Vietnam: One year after

by Malcolm Salmon

April 30, 1976, marked the first anniversary of the end of the Vietnam war. But it cannot be said that serious analysis of the meaning of this event has yet gone very far. Stereotypes such as "world-shaking victory of the national liberation movement" and "dangerous advance of the forces of communism in Southeast Asia" amount not to analysis but to little more than special political pleading by those who supported one side or the other in the conflict.

One of the most interesting observations on the matter that I have seen was actually made in 1969, well before the end of the war and about two years before his own death, by the veteran Hungarian marxist George Lukacs. Lukacs said: "The defeat of the USA in the Vietnam war is to the 'American way of life' rather like what the Lisbon earthquake was to French feudalism."

Michael Lowy expands on Lukac's comment in an article in New Left Review (No. 91, May-June 1975): "The Lisbon earthquake of 1755 triggered off an extraordinary ideological crisis in Europe, particularly in France. The deadly and absurd event (total destruction of the city and 20,000 deaths) challenged Leibniz's optimistic (and conformist) ideology 'We live in the best of all possible worlds', Alexander Pope's 'What is, is right', as well as the whole concept of divine Providence. Voltaire made his Doctor Pangloss, the philosopher of smug optimism, die in the Lisbon earthquake. Thus, for Lukacs, the consequence of the Vietnam war was, by analogy, as follows. Firstly, the end of optimistic illusions in an 'era of peace' on a world scale - illusions which he himself had harbored since 1956. Secondly, the decline of what he called 'cybernetic religion': blind faith in machines, computers and electronic instruments, omnipotent and provident fetishes, substitutes for the God of the eighteenth century, which were all defeated by the NLF. Last, and above all, the appearance of an enormous crisis of values, a radical challenge to imperialist ideology, which could, in future, erupt in a massive revolutionary upsurge of international dimensions."

It is still far too early to estimate how accurate Lukacs' prophecy will prove. As Lukacs himself recalled, Lisbon was destroyed in 1755 and the Bastille not until 1789. But signs of the depth of the changes wrought in American attitudes by the experience of the Indochina war are plain to see even at this
early stage. The most obvious one is the effective paralysis of recent US interventionist attempts in Angola. The Angolan liberation forces thus owe as direct and immediate a debt to the Vietnamese revolution as those of Algeria did in 1954: Vietnam's victory over French colonial power at Dien Bien Phu in May of that year was the direct detonator of the Algerians' eight-year struggle for independence from France which began less than six months later, on November 1.

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The first anniversary of the end of the war is a good opportunity to examine, with the hindsight of the intervening months, the nature of the process by which Vietnam's epic struggle was finally brought to an end.

While the media in the West concentrated almost exclusively on the role of North Vietnamese regular armed forces in the process, the Vietnamese media on the revolutionary side described it as one of "armed attacks and people's uprisings". The Western formula is clearly inadequate, a somewhat pathetic survival of mid-sixties' State Department thinking. But the Vietnamese formula, to my mind, is not all that much better. Both completely fail to capture the complex and largely unforeseen interplay of political and military factors which actually took place, and determined the outcome of the conflict.

Certainly, military action played a decisive role. Moreover, it was military action at the highest level of regular warfare ever attained by the revolutionary armed forces in Vietnam. The bombing on April 28 of Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport by revolutionary pilots flying captured US A-37 bombers was highly symbolic in this respect: it was the first and only instance of the use of concerted aerial bombardment by their side in the whole war. The closing moments of the war were, therefore, a striking confirmation of the three-stage strategy of people's war espoused by the Vietnamese since the days of the war against the French: from guerrilla, through mobile, to regular warfare.

General Vo Nguyen Giap and his deputy, General Van Tien Dung (pronounced "Zoong"), are the joint authors of a lengthy analysis of the "Ho Chi Minh Campaign" which brought the war to an end. Published in Hanoi on July 7, 1975, their account attributed victory to "speedy tactical movement" (expressed elsewhere, more philosophically, as "effective use of time and space in warfare"), and the "classic military siege".

On the first aspect they say that one of the keys to victory was "good preparation of rear areas and transportation". Here they note a feature of the Ho Chi Minh Campaign which, like the Tan Son Nhut raid, was an entirely new thing in the practice of the Vietnamese revolutionary army, and contributed greatly to the quick success of the Campaign: "Troops rode to battle in trucks and thus were able to move quickly to new battlefields when the opportunities were present." The aspect of "classic military siege" related especially to the tactics employed in the capture of Saigon, Vietnam's largest city, intact.

