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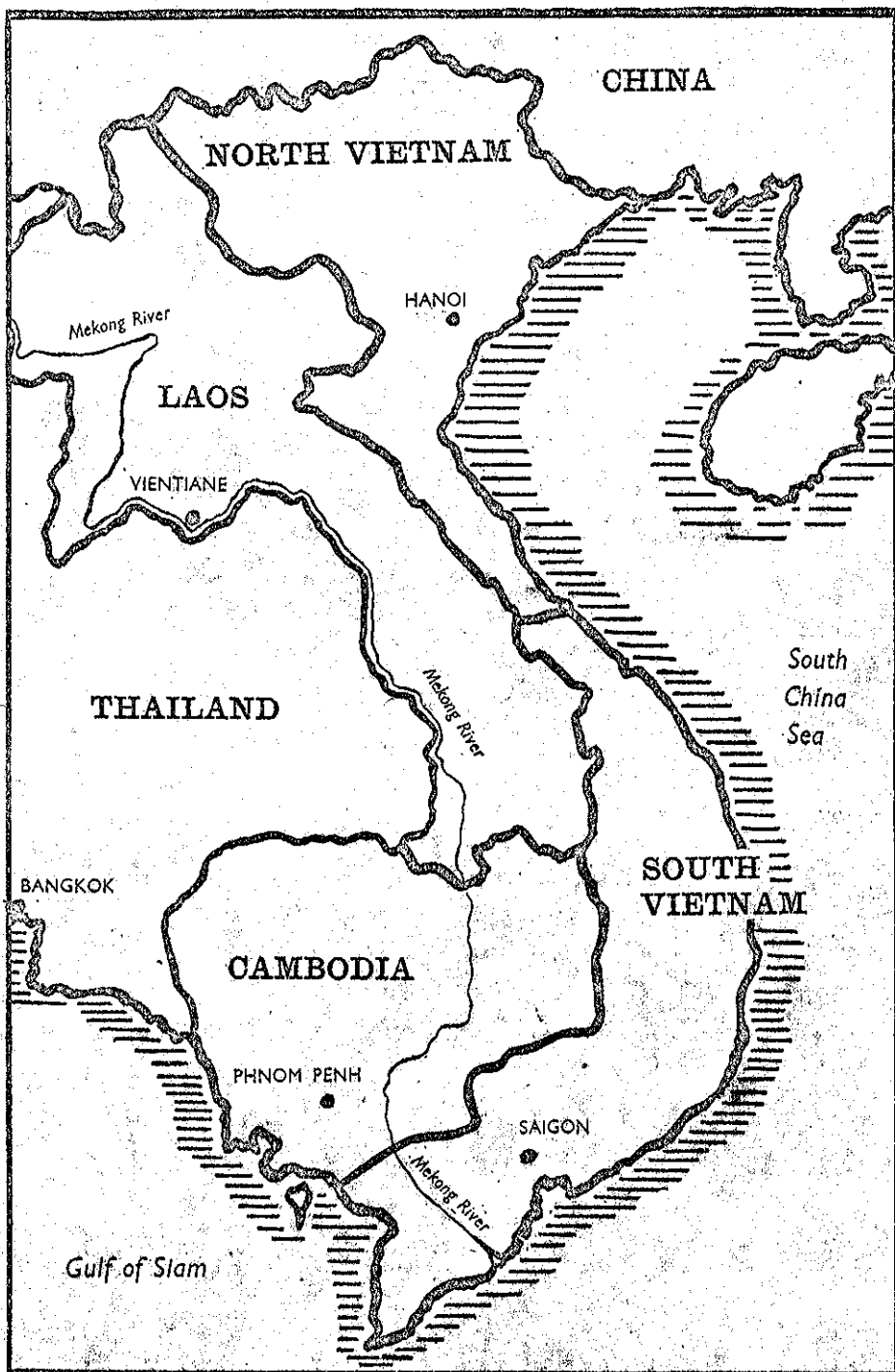
NORTH VIETNAM:

CRADLE OF REVOLUTION

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION	3
EARLY TACTICS IN INDOCHINA	5
TACTICS IN CAMBODIA	7
TACTICS IN LAOS	9
SUBVERSION ELSEWHERE IN ASIA	11
A WORLD MODEL	16

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INTRODUCTION

"Our country is the focal point of the acute contradictions that exist in the world."—Hoc Tap, *North Vietnamese party's theoretical journal*, September, 1966.

