



**WHO ARE THE  
VIET  
CONG**



Michael  
Hannon  
1970



FRONT COVER: 1. guerrillas train in Hanoi; 2. suspected Viet Cong led to interrogation; 3. North Vietnamese Army regulars captured in South; 4. Communist Viet Cong soldiers in temporary prison compound.

# WHO ARE THE VIET CONG

# ?

## CONTENTS

PART ONE: Patriots or Puppets? **3** How They Began **3** Emergence of the Guerrillas **4** Terror in the Countryside **9**

PART TWO: Hanoi Speaks Out **15** The 'Front' **16** Party of the 'People' **20**

PART THREE: 'War of Liberation' **25** The Puppeteers **30**

PART FOUR: The Hidden Government **33** The Viet Cong and the People **37**



Republic of Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky.  
Below: North Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh, float glorifying  
his friendship with Communist China's Mao Tse-tung.



## PART ONE

### PATRIOTS OR PUPPETS?

Who are the Viet Cong?

Hanoi and its allies in Peking and Moscow claim the Viet Cong are South Vietnamese patriots who seek to overthrow the Saigon government through a "war of national liberation."

Saigon and its allies in Washington and other world capitals say the Viet Cong are Hanoi's puppets—part of North Vietnam's machinery for conquering South Vietnam by subversion, terror and warfare.

Between these two extremes is a third view—that the Viet Cong represent just one of the factions involved in a complex civil war situation.

Which of these viewpoints is correct?

The answer to this question can only be obtained through an examination of the accumulated evidence.

### HOW THEY BEGAN

The South Vietnamese call the guerrilla forces operating in their country Vietnam Cong San or Viet Cong for short, meaning "Vietnamese Communist." North Vietnam refers to them as "liberation troops."

By either name the original guerrillas were soldiers of the Viet Minh. That was the name of the national front group created during World War Two and led by Ho Chi Minh, founder

of the Indochinese Communist Party. Few Vietnamese were then aware that "Ho Chi Minh" was an alias assumed in 1943 to conceal the true identity of the communist leader Nguyen Van Thanh—or that the government he proclaimed in the north in 1945 at the end of the war was dominated by his party.

Ho and the Viet Minh led the 1946-54 Indochina war against French rule. This war was supported by Vietnamese of nearly all political persuasions because it was hailed as a fight to end their century-old colonial status. During these years the communist leadership of the Viet Minh front (later the Lien Viet) became more open. But even the non- or anti-communist majority supported the Viet Minh, for to oppose this group was in effect to be pro-French.

The Geneva Agreements of 1954 ended the Indochinese war. Independence was achieved for all Vietnam, and Laos and Cambodia as well. Vietnam was partitioned at the 17th parallel pending reunification elections to be held in mid-1956. The Ho Chi Minh regime, by force of arms, ruled the north from Hanoi. The former Associated State of Vietnam, granted self-government within the French Union in 1949, governed the southern zone from Saigon as the State of Vietnam under an agreement concluded during the Geneva conference by chief of state Bao Dai and the French.

The Geneva Accords called for the free flow of Vietnamese to any part of the country in which they desired to live. Between 900,000 and 1,000,000 Vietnamese elected to leave their homes and lands in the north and go to the southern zone; an estimated 400,000 more were prevented from leaving, chiefly those living in areas to which the Hanoi government refused to admit teams of the International Control Commission, supervisory body of the Geneva conference. Between 80,000 and 100,000 persons in the south chose to move north.

The agreements also provided for the withdrawal of all contesting military forces to the appropriate side of the 17th parallel.

Not all of the troops complied with this provision, and it was here that the trouble began.

## EMERGENCE OF THE GUERRILLAS

After the 1954 agreements France's military forces pulled out of Vietnam entirely. The majority of the Viet Minh troops loyal



Villagers flee before Viet Minh forces. Below: After Dien Bien Phu, victorious Viet Minh representative takes over from French commander.





1954: Opening session of the Geneva Conference.  
1955: Saigon celebrates proclamation of Republic.



to Hanoi moved north. But according to the South Vietnamese government, the Viet Minh left behind several thousand hard-core communist agents who buried arms, ammunition and radio equipment and immediately set about organizing what was to be known as the Viet Cong. (Saigon was later to report to the International Control Commission that 3,561 caches of communist arms were discovered in South Vietnam between 1954 and 1959.)

Positive identification of these "Viet Minh/Viet Cong" has never been made. Proof is lacking that this vanguard of the guerrillas was either predominantly southern or northern. Although the point concerning origin has been much argued it is essentially irrelevant. A number of Hanoi's top officials have been southerners and vice versa (Nguyen Cao Ky, commander of South Vietnam's air force and later premier, was born near Hanoi; North Vietnam's premier Pham Van Dong was born in Quang Ngai province, well south of the 17th parallel). The all-important point setting the original guerrillas apart was their ideological affiliation.

At any rate, the guerrillas in South Vietnam emerged in 1957 abruptly and brutally. Village chiefs were machine-gunned and butchered by the score. The pattern of these killings ("assassinations in cadence" as Saigon was later to characterize them) was not immediately apparent, for various political sects and bandit groups were still active in the countryside.

A frequently raised question is: why did the guerrillas lie in wait for more than two years after the Geneva Accords before opening their attack?

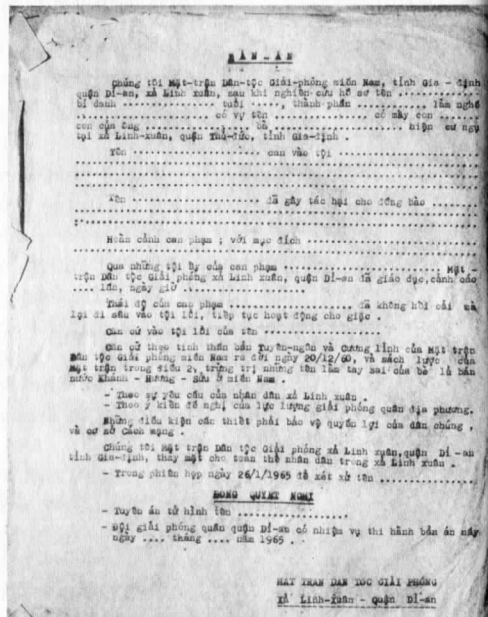
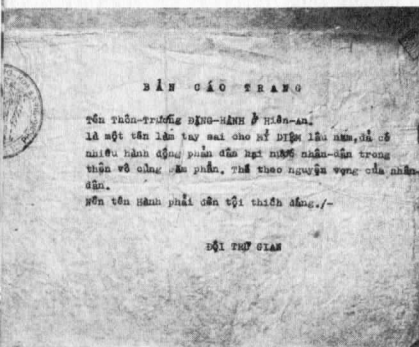
The complexity of the post-Geneva situation in South Vietnam, of course, precludes a simple answer to this question.

