberation struggles everywhere."¹³ Paradoxically, here Giap and the enemy find themselves in agreement, since the U.S. government correctly claims it is fighting in Viet-Nam to prevent Viet-Nam-type wars of national liberation from becoming recrudescent.

Footnotes For Chapter ~~XV~~ XVII

- 1 Vo Nguyen Giap, The South Viet-Nam People Will Win, op. cit., p. 61
- 2 Declaration of the First Congress of the South Viet-Nam National Front for Liberation. Hanoi: FLPH, June 1962, p. 8
- 3 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 133
- 4 *ibid.*, p. 38
- 5 *ibid.*, p. 46
- 6 *ibid.*, p. 50
- 7 *ibid.*, p. 102
- 8 Vo Nguyen Giap, The South Viet-Nam People Will Win, op. cit., p. 38
- 9 *ibid.*, p. 47
- 10 *ibid.*, p. 38
- 11 *ibid.*, p. 54
- 12 *ibid.*, p. 27
- 13 *ibid.*, p. 69

THE BOURGEOISIE AND DEMOCRACY

Few have described the characteristics of that vacillating class, the bourgeoisie, better than Le Duan.

"Having a rich sentimental life, the petty-bourgeois intellectuals share very easily the national feeling," he writes. "At times, their patriotism was very boiling. They were very enthusiastic when the national-liberation movement reached a high tide, but usually they wavered between the bourgeois road and the proletarian road. The proletarian stand enhances the great patriotism of the workers and peasants, and strengthens further the patriotism of other sections of the people....

[It serves] the bright future of the nation. On the contrary, the bourgeois stand only wears out and paralyses this patriotism, because the democracy of capitalism serves its personal selfish interests, and patriotism cannot be built with the spirit of serving these interests.

"Therefore the petty-bourgeois intellectuals can also understand that only the proletarian democratic path is their own. The abstract democratic idea they have dreamt of is not only hazy, unrealistic but also commonplace."

Le Duan expresses uncommonly well the idea that it is ridiculous to talk about democracy in general, democracy in the abstract. In his view, as in that of most Marxist-Leninists, one must ask, democracy for whom? For democracy must be either proletarian or bourgeois--it cannot be both. Proletarian democracy serves the majority of people, while bourgeois democracy can benefit only the capitalist class, not the workers

and farmers.* As Dr. Herbert Aptheker is fond of saying in his lectures on Marxism and Democracy, "The wolf's freedom is the sheep's death."

Le Duan puts it this way:

"...national spirit cannot be separated from democratic spirit. However democratic spirit always has a class content, because we have only to consider the democratic regime of the slave-owners' class in the Greek and Roman slave societies, in the bourgeois democratic regime or in the proletarian democratic regime to know that there exists no democratic regime common to all classes.

"Therefore the national spirit cannot be taken apart from the democratic spirit, which in its turn cannot stand outside the class spirit."²

In a footnote Le Duan adds:

"Petty bourgeois intellectuals frequently speak of a common democracy, a vague classless democracy of the petty bourgeoisie which tallies with their interests. In fact in society if democratic rights see to the interests of capitalism, they fundamentally run counter to the interests of the proletariat,

* Le Duan's views on democracy are not entirely my own, as an earlier chapter of mine indicated. Despite this, Le Duan is a brilliant exponent of modern Marxism whose views deserve to be presented. The compassion shining through much of his writings is also admirable. ~~As~~ One of my apolitical students at the Free School remarked after reading Le Duan, "I don't agree with Le Duan--at least, I should like very much not to; but darn it, his logic is absolutely irrefutable!"

and if they defend the interests of the proletariat they are fundamentally contrary to the interests of capitalism and there can be no democracy common to them. Therefore the social regime must be either the capitalist system or the proletarian system, and there cannot be a third system. In the period of transition, when we speak of mutual benefit of both labour and capitalism, in fact we place the interests of capitalism under those of the proletariat and we do not stand for the interests of both parties; that is, in the conflict between capitalism and proletarianism at a certain time, in definite social conditions, for the sake of its interests and the interests of the nation, the proletariat can make concessions with capitalism in order to make it serve the common interests."³

Le Duan's saying there can be no mutual benefit between capital and labor takes on even more interest since the Front's First Congress stated that "... the policy of the South Viet-Nam National Front for Liberation is...to carry out a policy of appropriate mutual benefit between the employer and the workers."⁴ But Le Duan's qualifier--that the working class under certain circumstances may make concessions when they jibe with its own interests and those of the nation as a whole--would justify Front policy on this matter.

