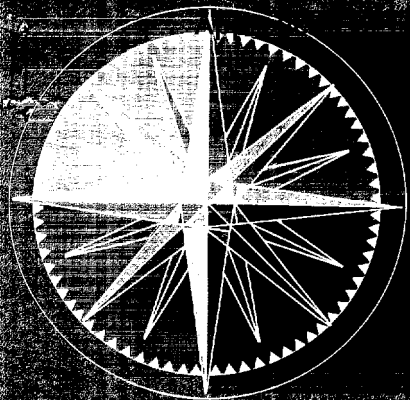


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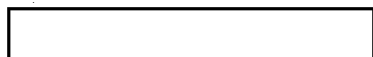
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SPECIAL REPORT

THE HANOI-DIRECTED NATIONAL FRONT FOR SOUTH VIETNAM LIBERATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE



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THE HANOI-DIRECTED NATIONAL FRONT FOR SOUTH VIETNAM LIBERATION

The NFLSV--ostensibly a democratic and independent organization but in reality established, controlled, and directed from Hanoi--is the political complement of the fighting forces of the Viet Cong. In its effort to provide an alternative to the government of South Vietnam, the NFLSV has set forth a program of broad political and economic objectives which can be accepted by the majority of people in the South. It has also created a phalanx of affiliated Front organizations to give the impression that it embodies and represents every significant social, ethnic, religious, and professional group in the country. Although it has not yet been recognized by any government, the Front is attempting to project itself as the "legitimate" regime in South Vietnam. Hanoi propaganda has been echoing these claims. The NFLSV has not obtained a significant degree of objective support from the South Vietnamese, but the spreading war weariness and disillusionment with the weakened anti-Communist regime in Saigon may lead to an increased willingness to accept the alternative offered by the Front.

The Formation of the NFLSV

The Ho Chi Minh - led Communists in Indochina have persistently operated under the cover of a large "front" movement. While resisting the Japanese during World War II, Ho and his comrades functioned behind the facade of the old Viet Minh league. In 1946, they formed the Lien Viet or Vietnam United Front, to conceal Communist direction of the war against France. When the struggle shifted to South Vietnam following the Geneva agreements of 1954, the North Vietnamese organized the Vietnam Fatherland Front to garner support for "reunification" with the South.

This organization, headquartered in North Vietnam, had little success in luring public backing in the South. In late 1958, Hanoi apparently began to plan to revitalize its front apparatus in South Vietnam. Viet Cong documents captured in that period disclosed the Communists' chagrin at their failure to win over a significant following in the South. These documents also indicated that the Viet Cong fully appreciated the importance of winning popular favor if their insurgency was to have any chance of eventual success.

The underlying theory behind the Communist front movements in Vietnam is to establish

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very broad, general objectives which can be accepted by the majority of people, and then to enlist support from every section of the population in an all-embracing political organization. If properly carried out, "all the people" will unite inside one organization against the "enemy" --the Saigon government. This theory is implicit in the treatise on revolution in Vietnam, the People's War, People's Army, written by the North Vietnamese minister of defense in 1961.

Hanoi had apparently completed by September 1960 general plans for a new and widely based front organization, ostensibly indigenous to the South. At a North Vietnamese party congress in September, Le Duan, the party first secretary, called for the creation of a "broad united front" in the South which would have the long-range goal of establishing a "national democratic coalition government." The abortive coup against the Saigon regime in November provided the final impetus for the announcement of the Front's formation.

In order to sustain the fiction that the NFLSV was the product of an indigenous band of patriots in the South, Hanoi gave no publicity to the new organization until January 1961.

The NFLSV Manifesto

The new Front's manifesto was broadcast from Hanoi on 29 January 1961--a procedure which

itself testified to North Vietnam's guiding role in the formation of the organization. When broadcast again from Hanoi on 11 February, the manifesto contained several significant changes. Many passages which tended to suggest Communist origin or ambitions were altered or deleted. The term "agrarian reform," for example, was dropped. Vicious and bloody excesses had been carried out under this slogan in North Vietnam, causing widespread revulsion in the South. Hanoi evidently felt that the retention of such material would tend to undercut potential support for the Front in the South.