One of the explanations that have been offered is that the guerrilla forces devoted much of the 1954-1956 period to planning their future activities and working out the details of their organizational structure. Other delaying factors were President Diem's political successes in these early years and his effective counter-measures against the rebel apparatus. In any case, it was not until opposition to Diem's methods began to develop that the guerrillas were able to take the offensive.

Another and more generally accepted explanation is that, with the passing of the mid-1956 deadline for reunification elections proposed in the Geneva Accords, Hanoi's hopes for a peaceful take-over of South Vietnam had to be abandoned. Saigon had refused to subscribe to an election in which the more populous North would "deliver" a solid communist vote. Moreover even



South Vietnamese farmers carry their rice crop from the fields.



"Death warrant" (above) issued by Viet Cong Anti-crime Squad justified the murder of Hamlet Chief Dang-Hanh. Viet Cong have blank form (right) used as death warrant for assassinations.

at Geneva the North Vietnamese communists did not believe that the Saigon government actually would submit to such an election.

What Hanoi really was counting upon was the collapse of the new republic to the south, for the economic and political problems it faced were so great that even Saigon's friends expected a disaster within a period of months. Hanoi was confident that only a minimum amount of subversion on its part would bring Saigon to this end.

But surprisingly, South Vietnam achieved a degree of political stability in 1955 and 1956 and made steady economic progress. Its Mekong "rice bowl" brimmed with food desperately needed in the North. Meanwhile North Vietnam was limping forward industrially; its authoritarian agricultural program produced a calamity. During the "land reform" and "rent reduction" campaign of 1954-56 in the North, the communists had killed an estimated 100,000 people. Then in late 1956, in the province of Nghe-An, a massive peasant uprising required an entire army division to suppress; thousands of farmers were slain or imprisoned. The Hanoi regime was badly shaken. To make peace with the people, Ho Chi Minh removed from office the minister of agriculture and the secretary general of the North Vietnamese Communist Workers Party (Lao Dong).

In short, by 1957, Hanoi was growing weaker and the Saigon government stronger. Something had to be done to realize Ho's goal of bringing the south—and its rice-rich Mekong delta—under communist rule. Therefore, Ho gave the signal to the Viet Cong underground to launch the opening stage of a war against South Vietnam.

## TERROR IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The guerrillas' claims of patriotism were weakened in 1957-58 when they began killing, maiming and kidnaping increasing numbers of South Vietnamese. Then, in 1959, what remained of the "liberation" illusion disintegrated further as they opened an accelerated, highly coordinated attack and pressed their campaign of terror throughout the countryside.

By 1962 the weekly number of terrorist acts averaged 171; in 1963 the average was 188 per week; and in 1964 it was 376.

In 1964, according to one compilation, 436 South Vietnamese



Viet Cong victims: In Saigon (above), huge bomb explodes near U.S. Embassy, kills or injures 160 Vietnamese and Americans; on the highway (left), mines blast buses and kill 54 civilians en route to harvest area; in a village (right), children are killed by Viet Cong terrorists who attacked Dong Xoai.



officials and 1,359 civilians were killed, and 1,131 officials and 8,423 civilians were kidnaped. Total: 11,349.

The chiefs of villages and hamlets were the prime targets, but anyone representing the central government—policemen, school teachers, medical workers, agricultural specialists—was a potential victim of the guerrillas. Peasants, too, suffered heavily when they refused to cooperate with the guerrillas or spoke and acted in any way displeasing to them.

Here are examples of the things the terrorists did, and have continued to do:

—Ngo Tuong, mayor of the prosperous village of Ap Quang Nam, was attending a Buddhist prayer meeting at his aunt's house when two terrorists burst in and opened fire. The two officiating priests and the aunt were killed instantly and the mayor wounded. He was riddled with bullets as he staggered from the house.

—In Phu Yen province, during the rice harvest, two terrorist mines exploded under a civilian bus, killing 54 farm workers.

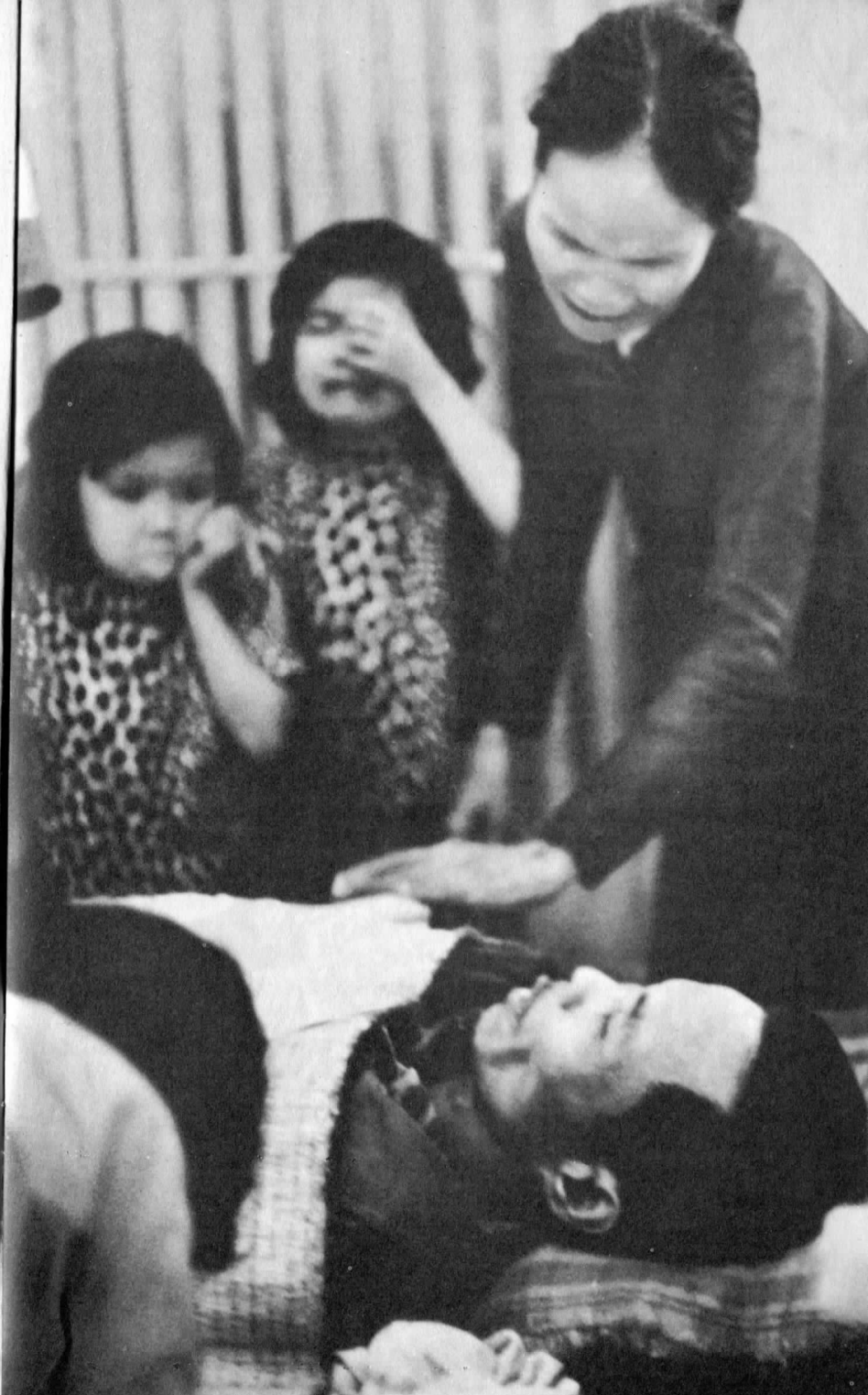
—Terrorists publicly disembowled a district leader at Kien Long, broke the arms and legs of his wife and child, then killed all three.

