

# THE NORTH VIETNAMESE REGIME: EXPANSION VS. CONSOLIDATION

ALLAN SPITZ

## I

A CAREFUL READING OF THE OFFICIAL LITERATURE OF THE NORTH VIETNAM regime indicates three specific goals. These are consistently expressed as: (1) the achievement of Socialism and Communism in North Vietnam, indicated by the consolidation of the position of the Communist Party in the North; (2) the achievement of national liberation and independence for South Vietnam and the elimination of the American "imperialist" presence; and (3) the achievement of reunification of the fatherland and the buildup of Socialism and Communism in a reunited Vietnam.

An understanding of the order of priorities of these goals in the minds of the North Vietnamese leadership is vital both to an understanding of the role that the North is playing in the war in South Vietnam and to an intelligent development of policy for the United States to follow. It is a thesis of this paper that North Vietnam's principal shortrun goal is the consolidation of the position of the Communist Party and the movement toward Socialism and Communism in that country.

Douglas Pike has attempted to extract from the massive flow of North Vietnamese statements on the Revolution, South Vietnam, and the National Liberation Front, a paraphrase of the northern view of the north-south relationship.<sup>1</sup> A summary of Pike's paraphrase would run as follows: "Vietnam is one country, the destinies of the north and the south are intimately linked. All of Vietnam is engaged in a revolution that commenced in August of 1945 and continues today. However, the Revolution has advanced to different stages in the north and the south. South Vietnam is undergoing a national democratic revolution to overthrow the American imperialists and their puppet, the bastard government of Thieu and Ky. The north is engaged in its socialist revolution, the movement toward consolidation of the Communist position. Each Vietnamese must contribute to the Revolution; each must perform his revolutionary task. We in the north have our own revolutionary tasks; they in the south have theirs. North and south

---

<sup>1</sup> Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 521.

morally support one another and are of one mind, one revolutionary spirit, but because each must be self-supporting, the north cannot assume the burden of liberating the south. That burden rests with the National Liberation Front. However, if and when aid to our compatriots in the south becomes necessary, we will give any assistance needed unstintingly, insofar as we are able."

The current responsibilities of the north to the south, as stated by General Vo Nguyen Giap in September of 1967, in a series of articles printed in *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* and *Nhan Dan*,<sup>2</sup> are "...those of a large rear toward a large frontline".<sup>3</sup> The conclusion to be drawn is that regardless of the ideological, technical, material, or manpower assistance flowing from the north to the south, the north regards the national liberation of the south as primarily a southern responsibility.

If it is possible to infer anything at all about the priority ranking of a group of professed goals from their relative stated positions, two fairly typical statements by General Giap are most interesting:

The present glorious and heavy tasks of the north which have been set forth by our Party, government, and President Ho, are: simultaneously to perform production and combat; to pool human and material resources; to contribute toward defeating the enemy's war of destruction against the north; determinedly to step up production under all war circumstances, *to support the southern revolution whole heartedly and to the best of our ability*; and at the same time, to take precautionary measures against the U.S. imperialists' schemes to expand the limited war all over the country.<sup>4</sup>

Noting that the U.S. efforts in South Vietnam and the "destructive" air war against the north have left the entire country in a struggle for survival, Giap states:

This situation calls forth for our people throughout the country a common duty: to unite the entire people and make both north and south stand shoulder to shoulder in intensifying the great patriotic war and in being determined to fight to vanquish the U.S. aggressors in order to protect the north, *liberate the south, and advance toward reunification of the fatherland*.<sup>5</sup>

Those who examine North Vietnamese references to the unity of all Vietnamese people, the solemn promises to assist in every way possible the struggle of the south, and the rabid denunciations of "American imperialist aggression", and conclude that the north will stop at nothing to secure the shortrun liberation of the south and the reunification of Vietnam, I believe, are overlooking a vital element implicit in the above passage. Evidence indicates that exhortations to