In its final version, however, the manifesto still bore a remarkable similarity to Le Duan's speech before the party congress in Hanoi, using his words to describe some of the Front's aims. Outlining a ten-point program, the document declared that the Front's most immediate task was to overthrow the Saigon government, implicitly through armed insurrection. When this was achieved, the Front would form a "broad national democratic coalition administration" to "negotiate" with North Vietnam on "reunification." These and other goals of the Front, such as the adoption of a foreign policy of "peace and neutrality," and the redistribution of land in the South, were identical with the actions long advocated for the South in North Vietnamese propaganda broadcasts. The goals were so phrased, however, that the politically inexperienced

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masses in the South would understand them to mean little more than the replacement of the current Saigon government by a more "representative, humane" administration.

The manifesto contained several highly generalized statements on the necessity of social and economic reforms designed to appeal to every possible dissatisfied element in the South. Such words as democracy, Social justice, full employment, higher wages, lower rents, etc., were liberally used. A general amnesty to all political prisoners of the Saigon government was promised. The document also played on Vietnamese sentiments of nationalism, calling for the elimination of foreign cultural influences and a return to Vietnamese traditions.

Organizing the NFLSV

One of the first acts of the Front was to set up a "Provisional Central Committee" to serve until a formal congress could be held. Regional, provincial, district, and village committees were also formed. This structure closely paralleled that of the Viet Cong in the South which, in its turn, was patterned after the Communist Party in the North.

The Communist-associated backgrounds of the Front leaders stood out clearly. The chairman, Nguyen Huu Tho, was a lawyer who had been involved in pro-Communist political agitation in Vietnam since 1947. The

secretary general, Nguyen Van Hieu, was a pro-Communist journalist who had spent most of his career propagandizing in favor of the Communists and North Vietnam. Other leaders, such as Vice Chairman Huynh Tan Phat, had similar backgrounds of pro-Communist activity.

To conceal the extent of Communist domination and yet give Hanoi a clearly explicable voice in the Front, the formation of an ostensibly new Communist party for South Vietnam was announced in January 1962. This organization was given the name of the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP). It openly admitted its Marxist-Leninist character, and claimed lineal descent from the original Indochinese Communist Party and from Hanoi's Communist (Lao Dong) Party. The NFLSV implied, however, that the PRP was to form only a constituent political element with a voice allegedly equal, but certainly not superior, to the non-Communist groups active in the organization.

It was clear, however, that the PRP exercised effective control of Front activities. There is evidence that the members of the PRP were identical with those of Hanoi's Lao Dong Party apparatus in South Vietnam. It is this apparatus which guides the Viet Cong. The chief representative to the NFLSV, Vo Chi Cong, is a seasoned revolutionary, active in Vietnam since 1928. There are tenuous indications that Cong was in North Vietnam in 1959.

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Captured Viet Cong prisoners in South Vietnam reveal that the units responsible for directing the NFLSV in Hanoi are the Reunification Department of the Lao Dong Central Committee, and the Reunification Commission of the North Vietnamese Government's Council of Ministers.

Two other "political parties," the Radical Socialist Party and the Democratic Party, were also established as constituent bodies of the Front. It is interesting to note that the only two political parties permitted to exist in North Vietnam, aside from the Communist Party, bear almost identical names. In the North they supply a facade of democracy to the political process in the country, and operate in such a manner as to attract support from the intellectual and "bourgeois" classes. They have the same function in the South. Similar groups existed in the Communist Front during the war against the French, and it is probable that some of their members were among the personnel ordered by Hanoi to remain in the South after the 1954 Geneva agreements.