—Mrs. Ly Thi Nuoi of Than Phy hamlet was sleeping in her home when she was awakened by terrorists. They beat her, then shot her in the forehead. She herself had done nothing to harm the terrorists, but one of her brothers was a sergeant in the South Vietnamese army and a second brother was deputy police chief in a nearby village.

—In Haunghia province, on the road between Baotrai and Cuchi, a three-wheel motorscooter bus hit a pressure mine. Four men, four women and three children aboard were killed. (Residents of nearby Duclap hamlet staged a protest demonstration against the terrorist road-mining squad.)

—Terrorists entered the sleeping quarters of men and women workers building an irrigation and transportation canal in Dinh Tuong province. The gunmen murdered 23 of the sleeping, unarmed workers and wounded seven.

Acts such as these have been repeated literally thousands and thousands of times in South Vietnam since 1957. Many of these acts appear to be committed with senseless cruelty—senseless, that is, when judged by any standards other than those of the terrorists and their leaders. The identity of those leaders is central to the meaning of terrorism in South Vietnam and to the nature of the whole conflict there.



Family weeps over Ngo Tuong, chief of Ap Quang Nam, killed by Viet Cong while at prayer.



Uniformed North Vietnamese students parade in Hanoi. Below: South Vietnam police find communist weapons and flags cached in 1954.



## PART TWO

### HANOI SPEAKS OUT

Until 1959 Communist North Vietnam appeared to stand aloof from the guerrilla warfare in South Vietnam. Then in July of that year, the Belgian Communist Party journal *Red Flag* published an article by Hanoi's President Ho Chi Minh containing the following statement:

"We are building socialism in Vietnam, but we are building it only in one part of the country, while in the other part *we still have to direct and bring to a close* the middle-class democratic and anti-imperialist revolution." (emphasis added)

The government of South Vietnam regarded Ho's statement as at least a partial admission that the guerrilla terrorists were communists aided by Hanoi. Further, it was viewed as an outright declaration that the Hanoi regime was taking full charge of an accelerated war against the South.

As noted before, there was a sharp step-up in guerrilla activity in 1959. In 1960 the guerrillas assassinated at least 1,400 local government officials and other civilians and kidnaped 700 while killing some 2,200 military and security personnel.

This wave of terror was not the work, alone, of the several thousand ex-Viet Minh who had gone underground after the

Geneva Agreements. That original force had been augmented by a stream of infiltrators trained and equipped in North Vietnam. As was shown in evidence later presented by the South Vietnamese government to the International Control Commission, this stream of infiltrators soon grew to a torrent. In the two-year period 1959-60, Hanoi sent an estimated 4,500 specially trained guerrilla troops into South Vietnam. More than 6,200 followed in 1961. Infiltration was greatly aided by recent territorial gains of communist guerrillas in neighboring Laos, who thus opened up new routes from North Vietnam into South Vietnam.

(On the question of "escalation," which was to become an important issue later, it should be noted that while Hanoi was pouring troops into the South, the United States announced on May 5, 1960, that at the request of Saigon the U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group there would be increased by the end of the year from its current 327 members to a total of 685.)

Ho's mid-1959 statement that Hanoi would "direct" the war in the South was followed by one from General Vo Nguyen Giap, the commander of North Vietnam's armed forces. Writing in the January (1960) issue of *Hoc Tap*, organ of the North Vietnamese (communist) Workers Party, Giap declared that "the North has become a large rear echelon of our army" and "the revolutionary base for the whole country."

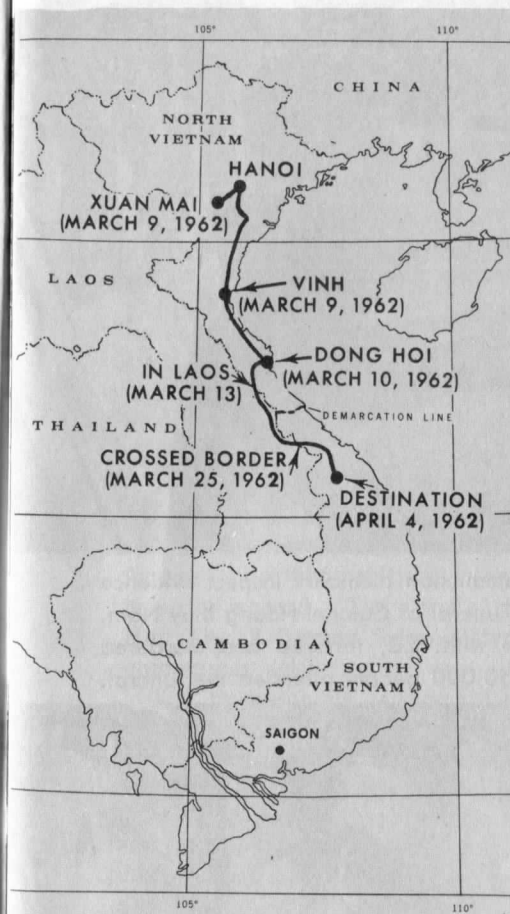
A few months later, the North Vietnamese party held a congress at which South Vietnam was the chief topic. Party Chairman Ho stated that North Vietnam was transforming itself into "a firm base for the struggle for national reunification." Party First Secretary Le Duan declared the chief task ahead was to "liberate the South."

