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THE UNITED FRONT  
IN COMMUNIST STRATEGY

Tactics in South Vietnam

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1961 1962

## INTRODUCTION

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December, 1962

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December 1968

INTRODUCTION

THE National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV) was set up in December, 1960 and is a classic example of Communist united front tactics. The Communist theory on which it is based and its activities during the last two years are worth examining for the light they throw, not only on the situation in Vietnam, but also on Communist tactics and strategy in general. For there is ample evidence that the Communists regard their policies in Vietnam as a model for activities in other developing countries where and when conditions are favourable.

The basis of the united front tactic is that Communist control must be established from the beginning. The Communist aim is seizure of power, though this must be concealed in an attempt to attract the sympathies and support of all classes even of those who would be opposed to the final goal.

In Vietnam the idea of founding a front in the South was first propounded at the Congress of the *Lao Dong* (Workers) Party in the Communist North in September, 1960. Thereafter the Communists set about founding the front and trying to make it appear as an organisation representing a wide variety of opinion, led by Southerners with substantial political influence who were not necessarily Communists.

The Communists put forward a programme for the front which in itself had little to do with Communism—indeed people would be jailed in North Vietnam for demanding its adoption there. It was nevertheless designed to suggest that as many people as possible desired the Communists' immediate aim: the overthrow of the independent government in the South.

The Communists hope to use the front to secure for themselves a share in power which they cannot gain through their own merits or appeal. Without such a front they would be at a disadvantage even if the political changes for which they are pressing took place. Few people in Vietnam would look to the Communists as such as an alternative govern-

ment; only by using others as a cover or claiming to cooperate with them can they hope to succeed.

The front also provides the Communists with an urgently needed cover not only for their political but also their administrative and military activities. They had administrative cadres and a complicated military organisation in South Vietnam long before the NFLSV was founded even in name. As their military activities, controlled from the North, increased the demand grew for some apparently local body to which direction of the armed forces could be attributed.

The front is used to present Communist subversion in South Vietnam as the work of a widely-supported local movement to foreign audiences. It is handicapped rather than helped by the appearance of its representatives abroad only in Communist-controlled countries or under the auspices of Communist-dominated organisations. Nevertheless, the publicity the Communists give to these appearances reveals that they wish opinion in non-aligned and Western nations to accept the front as a representative body and responsible for the subversive operations of the Communists. The tours of the front's agents abroad are also reported to the people of Vietnam as evidence of foreign sympathy for their aims and activities.

Should the Communists succeed in insinuating themselves into a South Vietnamese government through the front, both their theory and practice indicate that they would use this position to prepare the way for a merger between the South and the North on the Communists' own terms. They would dispense with the individuals and the programme which they exploited to reach their earlier goals. The temporary substance which they had given to the front for a limited time and appearance would gradually be withdrawn as their ultimate aim was reached.

#### COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP

THE basic explanation of the Communist plan in Vietnam was outlined by North Vietnam's Minister of Defence, General Vo Nguyen Giap, in *People's War, People's Army*, published in Hanoi in September, 1961. The

book is ostensibly an account of the political and military means used by the Communists to gain control of North Vietnam. It deserves study as a commentary on these events alone and as an admission of Communist aims and tactics from 1944-56 which the Communists concealed and denied at the time.

The book leaves no doubt that it is meant as a guide to Communist movements in South Vietnam and elsewhere:

"The study of these experiences is of great significance... for the completion of the national democratic revolution throughout the country".

The publisher's introduction refers to the situation in Asia, Africa and Latin America to sustain its view that "publication of this book is most timely". In several passages Giap claims that although the Soviet and Chinese revolutions provided many lessons, the policy of the Vietnamese Communists is the most appropriate model for small, developing countries.

