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NORTH VIETNAM AND SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS  
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## NORTH VIETNAM AND SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS

This is a working paper, the third in a series of ESAU studies of components of the world Communist movement in the context of the Sino-Soviet relationship. ESAU-XV discussed North Korea, and ESAU-XVI discussed the Indian party. This paper was prepared by Philip L. Bridgham, a member of the Sino-Soviet Studies Group in the period 1959-1961, before he joined the Department of Defense late in 1961. In preparing the first draft before he left the SSSG, and in preparing the final version of the paper in recent months, Mr. Bridgham had the benefit of counsel from [REDACTED] the China and Asian Satellites Division of the Sino-Soviet Bloc Area of OCI, [REDACTED]

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NORTH VIETNAM AND SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS

SUMMARY.....	i
I. NORTH VIETNAM AT WAR: 1949-1954.....	1
II. NORTH VIETNAM AND "PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE": 1955-1957.....	3
A. Intrabloc Relations.....	3
B. Domestic Policy.....	4
C. Policy Toward South Vietnam and Laos.....	6
1. South Vietnam.....	7
2. Laos.....	9
III. NORTH VIETNAM AND THE CHINESE MODEL: 1958-1959.....	10
A. Domestic Policy.....	11
B. Foreign Policy.....	14
1. South Vietnam.....	15
2. Laos.....	18
IV. NORTH VIETNAM AND THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE: 1960-1961.....	20
A. Domestic Policy.....	21
B. Foreign Policy.....	23
1. South Vietnam.....	26
2. Laos.....	28
C. North Vietnam and the Sino-Soviet Dispute.....	31

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## NORTH VIETNAM AND SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS

### SUMMARY

The North Vietnamese Communists have stood in several different relationships to the Soviets and the Chinese since the Communist triumph in China in 1949, but never in the relationship of a satellite of either. Chinese influence has always been the stronger, but at some periods, such as the present, not much stronger.

In the war years of 1946-1954, Chinese influence was clearly predominant with the Viet Minh. The North Vietnamese concurred in the Chinese claim to leadership of the revolution in Southeast Asia; they took "Mao's theory" together with Marxism-Leninism as their source of guidance; they adopted the Chinese revolutionary strategy (the broad "united front" against imperialism, and the peasant armies operating from rural bases); they looked to the Chinese model for their party, military and mass organizations, and for legislation; they were dependent on Chinese aid for their military victories; and they permitted the Chinese to play the principal role for the Communist side at Geneva in 1954 in negotiating a settlement of the war. The Soviets disapproved Chinese pretensions to leadership, but they apparently saw no alternative to predominant Chinese influence in this period.

In the postwar years 1955-1957, the picture was less clear. After the USSR established an embassy in Hanoi in November 1954, the North Vietnamese leadership soon began to assign equal weight to the experience of the Soviets and the Chinese, and by 1956 were claiming that they themselves had "creatively applied" Marxism-Leninism to conditions in Vietnam.

With regard to world Communist strategy in the years 1955-1957, North Vietnam became increasingly restive under the policy of "peaceful coexistence" to which both the Soviet Union and Communist China were committed in this period.

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Moreover, the North Vietnamese reacted with ill-disguised distaste to deStalinization and to Khrushchev's theoretical pronouncements at the 20th CPSU Congress on the non-inevitability of war and on peaceful accession to power by Communist parties.

As for domestic policies in this period, the North Vietnamese began to exercise the right (proclaimed by Ho Chi Minh following the 20th CPSU Congress) of finding their own methods and tempo of building socialism. After receiving grants of economic aid from both Peiping and Moscow, Hanoi introduced a ruthless land reform program in 1955 which clearly followed Chinese precedent. The consequences of attempting to transplant this Chinese program in Vietnam, however, were nearly disastrous. Faced with peasant uprisings which endangered the security of the regime, the Lao Dong party leadership in the fall of 1956 demoted the then secretary-general (the Stalinist and Sinophile Truong Chinh) and instituted an experiment with "democracy" and relaxation of controls. Veering sharply again, Hanoi reverted to a "hard" domestic policy line in the first half of 1957 at the very time Communist China was undergoing its own traumatic experience with "liberalization."

As for policy toward South Vietnam, the Viet Minh exhibited increasing disillusionment over the strategy dictated by the Geneva accords of seeking "national unification by peaceful means." In attempting to implement this strategy, the North Vietnamese received considerably more help from the Chinese than from the Soviets, who were content throughout the years 1955-1957 to accept the status quo in Vietnam. Although Hanoi had already decided by April 1956 that it was necessary to prepare for "armed struggle" in South Vietnam, it was unable to secure Peiping's support in this endeavor until late in the period when Communist China began to shift away from "peaceful coexistence" toward a more militant strategic line in Asia.

In contrast with the record of failure in Vietnam, the bloc strategy of "peaceful coexistence" appeared to win an important victory during this period in Laos. In late 1956 the Chinese took the lead in seeking a negotiated settlement of the civil war in Laos despite initial objections by the DRV. Internally, the Laotian Communists won recognition as a legal political party and participation in a coalition government, and externally the Souvanna Phouma regime was persuaded to adopt a policy of nonalignment by a combination of threats and blandishments on the part of Peiping.

- ii -

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In sum, in the years 1955-1957 Chinese influence with the North Vietnamese continued to be stronger than Soviet influence, but not to the same degree as in 1949-1954. Throughout most of this period, the North Vietnamese were under the constraint of both the Soviets and the Chinese in their policy toward the South, but with respect to matters of world Communist strategy and their domestic programs the North Vietnamese began to display greater independence and selectivity in reacting to policies originating in Moscow and Peiping.

In the years 1958-1959, a period of Chinese radicalism with regard to both grand strategy and domestic policy, the North Vietnamese again looked to the Chinese model for guidance in formulating their domestic and foreign policy programs and reasserted their dual allegiance to Marxism-Leninism and "the ideology of Mao Tse-tung." However, as the Sino-Soviet dispute intensified in late 1959, Hanoi apparently decided that it would be prudent to adopt a more nearly neutral stance in the impending conflict.

As for matters of world Communist strategy in this period, the North Vietnamese agreed with Mao Tse-tung's new estimate of the balance of power and his position on the need for a militant revolutionary advance throughout the world, particularly in Asia. They continued to betray apprehension and resentment over Khrushchev's prescriptions for bloc strategy, clearly implying that the Soviet leader's theses on the non-inevitability of war and peaceful accession to power did not apply to Southeast Asia.

As for domestic policies, the North Vietnamese enthusiastically endorsed China's "leap forward" approach to economic development and declared their intent to follow the distinctive Chinese road to socialism. Although less extreme than the Chinese, they introduced a "leap forward" of their own in agriculture (revising their 1958-1960 plan to set highly unrealistic goals for food production) and attempted to emulate China's "mass line" of local industrial development. The North Vietnamese response to China's commune program was more ambiguous: they clearly rejected it for themselves for the immediate future, while they defended it against Soviet criticism and seemed to envisage the communes as a long-range possibility for Vietnam. Following the failure of these extremist programs in China in late 1959, however, North Vietnam began to turn away from the Chinese model and look to the Soviet Union for guidance in economic development.

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As for policy toward South Vietnam during this period, Moscow remained reluctant to get involved in a venture there, while the Chinese and North Vietnamese were in agreement on the need for a more aggressive policy. The DRV decided in May 1959 to initiate a new phase of violent revolution to overthrow the Diem government in the South. Despite Hanoi's claim of solid backing by the "socialist camp", North Vietnamese commentary throughout 1959 revealed a sense of grievance over Soviet non-support of this "liberation" movement.

The DRV had less cause for criticizing Soviet policy in Laos during this period, but even here the Chinese were closer to North Vietnamese positions. In spring 1959, Communist China took the lead in a campaign of intimidation of the Laotian government. In fall 1959, when the resumption of guerrilla warfare in Laos coincided with Khrushchev's overtures to the United States, there began to be a significant divergence between Soviet policy on Laos and the more militant and uncompromising line of Peiping and Hanoi.

In sum, North Vietnam in the years 1958-1959 generally chose to follow Mao Tse-tung's lead and to support Peiping on significant issues in the Sino-Soviet dispute. By the end of the period, however, the North Vietnamese were openly skeptical of the efficacy of the Chinese model of economic and social development and were seeking a more neutral posture in the deepening Sino-Soviet conflict.

In the years 1960-1961, North Vietnam demonstrated a new national assertiveness in both domestic and foreign policy. By stressing the individuality and unique character of the Vietnamese revolution, the North Vietnamese sought to steer a neutral course between the conflicting policies advocated by the Soviets and the Chinese and at the same time to conciliate the worsening dispute between these two bloc powers.

