

Hanoi Slogans Carry Some Subtle Snubs

Saigon

Hanoi has just delivered a mysterious snub to its political arm in South Vietnam.

It happened under circumstances that puzzle Hanoi watchers. There is a possibility that Communist party leader Le Duan is moving his regime into some new diplomatic stance toward the south, and possibly China.

This is the season in North Vietnam when the Politburo publishes its annual slogans in commemoration of the nation's national day, September 2.

In the Communist world, slogans are not simple things to be shouted at rallies: they spell out the party line in sometimes tedious detail.

Apart from being shorter than ever before, this year's list surprisingly omits any mention of the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG), the political arm of the Viet Cong which Hanoi officially recognizes as the southern government.

Neither does the list of slogans include the hitherto standard praise for the old National Liberation Front, although it carries one tribute to the "valor and glorious victories" of the Viet Cong.

This year's list also contains a second omission that could be interpreted as a snub to the south. In all previous lists, the goals of Hanoi have been spelled out with a stock phrase: "In order to liberate the south, defend the north and proceed toward a peaceful reunification of the country."

That stock phrase was also dropped this year.

The possible reference to China is more questionable.

In the standard slogan referring to the continued fight against the United States, Hanoi's rulers this year inserted the phrase, "rely mainly on ourselves."

Some experts see this as one more indirect warning from Hanoi to Peking against too much meddling in Indochina (or at least meddling of the sort displeasing to Hanoi).

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