

The Ideological Debate in the DRV and the Significance of the Anti-Party Affair, 1967–68

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This essay examines the links between the ideological debates in the communist world and the events surrounding the decision to stage the 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam. It is based on memoirs, documents from the Public Record Office in London, and some documents from edited Vietnamese collections, as well as Vietnamese journals from the period in question. For analysts of DRV politics in the 1960s, there is still comparatively little in the way of documentary evidence to shed light on the nature of the communist leadership and its decision-making processes. This is true of the year leading up to the Tet Offensive of 1968: as David Elliott has shown in his recent study of the war in My Tho province (2003), Vietnamese accounts of this period present a contradictory and confused record. At the same time, the political events in Hanoi during the latter half of 1967, when what came to be called the 'Anti-Party Affair' was revealed, have only been elucidated in unofficial memoirs and open letters from party veterans to the leadership. We know that this period was one of high tension in the communist world, when the Cultural Revolution in China was reaching its peak and relations between the USSR and China had sharply deteriorated. Yet we still know very little about how this tension may have affected policy decisions within North Vietnam. The author concludes that ideological conflicts within the North Vietnamese leadership had a strong bearing on events in 1967–68, and that they influenced not only military decisions but also Vietnam's post-war development.

Introduction

For analysts of North Vietnamese politics in the 1960s, there has been little in the way of documentary evidence to shed light on the nature of the communist leadership and its decision-making processes. With the release of Chinese, Soviet and other East European documents since the end of the Cold War, we have learned more about the

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Vietnamese position on negotiations and attitudes towards its allies.¹ But thus far the Vietnamese government has released very few documents on higher level decision-making from its own archives.² A certain number of captured documents from the period leading up to the Tet offensive are in archives in the United States.³ These tell us something about the party resolutions passed in 1967 and 1968, but do not provide a complete guide to decision-making and leave many questions in obscurity. It has only been from unofficial memoirs and open letters from party veterans to the leadership, published in the 1980s and 1990s, that we have learned any of the details of the political turmoil which troubled Hanoi in the late summer and autumn of 1967.⁴ This paper will examine the background to these events and attempt to evaluate their importance in the progress of the war.

The untangling of this political struggle may appear to be a futile or overly abstruse exercise, now that the power of Marxist ideology has waned in Hanoi. In Vietnam this affair is often brushed off by party historians as a minor event, the arrest of some disgruntled pro-Soviet party members who had already been removed from high-level positions. This is clearly an inadequate explanation of the treatment of those arrested, including Hoang Minh Chinh, and a number of others discussed below. The fact that the charges against them were still being discussed in internal party documents in 1994–95 appears to show that the affair had a long-term relevance.⁵ If historians of the Vietnam War want to gain a deeper understanding of how US actions and the international context in general may have affected decision-making in Hanoi in 1967, then it would seem important to have a clearer picture of the internal politics and ideological struggles within the DRV. Otherwise we inevitably view the war from an American-centred position. To fill in our picture of the war from the Vietnamese perspective, a closer look at the Anti-Party Affair cannot really be avoided. Another reason for clarifying these issues is to achieve a better understanding of the political entity which signed the Paris Peace Agreement and which came to power in South Vietnam at the end of April 1975.

The Anti-Party Affair

The basic story of the Anti-Party Affair is as follows. At the end of August 1967, as preparations for a new stage in the war, the general offensive, were getting underway, a number of Lao Dong party members believed to be pro-Soviet began to be arrested. Among these was a former personal secretary to Ho Chi Minh, Vu Dinh Huynh. Another of the victims of this first wave of arrests was Hoang Minh Chinh, until late 1963 head of the Institute of Philosophy in Hanoi and a decorated veteran of the resistance against the French. He had been trained in Marxist philosophy and ideology in the late 1950s in Moscow and had come to be known as one of the Vietnamese proponents of the idea of 'peaceful coexistence'. (His removal from his post at the Institute of Philosophy is discussed in Martin Grossheim's essay.) Another group of people, not all members of the party, were arrested in October and December. The arrests of these men and the subsequent accusation that they were involved in a

pro-Soviet plot against the Lao Dong party became known as the 'Hoang Minh Chinh Affair' or 'The Anti-Party Affair'.⁶ Around 30 high-level figures were arrested, and perhaps as many as 300 altogether, including generals, theoreticians, professors, writers and television journalists trained in Moscow. The memoirs of Vu Dinh Huynh's son, Vu Thu Hien, who was arrested just before Christmas in 1967, have become a major source on this affair. Published in Germany in 1997 as *Dem Giua Ban Ngay* [Darkness in the Daytime], his account of his arrest and interrogation has not been published in Vietnam and is not treated as a reliable source by all students of Vietnamese politics. In its basic outlines, however, it is corroborated by the letters and petitions for restitution of civic rights from other victims of this case, in particular by Hoang Minh Chinh himself, who is still alive in Hanoi, after many years in prison, solitary confinement and house arrest. His first imprisonment lasted until 1972; after that he was kept under house arrest until 1978. When he petitioned for restitution of his civic rights in 1981 he was re-arrested for another six years, this time followed by three years of house arrest.⁷

Before the appearance of these memoirs and petitions in the 1990s, one of the few sources on the 1967–68 events was the book *Tet!* by Don Oberdorfer.⁸ Even the Russian author Ilya Gaiduk had to rely on Oberdorfer's account of Hanoi politics in 1967, for example the July 1967 Politburo resolution to stage a general offensive, in his study of the Soviet role in the Vietnam war from 1964 to 1973.⁹ (And only in 1988 did the Vietnamese party confirm that the decision to stage a general offensive at the start of the Tet celebration in 1968 was not made until October 1967.)¹⁰ In addition to Oberdorfer's information we now have access to reports of personnel at the British consulate in Hanoi, the official versions of which were declassified in 1997–98. These reports gave indications that a shake up of some sort was underway in the Lao Dong (Workers) Party by late August 1967, including the arrests of party members considered to be pro-Soviet. The consul, John Colvin, reported on 22 August that the Russians had 'forecast for some time [a] shake up in [the] Lao Dong Party adverse to their interests'. He then explained that on 21 August a Soviet colonel had told the Indonesian chargé d'affaires that arrests of 'several leading Party members had taken place that morning'.¹¹

The British consulate noted another indication of a struggle within the communist leadership on 30 March 1968. In this note Geoffrey Hirst, an analyst at the consulate, discusses a *Nhan Dan* editorial on the revival of Law no. 63, which he described as a 'vehicle for the legal disposal of any dissident members or factions in the Party'. His analysis came from a 'senior Eastern bloc diplomat', who told him that, 'there might be a split in the Party at the moment, probably between the doves and the eagles but [he] thought that the decree would be sufficient warning to all members to toe the line'.¹² Oberdorfer notes that the decree was issued in November by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, although it was not made public until March 1968. It prescribed, 'death sentences, life prison terms and lesser penalties for a long list of "counterrevolutionary crimes", including espionage, sabotage, security violations and the crime of opposing or hindering the execution of national defense plans'.¹³