With regard to world Communist strategy in this period, the North Vietnamese strongly favored Chinese positions in the first half of 1960. At a Warsaw Pact meeting in February, the Soviets and East Europeans reportedly advocated a "soft" strategic line, while the North Vietnamese supported the Chinese in advocating a "hard" strategic line toward the West. In spring 1960, the North Vietnamese endorsed in general the systematic Chinese attacks on Soviet strategy in the Lenin Anniversary pronouncements. In June 1960 the North Vietnamese

- iv -  
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again supported Chinese positions at the WFTU meeting in Peiping. However, after the Bucharest Conference revealed the fundamental character of the Sino-Soviet dispute and after an apparent pledge of Soviet support for a new offensive in South-east Asia, the North Vietnamese became more evasive and circumspect in their pronouncements on bloc strategy.

As for domestic policies throughout this period, North Vietnam abandoned its former reliance on the Chinese model and displayed a marked tendency to look to the Soviet Union for guidance in economic development. Endorsements of "Lenin's theory of agricultural cooperatives" provided a good indication that the DRV was shying away from China's heretical communes. Other indications of a closer adherence to Soviet policies were a new emphasis on heavy industrial development, instructions to North Vietnam's planners to learn "especially from the USSR" and renewed support for Khrushchev's concept (opposed by the Chinese) of an integrated bloc-wide economic system. North Vietnam was rewarded for adopting this new course by grants of sizable Soviet credits in June and December 1960 to help finance agricultural and industrial development in North Vietnam's first long-term economic plan.

As for policy toward South Vietnam throughout this period, the North Vietnamese in early 1960 inaugurated a new phase of stepped-up terrorism and guerrilla warfare in the South. Acting in accordance with its militant strategic pronouncements, Communist China took the lead throughout 1960 in extending public support and encouragement to this campaign of violence. The North Vietnamese, encouraged by the pledges of greater bloc support to "national liberation movements" in the Moscow Declaration of early December 1960 and by the vigorous bloc response to the Laotian crisis in the same month, appealed to both Moscow and Peiping in mid-1961 for further aid. There were indications at this time that Communist China once again favored a more militant and aggressive policy in South Vietnam than the Soviet Union was prepared to support.

As for bloc policy toward Laos in 1960-1961, the Soviet decision to lead the bloc offensive there in the fall of 1960 appeared to be influenced in part by the concurrent crisis in Sino-Soviet relations. By taking forceful action in Laos, Moscow was able to refute Peiping's charges that the Soviet Union had failed to support adequately any war or liberation struggle since the Moscow Conference of November 1957. Even

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in Laos, however, there was evidence throughout 1961 that the Soviets on the one hand and the Chinese and North Vietnamese on the other continued to hold divergent views on questions of timing and tactics in seeking a negotiated settlement of the Laotian war.

North Vietnam's enhanced stature within the bloc in 1960-1961 was graphically illustrated by its key role at the Moscow Conference of Communist parties in November 1960 and subsequently in seeking to mediate the Sino-Soviet dispute. Numerous reports have indicated that Ho Chi Minh was instrumental in conciliating the bitter disagreements between Khrushchev and the Chinese delegation at the Moscow Conference, making it possible for the Soviets and the Chinese to reach nominal agreement in the conference declaration. Advocating the concept of bloc solidarity based on "voluntary" allegiance, the North Vietnamese delegation supported Communist China in resisting the principle of majority rule in the international Communist movement which Khrushchev sought to impose at this conclave. Acting in accordance with their concept of "voluntary" allegiance, the North Vietnamese asserted their determination following the conference "to strengthen unity and friendship" with both the USSR and Communist China. Also acting in accordance with this concept, the DRV generally supported Albania throughout 1961 in resisting Soviet coercion.

In sum, North Vietnam in the years 1960-1961 achieved a new status of independence and influence within the Communist bloc. As a major beneficiary of the Sino-Soviet dispute in the form of vastly augmented economic and military assistance from both Moscow and Peiping during this period, the North Vietnamese party leadership have every reason to persist--if they can--in their chosen role of mediator and neutral in the deepening conflict between the Soviet Union and Communist China.

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## NORTH VIETNAM AND SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS, 1949-1961

This study reviews the record of North Vietnam's relations with the Soviet Union and Communist China since the appearance of the latter as a second great power center within the Communist bloc. Perhaps the dominant theme of this historical review has been the continuing struggle of North Vietnam to maintain its independence in the face of efforts by both Moscow and Peiping to influence the policies of this small Asian Communist state. Events of the past two years, principally the crisis in Sino-Soviet relations and in the East-West struggle in Southeast Asia, have enhanced North Vietnam's status within the bloc to a point where it now proclaims the unique character of its own revolutionary experience as a model for Communist "liberation" movements in underdeveloped areas of the world.

### I. NORTH VIETNAM AT WAR: 1949-1954

Founded in 1930, the Indo-China Communist Party under Ho Chi Minh had achieved firm control over the Vietnamese nationalist revolution by the end of World War II and, immediately following the surrender of the Japanese, had established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. After a period of fruitless negotiations for independence, Ho initiated a full-scale war against France in December 1946. The appearance of a powerful Communist China in 1949, the meeting of Sino-Vietnamese forces along a common border the following year, and massive Chinese military, economic and technical aid were indispensable to North Vietnam's final victory in the field at Dien Bien Phu.

The Chinese Communists, on coming to power in 1949, were in a mood of supreme self-confidence and assertiveness. In 1948, at an important regional conference in Calcutta of Communist parties convened to disseminate the new line of armed insurrection in Asia, the Chinese Communist representative had staked a claim to leadership over the national liberation movement in Southeast Asia. Within weeks after the establishment of the Chinese People's Republic, Liu Shao-chi elaborated

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this claim in a speech before a Conference of Asian and Australasian Trade Unions in Peiping in which for the first time the "road of Mao Tse-tung" was proclaimed to be the revolutionary model for other Asian Communists to follow. Two years later, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party, this claim was reiterated in speeches hailing the Chinese revolution as "the classic type of revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries."

The Soviet reaction to this early Chinese bid for hegemony over the Asian revolutionary movement was mixed. Moscow appeared to favor the substance of the Maoist revolutionary prescription (formation of a broad "united front" directed against imperialism and organization of Communist-led peasant armies operating from rural bases), but Moscow apparently disapproved of the Chinese Communist undertaking to establish Peiping as the regional center for Asian Communism and "the theory of Mao Tse-tung" as the fountainhead of Asian revolutionary doctrine. Soviet propaganda throughout this period consistently minimized Mao's ideological innovations and theoretical eminence. In November 1951 Soviet spokesmen took the offensive by warning that "it would be risky to regard the Chinese revolution as some kind of 'stereotype' for people's democratic revolution in other countries of Asia," and nearly a decade later, during the bitter exchanges at the height of the Sino-Soviet dispute in 1960, the Soviets were to cite this episode as an example of "sectarianism" in the international Communist movement.

By contrast, North Vietnam in the period 1951-1954 actively propagated the concept of Peiping's leadership over the Asian revolution and enthusiastically endorsed "Mao Tse-tung's theory" as the source of guidance in its revolutionary struggle. Throughout the crucial war years of 1951-1954, North Vietnamese party leaders and organs consistently coupled "Mao Tse-tung's theory" with Marxism-Leninism as twin sources of ideological authority (most notably in the Lao Dong Party statutes of 1952); directed party, military and mass organizations to pattern themselves on their Chinese counterparts; and drafted legislation in accordance with Chinese prototypes. The extent of Chinese Communist influence was demonstrated graphically in December 1952 when Ho Chi Minh delivered an important policy speech in Hanoi large parts of which had been drafted in Peiping, apparently either by the Chinese or by one of Ho's writers with Chinese guidance.

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Communist China's influence with the North Vietnamese leadership was also evident in the final months of the Indo-China War. Although the Soviet Union and Communist China appeared to share responsibility for the initial decision, Chou En-lai took the lead at Geneva in negotiating a territorial division of Vietnam at the 17th parallel and in persuading Ho Chi Minh to substitute political methods for armed struggle in seeking the unification of his homeland. The subsequent failure of their "peaceful unification" strategy would largely determine North Vietnam's views on the bitter Sino-Soviet dispute over international Communist strategy in 1960.

## II. NORTH VIETNAM AND "PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE": 1955-1957

In terms of the Communist dialectic, the Geneva Conference of 1954 ushered in a "new era" of peace in which a series of "new tasks" confronted the North Vietnam regime. Although all were closely interrelated, these tasks in the ensuing three-year period will be discussed below under the headings of intrabloc relations, domestic policy and policy toward Southeast Asia.

### A. Intrabloc Relations

Establishment of a Soviet embassy in Hanoi in November 1954 afforded the North Vietnamese leadership an opportunity to introduce Soviet authority as a counterweight to the influence previously exercised by Peiping. Whereas previously the Lao Dong Party had stressed the paramount importance to North Vietnam of the Chinese revolution and "the ideology of Mao Tse-tung," the consistent pattern following the Geneva Conference was to assign equal weight to the contributions and experiences of the Soviet Union and the Chinese People's Republic, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party, the Soviet and Chinese armies and the Soviet and Chinese revolutions. Implicit in this new assessment was the right to choose between alternative policies and programs advocated by the two leading bloc powers. And in fact this right was to be asserted forcefully by Ho Chi Minh following the Soviet 20th Party Congress in early 1956. After claiming for the first time that "our party has already achieved

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considerable results in the way of creative application of Marxism-Leninism to conditions in Vietnam," he emphasized the importance to the Vietnamese people of finding their own path, methods and tempo in fighting American imperialism and struggling for socialism.