NORTH VIETNAM's belief in her international obligations to assist Communist "liberation struggles" throughout the world has led her to attempt to gain control of Laos and Cambodia; to engage in, or aid, subversion in South-East Asia; to maintain contact with revolutionary leaders in Africa and Latin America; and to become a founder member of the Havana-based Committee of Aid and Assistance to Liberation Movements, set up at the Tri-Continental Conference in January, 1966, which aims to co-ordinate guerrilla and subversive organisations in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

These aspects of the Hanoi government's international policy have been largely overshadowed by North Vietnamese action in South Vietnam though Hanoi sees the war there, and the knowledge of strategy and tactics gained by its troops,* as "useful to the revolutionary struggle of the people of the world". (*Hoc Tap*, September, 1966.)

The importance of "applying an offensive strategy" so that the forces of the "world revolutionary movement" can be made "increasingly more powerful" was emphasised by *Hoc Tap* over three years ago, in January, 1964. Six months later, the journal attacked "revisionists" who supported peaceful co-existence and tried to substitute "peaceful transition for violent proletarian revolution".

* General Wheeler, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, estimated that in January, 1967, there were 50,000 North Vietnamese regular troops in South Vietnam. Thousands of North Vietnamese irregulars have also been infiltrated into the South to fight alongside the Vietcong, the military arm of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV). The Front is controlled by the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP), a subsidiary of the ruling Lao Dong (Workers') Party in North Vietnam.

North Vietnam's revolutionary activities have the support of both the Soviet Union and China. The Chinese have claimed that Vietnamese experiences have added to Mao Tse-tung's theory of people's war and that the North Vietnamese have been able to "work out operational lines and methods in accordance with their own conditions" (article entitled "The Magic Weapon for Victory is People's Revolutionary War" in the December 24, 1966, issue of the Peking *People's Daily*).

North Vietnamese belief in her international revolutionary rôle goes back to 1946. It was then that Truong Chinh, a North Vietnamese Politburo member, wrote in *The August Revolution* (reissued in 1962): "The Vietnamese revolution strongly promotes the liberation movement of the Laotian and Cambodian peoples and other colonial countries of South-East Asia."

The Vietnamese Communists' decision to begin guerrilla warfare against the French in 1946 was contrary to international Communist policy. But when the Russians decided, as the first step in the cold war, to intensify the West's political and economic difficulties by action in the rear (Asia), they found in the Vietnamese war against the French a ready-made model for the countries of South-East Asia.

EARLY TACTICS IN INDOCHINA

THOUGH Hanoi's encouragement or creation of "revolutionary movements" in Indochina reflects traditional Vietnamese expansionism, it is primarily the result of President Ho Chi Minh's desire to extend the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism. Ho, a former Comintern agent and a founder-member of the French Communist Party, wrote in July, 1960: "In the beginning it was patriotism and not Communism which induced me to believe in Lenin and the Third International. But little by little, progressing step by step in the course of the struggle and combining theoretical studies of Marxism-Leninism with practical activities, I came to realise that Socialism and Communism alone are capable of emancipating workers and down-trodden people all over the world." ("The Path That Led Me to Leninism", *Echo du Vietnam*, Paris.)

Vietnam's history, traditions, language, administrative system, religious outlook and philosophical doctrines resemble those of China more closely than those of the other South-East Asian countries. Vietnam's history could be broadly summed up as a thousand years of Chinese rule followed by another thousand years in which Vietnam has defended herself from Chinese encroachments while herself encroaching into the lands to the south. Until the 15th century Vietnamese lived only in the north. The expansion southwards took over the thickly populated areas of the Mekong Delta in the 17th and 18th centuries, so that when the French arrived the Vietnamese were unstable, newly-settled and administratively incoherent. French rule, introduced in the South and lasting nearly 100 years, probably increased this instability. France administered Indochina as four regions: Laos and Cambodia were protectorates, as was North and part of South Vietnam (Tonking/Annam); South-West-Vietnam (Cochinchina) was a directly administered colony.