In describing how the united front was used to bring the Communists to power in North Vietnam, Giap reveals the general rule that such a front must be dominated by the Communists from the outset:

"The Vietnamese people's war of liberation was victorious because we had a wide and firm *National United Front*... organised and led by the Party of the working class: the *Indochinese Communist Party*, now the *Vietnam Workers' Party*. In the light of the principles of Marxist-Leninism, it was the Party which proceeded... to determine the fundamental tasks of the people's national democratic revolution... It was the Party which found a correct solution to the problems arising out of the setting up and leadership of a people's army, people's power and national united front".

For part of the time Giap describes, no "party of the working class" was officially in existence at all. The Indochinese Communist Party was dissolved in November, 1945. The *Lao Dong (Workers') Party* was not set up until 1951. Meanwhile the *Lien Viet* was launched in May, 1946 as a broad, national front nominally free from Communist influence and direction. (This did not, however, stop the Cominform journal of August 21, 1953 recording that

Communist Party membership increased from 20,000 in 1946 to 500,000 in 1950).

The National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam today is more openly a Communist instrument than the *Lien Viet* was from 1946-50, although Giap has since admitted that it was tightly controlled by the Communists. For in January, 1962, the People's Revolutionary Party was set up in South Vietnam to give the NFLSV an open Communist element and indeed leadership. In its manifesto the Party acknowledged its descent from its predecessors (the Indo-Chinese Communist and Workers' Parties). It declared in a statement published in Hanoi on April 4, 1962, by *Nhan Dan* organ of the *Lao Dong* Party:

"The Vietnamese Revolutionary People's Party volunteers to act as the assault soldier in the front line of this struggle".

The Party can be expected, however, to try to conceal the extent of its control of the front's political and military programme, at the same time actually securing and expanding this control. It no doubt plans to emerge one day in the South with all the power now held by the *Lao Dong* Party in the North and reduce the Liberation Front to the status and influence left today in the North to the Fatherland Front (which replaced the *Lien Viet* once it had served its purpose).

### CONGRESS AND ORGANISATIONS

THE People's Revolutionary Party may have been founded to give a label other than membership of the *Lao Dong* Party to known Communists who attended the First Congress of the Liberation Front.

The Congress met from February 16 to March 3, 1962, according to a transmission on April 10 from the clandestine "Liberation Broadcasting Station". (The station was inaugurated at the beginning of February perhaps to give direct publicity to the Congress. There are indications that it is in the North.) During April the "Liberation Station", Peking and Hanoi Radio broadcast various documents said to have been issued by the Congress, which were combined with additional material in a *Declaration* published in Hanoi in June.

According to the *Declaration*, the following parties and organisations were represented at the Congress:

- The Radical Socialist Party;
- The South Vietnam Democratic Party;
- The Vietnam People's Revolutionary Party;
- The Students' and Pupils' Union for Liberation;
- The Labour Union for Liberation;
- The Peasants' Union for Liberation;
- The Youth Union for Liberation;
- The People's Revolutionary Youth Union;
- The Association of Patriotic and Democratic Journalists;
- The Writers' and Artists' Association for Liberation;
- The Vietnamese Nationals of Chinese Origin;
- The South Vietnam Committee for Asian Solidarity;
- The South Vietnam Peace Committee;
- The Saigon-Cholon Peace Committee.

The formation of most of these organisations was reported by *Hanoi Radio* after the foundation of the Front. They appear to have little life independent of the Front and several share the same officials.

In a biography broadcast by Hanoi on April 16, for instance, Nguyen Van Hieu, Secretary-General of the Liberation Front and of the Radical Socialist Party, was also listed as Secretary-General of the South Vietnam Committee for the Defence of World Peace. He was subsequently described in Moscow in July, 1962, as Vice-Chairman of the South Vietnamese Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee and appeared in Budapest in August as Vice-President of the Association of Patriotic and Democratic Journalists.