Although both the Soviet Union and Communist China were committed to a strategy of "peaceful coexistence" in this period, Moscow appeared even more reluctant to support North Vietnamese aspirations for an early Communist takeover in South Vietnam and what is now known as Laos. When Ho greeted the first Soviet ambassador with expectations of "constant support" and "great assistance" from the USSR, the Russian diplomat countered by offering the "deep sympathy and understanding" of the Soviet people for Vietnam's struggle. And when Ho visited Moscow seeking aid for his struggling regime in July 1955, the formal communique referred pointedly to Sino-Vietnamese friendship as "the main factor" preserving peace in Southeast Asia.

Furthermore, the Soviet 20th Party Congress in February 1956 issued a number of theoretical pronouncements which were patently unsuited to Vietnamese needs. The Lao Dong Party resolution commenting on these innovations revealed ill-disguised distaste for Khrushchev's dicta on the preventability of war (noting instead the need for struggle and vigilance against imperialist war plotting) and on peaceful accession to power. In a country like Vietnam, the Lao Dong resolution clearly implied, it was necessary "to prepare the proletariat well in advance...for the inevitable armed struggle for power." Khrushchev's slashing attack on Stalin and the "cult of personality" was greeted coolly at the outset by the DRV, as by the Chinese, and by the end of 1957 Soviet deStalinization was being publicly blamed for much of the "pessimism and skepticism" which had infected the Lao Dong Party.

#### B. Domestic Policy

The new bloc strategy of "peaceful coexistence" and the local variant in Vietnam of "reunification through peaceful means" (the Geneva settlement provided for nation-wide elections to be held in 1956) called for a "soft" tactical line,

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one which stressed national and democratic goals appealing to a broadly-based "united front" in both North and South. On the other hand, the "national-democratic" phase of the revolution had already been completed in the North and it was necessary to move ahead with the pressing tasks of building the economy and remoulding society along socialist lines. Conflict over the relative importance of the reunification struggle through "political" means and the rapid buildup of a Communist regime in the North has probably accounted for much of the controversy within the Lao Dong Party from 1954 to the present.

For more than a year following the Geneva Conference, Hanoi consciously soft-pedaled its Marxist goals out of deference to the reunification struggle in the South. Then, as it became painfully clear that the new Diem government in South Vietnam would neither succumb to Communist subversion nor consent to the holding of nation-wide elections, the decision was taken at a key party plenum in August 1955 "to consolidate the North and take it to socialism." In anticipation of this decision, Ho Chi Minh had already visited Moscow and Peiping to secure badly needed assistance to rebuild his country's war-torn economy. At this time Peiping, contributed three times the amount of aid proffered by the Soviet Union. In quick succession, in the closing months of 1955, North Vietnam proclaimed its status as "the first people's democracy in Southeast Asia," revealed that its land reform program was merely a prelude to agricultural collectivization, and characterized its first annual state plan for 1956 as a step "leading to socialism."

For nearly a year, Hanoi executed a ruthless agrarian "reform" policy which clearly followed Chinese precedent. Employing the well-known Chinese Communist techniques of mobilizing the peasants in "struggle" meetings, Communist cadres reportedly executed between 50,000 and 100,000 landlords to consolidate the regime's control over the countryside. Inspired by Mao's call for rapid collectivization of agriculture and "transition to socialism" in China, the Viet Minh continued throughout most of 1956 to look to Peiping for domestic policy guidance. It is perhaps significant that Soviet representatives at this time began to express dissatisfaction with the manner in which their own aid program was being implemented, complaining to Western diplomats of the "obstinacy and stupidity" of Vietnamese officials.

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The consequences of this headlong pursuit of Communist revolutionary goals were nearly disastrous. Widespread discontent and disaffection erupted in popular uprisings which precipitated a crisis in party leadership. This resulted in the demotion of the Secretary-General of the Lao Dong Party, the Stalinist and Sinophile Truong Chinh, and in the abject admission (perhaps unprecedented in the history of the international Communist movement) that the party central committee itself had been "responsible for serious errors" in the agrarian reform program of 1956. Further admissions that "general confusion existed among all classes," that cadres had lost confidence in the party leadership, and that peasant uprisings had endangered the security of the regime, testified to the gravity of the situation.

Responding to this crisis, the Lao Dong party initiated an overall program of "mistakes correction" in the fall of 1956 aimed at mollifying the recalcitrant population. In addition to remedying the errors committed in land reform, the program also called for a greater degree of "democracy" and freedom of expression and promised to relax the pace of economic development in order to improve living conditions. In brief, the time had come once again to stress national "democratic" goals and the "liberal" character of the revolution in a period of economic retrenchment.

The transitory nature of this "liberal" phase in the evolution of North Vietnamese domestic policy soon became apparent. In February 1957, the experiment with relaxation of controls was largely discarded; in September, the decision to move ahead with agricultural collectivization was announced; and by the end of the year, it was clear that the pendulum had swung again to a new "hard" line in socialist revolution and construction.

### C. Policy Toward South Vietnam and Laos

The frustrations experienced by North Vietnam during and after the Geneva Conference of 1954 were to shape its views on the bitter Sino-Soviet dispute over international Communist strategy in 1960. Having expected to gain control over all Vietnam through military conquest, the Viet Minh were persuaded to accept partition and to substitute peaceful, political

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methods for armed struggle in seeking the unification of their homeland. Furthermore, although the Soviet Union and Communist appeared to share responsibility for the initial decision at Geneva, it soon became apparent that Moscow was much less interested than Peiping in attempting to implement the provisions of the Geneva settlement affecting Indochina. Following the issuance of a Soviet-Vietnamese communique in July 1955 which termed Sino-Vietnamese friendship the "main factor" in preserving peace in the Far East, Communist China took the lead in championing DRV policies toward both South Vietnam and Laos.

#### 1. South Vietnam

As noted earlier, it had become painfully clear by mid-1955 that the authorities in South Vietnam would neither succumb to Communist subversion nor consent to the holding of nation-wide elections in the absence of effective and impartial supervision of the proposed balloting. (Moreover, the Government in South Vietnam had not signed the Geneva accords and was not bound by their provisions). Constrained by the overall bloc strategy of "peaceful coexistence" from resorting to military force, the Lao Dong party leadership then laid down the new tactical line in August 1955 of forming a "broad national united front...to strive for national unification by peaceful means." Posing internally as a strong and dynamic government capable of outstripping the South in "peaceful competition," North Vietnam's strategy externally was to pose as a peaceful and loyal adherent to the Geneva Agreements and to seek international support in order to press Diem into negotiations for a national election.

Serving with Great Britain as a permanent co-chairman of the Geneva Conference, the Soviet Union acknowledged in the joint Nehru-Bulganin declaration of June 1955 that it had "undertaken special responsibilities" in overseeing implementation of the Geneva settlement. Nevertheless, its conduct throughout the ensuing three-year period was to belie this statement. In April 1956, the visit of Mikoyan to Hanoi proved such a disappointment to North Vietnam that not even the customary joint communique was forthcoming. In a meeting of the Geneva co-chairmen in London the following month, the

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Soviet representative appeared tacitly to accept the status quo in Vietnam for an indefinite period. Even more galling was the Soviet proposal in January 1957 that both North and South Vietnam be admitted to the United Nations as "separate states," thus placing the stamp of approval on the territorial division of Vietnam to the obvious dismay of the DRV.

By contrast, Communist China on several occasions throughout this period supported the Viet Minh in efforts to enforce the provisions of the Geneva Settlement. For example, Chou En-lai in January 1956 formally proposed that the Geneva Conference be reconvened to deal with alleged violations of the accords by the Diem regime. It was presumably in recognition of these services that the Lao Dong party organ Nhan Dan on 1 October 1956 singled out the "loyal attitude" of the Chinese People's Republic as having greatly encouraged the DRV in its struggle to unify Vietnam under the terms of the Geneva Agreements.

Disillusionment over the efficacy of political forms of struggle to achieve national reunification was becoming more and more apparent within the ranks of the Vietnamese party. At an important central committee plenum in April 1956, the then Secretary-General Truong Chinh publicly acknowledged that "some people" regarded the policy of "peaceful reunification" as "illusory and reformist." The party resolution emerging from this session clearly implied that it was necessary to make long-term preparations in Vietnam for "armed struggle." In commenting on the failure of nation-wide elections to take place in July 1956, Nhan Dan referred to widespread "pessimism, disappointment and lack of confidence in future struggle for national unification." In an August 1956 article, Ho Chi Minh appeared to be rebuking militants within the party when he stressed that North Vietnam was bound to the "general struggle" of the bloc and rejected the notion that the Viet Minh's problems were a "personal affair which no longer concern the international proletariat."