But given the lack of comment from any official representatives of the Hanoi regime over the years, it has been very difficult to determine the significance of these events in late 1967 and 1968. The obvious inference, the one drawn by Oberdorfer, is that party members considered as hostile to the escalation of the war and the Tet offensive were being incarcerated to quell any dissent within the regime. The fact that they were held in prison until 1972 and re-arrested if they made an effort to gain redress, however, would lead one to believe that they were considered a long-term threat by some faction of the leadership. Vu Thu Hien, another Moscow trainee, a non-party member who was known in Hanoi as a talented translator of Russian literature, offers two explanations for the wave of arrests. First is the fact that during his prison interrogation he was closely questioned about his father's relations with General Vo Nguyen Giap.¹⁴ He concludes that Le Duc Tho and Le Duan viewed Giap as a rival for power, and thus concocted the story of a coup plot to discredit him, along with other influential, second-tier cadres who were considered to be pro-Soviet. However, at another point in his narrative, Hien writes that Le Duc Tho may have led Le Duan astray with his story of a Soviet plot.¹⁵ As Hien points out, the only formal accusation against the 'modern revisionists' came four years later, at a Central Committee plenum in January 1972, when Le Duc Tho announced that there had been a conspiracy to overthrow the party leadership.¹⁶ The Soviet Ambassador Ilia Shcherbakov and his Second Secretary Rashid Khamidulin were accused of links with the plotters.¹⁷

A further clarification of the charges was made in a document titled, 'The Activities of a Number of Enemy and Opposition Forces', circulated to party members in April 1994 by the Hanoi party committee. This document explained that in July 1967, Hoang Minh Chinh and others involved in the Anti-Party Affair got hold of the secret transcript of a Vietnamese–Chinese consultation. They found a way to send these minutes abroad, and for this reason the security organs arrested Hoang Minh Chinh and three others. At the same time the accused were said to be collecting documentation that amounted to an opposition programme or thesis in opposition to the party.¹⁸

Giap himself was never arrested, and in October 1967 he flew to Hungary, ostensibly to garner more support for Hanoi's war effort. However, documents in the Hungarian archives show that Giap was in Hungary as early as 14 October, where he and the son of former Foreign Minister Ung Van Khiem (known to have 'revisionist' sympathies) were receiving medical treatment. By 19 October the Vietnamese ambassador in Budapest reported to the Hungarians that Giap's health was already improving. Ambassador Hoang Luong said that Giap had exhausted himself while writing a long essay on the tactics and strategy of the Vietnamese struggle.¹⁹

Vu Thu Hien's other explanation of the choice of arrestees is on the personal level, and is typical of the anecdotal style of history that often substitutes for analysis in Hanoi. He claims that Le Duc Tho singled out fellow militants who had been imprisoned with him during the Second World War in Son La, and who knew of his privileged role as a servant to the French prison governor.²⁰ This treatment was seen as a favour to Tho's wealthy family. If such a story were true and were widely known, it

would have caused serious political problems for Tho, who as head of the Party Organization Committee was charged with upholding the working class character of the Lao Dong party.

The International Context and the Tet Decisions

The background to the 1967 events is the history of the Sino-Soviet split, which developed after Khrushchev denounced Stalin's crimes and cult of personality at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956. After this the USSR began to promote a policy of 'peaceful coexistence' and peaceful competition between the capitalist and communist worlds. Another innovation in ideology made under Khrushchev was the idea that class contradictions no longer played a major role in Soviet society. As Chinese historian Yang Kuisong puts it, 'By advocating all-people countries and all-people parties, . . . Khrushchev was actually rejecting class struggle'.²¹ While the Vietnamese publicly endorsed Khrushchev's reforms and signed a communiqué along with 80 other communist parties in support of Soviet policies in 1960, the Russian's reluctance to provide significant military aid for the struggle to reunify Vietnam caused much unhappiness in Hanoi. Following consultations with Chinese theoreticians and Chairman Mao in Wuhan in the summer of 1963, at its 9th Plenum at the end of 1963, the Vietnamese Communist Party passed a resolution condemning 'modern revisionism' and aligning its internal and foreign policies with China's. At that time China was preparing to establish a new communist international of pro-Beijing parties.²² The Vietnamese did not publish the full text of the 9th Plenum resolution, but publicized it via internal study sessions within the party.²³ They could not afford to alienate the Soviet Union altogether.

This cooling of relations with the Soviet Union was not permanent; as the American escalation began, Vietnamese-Soviet relations fluctuated, depending on how much aid the Russians were willing to provide and how the Chinese were behaving. After Khrushchev's ouster in October 1964, the new premier Alexei Kosygin made a visit to Vietnam in February of 1965. This opened a new phase for the two countries – as the US bombing of the DRV grew more intense, the Russians began to offer a steady supply of heavy weapons and advisers. At the same time, the Chinese, who had been a reliable source of food, consumer goods, military equipment and even foreign currency during the early 1960s, became embroiled in their own internal struggle, the Cultural Revolution. The PRC maintained logistical support and anti-aircraft troops in the northern part of the DRV until 1968, but their share of total foreign aid going to the DRV gradually decreased.²⁴

Vietnamese diplomats often registered dismay at the way the Cultural Revolution was turning a secure rear logistical base into a scene of chaos, when speaking to counterparts in Eastern Europe. The power of the 9th Plenum Resolution decreeing Vietnam's ideological unity with the PRC seemed to be waning in 1965 and 1966, as the necessity of Soviet anti-aircraft technology to defend the DRV became clear. But the Vietnamese maintained an even-handed approach in public towards their two

socialist patrons, and Tran Quynh maintains that the majority in the Vietnamese Politburo continued to favour China.²⁵ However, the Soviet chargé in Washington believed that there existed 'forces of moderation in the DRV', who wanted to start negotiations with the US, but that 'they could not be active while bombs were falling on Hanoi'.²⁶

Events threatened to slip out of control in 1967 when the PRC fell under military rule and full-scale civil war broke out. When Indonesia expelled Chinese Ambassador Yao Tengshan in April, he returned to a hero's welcome in Beijing and took control of the Foreign Ministry from Minister Chen Yi. The spillover from this radicalization provoked crises in Hong Kong, Cambodia and Burma in April and May. China's diplomats were called home in the spring and returned to their posts in June, when a major escalation in the export of the Cultural Revolution began.²⁷

The actions of Chinese diplomats in spreading Maoist propaganda in Burma and Cambodia are well-documented; in Vietnam we do not have a clear idea of how active the Chinese were in promoting this new phase of 'permanent revolution'. But there was certainly a raising of the political temperature in Hanoi in the middle of the year, something that may have been connected to the recall of Hanoi's diplomatic corps in July. The US State Department began to request discreet reports on the movements of Hanoi's diplomats at the end of June. The Vietnamese representatives in Paris, Beijing, Phnom Penh and Vientiane were known to have returned, and there was reason to believe that the ambassador in Jakarta had also flown back to Hanoi.²⁸ The British consul in Hanoi could offer no real information on why this recall was taking place.