<sup>2</sup> General Vo Nguyen Giap, *Big Victory, Great Task* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

“unite the entire people” immediately “in intensifying the great patriotic war” are pleas for unity of mind, will and revolutionary zeal. The north fulfills much of its responsibility to the cause of national liberation of the south and the *eventual* reunification of north and south by maintaining, through indoctrination and propaganda, moral and ideological support for the southern cause among the people of the north, and by assuring the revolutionaries in the south of that unshakable support. It cannot be maintained that the ideological goal, unity of mind and spirit, which is immediate and primary, is the same thing as unification of north and south Vietnam which is not immediate, but long range, and which would be primary were it not for an overriding concern in the north for the progress of the socialist revolution.

With this as an introduction, attention can now be focused on ideology and organization within the North Vietnamese military and on the role of the political-military cadre. This will be a descriptive treatment, using articles from *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* from 1964 to 1967, serialized by the Joint Publications Research Service. The conclusions from this study that are applicable to the thesis will be examined in the third section.

## II

### ORGANIZATION AND IDEOLOGY IN THE NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY

Communist doctrine dictates that the role of the military involves more than merely the physical security of the nation, particularly when that nation is experiencing a socialist revolution in which the Communist Party is attempting to consolidate its leadership position.

War is a continuation of politics. . . . Therefore the fighting goal of any army is to serve the political line and direction from which it derives.<sup>6</sup>

There never has been a war which did not have some political purpose and aim, and there has never been an army which has not had a class nature and political relationship to the overall objectives of the society in question.<sup>7</sup>

Working as the “tool of the people’s revolution”, the army of the Republic of North Vietnam must wage an internal, ideological war on behalf of its own Communist Party. It must work toward the consolidation of Party leadership. At the same time, it must maintain a level of combat readiness sufficient to protect the land, people, and strategic targets from U.S. air attack. Further, the army must at all times be prepared to launch a defensive battle against an anticipated escalation of the U.S. effort in the form of a massive land invasion.

---

<sup>6</sup> Lt. General Song Hao, “Party Leadership in the Army is the Source of Victory in the Armed Struggle”, *Nhan Dan*, December 18, 1964, JPRS 28408 (6392A-37 #136) pp. 10-24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

The necessity of prosecuting a political-ideological struggle to consolidate the position of the Communist Party shapes the Party military line, the "political line" which the army serves. That line is handed down from the highest echelons of Party leadership, through the Military Central Committee, to every cadre and Party member at whatever organizational level. An attempt will be made to identify and describe the principal elements of the military line during the period 1964-1967.

### *People's War, People's Army*

Like Maoism in China, North Vietnamese Communist doctrine relies heavily on the will and power of the masses. "For the people, the army serves" is the operating slogan and "total reason for the existence of the army".<sup>8</sup> General Giap, North Vietnam's Defense Minister, was instrumental in propagating the concept of people's war, people's army. Since the army is viewed as the agent and tool of the people's revolution, the enemies of the people are the enemies against whom the efforts of the military are directed.

The most visible "enemy of the Vietnamese people" is U.S. imperialism, and this is the propaganda line used to maintain "revolutionary zeal." But the "people" have internal enemies, and the army must lead the battle on this front as well.

Our enemy is the landlord class which is working for the imperialists and feudalists to occupy our country. Beyond that, the enemy is the capitalist exploitive system.<sup>9</sup>

Periodically, there is a "teaching" drive in North Vietnam to remind the people of who their enemies really are. After such a drive in the Right Bank Military Zone in May, 1964, it was announced that "Fighters and cadres came to realize that past miseries had been caused by imperialists, feudalists, and other exploiting classes."<sup>10</sup> At nearly the same time, in the 4th Military Zone, a resolution of the Zone Party Committee reminded cadres and soldiers of their duties in this internal, ideological war.