### PROGRAMME

THE Front's Policy Statement was broadcast from Hanoi on April 13, 1962. It followed the programme for South Vietnam laid down by the Third Congress of the *Lao Dong* Party in North Vietnam in September, 1960, calling for the overthrow of President Ngô Đình Diem and the formation of a "broad national democratic administration in South Vietnam". The Front promised, if such an administration came to power, to:

- (i) release all political prisoners unconditionally;
- (ii) guarantee freedom to all mass organisations and parties;
- (iii) carry out freedom of opinion and the Press;
- (iv) abrogate the constitution and dissolve the National Assembly;
- (v) hold elections for a new Assembly with a "democratic spirit" which would decide on the nature and form of the régime;
- (vi) eliminate the American trade monopoly and accept economic and technical aid from all countries;
- (vii) learn from the culture of all countries, regardless of political régime;
- (viii) secure a policy of neutrality by opening diplomatic relations with all countries (in conformity with the Bandung Principles), avoiding a military alliance with any country;
- (ix) advance peaceful reunification.

To achieve these aims, the Front undertook to unite people of "all strata, classes, nationalities, political parties, mass organisations, religious communities and patriotic personalities in South Vietnam". All they need in common is to be "against the US imperialists and their henchmen". The fuller Declaration of the Congress published in Hanoi in June, 1962, expanded the Front's appeal for support even further:

"Congress highly values joint action between the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation and all organisations and individuals of goodwill outside its ranks against the US imperialist aggressors and war provocateurs, against the US dominated dictatorial régime of the traitorous Ngo Dinh Diem clique".

### PERSONALITIES

THE composition of the Central Committee, said to have been elected during the Congress, reflects the Communists' desire to put forward the Front as representative of all sections of the population, with a heavy bias towards intellectuals, the middle classes and religious

groups. According to *Nhan Dan* of April 13 the Committee is composed of:

**President:** Nguyen Huu Tho (lawyer; former Vice-President of the Saigon-Cholon Peace Movement; in prison 1955-61);

**Vice-**

**Presidents:** Vo Chi Cong (People's Revolutionary Party); Dr. Phung Van Cung (Chairman, South Vietnam Peace Committee);

Huynh Tan Phat (Secretary-General, South Vietnam Democratic Party);

Venerable Sop Vong (Khmer Buddhist leader);

Ibhi A Le O (Ede Protestant);

**Vacancies:** three.

**Secretary-**

**General:** Professor Nguyen Van Hieu (Secretary-General of Radical Socialist Party);

**Members:** Tran Huu Trang (Playwright);

Joseph Mary Ho Hue Ba (Patriotic Catholic);

Thich Thien Hao (Buddhist monk);

Huynh Cuong (Cambodian intellectual);

Nguyen Van Ngoi (leader of Tien-thien sect of Cao Dai);

Nguyen Ngoc Thuong (Professor);

Tran Buu Kiem (Student leader);

**Others:** 17, including "six famous bourgeois and intellectual leaders" who cannot be

named because they are "in action in the big cities";

**Vacancies:** 21.

The Saigon *Dan Viet* of April 14 also listed Tich Thien Ngoc, Ung Ngoc Ky and Mau Thi Chu as members of the Central Committee.

The biographies of a few of these figures broadcast from Hanoi on April 16 were mainly confined to lists of the organisations of which they were or had been members and gave little indication of their background. The existence of some can, however, be independently established. Nguyen Van Hieu was a schoolmaster in Gia Dinh and worked in Saigon as a journalist. His wife, Ma Thi Chu, kept a

pharmacy in Can Tho. Tran Huu Trang was known as a playwright in Saigon. Dr. Phung Van Cung was medical officer at Chau Doc hospital. Ibih A Le O was known as a French-speaking radical and Joseph Mary Ho Hue Ba had a record of political activity in Ben Tre. Nguyen Huu Tho was known as an unsuccessful lawyer. It is likely that such identifiable figures are Southerners whom the Communists have been able to attract to the Front after an extensive search and build-up.

### THE FACELESS MEN

SOME of the unnamed members of the Central Committee may be figures who have been mentioned in the Front's propaganda but whose appearance at the moment on an organ claiming national leadership would invite attention to its failure to attract men with any known reputation.

