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*Recent Communist Military  
and Economic Assistance to North Vietnam*

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TCS No. 3243/73  
10 May 1973

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MEMORANDUM

10 May 1973

RECENT COMMUNIST MILITARY  
AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO NORTH VIETNAM

Conclusions

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There is virtually no direct information on military imports by North Vietnam since the signing of the Paris Agreements on 27 January.

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But beyond that, there have been only a few reports -- second- and third-hand -- of supplies moving through China to North Vietnam. Conversely, a few Communist diplomats (whose access to such information is debatable) have said that both the PRC and the USSR are cutting back on military aid.

Independent evidence is consistent with a continuation of military aid at high levels, but is not conclusive. The current high level of North Vietnam's logistical activity directed toward building military stocks in Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam suggests that Hanoi is not hurting for military equipment. Traditionally, such a high level of activity at the lower end of the logistic funnel has been accompanied by a corresponding high level of activity at the top of the funnel -- military aid from the USSR and the PRC -- but there is no conclusive proof that such is presently the case. Indeed, the present activity could be a readjustment of internal stockpiles.

In sum, the evidence with respect to current levels of military aid is sketchy and ambiguous. There have been some propaganda and public statements out of Hanoi that can be read as signs of

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concern. In terms of available evidence on movement and delivery, however, there are no clear signs that military aid is continuing at pre-cease-fire levels and no clear signs that such aid has been curtailed.

There is no doubt that Soviet and Chinese economic assistance is continuing. Both the USSR and the PRC continue to be responsive to Hanoi's economic needs, shipping large amounts of food, petroleum, and other economic goods into North Vietnam at levels comparable to the period just prior to the cease-fire. Furthermore, both countries have made firm plans for additional major economic assistance in the immediate months ahead. Since the cease-fire, the PRC has sent about 160 technicians to North Vietnam to help in the rebuilding effort.

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Military Assistance

Source Limitations

1. Over the years, there has been little direct evidence of foreign military aid deliveries to North Vietnam, which are made almost entirely by overland transport. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] military aid estimates have been based primarily on indirect evidence from a variety of sources. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] However, determination of imports of small arms and ammunition could be made only on the basis of observed use of such ordnance in actual combat, plus estimates of losses from Allied air and ground actions and estimated expenditures for training in rear base areas.

2. Historically, this information has permitted us to make rough estimates of trends in military aid. Before 1972, the peak of military aid to North Vietnam was reached in 1967 with the import of large quantities of small arms and ammunition (principally from the PRC) and SAMs and antiaircraft artillery (from the USSR). The level of military aid trailed off through the next three years but began to move up again in 1971 and rose sharply in 1972.

Direct Evidence

[REDACTED] Nonetheless, there has been some fragmentary

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evidence that the USSR and the PRC are continuing to send aid, presumably under the terms of agreements signed with North Vietnam late last year.

4. Thus far in 1973, about 1,900 trucks have been detected [REDACTED] in North Vietnam from other Communist countries -- as shown in the following tabulation: 25X1D1a NSA

|       | USSR  | China | Eastern Europe | Total |
|-------|-------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Total | 1,100 | 590   | 240            | 1,930 |
| Jan   | 10    | 180   | 40             | 230   |
| Feb   | 360   | 410   | ....           | 770   |
| Mar   | 430   | ....  | 200            | 630   |
| Apr   | 300   | ....  | ....           | 300   |

This total is roughly comparable to the 1,900 trucks observed being delivered during the same period last year when the Communists were gearing up for their offensive. Although some of these trucks may be destined for the civilian economy, there is little doubt that many are going to military units.

5. On 14 April, ELINT from the Hanoi area revealed the probable initial presence of the FLAP-WHEEL radar in North Vietnam. Although we have no direct information on when this radar arrived in North Vietnam, Hanoi has traditionally deployed new equipment as soon as it has been received and is operational. This radar is a fire-control radar generally associated with the 57-mm antiaircraft gun. It is a marked improvement over the earlier generation FIRECAN radar in that it is capable of performing its own acquisition, has an onboard computer, and is able to operate more effectively in a jamming environment. Taken with the heavy deliveries of SA-3 equipment detected just before the cease-fire, these deliveries underscore Soviet intent to further update North Vietnam's air defense capabilities. Because of the sophisticated nature of this equipment, the Soviets will almost certainly have to provide continued training and material assistance (in the form of spare parts, etc.) if Hanoi is to make full use of their equipment.