One event that caused a stir in Hanoi in early July was the death of the chief military commander in South Vietnam, Nguyen Chi Thanh, of heart failure in Hanoi. He was known as an aggressive proponent of large-unit warfare in the South and was widely believed to be a rival of General Vo Nguyen Giap. Whether or not his death had any bearing on the events that followed in August and September is a mystery. Another unusual aspect of the situation in Hanoi was that Ho Chi Minh had not been seen in the capital by any western witnesses since 13 April, when he had been visited by two Swedish doctors. He had not made a public appearance on May Day or on his official birthday on 19 May. (He was pictured in the press at an anti-aircraft site in winter clothing, when the temperature in Hanoi was 100 degrees.)²⁹ Ho was back in Hanoi to meet two French peace envoys, Raymond Aubrac and Herbert Marcovitch, on 24 July, but then in September returned to Beijing for medical reasons until December.³⁰

The most important decision before Hanoi at this mid-point in 1967 concerned the future course of the war. It is not my intention in this paper to undertake a detailed analysis of the decision-making leading up to the Tet offensive. David Elliott has pointed out many gaps and anomalies in the official record in his recent study of the war in My Tho province.³¹ His description of the Tet decision as 'incremental, contested and improvisational' conveys the mood of the times, and contradicts the idea that the Lao Dong party was a methodical and monolithic political machine. What is clear is that key decisions relating to Tet were made in both June–July and October. The late Ralph Smith also made a close study of the confused events of July

1967, which he described as ‘probably crucial’. He suggests that ‘in the aftermath of Thanh’s death – and also in the light of an improvement in Soviet–American relations in late June – a serious effort was made by some leading figures in Hanoi to explore the possibility of a negotiated solution.’³² This improvement in US–Soviet relations was connected to a meeting in Glassboro New Jersey on 23–25 June between President Johnson and Soviet Premier Kosygin. During this meeting Kosygin had received an assurance direct from Pham Van Dong in Hanoi that if the US stopped the bombing of North Vietnam unconditionally, the North Vietnamese would immediately go to the conference table.³³ The Aubrac and Marcovitch mission to Hanoi followed: the two carried a proposal approved by President Johnson, passed to them in Paris by then Professor Henry Kissinger.

But in August and September the Vietnamese contacts involved in this peace initiative, given the code name ‘Pennsylvania’, went dead. The French envoys received no reply to a second proposal sent on 25 August via the Vietnamese representative in Paris. They were not invited back to Hanoi. One of the Vietnamese diplomats closest to these negotiations, Luu Doan Huynh, reports that he had responsibility for drawing up negotiating documents for talks with the Americans in 1966 and 1967. Most of the files were ready by August 1967, ‘just in time’, as he puts it. But at that point, ‘because of illness and exhaustion’, he says, ‘I had to ask for a transfer to the China division.’³⁴ This appears to be a diplomatic way of hinting that the negotiating process was cut short at this time by the Vietnamese.

The fact that on 20 August American planes bombed targets around Hanoi may have been linked to the breakdown in talks. At the same time, the planning for the Tet offensive was already well advanced and it would seem that whatever support for immediate peace talks had existed in July had already collapsed. From 20 to 24 October the Politburo met and decided that they could carry out the planned offensive earlier than they had initially planned, as the 1988 official history of the People’s Army of Vietnam explains.³⁵ This meeting was chaired by Truong Chinh and included Pham Van Dong, Nguyen Duy Trinh, Le Thanh Nghi, Van Tien Dung, Tran Quoc Hoan and Le Duc Tho. A number of Politburo members were absent from Hanoi at the time, including Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap. It appears that Le Duan was also absent, having already departed for the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution in Moscow.³⁶

The restricted nature of this consultation and the decree reviving Law no. 63 in November raise the question as to whether decisions taken in October and November 1967 could be considered an inner-party power grab or coup. Comments made by the Soviet ambassador in Hanoi, Shcherbakov, to the Hungarian chargé, reported to Budapest in January 1968, explain the arrests of 1967 as the result of a ‘gradual weakening of party democracy, which accelerated after the outbreak of war but had actually begun earlier’. The Hungarian diplomat added his own observation, that according to the Lao Dong party rules, the Central Committee should have held plenums at least twice a year. But by 1968 plenums were being held only once a year, and had become ‘merely informative in nature’, with no debate on the issues.³⁷ This

comment may reflect the fact that the January 1968 resolution authorizing the Tet offensive, no. 14, had been drawn up at the restricted Politburo meeting in October.

The Ideological Debate in Hanoi

Clearly momentous decisions were being made in Hanoi at the time that the arrests connected with the Anti-Party Affair began. The turmoil in China, Kosygin's initiatives towards the US, the increasingly destructive war, Ho Chi Minh's failing health – all of these issues must have been responsible for creating tension within the Vietnamese leadership. The loss of Nguyen Chi Thanh may also have disturbed the faction most eager to step up military action. It meant that they had not only lost a trusted comrade and experienced leader, but that they also had one less vote in the Politburo.

Throughout 1967 the Cultural Revolution had been raging in China, turning what had been a secure rear area for the North Vietnamese into a source of potential instability. Some Red Guards had actually crossed the border into Vietnam – although they volunteered to fight the Americans, they 'did not respect the rules' of either Vietnam or China.³⁸ For all of Vietnam, by 1967 the war had become a death machine not unlike the visitation of a plague. In the southern countryside controlled by the Viet Cong, in operations with codenames like Cedar Falls, the US military was uprooting whole village, burning the peasants' thatched huts, ploughing under the crops and lifting the inhabitants out by helicopter to refugee camps (unless they chose to remain in what became free fire zones for the US B 52s).³⁹ In the land above the 17th parallel, bombing by unseen American planes had become a daily reality. The British consulate, in its report of 9 November 1967, mentioned that the bombing of targets close to Hanoi, including the power station and the main bridge over the Red River, was inducing a 'spy fever' in the DRV.⁴⁰ (And, in fact, British scholars have since concluded that the British personnel in Hanoi did engage in intelligence gathering.⁴¹) The Hanoi press featured a daily count of the number of US aircraft that had been shot down – by the time of the 50th Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in November the count had reached 2,500, or so the public was informed.