It was shortly thereafter that Chou En-lai reportedly was approached by the North Vietnamese, to provide greater assistance in the struggle against the South. Although reportedly he replied that nothing could be done at the time, Communist China within six months in June 1957 fired the opening shots in a new propaganda campaign assailing United States military "control" of South Vietnam as a "grave threat to peace in

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Indochina and the whole of Southeast Asia" and insisting that "United States aggressive forces must be withdrawn from South Vietnam in the interest of Vietnam's peaceful unification." This campaign anticipated a significant shift in Communist China's strategic line in Asia following the Moscow Conference of November 1957, a shift away from "peaceful coexistence" to a militant pursuit of its foreign policy objectives.

## 2. Laos

From the standpoint of international Communism, Laos must be regarded as an extension of North Vietnam. As an integral component of the old Indo-China Communist party, the Laotian Communists in 1951 formally recognized the right of the Lao Dong party to "supervise" its activities. Military invasion of Laos by the Viet Minh in 1953 enabled the Pathet Lao to develop strong guerrilla forces, establish a "resistance government," and gain control over the two northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua adjoining the borders of both North Vietnam and Communist China. The acquisition of an effective military force and of a fixed territorial base adjacent to North Vietnam (serving both as a sanctuary in times of retreat and as a base of operations in times of advance) has shaped the entire course of Laotian history from that time to the present. The additional factor of a powerful Communist China as a "close neighbor," as Peiping is fond of stressing, was to make "peaceful coexistence" a much more formidable strategy in Laos than in South Vietnam.

The Geneva agreements also facilitated the Communist cause in Laos, permitting the Pathet Lao to occupy "regroupment areas" in the two northern provinces until an internal political settlement had been reached. Confronted internally by a Viet Minh-directed armed insurrection and externally by strong pressures exerted by both Peiping and Hanoi, the Laotian government under Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma decided in the spring of 1956 to seek a negotiated settlement with the Pathet Lao.

Peiping took the lead in proposing a negotiated settlement in Laos despite initial objections by the DRV, which in turn had to overcome similar opposition by the Pathet Lao. During the protracted negotiations leading up to the November

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1957 Vientiane agreement, the bloc negotiating strategy was remarkably successful in wringing unilateral concessions from the Phouma government. Internally, the Pathet Lao won recognition as a legal political party, participation in a coalition government, and the opportunity to implant its functionaries within the government administration. Although Pathet Lao agreement to permit integration of their troops into the national army and to surrender control over the two northern provinces appeared to be a substantial quid pro quo, there is good evidence that the Laotian Communists had no intention of abiding by these provisions of the agreement.

Externally, the Phouma regime was persuaded to adopt a policy of non-alignment by a combination of threats and blandishments on the part of Peiping. Symbolizing the leading role of Communist China in this effort was Souvanna Phouma's trip to Peiping in August 1956. On this occasion, the Laotian premier publicly disavowed any interest in SEATO and pledged to follow thereafter a "policy of peace and neutrality." This pledge, supplemented by promises to develop economic, cultural and diplomatic relations with the Communist bloc, was reaffirmed in the negotiated settlement a year later. In contrast with the record of failure in Vietnam throughout this period, the Vientiane agreement of November 1957 constituted an important victory for the bloc strategy of "peaceful coexistence" in Laos.

### III. NORTH VIETNAM AND THE CHINESE MODEL, 1958-1959

The Lao Dong party's annual review of major developments at the close of 1957 revealed a picture of almost unmitigated gloom. For whatever reason (the ostensible cause was "revisionism" which had sprung up following deStalinization, the Hungarian uprising and policy errors in North Vietnam), authoritative pronouncements alluded to the existence of widespread "confusion and skepticism" and decried the loss of "revolutionary optimism" within the ranks of the party. It was time for a bold new program on both the domestic and foreign policy fronts, one which would restore revolutionary elan and badly needed momentum in the drive for a socialist, unified Vietnam. As this program unfolded throughout the ensuing two-year period, it became clear that the Viet Minh

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in a number of important respects was once again emulating the Chinese Communist model in pursuit of its domestic and foreign policy objectives.

A. Domestic Policy

The campaign of emulation of Communist China extended into most spheres of North Vietnam's domestic policy throughout 1958 and 1959. Attracted by Peiping's claim to have discovered a special road enabling the underdeveloped nations of Asia to achieve rapid economic and social progress, the North Vietnamese leadership enthusiastically endorsed China's "general line of socialist construction" and "leap forward" programs and appeared to regard the even more radical commune program as a logical step to be taken at some future stage of higher "socialist" development within North Vietnam.\*

In May 1958 Ho Chi Minh, a onetime member of the Chinese Communist party, issued the first of a series of appeals to all classes of Vietnamese society to learn from the "example" and "experience" of their Chinese counterparts in building socialism. The Vietnamese leader noted in August that "our country being near to China and having conditions similar to hers must learn first from China and then advance further to learn from the Soviet Union."

The second in command of the Lao Dong party, Le Duan, presented a more comprehensive rationale for the DRV decision in 1958 to follow China's distinctive road to socialism. After quoting Mao Tse-tung on the special problems encountered by underdeveloped nations seeking industrialization and modernization, Le Duan declared in September that

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\*However, North Vietnam never became as intoxicated with these innovations as did the North Korean regime. For a discussion of the even more enthusiastic response of the North Korean leadership to these radical innovations, see ESAU XV-61: "Sino-Soviet Competition in North Korea."

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"the problem is the same with us" and added that "the infinitely rich experience of China in this connection has taught us a brand new concept of the road to socialist construction." In brief, this concept held that in the conditions of overpopulation, land scarcity and shortage of capital peculiar to backward Asian countries, the key to economic development lay in mobilizing and exhorting the peasant masses in a forced-draft labor-intensive program conducted at "leap forward" speed.

In this new approach to economic development in North Vietnam, a "leap forward" in agricultural production was the first step. Following the Chinese pattern, party enthusiasts were sent to the countryside to wage a "sharp ideological struggle against conservatism in the fixing and fulfillment of production norms." Taking the lead in this endeavor, Ho Chi Minh called for doubling the spring 1959 production target, asserting that new techniques perfected in Communist China (principally deep plowing, close planting and abundant fertilization) enabled a technological break-through in agriculture. Under the influence of this "leap forward" psychology, North Vietnam's Three Year Plan was revised in December 1958 to include hopelessly unrealistic food production goals for 1959 and 1960.

The next step was a "leap forward" in industrial development to be achieved by following Communist China's "mass line" of local industrialization. The DRV Minister of Industry confidently asserted that Vietnamese workers and peasants, "provided they are led by the Party and enlightened ideologically," could grasp industrial techniques and build a network of small industrial installations throughout the countryside. The extravagant Chinese claims for this audacious undertaking--that it constituted a short-cut to industrialization, promoted agricultural mechanization and helped eliminate differences between urban and rural areas--were all faithfully reproduced in Vietnamese commentary. When all industrial enterprises in early 1959 were ordered to build small-scale iron and steel plants "employing simple methods and using only local materials," North Vietnam appeared firmly committed to Peiping's unorthodox program of "leaping" agricultural and industrial development. Applauding this fidelity in a message of greetings in May 1959, Liu Shao-chi lauded "the great achievements of the Vietnamese people" who were "displaying the highest labor enthusiasm in order to achieve great leap forwards in all fields of construction."

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By contrast, Hanoi's reaction to the third of the trilogy of programs which dominated the Chinese scene in 1958-1959--the formation of people's communes--was more ambiguous and circumspect. The fact that the DRV was still in the preliminary phase of organizing low-level agricultural cooperatives ruled out the establishment of communes in North Vietnam within the foreseeable future, and probably for this reason Hanoi originated little independent comment on China's commune program in the fall of 1958. This presumption was confirmed by Ho Chi Minh in January 1959 when he utilized the medium of a Western press query to stress that his country had no intention of organizing communes in the "immediate future."

On the other hand, there were indications at this time that the Lao Dong party may have been attracted by a number of commune features and may have looked favorably on this organization as a logical future step once North Vietnam had achieved a higher level of "socialist" development. In a 19 December 1958 editorial, the official party organ hailed "the movements to establish people's communes and develop the national economy at a leap forward rate" as "of great significance not only for the Chinese People's Republic but also for the Communist and Workers Movement and peace movement through the world." A May 1959 report by the Sinophile Truong Chinh on agricultural cooperatization revealed the future goal of establishing "large cooperatives" encompassing "all party organizations; administrative services, organs for mobilizing the people; all economic, cultural and educational activities; and the building of militia...." The basic identity between this comprehensive organization and Mao Tse-tung's concept of the commune, combining "industry, agriculture, commerce, education and the militia" plus township government, was unmistakable.

North Vietnam's praise of the Chinese Communist model reached a peak at the time of the 10th anniversary of the Chinese People's Republic in October 1959, an occasion honored in Hanoi, according to a Western observer, as if "a colony were celebrating the centenary of its mother country." A significant feature of Vietnamese commentary on this occasion

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was the theme of dual allegiance of the Viet Minh revolution to "Marxist-Leninism and the ideology of Mao Tse-tung."\* Elaborating this theme, the official organ of the People's Army of Vietnam paid striking tribute to "the military ideology of Mao Tse-tung" as exercising "profound influence on our armed struggle in general and in building our armed forces in particular."