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In April, two Soviet ships delivered six MI-10 helicopters to Haiphong. These craft -- with a lift capability of some 13 tons each -- have a variety of applications, including construction work and passenger and freight hauling.

7. Finally, there has been a smattering of reported observations of military shipments. An ARVN prisoner of war recently returned from North Vietnam reported that he was told by other POWs that they had observed convoys of trucks carrying military supplies near the Chinese border as late as February 1973. Another source reported in late March observing at Nan-ning, in southern China, trucks loaded with food and weapons moving toward North Vietnam.

#### Indirect Evidence

8. There is no doubt that a great deal of Communist military logistic activity has been taking place throughout Indochina since the cease-fire. 25X1D0a

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Throughout the war, the North Vietnamese have practiced a supply

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stockpiling policy which requires that, for every type of ordnance or military equipment provided to the front line forces, they maintain very large stockpiles in rear base areas. It could be argued that the current activity would not be taking place if Hanoi did not feel confident of receiving continued military aid.

9. Moreover, there have been no indications in the post-cease-fire period that the Communists have found it necessary to conserve supplies while rebuilding their military capability in South Vietnam. Relatively heavy firing from field artillery and other weapons has continued during the cease-fire, and ten new SA-2 sites have been established near Khe Sanh.

10. There has been conflicting information as to what Communist forces deployed in Laos or South Vietnam are being told to expect in the way of future supplies.

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Whatever the case, there is strong indirect evidence that the Communists will at least try to maintain and strengthen the present areas and force structure they hold and maintain in South Vietnam.

11. Recent North Vietnamese propaganda contains at least some hints that the North Vietnamese leadership is still concerned over the amount of support and aid that its Communist allies are willing to provide. In the May Day speech, Pham Van Dong seemed to be addressing this topic when he stated that "we strive to secure the assistance in many fields from the USSR, China, and other socialist countries." While not as strong as earlier statements, the North Vietnamese do appear to be calling for greater assurances of support and aid from the Communist bloc. An article in the

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North Vietnamese party newspaper last month also hinted that both the Chinese and Soviets were still putting pressure on Hanoi to honor the agreement. So far, however, these expressions of concern have been scattered and fairly muted.

12. In any case, whether or not North Vietnam and its allies intend to abide by the spirit of the cease-fire and curtail military imports, it seems likely that there will be (if there has not already been) a slackening of such imports in the months ahead. For one thing, with the halt in US air operations over North Vietnam, Hanoi's requirement for AAA ammunition, SAMs, and other types of air defense equipment has fallen to only a fraction of its previous level. These are the most bulky and expensive items in Hanoi's military aid bill and the most easily detected. It is also likely that, as the rainy season approaches and with ammunition and weapons caches already built up to massive levels in Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam, the movement of supplies into these areas will decline. Even if Hanoi's allies are willing to sponsor the buildup and maintenance of relatively large weapons inventories, such imports in the future -- assuming no large-scale resumption of hostilities -- might not exceed the low levels observed during the 1969-71 period.

### Economic Assistance

#### Overview

13. North Vietnam's major Communist aid donors have continued to provide economic aid to Hanoi since the cease-fire under the terms of the 1973 aid and trade agreements. This aid has included both commodity assistance to sustain the economy and technical assistance for the reconstruction effort now under way.

14. By any measure, the flow of imports from Communist suppliers since the cease-fire has been quite large. The total deliveries to North Vietnam during February-April 1973 -- some 565,000 tons of

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general cargo, food, fertilizer, and petroleum\* -- were essentially unchanged from the three months prior to the cease-fire. The recent flow is not far below the 615,000 tons of the comparable period in 1972, in spite of the fact that the port of Haiphong was in full operation at that time.