Since we have only the sketchiest official or party sources from the Vietnamese side on the issues that were responsible for the tension within the leadership, one has to turn back to the tools of Cold War analysis. One method of determining what was in the minds of the Hanoi leadership in these months of escalating war is to read their own speeches, some of which were reprinted in the party's theoretical journal, or sometimes in the party's daily newspaper *Nhan Dan*. (These are part of a contemporary record that has certain advantages over memoirs – they do not change with the benefit of hindsight.) A series of these speeches published in 1967 and 1968 in the journal *Hoc Tap* [Study] reveals that a campaign to reassert the 'class character' of the party was in full swing by the close of 1967, a campaign which echoed a number of Maoist ideas propounded in China during the Cultural Revolution. These official statements of policy may not necessarily represent the viewpoint of one single author, but rather a carefully calibrated compromise among the top leadership.⁴² At other

moments, however, the author may have been trying to nudge a policy debate in a particular direction by garnering wider support from lower ranking party bodies. The shift in emphasis from late 1966 to late 1967 and throughout 1968 shows that the prevailing political winds in Hanoi had changed in that period. Given the length and vehemence of the speeches of two of the protagonists in the events of 1967–68, Le Duc Tho and Truong Chinh, one can conclude that they were on the winning side of a struggle, as the later memoirs indeed claim.

The parameters of the debate that was taking place within the leadership in 1967–68 may appear narrow to us today. (No one was discussing multi-party democracy.) But, by the standards of the 1960s, it was an argument about starkly different choices regarding the DRV's future development. The nature of the war and revolution were at the heart of this debate, which was a multifaceted polemic, covering issues that ranged from the selection of party members to agricultural development. The role of peace negotiations in ending the war was thus part of a larger picture. This was a contest between a view of the future based on national unity (within a patriotic coalition), scientific development and technological progress, as opposed to one based on the revolutionary will of the masses and the transforming power of violent revolution. The first presupposed that intellectuals had an important function within communist society, while the second placed communist virtue ahead of expertise. It was also a debate about private property and the speed of collectivization of the economy.

The belief of a number of western analysts that the major split in the Politburo was a disagreement between 'North-firsters' and leaders committed to war in the South is misleading in my view – this dichotomy does not capture the essence of the ideological divide.⁴³ (Vo Nguyen Giap and Truong Chinh were both sceptical about the prospects for military struggle in South Vietnam in the early 1960s, but they were divided on the nature of the revolution in North Vietnam.) In the view of the leadership itself, their disagreement was about how quickly the country should move to develop a fully communist society and what sort of compromise was possible with the capitalist world. Most of these disagreements were part of the Sino-Soviet debates over 'dogmatism' and 'modern revisionism'.

In my conclusion, I will examine the extent to which these ideological issues were the primary cause of political tension. One underlying cause was undoubtedly Ho Chi Minh's failing health, and the intensification of a power struggle over his succession. But was the succession struggle primarily a battle over the nature of Vietnam's socialism, or a contest for personal power? A second question which I will address is whether or not the ideological debate had a long-term influence on the course of the war and the state which emerged from war in 1975.

One odd thing about this period is that we have very little evidence that Vo Nguyen Giap actually held any views that were strongly divergent from those of the rest of the Politburo in 1967. In his writings he regularly expressed his support for people's war, an orthodox Maoist doctrine. In fact, a number of analysts have assumed that his article in *Nhan Dan* and *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, 'The Big Victory, the Great Task', in September 1967 provided a 'general description of the Tet offensive'.⁴⁴ (We have to

consider the possibility that General Giap's public writings were a form of self-defence, and do not fully reflect his most deeply held beliefs.) But at the same time, paradoxically, he was identified as being close to the Soviets, mainly because of his advocacy of a modern, technically trained military, but perhaps also for his identification with Khrushchev's policies. The real problem that Giap represented may have stemmed from his popularity within the army, as the victor of Dien Bien Phu, and his leadership during the correction of the excesses of land reform. General Giap had made the party's apology to the people in October and November 1956, on behalf of Ho Chi Minh.⁴⁵

Le Duan, often painted these days as the party's leading extremist, from his own speeches comes across as a spokesman for middle-of-the-road views in 1967–68. He was a native of the central province of Quang Tri who had served until 1957 as the top Politburo leader in South Vietnam. Although variously described as pro-Chinese and pro-Soviet over the years, Le Duan was chosen to lead the party in 1958 as a compromise between different Hanoi factions, the first identified with General Giap and the second with Truong Chinh, the party leader from 1951 to 1956. Le Duan has consistently been identified as the Politburo's strongest proponent of defending the revolution in South Vietnam and was believed to be behind the adoption of a strong pro-Chinese line at the 9th Plenum in 1963. But his pro-Chinese and pro-Soviet positions seem to have been the result of his calculations as to which state was able or willing to do the most to further the cause of reunification at any point in time. Thus he had strongly criticized the Soviet line during meetings in Moscow in early 1964, Khrushchev's last year in power.⁴⁶ By the close of 1966, however, when North Vietnam had become heavily dependent on Soviet weaponry to defend itself against US bombing, he was clearly distinguishing his views from the Maoist formulations of the Cultural Revolution. During a March 1966 visit to Moscow, he even referred to the Soviet Union as a 'second motherland', thus angering the Chinese leadership.⁴⁷

Le Duan expounded his view of the Vietnamese revolution in a lengthy speech printed in *Hoc Tap* in May 1967. (He had delivered the speech in December 1966 at a conference of the Executive Committee of the General Trade Union of Vietnam.) In this speech he showed himself to be a careful compromiser, a common trait of successful communist bureaucrats. His topic was 'The Role of the Vietnamese Working Class and the Mission of the Unions in the Coming Period'. 'If we wish to achieve victory for the proletarian revolution, the working class in each country must firmly grasp and uphold the banner of nationalism and democracy – only in this way can we unify the people in each country where the struggle in on the upsurge', he told the delegates. 'The struggle of the working class against the capitalist class in the entire world today is proceeding under the slogan, 'peace, independence, nationalism, democracy and socialism'.⁴⁸ What the words 'nationalism' and 'democracy' signified to him is unclear. But he seems to have been stating the need for the struggle in the South to remain a 'national democratic' revolution, as opposed to a primarily class struggle.

What he was clearest about in his speech was the goal of transforming Vietnam from a backward agricultural country into an industrialized state: 'as products of a

backward level of agriculture, to move forward to socialism, we had no other way but to begin to collectivize [hop tac hoa, literally, “to cooperatize”] agriculture and to develop agriculture in a well-rounded way to become a base for the development of industry’, he stated. But he qualified this belief further on, making it clear that Vietnam did not have the technological base to develop large-scale communes overnight. (In a major speech on agriculture in 1968 he elaborated on this theme, pointing out the importance of providing for the peasants’ consumer needs and of encouraging production on private plots, which still provided 40% of their income.)⁴⁹

In a second part of his 1967 speech, he spoke of the ‘three revolutions’ underway in Vietnam: the revolution in relations of production, the revolution of technology and the revolution of ideology and culture. ‘Of the three revolutions today the revolution of technology is the linchpin’, he said, ‘because it aims to create the material and technological basis for socialism, to construct the forces of production which are appropriate for socialist relations of production.’⁵⁰ He emphasized both education and technology: ‘In summary, the duty of the union in the current period is to radically raise the workers’ level of education and spirit of collective mastery, raise the level of organization of workers to actively take part in administering industry, the economy, implement the revolution in technology, at the same time, with all their strength, care for the lives of the workers.’⁵¹ As the Cultural Revolution in China was popularizing the idea that it was ‘more important to be Red than to be expert’, Le Duan was staking out a position which would be identified with the Soviet one on the issue of scientific progress. By placing the need for a technological revolution before the revolution in relations of production, he was making the case that a fully collectivized economy would have to wait until Vietnam had the technological means to build a more modern economic base. This was one of the lessons that many Vietnamese had drawn from China’s disastrous ‘Great Leap Forward’. Le Duan may be viewed, then, as a moderate on the question of the construction of ‘socialism’ in North Vietnam.

