

5. "People's Power" -- The Armed Forces

"Armed strength is the (Communist) Party's essential weapon to achieve any political aim."

General Vo Nguyen Giap, Commander-in-Chief of the Vietnam People's Army, in Nhan Dan, September 20, 1951.

Like all the armed forces of any Communist state, the Vietnam People's Army (VPA) of the DRVN is an essentially "political" force designed to achieve by military strength whatever objectives the political machinery cannot reach by other methods at its disposal.

In less than ten years -- from the beginnings of Viet-Minh anti-Japanese guerilla forces in Dinh-Ca valley (North Vietnam) in the fall of 1944 to the battle of Dien Bien Phu in the spring 1954 -- the VPA developed from a band of ill-armed irregulars into a force of almost twenty divisions of battle-seasoned regulars.⁵³

Until December 1949 -- time at which Chinese Communist forces reached the northern Vietnamese border and thus established a direct link between the DRVN and the rest of the Communist world, the VPA operated mostly in small groups armed with captured French and some American equipment illegally purchased in China, and with fairly sizeable amounts of Japanese arms which had fallen into their hands after "VJ"-Day, August 1945. The arrival of Chinese Communist forces changed the whole aspect of the war. Now, large-scale training of Viet-Minh troops by Chinese and Soviet advisers could be undertaken without any risk since, like United Nations planes in Korea, the French Air Force in Indochina had to respect the Chinese Communist "sanctuary."

Within less than a year, the VPA was strong enough in regular troops now equipped with light artillery, machine-guns and mortars,

⁵³. For two DRV views on its armed forces, see: Vo Nguyen Giap, L'Armée Populaire de Libération du Viet-Nam, Vietnam Information Service, Nov. 1951, and Ten Years of Fighting and Building the Vietnamese People's Army, Hanoi 1955; The Foreign Language Publishing House.

to attack the French fortresses of Lang Son, That-Ke and Cao-Bang which defended the major routes of access between North Vietnam and Red China. By the end of September 1950, the whole Vietnamese border with Red China, with the exception of a narrow coastal strip, was in Viet-Minh hands.

According to The Times of London (August 24, 1950) the first formal promise by Red China to provide the DRVN with military aid and advice was signed in Mong-tze, Yunnan, on June 10, 1950, providing for joint operations between the Red Chinese 53rd Field Army and the VPA in the case of a major French offensive menacing vital DRVN positions. Interestingly enough --and no doubt in memory of the Viet-Minh's previous experience with Chinese forces in Vietnam -- this treaty specifically provides that the Red Chinese forces which would enter Vietnam would "unconditionally return to China within one month after having obtained victory."

According to French intelligence sources, by the end of 1950 already 40 battalions (or about 20,000 men) had been fully trained and equipped by the Chinese Communists on the training fields and gunnery ranges of Tsin-tsi and Long Chow (Kwang-si) in Red China, while equipment for an equal number of VPA troops was provided the DRVN in 1951, with further emphasis on artillery and heavy mortars. By the end of 1952, Communist Chinese operations in Vietnam had been sufficiently extended to warrant the creation of a special "General Headquarters of the Chinese People's Volunteers to Help Vietnam." A small top secret booklet issued by the Headquarters fell into Western hands and was published early in 1954, showing that Communist Chinese aid to the Viet-Minh in fighting the Indo-China war was far more extensive than had been imagined at first.⁵⁴

In the final showdown battle of Dien Bien Phu, it became clearly apparent that Red Chinese aid had gone beyond equipment and technical advice. Hitherto concealed anti-aircraft artillery was used extensively, and in the very last stages of the battle, the powerful Soviet "Katyusha" rocket-launchers (also known as the "Organs of Stalin") were used extensively. Most of the Soviet weapons delivered were -- as now in the case of the Middle East -- produced in Czechoslovakia, with the exception of the many "Molotova" trucks and certain weapons which were directly of Soviet manufacture.

⁵⁴. "Handbook for (Chinese) Political Workers Going to Vietnam," in Far Eastern Notes, No. 8, May 7, 1954.

a. The Army and the Commissars

As the regime's "essential weapon" to further its political aims, the VPA possesses its own elaborate political infrastructure. Within the staff organization of the VPA, the General Political Directorate ranks in importance with the Army General Staff and the Army Supply Staff, and the General Political Commissar of the Armed Forces is an important personage of the regime. In May 1957, a special "Cadre Bureau" was added to the VPA staff for better control of its personnel policies.

Every branch of service, headquarters, and unit above battalion (about 500 men) level has its own Political Commissar. Smaller units down to platoon level have so-called "Political Workers" who are responsible to their Political Commissar rather than to the unit commander. In nearly every platoon and company of the VPA, the members of the Lao-Dong Party from their own cells, so that in fact the whole Vietnam People's Army is permeated by two hierarchies -- that of the army and that of the Party -- each of which has its own cadres and leaders.

At brigade and division level, the Political Commissar has his own political police and security detachment, and, as in the armies of other Communist states, has an important voice even in purely military operations. In this field, in fact, the DRVN seems to have done the Soviet Army one better, for in the latter, according to pertinent regulations, the Communist Party representatives (now called Sampolit) share "equally with the (military) commander" full responsibility for all operations. With regard to the VPA, Ho Chi Minh issued a decree (No. 32/SL of March 4, 1950) creating "Front Command Committees with Political Preponderance," composed of the unit commanders and deputy-commanders and their Political Commissar. However, contrary to the Soviet model, where responsibilities were, at least in theory, equally shared, in the case of the VPA, according to article 3 of the decree,

In the case of divergence of views, the Political Commissar shall have the power of final decision.

This situation is somewhat unusual and does not exist in other Southeast Asian armies. There is evidence such as during the Indochina hostilities that when certain Viet-Minh officers deserted their cause because they resented this political tutelage, that VPA military commanders are not too happy with the arrangement.

On the other hand, it fully insures the political orthodoxy of the armed forces and provides the regime with as firm a grip over the military as it has over all the other activities within the DRVN zone of control.

b. Tactics and Organization

The tactics used by Vo Nguyen Giap in fighting his campaigns were copied exactly from those of Mao Tse-tung⁵⁵ as laid down in his famous article "Our Mission in View of Present Circumstances." The VPA was taught not to fear protracted wars and difficult campaigns; only seldom did it let itself be induced to commit its regular forces if it could use the ill-armed and highly expendable regional and local guerilla forces.

Like the Communist Chinese forces, the VPA pays great attention to the political indoctrination of the individual soldier. A French Air Force General who has made a study of such propaganda indoctrination of the Chinese Communist forces, has drawn some conclusions which apply equally well to the Viet-Minh forces:

In the day's work of the Red soldier, the Marxist political lesson plays as important a part as the arms manual. Taken in hand by intelligent masters, the armed peasant⁵⁶ rapidly becomes a fanatic, an apostle of the new religion (i.e., Communism)...⁵⁷

With the constant presence of Army Political Commissars and "Political Workers," many of them women who were even more fanatical than the men, the individual VPA soldier was both persuaded and forced to develop along communist lines. This was made even easier because the VPA regular soldier was given many material benefits which no other Vietnamese social class enjoyed: he was given well-made clothes including padded jackets for cold-weather operations in the North Vietnamese mountains; abundant rice when the rest of the Vietnamese population was on starvation rations, and medical care when there were neither doctors nor drugs available for anyone else.

55. Lt. Colonel Robert B. Rigg, "Red Parallel -- The Tactics of Ho and Mao," in The Army Combat Forces Journal, Washington, January 1955.

56. According to Viet-Minh sources, about 80 percent of all DRVN soldiers were of peasant origin.

57. General L.M. Chassin, La Conquete de la Chine par Mao Tse-tung, Paris 1951, Librairie Plon, pp. 232-233, passim.

During the war years, the VPA fell into three echelons; the regular forces (known as the Chu-luc, or Main Force), the Regional Troops, composed of semi-regular units which would generally fight within their own province or areas, and lastly, the Du-kich, or local militia units, which were recruited directly in the villages where they fought. The local guerillas received no uniforms and only the poorest equipment which was of no further use to either the regular or the regional troops. They were by far the most numerous (perhaps 200,000 out of a total of about 350,000 fighting men) and often sustained the heaviest losses. In addition, the villages often had to furnish hundreds of coolies who were pressed into service to carry ammunition and food for the regular units. Contrary to the regular units, the guerillas received no pay.

All units, regular or local, were subordinated to the DRVN Minister of Defense and Commander-in-Chief, VPA, Vo Nguyen Giap. He is extremely popular with his armed forces and thus represents a pillar of Viet-Minh power.

c. The VPA since the Cease-Fire

The 1954 cease-fire found the VPA in both an excellent material and strategic position, but from then on, its activities in the field of further increase of size and armament were to be nominally controlled by the Indian-led International Supervisory and Control Commission (ICSC). Deliveries of new weapons to both sides were to be limited to replacement of worn-out items. As of mid-1957, the ICSC still controls the enforcement of the cease-fire conditions throughout Indochina, but its efforts to limit Viet-Minh armament have been totally frustrated by various methods used by the latter to circumvent control.

Control teams must announce their visits well in advance, with the result that all questionable activities are immediately camouflaged. In addition, the VPA uses alternate delivery routes for its equipment from Red China which are not under the control of the ICSC. Even the Indian member of the Commission soon lost his illusions as to the possibility of enforcing the terms of the cease-fire. While on October 20, 1954, the New York Times reported the Indian chairman of the Commission in Hanoi to have asserted that the "Viet-Minh forces are receiving no build-up of war materials from Communist China," the same Commission acknowledged a few weeks later, that "it was unable to check French charges" that weapons were introduced illegally into the DRVN because "an army of men would be required for any conclusive check."⁵⁸

58. New York Times, December 29, 1954.

That such a build-up actually had taken place was soon affirmed by various sources. During a question period in the British House of Commons on November 8, 1954, the then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Anthony Eden, in reply to a question from the floor, stated the following with regard to Viet-Minh rearmament:

When we survey the position in South-East Asia, we must remember that the agreements reached in Geneva have in no way diminished the formidable military power of (the) Vietminh, to say nothing of that of their Chinese allies. On the contrary, since the Geneva settlements there has been considerable re-organization and rapid expansion of the Vietminh regular army. By the end of this year this will probably mean that the Vietminh will have twice as many regular field formations as at the time of the Geneva settlements.

