



The President's Daily Brief

26 January 1970

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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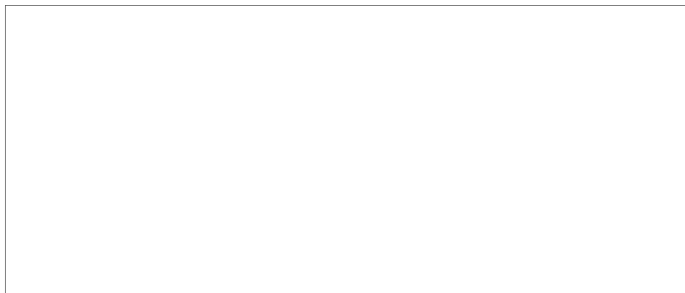
Hanoi departed from the norm in a recent broadcast by praising the wisdom of past policies that led to a cease-fire with the French. We review the content and possible motivations behind this unusual broadcast in an annex.

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A North Vietnamese broadcast last week contained some of the most intriguing hints yet of policy and leadership trends in Hanoi since Ho Chi Minh's death. Our preliminary views on the significance of the broadcast are treated in today's annex.

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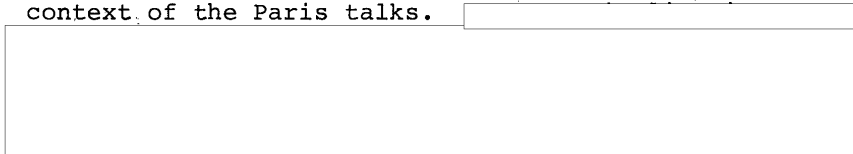
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NORTH VIETNAM

Hanoi has issued a variety of statements to mark the 40th anniversary on 3 February of the Indo-chinese Communist Party (now the Vietnam Workers' Party). A North Vietnamese broadcast on 20 January seems particularly significant, however, because it contains an oblique suggestion that the Communists might try to use the Paris talks to obtain a respite in the fighting. The broadcast summarizes a recent pamphlet commemorating the anniversary.

The passage with the most important implications of Hanoi's intentions is one which calls the signing of a compromise "preliminary" agreement with France in March 1946 a "very correct and clear sighted undertaking of our party." That agreement provided, among other things, for a cease-fire, for the return of French forces to north and central Vietnam, and for the opening of political negotiations between the Viet Minh and France. It fell far short of what Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues wanted at that time, but they accepted the terms because they did not believe they were in a position to fight. The Hanoi broadcast last week asserts that the March 1946 agreement allowed the Communists to get rid of one enemy (the Chinese Nationalist troops then occupying part of North Vietnam), and to concentrate on the struggle against "the immediate and most dangerous enemy... at the time" (i.e., the French). The agreement, said the broadcast, enabled the Communists to prepare their forces for a protracted resistance war, which broke out later when negotiations with the French failed.

It is highly unusual for Hanoi to cite the efficacy of negotiating a compromise agreement as a means to gain time. To do so at present suggests that the leadership believes there are opportunities for applying similar tactics now, presumably in the context of the Paris talks.



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The broadcast on 20 January is also noteworthy for its suggestions of current Communist tactics in the war and for changes in the North Vietnamese leadership which probably have accompanied the adoption of these tactics. The broadcast specifically cites the so-called "August Revolution" of 1945 as a "model" of how a revolutionary war should be conducted. Hanoi has stressed this theme heavily in recent months. The lessons it seems to want drawn from that earlier period are that long military and political preparations must precede any successful seizure of power, and that in South Vietnam the Communists must now concentrate on such preparations if they are to be in a position to exploit favorable openings in the future.

Truong Chinh is the North Vietnamese figure most associated with the August Revolution, and this stress seems to reflect his rise to special prominence in the party hierarchy. The broadcast underscored this conclusion by linking Ho Chi Minh and Truong Chinh with the "perfection" of party policies for fighting a revolutionary war.

The broadcast also strengthens the impression that Hanoi has been trying to restore a better balance between the efforts designed to build up the regime in the North and those devoted to fighting the war in the South. The relative priority of these two tasks has been the touchstone of debate within the leadership for the past decade. Since late 1968, the regime has swung toward re-emphasizing "building socialism" in the North and trying to fight the war in less costly ways that cannot be expected to produce quick results.

The broadcast treats this shift quite pointedly by citing a party policy report delivered by first secretary Le Duan in 1960. The broadcast asserts that the report "made clear that the task of socialist construction in the north is the most decisive task for the development of the revolution in our country as a whole and for the cause of national reunification of our people." The 1960 report indeed contained such a formulation, but it was artfully balanced by another sentence which stressed that the war in the south has a "direct and decisive effect" upon the achievement of reunification

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and party objectives throughout Vietnam. It thus gave equal weight to the party's "two strategic tasks," which the recent broadcast does not.

Moreover, in associating Le Duan with such a one-sided view, the broadcast neatly obscured the fact that in the past he has always been one of the foremost spokesmen in underscoring that the task of "building socialism" in North Vietnam must not be used to put limits on the war effort in South Vietnam. Indeed, Le Duan can be more readily identified with those in the leadership who were willing to push the war effort forward with less regard for its impact on the north, and whose views generally carried the day through mid-1968. There is no reason, of course, why Le Duan's position on this subject could not have shifted in recent years, along with the rest of the leadership. The broadcast is one more reason to believe, however, that regardless of where individuals stand in the post-Ho hierarchy, the new regime recognizes that the policies pursued through most of the 1960s have not paid off and that it is committed to going back to some of the fundamentals of fighting a "people's war" which eventually allowed the Communists to prevail against the French.

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