Other names may have been held back because they are too well known, for instance as members or officers of the *Lao Dong* Party. Neither Le Duan, the Party's Secretary (who has connections with the South) nor General Vo Nguyen Giap appeared at functions in Hanoi at the end of February during a Soviet Party delegation's visit (when the Front's Congress was held). A North Vietnamese delegate to the Geneva Conference on Laos was reported in the London *Sunday Telegraph* of July 27 to have disclosed that four unlisted members of the *Lao Dong's* Central Committee were in fact running the Liberation Front in the South.

The Communists would not, of course want too many of their number to appear on the Central Committee even in the guise of members of the Revolutionary Party. They may emerge later as unnamed members or to fill vacancies. They may be the backbone of the Central Committee's Standing Committee which appears to take most executive decisions and on which Communists may be already in a majority.

It was curious that the Front did not publish the name of Huynh Van Tam in the original Central Committee list. He was widely publicised as the Front's first representative abroad when he visited the USSR and China at the beginning of 1962 and membership was ascribed to him on

October 29 by the *New China News Agency* in a report of his arrival in Algeria during National Day celebrations. Such a name is unknown in South Vietnam, even in Labour circles whom he claims to represent. There was speculation when Tam was in Moscow and Peking that he was in fact a Northern "trade union" official.

Other vacancies on the Front's Committee may be kept open for non-Communists. It would be very useful to offer a Vice-Presidency to a well-known leader in exile or to a political figure in the South with places on the Committee for some of his followers. The publicity Hanoi gave to the Press conference at Geneva on July 23 by Tran Van Huu indicates the way the Communists would like things to go. As it stands the Committee scarcely seems of sufficient calibre to offer leadership on the national scale.

### THE WAITING GAME

IT may be for this reason that the Committee hesitates to declare itself as a rival government. It might wait to do so until some of the vacancies are filled or it might offer itself as an ally to another group which, through a *coup d'état* or simply by issuing a popular manifesto, commanded some power or following. As the Front's *Declaration* said:

"Regarding the army units and officials of the administration of South Vietnam who rise up in mutiny or to attempt *coup d'état* directed against the US imperialists and their faithful agents, the Front for Liberation will give them active support and be ready to help them continue the struggle . . ."

It may be significant that when Ho Chi Minh set up a Vietnamese Provisional Government in China in March, 1944, the Viet Minh (already a fairly wide "front") held only a minority of posts. The Viet Minh on paper merely participated in the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam set up after the "August Revolution" in 1945. Although in Laos the NLHS could claim a figure as well-known as Prince Souphanouvong among its leaders, it did not demand to form a government exclusively. It only pressed for inclusion in a provisional government dedicated

to broadly defined aims. Meanwhile, it went on building up its local, military and international position.

The Communists are no doubt ready, if they think circumstances demand it, either to declare as provisional Prime Minister Nguyen Huu Tho (whose character is colourless enough for stronger personalities to work under) or to offer support to someone else willing to set up a provisional government. Meanwhile, to increase their bargaining and other powers, they are consolidating their local committees and armed forces and trying to increase their international standing. Since the Congress Communist propaganda has tended to demonstrate and exaggerate the extent of the Front's administrative and military organisation in the South rather than to conceal it as in the past. It has particularly exploited foreigners captured by the Vietcong so as to secure publicity abroad.

#### ADMINISTRATION AND FORCES

ONE of the first open references to a "liberated area" was contained in a broadcast by the *Liberation Radio* on May 27. It said that the Tay Ninh provincial Liberation Front Committee had arrested a German businessman who had entered the "area" under its control without authorisation. A communiqué from the Eastern Committee (reproduced by the *North Vietnamese News Agency*, on March 19) announced the release of a Japanese and a Filipino "prisoner of war" captured by the "People's Armed Forces" attached to it. Although the Vietcong claim to have shadow administrative committees down at least to district and village level in some areas (issuing orders, collecting taxes, and inspiring demonstrations) they do not yet seem to have organised "regional" committees throughout the country at an intermediary level between the national and provincial committees. The Front's *Declaration* said the following "regional" committees were represented at the Congress: Saigon-Cholon—Gia Dinh; Eastern Nam Bo (South Vietnam proper);

Central Nam Bo (South Vietnam proper); Western Nam Bo (South Vietnam proper); Movement for national autonomy in the Western High Plateau.