From the relatively small population which they control -- some 14 million in all -- the Vietminh have already raised more regular troops than either Pakistan or Indonesia with a population of over 70 million....⁵⁹

In France, Prime Minister Pierre Mendes-France, who made possible the Geneva cease-fire, had to confirm as "perfectly exact" French parliamentary figures showing that in the four months following the cease-fire, the USSR and Red China had provided the VPA with 180 howitzers, 340 recoilless cannon, 470 mortars and other equipment.⁶⁰ This contrasts with events in the non-Communist areas of Vietnam and in Cambodia, and Laos, where more than 300,000 French Union troops were withdrawn three years after the cease-fire, and where the national armed forces of Vietnam (South) were reduced from more than 200,000 men to less than 150,000 men.

The VPA, with great publicity, announced in 1955 a reduction of its overall manpower by 80,000 men. This reduction, however, was apparently made mostly from the ranks of the semi-regular Regional Troops and other such units which were in excess of peacetime needs anyway. Local guerilla forces were transformed into "Militia"

59. Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), London, November 8, 1954, Vol. 532, No. 175, column 933.

60. Debats Parlementaires, Paris, December 17, 1954, p. 6515.

(i.e., police) units designed to maintain internal security. In addition, Security Troops have recently been created with specifically political tasks, like their counterparts in the Soviet Union and mainland China.⁶¹

In spite, however, of its repeated professions of peaceful intentions as embodied in the "Pansh' Sheela" (Five Principles) declaration jointly signed by Ho Chi Minh and India's Prime Minister Nehru during the latter's visit in Hanoi in 1954, the DRVN continues the training not only of its military forces but also of the civilian population.

In a remarkably candid article in the VPA's own newspaper, a reporter described in detail how the residents of the villages along the 17th parallel were specially trained by VPA units stationed there in the various arts of guerilla warfare:

Unit "X" responsible for the security guard at the 17th parallel has helped the militia score numerous achievements. Political ideas and lessons dealing with the "militia's responsibility"...were taught to local students. They were also given combat training such as firing practice, marksmanship, grenade throwing, weapons-assembling and dismantling practice, guard and patrolling systems, etc.⁶²

It may be debatable whether such additional military training may be construed as a violation of the 1954 cease-fire provisions which forbid the increase of the armed forces of the signatory powers beyond the levels attained at the time of signature, but it would be equally difficult to explain such training -- particularly in as explosive an area as that along the boundary between the two zones -- a peaceful measure.

The political reliability of the VPA was put to a severe test during the November 1956 uprising, when the local police and militia forces proved themselves unable (or unwilling) to intervene forcefully against their fellow-villagers and two VPA divisions were committed

61. See Chapter 4.

62. Quan Doi Nhan Dan (People's Army), Hanoi, April 2, 1957, article by Truc Ha, "Guerilla Warfare at the (17th) Parallel Has Been Explained to the Residents of the Region."

in part to finish the job. Apparently, the troops fulfilled their assignment as expected. In fact, it seems that, at least for the time being, that the Viet-Minh armed forces are more faithful to the orthodox Communist line than even the Lao-Dong Party.

During a conference of 600 VPA political cadres in Hanoi, reports Nhan Dan of November 9, 1956, several Army Political Commissars warned General Giap that

the Central Committee of the Lao-Dong (Party) and the General Military Committee did not have full knowledge of the situation prevailing throughout the countryside and among the (Army) units... so they cautioned the Congress (of military delegates) against some points in the resolutions..."

because they admitted too clearly the past mistakes of the Party and the regime.

It is also noteworthy that shortly thereafter the Viet-Minh radio and press began to stress the theme of "patriotic duty" in the armed forces in order to prepare its public for the proclamation of compulsory military service for all its citizens, since there were no longer sufficient voluntary enlistments as in previous years to fill its ranks.⁶³

In summation, the Vietnam People's Army is perhaps the strongest present-time prop of the Viet-Minh regime, in many ways more reliable than the badly-shaken Lao-Dong Party itself. It can be expected to remain a trustworthy palace guard as well as Southeast Asia's strongest and most battle-seasoned ground force for many years to come. But its recent attitude of absolute subservience to the Viet-Minh regime has certainly not enhanced its standing among the Vietnamese population.

⁶³. Radio Hanoi, January 22, 1957.

6. Right-Thinking Schools

"School children seem to yearn for the same old rottenness...Their activities consist of composing poems to express regrets for former times."

Thoi-Moi, November 23, 1955.

Like most recently-independent countries of Southeast Asia, the DRVN faces a serious problem in basic as well as in advanced education. The withdrawal of French and Vietnamese national forces from the area north of the 17th parallel, moreover, left the Viet-Minh regime in possession of Vietnam's only full-fledged university, with its well-equipped facilities, classrooms and libraries, and of such additional advanced research centers as the Pasteur Institute, the Radium Institute, and the main center of the famous Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient with its vast historical and archeological collections. In fact, it can be said without exaggeration that the educational plant which fell almost intact into the hands of the DRVN in 1954, is almost second to none in Southeast Asia.

It is to the credit of the regime that it has made utmost use of the existing educational facilities and has no doubt added many new ones to them. Indeed, if one is to believe literacy figures quoted by various Viet-Minh sources, the DRVN today has a literacy rate well over the 80 percent mark, making it the most literate area in Southeast Asia. However, here as in all the other fields of activity of the DRVN, the political aims of the Lao-Dong Party have taken priority over the purely educational objectives.

The education system of the DRVN is divided into two entirely separate tracks: the general education system and the so-called "Mass Education Program." The general education system includes all the regular schools from the elementary grades through the universities. The Mass Education System is mainly concerned with wiping out illiteracy. Contrary to the teachers of the regular school system who are trained educators, the Mass Education System recruits its instructors mainly from various Party and front organizations. Texts used by the Mass Education System generally extol the glories of the regime and of its leaders, with the result that large segments of the population, under the guise of "education," are not only made literate but also "politically conscious," i.e., willing adherents of the regime and its policies.

The regular school system, as will be seen, has its own political structure which pervades it at every level and instills the students with Communism along with his other subjects.

a. The Party Pyramid in the Schools

While school attendance in the DRVN is compulsory within the present means available (for certain remote areas still lack adequate teaching facilities and personnel), accession to higher institutes of learning in many cases is limited to "progressive students," that is, students who have shown their faithfulness to the regime and its policies.

However, each student is given every opportunity to prove his faithfulness through participation in the various party-sponsored organizations which exist in his school and to which most of fellow students as well as his teachers belong. Thus, almost all the children in the primary school grades now belong to the "Youth Pioneer" groups similar to the last detail to those which exist in Communist China, the Soviet Union and the various European satellite countries, with the white shirts or blouses, their blue shorts or skirts, and their bright red scarves. "Young Pioneer" groups work and play together in and after school under the guidance of trained adolescent and adult leaders, away from their parents and other relatives who, in most Asian families, play an important role in fashioning the child's outlook on his world, religion, and society.

As the child grows older and attends a high school or a university, he is likely to join the class group of the "Youth for National Salvation," renamed in May 1955 "Working Youth of Vietnam." If there are students over 17 at the school -- this is most likely the case of the university and other higher research institutes -- they may join the school or class cell of the Lao-Dong Party to which their teachers belong almost automatically. In those cells, students, if they are party members, have equal rights with their professors who are members of the same cell. Unusually, the director or dean of the school is at the same time the cell chairman of the school's Lao-Dong cell.

The most feared body in any school is the Disiplinary Council which acts as a sort of "Politburo" for the whole school and also controls the school police composed of students. Each class is composed of several "study groups" and "study cells," with two of its members acting as cell leader and deputy-leader. These cells

make reports on their professors and fellow-students as to their overall class performance, but particularly with regard to their loyalty to Party principles. Any suspected deviation is immediately reported to and discussed in the Disciplinary Council, with the incriminated subject called in to make his "self-criticism" and to promise to redress the error of his ways.⁶⁴

There is no doubt that such methods have a certain effect upon young minds. In the words of eyewitness reports, great strides have been made towards breaking down the normal parent-child relationships prevailing in the Vietnamese family:

Trained in Vietminh Communist schools, the Vietnamese child has been induced to cast aside all loyalties but those to Ho Chi Minh and world Communism.

Parents can be sure that the nearest spy is their own child. As a member of the local branch of the Communist national youth organization, he is expected to report his parents' words and deeds, how much money and rice they have, whether they practice their religion and whether they are enthusiastic participants in production drives...⁶⁵

However, as in Hungary, traditional values of respect for one's elders and of longing for freedom to speak one's mind manage to survive even years of Communist control. This was very obvious during the upheavals of the fall and winter of 1956, when a courageous (and since suppressed) weekly newspaper in Hanoi, Nhan Van ("The People Asks") published several articles depicting some adverse aspects of life north of the 17th parallel: suicides of persons hounded on false charges, persecutions of intellectuals in the VPA, etc. In its issue of December 10, 1956, the official Party newspaper Nhan-Dan cites a group of students from Chu Van An high school in Hanoi, who, after reading those articles, had openly declared:

64. For an interesting Vietnamese account on the life of a professor in such a school, see Nguyen Tien Lang, Les Chemins de la Liberte, Paris, 1954.

65. Fall, op. cit., p. 149.

Who could love a regime like that depicted in the five issues of Nhan-Van?...Inside us we sensed a feeling of doubt and hatred for the (Lao-Dong) Party and the (DRVN) regime which had trampled on a man and stifled literature. ...We felt that everything we had previously felt about the (Vietnam People's) troops and Communist fighters was wrong.

It remains to be seen whether the temporary softening of the regime's attitude towards self-expression in the arts and literature as expressed in the so-called "One-Hundred-Flowers" Policy⁶⁶ will alleviate the sense of frustration which at present seems to pervade Vietnamese youth north of the 17th parallel. It is equally doubtful whether the regime, particularly in view of this frustration, can truly afford a relaxation of its controls on youth without having to yield in other aspects as well.

66. See Chapter 9: "Brief Bloom for 'One Hundred Flowers'"

7. The Regime and the Minorities

"The aim of the nationalities policy of the Lao-Dong Party is to enable all national groups to achieve equality, unity, progress and prosperity."