Each cadre, Party member, and fighter is asked to: 1) use positive revolutionary spirit to vanquish the negative rightist tendencies; 2) use alertness and combat readiness to win over pacifist thinking; and 3) use the positive revolutionary spirit of Marxism-Leninism to triumph over modern revisionist influences.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Le Trang, "Right Bank Military Zone Teaches Class Consciousness", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, May 26, 1964, JPRS 25487 (16165) pp. 3-4.

<sup>11</sup> Nguyen Dam, "A Resolution of the 4th Military Zone Party Committee" *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, May 23, 1964, JPRS 25487 (16165) pp. 1-2.

The concept of people's war, people's army demands complete reliance on the people, in theory. In practice, the relationship between the military and the masses is not so straightforward. The armed forces have been termed the "agrigo-industrial armed forces."<sup>12</sup> One of the principles of the people's army is that the military assist the people in maintaining agricultural and industrial production, while the people carry part of the burden of maintaining a defense network around the villages and strategic installations.<sup>13</sup> Local self-defense troops are considered to be one of the three elements of the total military structure, along with the main body of regular troops, and the part-time militiamen.<sup>14</sup> However, the responsibility for coordinating the efforts of the regular troops and the local forces rests with the "grass roots" cadres attached to the military units. This type of coordinated effort is part and parcel of the concept of "arming the people to fight alongside the troops."<sup>15</sup>

The "reliance" on the masses mentioned above, a key element in Giap's concept, is reliance of a specific type. It is reliance not to lose the revolutionary spirit; reliance to obey completely and enthusiastically the Party line; and in the military sphere, it is reliance to "solve concrete difficulties over concrete preparations for battle."<sup>16</sup> In other words, the people are relied upon to dig the trenches, install and man small anti-aircraft installations, secure the village when under attack, and so on.

The overriding concern of the regime in North Vietnam, as in any Communist nation at a similar revolutionary stage, is to maintain a high-pitched hatred of the class enemies, and a high revolutionary spirit. Those responsible for maintaining this spirit, both among the people in the villages and among the troops, are the cadres. In May of 1964, there was a widespread "teaching and propaganda drive to promote ideology", for the purpose of "heightening the class viewpoint and revolutionary fighting will."<sup>17</sup> Within the 4th Military Zone, at least, this drive was aimed at improving the quality of the cadres. "... To successfully arouse the masses, we must arouse the ... cadres."<sup>18</sup>

Within the framework of the people's war, people's army, Communist doctrine emphasizes the power and will of the masses which must be aroused and maintained at a high level for the revolution

---

<sup>12</sup> Le Trang, JPRS 25487 (16165) pp. 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> General Le Quang Hoa, "Ideological Work in Present Fighting Situation", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, June 14, 1965, JPRS 31216 (14479-36 #194) pp. 3-9.

<sup>14</sup> Colonel Dang Si Nguyen, "Application of Understanding of Party Military Line to Actual Combat Conditions in Military Zone 4", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, April 22-24, 1965, JPRS (11050-34 #177) pp. 5-11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> General Le Quang Hoa, JPRS (14479-36 #194) pp. 3-9.

<sup>17</sup> Nguyen Dam, JPRS 25487 (16165) pp. 1-2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

to proceed. The coordination of efforts between the military and the masses is crucial. The people must provide the will and manpower to carry out the military line of the Party developed at the top Party hierarchy. The key to the system, the link between top level Party leadership and the masses (including non-Party military) is the cadre—the man of many responsibilities. His role will be examined later. Attention will now be focused on the second element of the North Vietnamese Party military line.