His writing on the war in the South regularly underlined the need to combine military and political methods of struggle. From the first of his published Letters to the South, written in February 1961, to his instructions to southern revolutionaries in January 1968, he outlined tactics that included the creation of united political fronts and popular uprisings in the urban centres. In the 1968 offensive, these were to be coordinated with the thrusts of guerrilla forces into the cities.⁵² This plan relied heavily on the urban petty bourgeoisie, in particular students and intellectuals. As it turned out, the urban uprising in Saigon was pre-empted by a last-minute change of date for the start of the offensive.⁵³ A number of authors have pointed out that the Chinese disapproved of this plan to stage urban uprisings in 1968.⁵⁴ They may have also disapproved of the tactic to call for a neutral coalition government to be formed in the South, as stated in the August 1967 programme of the NLF. The formation of such a government would have required some form of peace negotiations. Throughout 1967 and 1968 the Chinese remained strongly opposed to negotiations and tried to dissuade the Vietnamese from opening talks with the Americans.⁵⁵ From 1965 to the end of

1968, Mao warned the DRV against what he viewed as a Soviet 'peace plot', that is Soviet efforts to start peace negotiations.⁵⁶

In December 1967, after the arrests of the 'anti-party group' and as final preparations for the Tet offensive were being made, Le Duc Tho, a Politburo member who since 1956 had run the Party Control Commission, made a speech with quite a different tone from Le Duan's. As the man who controlled all appointments within the party bureaucracy, Tho's views on 'Constructing a Strong New-style Marxist-Leninist Working-class Party' must be seen as decisive for future Lao Dong party policy.⁵⁷ (He had the power to assign party cadres to work with Le Duan in the Central Committee office: in 1965 he transferred Duan's political secretary Tran Quynh to other work.⁵⁸) Although in his speech he rejected the idea that Vietnam would follow one communist model or the other, he did not accentuate the nationalist aspect of the revolution. Instead he emphasized the two-line struggle: 'we must constantly maintain the struggle between two paths – the collective, socialist path and the path of individualistic capitalism – in all aspects of politics, ideology, the economy, culture and our daily life.' 'We must constantly struggle against opportunism of left or right', he continued.⁵⁹ When he spoke of party development, he did not bother to camouflage his opposition to the more nationalist wing of the party. 'We must choose Party members from the most basic segments of the revolution: the poor peasantry', he said.⁶⁰ 'Rightist deviations' in the construction of the party still continue. 'Lately we have not been emphasizing the development of the Party within the working, middle and poor peasant classes, and in places some "complex elements as well as a number of people from the exploiting class have been admitted to the Party."⁶¹ 'When we were correcting the errors of the land reform campaign and of the Party Rectification, we made the rightist error of restoring the membership of a number of people who should not have been readmitted. This situation has had a negative influence on the Party's purity,' he claimed. He singled out the upper levels of the party, where he said the majority of members are 'petty bourgeois intellectuals'. The problem of cadres' class origins is very important, he emphasized. (He did not mention that a number of these bourgeois intellectuals had recently been arrested and were at that moment undergoing interrogation. Nor did he make any reference to his own class background.) Finally, in case there were any doubts about his message, he pointed out that it was wrong to place too much emphasis on 'skill' in the selection of cadres. He implicitly criticized those party members who 'place heavy emphasis on skill (tai) and less on virtue, who favour ability (nang luc) and pay little attention to virtue, ideology and political attitude'. With his criticism of the correction of the errors of land reform, he was signalling that this was an attack on Vo Nguyen Giap and his allies within the party. (Giap had strongly criticized the 'classism' (giai cap chu nghia) of the Land Reform and Party Rectification movement, led in the early 1950s by Le Duc Tho's predecessor as head of the Party Control Commission, Le Van Luong.)⁶²

After Le Duc Tho, it was Truong Chinh who weighed in with his views to clarify ideological issues. Still a Politburo member in spite of his demotion in 1956, he was also chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, in which capacity

he signed many major government decrees.⁶³ As the head of the Nguyen Ai Quoc Party School, he was the DRV's leading theoretician. He made two lengthy speeches in September and November 1968, which received wide publicity in the Vietnamese media. These seem to have been intended as the final word on what may still have been contentious issues within the Lao Dong party. The first, delivered to mark the 150th Anniversary of Karl Marx's birth, was published in part in September and October 1968 in Hoc Tap. It is unknown whether the actual delivery date was closer to the birthday celebrations in May. A more complete version of the speech was also broadcast in four parts over Hanoi radio (and received considerable attention from western analysts at the time). The party paper Nhan Dan called it 'a new contribution to the Vietnamese revolution's treasure of theories'.⁶⁴

The speech gives a different emphasis to the importance of the 'three revolutions' outlined by Le Duan at the end of 1966. In essence Truong Chinh was calling for an end to both private property and private trade. He says that the revolution in the relations of production must not be limited to the 'means of production', but must be extended to management and distribution. 'After the basic reform of the relations of production and the system of property has been completed, then the revolution in technology has the key role', he said.⁶⁵ This is a call for any sort of private economic activity to be eliminated, possibly a reference to private farmers' markets where peasants could sell the produce from their private plots.

Another topic of Truong Chinh's long statement of policy was the nature of the revolution in the South. His comments lead one to question whether he disapproved of attempts made by NLF cadre in Saigon in 1967 to open negotiations with the US embassy on prisoner exchanges. (In fact Tran Bach Dang was later criticized for this initiative, which resulted in the release of a number of NLF cadres.)⁶⁶ There had also been talks, apparently not approved by the DRV, in July 1966 in Paris between NLF representative Le Van Truong and a US diplomat on the formation of a coalition government in the South.⁶⁷ Truong Chinh made clear that the party must remain in 'undisputed control of the united front at all stages of the national democratic revolution and on no account let it fall into the hands of the "bourgeoisie" – the Party must always preserve its independent identity within the front; the sole purpose of the front's "minimum platform" (independence and social reform) is to facilitate the realization of the Party's maximum platform (the creation of a communist state). The party 'must absolutely not allow the national bourgeoisie to lead the national united front'. In his statements of 1968 it is difficult to pick up any hints that he wanted to reduce the DRV's commitment to the South, that he was a 'North-firster'. What is remarkable here is his insistence that the southern revolution must rely on 'non-peaceful means' to make the transition to socialism.⁶⁸ This seems to mean that a negotiated solution leading to a coalition government in the South would not be an acceptable outcome of the war.