Ho Chi Minh and his followers formed the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930. Its aims were not only to free Vietnam from the French and to bring it under Communist domination, but also to unite the four regions of Indochina

in a Communist federation. The party was officially dissolved in 1945 in an attempt to conceal its Communist nature and thus attract more non-Communist support against the French, but it continued to function clandestinely as a Marxist Study Group and the principles and ambitions that led to its formation remained. In 1951 the party re-emerged as the Lao Dong Party but its platform still referred to the intention of establishing a federation of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

As in Vietnam, the end of the Second World War encouraged nationalist groups in Cambodia and Laos, the Khmer-Issarak (Free Cambodian) and Lao Issara (Free Laotian) movements. These did not, however, come under Communist influence and there were no active Laotian or Cambodian Communist Parties. The grant of independence within the French Union to Vietnam in 1949 was followed by similar grants to their brother States, Cambodia and Laos.

The Vietnamese Communists then began in earnest to subvert these States. The Viet Minh* (League for the Independence of Vietnam), a Communist front organisation formed by Ho Chi Minh in 1941, issued a secret directive, captured by the French in November, 1951. This shows that the task was to form an anti-imperialist government and to develop a workers' democracy; each country should have its own revolutionary party, but the "Vietnamese party reserves the right to supervise the activities of its brother parties in Cambodia and Laos. . . . Militarily Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos constitute a combat zone."

* The name "Viet Minh" came to be synonymous with the North Vietnamese Communists long after the League had been superseded.

TACTICS IN CAMBODIA

IN Cambodia, North Vietnamese tactics provide a textbook example of a bloodless "revolution from within". In 1949, small Communist-inspired groups established a Committee for a Revolutionary People's Party and in April, 1950, a National United Front of Cambodia was formed. In March, 1951, this Front and a Laotian National United Front, formed in August, 1960, were included within the Vietnamese Communist front, the Lien Viet.

With the creation of the Lao Dong Party in 1951 North Vietnam had the political tool to create a brother-revolutionary party in Cambodia in the Comintern tradition.† The revolutionary party was set up and given a programme of People's Democracy. Shortly afterwards, a "Cambodian Resistance Government" was formed under the leadership of Son Ngoc Thanh, a mixed Cambodian-Vietnamese who had joined the Viet Minh.

Special Vietnamese armed units known as "Vietnam Troops to help Cambodia" were then created and took over Kampot and Kompong Speu provinces. The whole South Vietnam Zone Command of the North Vietnamese Army transferred its headquarters to Prey Veng province as did the Central Office South‡ headed by Sieu Heng, another revolutionary of mixed Cambodian/Vietnamese descent. A network of cadre committees and canvassing committees was set up as in Vietnam.

In April, 1954, fighting broke out but Viet Minh operations were contained by the present Head of State, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, then King of Cambodia. Cambodia, a favourite Vietnamese overspill area for more than 150 years, has a traditional distrust of the Vietnamese and this

"... instead of creating a single national revolutionary party based upon individual adherents one must attempt to co-ordinate and to unite the activities of the various national revolutionary organisations with the help of common action committees so as to create an effective bloc of all revolutionary elements." (Instructions voted by the fourth congress of the Comintern as applying to under-developed areas, *Pravda*, October 17, 1928.)

† A temporary North Vietnamese regional delegation with jurisdiction over Cambodia and South and South Central Vietnam. The office still exists helping to direct the war in South Vietnam.

undoubtedly contributed to the Communists' failure there.

Writing in the Cambodian magazine, *Realités Cambodgiennes*, in March, 1958, Prince Sihanouk described the Viet Minh organisation in Cambodia: "From the information I have been able to obtain, it appears that the Viet Minh came to Cambodia with a very small force of Cambodian auxiliaries, mostly of Cochinchinese origin, formed into cells in South Vietnam, and with superior cadres from Tongking (North Vietnam). . . ."