Of particular interest was the defense, appearing in several authoritative discussions at this time, of China's communes against the mounting campaign of criticism by the Soviet Union. In a late August Nhan Dan editorial the Lao Dong party asserted that "only the imperialists and their followers...attacked the great successes of the Chinese people in their movement to build people's communes." A major article in late September appraising the 10-year record of the Chinese People's Republic, sought to justify the commune by stressing China's "special conditions," declaring that "certain things may be true in a certain friendly country [the USSR] but not in China." And Ho Chi Minh speaking in Peiping lauded Communist China's "general line, great leap forward and people's communes" as, by implication, "proof of the wisdom of the leadership of the Chinese Communist party headed by Comrade Mao Tse-tung" and as a "creative application of the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism to the actual practice of the Chinese revolution."

#### B. Foreign Policy

The first Soviet sputnik launching and ICBM test in the fall of 1957 marked an important turning point in the evolution of the Sino-Soviet dispute over world Communist strategy. Assuming that this breakthrough in weapons technology constituted a decisive shift in the world balance of power, Mao Tse-tung returned from the Moscow Conference of Communist and Workers Parties in November 1957 apparently convinced that the

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\*This formulation, which implicitly acknowledges Peiping's leading role in the Asian Communist movement and which accordingly is anathema to Moscow, had not appeared in Vietnamese commentary since the Geneva Conference of 1954.

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correct strategic line for the international Communist movement was no longer one of passive "peaceful coexistence" but one of active revolutionary advance. Coming at a time of frustration and sagging hopes in North Vietnam's undertaking to achieve national unification by "peaceful means," this strategic estimate must have struck a responsive chord in Ho Chi Minh, who tarried a month in Peiping before returning home from the Moscow Conference. As the events of the ensuing two years were to demonstrate, Communist China and North Vietnam would act in concert on the implications of this assessment by adopting a more aggressive policy in pursuit of revolutionary goals in South Vietnam and Laos. As these events would also demonstrate, Moscow's differing strategic estimate and its reluctance to become involved in Southeast Asia would align the North Vietnamese regime behind Peiping on a number of issues in the worsening Sino-Soviet dispute in the latter months of 1959.

#### 1. South Vietnam

Le Duan, who had become Ho Chi Minh's second in command in early 1958, expressed the party's new "hard" line toward South Vietnam. Reputedly the leader of a "Southern" faction who had been in charge of party operations in the South from 1947 to 1956, this previously obscure revolutionary figure criticized Khrushchev's doctrine of "peaceful transition to socialism" in early 1958 in a series of speeches and articles directed ostensibly at the Tito-brand of "revisionism." Denying the applicability of this doctrine to Vietnam, Le Duan underlined the "arduous and complicated" nature of the struggle in South Vietnam and invoked the authority of Lenin to emphasize that "both peaceful and non-peaceful forms of struggle" were essential to the success of any revolutionary undertaking. Developments throughout the remainder of 1958 indicated a Viet Minh decision to intensify sharply the political struggle in preparation for a new phase of armed struggle in South Vietnam the following year.

The first indication of an impending shift in revolutionary tactics appeared in July during the fourth anniversary of the Geneva Conference. In contrast with previous anniversaries which had emphasized the DRV's faithful adherence to the Geneva Agreement, this observance was devoted to a campaign of rabid

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anti-Americanism. In propaganda tones approaching hysteria, Hanoi's press and radio launched a massive "anti-American movement" in which it was claimed that a million Vietnamese had participated in rallies demanding the withdrawal of United States imperialists from South Vietnam. Criticism of the operations of the International Control Commission in Vietnam appeared for the first time, especially after it had rejected DRV complaints against US military operations in the South. Continuing these pressure tactics, Foreign Minister Pham Van Dong cabled the United Nations demanding steps "to compel the complete withdrawal of U.S. military personnel from South Vietnam."

Next was the decision in December to stage an all-out propaganda attack against the government of South Vietnam. Whereas previous appeals to the Diem regime to enter into negotiations had been temperate in tone, Pham Van Dong's 22 December note was characterized by abusive and insulting language, asserting in arrogant tones that negotiations were feasible only if Diem agreed to accept Communist terms. Following closely on the announcement of this new hard line on reunification, the DRV initiated a virulent propaganda attack, charging that the Southern authorities, acting on US instructions, had poisoned 6,000 inmates of a "concentration camp" in the Southern zone.

Developments in Communist China at this time encouraged North Vietnam in its decision, based primarily on other considerations, to inaugurate a new phase of armed struggle in South Vietnam. First was the adoption of a more radical strategic line by Mao Tse-tung, one which stressed the "paper tiger" character of American power and which advocated a more militant revolutionary struggle. Next was a series of reports that Mao Tse-tung was determined to win Moscow's recognition of a special role for China in guiding Asian Communist parties and assisting them to power. The militant character of Peiping's new policy was revealed in Premier Chou En-lai's address to the National People's Congress in April 1959 when he pledged "support and assistance to the full extent of our capabilities to all national independence movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America."

The Lao Dong central committee decided in early May 1959 to initiate a new phase of violent revolution in the South with the avowed purpose of overthrowing the Diem regime.

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Although couched in the usual Aesopian language of such occasions, the message contained in a 14 May Nhan Dan editorial on this party conference was clear. Utilizing the "advantageous" shift in the world balance of forces and supported by "an unprecedentedly firm North Vietnam and socialist camp," the party's compatriots in the South were exhorted "to struggle... in the tradition of the 1941 and 1945 uprisings...and by all necessary forms and measures to achieve the goal of revolution." This decision was implemented in the fall of 1959 and the winter of 1959-1960 by sharply stepping up sabotage and terrorist operations in the South and by sharply increasing the flow of cadres and arms to newly activated guerrilla battalions in South Vietnam.

Despite the claim of solid backing by the "socialist camp," this new revolutionary drive was to receive much more support from Peiping than from Moscow throughout 1959. Khrushchev's decision at this time to press for a rapprochement with the West under the guise of "peaceful coexistence" and "relaxation of international tensions" was clearly incompatible with the launching of a frontal assault on American imperialism in Vietnam, and indeed the Chinese were soon to accuse Khrushchev of being unwilling to give adequate support to "liberation" wars. The Soviet leader's failure to mention Vietnam in a global review of "main problems" in East-West relations in October 1959 (despite lengthy remarks on Korea) appeared to confirm Soviet caution with regard to Vietnam's national liberation struggle. In a speech delivered in Peiping on 30 September, North Vietnam politburo member Hoang Van Hoan appeared to air publicly his party's grievances over Soviet non-support when he pointedly confined the scope of Soviet assistance to economic aid and efforts to restore peace in Vietnam and then paid glowing tribute to Communist China's "persistent support of the Vietnamese people's resistance war" in the past and "active support of Vietnam in her struggle for national reunification" in the present.

Authoritative party editorials in the remaining months of 1959 continued to betray apprehension and resentment over Khrushchev's prescriptions for bloc strategy. A recurring theme in these discussions was the need to differentiate between the general world situation (where some relaxation of international tension had occurred) with the situation in Laos and South Vietnam (where American imperialists were plotting war and aggression.) Of particular interest was the veiled

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warning to the Soviet Union that it would be a "mistake" to detach the "socialist camp" from "the national liberation movement in Asia, Africa, and Latin America." Thus increasingly overt criticism of Soviet policy characterized the position of North Vietnam as the Sino-Soviet dispute over international Communist strategy neared a climax in 1960.

## 2. Laos

The DRV had less grounds for criticizing Soviet policy in Laos throughout 1958 and 1959. After a strong showing in supplementary elections held in early 1958, the Laotian Communists were in a good position to demonstrate the efficacy of Khrushchev's doctrine of "peaceful transition to socialism." When a strongly anti-Communist Lao Government emerged in August 1958, it was clearly in the interests of the Soviet leader, as prime advocate of this doctrine of revolution via the ballot box, and of the Soviet Union as leader of the bloc, to participate in a common effort to preserve the powerful Communist assets in that country. Even here, however, the Soviet Union appeared to favor a more conciliatory policy than that advocated by Communist China and North Vietnam.

The developments leading up to and including the Laotian crisis in mid-1959 fall into several well-defined stages. The first stage, in summer 1958, saw the formation of an anti-Communist coalition government vested with emergency powers and intent on aligning Laos more closely with the West. In order to deal more effectively with internal Communist subversion and prepare the way for more active American assistance, the Lao Government succeeded in July 1958 in bringing about an indefinite adjournment of the International Control Commission. This action was strongly protested by Hanoi and Peiping, the latter underlining its right to be heard with the reminder that it was "a close neighbor of Laos." Probably more decisive in indicating to Hanoi that a resumption of Communist military action was necessary was Premier Phoui's Civic Action program, started in August 1958, to wipe out Communist influence in the countryside. In ominous response, North Vietnam charged Laotian violation of its borders in December and sent troops into the disputed border areas.

