

S.E. Asian revolutions face Viet Nam backstabbing

Across Southeast Asia, from the Philippines to Burma, national liberation movements have been fighting for years to free themselves from the yoke of oppression and foreign domination. The Vietnamese government came to power in just such a struggle.

But today the rulers of Vietnam and their massive army – the fourth largest in the world – are stabbing the peoples of Asia in the back. In just the last year Vietnam has:

- * Invaded neighboring Democratic Kampuchea (Cambodia), overthrown the government and installed its own puppets in power;

- * Stationed 200,000 troops in Kampuchea and its other neighbor, Laos, which it now dominates;

- * Compelled Laos to sign an agreement with the military government of Thailand (bordering both Kampuchea and Laos), providing for the suppression of the Thai guerrillas who have waged a 14-year war for liberation;

- * Set up a rival "genuine Thai Communist Party" based in Laos;

- * Condemned the New Peoples Army in the Philippines for its guerrilla war and its work with broad opposition forces in the country;

- * Sent Premier Pham Van Dong to five Southeast Asian countries, announcing to the governments, and, through press conferences, to the world, their opposition to every guerrilla movement in the area. The Premier went so far as to lay a wreath at the monument to British troops who fought against Malaysian liberation forces in the '50s.

- * Signed military, political and economic pacts with the Soviet Union that significantly expand Moscow's influence in the region.

DEPENDENCE . . .

There isn't a single liberation struggle in Southeast Asia that the Vietnamese or their Soviet masters support. It would run counter to their aim of hegemony in the region. And it would clash with Vietnam's strategy of reliance on the Soviet Union and Southeast Asia's dependence on Hanoi.

Vietnam has turned to the Soviets for the supplies and airlifts that were essential in its aggression in Kampuchea, just like the U.S. backed their puppets in South Vietnam. In return the Soviets get a political and military foothold in the most powerful country in the region.

On the assumption that foreign--mainly Soviet--aid would flow into the country, Vietnamese leaders have not decisively mobilized the people during their four years in power. As a result, the economic situation is disastrous. There are huge rice shortages, and in the cities a chicken costs two thirds of an average month's wages.

The diversion of energy, resources, and cadre into occupying Laos and attacking Cambodia certainly doesn't help to develop Vietnam internally. Since the clashes with the Chinese in

February, it has exploited the situation by calling back 200,000 men into military service. Putting the country on a war footing may temporarily solve a massive unemployment problem, but it won't get the Vietnamese out of the hole they're in.

OR INDEPENDENCE?

The national liberation struggles of Southeast Asia are taking a completely different path. They practice self-reliance, turning to the majorities in the countryside while building broad united fronts. In Thailand the front includes former parliamentary representatives and in the Philippines, Catholic clergymen.

The Thai People's Army and the New People's Army in the Philippines continue to score advances on the military front. Guerilla struggles are developing in Burma and have a long history in Malaysia. The former Portuguese colony of East Timor is fighting hard against an invasion from Indonesia, and people's forces are active in Indonesia itself.

These movements' insistence on carrying out their own revolutions in their own way is unacceptable to the Vietnamese, even though all these movements (except Burma) are fighting U.S. imperialism. This self-reliance directly obstructs Vietnam's aims of controlling Southeast Asia.

Vietnam has responded to this challenge with slander and outright intervention. Vietnam set up a group of "authentic Kampuchean revolutionaries" just before invading and overthrowing the Kampuchean government this January. The recent establishment of a "genuine Thai Communist Party" forewarns of Vietnam's intention to meddle in Thailand, where the guerrilla movement otherwise has a solid chance of seizing power within a decade.

Through its press, Vietnam has publically repudiated the Southeast Asian national liberation movements as "outlawed Beijing (Peking) minded extremist organizations... (who) conduct armed attacks and terroristic and divisive operations, wantonly massacring civilians and ransacking the people's property."

Vietnam denounces these movements for "taking Mao Ze Dong Thought as their ideological foundation and armed struggle as the only means of securing power."

CHINA'S ROLE AND THE SOVIETS

In contrast to Vietnam, China continues to aid the liberation movements in Southeast Asia. Despite the requirements of a foreign policy that involves uniting with the U.S.-supported governments in the area against the Soviet threat, China has continued its longstanding support for the movements for liberation. Deng Xiao Bing (Teng Hsiao Ping) underscored this point at a recent Bangkok press conference, in the presence of the Thai ambassador

to China.

The Soviet Union, in keeping with the position of its Hanoi sidekicks does not support any of the Southeast Asian liberation movements, because none will become subservient to Moscow.

The Soviet thesis of "peaceful co-existence" with imperialism and refusal to support national liberation struggles emerged in the 1950's and



Afghani rebels with Soviet whirlybird they downed.

Afghanistan rebels target Soviets

In April, Aleksei Yepishev, political commissar of the Soviet Army and a key figure in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, flew into Afghanistan. Yepishev was not vacationing in the mountainous, Texas-sized Asian nation. He was there to prop up the pro-Moscow government of Nur Mohammed Taraki, which is losing a rapidly escalating civil war with Islamic guerrillas.

The Khalqi Party, which Taraki heads, seized control of the country in a military coup, which they have since dubbed a "socialist revolution", early in 1978. Opposition at first was limited – the dictatorship of Mohammed Daud, also pro-Soviet, had done nothing for the desperately poor Afghani masses.

But Taraki instituted a series of ill-considered social reforms and backed them with repressive laws. The government did not take into account local custom and tradition or the fact that the small Khalqi Party had little firm support among the common people. Ignoring or attacking religion at a time of a nationalistic resurgence of Islam throughout the Middle East was a fatal error.

Taraki also sold out the national interests of the Afghani people. Soviet advisors were everywhere, running things openly and behind the scenes. Alienation from the government grew, even among patriotic intellectuals and leftists, as a result of steps like the dumping of Afghanistan's traditional flag in favor of a new, red banner.

By late last fall, the traditional-

60's. Since then they have taken this policy from the defensive to the offensive.

In Asia, the Soviets use Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay as a temporary naval base, and are constructing yet another Pacific naval base, enlarging a super airstrip in the southernmost of the four Japanese islands they occupy, dispatching Cuban politicians on a diplomatic swing around the region, and offering arms to both the Thai and Philippine governments to use against the revolutionary struggles in those areas.

Today national liberation struggles have entered a new stage, facing Soviet, Vietnamese or Cuban intervention as well as that of the U.S.

ly independent mountain tribesmen were in revolt against the government. This rebellion spread and became a direct threat to Taraki's rule. Tens of thousands fled government reprisals and became refugees in Pakistan.

During a mid-March uprising in Herat, the third largest city, large numbers of soldiers and police deserted. On April 20 it escalated to armed mutiny in the Jalalaba garrison near the Pakistan border.

Government officials have tried to backtrack. "Socialism" is seldom mentioned and Taraki gets himself photographed praying in mosques, but it's too little, too late. Nearly every section of the population is hostile to the regime.

Taraki's main answer has been to lean on the U.S.S.R. even more. Yepishev's visit was followed by an airlift of T-60 tanks, MiG fighter-bombers, Mi 24 rocket-armed copters and over 2,000 Soviet "advisors" to use this hardware.

Russians have become a natural target for the rebels. Over 200 have been reported killed so far. Other Europeans describe close calls in city streets when angry crowds armed with clubs and knives surrounded them on the assumption they were Soviets.

The rulers of the U.S.S.R. are in a real bind. They have committed themselves to the defense of the faithful Taraki regime – losing control of Afghanistan would be a practical and prestige setback. But they worry that the country may become, in the words of one Soviet diplomat, "our Viet Nam".