They said: "After our big victory in the highlands (the "strategic withdrawal" of the Thieu army from that region in mid-March which, incidentally, was described by the
Voice of America at the time as "a wise strategic decision" - VoA March 20, 1975 - M.S.), the party quickly recognised the the new situation and the new opportunity, and immediately advocated the carrying out of the anticipated plan - an all-out drive to capture Saigon. We made the correct assessment: the enemy was facing the danger of complete disintegration and our capabilities of winning final victory had rapidly matured. Each day the revolution in our country was making advances such as took 20 years in the past."

As the North Vietnamese troops continued to rout Saigon forces, the possibility of American intervention was weighed again by the military and political leaders. Giap and Dung say: "Our party asserted that even if the United States dared to take part in the war again, we would determinedly advance to win because we had all the conditions to secure final victory."

The two generals said victory was hastened by poor American and Saigon intelligence. They go so far as to say that if the Americans had not made wrong calculations, "they might have had two more years in South Vietnam". "It was because of their poor intelligence that they were taken completely by surprise when our general offensive started," they say. They noted that in 20 of South Vietnam's 44 provinces, no heavy fighting was necessary for victory. (To keep this claim in perspective I should recall that a senior Vietnamese army officer told me during a visit I made to Saigon in the first 10 days of last June that the revolutionary armed forces lost some 20,000 men killed in the Ho Chi Minh Campaign, with four or five times that number wounded.)

It is perhaps only to be expected that the analysis by the generals dwells much more heavily on the military aspect of the process than on the political, even though they repeat often enough the ritual formula "armed attacks and people's uprisings".

The role of "people's uprisings" in the process varied greatly in importance from place to place and from time to time. It was extremely important, for example, in one early stage of the process - the fall of the major highlands centre of Ban Me Thuot in early March. A correspondent of Agence France-Presse in Saigon at the time, Paul Leandri, highlighted in a despatch the insurrection by local montagnards (tribesmen of minority nationality) which touched off the events leading to the fall of the city to the revolutionary forces. Incensed, the Thieu authorities, who maintained that only "North Vietnamese invaders" were involved, called him to police headquarters and demanded to know the source of his information. His refusal to divulge it led to a series of fast-moving events culminating in his death from a Thieu police bullet in the police headquarters courtyard a few hours later.

But as the momentum of the advance of the revolutionary armed forces increased, the aspect of "people's uprisings" certainly diminished in importance. The "people's" political role became increasingly that of protecting economic installations and public utilities from the sabotage attempts of the fleeing Thieu troops.

This is not to deny the continuing importance of political factors in the process which led to victory for the revolutionary forces, even if it is to dispute whether these factors are adequately described by the expression "people's uprisings". Indeed, it is an interesting fact that the most important political element in the process of Vietnam's victory is still, a year later, not widely acknowledged for what it was. It was not the uprising of the urban masses against the hated Thieu regime to which revolutionary romantics, and some others, had for years looked forward. It was the collapse of the morale of the Thieu army and administration, a phenomenon as intensely political in nature as the disintegration of the Napoleonic armies on their retreat from Moscow. This was the prime political factor in the rapid victory of the revolutionary armed forces. In the extract from their analysis quoted above the generals implicitly say as much when they emphasise (first factor) "the enemy was facing the danger of complete disintegration" and (second factor) "our capabilities of winning final victory had rapidly matured".

The war did not have to end in the way it did. Counter-revolutionary armies have been defeated before in history without the wholesale disintegration that overtook the Thieu army. Even if this army had had a Taiwan to flee to there is no indication that it would have been capable of doing so in anything like the order achieved by the Kuomintang forces in their flight in 1949. (Nor, incidentally, was it likely that, given the state of mind prevailing in
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The manner in which the war ended in fact expressed certain peculiar features of the dynamics of the Vietnam conflict. Following the withdrawal of the US and other foreign forces from Vietnam in 1973 under the Paris Agreement, US Secretary of State Kissinger claimed that the war had now become a "civil war". The Vietnamese revolutionaries hotly denied this, pointing to the obvious facts of the continued US funding of the Saigon war effort, the continued presence of US advisers alongside the Thieu forces, and so on. But, looked at purely from the angle of the nationality of the combatants, Kissinger's claim was correct. This fact was to prove of heavy consequence.