As a result of the 1954 Geneva Conference the Viet Minh withdrew its troops from Cambodia, but a legacy of its presence remains in the Krom Pracheachon (Group of the Nation), the legal appendage of the Revolutionary Cambodian People's Party now suppressed by the Cambodian Government. In 1962, Prince Sihanouk commented: "In leaving Cambodia . . . the Viet Minh left us, as a lasting 'souvenir', not only the above mentioned cells (i.e. of the Pracheachon Party), which have entertained clandestine but constant contact with their Vietnamese agents, but also many caches of arms and ammunition . . . thus providing proof that the Viet Minh did not in the least respect the disarmament clauses of the Geneva Agreement and that they strongly believed that soon after the truce it would be possible to recreate insecurity and rekindle revolutionary combats in Cambodia. . . ." In November, 1966, Prince Sihanouk announced that he had secured documents proving that "the partisans of the Pracheachon" are "the lackeys of the Viet Minh".

A fundamental factor in Prince Sihanouk's foreign policy is to gain recognition of Cambodia's present frontiers and support for its territorial integrity by North Vietnam and the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV). So far both have refused this.

TACTICS IN LAOS

IN Laos, the Vietnamese worked through the Pathet Lao, led by Prince Souphannouvong. It broke away from the Lao Issara (Free Laos) nationalists in 1949 because of their unwillingness to co-operate with the Vietnamese Communists, and moved into Vietnam. There, in August, 1950, Prince Souphannouvong convened a "Laotian National Assembly" and established a "National United Front of Laos". (It has since been claimed that a Liberation Committee of Eastern Laos was established at the end of 1947 and a War Zone of Lower Laos by the end of 1948.)

The Front attracted little following in Laos during the next 12 months, but in December, 1952, a Viet Minh detachment crossed the frontier from the Dien Bien Phu area and scattered a Laotian battalion. In April, 1953, regular Viet Minh battalions invaded Laos as "volunteers" supporting a Laotian "liberation army", and established Prince Souphannouvong in Sam Neua (Laos) as the head of a "Free Laotian Government". They have never left. Neither the 1954 Geneva Agreement, which provided for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Laos, nor the 1962 Geneva Agreement, which again provided for their withdrawal and also attempted to ensure Laotian neutrality and freedom from foreign interference, were observed by the North Vietnamese. Of the several thousand Vietnamese troops estimated to be fighting in Laos at the time of the 1962 Geneva Conference only between 40 and 50 soldiers withdrew through the checkpoints set up by the International Control Commission (India, Canada and Poland) to supervise their departure.

Up to 20,000 North Vietnamese regular soldiers are now estimated to be fighting with the Pathet Lao and also protecting Communist supply lines to South Vietnam along the "Ho Chi Minh trail" through eastern Laos. An ICC investigation found that prisoners captured in September, 1964, were of North Vietnamese nationality and confirmed their military status in a report (dated September 16, 1965), published in December, 1965. Although ostensibly a Left-wing front supporting the Laotian monarchy and the neutral coalition government, the Pathet Lao is in effect controlled from Hanoi. Many of its

hard-core members still belong to the North Vietnamese Communist Party and maintain contact with Hanoi.

The 1954 Geneva Agreements represented an abandonment of North Vietnamese claims to Laos and Cambodia. As the then British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Anthony Eden (now Lord Avon), commented at the conference on June 10, 1954, the Viet Minh, in invading these countries "not only crossed a political boundary, they crossed the frontier that divides the two great cultures of Asia—the Indian and the Chinese". Prince Sihanouk's comments and the situation in Laos make it clear that this abandonment was tactical and only temporary. In September, 1966, *Hoc Tap* still stressed that North Vietnam must "strive by every available means . . . to assist actively the Laotian revolution".