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The second stage, from February through April 1959, was initiated by the Lao Prime Minister's repudiation of the Geneva Agreements of 1954, a prerequisite for introducing an American military training mission and for increasing American military aid. During this period, Communist China took the lead in a campaign of intimidation against the Lao Government, charging "unscrupulous violation" of the Geneva Agreements and "military incursions" of its southern border. For the first time, the Soviet Union added its voice to the chorus demanding reactivation of the ICC, declaring that it "fully shared" the concern of its Far Eastern partners over the "serious situation" in Laos.

The third stage, immediately preceding the outbreak of armed hostilities in May 1959, was inaugurated by efforts to integrate two Pathet Lao battalions into the national army (as stipulated in the Vientiane agreement of 1957). With the escape of one of these battalions to the North Vietnam border and the ensuing arrest of several top-ranking Communist leaders, developments accelerated rapidly. Reacting violently, both Hanoi and Peiping accused the Royal Laotian Government of "launching a civil war" and laid the groundwork for possible military intervention by alleging threats to their national security. Following representations by these Asian bloc members, the Soviet foreign minister pressed for reactivation of the ICC in high-level talks with the British.

The final stage, in fall 1959 and the winter of 1959-1960, was marked by the resumption of full-scale Communist guerilla warfare. It was in this stage of armed insurrection, begun on the eve of Khrushchev's visit to the United States, that Soviet policy on Laos began to diverge from the more militant and uncompromising line of Peiping and Hanoi.

Throughout August and September of 1959, Communist China and North Vietnam made more explicit their threats to intervene by warning that any foreign involvement in Laos would be a direct threat to their national security. On 12 August Communist China demanded the complete withdrawal of US advisers, equipment and bases as a precondition for peace in Laos. It was also at this time that Peiping brought up the Laos situation in connection with Khrushchev's impending visit to the United States, citing it as further proof of the inherently aggressive nature of American policy despite peaceful protestations.

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By contrast, a Soviet Foreign Ministry statement in mid-August was notably conciliatory in tone. Then the dispatch of a United Nations fact-finding mission in Laos in September prompted a stronger Soviet stand calling for a new Geneva Conference to uphold the legality of the 1954 agreements. This action, promptly endorsed by Hanoi and Peiping, succeeded temporarily in reconciling the divergent views of the three bloc partners. Two developments in the following month, however, suggested a continuing dispute over the tactical line to be pursued in Laos.

The first indication appeared in Khrushchev's obvious effort to minimize the gravity of the Laotian situation in a major foreign policy address of 31 October. In a formulation remarkably neutral in tone, the Soviet leader urged "the great powers" to refrain from intervention in Laos and argued that a "sensible approach" predicated on adherence to "international agreements" could "liquidate the clashes" in that troubled area. And in a final observation which appeared to be directed in part at the incendiary and bellicose position of Communist China throughout the preceding months, Khrushchev asserted that "more than a necessary amount of noise has been raised in the world" about the Laotian crisis.

The second development concerned a Soviet approach to the British in behalf of the imprisoned Communist leaders about to go on trial in Laos. During the course of conversations in London, Soviet Ambassador Malik referred twice to Communist China's position as expressed in a 31 October note which warned that the trials would "inevitably block the way to a peaceful solution" of the Laotian problem. By this device the Soviet representative appeared to convey a warning that the Chinese would cause trouble in Laos if the trials were held. Moreover, the timing of this demarche, which followed almost immediately Khrushchev's thinly-veiled warning in Peiping against "testing the stability of the capitalist system by force," suggested the possibility of Soviet apprehension over Communist China's aggressive intentions in Southeast Asia.

#### IV. NORTH VIETNAM AND THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE: 1960-1961

A number of developments in the fall of 1959 intensified the Sino-Soviet dispute over methods of building Communism and international Communist strategy. Following his abortive

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conference with Mao Tse-tung in Peiping, Khrushchev apparently decided to resort to more forceful measures designed to press Communist China and its bloc supporters back into line. The Soviet leader publicly attacked China's foreign and domestic policies on four separate occasions in the closing months of 1959. On 31 October he implicitly rebuked Peiping for its bellicose posture toward the West by alluding to Trotsky's "notorious slogan of 'neither peace nor war'." On 1 December Khrushchev launched a polemical, if oblique, attack on China's commune and "leap forward" programs, characterizing them as a "distortion of the teachings of Marxism-Leninism on the building of socialism and Communism" resulting from "conceit...and mistakes in leadership." Reacting to these developments, North Vietnam apparently decided in late 1959 to adopt a more nearly neutral position in the Sino-Soviet dispute, a policy which it has maintained up to the present time. Implementation of this policy during 1960-1961 would be characterized by a new national assertiveness manifested internally by stressing the unique character of the Vietnamese revolution and externally by proclaiming (for the first time) the revolutionary experience of North Vietnam as a model for Communist "liberation" movements in other underdeveloped areas of the world.

#### A. Domestic Policy

North Vietnam's determination to seek a neutral course in domestic policy was revealed by two significant developments in the winter of 1959-1960. First was the growing skepticism over the applicability to Vietnam of the Chinese model of economic and social development. In September Premier Pham Van Dong had publicly exposed this skepticism when he enumerated various defects in the 1959 economic plan, singled out for special criticism the excessive agricultural production goals which had been forced on the peasants, and pointedly asserted that "socialist ideology and enthusiasm cannot automatically make us skillful." Further admission of failure in North Vietnam's "leap forward" program appeared at this time in the progressive reduction of the highly unrealistic goals of the Three Year Program (1958 to 1960). Most striking was the drastic scaling-down of the 1960 food target from the plan figure of 7.6 million tons to 5.5 million tons.

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Even more revealing was the decision taken in late 1959 to stress the individuality and unique character of the Vietnamese revolution. In place of previous encomiums to the Chinese model and the "ideology of Mao Tse-tung," Hanoi utilized the anniversary celebrations of Indo-China Communist party in January and Lenin's birthday in April to introduce a new rationale ascribing all of its revolutionary victories to Lenin and Ho Chi Minh, described as Lenin's "most outstanding disciple in Vietnam" who had "creatively applied Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of Vietnam." This new national assertiveness, no doubt calculated, reflected North Vietnam's decision to steer a neutral course between the conflicting Sino-Soviet doctrinal pronouncements on correct methods of building socialism and Communism.

The new exaltation of Lenin as the ideological mentor of the Vietnamese revolution was carried to extremes. In an April Hoc Tap editorial, it was asserted that "ever since restoration of peace in 1954, we have taken Lenin's theory on the transition to socialism as a compass in socialist transformation and the building of socialism in North Vietnam," and in the August-September issue of this party organ Premier Pham Van Dong cited Lenin 13 times as the ideological guide to North Vietnam's revolution. Of particular interest in this voluminous discussion were the increasing references to "Lenin's theory of agricultural cooperatives," a good indication that the DRV was shying away from the ideologically suspect "people's communes" of Communist China. On this point, Hanoi's position was virtually identical with Moscow's.

There were other indications of a growing tendency to look to the Soviet Union for guidance in economic development programs. First was Le Duan's announcement in January 1960 that North Vietnam would shift from agricultural to heavy industrial development as the main task of the First Five Year Plan (1961-1965) and his instruction to learn "especially from the USSR" in carrying out this task. A Soviet scientific and technical mission arrived in spring 1960, charged with "drawing up a long-term, comprehensive construction plan." Equally important was Le Duan's reiteration at the Third National Party Congress in September that North Vietnam fully accepted Khrushchev's concept of an integrated bloc-wide economic system in which each country acknowledged "socialist principles of international division of labor and cooperation" and "coordinated its long-term national economic plans...as an integral part of the world

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socialist economic system." (Peiping has consistently opposed this principle of a coordinated bloc-wide approach to economic development). The North Vietnamese were rewarded by grants of sizable Soviet credits in June and December 1960 to help finance agricultural and industrial development in North Vietnam's first long-term economic plan.

Another instance of North Vietnam's increasing susceptibility to Soviet positions on building socialism occurred at the now famous Bucharest Conference of world Communist parties in June. According to reliable accounts of the proceedings of this conference, the Soviet leader attacked China's communes as a fake, the mass iron and steel campaign as a mistake, and the "great leap forward" policy as indefensible in both theory and practice. Voicing an even more serious objection, Khrushchev accused the Chinese of "wanting to impose their concepts on others." Apparently reacting to these polemical attacks, North Vietnam suddenly terminated its support for Peiping's heretical program. Although Premier Pham Van Dong had praised these programs only a month earlier during Chou En-lai's visit to Hanoi, this was the last such reference to appear in North Vietnamese commentary throughout 1960.

The extension of sizeable economic credits by both Moscow and Peiping in the winter of 1960-1961 testified to the effectiveness of North Vietnam's efforts to steer a middle course in domestic policy through the preceding months of crisis in Sino-Soviet relations. Whether designed by Ho Chi Minh or not, neutrality was paying off in the form of an apparent Sino-Soviet economic competition for influence in the domestic affairs of the DRV. It remains now to turn to the even more important benefits accruing to North Vietnam in the pursuit of its foreign policy objectives in Laos and South Vietnam.