### *The Class Nature of the War*

Awareness of the proletarian class is the foundation of the Party's ideological education and political training. Only through this awareness can the army absorb Marxism-Leninism and "develop the revolutionary positiveness of the working class."<sup>19</sup>

Communist doctrine maintains that the working class, the industrial proletariat, of which the Party is the vanguard, will be the dominant force in the revolutionary process. In North Vietnam, there are few in the industrial proletariat class; most of the country is inhabited by rural peasants. Lest the Communist Party become the vanguard of a non-existent force, the Ho Chi Minh regime attempts to instill in all of the people—worker, peasant, and soldier—the "spirit" of the working class and an "awareness" of the proletariat position. The Party maintains that awareness of the contradictions between the exploiter and exploited, "awareness" of the evils that the American imperialists will perpetrate if they are victorious,<sup>20</sup> "awareness" of past miseries under the feudalists, and present blessings under Ho Chi Minh, and the comparison between the two,<sup>21</sup> are essential to the cause of the revolution.

It was mentioned earlier that war is regarded in North Vietnam as the extension of politics. In doctrine, there are two kinds of politics in any society, the politics of the exploitive class, and the politics of the working or exploited class.<sup>22</sup> The North Vietnamese leadership regards their two-front war as a political war against the exploitive imperialist, capitalist system that the United States is attempting to impose on all of Vietnam on the one hand, and against the feudalist, landlord class remnants of the many decades of western capitalist rule in their own country, on the other. Only by being aware of the class nature of the war on both fronts, so the argument goes, can the North Vietnamese hope to eliminate the exploitive elements from their society, and conquer the exploitive forces from outside the country.

<sup>19</sup> Lt. General Song Hao, JPRS 28408 (6392A-37 #136) pp. 10-24.

<sup>20</sup> Huu Hoc, "Party Leadership and Military Training", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, May 21, 1964, JPRS 25671 (16349) p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Le Trang JPRS 25487 (16165) pp. 3-4.

<sup>22</sup> Lt. General Song Hao, JPRS 28408 (6392A-37 #136) pp. 10-24.

It is difficult to determine whether "class awareness" or "ardent revolutionary spirit" is supposed to come first. On the one hand, Le Trang argues that the revolutionary duties of soldiers and the people demand a high spirit; the kind of spirit which makes one willing to sacrifice himself for the class interest. He maintains that the basis of this spirit is the degree of revolutionary and class awakening. When that degree of class hatred and class awakening is achieved, then the proper revolutionary fighting spirit will emerge.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, Lt. General Song Hao notes that there are many peasants and petit bourgeoisie within the army, and few workers. "The peasants", he argues, "have an ardent spirit but lack clear and penetrating awareness of the proletariat."<sup>24</sup> Pursuing this matter a little further, General Song Hao clouds the issue again by stating later in his article: "The peasant must and can constitute the majority force in our army, and they, above all, find it easy to distinguish the enemy of the people."<sup>25</sup>

Whichever comes first, there are constant exhortations to greater heights of class awareness and to greater degrees of revolutionary zeal. A proper level of awareness can accomplish remarkable feats. Because of successful efforts to "raise ideological and political awareness", one regiment was reportedly able to reduce its percentage of un-serviceable weapons from 30% in 1961, to 1% in 1963.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, lack of class awareness can lead to grave evils, such as overestimation and worship of the power of weapons and contempt for the masses,<sup>27</sup> or to poor firing while engaged in anti-aircraft activities.<sup>28</sup>

There are numerous devices by which class awareness and revolutionary zeal are maintained. General exhortative propaganda is perhaps the most common (for example, the messages read to the troops from President Ho periodically, and the official Party newspapers such as *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*). Other devices, generally implemented by cadres, are concerted efforts to raise the hatred of the U.S. and the "determination to fight and to win", primarily by keeping the troops occupied in some propaganda or indoctrination effort (for example, self-criticism, posting newspapers on walls, folk-singing, reading newspapers, and so on).<sup>29</sup> Another common device for maintaining revolutionary fervor is the "emulation drive", an officially proclaimed competitive

<sup>23</sup> Le Trang, JPRS 25487 (16165) pp. 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> Lt. General Song Hao, JPRS 28408 (6392A-37 #136) p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Huu Hoc, JPRS 25671 (16349) p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Hoang Phuong, "Grasping Party Military Doctrine in Combat Training", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, March 23, 1965, JPRS 29876 (9314-30 #116) pp. 36-42.