SUBVERSION ELSEWHERE IN ASIA

NORTH VIETNAM is actively fomenting revolutionary movements in other parts of Asia, particularly in neighbouring Thailand. Agents from all over Thailand are being trained by the North Vietnamese in Communist-controlled areas in Laos and in North Vietnam where, according to Thai defectors, a "Political and Military School of the Thai Communist Party" exists. North Vietnam is also harbouring members of the Malayan National Liberation League (MNLL), an illegal Communist organisation pledged to overthrow the Malaysian Government.

Hanoi has been concerned, too, in preparing and distributing pamphlets on waging guerrilla war in India. (*Hindustan Times*, February 20, 1967). Members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, a Chinese-aided movement dedicated to overthrowing the Jordanian and Israeli governments and establishing a "liberated Palestine", are reportedly to receive guerrilla training in North Vietnam. (*Guardian*, Rangoon, January 10, 1967.)

As in Indochina, Hanoi's encouragement or creation of "revolutionary movements" throughout Asia has a long history. Ho Chi Minh's direct links with the revolutionary parties go back to the Comintern decision in 1928 to organise national revolutionary movements under Communist leadership in Thailand, Indochina, Malaya, Burma and Indonesia. Ho was sent to Bangkok from south China where, as assistant to Michael Borodin, the chief Soviet agent there, he had been organising Vietnamese refugees and establishing contact with Vietnamese nationalists in Thailand. In Bangkok his task was apparently to supervise the Communist movement in these countries* but he appears to have been primarily concerned with building up his contacts in Indochina. During the 1930s, Ho performed various missions to the Communist Parties of South-East Asia as a Comintern agent, operating successively from Canton, Malaya and Macao.

* This was not, however, Ho's first contact with Asian revolutionaries. As a member of the French Communist Party in the early 1920s he conducted propaganda among Asians and Africans and organised the League of Colonial Peoples in Paris.

In the late 1940s the Vietnamese Communists seem to have made a serious attempt to gain leadership of the "liberation movements" in Thailand, Burma and Malaya. Three sponsored organisations were successively set up whose leaders were in direct contact with Ho: (i) the South-East Asia League, led by a Moscow-trained Vietnamese, Trần Văn Giàu, which collapsed in 1948 after a brief open appearance in Thailand; (ii) the Ku Sap Be or Liberation Party of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma and Thailand for the Salvation of the Fatherland (Vietnam), which operated under Nguyen Van Long, another Moscow-trained Vietnamese. This soon collapsed and Long then set up (iii) the Communist Co-ordination Committee for South-East Asia at Muong Lene in the Shan States (Burma). The committee supposedly co-ordinated the operations of the Communist Parties on the whole South-East Asian mainland and Indonesia. Its council included Communist Chinese, Malayan Chinese, Vietnamese, Burmese, Thai, Lao, Indonesians and Cambodians. (*Singapore Standard*, January 4, 1953.) The Viet Minh also had an active network of agents based on Muong Lene which they used as a training area and transit zone for Viet Minh troops travelling between Thailand and Laos.

The co-ordination committee seems to have had links with the Chinese-sponsored "Free Thai State" which proclaimed its existence in the South Yunnan province of China on July 24, 1953, as an autonomous State for all Thai tribes living in Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, North Vietnam, south China. Little has been heard of the State since 1953. It could, however, create a pole of attraction, particularly if reports that Mao Tse-tung relinquished administrative control of the Thai territories in south China to Ho Chi Minh so as to unify the area under one single control are correct (*Le Monde*, December 13, 1953). (Thai territory in North Vietnam covers the north-western third of the country between the Red River and the Lao border.)

Thailand

The Vietnamese Communists' links with the Thai Communist Party appear to have been almost continuous since Ho's earliest contacts in the late 1920s. Although Com-

munism was banned in Thailand in 1933, Communist cells were set up during the next two years in the north-eastern provinces where there was a concentration of Annamite Left-wing extremists who had fled from Indochina.

In 1950, the Communists tried to set up a united front like those in Laos and Cambodia. In 1954, the Viet Minh still operated openly in Thailand despite Thai refusal to grant diplomatic recognition to the régime, maintaining a procurement commission, a local propaganda office and a Vietnam Emigrant Association. The Vietnam-Chinese Friendship Association, created by North Vietnam to cope with the problem of its Overseas Chinese community, had an office in Thailand.