15. The continued responsiveness of Hanoi's Communist suppliers can be judged from their actions since the cease-fire. Direct Soviet shipping to Haiphong was resumed long before that port could be declared safe for international shipping. China's support for Hanoi is evident from the very large delivery schedules which have been negotiated each month since the cease-fire. There is a continued heavy use of overland routes even though the port of Haiphong is becoming fully operational. Although there is undoubtedly a strong need to rebuild stocks and an extensive demand for machinery and equipment for reconstruction, the current rate of flow of imports and maintenance of the less efficient overland routes suggests also that Hanoi (with the help of its allies) is buying the maximum possible insurance against a resumption of hostilities. A clearer reading of this point will be possible only with the passage of time.

#### Seaborne Imports

16. North Vietnam resumed seaborne imports as quickly as possible following the cease-fire. Some 337,000 tons of cargo have arrived since then, almost as much as was sent to North Vietnam via the Chinese ports in the three months preceding the signing of the accord (see Table 1). Deliveries have increased month by month, mainly on the strength of imports from the USSR. In all, the Soviets have supplied some 212,000 tons, or nearly 65% of the total, while the PRC has sent some 81,000 tons.

17. Food imports, which were down for the three-month period, remained the single largest component

\* Including an estimate for petroleum moved through the PRC-North Vietnam pipeline system constructed since mid-1972.

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Table 1

North Vietnam's Seaborne Imports, by Origin<sup>1</sup>

| Thousand Metric Tons                   |   |                      |      |      |                 |      |
|--|---|----------------------|------|------|-----------------|------|
|  | Three Months<br>Pre-Cease-Fire<br>(Nov 1972-Jan 1973) | Post-Cease-Fire 1973 |      |      | Feb-Apr<br>1972 |      |
|  |   | Total                | Feb  | Mar  | Apr             |      |
| Total                                  | 361   | 337                  | 88   | 115  | 135             | 605  |
| USSR                                   | 271   | 212                  | 49   | 70   | 92              | 304  |
| PRC                                    | 35  | 81                   | 19   | 29   | 32              | 209  |
| Other                                  | 55  | 45                   | 20   | 16   | 11              | 92   |
| Food                                   | 126   | 116                  | 25   | 39   | 53              | 188  |
| USSR                                   | 79  | 62                   | 10   | 26   | 26              | 94   |
| PRC                                    | ....  | 35                   | 3    | 13   | 19              | 56   |
| Other                                  | 47  | 19                   | 12   | .... | 8               | 38   |
| Petroleum                              | 122   | 71                   | 15   | 27   | 28              | 107  |
| USSR                                   | 120   | 70                   | 15   | 26   | 28              | 93   |
| PRC                                    | ....  | ....                 | .... | .... | ....            | 14   |
| Other                                  | 2   | 1                    | .... | 1    | ....            | .... |
| Fertilizer                             | 22  | 35                   | 12   | 8    | 14              | 58   |
| USSR                                   | 22  | 29                   | 9    | 5    | 14              | 50   |
| PRC                                    | ....  | 3                    | .... | 3    | ....            | 3    |
| Other                                  | ....  | 3                    | 3    | .... | ....            | 5    |
| General Cargo<br>and Uniden-<br>tified | 91  | 115                  | 36   | 41   | 40              | 252  |
| USSR                                   | 50  | 51                   | 15   | 13   | 24              | 67   |
| PRC                                    | 35  | 43                   | 16   | 13   | 13              | 136  |
| Other                                  | 6   | 21                   | 5    | 15   | 3               | 49   |

1. Including deliveries to PRC ports for North Vietnam. Because of rounding, components may not add to the totals shown.

at 116,000 tons. Seaborne petroleum imports, virtually all of which have come from the USSR over the years, are down sharply since the cease-fire (although there is considerable evidence that large amounts of petroleum continue to be delivered overland via the PRC-North Vietnam pipeline). Other seaborne imports include fertilizer, machinery and equipment, vehicles, and helicopters.

18. Since late February, foreign ships have, with one exception, taken their cargoes directly to North Vietnam, nearly all to the Haiphong area, instead of to Chinese ports for transshipment

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overland. Haiphong, however, has not yet returned to full capacity, because US mine-clearing remains uncompleted and silting has reduced channel depths. Large dry cargo ships and some smaller ones continue to discharge at least part of their cargoes onto lighters at an anchorage outside of the harbor. Haiphong is also having some difficulty handling Soviet tankers. The USSR has moved to help alleviate tanker congestion in Haiphong in recent weeks as a large Soviet tanker has been sent to Haiphong to act as floating storage. For its part, the PRC is scheduled to transfer two small tankers to North Vietnam in June possibly for similar use.