Throughout his speech Truong Chinh makes a number of references to 'enemies of the people'. 'Today in North Vietnam', he says, 'the struggle between the socialist path

and the capitalist path is continuing, in order to finish with the question of “who will vanquish whom?” It is a long struggle, difficult and complex.⁶⁹

The speech continues in this vein:

Concerning dictatorship, it has been made clear that the dictatorship of the labouring people’s majority will be realised, as opposed to counter-revolutionaries and exploiters who are in the minority and who refuse to convert themselves . . . under the socialist democratic regime, enemies of the people and of socialism are not allowed to enjoy democratic rights. The proletarian dictatorial state determinedly prevents the use of slogans of democratisation of the regime in order to weaken or abolish the proletarian dictatorship, belittle or deny the revolutionary leadership of the working class and of the communist party, or achieve step-by-step the ‘peaceful evolution’ strategy and push the country to proceed gradually towards a liberal bourgeois system and eventually return to capitalism. At the same time, it is imperative to struggle against all manifestations of the national bourgeoisie, the enemy of proletarian internationalism, which isolates and pushes the country into the arms of world capitalism.⁷⁰

A British Foreign Office analyst, Lydia Giles, found the comment about ‘who will vanquish whom’ intriguing. ‘Presumably it refers to the difference of opinion in the North about how the war should be fought, about negotiations and about the whole question of whether a basically more Russian or more Chinese form of communism should be followed in North Vietnam’ she wrote.⁷¹ She also remarked that the timing of this speech’s publication, after the Soviet Union’s August invasion of Czechoslovakia, might be significant. We do not have sufficient knowledge of events in the DRV to know whether the phrase ‘slogans of democratisation’ used by Truong Chinh is a reference to the Prague Spring and the communist world in general, or whether it is a comment on something that had occurred in Vietnam.

Truong Chinh delivered his other landmark speech of 1968 on 6 November, to the cadres of Vinh Phu Province. The speech, headed ‘Determinedly Correcting Weaknesses, Developing Strengths, to Lead the Cooperative Movement to Steadily Advance’, was printed in two parts in *Nhan Dan* on 29 and 30 January 1969. This was the speech that ended experiments with production incentives to peasant farmers. These had been going on in different provinces since at least 1963, Vu Thu Hien relates in his memoir. Hien mentions two northern provinces, Hung Yen and Vinh Phu, as the sites of experimentation with production contracts (*khoan san pham*), which permitted peasants to keep that portion of a crop which exceeded the amount that they had contracted to grow for the state. Hien notes that similar experiments must have been underway in China in 1962, because Mao Zedong made a statement opposing contracts that year.⁷² In fact, arguments over production contracts and the family ‘responsibility system’ of farming had been a key feature of the PRC’s political life in the wake of the Great Leap Forward and in the lead-up to the Cultural Revolution.⁷³ Within the DRV the prevailing wisdom has been that Le Duan opposed Truong Chinh’s criticism, but was powerless to intervene.⁷⁴ In fact, the arrest of the ‘anti-party group’ appears to have boosted Truong Chinh’s role and visibility as much as any other leader’s. Certainly, in 1968 he was the ideologist who had the final word.

He pointed out that the experiments with contracts were the equivalent of a return to individual farming, that they ‘went against the party’s path of cooperativization.’⁷⁵

Truong Chinh’s ideological recipe echoes elements of the political debate, which was still taking place in China in 1967–68. Zhou Enlai had given Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap a lecture on these issues when they were in Beijing in April 1967.⁷⁶ ‘I told you that our cultural revolution this time was aimed at overthrowing a group of ruling people in the party who wanted to follow the capitalist path’, Zhou explained. ‘In one of his speeches last year, Comrade Lin Biao said: In the process of socialist revolution, we have to destroy the “private ownership” of the bourgeoisie, and to construct the “public ownership” of the proletariat.’ And further, ‘as I have told you, in our society, “private ownership” still exists . . . there are remnants of the bourgeoisie, of feudalism, and newly emerging capitalists, speculators, embezzlers . . . And still there exists private ownership, privately owned land, free market, free business. Therefore capitalism can recur at any moment . . . All the above-mentioned factors are fertile ground for the restoration of capitalism and the appearance of revisionism.’ We do not know what other channels existed between Vietnam and China for the communication of this ideology. But it seems likely that leaders such as Le Duc Tho and Truong Chinh had counterparts in China who served as direct informants regarding the ideology of the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese embassy in Hanoi was probably also involved in promoting these ideas, as were China’s embassies in other Southeast Asian capitals. Our picture of contacts among the socialist camp as consisting uniquely of exchanges ‘at the highest level’ is very likely a primitive view of how things worked.

The Continuing Debate and the Long-term Significance of the Anti-Party Affair

Although the Vietnamese leadership has always been careful to maintain a public image of unity, the published speeches of 1967–68 betray the fact that such leaders as Le Duc Tho and Truong Chinh were extremely worried by the situation within the top ranks. Documents made public in recent years allow us to see how these concerns were followed up by concrete political actions. After receiving the information from the interrogations of those arrested in 1967, in November 1968 the Politburo established a committee to supervise the continued investigation of the Anti-Party Affair. The committee was headed by Le Duc Tho, with Minister of Internal Security (Bo Cong An) Tran Quoc Hoan as his deputy. Other members included Hoang Quoc Viet, Nguyen Luong Bang, and Song Hao. One of the major accusations against the ‘anti-party group’ was that they had opposed Resolution 9 of the Central Committee, passed in 1963. They were also accused of opposing the policy of armed resistance to the US for the liberation of the South and the unification of the nation.⁷⁷ Finally, they were accused of passing secret documents to a foreign country. As we know, these accusations were not made official until 1972, when the committee may have completed its investigation.

But it appears that the Lao Dong Central Committee continued to dispute ideology and policies in a way which the top leadership found disturbing. Proof of this fact can

be found in a report on a party plenum of December–January 1970–71, a year after Ho Chi Minh's death had left the Lao Dong without a clear senior statesman. The report by secretariat member Hoang Anh, available in Russian translation in the RGANI archive, covers the 19th Party Plenum. (By the Soviet count this was the 20th Plenum – there may have been some doubt as to whether a true plenum had been held in late 1967, or whether other meetings constituted plenums. Secrecy regarding the dates of plenums may account for the Russian confusion over the numbering. As mentioned earlier, Eastern bloc diplomats in Hanoi were aware that plenums had been held less regularly since the outbreak of war.⁷⁸)

Hoang Anh's report is filled with remarks about the lack of unity within the party. 'In the forty-year history of our party', he says, 'there have never been such strong disagreements.'