The party congress approved a resolution setting forth Hanoi's two strategic tasks: "... first, to carry out the socialist revolution in North Vietnam; second, to liberate South Vietnam. ..." The resolution underscored the fact that "these two strategic tasks are closely related to each other."

The date was September 10, 1960.

## THE "FRONT"

The "National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam" reportedly was formed December 20, 1960, at an undisclosed site



Infiltration from the North: Map shows the route of Huynh Duc Tha, deputy commander of Viet Cong company; he came to South Vietnam in 1962, surrendered to Government forces in July 1963. Below: Passports issued by Hanoi to Nguyen Van Tien (left) and Huynh Van Nghia, officials of the "National Liberation Front of South Vietnam."





Above: International Control Commission members inspect evidence of Vung Ro arms cache. Below: Funeral of Colonel Hoang thuy Nam, chief Vietnamese liaison officer with ICC, tortured and murdered by the Viet Cong. More than 150,000 people attended the funeral.



south of the 17th parallel. As the political organization of the guerrilla forces in the South, its objective was said to be the "peaceful reunification of the country." This was to be achieved under a "broad national democratic coalition administration" after the defeat of the South Vietnamese army.

There were several curious aspects about this development. First, it was announced only by Hanoi radio and the announcement was not made until January 29, 1961, giving rise to the suspicion that the Hanoi regime was trying to screen its relationship to the front with an excessive display of casualness. Second, though it might be expected that an announcement of such an organization would include the names of its leaders and pertinent biographical information about them, no names were mentioned. Not until April 1962 did Hanoi disclose the identity of any of the front's alleged leaders, and then only 31 names were listed for the 52 seats on the group's central committee. None of the leaders was a person of stature or reputation in South Vietnam—nor were any of them nationally prominent figures who had criticized or opposed President Diem, at home or abroad. The front's chairman was named as Nguyen Huu Tho, a former Saigon lawyer with a long history of pro-communist activities.

The questionable nature of the front's leadership deepened when news dispatches from Geneva quoted a North Vietnamese delegate to the 1962 conference on Laos as saying that several members of the front's central committee also were members of Hanoi's Workers Party, the name given by North Vietnam to its communist organization.

Communist spokesmen, however, contended that the front represented a wide cross-section of South Vietnamese society, and from time to time Hanoi or its new "Liberation Radio" announced that another group had joined. The front also claimed to represent various associations of teachers, trade union workers and intellectuals. Among them were the "Patriotic and Peace-Loving Boys and Girls Group," the "Association of the Families of Patriotic Soldiers," the "Committee for Solidarity With the Latin American People," and the "Group of Soldiers Who Have Returned to the People."

Two political parties were attached to the front, the "Radical Socialist Party" and the "Democratic Party," names almost identical to the two parties (other than the ruling Communist or Workers Party) permitted to exist in the North as part of the "Fatherland Front."

After a third political party joined the new front for the South the connection between Hanoi and the front and what Saigon called the "Viet Cong" became even clearer.

## PARTY OF THE "PEOPLE"

A year after the front for the South was organized, it was joined by a new political party called the "People's Revolutionary Party" (PRP). This party came formally into existence on January 1, 1962, according to a Hanoi announcement made three weeks later. But again, as had been the case with the original front, neither its founders nor its leaders were named.

Hanoi said the decision to form the PRP was made by a "conference of representatives of Marxist-Leninists" held December 19, 1961, at an undisclosed site in South Vietnam. The announcement said the PRP was a lineal descendant of the Indochinese Communist Party organized by Ho Chi Minh in 1930. But the PRP's relationship to the North Vietnamese Communist Workers Party was not mentioned.

The explanation for the apparent existence of two communist parties in Vietnam was contained in captured guerrilla circulars which South Vietnam submitted to the International Control Commission on May 30, 1962. Guerrilla cadres were told secretly that the PRP was "nothing but the Lao Dong (Workers) Party of Vietnam, unified from north to south under the direction of the central executive committee of the party."

The ICC's legal committee later concluded that "it is the aim of the Vietnam Lao Dong Party to bring about the overthrow of the Administration in the South." To this end, the front "was, in fact, constituted under the sponsorship of the Lao Dong Party. There are present and functioning in the Zone in the South, branches of the Vietnam Lao Dong Party and the Front for the Liberation of the South along with its armed branches. . . ." The "armed branches" were the guerrilla terrorists whom the Saigon government had branded "Viet Cong"—Vietnamese Communists.

PRP cadres were issued a training manual in 1963 which instructed them to "work through the NLF to achieve the liberation, neutralization and unification of Vietnam through the establishment of a democratic coalition government."

An early 1965 manual said the PRP was the "vanguard of southern workers dedicated to achieving patriotic, democratic and national revolution in order to introduce socialism and then communism into Vietnam." The manual also said that "communism will be practiced as it is in the Soviet Union. Factories, mines, fields, and all other land will be the common ownership of the people."

While the communist direction of the PRP is explicitly stated in secret party instructions and directives, PRP agents tend to conceal their ideology in dealing with peasants in remote villages and hamlets, and for good reason. For example, to tell the peasants that their lands will one day be collectivized would be fatal to the cause of the party and the front.

Any remaining question as to the role of the PRP—and the source of the armed attacks in the countryside—was answered by an article in the January 1966 issue of *Hoc Tap*, journal of the North Vietnamese Communist (Workers) Party. The article dealt with the PRP and its "historic mission" in the South and began with the proposition that "Vietnam is indivisible." It stated:

"After the re-establishment of peace" (i.e., the 1954 Geneva Agreements), "the partisans of Marxism-Leninism early realized who were the new enemy of the southern people . . . they proudly took to themselves the historic responsibility of standing in the van of enlightened people, mustering all the revolutionary forces, and directing the spearheads of the attacks on these enemies. . . ."