Democracy in the abstract, which Le Duan derides as both meaningless and mundane, forms an important part of the propaganda of the National Front for Liberation. Point II of the NFL's Program "To Bring Into Being A Broad And Progressive Democracy" naturally

~~is~~ not qualified by adding "socialist" or "bourgeois" before the word "democracy." Similarly, in the explanation of Point One of the Front's Program, to "realize independence and democracy" the Front speaks of democracy in general.

For that matter, so does the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam! The very name Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam connotes democracy in general, the word "democratic" uncumbered by the word "socialist." Unlike the NFL which in the stage of National Democratic Revolution can speak only of democracy in general, the DRV speaks sometimes of proletarian versus bourgeois democracy, as Le Duan's writings show. But at least as often, DRV leaders (including Le Duan!) talk about freedom and democracy in general. The Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam has never completely roused itself from the stage of National Democratic Revolution because of its admiration for Western-type civil rights and civil liberties. To fulfill its own vibrant vision of life, it craves more freedom than other socialist countries. While Ho Chi Minh's great dream of synthesizing socialism and democracy has met with far from perfect practice, it has reached its greatest fruition in the DRV. Perhaps the NFL will carry it even further.

The DRV sometimes calls its government a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat ("practicing democracy towards the majority of people and dictatorship towards the handful of traitors"); but even Le Duan refreshingly departs from Marxist dogma by saying that the dictatorship of the proletariat, or people's democracy, can exist in a multiplicity of forms, differing markedly in different countries. The DRV govern-

ment, as its leaders are quick to point out, is not like the proletarian dictatorships of the Soviet Union, China or the other socialist countries (the Soviet Union now calls itself a "State of the Whole People" but its form has remained unchanged). Would Le Duan consider the National Front for Liberation of South Viet-Nam one of the many variants on the theme of proletarian dictatorship?

Whether he would or not, one can imagine him smiling his gentle smile as he ponders the part of the NFL Program that speaks of democracy in general. Because Le Duan comes right out and says:

"...to conceive the National United Front independently of class awareness is but an abstract knowledge, a means of deceit or an instinct of conservation of the selfish interests of his own class.

"The content of the national united front cannot exclude class content."⁵

But in very essence, the program of the National Front for Liberation, which pits the peasantry against the parasitic feudal landlord class, certainly does reflect the class struggle.

Le Duan rhetorically asks:

"Then are there contradictions between the interests of the class and those of the nation, and vice versa?

"Feudalism has solved these contradictions by surrendering to and colluding with imperialism."⁶

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The Front did not exclude the big feudal landlords because they were landlords but because they acted against the pasants' interests and those of the entire nation by hitching up with imperialism.

Le Duan has this to say about the fickleness of the middle class:

"When their revolutionary sentiment sinks and bourgeois ideology penetrates in them and attacks them, they doubt the democratic line of the proletariat. If they are poisoned more deeply by bourgeois ideology it is possible that they stand against the national line of the proletariat." ⁷ Whenever I observe the charades of middle-class liberals in the U.S. who support the NFL's struggle, I am always reminded of the veracity of Le Duan's words.

While working with the Committee to Aid the National Liberation Front I met and cultivated a close friendship with a young man whom I shall call Reginald. Of upper middle-class background, he devoutly defends capitalism in the U.S. but at the same time believes in "humanism," counting among his idols Thoreau and Bertrand Russell. Having mindlessly supported the war, at age thirty Reginald grew to sympathize with the Liberation Front when he began realizing the U.S. is the aggressor and the Front represents the hopes and strivings of the South Viet-Namense people. But his bourgeois character is too vacillating to really ^{to} support the NFL and DRV politically and many-sidedly. Observing him, one could fully appreciate how correctly Le Duan has psychologically sized up the middle

class.