The Vietnam wars, French and American, from the very beginning, insofar as they concerned Vietnamese, have had the character of "intra-familial" wars. Throughout Vietnamese society, but especially among the country's numerically small but highly influential French-trained elites, families were divided in their allegiances. It was not uncommon for brothers or cousins, due to similarities in their training, to find themselves working as opposite numbers in the ruling machineries of Hanoi and Saigon. As well as direct family relationships, there were thousands of cases in which members of the ruling groups at the two ends of the country were personally acquainted. I have often been regaled by Hanoi officials with stories about the former Saigon president and vice-president Nguyen Cao Ky, for example, whom they had known from his student days in Hanoi. Most such tales concerned student Ky's amorous adventures, and clearly reflected close personal knowledge. This is not to mention the other thousands of cases of people actually changing sides in the course of the Vietnam wars. Such people came to possess personal knowledge of leading Vietnamese figures in both Hanoi and Saigon.

One result of all this was that, particularly in the recent war, US personnel in Saigon had a nightmarish time worrying about who, among their Vietnamese "friends", just might be a double agent. They worried with good cause, for Saigon was host to double agents in plenty. I myself met one of them. He had worked for years, and was still working in June 1975, in the Saigon bureau of the major US newsagency Associated Press.

But much more important was the fact that there was a degree of interpenetration - one is tempted to use the word symbiosis - of the two Vietnamese sides which probably has few parallels in the history of war.

The Hanoi publicist Nguyen Khac Vien expressed aspects of this phenomenon in an interview granted in July last year to an Algerian journalist from the magazine Jeune Afrique. The Algerian had just returned from a visit to Saigon. He said: "In the towns the masses apparently took little part in their liberation, there was no insurrectionary situation in the towns." Vien replied: "In our time you should not picture the people's movement like the marches and mass demonstrations of the 19th and early 20th centuries, mounting open attacks on the organs of power. The means of repression at the disposal of the fascist regimes are nowadays so great that one would only be courting futile massacres. It is the combination of armed struggle with political struggle that decides victory ... As much as the tanks and guns of the liberation forces it was the work of persuasion, agitation, education carried on for years by millions of people which brought about the disintegration of Thieu's troops. What South Vietnamese had not a brother, a friend, a cousin, a classmate or a son in the puppet army or police? And even before the liberation forces launched their attacks this work of undermining had already been done by millions of people. The liberation tanks moved against units and garrisons that had already been thoroughly worked over politically ..."

Another aspect of this "symbiotic" relationship between the two Vietnamese sides must be noted: they were never even remotely equal in terms of national moral and political authority. This fact too was well understood, even if only privately, by both sides. Thus, to an unusual degree in "civil war", the eventual outcome of the struggle was known in advance, especially to the principal actors, on both sides.

Various foreign observers have commented on this aspect of Vietnamese politics. Writing in the French paper La Tribune des Nations as early as July 15, 1955, the journalist Claire Barsal achieved something of a classic of under-statement when she wrote of the then
Saigon ruler Ngo Dinh Diem: "Diem labors under a basic handicap in a country which he claims to be leading to complete independence - that is, that he is not the man who conquered colonialism. That man was and is still, in the eyes of the people, Ho Chi Minh, the victor in the colonial war ..."

Three years before, Philippe Devillers, a man with close connections with the French colonial administration and police, had been much more damning in his book *Histoire du Vietnam 1940-52*. On the problem of what social support remained for the French in modern Vietnam, he said: "What was left then? The Catholics? Would it not be the ruination of Catholicism in Vietnam to compromise it again, as in the 19th century, with 'foreign imperialism'? Then there remain only, to side with France, 'nationalists of the piastre, ambition or revenge', those who out of lust for gain or honors, out of anti-communist passion or simply to assuage some personal grudge, are prepared to make themselves auxiliaries of a policy opposed to the interests of their people and directed against the freedom of their country ..."

He went on: "There is not a shadow of doubt that Ho Chi Minh has retained the ear and the confidence of the Vietnamese people and that the great majority of the 'men of worth' in Vietnam have rallied to his cause. If one man today can pretend to bring about 'national unity' in Vietnam, to take the helm of the country and bring it to harbor, it is certainly Ho Chi Minh. It is above all with him, and with his men, that the Vietnam of tomorrow will inevitably be built. Nothing lasting or great will be done in this country without them or against them."