"The partisans of Marxism-Leninism are in fact the soul of the NLFV and the center of the unity of the southern people. . . ."

"The fact that the Vietnam People's Revolutionary Party was born with the historic mission of liberating the South was an objective necessity consistent with the rules of the development of the southern society and with the objective tendency of the present revolutionary movement in the world. . . ."

"The Vietnam People's Revolutionary Party is actually the vanguard body of the southern revolution. It has shown itself worthy of the confidence of the working class, the peasantry, and other people's strata in the South, worthy of being the inheritor of the former Indochinese Communist Party in carrying out its glorious task."

Significantly, the *Hoc Tap* article classified the fighting in South Vietnam as a "war of liberation." This communist term places in full perspective Hanoi's decade-long campaign against South Vietnam.



Viet Cong terror: Hamlet chief slain (above), and survivors huddled in shock after savage VC attack.



Systematic destruction: Train derailed by VC mine, and aftermath of a terrorist attack on Dong Xoai.





Ho Chi Minh (center) with Chinese adviser at time of Geneva Conference.

## PART THREE

### "WAR OF LIBERATION"

The seedbed for revolution and war is social unrest. The factors which disturb a society often include economic injustice, political instability, ethnic differences and regional rivalries. The individual is bitter about the past, unhappy with the present, and fearful of the future. He wants a change, and he wants it "now."

To exploit social unrest, the communists developed a strategy they called a "war of liberation" or a "people's war." The success of such a war depends upon the communists' use of deception, especially in the beginning—to make sure that few people are aware that the war has one goal and one goal only: the ultimate establishment of a communist state.

Originated by the Russian revolutionist Lenin, this politico-military strategy was adapted by the Chinese Communist leader Mao Tse-tung for the conquest of Mainland China.

Militarily, Mao's strategy is based upon the concept that a communist minority seeking power should begin its drive by launching and leading a "protracted" war against the government. The minority, being few and weak, must avoid any attempt at a quick victory, for the movement will likely be crushed at the outset by the government's superior forces. The communist party, therefore, must be prepared to fight a long war in three stages.

First, there is the defensive stage, stressing terrorism and guerrilla warfare. Next comes the stalemate stage, the enlarged and better organized guerrilla forces weakening the government side to the point where it loses the strength and the will to dominate the battlefields. Finally, the now powerful guerrilla armies mount an all-out general offensive which is supposed to doom the government.

Underlying the theory of protracted warfare is Mao's formulation that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." The related idea is that "politics commands the gun," which means that the communist party must exercise absolute leadership over the army. Both the party and the army depend upon the people for support and growth. And the best way to bring the people to support the war, according to communist doctrine, is to convince them that they are being "liberated" from an oppressive government.

To unite the people against their government, the communist party must persuade them to join a "national united front" organization. Because the communists almost invariably are a distinct minority in the target country (indeed, they may not even be recognized as communists), the front should ostensibly be composed of various non-communist political parties, as well as of religious, business, professional, trade union, and social groups of all kinds. Some of these organizations may be "paper" ones created by the communists; others may be legitimate groups secretly guided or influenced by communists in their ranks.

While the protracted war is in progress, the communists may not be strong enough to admit openly their true program and policies. To win and keep the broadest possible representation in the front, the communist party is candidly instructed by Mao to make "a series of adjustments" in its program when necessary, even to the point of disavowing communist policies and proclaiming allegiance to non-communist ones. When the war is finally won, however, opposition elements within the front must either cooperate with the communists or be liquidated.

This abbreviated description of the strategy of a "war of liberation" is taken from the highly publicized tract on that subject written by Communist China's Defense Minister Lin Piao and published September 3, 1965. The article was presented as a summation of the theories of Mao Tse-tung, as a "review of the historical experience" of the communist victory on the Mainland, and as a prescription for the "rural" peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Vietnam, said Lin Piao, is "the most convincing current example" of a war of liberation. Or, as the Chinese Communist Party had stated a few months earlier:

"The Vietnam question is the focus of the present international class struggle and is a touchstone of the attitudes of all political forces in the world."

There is one central point that both the Chinese Communists

and their North Vietnamese disciples have chosen not to speak about: that they gained power without the masses of Chinese and Vietnamese people knowing they were communists. Mao and Ho originally gained followings among their people by posing as nationalistic land reformers who were fighting foreign invaders. The peasants, at this stage, had never heard of "Marxism-Leninism," but they later found out what it meant when the land the communists had given them was collectivized.

In Vietnam, as in China, concealment and deception were crucial to the success of Ho and his Indochinese Communist Party in taking control in the North in 1945. "Ho Chi Minh," the alias he had adopted only two years earlier, then was known only as the leader of the Viet Minh front ("League for the Independence of Vietnam"). He and his communist-dominated guerrilla forces won widespread popular support by opposing the colonial French administrators who at that time were still operating under the command of the Japanese army.

When Japan surrendered to the Allies in 1945, Ho and the Viet Minh took over from the withdrawing Japanese troops. Making a triumphal declaration (after scarcely any serious fighting), Ho proclaimed the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" in September, with himself as president. Two months later the Indochinese Communist Party announced it was "dissolving" itself (although admitting years later that it had continued to exist). Ho and his party began neutralizing and then eliminating opposition to their dominance of the new government while negotiating with France for independence. Talks between Hanoi and Paris broke down and the Indochinese war began in late 1946.

To expand the base of popular support, Ho announced in 1951 that the old Viet Minh front was being absorbed into a bigger organization called the Lien Viet ("League for the National Union of Vietnam"). At the same time, the old Indochinese Communist Party which had temporarily organized itself as the "Association for Marxist Studies" was re-surfaced as the Lao Dong (Workers) Party, an avowedly Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party. The leaders of the party, the front and the government all proved to be communists.

Thus, what started as a nationalist anti-colonial war to end French rule and achieve independence was cleverly transformed into a "war of liberation," in which the Vietnamese people thought at first that they were fighting for freedom, not for communism.