Speech by General Vo Nguyen Giap,
at Thai Nguyen, August 10, 1956.

There are two major ethnic minority groups in Vietnam -- the northern mountain tribes composed mainly of T'ai and Meo groups and other minorities similar to those living in neighboring Yunnan and Kwang-si, and the southern mountain tribes living in the uplands of Central Vietnam south of the 17th parallel, composed mainly of fairly primitive remnants of the Vietnam's originally Malayo-Indonesian population.⁶⁷ Total approximate figures for Vietnam's ethnic minorities may vary between 1.5 to 2.2 million.

Traditional Vietnamese policy towards the mountain tribes has been a gradual absorption of the minority tribes into the national community -- a policy which is generally shared by most Southeast Asian countries with regard to their minorities.

In this regard, the present "nationalities policy" of the DRVN constitutes a clean break with the past in favor of an imitation of the minorities policy developed over the past forty years by the Soviet Union and later on by Communist China. Like those countries, the DRVN has erected over the past three years since the cease-fire several "autonomous areas," in which the various nationality groups are reportedly given an opportunity to develop themselves along certain lines carefully laid down by the central government. What this policy amounts to, in fact, is -- to the Vietnamese, at least -- a continuation of the colonial "divide-and-rule" system which was willing to encourage local autonomist tendencies in order to discourage the union of those various elements against the central authority.

⁶⁷. According to available evidence, the present-day Vietnamese migrated from China into Vietnam between 400 to 250 B.C. and, in a 1,000-mile march along the coast which ended in 1714 by the occupation of the southernmost tip of the country, wrested their present habitat from the tribal groups and the Champa and Cambodian kingdoms which occupied it.

By a careful system of what one could call "balanced favoritism," which consists in perpetuating local antagonisms through emphasis upon and selective encouragement of differences in dialects and customs, the central authority succeeds in focussing upon itself loyalties which otherwise might have been directed towards a drive for genuine regional autonomy. This policy has worked with apparent success both in the USSR and in Communist China, and if imitation is a form of flattery, the DRVN no doubt greatly flattered Peking by copying almost to the word the "Nationalities Statute of the Chinese People's Republic."

Since the 1954 cease-fire, the DRVN has methodically gone about the business of setting up "autonomous areas" in its zone of control. In actual fact, these "autonomous areas" have hardly more autonomy than any other regular "inter-zone"⁶⁸ and maintain an internal structure based entirely upon the DRVN systems of local, provincial and inter-zone "Committees for Resistance and Administration" (UBKC/HC). The appearance of "autonomy" is largely limited to the inclusion of tribal representatives in the regional UBKC/HC, but this again is no innovation, for even under the French administration there existed a T'ai autonomous area with its capital at Lai-Chau under the leadership of Deo-Van-Long, the traditional chieftain of the T'ai Federation.⁶⁹

The so-called "Thai-Meo Autonomous Area"⁷⁰ was created within the exact borders of the former T'ai Federation by a decree of Ho Chi Minh on April 29, 1955, as the result of a decision of the DRVN National Assembly of March 20-26, 1955. It covers about 20,000 square miles and includes 20 minority tribes. The largest tribal groups are the T'ai (190,000) and the Meo (60,000), with smaller groups (Man, Lu, Xa, Lolo, etc.) making up the rest. The Chairman of the Area UBKC/HC is Sa Van Minh, a T'ai who had been Viet-Minh chief for the province of Son-La.

68. See page 21, with regard to the DRVN regional administration.

69. The French-sponsored T'ai Federation functioned from 1948 until 1953, when Viet-Minh forces overran Lai-Chau. Many of the followers of Deo-Van-Long, who had fought the Viet-Minh for many years, were later on executed by the DRVN.

70. The spelling "T'ai" is often used in order to enable readers to differentiate between the mountain tribes of that name inhabiting the whole Southeast Asian watershed area and the inhabitants of Thailand (Siam) whom are also called "Thai." The Viet-Minh, in its English-language literature, refers to the T'ai tribes as "Thai" and this spelling is respected here.

However, as in similar occurrences in the Soviet Union and Communist China, there is precious little "autonomy" contained in the statute granted by Hanoi to the "Autonomous Area." Like all other UBKC/HC, the regional committee is under the direct authority of the central government (Article 3); must follow the system of "democratic centralism"⁷¹ (Article 5) and must, with the help of the Hanoi government, teach the mountain tribes (who are known for their resistance to the DRVN) "to reach agreed views" (Article 21).

The official newspaper of the Lao-Dong Party was somewhat more direct about the usefulness of the "Autonomous Area" to the Viet-Minh regime. In its issues of May 11, 1955, Nhan Dan described the tasks of the Area's administration to consist of the following:

- (1) To form units of regular military troops, units of People's Partisan Troops, and units of Security Troops to protect the zone;
- (2) Develop a corps of local (Lao-Dong Party) cadres;
- (3) Propagate belief in President Ho Chi Minh, the Lao-Dong Party, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The next tribal area to be created also was a revival of a formerly French-sponsored attempt at local autonomy, for in 1948 the French had set up in northeastern Vietnam an area which sought to englobe the crazy-quilt patch-work of tribal splintergroups living there into a homogenous entity. For lack of any common characteristics, the area was simply known as "Cao-Bac-Lang," a combination of the names of three provinces of Cao-Bang, Bac-Kan and Lang-Son included in the new territory. The Viet-Minh, faced with the same puzzling problem, solved it by simply calling the "autonomous area" the "Viet-Bac" (i.e., northern Vietnamese) Autonomous Area."

Created by DRVN decree of August 10, 1956, the Viet-Bac Area includes the three provinces mentioned above and parts of the three neighboring provinces of Thai Nguyen, Tuyen Quang and Bac Giang

⁷¹. "Democratic centralism," in Communist parlance, means unquestioning obedience to orders from above once they have been adopted by the party's central leadership.

with a total area of 26,000 square kilometers and a population composed of 11 different ethnic groups and a total of about 800,000 inhabitants. The Chairman of this UBKC/HC is VPA Brigadier General Chu Van Tan, a member of the Tho minority. Chu Van Tan has been a member of the Central Committee of the Lao-Dong Party. Since prior to becoming Chairman of the "Autonomous Area" he was Chairman and military commander of the Viet-Minh inter-zone which covered exactly the same territory, it is easy to see that any change in status of the area within the Viet-Minh structure is minor and hardly conducive to effective autonomy.⁷²

To all appearances, however, this "divide-and-rule" policy of the DRVN must meet with a favorable response at least in Hanoi or in Peking, for according to recent news, yet a third "autonomous area" known temporarily as "Lao-Ha-Yen" (for the provinces of Lao Kay, Ha Giang and Yen-Bay which make it up) was created by a governmental decree of March 25, 1957. Here again, the populations which are included in the autonomous area are so diversified (as any ethnographic map of Vietnam will show immediately) that the creation of such a thoroughly artificial division does not raise the risk of local nationalist uprisings, the more so as all the news releases from those areas emphasize the thorough propaganda and indoctrination work which the DRVN carries on in those areas through special minorities schools and cadre courses.

The problem is somewhat different with regard to the ethnic minorities living on the mountain plateaus of southern Central Vietnam. These tribes, the Kohu, Tarai, Rhade, etc., have little in common with the Vietnamese and are at a lower level of development. Yet even here, the Viet-Minh have found elements susceptible to indoctrination and now have special broadcast programs in the languages of those minorities. One Rhade tribesman, Y Ngon Niekdam, is now a representative in the National Assembly; a member of the Sedang tribe is a member of the DLD Central Committee, while others have been sent to the Soviet Union for "training."⁷³

72. For an excellent appraisal of DRVN minority policies, see "Minorities under the Viet-Minh," in *Eastern World*, London, November 1955, pp. 17-18.

73. Fall, op. cit., p. 80.

It is difficult to judge, at present, how much success the Viet-Minh has met in its attempts to woo the mountain tribes or whether the whole scheme, regardless of its internal results, is merely a propaganda show window to attract the attention of other Southeast Asian minority groups which at present face difficulties in adjusting to the development of the new national states of the area. (Communist China has done so with its "Thai Autonomous Area") and no doubt Hanoi can do likewise at least in neighboring Laos whose mountain tribes are of the same stock as those across the border in the "Thai-Meo Autonomous Area."

Whatever the final outcome of the Viet-Minh's minority policy, one can safely pressure that it will be directed towards upholding the interests of the regime rather than towards those of the mountain tribes.

8. Economic Regimentation

"One of the no less important difficulties which impede the restoration of our economy is the plague of embezzlement and waste..."

Thoi Moi, December 14, 1955.

The DRVN's economic problems are twofold: as a Communist state it is committed to a land reform which, in its first stages, eliminates the landlords and gives the land to the smallholders; and which, in the second stage, collectivizes the newly-created small-holdings. At the same time, the DRVN cannot afford to alienate a large mass of peasants, because (until such time as the industrial workers gain a sufficient amount of numerical strength) it has to rely upon the peasant masses for the bulk of its following, its labor force and its army.

While the DRVN thus fights a political-economic battle on the agricultural front, it is at the same time engaged, as every other Communist state, in an extensive industrialization program for which it needs extensive outside support from Red China, the Soviet Union and the latter's European satellites. Both the agricultural and the industrialization program are carried on in the midst of a race against an ever-increasing population pressure and the need to show a good "face" to South Vietnam, where a Free Vietnamese government, with Western help, builds up its own economy.

a. The Race towards Industrialization

According to Marxist theories, the revolution is carried forward by the alliance of workers and peasants, but mainly basing itself upon the former. The average Vietnamese farmer is considered too much attached to his land to become an enthusiastic tool to carry forward a program of state-ownership of all land and industry.

Hence, industrialization in a Communist land not only is important to absorb the surplus manpower which most of the lesser developed countries have in abundance, but it is also an excellent tool for mass control and indoctrination. A Vietnamese farmer is a largely an individualist, working perhaps with his own family and a few helpers. An industrial worker generally is uprooted from his native environment and but a small cog in a vast machine, where he is within easy reach of political workers, cell "activists," and the various organizations of the "Fatherland Front."