<sup>28</sup> Quang Hoa, "A Day in the Life of a Political Officer", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, May 16, 1967, JPRS 41721 (12659-45 #203) pp. 12-16.

<sup>29</sup> Brig. General Le Quang Hoa, "How Company Political Officers Conduct Ideological Work", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, July 11-14, 1965, JPRS 31675 (16375-36 #204) pp. 5-16.

effort to excel in the performance of given revolutionary tasks. Recognition of outstanding performance usually takes the form of special appellations or awards to units or individuals, followed by exhortations to "emulate" that performance. Such drives are usually of a somewhat lengthy nature, perhaps one or two months. In June of 1967, there was an emulation drive to "raise the number of U.S. planes shot down to 2,000."<sup>30</sup> Also in June of 1967, a policy of "reporting and evaluating achievements" was instituted. The purposes of requesting individuals to report their own concrete achievements and those of others were: (1) to develop positive, self-vigilant spirit; (2) to summarize individual experiences in the past 2 years; and (3) to exchange experiences.<sup>31</sup> Each unit was to organize the reporting of achievements, and to sponsor achievement celebrations.

By raising the revolutionary fervor of the people, a number of undesirable tendencies will be eliminated. Concern is repeatedly expressed over the existence of "bystanding and negative attitudes". Criticism meetings attempt to purge any doubts about the correctness of the Party line and to instill the desired level of revolutionary zeal and hatred of the exploitive class.<sup>32</sup> Such forces as "individualism", "negativism", and "liberalism" are viewed as dangerous tendencies showing a lack of fervor. In concrete terms such tendencies allegedly lead to the unwillingness to sacrifice all for the revolution, and desires to seek peace.<sup>33</sup>

In summary, the concept of the people's war, people's army is grounded upon respect for the masses. However, it is the continuing responsibility of cadres and Party officials to see to it that the masses — meaning the "people" in the Maoist sense — maintain a sufficiently high level of class awareness, coupled with revolutionary fervor and hatred of the capitalist exploitive system, to insure the progress of the socialist revolution in the north and support for the national liberation effort in the south. The type of thought control needed to realize this goal demands both a viable ideological foundation and an effective system of organization. An element of North Vietnamese doctrine is that the entire revolutionary effort is under the direction of the Communist Party.

### *The Absolute Nature of Communist Party Leadership*

The key to the success of the revolution is to maintain the absolute leadership of the Communist Party in all areas.

<sup>30</sup> Unsigned article, "The Armed Forces Organize Reporting and Evaluating of Achievements", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, June 3, 1967, JPRS 41893 (14211-42 #212) pp. 41-43.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Le Trang, JPRS 25487 (16165) p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Lt. General Song Hao, JPRS 28408 (6392A-37 #136) pp. 10-24.

The absolute leadership of the Party is the most decisive factor in successfully completing every mission of building up the combat readiness of the armed forces.<sup>34</sup>

It is important to understand what is meant by the use of the term "leadership" at each of the two levels at which it may be exerted. The first level is the top policy making level of the Party. Leadership at this level is exercised by President Ho, the Politburo, and the Party Central Committee, and is of the decision-policy making type. Decisions made at the highest Party levels filter down to the various second level Party committees, Party members, and cadres. It is thus possible to characterize the "leadership" exercised by *all* Party committees below the Central Committee as leadership of a non-decision-policy making type.