It is only with an awareness of this moral, political and psychological background that it is possible to understand the totality and speed of the collapse of the Thieu regime. For Vietnamese on both sides of the conflict it was the moment of truth - a moment delayed for decades by brutal foreign interventions - but a moment all knew had to come.

When the last Saigon President, General Duong Van Minh, in his speech of welcome - and surrender - to representatives of the revolutionary armed forces in Saigon's Independence Palace on April 30, 1975, said "The revolution has triumphed" he used words which every member of the Saigon governmental elite had known for years in his heart of hearts would one day be uttered by one of them. It was just a matter of by whom - and when.

All this is not to deny the genuineness of the fear of "communism" that gripped much of the rank and file of Thieu's army, and a part of the civilian population, in the closing days of the war. Macabre events such as the action of Saigon army soldiers clinging to the undercarriage of planes taking off from Da Nang on March 29, 1975, only to drop within seconds to their deaths, are not to be forgotten. One thing they prove is that the billions of dollars of US taxpayers' money spent on anti-communist "psywar" operations in Vietnam were not spent entirely in vain. But such events have only the most marginal significance in the history of Vietnam. Perhaps more than anything else they show that in South Vietnam, as within the USA itself, it was the poorest, least known, least influential people who suffered most from the war. Compare the differing fates of Richard Nixon on the one hand and 19-year-old Lance-Corporal Darwin Judge, a former carry-out boy at a supermarket in Marshalltown, Iowa, on the other. Nixon, the author of the December 1972 bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong and the arch-criminal of the Watergate affair, has been granted a full pardon by his hand-picked successor as President, and now lives in comfort at San Clemente, California. Lance-Corporal Judge became the last American to die in action in Vietnam - the 55,567th - at Tan Son Nhut airport on April 29, 1975. Or compare the fates of the fear-crazed rank and file Thieu soldiers at Da Nang with that of Lieutenant-General Dang Van Quang, who had the remarkable distinction of being known as the most corrupt general in the whole Thieu army: he was lifted out of the US Embassy grounds by helicopter and flown to safety on April 29.

To close this examination of the process of Vietnam's victory it might be useful to recall this comment on the ultimate futility of the French and US interventions in Vietnam by Jean Sainteny, the veteran French diplomat who negotiated with Ho Chi Minh following Vietnam's August Revolution of 1945, and was the first French "delegate-general" in Hanoi following the Geneva Agreements of 1954.

Speaking in a Paris radio interview on May 5, 1975, a week after the fall of Saigon, M. Sainteny declared:
Mammoth signboard in Hue reads "Hanoi-Hue-Saigon" demonstrating the linking together of the three major cities.
"We are witnessing the birth of a power possessed of formidable weapons, the best infantry in the world, and heavy equipment of Soviet origin and American material which has been captured. There will be a very exceptional power in South-east Asia.

"The recent events are the outcome of the dominant idea of Vietnamese policy for 30 years - first of all independence, which has now been won, then reunification.

"I believe that the French war in Indochina could have been avoided at the price of concessions which may have seemed considerable then but are negligible in today’s context."

He added (my emphasis): "It is probable, if not certain, that things would be much as they are today, but we would have made the considerable saving of avoiding that war and the other that has followed it."

A “considerable saving” indeed!

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With the euphoria of victory passed, “the most important task now is to wipe out, to liquidate, the deep, innumerable consequences of a powerful and brutal neocolonialist intervention” - so said Nguyen Khac Vien in the interview quoted above.

The South Vietnam Provisional Revolutionary Government’s Foreign Minister, Nguyen Thi Binh, for her part, told foreign correspondents in Moscow recently: “If you come back to Saigon now, you would realise that the atmosphere has completely changed. But, if you go deeper, a lot of things have to be done to change the life of the people there - to make radical change.

“In South Vietnam now - in spite of the fact that the war has stopped, that there is no more American presence, that there are no more US bombs - the sequels of the war are felt daily, hourly, and they are weighing heavily on our country. And the situation will last for a long time.”