The first congress of the NFLSV in February 1962 formalized the provisional central committee into a 52-man permanent body and expanded the Front's political manifesto. The essential aims and objectives, however, remained the same. NFLSV propaganda claimed that the meeting was "truly representative" of the people and heavily attended. Actually,

fewer than 200 people participated and "elected" the 52-man committee.

The Front skeleton has, however, been fleshed out extensively with a phalanx of affiliated "liberation" organizations. These groups have been added to give the impression that the Front is representative of every significant social, ethnic, religious, and professional group in South Vietnam. There is, for example, "The Association of Workers for the Liberation of South Vietnam," and similarly named associations for students, women, and youth. These groups appear to be mainly small staffs operating with very little actual public participation. Wherever possible, these NFLSV groups are affiliated with corresponding international Communist-front organizations. This affiliation gives them an international character, stimulates publicity about them, and makes them appear far more important than they actually are.

Front Propaganda

The NFLSV also boasts an especially well-organized propaganda arm, the Liberation News Agency (LNA). This was created by Hanoi early in 1961, paralleling the establishment of the Front itself. LNA still provides the easily controlled mechanism for information dissemination which the Communists have found so essential and effective in coordinating and backstopping their political agitation activities.

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The North Vietnamese news agency itself frequently is observed quoting LNA stories, doubtless to provide them with wider dissemination.

NFLSV propaganda publications are printed in several languages in Hanoi by the government's official publishing houses, apparently to be distributed abroad under the aegis of the North Vietnamese Government. English-language editions of Front documents, for example, have been distributed in England at meetings organized by a British Communist front organization which receives the material from the London correspondent of the North Vietnamese newspaper Cuu Quoc. In France, they reach the large resident Vietnamese community through the North Vietnamese economic mission in Paris. Presumably Front material is sent to Paris from Hanoi in regular official channels.

NFLSV Activities Abroad

One of the main aims of the Front since its formation has been to publicize abroad its program and activities, and the actions of the insurgent army. By representing itself as an organization struggling to free Vietnam from "neocolonialist and imperialist aggression," the NFLSV attempts to appeal to the sympathy of the newly emerging countries. Expressions of foreign support are useful to the Front in proving its "importance" to the public in South Vietnam. A steady flow of telegrams of greetings and congratulations go

out directly from the Front to foreign governments and heads of state. The coordination and advice probably comes from Hanoi, which has by now gathered considerable experience in the techniques of international relations.

The Front has long been sending representatives on overseas tours, mainly to the Communist bloc, and to meetings of leftist and Communist-sponsored conferences abroad. Only a few individuals from the South, most notably Nguyen Van Hieu, have participated in these activities, suggesting that the NFLSV has encountered difficulties in moving in and out of South Vietnam. It is believed that a hard core of "delegates" stabled in North Vietnam, where entrance and egress is easier, make up the Front's touring service. During the past two years, Hanoi has been increasing its efforts to gain international stature for the NFLSV. Front delegates, under Hanoi's sponsorship, have increasingly appeared abroad at Communist-sponsored world or regional conferences on an equal footing with national delegations.

Permanent Front "missions" have also been established abroad during the past two years in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Cuba, Algeria, and Egypt.

The organization of the Front office in Algiers exemplifies NFLSV operations abroad. This mission was established in February 1963 by Huynn Van Tam, who had headed a delegation to the Afro-Asian Lawyers Conference

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in Conakry in October 1962. There is no evidence that the Algerian Government has taken official notice of the NFLSV mission. Tam has, however, contributed articles to local French-language newspapers and undertaken many other political support activities, including film showings and speeches to leftist youth meetings. In view of the long history of Algerian opposition to French "colonialism," Hanoi probably sees Algeria as a fertile area in which to enlist support for the insurgency in South Vietnam.