#### Overland Imports

19. The heavy pace of overland imports established in 1972 has continued virtually unabated since the cease-fire. Although deliveries noted thus far in April total only some 6,600 tons,\* shipments in February and March amounted to 26,000 and 47,000 tons, respectively (see Table 2). Monthly overland shipments during the preceding nine months (when the ports were mined) averaged some 27,000 tons, and for the three months prior to the cease-fire they averaged about 29,000 tons. By comparison, total shipments observed during February-April 1972, before the ports were mined, were roughly 11,000 tons.

20. The USSR continued to be the dominant supplier of North Vietnam's observed overland imports, providing 82% of the total since the cease-fire. Foodstuffs account for 83% of the tonnage of Soviet deliveries, but Moscow also provides substantial quantities of trucks, petroleum, construction-related explosives, and other goods. Chinese deliveries, consisting mainly of foodstuffs, vehicles, and explosives, account for another 11%, while Eastern Europe and other Communist countries provide the remainder.

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Table 2

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North Vietnam: Overland Imports Noted  
by Commodity and Origin

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|               | Three Months<br>Pre-Cease-Fire<br>(Nov 1972 - Jan 1973) | Post-Cease-Fire 1973 |               |               |              | Feb-Apr<br>1972 |
|---------------|---|----------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
|               |   | Total                | Feb           | Mar           | Apr          |                 |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>86,781</b>   | <b>79,284</b>        | <b>26,038</b> | <b>46,631</b> | <b>6,615</b> | <b>11,151</b>   |
| USSR          | 55,942  | 65,142               | 23,102        | 39,148        | 2,892        | 8,969           |
| PRC           | 12,175  | 8,785                | 2,330         | 3,576         | 2,879        | 2,182           |
| Other         | 18,664  | 5,357                | 606           | 3,907         | 844          | ....            |
| Food          | 70,071  | 61,886               | 20,182        | 40,044        | 1,660        | 705             |
| USSR          | 48,572  | 54,030               | 19,921        | 34,109        | ....         | ....            |
| PRC           | 6,899   | 4,473                | 261           | 2,927         | 1,285        | 705             |
| Other         | 14,600  | 3,383                | ....          | 3,008         | 375          | ....            |
| Petroleum     | 5,877   | 3,672                | 1,551         | 1,603         | 518          | ....            |
| USSR          | 5,494   | 3,244                | 1,471         | 1,470         | 303          | ....            |
| PRC           | ....  | 136                  | ....          | ....          | 136          | ....            |
| Other         | 383   | 292                  | 80            | 133           | 79           | ....            |
| Fertilizer    | 779   | ....                 | ....          | ....          | ....         | ....            |
| USSR          | 429   | ....                 | ....          | ....          | ....         | ....            |
| PRC           | 350   | ....                 | ....          | ....          | ....         | ....            |
| Metals        | 3,419   | 1,632                | 526           | 825           | 281          | ....            |
| USSR          | 67  | ....                 | ....          | ....          | ....         | ....            |
| PRC           | ....  | 90                   | ....          | 90            | ....         | ....            |
| Other         | 3,352   | 1,542                | 526           | 735           | 281          | ....            |
| Machinery     | 890   | 275                  | 180           | 38            | 57           | ....            |
| USSR          | 513   | 57                   | ....          | ....          | 57           | ....            |
| PRC           | 311   | 199                  | 180           | 19            | ....         | ....            |
| Other         | 66  | 19                   | ....          | 19            | ....         | ....            |
| Explosives    | 48  | 1,440                | ....          | 522           | 918          | 611             |
| USSR          | 48  | 932                  | ....          | 522           | 410          | 305             |
| PRC           | ....  | 508                  | ....          | ....          | 508          | 306             |
| Vehicles      | 3,593   | 6,430                | 2,850         | 2,192         | 1,388        | 8,625           |
| USSR          | 120   | 4,790                | 1,210         | 2,192         | 1,388        | 8,625           |
| PRC           | 3,473   | 1,640                | 1,640         | ....          | ....         | ....            |
| Miscellaneous | 2,104   | 3,949                | 749           | 1,407         | 1,793        | 1,210           |
| USSR          | 699   | 2,089                | 500           | 855           | 734          | 39              |
| PRC           | 1,142   | 1,739                | 249           | 540           | 950          | 1,171           |
| Other         | 263   | 121                  | ....          | 12            | 109          | ....            |