For instance, one night I was telling Reginald about the three parties in the DRV. At first he liked it, as he was all in favor of the "multi-party system." When he found out that all three political parties in the DRV work in harmony, he began to "doubt the democratic line" of the Viet-Namense people. "The three parties don't differ sufficiently!" he wailed. "It's not like our wonderful two-party system." I said, what is the sense in supporting a U.S.-type two party system when both parties pursue identical reactionary policies which work against the interests of most people? It seems more just to have three DRV-type parties, which all work for the happiness and welfare of the overwhelming majority of the people.

Reginald replied, "Why, don't you know that the Democratic Party here in the U.S. always supports the small businessman and labor?" No one could tell him differently, as he gloried in the stock market and said that "everybody in the U.S. has an equal opportunity, rich and poor alike"; if the poor weren't rich it was because they were "lazy" or "not talented." He constantly condemned Johnson and the other government leaders for their atrocious war against the Viet-Namense people, but ascribed their actions to "the evil in human nature."

At the same time Reginald represents a type which can and must be won over. For the cultivation of anti-war sentiments, it is perhaps enough that such persons are against the U.S. government's foreign policy, whatever their reasons.

But despite or maybe because of all his contradictions and vacillations, Reginald really has genuine admiration for the DRV and Uncle Ho and wants all Viet-Nam to be reunified under his leadership. Reginald also said to me, "Just to be in the same room with Generals Vo Nguyen Giap, Nguyen Van Vinh and Nguyen Chi Thanh ^{*} ~~would~~ who are my heroes would be the greatest moment of my life."

Reginald says he will magnanimously support the policy of the Lao Dong Party "till a few years after the war, when I shall tactfully suggest to the DRV that it reform its government along liberal capitalist lines." Reginald has a theory that is Lenin's and Le Duan's in reverse. Instead of believing that "The National Democratic Revolution Shall Be Succeeded By The Socialist Revolution" he believes that all developing nations must first have socialism; then, when their industry is more highly developed, they will all see the merits of capitalism and adopt more of it! "The Socialist revolution shall be followed by the capitalist revolution!"

Many national bourgeois play "cat and mouse" with the revolutionaries. Their dalliance with the militant elements in the United Front is touch and go, and sometimes they do go-- over to the side of the enemy! True, they suffer at the hands of the compradors and foreign imperialists who steal both

* This of course was before Nguyen Chi Thanh's tragic death

their thunder and their capital; but they still stand to lose more in a revolution than members of the other three classes in the Front. The more a person has to lose, the more cautious and hesitant he becomes--for the same reason that so many in the U.S. keep their mouths shut for fear of losing lucrative jobs, or endangering their families. Traditionally, the bourgeois are fence-sitters, waiting to see who will win. As the fortunes of war change, so does their allegiance. They play a sort of grim game of hide-and-seek--now you see them on the revolutionary side, now you don't! They are so clever at the quick-change act that one sometimes thinks they would make quite good circus performers.

Though gently chiding the bourgeois for their vacillation, Le Duan also has positive things to say about them: "our Party has always realized that the petty bourgeoisie is a revolutionary force, and the national bourgeoisie has its good side, which is patriotism and anti-imperialism, therefore the proletariat must establish a united front with them." ⁸ In this way, Le Duan adds, "our Party correctly assessed and highlighted the national factors and patriotic spirit of other sections of the people [that is, other than the proletariat]..." ⁹

But with his characteristic distrust of the bourgeoisie Le Duan doesn't fail to say "In the building of the united front with the bourgeoisie the proletariat must maintain its independent character and struggle against the bourgeois scheme for seizing the leadership." ¹⁰

According to Le Duan and other DRV leaders, nobody can

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guarantee the working class staying on top. The possibility ever exists that the bourgeoisie will try to usurp leadership. Even today, some bourgeois in the NFL only agree to the leading role of the worker-peasant alliance in hopes that at an opportune time they can snatch power.