At the Communist-sponsored Conference of "Anti-Colonialist Youth" in Algiers in May 1963, Tam appealed for world-wide support of the insurgency in South Vietnam. Tam also attended the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Meeting in Algiers in March 1964. His speech, predictably, dealt with the "certainty of final victory for the South Vietnamese people" and appealed for moral and material support. Tam's actions illustrate another important use of the Front abroad. Through these overseas offices the NFLSV is able to funnel funds and medical supplies to the Viet Cong.

The international travels of Front members have also included open visits to Hanoi. During October 1962, an NFLSV delegation led by Nguyen Van Hieu visited North Vietnam and was given the red-carpet treatment. During the past year, NFLSV representatives have shown up more frequently and openly in the North; their exact method of

travel from the South, however, is unknown.

The NFLSV as the "Legitimate" Government of South Vietnam

The Front's international activities also seek its recognition as the "true representatives of the South Vietnamese people" by as many foreign governments as possible. No foreign state, Communist or non-Communist, however, has yet officially recognized the NFLSV as the government of South Vietnam. The difficulty of establishing a firm operational base for a full-fledged Communist government in the South probably remains a prime problem for Hanoi.

The establishment of a provisional government, however, is clearly part of the Communist strategy for South Vietnam. Lately, NFLSV pronouncements and activities have suggested that the "legalization" of the Front is being carried out at an accelerated pace. It is probable that the Communists hope to dress the Front in trappings of legitimacy prior to any international conference on the insurgent war in order to gain NFLSV a voice in the proceedings.

The Front's second congress in January 1964 produced some of the first public hints that efforts to attain legitimacy was being speeded up. A speaker alleged that many governments already consider the Front a "real government" and receive its delegates as "real diplomatic envoys of the state." This

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theme was picked up by the pro-Communist journalist Wilfred Burchett, in an interview with Ngyuen Huu Tho published in April 1964. Burchett referred to Tho as the "de facto premier of most of South Vietnam," and to the NFLSV as to "all intents and purposes, a government." According to Burchett, the question "of setting up a provisional government is obviously the order of the day." Hanoi later sought to give greater publicity to this image of the Front as a legitimate government by rebroadcasting the Burchett interview.

Traditionally, such activities as tax-gathering and food production conducted by the Viet Cong have been carried out under the ostensible auspices of the NFLSV. Viet Cong political action documents, and most other nonmilitary publications in South Vietnam, are also put out in the name of the Front. The Viet Cong military forces have been "officially" an arm of the NFLSV since 1961.

More recently, the evidence has begun to indicate that the Front is building a formal governmental organization in the South. The communiqué of the second Front congress, for example, announced that a "number of problems of economic construction" and of the "people's livelihood" had been settled. Burchett's article claimed also

that the NFLSV leaders are faced with increasing administrative tasks because of the growing amount of territory coming under their control. He claimed that the Front has now set up committees--"ministries in embryo"--for military affairs, external affairs, information, and education. The efforts of the Viet Cong, under the cover of the NFLSV, to tighten and expand the Communist governmental apparatus in the "liberated" parts of the country have been reflected in the infiltration from North Vietnam during the past year of special groups of administrative cadres and governmental specialists.

Southern Public Support
Of NFLSV

It is clear that the NFLSV does not have anything like the support it claims among the South Vietnamese populace. In the "liberated" zones, of course, the Viet Cong can point to everyone who cooperates with them rather than risking his life as a Front supporter. Both in and out of the Communist-controlled areas, however, it is probable that there is very little objective allegiance to the NFLSV, either among the politically conscious classes or the peasantry. Despite its blandly stated aims and the careful attempt to disguise its domination by the Communists, the

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real nature of the Front is well known.

During the last year, however, the Front probably has found more favorable public opinion for its work as a result of the political upheaval and disarray in Saigon and the un-

remitting Viet Cong military pressure. These developments have produced a growing war weariness among the populace, and probably some tacit acceptance of the Front's authority as the only real alternative to the weakened anti-Communist military regime in Saigon. 25X1

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