As a result of the fact that many comrades have for a long time opposed our basic line in agriculture, within the party leadership there is a continuous struggle, which had begun already at the 17th Plenum, continued at the 18th, and reached its highpoint at the 19th Plenum. Many of the comrades present here are not in agreement with our line. What do they want? What path do they want to follow? How should we resolve these urgent problems? We consider that this is sectarian, revisionist activity.⁷⁹

Clearly the ideological debate did not end in 1968, but continued to force compromises on the Vietnamese leadership with which many people were dissatisfied. Hoang Anh's report mentions continued disagreement over the war in the South, with some comrades wanting to mount a large-scale invasion or to invite in Chinese troops, ignoring the fact that the country needed to recover from the wounds of 1968 and 1969.⁸⁰ In any case, by then the DRV was set on a course of 'talking and fighting', which continued until the signing of the Paris Agreement on ending the war in January 1973. The Tet offensive had been a clear psychological blow to the Americans and had persuaded Lyndon Johnson to halt the bombing. In that sense its architects could claim success.

The question that one has to ask, then, about the political events of 1967–68 is whether they had any long-lasting significance for the DRV. Certainly the debate which framed the arrests had a larger significance than just the choice of tactics and strategy for Tet 1968. On the surface, the arrests of 1967 may appear as a last salute to the Vietnamese's Chinese patrons, especially Mao Zedong, who had played a key role at many stages of the independence struggle and in the development of socialism in the DRV. But I would maintain that the legal precedent set in 1967–68 for dealing with dissent within the Communist Party had a long-term effect. It strengthened the Party Control Commission's right to maintain absolute secrecy about the inner life of the party, a right which it still makes use of. Painting party members who disagreed or dissented with a course of action as traitors, simply because they held discussions with representatives of the Soviet party and provided them with information about DRV policies, was a move towards inner-party dictatorship. Any deviation from that standard of secrecy, including Hoang Minh Chinh's and others' attempts to clear

their names, could consequently be construed as counter-revolutionary or treasonous.

Another consequence of the Anti-Party Affair is that a group of leaders who had built their careers on a close relationship with China and support of Chinese policy saved themselves from irrelevance as the Vietnamese relationship with China weakened. Logically, as Vietnamese dependence on Moscow grew stronger, one might have expected a pro-Soviet group of leaders to emerge as a controlling force within the Vietnamese party. But as Soviet documents reveal, the Vietnamese leadership retained a secretive attitude towards the Russians when it came to their foreign policy and military plans.⁸¹ The Soviets were not informed of plans for the Easter offensive of 1972, for example, according to their documentary sources. Le Duc Tho and Truong Chinh remained powerful forces within the Vietnamese Politburo, even after the break with China in 1978. It is revealing that in Hoang Anh's plenum report in 1971, he stated that the Vietnamese party approved of Maoist policies and the ideas behind the Cultural Revolution, even though it disapproved of the methods used in China.⁸² It appears that these men were strongly committed to the ideas they espoused in 1967–68 and were not simply staging a grab for power.

The DRV leadership that took charge of a reunified Vietnam in 1975–76 was in my view not the same as it would have been without the Anti-Party Affair. Where economic compromise and national unity were called for at the end of a long and divisive war, Vietnam was instead guided by an official ideology that called for a rapid march to socialism. International threats to Vietnam from China and a humiliated United States made the situation of the Hanoi leadership extremely difficult, admittedly. Over-confidence after defeating the strongest military power in the world also played a role in what happened after 1975. But at the same time, the legal and ideological precedents set in 1967–68 restricted the choices before the communist leadership and contributed to the difficulties which the Vietnamese people lived through in the 1970s and 1980s.

Notes

- [1] Ilya Gaiduk and Mari Olsen have made extensive use of Soviet documents in their writing; on the Chinese side the works of Chen Jian and Qiang Zhai provide a guide to newly available Chinese documentation.
- [2] The release in the spring of 2004 of documents related to decision-making during the Battle of Dien Bien Phu was perhaps the first sign of a change. A large number of Lao Dong party documents have been printed in the most recent volumes of *Van Kien Dang* [Party Documents], including a number of Central Committee resolutions in edited form, but still many of the key documents relating to the 1967 decisions regarding the Tet offensive are absent.
- [3] A number of documents were collected during the war by the Combined Document Exploitation Centre (CDEC) in Saigon. These are now available on microfilm in the US National Archives.
- [4] The Paris-based Vietnamese monthly *Dien Dan* [Forum] has published a number of these documents, some leaked by Hanoi officials.

- [5] ‘*Tai-lieu pho bien den Dang Vien va Can Bo Cac Doan The*’, Theo Ke Hoach so 38/KH-TU ngay 7-4-1994 cua thuong vu Thanh Uy Hanoi [‘Documents Circulated to Party Members and Cadres’, Project 38/KH-TU, 7 April 1994 of the Standing Committee of the Hanoi City Committee], includes a review of the charges, under the heading ‘Hoat dong cua mot so the luc thu dich va chong doi’ [Activities of a number of enemy and opposition forces].
- [6] See Stowe, ‘“Revisionism” in Vietnam’, for a summary of the Anti-Party Affair. While I am not in agreement with all of her conclusions, she has put together the only coherent account of these events which exists in English. Georges Boudarel wrote an earlier account of the affair in *Cent Fleurs écloses dans la nuit du Vietnam*, 256–264.
- [7] See e.g. ‘Thu ngo cua cong dan Hoang Minh Chinh’.
- [8] Oberdorfer, *Tet!*, 65–66.
- [9] Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 139, notes 9 and 11.
- [10] Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 214.
- [11] PRO, FCO 15/481, Hanoi to Foreign Office Unnumbered 22 August 1967, signed Mr. Colvin.
- [12] PRO, FCO 15/481, 1/1/68 Conf. Brit. Congen, Hanoi, 30 March 1968 to SEAD, FO, signed G. S. Hirst.
- [13] Oberdorfer, *Tet!*, 66. Oberdorfer says that Ho Chi Minh signed the decree on 10 November, but it is now known that Ho was in Beijing at the time.
- [14] Vu Thu Hien, *Dem giua ban ngay*, 271–279 in particular.
- [15] *Ibid.*, 297.
- [16] *Ibid.*, 297.
- [17] *Ibid.*, 297.
- [18] ‘*Tai-lieu pho bien den Dang Vien va Can Bo Cac Doan The*’, Theo Ke Hoach so 38/KH-TU ngay 7-4-1994 cua thuong vu Thanh Uy Hanoi, [Documents Circulated to Party Members and Cadres, Project 38/KH-TU 7 April 1994 of the Hanoi City Committee Standing Committee. A copy of this document is in my possession.]
- [19] My thanks to Balazs Szalontai for providing me with a translation of this document: Memorandum: The Visit of Vietnamese Ambassador Hoang Luong to Dep. Foreign Minister Erdelyi (Hungarian Foreign Ministry Archives, VTS 1967.93.doboz,146,001025/19/1967).
- [20] Vu Thu Hien, *Dem giua ban ngay*, 176.
- [21] Yang Kuisong, ‘Mao Zedong and the Indochina Wars’, 24.
- [22] Tran Quynh, ‘Hoi Ky ve Le Duan’, 18, describes the meetings in Wuhan and Chinese efforts to form a new International. Tran Quynh served as Le Duan’s political secretary from the late 1950s until 1965.
- [23] Hoang Van Hoan and Hoang Minh Chinh concur on this point in their separate memoirs. Hoang Van Hoan, *Giot Nuoc Trong Bien Ca*, 380; Hoang Minh Chinh, 29. In 2003 the Vietnamese published what is said to be a full text of Resolution 9 in Vol. 24 of *Van Kien Dang* [Party Documents] for 1963.
- [24] For a discussion of Chinese aid to the DRV see Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, 215–229.
- [25] Tran Quynh, ‘Hoi Ky ve Le Duan’, 30.
- [26] Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 94.
- [27] MacFarquar and Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China*, 232–247.
- [28] PRO, FCO 15/535, Priority Washington to Foreign Office, Telegram no. 2233, 30 June 1967.
- [29] PRO, FCO 15/535, Secret, Immediate Hanoi to Foreign Office, tel. No. 421, 3 July 1967.
- [30] Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, 717–725 on the meeting between the two French envoys, Pham Van Dong and HCM. On Ho Chi Minh’s movements see Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 556.
- [31] Elliott, *The Vietnamese War*, Chapter 19, 1054–1071.