To carry out such an industrialization program, North Vietnam possesses adequate mineral and manpower resources. According to impartial sources, an impressive effort has been made over the past three years to rehabilitate the already-existing French-built industrial establishments and to improve and repair the road and rail network which has been well-nigh wrecked by Communist Viet-Minh attacks and sabotages during the war years.

Since 1954, great strides have been made by the DRVN in restoring communications. Thanks to extensive Chinese Communist assistance and the use of thousands of Vietnamese forced laborers working under most trying conditions and a minimum of tools, the regime has indeed re-established its major railroad connections with Red China via Lang-Son and Mu-Nan-Kwan and via the old Haiphong-Yunnan Railroad. The Lang-Son rail connection was restored first and was instrumental in permitting large-scale deliveries of Soviet and Red Chinese aid to the DRVN. The Yunnan railroad is more important to Red China as the easiest means of access to Southwestern China. In its case, Red China apparently has fallen heir to the French-Nationalist Chinese Agreement of February 1946, for a Radio Hanoi broadcast of April 19, 1957, announced that a Red Chinese-Viet-Minh agreement has been concluded in a "spirit of mutual cooperation between the two brotherly countries," which will give Red China custom-exempt transit rights for goods imported or exported from China via Haiphong.

In the field of industrial equipment, the DRVN has scored some successes thanks to Soviet Bloc aid, but at a heavy price in terms of lowered living standards for the Vietnamese workers. While exact figures of such aid to the DRVN are not known -- particularly not those concerning military equipment delivered before and after the cease-fire -- the economic aid agreement signed between the DRVN, the USSR and Red China in 1955 provides for aid and equipment to the amounts of 400 million Soviet rubles and 800 million Chinese Communist yuan.⁷⁴ Such monetary figures are, of course, completely meaningless, for the official exchange rates of the Soviet Bloc currencies have no

74. Mende, Tibor, "The Two Viet-Nams -- Proving Ground of Asia." English translation of an article which originally appeared in French in the Paris newspaper Le Figaro, April 1, 1957.

relation with their actual purchasing power⁷⁵ or with the prices of the merchandise delivered under such programs.

Both Viet-Minh and uninformed Western sources have made much of the so-called "Twenty-Five Industrial Projects" which Soviet Bloc aid is helping to build in North Vietnam. In fact, the recent issues of the DRVN's English-language bulletin published in Burma have carried photographs of such asserted new constructions.⁷⁶

Experts familiar with the area have pointed out that in most cases, those "new constructions" are in fact re-constructions or improvements of facilities which have existed under the French colonial administration. Tibor Mende, in his above-cited article, makes the point of the tin mines of Tinh Tuc which, according to him, had been opened "last October" (i.e., 1956). Likewise, Viet-Nam Information Bulletin No. 6 of February 8, 1957, carries photographs of the "inauguration ceremony." In actual fact, the Tinh Tuc mine had been reopened by the Viet-Minh as early as 1952 to pay the USSR and Red China in part for their arms deliveries. This fact was reported in other sources as early as April 1954.⁷⁷

A great many of those constructions must be included in the vast array of industrial "prestige" constructions with which Communist regimes like to surround themselves, particularly when such projects are likely to impress neighboring non-Communist countries. Tibor Mende apparently sensed this in his appraisal of North Vietnamese industrial development:

What the North Vietnamese are trying to achieve at the present time with the guidance of their Russian and Chinese allies is deliberately kept secret in order to make it a bigger surprise when it is disclosed. They

75. The Soviet ruble is quoted theoretically at 4 to the U.S. dollar, but in April 1957, the USSR decreed that tourists would receive henceforth 10 rubles for each dollar. Thus, the 400 million rubles would be worth \$100 million under one system and only \$40 million under the other. Viet-Minh trade with the USSR is insignificant; according to the November 1957 issue of the bulletin of the Soviet Foreign Trade Ministry, 1956 trade (in rubles) amounted to 14.9 million. Similar figures for North Korea and Outer Mongolia were 637 million and 631 million, respectively.

76. News Service of the DRVN, Rangoon, Viet-Nam Information Bulletin (weekly), issues No. 5,6,7, 1957.

77. Fall, op. cit., p. 100.

probably intend to work out some sort of "window display surprise" for the admiration of the peoples of Southeast Asia....When that day comes, one should not forget the thousands of dead (workers) sacrificed to the ideological obsessions of the (Viet-Minh) regime, and those who had been forced to make the sacrifice of the best years of their lives to labor at a ruthless pace...

This ruthless pace of industrialization has made victims in more than one field. The Economic Sub-Commission of the DRVN National Assembly, in its report for 1956, acknowledged quite a few shortcomings in the Economic Restoration Plan, such as the following:

...inadequate attention paid to the development of light industries and handicrafts, and shortcomings in the management of public properties and leadership of production. These shortcomings have created difficulties and limited the achievements. Some present difficulties are: agricultural production is still in an elementary stage; production is still below the people's requirements, and so on. The Government policy of economic rehabilitation for 1957 is fundamentally correct because it aims at increasing production to improve the people's livelihood...⁷⁸

A more careful reading of the above statement would uncover the following: there is an acute shortage of consumer goods for the improvement of the population's living standards; there is waste and embezzlement in the state-managed enterprises; and, in view of the population's restiveness, the Government has decided to do what most European satellites had been forced to do after several years of intensive industrialization drives: switch to an increased amount of consumer goods production.

In other words, after the initial period of revolutionary enthusiasm, the regime now has to face the cold facts of its own economic situation. Like many other governments born in rebellion, it now finds that it was easier to find guerillas to blow up a locomotive plant than to find the engineers to run a railroad. Incompetent managers, mainly chosen for their obedience to the Communist cause, were put in high positions of industrial responsibility

78. Viet-Nam Information Bulletin, No. 6/57, February 8, 1957, p. 7.

with disastrous results, if one is to judge, for example, by the corruption scandals uncovered in one of the major towns, Nam Dinh. In less than one year, the managers for the city's restoration had misappropriated 20.4 million dong (about \$30,000 or £ 10,000), wasted another 578 million, and mismanaged nearly 500 tons of scarce rice and 35,795 days of labor.⁷⁹

As a last resort against such "un-Socialist" practices, the DRVN had to resort to the "capitalist" practices of strict business-like management and cost accounting. Quite recently, in a little-known communique, the Office of the Prime Minister of the DRVN announced on April 15, 1957, that in order

To strengthen the commercial management of State factories, the Premier's Office has just issued a communique dealing with the application, step by step, of a regime of economic control. ...

...It is aimed at developing incentive in the commercial management of factories, at increasing production and productivity, at improving the quality of goods, at lowering costs, at increasing the working capital, at avoiding immobilization of capital, at combating waste, at accumulating capital for the State...

According to this regime of economic control, the State will entrust the factories themselves with the management of capital and property. The factories will be entirely responsible for their profits and losses.

...the State will determine the production responsibilities, including expenses relating to the production of goods...

...the factories have the right to set aside a definite percentage of their profits to set up a bonus fund to gradually improve their workers' working and living conditions on the basis of increasing productivity and lowering costs.⁸⁰

79. Nhan Dan, March 22, 1956. This, however, is not an exceptional case. Viet-Minh press reports in 1957 also frequently refer to such occurrences.

80. Emphasis added.

This statement must be considered as nothing less than revolutionary, for it now enforces upon the fledgling Viet-Minh economy the strict standards of advanced industrial production, adding in some twists which the enlightened capitalist systems of the Western world have long discarded, such as "speed-ups" and making the improvement of living and working conditions of the workers dependent upon the factory lowering its production cost and increasing its productivity.^{80A} Here again, the hapless management and labor force is faced with the fact that it is the State -- and not the people who work in or run the factory -- which arbitrarily sets what it considers proper production costs. As is known from other Communist states, this bureaucratic control of industrial production generally results in unrealistic standards and reduces, rather than increases, production efficiency - not to speak of management and labor morale.

b. Social Revolution through Land Reform

Like most Asian countries, Viet-Nam is largely agricultural, with nearly 90% of the population engaged either in the cultivation or the sale of agricultural products. Thus, no government in Asia can maintain itself in power in the long run without peasant support, for it is the peasant class that furnishes it with the laborers to build its factories and the soldiers to fight its wars as well as with the hard-earned tax money to run the government with.

The Viet-Minh regime had sensed this quite clearly in 1945 when it made its first large-scale drive for the affection of the Vietnamese. Personal taxes were abolished immediately -- to be restored in various and heavier forms slightly later, when the DRVN had gained its hold over the population and needed the revenue -- and effective measures were taken to lower interest rates on money loans.

However, until December 1953, the regime did not directly attack landownership as such, the more so as in the majority of the areas under its control in North and Central Vietnam, most landholdings were already too small to be economically efficient.⁸¹

^{80A}. Interestingly enough for a Communist state, Nhan Dan of March 29, 1957 proclaimed piece work day - abandoned in Western countries for the past 40 years as unfavorable to the workers - as an "equitable method of working!" By October 1957, the new Hanoi Match factory had switched to piece work pay for its workers.

⁸¹. See page 18, footnote 23.

But here again, Communist Party doctrine prevailed over even the economic welfare of the peasants themselves, and minute parcels of land were further redistributed while their owners were tried as "rich farmers" and "landlords." Lenin himself supplied the answer to the obvious question why a Communist regime would split up land among the farmers when such land was too small to support them all, not to speak of increasing their living standards:

The proletarians tell the peasants: we shall help you to realize your desires in the direction of an ideal capitalism -- for an equalitarian redistribution of landed property is nothing but an idealization of capitalism from the point of view of the small-holder. At the same time we shall demonstrate to you the impossibility of such a system and the necessity to pass onward to the collective culture of the land.⁸²

In other words, the Communist regime would at first give the farmer a small piece of land to satisfy his hunger for land ownership. Then, it would so burden him down with taxes and other inconveniences that, faced with the alternative of starving on his land or "voluntarily" joining a collective farm, he eventually chooses the latter -- of his own free will, of course.

This system has been applied in the Soviet Union in the late 1920's, and since then the pattern has been rigidly repeated in Eastern Europe, North Korea and Communist China. In the Soviet Bloc outside the USSR, the program has not yet run its full course but has been applied with varying degrees of success.