As I mentioned earlier, in 1956 many members of the bourgeois parties in the DRV's Fatherland Front insisted that North Viet-Nam follow capitalism instead of socialism. This was rejected by the majority of people and voted down in the National Assembly, so the Communists' position finally prevailed. But it shows how persistently the capitalists can be.

"The Communists' task is to actively guide the national liberation movement to advance in the natural direction of its development," Le Duan writes. "It should by no means mark time.... The communist parties must grasp firmly and hold aloft the banner of nationalism, democracy and peace, and should not let the bourgeoisie utilize it to hoodwink the masses. They must carry through the national-democratic revolution against imperialism and feudalism, thereby creating conditions to switch over to socialist revolution."¹¹

The U.S. government claims that Le Duan was most instrumental in creating the National Liberation Front in the South, but I can scarcely imagine a person less disposed to do so! They say Le Duan set up the NFL because of his southern birth. Actually he was born at Haiphong, though during the First Resistance War he became political Commissar for the South. Some Northern leaders are from the South (such as Pham Van Dong who was born near Pleiku). But from whatever part of

Viet-Nam they originated, all Northern leaders share the same deep love for their compatriots North and South.

I said before that along with Ho Chi Minh, when young, Le Duan (he is 58 now) played a leading role in setting up the Revolutionary Youth Union in 1925. The organization was a sort of Young Communist League, except that non-Communist young people also belonged to it. He also helped set up the Democratic Front eleven years later. Still one receives the impression that his heart is not and has never been in the broad-based national democratic revolution. His "real love" seems to be the next stage, outright Socialist revolution and "a government of the masses" (he has a whole theory on the subject).

So it seems all the more a tribute to Le Duan's scintil-
lent vision that he has come up with the interesting philosophic principle that the National Democratic Revolution is fluid; that there is no demarcation line or, as he puts it, no "Chinese Great Wall between the bourgeois democratic revolution and the socialist revolution." One cannot give the hour or day, any set time when the National Democratic Revolution crosses the threshold into socialist revolution. Gradually, and as unobserved as a feather's touch, they merge!

Le Duan's thesis that there is no dividing line separating the National Democratic Revolution from the Socialist Revolution forms one of the keystones for my own theory, which I have deliberately avoided going into any further in this book. Particularly during the war I feel it my duty not to foist on others my own subjective ideas on this question which have not

quite crystallized, and which I am not really sure could be realized.

But I can't resist saying that precisely because the relationship between the National Democratic and the Socialist revolution is so fluid, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam still bears many characteristics, many lingering manifestations of its national democratic days. Its liberality and spirit of tolerance, for instance, are traceable to National Democratic heritage. For its part the National Front for Liberation, though carrying out the National Democratic Revolution, is already indelibly stamped with some of the hallmarks of Socialism. (Such as proletarian leadership of the revolution, and the worker-peasant alliance occupying center place in the Front.) It seems to me that instead of "The National Democratic Revolution Will Be Succeeded By The Socialist Revolution" we could conceivably have a situation in South Viet-Nam where "The National Democratic Revolution Will Be Succeeded By The National Democratic Revolution--blended naturally with the Socialist revolution! That might be a beautiful and inspiring model for the world.

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Footnotes For Chapter XVIII

- 1 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 80-81
- 2 *ibid.*, pp. 74-75
- 3 *ibid.*, p. 75
- 4 Declaration of the First Congress of the South Viet-Nam National Front for Liberation, op. cit., p. 28
- 5 Le Duan, On The Socialist Revolution, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 72
- 6 *ibid.*, p. 72
- 7 *ibid.*, p. 81
- 8 *ibid.*, p. 34
- 9 *ibid.*, p. 35
- 10 *ibid.*, p. 28
- 11 Le Duan, On Some Present International Problems, op. cit., p. 25