Active encouragement of, and material support for, armed insurrection in Thailand dates from early 1965 when both North Vietnam and China increased their effort. It seems clear, though, that subversion is still in little more than a preparatory stage. Thais trained in Laos or North Vietnam use the Viet Minh's methods and techniques, now also employed by the Vietcong. Defectors from Ubol province in north-east Thailand told correspondents in Bangkok on March 9, 1967, that they had undergone courses lasting up to eight months at the Thai Communist Party Political and Military School in Hoa Binh, North Vietnam, and that they had themselves begun training others on their return.

The Viet Minh's system of political organisation is also being superimposed on the Thais. The Thailand Patriotic Front closely resembles the NFLSV and earlier Vietnamese Communist united fronts. Like the NFLSV, it is dominated by Communists, controls the "People's Armed Forces" and has affiliated mass organisations of farmers, students and religious groups. It has also adopted the same methods of dealing with opposition, known euphemistically by the Vietnamese Communists as "armed propaganda". This is the systematic assassination, execution or blackmail of local officials and government servants. Incidents have been reported on a small but increasing scale in Thailand in recent months, as have the number of forced propaganda meetings.

There has also been an increase in the size of the armed bands operating in the north-eastern provinces near the

Laotian border. According to official estimates, about 1,000 hard-core armed Communists are now operating in bands. During the past six to nine months these bands have increased in size and now operate in groups of 100 to 200. Their main aim appears to be to consolidate areas from which they could later operate in safety. Camps and food caches have been found in jungle areas.

On February 15, 1967, Thai police arrested about 100 Vietnamese in north-eastern provinces for collecting arms, food and money for terrorists and for sheltering agents infiltrated from North Vietnam. Communist flags, literature and portraits of Ho Chi Minh were seized. Whether these insurgents are controlled by the Vietnamese as well as trained and indoctrinated by them has not been established. The possibility cannot be dismissed, however, particularly as some 40,000 Vietnamese refugees from the Indochina war now live in the border provinces. The refugees, among whom must be members of the North Vietnamese Communist Party, are hostile to the Thai Government and basically friendly to North Vietnam.* The pressure to conform put by local Communists on these tightly knit communities is believed to be great and they are subjected to intensive indoctrination. Efforts are made to relate the struggle in Thailand with that in Vietnam. The *Voice of the People of Thailand*, a clandestine radio station operating in North Vietnam or south China, has several times invited closer co-operation with Vietnam's struggle.

Communism's basic weakness in Thailand is that both in its origin and growth it has been almost exclusively an alien movement based on Chinese and, latterly, partly on Vietnamese Communism. Both the Chinese and North Vietnamese try to counter this weakness by creating a nationalist issue. Recent Communist propaganda has attempted to show Thailand as an "imperialist puppet", a country only nominally independent, a "semi-colony". Prince Wan, a Thai Deputy Prime Minister, commented recently: "What is happening now in the north of our country reminds me of the first shots which were fired about a decade ago in South Vietnam." (*Die Presse*, Vienna, January 21-22, 1967.)

* Thailand and North Vietnam had an agreement to repatriate the refugees and many thousands returned before North Vietnam abrogated it in 1964.

Indonesia and Malaysia

Hanoi had close relations with the Indonesian Government before the Communist abortive *coup d'état* in 1965, President Sukarno referring to the Peking-Pyongyang-Hanoi-Djakarta axis. Indonesian students were given military training courses at Hanoi University. Since the *coup* North Vietnam has continued to support the Indonesian Communists but this support is now largely confined to propaganda and no Indonesian Communist refugees are known to be in Hanoi. Their interests and those of the Malayan Communists are no doubt catered for by the four leaders of the Malayan National Liberation League (MNLL) who fled from Indonesia in 1966 and were given asylum in Hanoi. Although its chief support—and probably its inspiration—comes from Peking, the MNLL, successor to the Malayan Races' Liberation League, could find in Hanoi a new centre and base for the remnants of the Communist guerrilla organisation which produced the Malayan emergency ten years ago.