In Vietnam's Communist zone, the Land Reform legislation passed by the DRVN falls into several categories: (1) the series of decrees dealing with the reduction of land rents and usurious loan practices, without directly affecting ownership of the land; (2) legislation sorting out the various social classes so that pressure can be applied to a clearly defined social group at a time; (3) actual land reform legislation which affects land ownership, tenure and methods of redistribution; and (4) decrees and government orders creating collective farms. These will be discussed briefly below.

82. Lenin, V.I., "La Revolution proletarienne et le renegat Kautsky," in his Oeuvres Choisies (Selected Works, French edition), Vol. VII, p. 201.

(1) Reduction in Land Rent

Needless to say that the DRVN decrees dealing with the reduction of the heavy land rents exacted by many land owners were quite popular at first with the small farmers and tenants. Decree No. 78/SL of July 14, 1949 reduced all rents by a flat 25% -- except in the case where such lands belonged to VPA soldiers and cadres of the new regime.⁸³

Another decree, Circular 33/NVL of August 21, 1949, permitted the confiscation of lands belonging to Frenchman and Vietnamese "traitors," i.e., anti-Communists; while another series of decrees in May 1950 wiped out most debts owned by the peasants.

(2) Discrimination between Social Classes

Engaged in a death struggle with the French, the Viet-Minh clearly realized that it could not antagonize any large segment of the peasant class. Thus, in true Communist fashion, it set out to divide the adversary in order to conquer it. In one sweeping piece of legislation,⁸⁴ the Population Classification Decree No. 239/B.TLP of March 1953, every Vietnamese man, woman and child was caught in a net of Marxist ideology run wild, with the population, which had lived harmoniously together for centuries, neatly labeled into 5 agricultural and 12 non-agricultural categories, with non-agricultural categories carefully assimilated to those engaged in farming and the while enrobed in a thick layer of Communist jargon which seeks to translate human productivity and numbers of pigs into pounds of rice (Section D, Article 3).

In addition, it considers "social class" transmissible from parents to child like the color of one's skin or the stripes on a tiger, with children considered "landlords" even if they are raised by a poor family and former wealthy wives of poor farmers still considered as "landlords" for a whole year after their marriage.

Prophetically enough, the framers of the decree (which is signed by the present DRVN Prime Minister Pham Van Dong) foresaw that population classification is "a very complex operation which might be accompanied by easily-committed errors." This warning is,

⁸³. Inter-Ministerial Circular No. 152/NVI, July 23, 1949.

⁸⁴. See Appendix I.

in fact, included in the decree itself. But little did Pham Van Dong know how much it was to contribute to the chaotic conditions which reign to day among the farmers of North Vietnam. He also could not know that his government would have to go through a humiliating "Mistakes-Correction Campaign" to undo even in part the grievous damage done by this decree to the standing of the DRVN in the eyes of its own population.⁸⁵

In the words of a sympathetic British reporter, H.C. Taussig,

(Land Reform) Teams went out to introduce the Agrarian Reform according to their own admission, they did not pay sufficient attention to local advice and became responsible for the most serious, indeed chaotic, conditions. They wrongly classified peasants which led to grave injustices and, eventually, to widespread dissatisfaction...

Be this as it may, the fact remains that (land reform) led to wrong assessment...and finally led to some kind of village terror...⁸⁶

One of the most serious problems of the DRVN today is how to get out from under the cloud of its own population-classification blunders, for, contrary to its intended aim of directing popular wrath at succeeding classes of land-owners and rich peasants until all but the smallest were eliminated and the latter ready for collectivization, it succeeded in drawing upon itself the collective wrath not only of the peasants but also of many of the small Lao-Dong Party cadres who were peasant origin themselves.⁸⁷

The problem is of some magnitude, for in his report to the Viet-Minh National Assembly on January 15, 1957, Nguyen Duy Trinh, the former President of the Viet-Minh stronghold south of the 17th parallel known as Inter-Zone V and now Vice-Minister of Agriculture, had to acknowledge the fact that the government was in no position to make financial amends to the wrongly accused persons:

85. See Chapter 4. See also, H.C. Taussig, op. cit., "Land Reform Abuses."

86. Ibid.

87. See pages 38 - 41.

In reply to questions (from the floor) on the problems of indemnity for wrongly classified and wrongly accused persons, Mr. Nguyen Duy Trinh pointed out that their main properties...will be restored to them with means for earning a living. Confronted with the present financial situation, the Government cannot use the national budget to provide indemnities for all, he said, adding: "The peasants will have to make concessions to one another and negotiate and settle the problem among themselves."⁸⁸

We already have seen with how much success the "settling-among-themselves" is carried out in the DRVN's rural areas.⁸⁹

(3) Land Reform Legislation

With the gradual implementation of steps (1) and (2) well under way, the Viet-Minh began in 1953 the implementation of the actual owner and its re-distribution to others. Begun in April 1953 with the publication of several statutes on land tenure,⁹⁰ it ended in December 1953 with the approval by a hastily-reconvened National Assembly of the Agrarian Reform Law of December 3, 1953, to take effect on January 1, 1954.⁹¹

The law itself contains nothing particularly startling in terms of Communist land reforms, with the usual terms of expropriation of rich farmers.

It is only at the very end that, as in many other pieces of Viet-Minh legislation, the iron fist appears in the velvet glove: Article 34 of the Agrarian Reform Law leaves the implementation of the program in the hands of the local "Farmers' Associations" and other lower cadres, with the disastrous results which we already saw.

Article 35 expressly forbids any "resistance" to the land reform, and, finally, Article 36 institutes the dreaded "Special People's Tribunals" which did so much in eventually wrecking the land reform until they were abolished by the Viet-Minh government itself.

88. Vietnam News Agency, Hanoi, January 16, 1957.

89. See page 40.

90. Fall, op. cit., pp. 125-127.

91. The Law was promulgated under authority of Government Decree No. 197/HL of December 19, (the anniversary of the Viet-Minh attack upon the French in 1946) 1953, signed by Ho Chi Minh himself.

There is little need in describing the senseless purges that now began throughout the territory under control of the Viet-Minh. Not a sector of Vietnamese society, poor or rich, for the Viet-Minh or against, was spared its effects. Mass hatred was whipped up by young graduates of various Communist training schools with little experience in the problems of the farmers. In the words of a responsible news source, the land reform.

...was carried out in an excessively brutal manner by inexperienced cadres mostly originating from the armed forces, who had received only a few weeks training in (land reform problems) prior to being sent into the villages, their heads full of badly-assimilated theories.⁹²

Regardless of the loss of popularity which it now faces, the DRVN regime has steadfastly stuck to its tactics. While now regretting the "mistakes" made, it nevertheless seems to derive a sort of somer joy from the fact that "in the North, the landowner class has been fundamentally overthrown," even at the cost of letting faithful Party cadres be executed together with the landlords. Unmindful of local conditions, apparently with its eyes fastened upon the "true north" of Marxist ideology, the Viet-Minh and its Communist Party faithfully plod on with the land reform on its way to the last stage.

(4) And Now -- Collectivization

The Viet-Minh were more careful with this last stage of land reform because they clearly realized the force of its impact upon a population deeply dedicated to the principle of individual land ownership.

Here again, the first move began innocuously enough with the creation of so-called "Labor Exchange Teams" (in which one farmer would lend another his water buffalo or plow and the other would lend him whatever he needed for his fields) and, at a later stage, of "Production Cooperatives" and "Marketing Cooperatives," in which the

92. Georges Chaffard, "Le gouvernement nord-vietnamien doit affronter a son tour le mecontentement populaire," (The North Vietnamese Government in turn must face Popular Discontent) in Le Monde (weekly ed.). Paris, December 5, 1956.

member farmers of a given village would market their crops together and split the receipts. Once such a Cooperative is started in a village, a great deal of pressure is exerted upon recalcitrant farmers to join it "voluntarily" -- lest they be declared disloyal to the regime or even "reactionary."

The system by now has been spread throughout the northern area, including the "Autonomous Areas" inhabited by the ethnic minorities. In their case, since they produce only little rice, they must "co-operate" in marketing fixed quotas of resins, cattle and construction wood, which the government purchasing agencies buy from them at set prices which are far lower than regular market prices.

Outright collectivization has been treated gingerly, particularly in view of the cool reception given to other agricultural reforms forced upon the Vietnamese peasantry by the DRVN.

Yet, on November 19, 1955, without much fanfare, Radio Hanoi announced that two "State Farms" in Nghe An and Ninh Binh (Central Vietnam) had been provided with mechanical equipment for agricultural and forest clearing work. The report ends with the ominous words: "Other similar farms will be established later." And a few days later, a DRVN report for the first time called these farms by their real name -- "kolkhozes."⁹³

The Viet-Minh has called the last stage of its land reform drive the "Dien Bien Phu of Land Reform." As can be seen from the foregoing pages, the battle is still far from over. In fact, it still cannot be safely predicted as to which side -- the peasants or the regime -- will emerge the victor.

c. The Outlook for the Viet-Minh Economy

To be sure, the Viet-Minh has achieved not inconsiderable results in its drive for economic development. The very extensive damages caused by the war years (it must not be forgotten that the heaviest battles were fought in the North) have created a heavy burden for the regime.

93. "Kolkhoze" is the Russian-language word for "collective farms."

In addition it is saddled with a chronical overpopulation problem which, though somewhat lightened by the exodus of nearly 900,000 anti-Communists refugees to Vietnam south of the 17th parallel, is still important. Furthermore, a great many skilled factory workers, miners, mechanics and administrators were among the Vietnamese who refused to stay in the North with the Viet-Minh.

Above all, however, the inept handling of the land reform problem by the regime and its Communist cadres has created a whole series of difficulties which the DRVN could have easily avoided if it had not been so intent upon aping its Communist brother-states in Asia and Europe. The fact that the fall uprisings of 1956 did not degenerate into a generalized rebellion of the Hungary type is more due to Ho Chi Minh's personal acumen than to the measures taken by his subordinates before or even after the incidents. The removal from the limelight of some of the most conspicuous personalities associated with the land reform errors has perhaps reduced popular pressure for immediate changes. On the other hand, the regime seems to make no apologies for what has happened; it still considers the persecutions and executions as merely a bad outcropping of a basically sound policy. It is quite obvious however, to the impartial observer that the Vietnamese peasantry is far from ready to accept Lenin's demonstration that an independent small farmer cannot make a decent living without control and guidance of an almighty State bureaucracy, and has to join a kolkhoze to improve his living standards.