It was only after the Geneva conference of 1954, officially

QUÂN ĐỘI NHÂN DÂN  
VIỆT-NAM

VIỆT-NAM DÂN CHỦ CÔNG HOÀ  
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

Số 44

Đơn vị 1220

**GIẤY NGHỈ PHÉP**

24-5-  
9

Họ tên Nguyễn Hùng Long  
Cấp bậc Trung sĩ  
Đơn vị 1220  
Được phép nghỉ từ giờ, ngày 14/4/54  
đến giờ, ngày 25/4/54  
Nơi nghỉ phép Hải Phòng  
Lý do Đã hết  
Được hoặc không giảm 50% tiền đi xe lửa

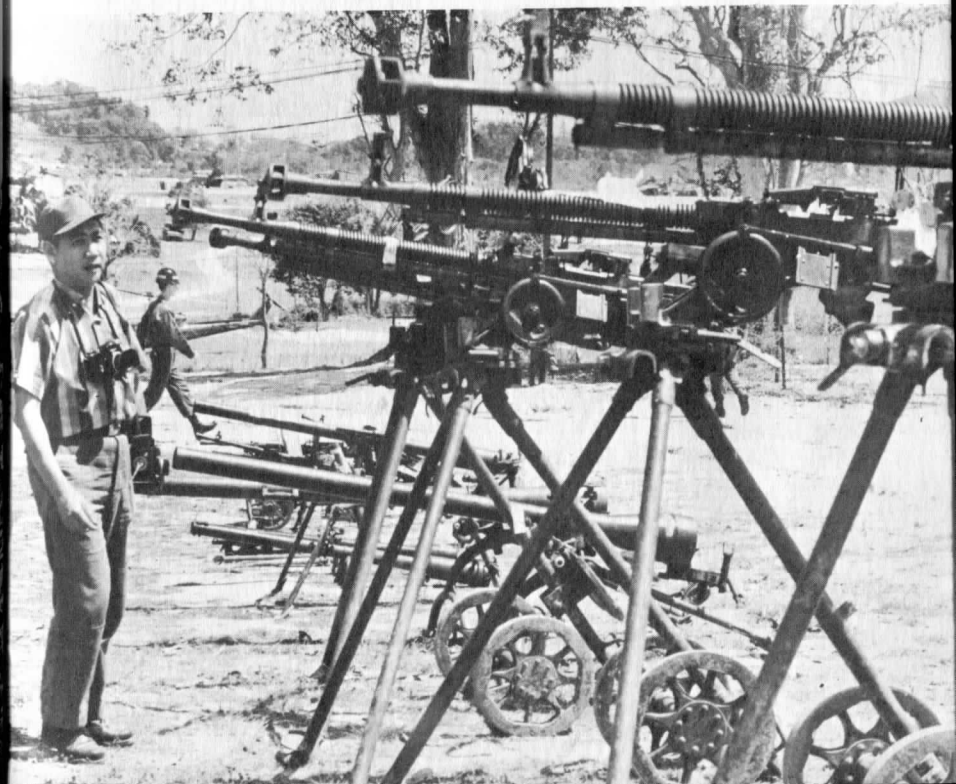
Ngày 18 tháng 9 năm 1964  
thủ trưởng  
Đoàn trưởng Pháo

Chú thích:  
Nơi nghỉ phép, ngày  
\* ngày đi địa phương  
\* ngày thực ở mặt sau.

Leave slip (above) found on body near munitions supply ship sunk in South Vietnam identifies North Vietnamese soldier. Below: Farmer mourns family murdered by VC.



Nguyen Huu Tho (second from left), President of the Front's Central Committee, visits Viet Cong units. Below: Communist Chinese weapons captured from North Vietnamese Army units fighting in the South.



ending the war, that the Hanoi regime gradually dropped its veils and emerged as a communist state.

But Ho's victory was less than total. Vietnam was divided at the 17th parallel, with an anti-communist parliamentary government in Saigon. When the new South Vietnamese nation failed to collapse as the communist North had expected, the "Viet Cong" and another "war of liberation" were born.

## THE PUPPETEERS

It is clear now that Ho Chi Minh planned to conquer South Vietnam by using a puppeteer's apparatus similar to the one he had originally fabricated to seize control of North Vietnam. In place of the Viet Minh and Lien Viet, united front organizations used so effectively in the North, he simply fashioned the "National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam." In place of the Lao Dong Party as the leading element of the front, he created the "People's Revolutionary Party." The party and the front comprised the political and administrative leadership and machinery for the "people's liberation army," the Viet Cong.

How Hanoi conducts its war against South Vietnam is no longer a matter of deduction. The North's war machine has been well diagrammed, though some details are lacking or have not been made public for security reasons. Testimony and documentary evidence have been supplied by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong officers and soldiers, both captive and defectors. Directives, orders, diaries, letters, weapons, and other material found on dead communist troops have been especially informative. Additionally, in late 1965 and early 1966 South Vietnamese and allied troops overran a number of communist headquarters and strongholds in the South and found "literally tons of documents." These "secret" papers confirmed earlier evidence that Hanoi and the PRP were "master-minding" the Viet Cong offensive.

The Viet Cong, the party and the front in the South are all part of a single apparatus controlled from Hanoi. The control lines run from the highest party and governmental levels in Hanoi down to the lowest communist elements in southern villages and hamlets.

The chief puppeteer is, of course, Ho Chi Minh, who is both chairman of the ruling Communist Workers Party central com-

mittee and president of the government. Policy decisions and their execution are channeled through the central committee's "reunification department" and the governmental council of ministers' "reunification commission." Coordinating and directing the policy execution in the South of both units is thought by some observers to be Major General Nguyen Van Vinh, deputy chief of the North Vietnamese army's general staff.

Political directives to the Viet Cong are sent to administrative headquarters of the PRP central committee known as "Central Office/South." This office directs five regions and a Saigon area zone in the South, each with a hierarchy of provincial, district, village and hamlet political committees. Each regional committee has specialized sections responsible for subversive activities, espionage, liaison, and so forth.

Viet Cong military regions correspond to the political regions. The guerrilla army and irregulars take their orders from the PRP and the North Vietnam army regulars are under the direction of Hanoi's defense minister, General Vo Nguyen Giap. In Hanoi at the policy level and all the way down to the various operational levels in the South, the military and political lines of control are synchronized.

The front itself, which declares that North Vietnam is the "sacred revolutionary base of the revolution," is headquartered in "Central Office/South." While maintaining political and military liaison with the PRP central committee office, the front serves mainly as a propaganda vehicle, issuing statements and declarations and supporting pseudo-diplomatic missions abroad, chiefly in communist countries. Front emissaries travel with North Vietnamese passports and use North Vietnamese currency.

As noted previously, the reported leaders of the front and the PRP are scarcely known to the people of South Vietnam. Viet Cong who have been captured or have defected say they regarded officials of the Workers Party in Hanoi as their leaders.