She said that there were still three million unemployed; food shortages were still being exploited by speculators; despite all efforts, only 300,000 people had been resettled from the cities in the countryside and the false urbanisation created by the war remained a massive problem; the PRG was still grappling with the problems posed by tens of thousands of orphans, of women who had been forced to live by prostitution, of beggars and of drug addicts; the PRG’s power was secure throughout South Vietnam, although a small number of CIA-linked opposition elements had engaged in sabotage.

David Shipler, of the New York Times Moscow bureau, who was at the interview, noted: “Mrs Binh spoke softly. She did not seem like a victor, but like someone sobered by a long battle, confronted now by a further, different struggle.” (Australian Financial Review, March 8, 1976.)

Awareness of this sombre background is the essential starting point for all thought and action about South Vietnam from now on.

More aid is certainly needed from the United Nations and other agencies. But central to the whole problem is the responsibility of the United States to assist in overcoming the problems created by its years-long intervention in Vietnam. This responsibility is clearly expressed in Chapter VIII, Article 21, of the Paris Agreement of 1973: “In pursuance of its traditional policy, the United States will contribute to the healing of the wounds of war in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and throughout Indochina.” Yet the US has not spent one cent in this direction since the end of the war. On the contrary it has placed a vindictive embargo on all trade with the two Vietnams. It is not only a moral and humanitarian question, it is vital to the practical solution of South Vietnam’s major current problem, economic recovery: US-equipped factories left over from the former regime, and there are not a few of them, cannot be effectively operated without a guaranteed supply of spare parts from the USA.

US Vice-President Rockefeller, when he came to Australia for his recent bicentennial visit, was surely reminded that Australians have forgotten neither Vietnam nor the continuing and undischarged responsibility of the US government to provide Vietnam with reconstruction aid.

As for our own Fraser Government, its intentions in this respect were made clear in a little-noticed passage in an interview granted by its Foreign Minister, Andrew Peacock, to Michael Richardson of the Sydney Morning Herald (February 2, 1976). Richardson asked Peacock “will civil aid programs to the countries of Indochina be continued at their
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present levels?” Peacock replied: “We will continue to provide aid to Vietnam and Laos.” The omission of any reference to “present levels” in Peacock’s reply could not have been more eloquent. Clearly, at least some of the Indochina aid programs developed under the Whitlam Government are slated for the chop by the cold-blooded axemen of the Fraser administration. The Labor Opposition should be probing to find out which programs they are and how their scrapping is justified. In doing so, the Opposition should be using for all it is worth the reported fact (Australian Financial Review, March 12) that its own Foreign Affairs Department recently urged upon the Fraser Government “the provision of economic aid to the new governments of Indochina in a generous way” (my emphasis).

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By the time this article appears there will have been elections held (April 25, 1976) for a single national assembly for the whole of Vietnam.

But we should be under no illusion - the process of Vietnam’s reunification is still in its very early stages.

There is simply no quick solution to the problems created by the different evolution of the two halves of Vietnam over the past 30 years.

Just to take the political problem: there is a real difference between acceptance by South Vietnamese of the rule of the PRG, and a positive desire on their part for reunification with the North. North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong alluded to this situation when he told a group of visiting overseas Vietnamese, in Hanoi for the 30th anniversary of the DRV last September: “If we can convince 50 per cent of the South Vietnamese that reunification is an urgent need, that’s good; if we can convince 60 per cent, that’s better; if we can convince 70 per cent, that’s perfect.”

The problems involved in reunifying the two economies have been canvassed often enough. The report (Australian Financial Review, March 12) that the South will build a “five-tier economy - private, joint private-State, State, collective and individual”, and that this economic policy is held by the PRG as “a long-range one”, is only the most recent indication that the problems of economic reunification are so substantial as not to be rushed.

But notwithstanding all difficulties, “Vietnam is One.” However long it takes to consummate reunification, it is certainly Vietnam’s wave of the future.

It is up to foreign friends of Vietnam to be aware of the difficulties, and to be as patient as the Vietnamese appear to be as they work for their resolution.

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Whether it has two governments or one, Vietnam is now “independent and free, free and independent forever” - to quote the words of Workers’ Party leader Le Duan at the Hanoi victory celebrations of May 15, 1975.

It seems fitting to close this article on the first anniversary of Vietnam’s victory by looking a little more closely at the concept of independence and how it is understood in that country.