Time will only tell if, in the face of a more successful agrarian reform in the neighboring free Asian countries, the Viet-Minh will see the error of its policies. This, coming from a Communist regime, is very unlikely, however, and further troubles are no doubt in store for the economic system of the DRVN.

9. Brief Bloom for "One Hundred Flowers"

"...the press under our regime...is
a tool of the struggle for the people."

DRVN Decree on Freedom of the Press,
December 14, 1956.

As in the case of all other Communist regimes, the DRVN cannot afford to leave any field of endeavor untouched from government control or party control. This already must have become apparent in this brief survey of Viet-Minh relationships with the administrative apparatus, justice and police, the army, religion, and the schools -- not to speak of industry and agriculture.

In other words, it seems quite clear that there is no person in the DRVN, no matter how humble or far removed from Hanoi he be, that does not, in some way or another fall under the political and economic control of the Communist-controlled government. The control may sometimes be lax or not readily apparent, but it is always there.

This is particularly true in the field of letters and mass communications which in all Communist countries is one area subject to particularly rigid controls, in spite of some temporary relaxations granted from time to time to head off a potentially explosive situation. This, however, should not be confused with freedom of thought in the usual sense: like the "Mistakes-Correction Campaign" of 1956-1957, it is merely a lesser of two evils -- to let the indignant population express itself in a limited and government -- controlled area of thought lest it take its rights in its own hands where government control cannot reach it as readily.

With schools and the most important newspapers as well as all the radio stations under its direct supervision, the Viet-Minh system truly controls most of the means of reaching the population within its boundaries and is even capable of presenting its viewpoint to most of the rest of Southeast Asia, thanks to its powerful Radio Hanoi transmitter. The government also controls the production and import of paper as well as all but a few printing plants. Writers must submit to Government control if they want to see their works printed.

But, as has been stated above, the DRVN did permit one experiment in the winter of 1956-57 with a mild "opposition" press, in accordance with the "One-Hundred-Flowers-Blooming" policy which also had made its

appearance in Red China.⁹⁴

A few literary magazines and reviews, such as Dat-Moi (New Soil), Van Nghe (Literature and Art) and the already-cited Nhan Van (The People Asks) brought forth articles which courageously stated many of the things which everyone in the DRVN knew more or less but hesitated to say out loud even in front of one's children -- that many people had been driven dangerously close to suicide through relentless persecutions, that no freedom of thought was allowed, and that literature was reduced to a servile repetition of officially approved themes.

In spite of the fact that the 1946 Constitution formally protects the intellectuals,⁹⁵ freedom of thought had been manhandled so badly throughout the first ten years of the Viet-Minh regime, that Ho Chi Minh felt compelled to issue a Presidential Decree in December 1956, again guaranteeing all the rights of a free press.⁹⁶ In fact, however, the decree provided the Government with several new controls on press freedom which it did not formally possess before. In the words of the official text:

...the press under our regime...is a tool of struggle for the people. It must serve the interests of the country and the people, (and) safeguard the People's Democratic Regime...

Needless to say, all newspapers concerned clearly understood the hint. Nhan Van, the new weekly which had first had the courage to face the storm, found itself saddled with a strike of its printing personnel which protested against the "destructive" attitude of the publication. It was closed down by the government after the fifth issue.⁹⁷

94. The "One-Hundred-Flowers-blooming" policy refers to a statement of Marx that many flowers have a pleasant scent with no one having all of it, e.g., there are several roads to true Communism, with no system having a monopoly to it. See also Reuters report "Freedom Tasted in North Vietnam," in New York Times, May 26, 1957, on the short-lived effects of the "One-Hundred-Flowers" policy.

95. Article 13. "The rights and interests of both manual and intellectual workers are guaranteed."

96. Presidential Decree No. 282/SL of December 14, 1956.

97. "The Ho Chi Minh Way," in The Economist, London, January 5, 1957.

Van Nghe, as the official publication of the Vietnamese Artists and Writers Association -- an organization belonging to the "Fatherland Front" -- was in a better position to criticize state interference in the arts with a comparatively greater amount of impunity.

It did so in its issue No. 162, of March 7, 1957, with a scathing article on "superficiality" in North Vietnamese literature, which contained a great deal more than a mere indictment of literary shallowness.⁹⁸

Here again, one must make allowance for the necessary double-talk required under a Communist regime to permit appearance of the article without mortally endangering its writer as well as the editors; but the ideas which the author sought to express come through quite clearly:

That we should strive to ward off superficiality is a correct and necessary thing to do; the men of letters demand it, and so do the masses with still greater urgency. But a few people think that superficiality springs from the very nature of our new literature, and others, in the same spirit, charge it with idolatry to the Soviet regime. Indirectly, what they really want to say is: Because the Party leadership meddles in literature, literature cannot help becoming superficial and formula-like. Should it be completely free, literature would be immeasurably richer. ...

As for the new hackneyed types found in all literary works of the post-August revolution period, we do not like them, not in the least! There is the perfect model of the section secretary who is able to solve all questions; there are the mobilizations of the masses with the three ever-present phases of peasants suffering, peasants arising, and peasants victorious. ...

We wholeheartedly hate superficiality, but we do not like the idea that that word is used as a weapon to deal a blow

⁹⁸. It is equally noteworthy that the editor of Van Nghe prefaced the article with a short note explaining that the middle section and the concluding section had been eliminated from the article "owing to lack of space..."

to the righteous principles which guide Marxist-Leninist literature. However, hateful our "formula" system may be, its motive is to voice what is new and what is good. Now, solely because of insufficient study and lack of creativeness, it has degenerated into clichés, and yet its good intention is certain.

The foregoing hardly needs amplification. As in all other fields of activity, the Viet-Minh has thoroughly mastered its control of literature and freedom of artistic and journalistic expression, in the hope of further developing popular enthusiasm for its programs. It has merely succeeded in creating a series of spiritless literary parrots, with a corresponding decline of all intellectual activities to a dangerous low. The wave of anti-intellectualism which for a while flooded the DRVN has now apparently abated, however, for the regime clearly recognized that it has not yet reached the stage where it can (or at least think it can) dispense with great numbers of intellectuals. The official Party newspaper Nhan Dan of December 13, 1956, felt it necessary to warn the population that:

It is impossible to build socialism without intellectuals... Three workmen cannot do the work of an engineer, nor all the nurses in a hospital replace the doctor.

It is, of course, never too late for the Viet-Minh regime to clearly recognize its mistakes in its treatment of freedom of thought and artistic creation, but it is highly unlikely that it can give leeway to independent minds in this field without endangering the Communist state as a whole. Perhaps the most fitting epitaph to intellectual freedom in North Vietnam was written by a young Vietnamese refugee who recently escaped south and who said:

"The 'One Hundred Flowers' exhibited by Ho Chi Minh soon faded -- they were made of Viet-Minh paper. But while they lasted, some people in North Vietnam attempted to grow real ones of their own."

10. The Friendly Neighbor

"The National Assembly approves the (DRVN) government's policy aimed at further consolidating fraternal friendship...with other countries in the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union and China...

The assistance given by the Soviet Army to the government and people of Hungary fully conforms to justice."

Foreign policy resolution of the DRVN National Assembly, January 2, 1957.

As a member of the bloc "of fraternal countries" of the Soviet orbit, the DRVN's foreign policy closely parallels that of the other Communist nations. Recognized by them since February 1950, the Viet-Minh regime now maintains embassies in Moscow, Peking, and most of the other European and Asian Communist countries. It also was recognized by Yugoslavia in 1950 and, contrary to the then attitude of the other Soviet satellites, accepted the recognition inspite of the bitter feud between Stalin and Tito.

However, as a rather distant and somewhat isolated satellite of the Communist world, the DRVN in many instances had to rely upon the good will of its non-Communist neighbors in its struggle against the French. As a "national liberation movement," it enjoyed the instinctive sympathies of many non-Communists in Burma and Thailand, whose governments permitted operation upon their territory of certain DRVN purchasing and information missions as long as they did not undermine the internal security of the host country. Today the DRVN maintains propaganda outlets in Rangoon, New Delhi, and Paris which distribute Viet-Minh literature in French and English throughout much of the Western world and Asia. Their operations in Thailand were sharply reduced after 1950, when it became clearly apparent that Viet-Minh organizations in Thailand cooperated with local Communist organizations in an effort to spread the Communist revolution further into Southeast Asia.⁹⁹ In recent years, the Thai government had to move 50,000 pro-Viet-Minh Vietnamese from the Laotian border to northeastern Thailand because they were a threat to Thai internal

99. Singapore Standard, January 4, 1953.

security. Negotiations between Thailand and the national government of the Republic of Vietnam in Saigon concerning a large-scale repatriation of those refugees have stalled over the insistence of the majority of the refugees to be either repatriated to the northern zone or to remain in Thailand.

Until the cease-fire negotiations, the Viet-Minh's diplomatic activities were limited to the exchange of various Communist missions with countries of the Soviet orbit. The first "coming-out" of Viet-Minh diplomatic occurred at the cease-fire negotiations at Geneva, from May to July, 1954. The delegation, headed by Pham Van Dong aroused a certain amount of curiosity, but did not succeed in looking much more but an adjunct of the Chinese Communist delegation headed by Chou En-lai, perhaps the most urbane of all present-day Communist leaders both in Asia and Europe.

During the following year, at the Afro-Asian Conference of Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955, the DRVN delegation again made an appearance in an international setting, this time among fellow-Asians. Here again, it was completely over-shadowed by the formidable presence of such internationally known Asian figures as Nehru, Chou En-lai and General Romulo. In addition, the Viet-Minh came to the Bandung Conference under the cloud of a Laotian White Book on Communist infiltrations, addressed by the Government of Laos to the Indian Chairman of the ICSC in Laos just a few days previously.¹⁰⁰ In it, the Laotian Government formally accused the DRVN, citing chapter and verse, of aiding and abetting the activities of Pathet-Lao Communist rebels on Laotian territory.