It is significant, however, that only delegates of the various provincial Committees of the Front for the Southern Trung Bo (South Central Vietnam) were said to be present. The Vietcong seem to have hastened to produce a national committee for propaganda purposes before building up complete regional organisations.

An open reference on May 1 to "Liberation Troops" at the National Committee's disposal may have been made deliberately to demonstrate that the Front now runs three types of armed forces: regular, regional and guerrilla.

Since this is principally a study of the Front's political manoeuvres and aims, it is no place to discuss the Vietcong's military organisation. It should not be forgotten, however, that the Front's position depends on armed force. Nowhere have the Communists yet taken over without military conquest. The "united front" technique has so far never been successful without the use or threat of force to bring a Communist régime into power. As Giap says in his book *People's War, People's Army*:

"If insurrection is said to be an art, the main content of this art is . . . to maintain the correct relations between the forms of political struggle and those of armed struggle . . . we went forward to the time when the armed struggle occupied the key role". (p. 76).

The source of the "armed struggle" in the South today was investigated by the International Control Commission whose *Report to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference on Indo-China* was issued in London in a *White Paper* in June, 1962. The Indian and Canadian majority reported:

the Committee has come to the conclusion that in specific instances there is evidence to show that armed and unarmed personnel, arms, munitions, and other supplies have been sent from the Zone in the North to the Zone in the South with the object of supporting, organising, and carrying out hostile activities, including armed attacks, directed against the Armed Forces and Administration of the Zone in the South. These acts are in violation of

Articles 10, 19, 24, and 27 of the *Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam*.

"... the Committee has come to the further conclusion that there is evidence to show that the PAVN [People's Army of Vietnam, i.e., the North's regular army] has allowed the Zone in the North to be used for inciting, encouraging, and supporting hostile activities in the Zone in the South, aimed at the overthrow of the Administration in the South. The use of the Zone in the North for such activities is in violation of Articles 19, 24, and 27 of the *Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam*".

#### LINKS WITH THE COMMUNIST BLOC

**I**NTERNATIONALLY the Communists are publicising the Front inside the Communist bloc, among the uncommitted countries and in the West. As the *Liberation Radio* said on April 10, "The central committee of the Front is clearly the deserving representative of the Southern people on the international stage".

Despite all its pretensions to neutrality, the Front has never in fact concealed its adherence to the Communist bloc. The People's Revolutionary Party is not the only constituent party of the Front to refer to "the system of powerful Socialist countries with the Soviet Union as its centre". Even the "Socialist Radicals" and "Democrats" drew on the same language of the Declaration of 81 Communist Parties in Moscow in December, 1960, and the Programme of the 22nd Soviet Party Congress when drafting their manifestoes in South Vietnam. According to the Front's *Declaration*:

"The Socialist camp... with the Soviet Union at its centre... is the principal opponent of the aggressive bellicose colonialist forces. The existence and growth of the Socialist forces are... most beneficial to the movement for national liberation..." (p. 8).

Immediately after insisting on the need for the Communist Party to dominate the Front, Giap went on to define the Front's relationship to international Communism:

"If the Vietnamese people's War of Liberation ended in glorious victory, it is because we did not fight alone, but with the support of progressive peoples the world over and more especially the peoples of the brother countries with the Soviet Union at the head. The victory of the Vietnamese people cannot be divided from this support..." (p. 36).

Huynh Van Tam's visits to Moscow and Peking at the beginning of 1962 were followed by a delegation of the Front to "friendly countries" headed by Nguyen Van Hieu. It started its journey in Prague at the end of June, but by the time the tour came to an end in November every country it visited (with the exception of Indonesia) belonged to the Communist bloc: Czechoslovakia, USSR, Poland, Hungary, China, North Vietnam and North Korea.