- [32] Smith, 'The Vietnam War 'From Both Sides', 25.
- [33] Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 128.
- [34] McNamara et al., *Argument Without End*, 227.
- [35] Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 214.
- [36] A 2001 Hanoi source says that both Giap and Le Duan were absent from the Politburo meeting of 20–24 October 1967: this source claims that these 'comrades were absent for health reasons, as both were receiving medical treatment abroad'. See *Lich Su Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc, 1954–1975*, 32. My thanks to Merle Pribbenow for this reference.
- [37] Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Orszagos Leveltar), XIX-J-1-j, Vietnam SZT 1968.87.doboz, 001051/1968. Report from the Embassy of Hungary in the DRV, 17 January 1968.
- [38] Westad et al., *77 Conversations*, 25; 'Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and PhamVan Dong', Beijing 10 April 1967, 104.
- [39] See Schell, *The Village of Ben Suc* and *The Military Half*, for unequalled reporting on the realities of the US Pacification Program.
- [40] PRO, FCO, 15/481, 1014/67, Confidential report from Consul Brian Stewart to DF Murray, FO, Hanoi 9 November 1967.
- [41] Young, 'British Governments and the Vietnam War', 126 – see note 29.
- [42] Ralph Smith raised this point in his paper, 'The Vietnam War "From Both Sides"', 10.
- [43] *Ibid.*, 22–23, refers to the view of Philip Davidson in his 1988 history of the war as representative of this analysis.
- [44] See Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive*, 55
- [45] Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam*, 245–250.
- [46] Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, 6–9.
- [47] Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 232.
- [48] *Hoc Tap*, 5 (1967): 11.
- [49] Le Duan, 'Nam Vung Duong', 12.
- [50] *Ibid.*, 20.
- [51] *Ibid.*, 24
- [52] Le Duan, '*Gui Trung Uong Cuc va Quan Uy Mien Nam*', 195.
- [53] Ngo Vinh Long, 'The Tet Offensive and its Aftermath', 35.
- [54] Lien-Hang T. Nguyen discusses this question in 'The Sino-Vietnamese Split in the Post-Tet War in Indochina, 1968-1975', 4. Also see Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, 170–171, 178.
- [55] Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 233–234.
- [56] Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong and the Indochina Wars*, 32–36.
- [57] Le Duc Tho, 'Xay dung dang kieu moi mac-xit-le-nin-it vung manh', 29–39.
- [58] Tran Quynh, 'Hoi Ky ve Le Duan', 43.
- [59] *Hoc Tap*, 2 (1968): 31.
- [60] *Ibid.*, 32.
- [61] *Ibid.*, 32–34
- [62] Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam*, 247.
- [63] Note on decision making?
- [64] SWB – BBC Monitoring of Short Wave Broadcasts, FE/2899/A3, 12 October 1968 press review.
- [65] Truong Chinh, 'Doi doi nho on Cac Mac', 16.
- [66] Personal communication to me from the late Ton That Binh Minh (Manh Tuong).
- [67] Prados, *Lost Crusader*, 177.
- [68] These excerpts come from a US analysis of the speech circulated by the French embassy in London. Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Série Conflit Vietnam, 11 (FNL), Extraits d'un rapport de Truong Chinh, diffusé par Radio Hanoi du 16 au 20 sept. 1968.

- [69] *Hoc Tap*, 10 (1968): 17.
- [70] SWB trans., FE/2903/C/7.
- [71] PRO, FCO 15/481, Analysis of Truong Chinh's statement at Hanoi meeting to celebrate 150th Anniversary of Marx's birth, Lydia Giles, 29 August 1968.
- [72] Vu Thu Hien, *Dem giua ban ngay*, 309–311.
- [73] MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 'The Dispute Over Collectivization', 209–233.
- [74] Dang Phong and Beresford, *Authority Relations and Economic Decision-making in Vietnam*, 61–62.
- [75] *Nhan Dan*, 29 January 1968, 2.
- [76] Westad *et al.*, *77 Conversations*, 28; 'Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi, Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap', Beijing, 12 April 1967, 114–115.
- [77] Bao Cao ve vu an "To chuc chong Dang, chong Nha Nuoc ta, di theo chu nghia xet lai hien dai va lam tinh bao cho nuoc ngoai" va thu cua anh Nguyen Trung Thanh, Ban Bao Ve Chinh Tri Noi Bo Trung Uong, 29-6-1995' [Report on the Case of the 'Organization to Oppose the Party and the State; to follow Modern Revisionism and gather Intelligence for a Foreign Country' and the letter of Nguyen Trung Thanh, Committee for Internal Political Security, Central Committee, 29 June 1995], 3–8.
- [78] Hungarian National Archives, Report of 17 January 1968 from Embassy of Hungary in the DRV. For many years the dates of the 15th, 16th and 17th plenums were not made public, but in 1998 a publication titled *Dang Cong San Viet Nam*, edited by Le Mau Han, was published by the party publishing house. This shows that the 15th plenum was held in August 1968, the 16th in May 1969, and the 17th in September 1969.
- [79] Russian State Archive of Modern History (RGANI), collection 89, inventory 54, document 8; Report of CC Secretary Hoang Anh to the 20th Plenum of the VWP, December 1970–January 1971 (Russian trans.), 8. According to the Vietnamese count, this was the 19th plenum.
- [80] RGANI, collection 89, inventory 54, document 8, 9–10.
- [81] RGANI, fond 89, inventory 54, file 10, Report by I. Scherbakov, 21 May 1971, 'The Policy of the Lao Dong Party regarding a Solution of the Indochina Problem and our Tasks arising from the Decisions of the 24th Congress of the CPSU', 8.
- [82] Hoang Anh, Report to the 20th Plenum of the VWP, 27.

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