

Transcribed Excerpt from Letter Detailing Agricultural Issues in North Vietnam, 1963

... The recent demotion of the Minister of Agriculture, Neighiem Xuan Yem, to the position of Minister of State Farms, also reflected the poor performance of this segment of North Vietnam's economy in 1962. This change and Yem's replacement was announced at a January 7 meeting of the National Assembly's Standing Committee. The Minister had been a high ranking DRV official in the agricultural ministry since 1947 and held the ministerial portfolio since 1954. His demotion at this time, together with other shifts in agricultural leadership, undoubtedly reflect top-level displeasure at the poor showing of DRV agriculture during the last few years.

In a radio broadcast in December 1962, the Minister Yem explained at length how well the people of the North had done in the field of agriculture in spite of the many natural calamities which struck during the year. Though the severe droughts and typhoons during 1962 were a major factor in holding back agricultural production, his remarks, viewed in light of his demotion, appeared to be an attempt to draw attention away from human failings, including his own.

In February, this year, Hanoi also revealed that a worsening drought has already caused crop damage in many areas. In a strongly worded order on anti-drought measures broadcast from the Communist party secretariat on February 1, authorities in a "number of localities" were charged with administrative and leadership failures as a result of having "fallen into passivity when the drought dragged on seriously." The statement further revealed that peasants in "a number of areas" had become so discouraged over persistent drought conditions that they had given up the struggle and left the farms for other employment.

Whether caused by weather or managerial bungling, another poor crop would not only add to food problems that would further exacerbate existing peasant dissatisfaction with the rural cooperatives. It is quite apparent that in a country not well suited for agricultural production, the expansion of agriculture beyond the efficiently arable land and capacity of the people has been plagued by the law of diminishing returns.

These agricultural failures in North Viet-Nam as well as similar failures in Communist China should continue to serve as a lesson to the primarily agricultural oriented developing areas that the so called "efficient" and "systematic" Communist methods are not always successful nor worthy of emulation.