Russia, China and the Communist satellites will find it increasingly convenient to have a definite organisation rather than a nebulous movement not only to refer to in their propaganda about the strength of the opposition to President Diem, but also through which to channel actual aid, should they wish to involve themselves further in South Vietnam without being directly committed. While supplies, let alone volunteers, could hardly go to villages or "former resistance members" spontaneously defending themselves against "US-Diem" forces, they could be offered to the Front not by the governments but by the "people" of the Communist bloc, or even by a "world-wide" Communist "front" organisation. It is notable that Tam was the guest of "trade unions" rather than directly governmental bodies when he made his visits to Moscow and even Peking. Hieu and his party went to Moscow not at the invitation of the Soviet government but of the World Peace Council. In all the countries they visited, their main relations were with "Front" organisations.

The first indication that the Front might openly seek supplies from outside was contained in an appeal broadcast by VNA on March 21:

"The South Vietnamese people will call for full assistance, material assistance included, from the people throughout Vietnam, Asia, Africa and Latin America and from friends of peace and justice all over the world".

This threat was sharpened in the Front's *Declaration*: "In case of necessity, the people of South Vietnam and the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation will use their legitimate and effective right to appeal to the people and government of North Vietnam, to peace and democracy-loving peoples and governments the world over, irrespective of political system, requesting that active support, including material and manpower support, be afforded to the just struggle of the people of South Vietnam". (p. 30).

Nevertheless, a good deal of this propaganda might be designed to exaggerate the degree of outside support in order to raise Vietcong morale and undermine resistance to the Vietcong.

#### RELATIONS WITH UNALIGNED STATES

THE appeal of March 21 reflected the Front's concern with uncommitted countries. Scarcely a day passes without VNA reporting several instances of the Front's propaganda among neutral nations, either directly or through such organisations as the South Vietnamese branch of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee (which was formed in December, 1961). All three members of the delegation headed by Hieu were described as members of this branch when they set out to tour "friendly countries". The only non-Communist country included was, however, Indonesia. A note from the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, published on October 9, however, pointed out that Hieu had been invited to Djakarta not by the Indonesian Government but merely by the Indonesian Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. Members of the Front have also been reported at other meetings sponsored by branches of the Communist-dominated Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. In October Huynh Van Tam and Ma Thi Chu attended such a conference of lawyers in Conakry and on October 26 the *New China News Agency* announced that Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh had represented the South Vietnam Committee at an economic seminar organised by the Afro-Asian Solidarity

Committee of Ceylon. In August the Front appointed a permanent mission to Havana.

One of Tho's first acts when his appointment as Chairman of the Front was announced was to send a message to Prince Sihanouk. As soon as the Laos coalition government was founded Prince Souvanna Phouma appeared on Tho's mailing list. The messages to Prince Sihanouk and Prince Souvanna Phouma were not surprising in view of the special attention given to relations with Cambodia and Laos in the Front's programme. The Front's *Declaration* makes two precise proposals (pp. 25 and 35) for "a peace and neutrality zone comprising Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam". On July 2 the *South Vietnam Liberation Press Agency* released a memorandum addressed to the members of the Geneva Conference on Laos by Tho which said:

"... the situation in South Vietnam has become a factor that the conference on Laos has to take into consideration, so as to really stabilise the Laotian situation... as proposed in a memorandum from Prince Sihanouk to Ngo Dinh Diem on May 15, 1962... Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam may become a neutral area".

(This interpretation of Prince Sihanouk's message is curious when compared not only with the actual text but also with the statement in *Realités Cambodgiennes* of September 14 that "Cambodia will never lend herself to any manoeuvre tending to link Khmer and South Vietnamese neutralisation.")