Examining the reasons for the political success of the Vietnamese communists in his 1954 study The Vietnamese Nation - Contribution to a History, the French historian, Jean Chesneaux, finds the most important factor to be “their total independence in relation to the various powers that have dominated the Vietnamese people at the various stages of their history: Japan, France, China.”

He goes on: “This amounts to saying that the leaders of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam find the secret of their strength within their country itself, among the 20 million Vietnamese themselves.”

While the number of Vietnamese is now more like 45 million - despite everything their various foes have been able to do in the way of killing Vietnamese since 1954, the nation has succeeded in generating a continuous baby boom - Chesneaux’s point is as valid today as it was 22 years ago.

The American scholar Frances FitzGerald wrote after her visit to North Vietnam in early 1975: “The word ‘independence’ is the starting and finishing point for any ideological discussion in North Vietnam. It comes up most frequently in relation to the Chinese ... As the Vietnamese present the matter, independence comes first, and if there is a conflict the other imperatives, such as that of Socialist unity,
must be reconciled with it, rather than vice versa. Independence is the only issue that the North Vietnamese can be said to be fanatical about ... Independence is, to be sure, a complicated notion in this day of global economics and global politics, and it is particularly complicated for small countries. But for the North Vietnamese it has at least one specific meaning, and that is the liberation of the South from American influence, and the unity of the whole country.” (The New Yorker, April 28, 1975.)

Ms FitzGerald’s article hit the streets in New York less than 48 hours before the first part of that twin goal was achieved on April 30. The world may now expect to see Vietnamese independence displayed more vigorously than ever before. After all, if they preserved their independence through all the excruciating years of the war, why should it not be affirmed more strongly now that victory has been won?

The first instance in which an independent Vietnamese position may be expected to impinge on world opinion is in relation to the Paracel and Spratly islands, which are claimed by both Vietnam and China. This issue is undoubtedly the most “neuralgic” of all Vietnam’s problems with its neighbors. The sudden Chinese seizure of the Paracels from the Thieu regime in January 1974 has not been forgotten or forgiven by the Vietnamese. Their tit-for-tat action in seizing the Spratlys from Thieu control immediately after the fall of Saigon was an indication of how deadly serious they are on the issue. A North Vietnamese statement in January 1974 appealed for negotiations on the problem, but began with the firm statement “Preservation of its territorial integrity is a sacred cause for every people”. Although it has never been publicly referred to by either side in the dispute, a struggle for control of offshore oil resources gives a special edge of bitterness to the Paracels-Spratlys issue.

Another major manifestation of Vietnamese independence will be the country’s progressively closer identification with the non-aligned movement and the Third World in general. Despite all their wartime dependence on socialist-country aid, the Vietnamese never saw themselves as fundamentally aligned. They take great - and sometimes, one suspects, faintly malicious - pleasure in recalling that the success of their revolution in August 1945 predated by more than four years the success of the revolution in their great neighbor country to the north. They also have a vivid recollection of the fact that for the first five years of the life of the DRV their country was not only “non-aligned”, it was absolutely on its own. It was not until their big Border Campaign of 1950 which swept French forces from the region of their frontier with China that they gained access to the friendly rear provided by China, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Vietnamese independence will also be displayed in a series of bold joint-venture agreements with foreign capitalist concerns as they get fully underway with their quest for new technologies. They have already made their intentions clear in this respect, explaining that they are seeking not just technologies that are more advanced than their own, but those that are the world’s most advanced in each particular field of their interest. With such a perspective, they will obviously in many areas have to go beyond their traditional socialist-country sources of technological assistance.

The Vietnamese in developing such policies are certainly demonstrating a desire to distance themselves from the Sino-Soviet conflict, and to lessen the pressures to which they are subjected as a result of this conflict. But it would be wrong to think that this is their prime motivation. I personally doubt whether their current policies would have been very different if this conflict had never arisen.

As was said at the outset, it is still far too early to know whether Lukac’s prophecy of “a massive revolutionary upsurge of international dimensions” will come to pass as a result of the US defeat in Vietnam. Certainly no major post-Vietnam political development anywhere in the world has as yet put Lukac’s idea out of court. There are even signs of confirmation of it in Africa and, with all allowance made for the differences in conditions of the countries concerned, in Western Europe.

What can be said with confidence here and now is that independent Vietnam is set to do many things that will mock old conceptions of socialist/capitalist/non-aligned divisions. It is set to make interesting and unique contributions to world political developments in the last quarter of the century.