The Viet Cong front and the PRP thus are led by faceless men who emulate Ho and his old Indochinese Communist Party by operating behind a web of aliases and changing organizational titles and duties. Hanoi refers to Tran Nam Trung, PRP secretary general and front official, as "commander of the South Vietnamese liberation forces." Another shadowy figure is Vo Chi Cong, chairman of the PRP central committee and vice chairman of the front. It is believed that these men and many of their equally anonymous associates are in reality also members of Hanoi's Communist Party.



Above: Farm families fleeing Viet Cong control crowd South Vietnamese refugee center. Below: Delegations gather in Saigon to protest VC terrorism, North Vietnamese aggression against South Vietnam.



## PART FOUR

### THE HIDDEN GOVERNMENT

Hanoi's entire military-political apparatus in the sections of South Vietnam under its control has been called a "shadow government." Establishment of such a "government" as a replacement and rival of the real government in Saigon was a basic objective of the war-makers from the beginning.

As admitted practitioners of Mao's guerrilla warfare strategy, the North Vietnamese leaders set out to gain control of the countryside, hamlet by hamlet, village by village, district by district, until the cities and the government in Saigon were isolated and surrounded. The government forces would then be annihilated in a massive general offensive, the concluding stage of protracted warfare.

When the Viet Cong began emerging from their underground in 1957 they were starting to build a "shadow government"—or what the French have called "parallel hierarchies" in the countryside. Where persuasion and propaganda failed, terror was used. The Viet Cong marched into villages and in front of the stunned peasants machine-gunned the chief or a policeman and stuck his head on a pole. Such acts of selective terrorism were perpetrated for psychological reasons. To the peasant, traditionally respectful of authority, such acts were intended to demonstrate the authority of the Viet Cong and the weakness of the central government. They also were designed to intimidate the villager and make him cooperate with the guerrillas.

In the beginning, the Viet Cong did not identify themselves as communists or try to indoctrinate the peasants immediately. The guerrillas tried first to persuade the peasants that the Saigon government and its officials were evil and their taxes unjust. The peasants were flattered because the newcomers listened to their complaints and did favors for them.

In the limited area of the countryside under their control, the Viet Cong sought to organize the peasants into "liberation associations" representing farmers, youths, women and others, with as many individuals as possible given duties and offices. Gradually the Viet Cong forces set up their own local government, collecting taxes (which rose as the war went on), keeping village records of births, marriages and deaths, operating the schools, and conscripting the young men to work or fight for the guerrillas—for the new way of life, for the "revolution."

Thus a South Vietnamese hamlet or village was "liberated" and became part of the structure directed by Hanoi. The food,

Below: North Vietnamese soldiers parade in Hanoi. Right: A South Vietnamese civilian, chained and padlocked, was one of 25 prisoners shot by the Viet Cong when Government rescue forces approached.



money, recruits and intelligence information which formerly were Saigon's became Hanoi's.

A continuing expansion of Viet Cong control in the countryside is vital to development of the protracted war. Without dominance of the countryside, the communist forces cannot hope to grow in numbers and power sufficient to challenge and overwhelm the government armies.

The Viet Cong campaign reached a high tide in early 1965 when about 25 per cent of the South Vietnamese people in the countryside were under their control. About 50 per cent of the people were on the government's side, and the remainder uncertain.

In late 1965, however, the South Vietnamese and their allies began inflicting heavy losses on the Viet Cong and regular North Vietnamese army units that had started invading South Vietnam in large numbers the previous year. To bolster its decimated forces and shore up the cracking "shadow government" network, Hanoi started pouring more than 4,000 regular army troops a month into the South via infiltration trails through Laos. By early 1966 there were at least 12 Northern army regiments supporting the faltering Viet Cong.

Viet Cong losses in 1965 were staggering: 34,000 killed and 6,000 captured. Moreover, defections jumped sharply, reaching a weekly average of 250 by December and a total for the year of 11,124. The defection rate continued to increase in the first half of 1966 and by mid-July the total stood at 10,756. Thus, in less than seven months of 1966, the number of Viet Cong defectors had virtually equaled the total for the entire 12 months of 1965. And the upward trend was continuing.

The defectors included hard-core officers and platoon leaders with six and eight years' experience in the Viet Cong. Entire squads and platoons have come over to the government side.

A number of the defectors are hardly more than boys, for the Viet Cong lowered the age for conscription to 15 (the minimum government military service age is 18). Some defectors have reported that the Viet Cong enter a village and lead youths off into the jungle at gun-point or with ropes around their necks. Young men are shot for refusing to accompany the "recruiters." Another grievance is that recruits no longer serve as irregular guerrillas operating near their homes. They are being drafted directly into main force units and sent far from their villages.

Defectors and captives report that even pro-Viet Cong villagers

are losing their "revolutionary ardor." These villagers complain that the Viet Cong no longer protect them from warfare. They also protest the new tax burdens, up to 10 times heavier than before, and the other harsh methods the Viet Cong have used to enforce their authority.

The South Vietnamese peasant, like the North Vietnamese peasant who belatedly learned the meaning of "Marxism-Leninism," is learning the real meaning of "liberation" and "people's war."

## THE VIET CONG AND THE PEOPLE

How much support do the Viet Cong have in South Vietnam?

The Hanoi regime has consistently claimed that the great majority of South Vietnamese people is against the Saigon government and that the front is "the sole representative" of the people.

Saigon officials and other on-the-scene observers, however, point out that after 10 years of communist proselytizing and terrorism in the countryside the Viet Cong and their supporters and sympathizers comprise only a fraction of the population—at most 900,000 of the nation's some 15 million people.

The degree of support the South Vietnamese give the communists may be assessed by referring to the following facts:

1. Refugees—The flow of refugees between the communist and non-communist controlled areas always has been overwhelmingly in favor of the non-communists. This was true during the two periods of great refugee movement. In 1954, when the country was partitioned, one million Northerners moved to the South while less than 100,000 moved to the North. In the 1963-65 period, when the fighting reached new heights, more than 700,000 refugees fled to the government side; there was no appreciable migration to the Viet Cong side.

2. Terrorism—The use of terrorism to intimidate and control villagers in the rural areas preceded communist domination of a quarter of the countryside. If the Viet Cong had won the allegiance of the people there, and attracted support elsewhere, then terror tactics would no longer have been necessary. But during December 1965, more than 2,500 terrorist acts were reported, compared to a monthly average during the year of

1,700. This continued reliance on brutality is inconsistent with Hanoi's claim of support by the people.