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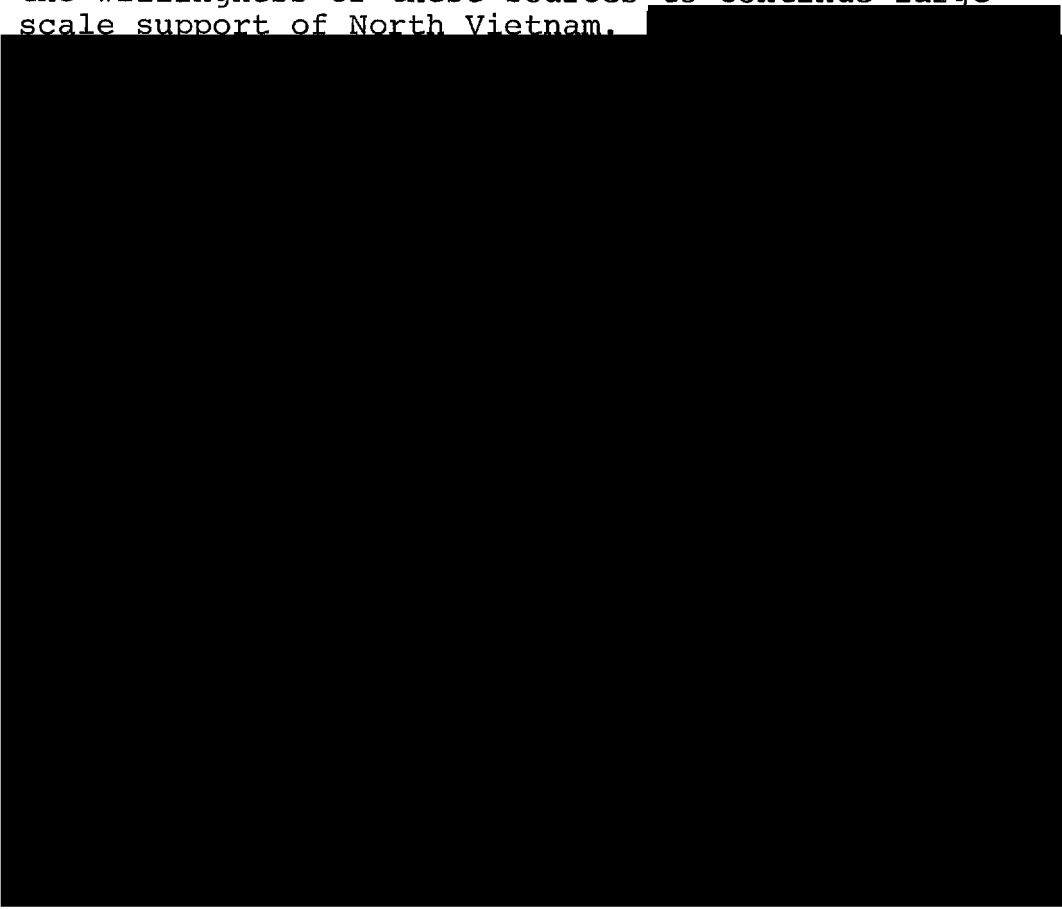
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21. Rail transportation has accounted for the bulk of observed overland deliveries, but the pipeline system to the PRC constructed since the mining of the ports constitutes another major element in North Vietnam's resupply capability. The pipeline system has undoubtedly permitted Hanoi to maintain its petroleum consumption levels even when the ports were closed and represents a means of resupply that can assure a virtually uninterrupted flow of petroleum deliveries if the United States should again close Haiphong.

Trade Negotiations and Plans

22. Ongoing trade negotiations reflect not only Hanoi's dependence on its Communist suppliers for a wide variety of essential supplies but also the willingness of these sources to continue large-scale support of North Vietnam.