#### POLICY TOWARDS THE WEST

ALTHOUGH the Front's propaganda presents the West as a solid bloc to Afro-Asian countries, it employs "splitting" tactics to divide the Western powers from the Vietnamese Government and from each other. An article in *Nhan Dan* of March 14 (which tried to deal with the effect on Communist morale of increased American aid to the Republic of Vietnam) offered the "insoluble contradictions" encountered by the "American imperialists" and their "stooges" as the best guarantee of success. This

suggests that the Front's propaganda about the attitude in the West to its policies is less to secure effective support or even an actual split than to comfort the Vietcong into believing that their activities are widely supported in the outside world and that "peoples" and oppositions are strongly divided from their governments about the situation in Vietnam.

Hanoi widely publicised an interview given by Pham Van Dong, Prime Minister of North Vietnam to *le Monde*. He promised the French special privileges and asked for foreign aid in securing the overthrow of President Diem and his replacement by "a government liberated from US domination, a government which carries out a policy of national independence and respects the people's democratic liberties, in short, a government of broad national unity".

On September 27 *VNA* reported a statement by Nguyen Huu Tho in the French *Combat*:

"We are fully cognisant of the French resident's worry about the safeguarding of their economic and cultural interests in South Vietnam. During the past few years especially, their economic interests suffered seriously because of the 'US aid' policy... Their economic and cultural interests are even more threatened now because of the rising situation of unrest in South Vietnam since the establishment of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam... the NFLSV will respect the lives and property and protect the rightful interests of all those French residents who do not co-operate with the American imperialists and their lackeys in opposing the South Vietnamese people's patriotic movement".

On May 31 *VNA* publicised an appeal to British Labour M.P.'s signed by Nguyen Huu Tho. Communist sources also reproduced for Vietnamese consumption the text of an interview given by Pham Van Dong to the London Communist *Daily Worker*, commending the Front to British public opinion. They, of course, did not reveal the degree to which the *Daily Worker* is discounted in Britain. Frequent statements of support for the Front by Miss Hilda Vernon of the British-Vietnamese Committee are quoted in propaganda, while concealing how unrepresentative this organisation is of British opinion.

In the same way the Front claims that the American "people", as opposed to their Government, deplore the American administration's support of the Vietnamese Government's resistance to Communist interference.

### SETTING THE SNARES

THE known record of the Communists in exploiting the "united front" in East Europe, China, North Vietnam and Laos offers some basis on which to speculate on how the Communists hope to go on in South Vietnam if President Diem is overthrown, American support is reduced and they insinuate themselves into a provisional administration either through their own internal and external pressure or for other reasons. The Front's intentions are particularly worth examination in the light of this record.

The Communists would presumably demand that any provisional administration they joined would carry out points i) to iv) of their programme. This would immediately release a flood of cadres and propaganda to prepare for item v): elections for a new Assembly. If any doubt existed on what the Front meant by "free elections", it was dispelled on October 23 when *VNA* published the following report of a speech made in Hanoi by Nguyen Van Hieu:

"In North Vietnam the constitution was elaborated in a fully democratic way, the National Assembly elected in full freedom, the people are allowed to use full right of election, and the deputies are those who sincerely reflect the people's aspirations and devote themselves to serving the people".

(The North Vietnamese Constitution of 1959 was drafted to bring it into line with the Constitutions of the Communist bloc. The elections held under it in 1960 followed the familiar Communist pattern. Only candidates nominated by the régime were allowed to stand and the Assembly which they joined has met only five times since for a few days to rubber-stamp decisions handed down by the *Lao Dong* Party.)

In the elections envisaged by the Liberation Front for South Vietnam, all the component organisations listed above in Chapter III would presumably produce their Central

Committees and election candidates. No doubt some would be Communists. It would probably be argued, however, that they reflected too bourgeois an outlook. Places in the new Assembly would also have to be allocated to representative workers and peasants for their part in the "liberation struggle". Some would have been members all along of the People's Revolutionary Party. Some would naturally join this Party of the workers. Others might stand independently.

People not directly connected with the Front in the past might be allowed to stand, provided they satisfied a scrutinising committee that they had not supported the previous régime, or that, if they had, they now repented. The election of a few might give the Assembly a wider appearance and not many people could get elected against the will of the Front in areas where its administration and military organisation were strong.