The leadership exercised by the top-level bodies is the essence of the centralization aspect of the concept of democratic centralism, the key ideological-organizational principle of the Party as a whole and of the Party within the military organization. The democratic aspect of democratic centralism is implemented through the "leadership" exercised at all levels below the top, and is most clearly in force at the lowest Party level, which in the military organization is the company Party branch and the Party branch committee.<sup>35</sup>

At the secondary level, leadership in the Party means: (1) instilling a high spirit of combat; (2) steadily believing in victory; (3) fully understanding the views of higher echelons; (4) implementing established policies properly; and (5) developing the idea of a high level of discipline.<sup>36</sup> An example of this type of leadership is the activity of a Party cell committee within a battalion on a search and destroy mission. The spirit had declined, according to reports, and the Secretary of the Party cell called a 20-minute meeting of the cell. The Party cell issued the following statement:

We are tired and hungry, but the enemy we are chasing is also tired and hungry. We are a revolutionary army, determined to conquer hunger and exhaustion in order to defeat the enemy.<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, the principal leadership activity at the secondary level is education and indoctrination; attempting to maintain the zeal both within the Party military organization and among the masses.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly enough, one of the secondary level leadership functions exercised by unit Party chapter committees is to solve the problem of

---

<sup>34</sup> Huu Loc, JPRS 25671 (16349) p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Brig. General Le Quang Hoa, JPRS 31675 (16375-36 #204) p. 5-16.

<sup>36</sup> Nguyen Van Thauh, "The Work of Battalion Party Cells in Combat", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, February 25-26, 1965, JPRS (7848-27 #155) pp. 11-22.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Huu Loc, JPRS 25671 (16349) p. 7.

educating the Party military organization and the masses in the absolute nature of Party leadership.

One factor that cannot be omitted in manifesting the leadership of the Party committee is that it must concentrate on consolidating the Party cells, making them the unified and united leadership faction of the companies, and the basic strength of the Party.<sup>39</sup>

Party leadership at the company, regimental, or battalion level is held responsible for the success or failure of any task. In 1963, a regiment overcame the tendency to rely too much on new weapons and equipment through effective Party leadership. That regiment, as reported by *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, "completed its mission" while on maneuvers with "70% of the previous year's weapons and equipment."<sup>40</sup>

The operational principle attending the democratic aspect of democratic centralism is known as "collective leadership". In practice, it means that discussion and ratification of a policy decision made at the top is accomplished by a "collective"; the composition of which changes with the circumstance. In a combat situation, collective leadership may be exercised by a "small collectivity" (e.g. the branch committee at the company level, or even the highest Party official directly responsible for the actions of the branch).<sup>41</sup> In non-combat situations, collective leadership is exercised by "large collectivities" (e.g. the Party branch membership or the cell membership).<sup>42</sup> It is admitted that in any given unit, collective leadership may not be possible in certain combat situations. In such cases, the unit chief is responsible for his actions and decision to the immediate collectivity — commissar, committee, or Party chapter.<sup>43</sup>

An important distinction made in the operation of collective leadership is between discussion and execution. Discussion of policies established at the top, as stated earlier, is an example of collective leadership or democracy. Execution of the directive issued at the top and ratified by the collectivity is the responsibility of the appropriate unit chief and is an example of centralism.<sup>44</sup> There apparently have been some problems created when unit chiefs issued orders to the soldiers and people in order to execute a directive coming from the collectivity. In January, 1965, an article in *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* stressed that the execution of a Party directive by a unit chief is not a decentralization

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Lt. General Song Hao, "Party Building Line and Task of Our Army Today", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, January 14, 1965 JPRS 29220 (7848-27 #150) pp. 1-10.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Vuong Thua Vu, "The Importance of Following Order", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, May 19, 1964, JPRS 25671 (16349) p. 1.

relation. "...To execute a unit chief's order is not to obey an order from an individual, but to implement a Party resolution."<sup>45</sup>

Within the military, the Party cadre is a unique individual. He is responsible for maintaining the revolutionary zeal of the troops and the people; he must remind the Party chapter in a given unit that the collective leadership exercised by them must always be in tune with the Party line determined at the top; he is responsible for morale and for the efficient combat operations of his unit; and he must implement the training program for the troops determined by the higher echelons. A brief look at some specific examples of cadre activities will provide an idea of his functions.