#### B. Foreign Policy

As noted earlier in this paper, Khrushchev's venture in summit diplomacy during the winter of 1959-1960 could not have occurred at a worse time for North Vietnam. Having decided by May 1959 to prepare for a new phase of violent revolution, the DRV was poised in December ready to launch a frontal attack on "US imperialism" in South Vietnam. This obvious incompatibility between Soviet and North Vietnamese foreign policy objectives came to a head at the Warsaw Pact meeting of February

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1960. According to accounts of this conference, the Soviet Union, backed by East European regimes, argued the necessity of a "soft" approach to the West in order to solve the uppermost problem confronting the bloc, that of Germany. On the other hand, Communist China, supported by North Vietnam and North Korea, maintained that a "hard" uncompromising line was essential in resisting American imperialism, the "main enemy," throughout the world.

Confirmation of these reports appeared in a surprisingly candid Hoc Tap party editorial on the results of the Warsaw Conference. Parroting the Chinese Communist line so closely that it was reproduced in Peiping's party newspaper, the editorial attacked the false belief "that the imperialist wolf has become a lamb;" warned that US imperialism would "continue to initiate local wars;" and, in a thinly-veiled criticism of Khrushchev's strategic assumptions, called for "correctly estimating the new advantages of the world situation...and forging ahead to obtain new advantages which are profitable to peace and socialism."

In April Peiping launched a public attack on the theoretical rationale of Khrushchev's foreign policy by reviving Leninist dicta on the inevitability of war, the intrinsically aggressive nature of imperialism and the need for direct revolutionary action to promote international Communism. When Premier Chou En-lai visited Hanoi the following month, the DRV enthusiastically endorsed this militant strategic prescription. After the publication of a communique stressing the two governments' "completely identical views...on all current major international questions," the Chinese leader hailed the agreement as of "great significance in further strengthening mutual aid and cooperation between our two countries and close coordination between them in international affairs." Close coordination was in fact evidenced in early June at the World Federation of Trade Unions Conference in Peiping when the North Vietnamese delegate strongly supported the dissident faction headed by Communist China and called for a resolution which would "make clear" that the "working class" did "not harbor any illusions about the nature of imperialism."

However, two developments in mid-1960 were to persuade North Vietnam of the wisdom of a more neutral course in the Sino-Soviet dispute on international Communist strategy. The first was the Bucharest Conference in late June which revealed

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to other bloc parties for the first time the fundamental character and disruptive effect of the Sino-Soviet conflict. According to reliable reports, Khrushchev utilized this occasion to accuse the Chinese party of "disloyalty and insincerity," of employing "Trotskyite methods," and of pursuing a "bellicose foreign policy." The Chinese countercharges were equally bitter, including the allegation that Khrushchev had been guilty of "revisionism and right opportunism" and had treated the Chinese "an enemies." In a response revealing grave apprehension over the growing rift in Sino-Soviet relations and a consequent desire to remain neutral, North Vietnam issued a studiously noncommittal editorial on the Bucharest meeting and took the unprecedented step of reprinting without comment the widely-divergent Russian and Chinese party editorials on the conference.

The second development was Ho Chi Minh's visit to Moscow in early August. Continuing his efforts after Bucharest to act as a conciliator in the Sino-Soviet dispute, Ho very likely also discussed the explosive Laotian situation and his party's determination to accelerate the pace and expand the scope of violent revolution in South Vietnam. Moreover, a significant shift in DRV commentary on the Soviet Union immediately thereafter suggests that Ho's mission to Moscow was successful in eliciting pledges of greater Soviet support in mounting a new offensive drive in Southeast Asia.

This new line was expressed most forcefully by Premier Pham Van Dong in a foreign policy address to the Third National Party Congress in September 1960. For the first time since the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet dispute on bloc strategy, a North Vietnam leader paid glowing tribute to the Soviet Union as "a staunch and successful supporter of the struggle of oppressed peoples to liberate themselves and strengthen their national independence." And in the same context, the North Vietnamese premier went on to declare that "the great Soviet Union deserves its position as the country leading the socialist camp." With the revelation of vastly augmented economic and military assistance to North Vietnam in the following months, the Soviet Union would undertake a much more active role in supporting "liberation" movements in Southeast Asia.

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## 1. South Vietnam

After two and a half years of a steady but low-key campaign of propaganda, subversion and terrorism, Hanoi inaugurated in early 1960 a new phase of sharply stepped-up terrorism and guerrilla warfare extending throughout wide areas of South Vietnam. Reflecting this decision, top-ranking North Vietnamese leaders in January and February began to issue overt appeals inciting the people of South Vietnam to engage in "revolution" to overthrow the Diem regime and "drive out" their US imperialist "enemies." Echoing Peiping's call for armed struggle during the Lenin anniversary in April, Lao Dong party 1st secretary Le Duan applied this Leninist dictum directly to South Vietnam when he asserted:

The way for the South Vietnamese people to liberate themselves can by no means differ from that which Lenin has mapped out for the national liberation revolution of colonial peoples.

Acting in accordance with its militant strategic pronouncements, Communist China took the lead throughout 1960 in extending public support and encouragement to the revolutionary drive in South Vietnam. Spelling out their "completely identical views on all current major international questions," Chou En-lai and Pham Van Dong in May 1960 characterized their two countries as "the closest comrades-in-arms of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America...firmly supporting the struggles in these areas for national independence and democratic freedoms." The Chinese premier was more specific in a 2 September speech when he singled out the revolution in South Vietnam as "an important part of the stormy struggle of people of the whole world against the U.S. imperialists" and declared: "The Chinese people have supported in the past, do support at present, and will support in the future the struggle of the Vietnamese people."

A second more violent phase of guerrilla warfare was initiated in South Vietnam in the latter half of 1960. This new phase was clearly indicated in keynote speeches at the Third Party Congress in September which pointed to "a new balance of forces favoring revolution" in the South and which openly proclaimed the intent of North Vietnam "to promote the

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revolutionary struggle in the South." The next step, as North Vietnamese commentary was to reveal more and more candidly in the ensuing months, was to call upon "the powerful and resolute help of socialist countries, especially the USSR and China" to assist in South Vietnam's liberation struggle.

The nominal resolution of Sino-Soviet differences on international Communist strategy as expressed in the Moscow Declaration, and in particular the vigorous bloc response to the Laotian crisis in December 1960, facilitated this task. The Declaration cited Vietnam, along with Laos, as a country struggling for national liberation and proclaimed the "duty" of "socialist countries...to render every moral and material support to peoples struggling for their liberation against imperialism and colonial oppression." The arrival in North Vietnam of massive shipments of arms, together with military advisers, from both Russia and China provided the wherewithal not only for waging a "liberation" war in Laos but also for supporting the armed revolt in South Vietnam.\*

There were several indications in the spring and summer of 1961, however, that Communist China was once again outbidding the Soviet Union in declarations of support for the war in South Vietnam. On 13 April the CPR Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a forceful protest against the stepped-up American military aid program in South Vietnam, a protest eliciting expressions of profound gratitude in a Nhan Dan editorial. Foreign Minister Chen Yi's harsh attacks at the Geneva Conference on American policy in South Vietnam also won DRV plaudits, suggesting a common intent on the part of Peiping and Hanoi to raise the issue of Vietnam at future sessions of this conference. More significant, however, was the reception accorded Premier Pham Van Dong during his June-July 1961 mission to Peiping and Moscow for the obvious purpose of countering Vice President Johnson's offer of aid to the Diem government with a demonstration of equal or greater bloc support for the North.

The results achieved in Peiping were gratifying. Premier Chou En-lai, in addition to reiterating previous pledges of

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\*It should be noted, however, that arms of bloc manufacture have not yet been found in South Vietnam.

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"resolute support for the Vietnamese people's just and patriotic struggle against US imperialist aggression," injected a new tone of menace when he asserted "the Chinese Government and people cannot be indifferent to the increasingly grave situation created by US imperialism in South Vietnam." Politburo member Peng Chen pointed to "stepped up military intervention in Laos and South Vietnam" as proof of Mao Tse-tung's dictum that "the Kennedy administration is even worse, even more sinister and insidious, than the Eisenhower administration," and he demanded that "US imperialism must get out of South Vietnam."

The North Vietnamese emissary received noticeably less from Khrushchev in the way of a public display of support for the war in South Vietnam. Perhaps already preoccupied with Berlin, the Soviet leader tended to blur the issue with generalities about the need to "welcome and show sympathy for" the liberation struggles of colonial peoples. And in the formal communique, Khrushchev carefully distinguished between "the Vietnamese people's legitimate demands for an end to foreign interference in South Vietnam" (which the Soviet Government "fully supports") and "the Vietnamese people's just struggle for national reunification" (which the Soviet Government "firmly believes" will succeed). Despite Premier Pham's assertion on this tour that his countrymen's struggle was receiving "the enthusiastic support of the Soviet Union, China and other fraternal countries," Peiping appeared once again to favor a more militant and aggressive policy in support of "national liberation" in South Vietnam.