The new Assembly would presumably ratify any steps already taken to execute items vi) vii) and viii): introduction of Russian, East German and Chinese economic, cultural and diplomatic representatives, and proceed further in the same direction. The Front's *Declaration* makes clear that it distinguishes sharply between the type of neutrality which would leave a country free to decide its own policy and the kind it demands for South Vietnam. Whereas:

"... The imperialists and their agents pay lip service to the policy of peace and neutrality ... with the aim of carrying out their policy of neo-colonialism ... the policy of peace and neutrality worked out by the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation ... will never be subject to the influence of any imperialist or colonialist clique".

(p. 24).

Neutrality by this definition means being irretrievably committed to the Sino-Soviet bloc if not yet a member.

### REUNIFICATION POSTPONED

**T**HE programme significantly leaves the question of reunification until last. Attempts to avoid the issue are understandable in view of the conflict between the Front's "neutral" propaganda and proposals for a neutral zone on the

one hand and the Communists' reluctance to admit responsibility for keeping Vietnam divided on the other. The Communists refusal ever to see a Communist-controlled territory go neutral makes it impossible to resolve the conflict by offering to neutralise the North. It is much sounder from the Communist standpoint to keep brothers divided until they can all be brought under Communism. As the Hanoi *Doc Lap* of March 16 reported:

"The National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam has explained to the Southern people the task of directly struggling to overthrow the American-Diemist fascist and dictatorial machine, liberate the South, establish a national and democratic Government ... Only when the people of South Vietnam have carried out the above aim, will they be able to effect peaceful national reunification".

The Front's *Declaration* also envisages some delay:

"The reunification of the Fatherland will be solved step by step on the basis of the aspirations and interests of all sections of the people of South Vietnam as well as the people of North Vietnam, on the principles of freedom and democracy, negotiations and agreement between the two sides ... our country is still temporarily divided into two zones, and ... basic differences have arisen in the social and economic character of each zone".

Since the North will not modify its economic, social and political systems (geared to the Sino-Soviet machine), reunification must wait until the South has a régime resembling the Sino-Soviet system more strongly. Once a "genuinely" neutral coalition Government had been set up in the South, steps towards reunification might take the direction of exchange of delegations so that both sides could learn more of conditions in the two zones. The Fatherland "Front" in the North (being revived now under Xuan Thuy, Truong Chinh's right-hand man) might send its members down to tell the South about the North. The Liberation Front could send its committee members to the North to confirm this version.

A further step might be the appointment of a kind of federal coalition in which both North and South would be represented. As a concession, the North might contribute

not only members of the *Lao Dong* Party as such (they would naturally include Ho Chi Minh, Truong Chinh and Pham Van Dong) but some members of the *Lao Dong* Party in their capacity as officials of the Fatherland Front, such as Xuan Thuy and some of the puppet "non-Communists" in the DRV leadership to-day such as Duong Duc Hien, Hoang Minh Giam, Phan Anh, Nghiem Xuan Yem and Phan Ke Toai. The South might be represented by direct members of the People's Revolutionary Party such as Vo Chi Cong, and other Communists presented in another capacity. Some members of the *Lao Dong* Party such as Le Duan standing for Southern constituencies in the Hanoi Assembly to-day might be squeezed in. "Non-Communist" heroes of the Liberation Front such as Nguyen Huu Tho and Nguyen Van Hieu would, of course, have to be included. To broaden the coalition appearance one or two exiles who had been out of touch with politics, power and followers for years might also be given places with some politicians in "opposition" to-day and, of course, any Southern leader thrown up by a possible *coup d'etat*. There is no doubt how much weight they could muster if they tried to resist any Communist programme for finally "merging" the two zones. None of the liberal measures which the Front's programme claims to champion would survive such a merger with North Vietnam, whose prisons, press, parties and parliament are dedicated to the preservation and extension of Communism.

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