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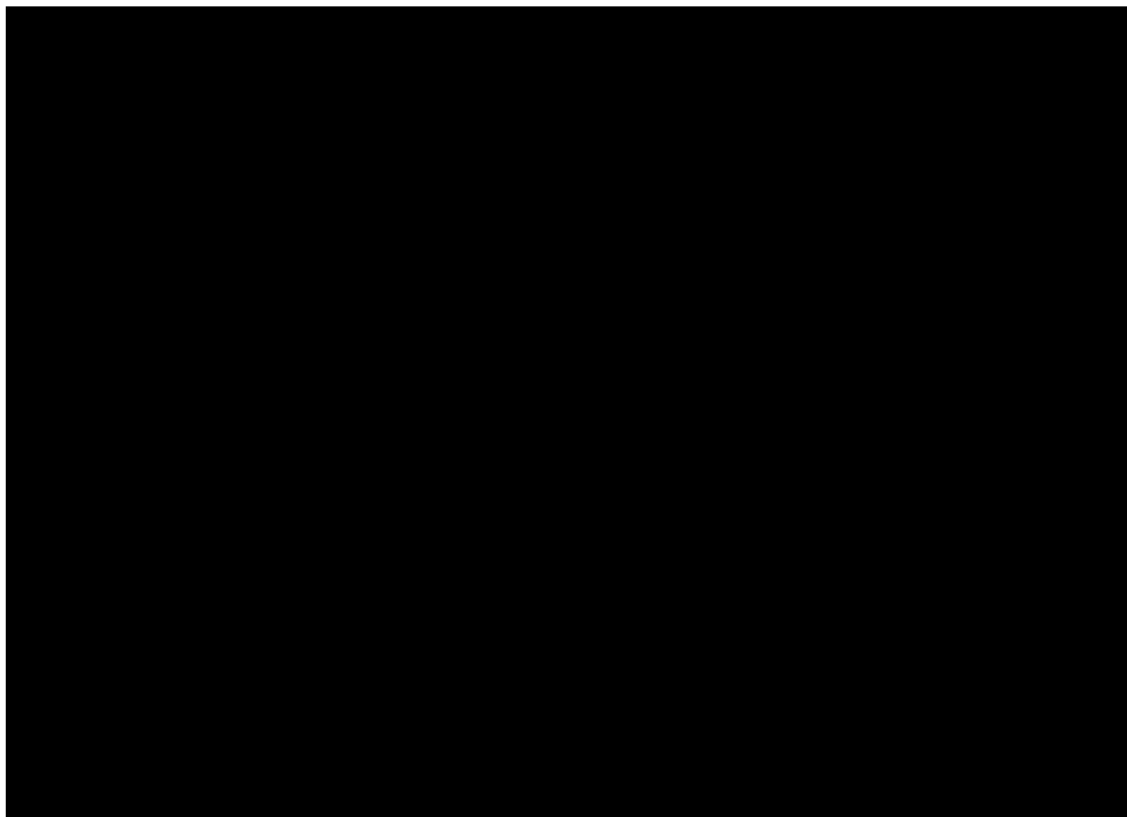
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Reconstruction Assistance

25. There has been a resumption of Soviet and Chinese technical assistance to North Vietnam since the cease-fire, although not yet on a massive scale. Most reconstruction work halted last June following the renewal of bombing and the departure of foreign technicians and has not yet resumed. Since the cease-fire, however, both Moscow and Peking have made arrangements to send technicians to North Vietnam, have accepted North Vietnamese trainees for instruction in various fields, and have arranged to send equipment and materials to a number of construction projects.

26. Moscow, for instance, reported plans to send 11 coal mining specialists to North Vietnam in March and also agreed to send unspecified numbers of specialists in such varied fields as electric powerplant construction, marine equipment, pier construction, and public health. In addition,

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the USSR contracted to train North Vietnamese bridge, road, and port construction teams, as well as drivers, river pilots, and three groups of surveyors.

27. Chinese assistance is represented by the arrival of about 160 specialists since the cease-fire, including 15 to work on restoration of the Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel Complex, 27 for the new 100-mw thermal powerplant under construction at Ninh Binh, eight for the Bac Giang chemical complex and another project, and about 110 others for unspecified projects. The PRC has also agreed to accept substantial numbers of North Vietnamese trainees for instruction in various specialties, including 60 agricultural trainees and four construction trainees scheduled to travel to the PRC in late March and April.

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