The powerlessness of the DRVN in international affairs was further emphasized in the subsequent negotiations of the Laotian delegation at Bandung in order to receive assurances of non-interference in internal affairs: the negotiations were carried out not between Laos and the DRVN, but between Laos, the DRVN, and Red China. The agreement that was finally signed by Pham Van Dong, under the auspices of Chou En-lai, constituted the first international treaty (outside of the Geneva cease-fire) signed by the DRVN and a non-Communist nation. In it, the Viet-Minh promised:

100. Kingdom of Laos, Presidency of the Government, Memorandum adressé le 13 Avril 1955 à la Commission Internationale de Surveillance et de Contrôle au Laos, suivi d'un Appendice. Saigon: I.F.O.M, 1955.

...that the settlement which is due to take place between the Royal Government of Laos and the Pathet Lao by virtue of the Geneva agreements is a question of an internal order...

Second, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Royal Government of Laos will develop and harmonize the good neighborly relations which tie and should tie these countries to each other...¹⁰¹

Negotiations between Laos, an independent Asian country, and the DRVN in 1956 and 1957, were to put the international integrity of the Viet-Minh to a severe test. In spite of repeated negotiations carried on in Vientiane (Laos), Hanoi and even Peking, the Viet-Minh continues to support the Pathet-Lao guerillas which, under Prince Souphanouvong, a member of a noble Laotian family.¹⁰² Souphanouvong has been collaborating with the Viet-Minh since 1945 and until November 1957 the two northeastern Laotian border provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua (see Map 1) in defiance of repeated promises to abide by the stipulations of the 1954 cease-fire agreement. Prince Souphanouvong's position as a puppet of both the DRVN and Communist China was made clear again by a statement which he made in the royal capital of Laos on May 13, 1957, in order to justify his failure to keep his repeated promises to end the Pathet-Lao rebellion. In his public declaration,¹⁰³ Souphanouvong argued that Laos must accept \$70 million in aid offered by Communist China because, in his words, such an aid "would be for the Kingdom a guarantee of neutrality and independence." The Pathet-Lao finally agreed to merge its areas with those under Royal control in November 1957 on terms which do not augur too well for Laos' future.

DRVN relations with Cambodia, since they are indirect (there are no common borders between the two countries), are somewhat more cordial but hardly what one could call "friendly." Norodom Sihanouk, the crown prince of Cambodia and the country's prime minister on

101. Kahin, George McT., The Asian-African Conference, Bandung, Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 1956, p. 27.

102. Souphanouvong is married to a Vietnamese who resides in Hanoi, probably as a hostage. His two children are being educated in the Soviet bloc, one in Peking and the other in Moscow.

103. Agence France-Presse, No. 3248, of May 14, 1957.

several occasions, visited Hanoi in 1956, where paid due tribute to the DRV regime's achievements in various fields. But upon his return to his country, he openly declared that under no circumstances did he want to see a similar regime installed in Cambodia and charged Radio Hanoi with interference in the internal affairs of his country. Viet-Minh propaganda in Cambodia, thereupon, changed its tone somewhat and switched to the more amenable theme of "coexistence." A Vietnamese newspaper named Sung Chung ("Co-Existence") is now openly printed in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, to further Viet-Minh propaganda.

The DRVN placed great hopes on making itself accepted as the sole "legal" government of Vietnam by at least the neutralist countries of Asia. It was to be bitterly disappointed on that score: not a single Asian country outside the Communist bloc granted it full recognition as the heir to Vietnamese independence. Countries such as India or Indonesia which received a Viet-Minh consul-general, also received one from the Republic of Vietnam in the south. Here again, at least part of the cool reception it received was of its own making. The Indian businessmen who, trusting Communist promises, had remained in North Vietnam, were so badly treated by the regime that the whole question of Indian-Vietminh relations was bitterly debated in the Indian Parliament on April 15, 1955, with accusations being raised that the regime was trying to ruin Indian businessmen by levying confiscatory taxes upon them.^{103A}

Relations with non-Asian countries outside of the Soviet bloc, after an auspicious start in 1954, have come to a low plateau. France, which has extensive economic and cultural interests in North Vietnam, continues to maintain a Delegate General in Hanoi, whose usefulness is limited. Commercial exchanges with France, after alluring promises at Geneva in 1954 that the Viet-Minh might even want to remain in the French Union, are limited to a trade agreement providing for the yearly exchange of \$2.8 million (£ 1 million) between the two countries. Cultural exchanges are even more limited although a few French schools continue to operate in Hanoi. Faced with being forced to teach along Marxist lines, most French professors in North Vietnam -- including the highly esteemed Dean of the Medical

^{103A}. According to recent information from Indina Foreign Ministry sources, Indian businessmen in the Viet-Minh zone had diminished from 400 in 1954 to less than 20 in December 1957. The rest had been economically driven to the wall.

School, Professor Huard¹⁰⁴ -- preferred to resign and leave the country.

Thus, after three years of comparative peace, the DRVN Government in Hanoi is as isolated from all except the Communist world as it ever was when it was still in hiding in the jungle. Instead of being acclaimed by its neighboring Asian countries as a fellow-member of the Asian movement for independence and liberation from colonialism, it is now little else but a grim Sparta, where Communist delegations from various "brotherly countries" succeed each other with the same stereotyped good wishes and are greeted with the same stereotyped parades and listlessly "enthusiastic" crowds.

But it is perhaps a Canadian observer from one of the teams of the International Supervisory Commission who best expressed Hanoi's present mood when he said: "There never were as many white faces in Hanoi under French colonial rule as there are now under the Viet-Minh." But now, of course, those white faces no longer belong to colonial administrators -- they are merely those of the Russian, East German, Czechoslovakian, Polish, and other "advisers" helping their Asian "little brother," all in the name of neighborly friendliness.

¹⁰⁴. Huard, a French Army reserve colonel, also negotiated the evacuation of the French wounded from Dien Bien Phu. He is married to a Vietnamese, speaks perfect Vietnamese, and was a personal friend of Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap. He left Vietnam in 1956 after an incident in which a young Communist "cadre" manhandled him.

CONCLUSION: The Viet-Minh in Perspective

It but remains to sum up this brief survey of developments in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam since the cease-fire of July 1954.

In the field of politics, the Viet-Minh regime has not fulfilled the high hopes which many Vietnamese citizens, whether they were Communists or not, had placed in it. In spite of its auspiciously democratic beginnings in 1946, the DRVN -- taking advantage of the war situation -- has reduced the role of its own central government into little else but an adjunct of the Vietnamese Communist party machinery. The facts show that in every case where the good of the country differed with the good of the Party and its Marxist doctrine, the good of the Party took precedence over that of the country.

This is particularly evident in the DRVN's present reluctance to hold parliamentary elections and to transform its provisional (and unconstitutional) National Assembly into a "People's Parliament." The argument that such elections would be tantamount to recognizing the permanent breach of Vietnam into two areas does not hold water, and is, in fact attacked even within the National Assembly's own ranks. As it exists now, the National Assembly of the DRVN can no longer claim that it represents "the will of the Vietnamese people." Many of the representatives have not seen their constituencies in more than a decade -- if they ever saw them before.

In the economic field, political ideology also has taken precedence over what would be most useful to the people. The too rapid pace of reconstruction and expansion has brought in its wake labor camps, and social tensions that might best have been avoided. As in wartime, peasants now flock to the cities after having undergone "mass mobilization" at the hands of the Viet-Minh's "Land Reform Teams," in order to eke out a meager living in the government's construction projects.

As to the much-hoped agrarian reform, the unrest and bloody events of the past year have clearly shown the bitter disappointment of the peasant class. The resentment was deep and generalized enough to incite the hardened Party cadres to throw themselves into "orgies of self-criticism." The present "Mistakes-Correction Campaign" itself appears to have become a major project which seems to absorb the time and attention of many cadres throughout the country.

A P P E N D I X I

VIET-MINH POPULATION CLASSIFICATION DECREE

In the present Decree, the Viet-Minh Government arbitrarily determines the social status of the Vietnamese according to their land ownership. It is interesting to note that such a social classification, once given, is considered almost like a racial characteristic (Articles 11 and 12). The whole law constitutes nothing less than an attempt at creating a socialcaste system along Marxist lines.

B. B. F.

Government Decree No. 239/B.TLP

Whereas the Council of Ministers of 1st and 2nd of March 1953 has resolved; and Whereas the Permanent Commission of the National Assembly has given its advice; The President of the Government promulgates the following Decree tending to classify the rural population.

Determination of the various categories

Section A. Principles underlying the present classification.

This classification is necessary. It is of real importance to distinguish our compatriots, separate our friends from our enemies, permit the unification and direct the struggle in the sense we want.

The essential principle to apply in the determination of the constituting elements of the rural class is that of each individual, of each family:

- have they, or not, any means of production?
- if so, how many have they?
- what are those, and how do they use them?
- do they cultivate their land themselves, or do they use hired labor, or do they rent their land?

Such precisions will allow to judiciously categorize the elements of the rural class according to whether those elements do their own exploiting or exploit for someone else, or exploit to insure their own subsistence.

Having recourse to such considerations as the composition of the family or its living standard is not necessary. It matters only in the case where the essential principle is not sufficient per se to arrive at the sought-for classification.

In order to arrive at an exact classification, it is necessary to base oneself upon the mass of the people. Once the latter...and thanks to a strict application of rules, it will be easy to proceed to the application of categories in the rural mass. In case of difficulties, the people shall be consulted and will decide.

Section B. Categories of the Rural Class.

1. The land owners.

Those are the owners of the land and rice paddies, whether they work them themselves, or rent them to others, but who, in any case, draw the principal means of subsistence from agricultural exploitation.

Included are also those who lend money with interest, or rent labor, or administer industrial enterprises or commercial undertakings, under the condition, however, that they draw their principal means of existence from agricultural exploitation .

Are assimilated to land owners:

(a) The administrators (of estates) or employees who collect the rents on behalf of the land owners, providing that they draw their principal subsistence from the part which the land owners leave them. Their living standard is higher than that of the average peasant class.

(b) The intermediaries who rent rice paddies belonging to others and sublet them to the farmers, providing that they live exclusively from their quit rents, or even when they themselves work those rice paddies, or parties thereof, or when they use additional labor. Their living standard is higher than that of the average peasant class.