## 2. Laos

It is not within the scope of this paper to trace the tortuous course of events preceding and encompassing the Laotian civil war in the winter of 1960-1961. Rather, bloc policy in Laos throughout this period will be discussed within the larger context of the Sino-Soviet dispute on international Communist strategy. Although solid evidence is hard to come by, the record does suggest a close relationship between the development of these two crises in intrabloc and East-West relations in the final months of 1960.

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Following the sending of a United Nations fact-finding mission in the fall of 1959, Laos entered a period of relative quiescence in which the Pathet Lao prepared for future large-scale guerrilla activities. This period was punctuated by occasional appeals by Peiping and Hanoi urging the Laotian people to "persist in their revolutionary struggle" and by increasingly frequent reminders from Peiping that no settlement of the Laotian problem was possible without its participation.

The Kong Le coup in August 1960 set the stage for the resumption of civil war in Laos. Moscow's reaction in the initial stages of this crisis was cautious in comparison with that of Peiping, merely expressing "sympathy" for the Laotian people as opposed to China's declaration of "resolute support." By late October, however, the Soviet Union had shifted to a position of "full support" for the Souvanna regime, committing its prestige and revealing a belated determination to lead the bloc offensive in Laos.

A factor of undoubted importance in this Soviet decision was the opportunity afforded by Souvanna Phouma's diplomatic recognition of Moscow in early October 1960. This opportunity, then denied Peiping (which was not recognized until April 1961), was quickly exploited by the arrival of a Soviet emissary with offers of economic aid. Another consideration, probably, was the conviction that Laos constituted a soft spot in the US-protected perimeter in Southeast Asia, which promised substantial gains in return for a limited investment. The timing of the Soviet decision, however, suggests still another factor of equal or greater importance--the need to take vigorous action in Laos to counter Peiping's polemical accusations throughout the preceding months that the Soviet Union had failed to support adequately any war or national liberation struggle after the Moscow Conference of November 1957. This charge had been aired publicly, in oblique if unmistakable terms, just weeks before the Soviet decision to intervene in the Laotian civil war--on the occasion of the publication of the fourth volume of Mao Tse-tung's collected works, timed to coincide with the celebration of the 11th anniversary of the Chinese People's Republic on 1 October 1960.

This event, greeted with much fanfare in Chinese propaganda, provided a convenient medium for reiterating Peiping's militant line on the desirability and inevitability of armed struggle and violent revolution in promoting international

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Communism. Surrounding commentary stressed that Mao had always insisted on taking a "revolutionary" line as opposed to an "opportunist" line (i.e. Khrushchev's). Furthermore, it characterized this volume as a "great Marxist-Leninist work" and asserted its "great significance for the broad people's revolutionary movements in those parts of the world still under oppression and exploitation." It was clear that the Chinese Communists were once again advancing Mao's revolutionary theories as a general guide for revolutionary movements in the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The immediate and forceful bloc response to General Phoumi's recapture of the Laotian capital in mid-December is a matter of record. Initiated by a large-scale Soviet airlift/delivering arms and ammunition, the Communist powers made quite clear their determination to take all measures necessary to support the Kong Le-Pathet Lao forces. Although the concerted program of diplomatic, propaganda, and military action suggested close coordination and consultation between Moscow and Peiping at the outset, there were several indications in 1961 that the Soviet Union and Communist China continued to hold divergent views on questions of timing and tactics in seeking a negotiated settlement of the Laotian crisis.

Beginning in January, Peiping and Hanoi appeared on a number of occasions to favor the continuation of armed struggle rather than to accept Moscow's proposal to negotiate an international political settlement. This was evident first of all in Communist China's obvious reluctance to permit re-activation of the International Control Commission in Laos, stipulating as a prior condition that a new Geneva Conference be reconvened. Reports of North Vietnamese resistance to a "cease-fire" appeared confirmed by a 4 April Soviet broadcast to Vietnam urging in defensive tones the desirability of a truce. Peiping's insistence in late April that all American military personnel and equipment be withdrawn before a "real cease-fire" could be achieved in Laos indicated a desire for continued military operations in preference to a political settlement. Finally, there was evidence of divergent approaches to negotiations, either as to tactics or to substance, between the Chinese Communists and the Soviets after the Geneva Conference on Laos convened in May.

Animated by the desire to achieve quick gains in both South Vietnam and Laos; North Vietnam displayed a marked

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preference for Peiping's more militant position on world Communist strategy throughout 1960 and 1961. It remains now to examine North Vietnam's role in the overall Sino-Soviet conflict throughout this period, a role which Ho Chi Minh performed with notable effect at the Moscow Conference of November 1960 and which Hanoi has continued to play up the present.

### C. North Vietnam and the Sino-Soviet Dispute

By a judicious combination of scattered [ ] reporting with information available in the public record, it is possible to reconstruct with a fair amount of accuracy the performance of the North Vietnamese party delegation at the Moscow Conference of November 1960. Numerous reports have indicated the key role played by Ho Chi Minh in conciliating the bitter disagreement which persisted between Khrushchev and Liu Shao-chi into the final days of the conference. From an intensive review of North Vietnamese materials bearing on this conference, it would appear that the essence of the reconciliation formula advanced by Ho Chi Minh at this time was the principle of bloc solidarity based on "voluntary" allegiance, a concept advanced by Peiping during the troubles in Eastern Europe in 1956.

Far and away the most revealing single published source detailing North Vietnam's role at this conference was the report of Lao Dong party 1st Secretary Le Duan appearing in the January 1961 issue of Hoc Tap. It was here that the principle of "voluntary" allegiance was discussed at some length in the section defining the nature of relations between Communist parties within the bloc. After repeating the ritualistic formula appearing in the Moscow Declaration that "all Communist and Workers Parties are independent and equal," Le Duan went on to add a significant formulation which did not appear in the Declaration--"and have the duty to support and help each other so that they will voluntarily respect the views and conclusion they have unanimously passed after democratic debates in delegates' conferences." (Underlining supplied). This statement would appear to confirm the number of reports indicating that North Vietnam at the Moscow Conference, while generally evasive and conciliatory, supported Communist China on the key issue of authority and discipline within the international Communist movement, rejecting the principle of majority rule which Khrushchev sought to impose on the movement.

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Moreover, the stress on "voluntary respect" and "unanimous views" would appear to reject coercive tactics (e.g. the withdrawal of Soviet technicians from Communist China in 1960 and economic sanctions applied to Albania since that time) as a means of extracting obedience to Moscow. Corroborative evidence for this conclusion would be provided by North Vietnam's conduct at the Albanian Workers Party Congress in February 1961. Whereas the Russian representative attacked the Albanian party leaders (obliquely of course) as "renegades...foaming at the mouth in fits of hatred and hostility against our party", the North Vietnamese delegate praised the Albanian leaders for "profound faithfulness to Marxism-Leninism" and "their correct leadership."

Another manifestation of this principle of "voluntary" allegiance was Le Duan's clear implication that the Lao Dong party would look to both the "Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party" (the "two largest parties") for guidance in charting its own revolutionary course. This implication was made first of all by omitting the tribute paid the CPSU in the Moscow Declaration--"the universally recognized vanguard...whose experience is of fundamental significance"--and by substituting the neutral statement that the DRV "would study the collective experience of brother countries." The principle was also to be evident in North Vietnam's resumption in 1961, after a six months' hiatus following the Bucharest Conference, of laudatory appraisals of Communist China's "leap forward" and commune programs and reassertion of "the great significance of the Chinese revolution to the revolution of Vietnam."

The intent of Hanoi to follow a neutral course in the Sino-Soviet dispute was also demonstrated in Le Duan's discussion of the nature of relations between bloc countries. After referring to the "USSR and China" as "the two largest countries bearing heaviest responsibility for maintaining unity within the socialist camp," the party leader indicated that North Vietnam's policy thereafter would be to "strengthen unity and friendship between our country and the USSR and China" and "between our party and the CPSU and the CCP."

As events throughout the remainder of 1961 would demonstrate, it would become increasingly difficult to implement this neutral strategy. The requirements of impartiality were illustrated in somewhat ludicrous fashion by Premier Pham Van Dong in mid-year when he lauded Communist China in Peiping as

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"the closest friend of the DRV" and then hailed Khrushchev in Moscow as "the closest friend of the Vietnamese people." And Khrushchev's bid at the 22nd Party Congress to establish supremacy over the Communist bloc and world Communist movement would aggravate Sino-Soviet tensions and further complicate Hanoi's effort to maintain a neutral stance.

On balance, however, it is clear that North Vietnam has been a major beneficiary of the Sino-Soviet dispute as the two bloc powers have intensified competition for influence over "national liberation movements" in Southeast Asia. The recipient of vastly augmented economic and military assistance from both Moscow and Peiping during the past two years, the North Vietnamese party leaders have every reason to persist in their chosen role of moderator and neutral in the deepening conflict between the Soviet Union and Communist China.

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