While it seems unlikely that either China or the Soviet Union has relinquished overall direction of Communist political influence in the area to North Vietnam, Hanoi appears to have an influence over the less developed and revolutionary parties in South-East Asia. It is also likely that Vietnamese directed "co-operation" would meet with less resistance than if the operation were openly under Chinese control.

A WORLD MODEL

HANOI's belief in its rôle as a leader and focal point of the world revolutionary movement was endorsed at the Communist-dominated 'Three Continents' Conference, held in Havana from January 3 to 15, 1966. The conference set up the Committee of Aid and Assistance to Liberation Movements to co-ordinate the activities of the guerrilla and subversive movements in Asia, Africa, Latin America and supply them with help, including arms and training. North Vietnam's impeccably revolutionary image makes her a natural contributor to this "guerrilla international". In return North Vietnam will receive "moral, political and material" aid from the three continents through a sub-committee on Vietnam based in Havana.

North Vietnam already has some contact with revolutionary movements outside Asia, particularly with those in the former French African possessions. Ho Chi Minh's interest in African affairs dates from his membership of the French Communist Party in the 1920s. In the past decade Hanoi has given training in North Vietnam to North African revolutionaries and provided military instructors for the Algerian Liberation Army.

Relations with Cuba are also close, and Castro can look to North Vietnam for help in Latin America where he has renewed his call for violent revolution in almost all countries. The Cubans already provide North Vietnam with economic aid, and Cuban military personnel are giving North Vietnam technical assistance. Hanoi has little contact at present with other Latin American countries, though Guatemalan insurgents have named their best "fighting village" after Vietnam.

North Vietnam has considerable interest in promoting "revolutionary struggle" in Latin America, which she sees as an attempt, similar to the Russians' promotion of armed struggle in Asia in 1948, to intensify the United States' political and economic difficulties by striking at its "safe rear area" and "back yard". By promoting rebellion in the countries on America's doorstep North Vietnam no doubt hopes also to reduce US pressure on her own military resources. In Hanoi's

eyes, revolutionary movements everywhere serve the same purpose; political agitation or guerrilla action sap "imperialist" strength and reduce, even if only slightly, US concentration on the war in Vietnam.

Hanoi is also highly conscious of her own invaluable contribution to revolutionary struggle throughout the world. North Vietnam's special rôle has been underlined by China in familiar terms. At a Peking rally in December, 1966, the Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, said: "The Vietnamese people know quite well that they are fighting not only for their own national liberation and the unification of the motherland, but also for the revolutionary cause of the oppressed nations and people throughout the world. . . . At present the focal point of the world struggle against US imperialism lies in Vietnam and the Vietnam war against US aggression and for national salvation is of great and far reaching world significance."

North Vietnam's own vision of her rôle is equally confident. The Lao Dong Party said in 1951: "We recommend that the people of Vietnam co-ordinate their war of resistance with the struggles of other peoples of the world. . . ." This policy is repeated regularly in North Vietnamese speeches and articles. It appeared recently in an interview given by the Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh: "All Vietnamese people are resolutely fighting against the US aggressors to defend their sacred national rights and fulfill their duty to the peoples of the friendly countries now struggling for their independence and freedom." ((North) *Vietnam News Agency*, January 28, 1967.)

A mixture of aggressive Vietnamese nationalism and the obligations of old-fashioned international Communism (which has, through the histories of the Vietnamese leaders, perhaps deeper roots in North Vietnam than in any other post-war Communist State) ensure that Hanoi is both unwilling and unable to see its own revolutionary activities in isolation.

North Vietnam seems to see her present war commitments as the final test of her guerrilla tactics. General Giap, the North Vietnamese Minister of Defence, was reported by the party newspaper, *Nhan Dan*, on July 19, 1964, as saying: "South Vietnam is the model of the national liberation move-

ment in our time. . . . If the special warfare that the United States imperialists are testing in South Vietnam is overcome, this means that it can be defeated everywhere in the world."