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DISCUSSION

I. INTRODUCTION

5. Under the terms of the 1954 Geneva Accords on Indochina, the area of Vietnam north of the 17th parallel was placed under the administration of the Vietnamese Communists. The French assumed responsibility for implementation of the Armistice provisions in the area south of the 17th parallel, but neither the French nor the Diem government has acknowledged responsibility for implementing the political settlement envisaged in the Final Declaration of the conference.

6. The UK and the USSR, as co-chairmen of the Geneva conference, met in London in April and May 1956 and reaffirmed support for the political settlement foreseen at Geneva but implicitly approved postponement of its implementation, including the nationwide elections. The co-chairman called upon all parties to preserve the status quo and requested the International Supervisory and Control Commission (ICC) to continue supervising the Armistice. Thus no steps have been taken to bring about unification or a political settlement in Vietnam, and the partitioning of Vietnam has been tacitly accepted by the Geneva conference powers for an indefinite period of time. In the meantime, the Communist regime in the north and the Diem government in the south have been developing their own institutions and preparing for an extended period of struggle for control of Vietnam.

II. NORTH VIETNAM — CURRENT SITUATION AND TRENDS

7. The Communist Party of Vietnam (commonly called the Viet Minh) and its governmental apparatus, the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" (DRV) continue to exercise firm and effective control over the estimated 13 million inhabitants of North Vietnam. Although critically lacking in technically trained personnel, the Communist regime possesses a large number of experienced po-

litical workers and has made considerable progress in developing an effective administrative machine. It has strengthened its control despite severe food shortages, continued passive resistance to its internal policies, and the gradual reduction of its prospects for early domination of all Vietnam.

8. Ho Chi Minh continues to occupy a pre-eminent position among Vietnamese Communist leaders, despite some de-emphasis of his public role. His prestige as a nationalist leader is still a significant factor in the attitude of many people in South Vietnam and Southeast Asia toward the Vietnamese Communist regime. Power relationships at the level below Ho are not clear, but party Secretary Truong Chinh, Premier and Foreign Minister Pham Van Dong, and army commander Vo Nguyen Giap appear to share top level responsibilities. We have no evidence of policy or personal differences among these three men or of the existence of "pro-Chinese" and "pro-Soviet" factions in the party.

9. The regime's primary concern in the past year has been to develop more effective controls over the people and the economy and to deal with such immediate problems as rehabilitation, malnutrition, widespread disease, famine, tightening of the party apparatus, and the development of the armed forces. Although violence and intimidation have been employed selectively, the Communists have so far refrained from the publicized, widespread terror employed in Communist China during the consolidation period in 1951-1952. Strenuous efforts are still being made to rally popular support behind front groups on the basis of nationalist and unification slogans. The most important of these is The Fatherland Front which is designed not only to mobilize support in the north for immediate reconstruction tasks but also to attract support in South Vietnam for Communist efforts to unify the country.

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