### *The Role of the Political Cadre in the Military Unit*

An important function of the cadre is to set an example for the troops in maintaining high revolutionary spirits. Cadres in one unit on a training mission in June of 1965 set an example by marching along with the company while nursing sore and bleeding feet and dysentery. The Party branch "realized that the exemplary role of cadres is the most effective measure to encourage our soldiers to fulfill their duties."<sup>46</sup>

The political cadre functions on the battlefield as a prod to greater zeal, and more efficient operation. In May, 1967, a political cadre with an anti-aircraft battalion was in a bunker during an American air attack. During a lull in the fighting, he made a statement to the troops: "Can you see that column of smoke over there? That was caused by an American bomb and it is our village that is burning. We must fire accurately and shoot down the Americans in order to avenge our compatriots."<sup>47</sup> In the same battle, the political cadre was alert to stem overoptimism of the troops after they shot down an American plane. The cadre sent orders to them: "We fire well, but we must also stay alert, maintain order, and be ready to fight the enemy when he reappears." Previously, the cadre had announced an emulation campaign to "discover the target" and initiated a competitive effort between observers and artillerymen to discover the attacking planes as they made their passes. The soldiers stood on their fortifications and made speeches on determination to fight and to win.<sup>48</sup>

Because of the nature of Communist ideology, and its demand on the spirit and mind of its adherents, the questions of morale and revolutionary zeal are vital. There is evidence that the primary respon-

<sup>45</sup> Lt. General Song Hao, JPRS 29220 (7848-27 #150) pp. 1-10.

<sup>46</sup> Vuong Xuong Le, "Good Examples Are Orders Without Words", *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, June 13, 1965, JPRS 31216 (14479-37 #191) pp. 27-28.

<sup>47</sup> Quang Hoa, JPRS 41721 (12659-45 #203) pp. 12-16.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

sibility for maintaining that peculiar type of Communist morale falls on the political cadre, and is supported by the pronouncements of the unit Party chapters.

### III

#### A REEVALUATION

The purpose of this paper has been to present evidence that the North Vietnamese leadership regards their own socialist revolution as the primary immediate goal. This does not at all mean that national liberation for South Vietnam and reunification of the north and the south are not important goals. However, if a choice had to be made in the north of pursuing only one goal for the time being, that goal would be the continued consolidation of the Communist dictatorship in the north. The body of this paper has presented some evidence supporting this conclusion which will be summarized below.

The position of the military in North Vietnam, engaged both in an offensive ideological war against negativism, revisionism, and the remaining feudalist tendencies in the north, and a self-defensive war against U.S. air attacks, makes morale a crucial problem. The type of morale which Communist ideology demands is difficult to maintain. There must be intensive propaganda and indoctrination in order to sustain a will to victory among the troops. From the tenor of the articles coming from Hanoi between 1964 and 1967, there is evidence that the primary concern at that time was maintenance of sufficient revolutionary zeal to fight the enemies of the people at home.

The constant exhortations to greater class awareness, the constant use of emulation drives, and the great role of the political cadres indicate that the position of the Communist Party is not consolidated sufficiently to allow the regime to focus its attention on the southern war of national liberation.

There is continuous emphasis upon the importance of Party leadership in achieving the goals of the revolution. A conclusion which can be drawn from the flood of material from Hanoi is that the country has led to concern for consolidation.

If any projection can be made from the 1964-1967 period to the present time, it might be that continued instability of Communist Party leadership, the pressure of the air war in the north, possible pressure from the Soviet Union to find a solution to the Vietnam war, have led either to a willingness to achieve a negotiated settlement at Paris to allow time to consolidate, or an attempt to use a feigned willingness to bargain as a ploy to get the U.S. to the peace table and then discredit them in the eyes of the world, and particularly in the eyes of the people of North Vietnam.

At any rate, the situation is much too complex to arrive at a simple answer. What this paper has attempted to accomplish is to present evidence supporting a particular interpretation of the north's position in relation to South Vietnam.