(c) The lenders with interest who specialize in loans to farmers and who make a profession of it, providing what this constitutes their principal source of revenue. They have a higher living standard than the average peasant class.

2. The rich farmers.

They are both owners of the lands....and of the means of production necessary for farm labor, be it by themselves or by the labor which they hire.

There are also those who are both land owners and farmers. There are others who are not owners but simply farmers; they work part of the land and paddies themselves and hire labor to cultivate the rest.

3. The middle-class peasants.

Those are the peasants who, in the majority, possess a sufficient amount of land and paddies; or who own a certain amount of land and paddies and rent it to others rather than to work it themselves.

Those are also who, not having any land or paddies of their own, obtain the rental of such from landlords.

In any case, the peasants of the middle class do not hire out their hands to others and do not exploit the property of others. ***

4. The Poor peasants.

There are, among them, peasants who own some land and rice paddies, and some means of production. There are others who do not own anything at all. But both draw their principal subsistence from hiring out their labor.

It is they who, most of the time, live on rented land, or are in debt, or rent themselves out as farm labor.

5. The agricultural workers (including the needy).

The agricultural workers are those, in general, who do not possess anything, neither land nor means of production and must hire out their labor to live. There are some among them who, although they possess some land or some means of production, live nonetheless in misery.

The agricultural workers live in groups. They have a well-determined job in the plantations, the industries of They are exploited in the capitalist manner or find work in the nationalized farms.

***/If members of this class are adopted by a rich farmer or land-owner - and benefit from such revenues like the rich farmers and land owners, they must be classified themselves into one of the two categories.

Section C. How to Distinguish Between Land Owners and Rich Peasants.

1. Discrimination Principle.

In order to distinguish the land owners from the rich farmers, one must consider that the first do not participate in an active fashion and directly in agricultural work, whereas the latter makes it his principal activity.

It must be that the person whose principal activity consists in agricultural work should work at it at least four months a year.

2. Particular cases.

(a) The family, one member of which enters into a/m category, is considered as entering into the a/m category. It is not so when this member of the family has been adopted, or when it is a nephew, a niece or a cousin, or a concubine. The latter enter, as has been stated above, into the category of the poor peasants.

(b) A family that counts 15 or more members must have at least 1/3 of its valid and able-bodied members occupied in rural work in order to be classified into the category of laboring rural classes. ***

(c) [Exceptions in case a member of the family is a veteran of Viet-Minh forces, etc.]

(d) As far as the families are concerned that have enough members occupied at rural work but whose land holdings rented out (to non-family members) are three times as big as those they work on....one can safely consider them as belonging to the category of land owners. ***

...One knows that the average surface of property for the family of a small land owner is 9 mau...

3. Basis of discrimination.

The determination of the average and surface which may be owned in a (given) region by the family of a small land owner serves essentially as a basis to establish a discrimination between the land owners and the rich peasants...

The mean surface of allocated land...will be determined by the UBKC of the province, taking into account the concrete situation of the region and [the state of] reconcentration of the lands and paddies. Thus, in an area where the family of a small land owner possesses between 5 to 10 mau, one can consider 7 mau as the mean surface which it should have.

Section D. How to Distinguish Between the Rich Farmers and Those of the Middle Class.

1. Principle of discrimination.

***...They should only draw one-fourth (25%) of their yearly revenue from their own agricultural work...One will take into consideration the manner in which they live normally and one will take into consideration the opinion of the inhabitants of the locality...

The amount of total revenue of a peasant family is calculated according to the product of the personal work of its members in collecting paddy, potatoes, corn, etc. One will also add cattle raising, fishing, woodcutting for sales purposes, etc. One will also take into account the dishonest products of exploitation, such as renting at excessive rates, paying hired labor at ridiculous wages, capitalized debts at progressive interest, etc...

When one has to calculate the [total] amount of various revenues of exploitation [of agricultural origin] one will compare that amount with the total revenue. If that partial amount is inferior to the total revenue by one-fourth, the family that exploits it is to be classified among the peasant of the middle class. If the amount is equal or superior to one-fourth, the family belongs in the category of rich peasants.

2. Mode of percentage calculation.

In order to facilitate the calculations, one might proceed in the following fashion. If one hires two agricultural workers for one whole year, or if exploitation under any other form is equivalent to the product of two agricultural workers for one year, the family under consideration will be classified as members of the rich peasantry.

If one single worker is hired...the family will be classified as a member of the middle class peasantry.

The hiring of a worker on a yearly basis, or for one season, or for four months, or for ordinary work for [an aggregate of] 120 days should be counted as hiring for one year [exception is made for housework]....

3. Practical examples.

We shall now take several examples to make ourselves better understood.

(a) Family "A" is composed of eight members, of which three only are physically able to work in the fields. It owns 6 mau of rice land. It hires a worker on a yearly basis, one worker and one part-time worker who works 60 days. Its annual revenue in cereals amounts to 40 quintals. Pork raising brings in the equivalent of 5 quintals. Interest on its loans amount to 2 quintals. The total revenue of the family in the present case is 47 quintals.

One might consider the work capacity of the members of the family, of the hired laborers and those who furnish ...work at four-and-a-half persons. It brings in (roughly) the value of 45 quintals....which makes a revenue of 15 quintals per working member of the family.

If one deducts from those 15 quintals the amount of the wages of the laborer, 8 quintals, there remain 7. One adds to that figure the 2 quintals which are equivalent to the total revenue (i.e., the TOTAL interest revenue is added to EACH part) of the loans, one may put at 9 quintals the total amount of individual working revenue which this family draws from its agricultural exploitation.

One then compares this figure of 9 quintals to the total revenue evaluated at 47 quintals. The percentage of income of the exploitation is in that case:

$$\frac{9 \times 100}{47} = 19\%$$

Which results in the fact that this family is classified in the category of well-to-do farmers (25% limit).

(b) Family "B" is similar to family "A" with the exception that it makes more loans with interest and receives each year the equivalent of 6 quintals of paddy for them.

In that case, the total amount of its revenue is 51 quintals. The revenue of the agricultural exploitation itself is but 13 quintals. The same calculation as above shows a percentage of 25%. Which results in the fact that the family belongs to the category of rich peasants and not into that of the well-to-do peasants.

Section E. How to Distinguish the Other Categories.

1. Case of those that have but little lands or rice fields to rent out or to have worked on by hired labor.

That would be, for example, the revolution fighters, families whose members have died on the field of honor, the cadres, workers and civil servants. Likewise for persons of liberal professions, little merchants, as well as people exercising other professions or not having the physical strength to do agricultural work. ***

In [such] cases one will take into consideration the profession or the job [principally exercised by the person] to determine the category to which they belong...

In any case, such classification must be submitted to the approval of the peasants.

2. Case of "new rich" farmers.

After the Revolution of August (1945), there were farmers of the middle class, or poor farmers, or needy ones who, thanks to the land reform and through the application throughout the countryside of the principles of democracy, thanks also to the personal efforts which they have made, have acceded to the category of rich peasants.

Those farmers who are rich form the category of "new rich farmers." They enter into the category of rich farmers with the sole difference that they continue to live the life of the laboring classes, while the others do not do so. That is why it has been decided to distinguish them from the peasants that have always been rich.

3. Case of the poor peasants.

*** [self-explanatory] ***

4. Case of the liberal professions.

Those are all people living from a profession and do not seek to exploit others: barristers, doctors, healers, men of letters, journalists, wandering singers, actors, etc.

[Even] if such persons have recourse to the services of others one should not consider them as exploiters. It is the same for those who work in private enterprises or in the categories of "employees."

5. Case of shipowners, saltpan owners and fishermen.

(a) are considered as "land owners" those who own numerous salt marshes, or live from the renting-out of saltpan lakes, etc., exploitation of coastal or river fishing.

****[classification here, too, into 6 groups, according to size of saltpans, ownership of boats or fishing equipment, etc., down to the hired hand.]

6. The little merchants.

[Are considered as such the various artisans with a very small number of workers; to be considered as small land owners.]

7. The revolution fighters.

Are all those who presently serve with the National Army or Regional Troops. Sons or descendants of land owners and rich peasants must serve at least one year before they may carry the title of Revolution Fighter.

8. The intellectuals.

One should not consider them as a special class. One should take into account the family from which they originate when it comes to classifying them into one or the other of categories.

As far as the intellectuals are concerned who are forced to exercise another profession in order to live and who do it for at least one year and receive no subsidy from their families, they will be classified in the social hierarchy according to the work which they have adopted.

9. The sharecroppers.

[Brief mention that they are classified according to whether they sublet land or work it themselves, and may be classified into any category up to rich farmer.]

10. The artisans. [see #6 above]

11. The children of landowners and rich peasants.

(a) In every family from whatever social environment, the children

automatically belong to the category of the family head. When they reach their majority and if they live separately, the children will be considered as living in a new social environment which, henceforth, will become theirs.

(b) ****

(c) ****

(d) *****

The children below 18 and students over 16 whose parents are land owners or rich peasants must, during all the time of their scholarship, be considered as belonging to the social environment from which they originate and not as belonging to a special personal category....

12. Children who marry or who are adopted.

(a) Daughters of land owners, rich peasants or bourgeois who marry workers or laborers enter into the laborer or peasant class as soon as they have spent one year providing for their own subsistence by labor.

If they do not work or as long as they have not completed one year of work, they remain in their original social class.

(b) Daughters of laborers and peasants that marry land owners, etc., must, after three years of life in common with their husbands, be categorized into [the respective class of their husbands]....

(c) Children of workers or peasants who are adopted by land owners, etc. and lead for more than one year the life of their adoptive parents (if they are 10 or above) must be classified into the same social class as they.

(d) Children of land owners, etc...who are adopted by laborers or peasants are considered as integrated into the social class of their adoptive parents if they lead the same life as they for more than one year.

As long as their adoption is not older than one year, they remain in their original social class.

IMPORTANT REMARK

The determination of the social category is necessary. It is a very complex operation which might be accompanied by easily-committed errors. It is evident that any error in that discrimination might be a source of multiple inconvenients. Thus, the best means to avoid any nefarious error is to mobilize the popular masses and to present to them the case under consideration, to submit it to discussion and to proceed to the classification only when fully cognizant of the facts.

For the President of the Government
The Vice-President

(s) Pham Van Dong