3. Recruitment of village officials—The government's officials and workers in the villages and hamlets have been the prime targets of the Viet Cong for years. Yet in 1964, for example, 15,000 men and women studied at the government's National Institute for Administration. Although many of them later fell victim to the Viet Cong, the institute has continued to have plenty of applicants.

4. Willingness to fight—The South Vietnamese armed forces have suffered 125,000 casualties, including 34,000 killed. Nevertheless, Saigon's military strength is based largely on volunteers. The Southern troops have fought for years and have fought well. It is not credible that the South Vietnamese forces could carry on this sustained performance if they believed they were fighting against their own people.

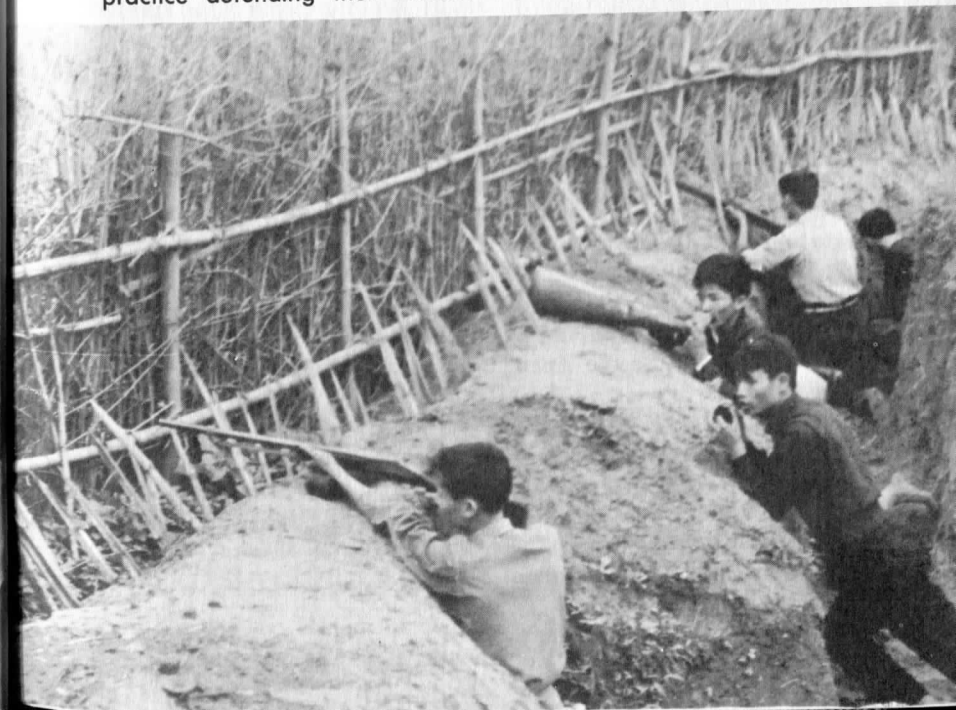
5. Infiltration—North Vietnam began sending its regular army soldiers in large numbers into the South during the latter part of 1964. This was *before* the large-scale build-up of American forces there had begun. The North Vietnamese army troops were required not only because the Viet Cong organization was failing to rally the people to its side but also because the Viet Cong and the "shadow government" already were losing whatever hold on the people they had ever had.

6. Absence of pro-Hanoi movements—The years since late 1963 have seen severe tests for the Republic of Vietnam. During this post-Diem period there have been unrelenting Viet Cong aggression, new highs in terrorist activities, and a number of changes of government leadership. But no movement was generated by the people in favor of Hanoi's demands or in support of Viet Cong front assertions that it is the "sole representative" of the South Vietnamese. The Buddhist-led demonstrations in early 1966 were not in support of communism, but for a speedup of the projected civilian government, a new constitution, and general elections.

7. Elections in the South—In mid-1965 elections were held for provincial and municipal advisory councils. Despite Viet Cong threats, there was no shortage of candidates for vacant council seats. Neither was there any shortage of voters, for 70 per cent of those registered cast ballots. The Saigon government had made no unusual effort to stimulate voter participation and observers agreed that the elections were conducted freely and fairly.



With ballots and bullets: Embattled South Vietnamese exercise their right to vote (above), and young South Vietnamese volunteers (below) practice defending their hamlet from attacks by the Viet Cong.



8. Viet Cong "strike" calls—Three times during the latter half of 1965 Hanoi issued heavily publicized "strike" calls to the people of South Vietnam, and three times the "strikes" were unqualified failures.

—In August and September, Hanoi and the Viet Cong repeatedly urged university students and the people to unite in a "wide political struggle front" to protest a new military service regulation. The communist appeals called for an end to the war and the "toppling" of the Saigon government. This effort failed.

—The period from October 15 to November 15, 1965, was to have been "Hate America Month" in South Vietnam, according to the communist clandestine radio. Detailed instructions were broadcast to specific groups in the South to take violent actions which would explode into a "general strike." When nothing happened, Hanoi's propaganda appeals dwindled to an embarrassed halt.

—After these failures, Hanoi and the front called upon the South Vietnamese people to observe a 15-minute period of silence in their homes on December 19 between 1 p.m. and 1:15 p.m. When that day and time came, the South Vietnamese were indeed at home and silent, but not because of the communist urging—it was the Sunday siesta hour.

The Viet Cong campaign in South Vietnam bears no similarity to the genuine nationalistic movements for independence—for true liberation—that have occurred during the past several decades elsewhere in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The movements which led to independence for India and Pakistan, for example, expressed the aspirations of the people and the people unreservedly, and en masse supported those movements. Another example among many others is that of the National Liberation Front in Algeria and the sacrifices the people as a whole made in support of that movement.

South Vietnam is an independent country whose sovereignty is recognized by more than 80 nations. The war there is not a rebellion by the people against their government. Nor is it a civil war.

The fighting in South Vietnam is simply a communist-style war of terror and aggression—a war by one nation to conquer another. The war was planned and executed by Communist North Vietnam's leaders in Hanoi. The evidence is so overwhelming that there can be no question that the Viet Cong organization is Hanoi's agent of aggression, its puppet.



North Vietnam Sergeant Vu Tuan Anh (above, right), who rallied to Government, displays his Communist Chinese rifle and describes his unit's infiltration into the South.



Former Viet Cong rally to government under the "Open Arms" program.