

Hanoi's Leaders, as Saigon Tottered Last Year, Were Against Any Settlement

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

Special to The New York Times

HONG KONG, May 30—North Vietnam's leaders had no intention of accepting a last-minute political settlement of the war last year, according to Hanoi's Chief of Staff, despite the Communists' repeated public hints that they were interested in such negotiations if President Nguyen Van Thieu would resign.

Gen. Van Tien Dung, the Chief of Staff, in a remarkably detailed and candid new account of the war's final battles, dismisses efforts to reach a cease-fire as "perfidious diplomatic tricks" designed to rob the Communists of their rightful victory.

General Dung reports that Hanoi's ruling Politburo actually sped its offensive and attacked Saigon "earlier than had been anticipated" because of fears that South Vietnam might seek "a political solution."

Offers Seen as Ploy

General Dung's account, which has been carried in serialized form by Hanoi's newspapers over the last seven weeks, raises several questions about the Communists' negotiating tactics last year. Some Western analysts who have read it believe it constitutes the clearest evidence yet that the Communist offers were simply a ploy to get President Thieu out of office and unsettle the South Vietnamese regime and its American backers.

General Dung himself makes no reference to the Communists' proposals to begin negotiations in the event of Mr. Thieu's resignation. These offers, always couched in ambiguous terms, were first made in Paris in early April by Nguyen Thi Binh, the foreign minister of the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government.

Referring to Gen. Duong Van Minh, known to Americans as "Big Minh," a leader of the so-called third force, Mrs. Binh said, "We understand that General Minh is ready to negotiate for peace and we are ready to

talk with him."

Pressure created by this proposal and others did contribute to Mr. Thieu's eventual decision to step down on April 21, a little over a week before the end of the war. Ambassador Graham A. Martin of the United States is believed to have been among those who urged Mr. Thieu to resign to open the way for face-saving peace talks.

U.S. Sought Contacts

Although some United States intelligence officials and journalists doubted that the Communists would really want to negotiate with victory virtually in their grasp, Ambassador Martin directed aides to begin contacts with Vietcong officers stationed at the Tan Son Nhut air base under the Paris peace agreement. In these secret talks, which also involved French diplomats and Polish and Hungarian members of the International Commission of Control and Supervision, some United States officials came to believe that "a deal has been arranged," as one put it at the time.

These contacts continued until hours before the United States evacuation on April 29. General Dung makes no ref-

erence to these talks, though he says Ambassador Martin had requested a meeting with members of the Communist delegation at Tan Son Nhut. This was turned down, General Dung relates, and the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, sent a message from Hanoi warning that "the U.S.-puppet clique was relentlessly resorting to perfidious diplomatic tricks while at the same time spreading threatening news aimed at preventing a general offensive on Saigon by our troops."

Report Apparently Finished

Some French diplomats believed at the time that Mrs. Binh and other members of the South Vietnamese Provisional Revolutionary Government really wanted to negotiate because they feared being shut out of power if the North Vietnamese Army won an outright military victory. General Dung's account leaves that as a possible interpretation.

His report, which now comes to 80,000 words and is apparently completed, mentions the existence of the Provisional Revolutionary Government or the National Liberation Front at only one point, and then only in giving a list of Communist leaders who attended a ceremony after the fighting was all over.

General Dung's account appears to be part of an attempt

to reverse the Communists' long-standing effort to publicize the National Liberation Front as a separate movement in South Vietnam and now instead to give full credit for the victory to the North Vietnamese party and army.

The example General Dung, who at 59 is the youngest member of the 11-man Politburo, relates that four members of the Politburo were assigned to South Vietnam last year to direct the fighting or help in the Communists' consolidation of power.

In addition, General Dung says, "Economic, cultural, educational, home trade and propaganda and training teams came from North Vietnam" to help in newly captured areas.

The general, who was in overall command of the campaign, says that by mid-April he had 15 North Vietnamese divisions around Saigon, to 5 for the South Vietnamese.

Hanoi Expected Battle

Despite their overwhelming numerical superiority, the North Vietnamese expected a major battle for Saigon and planned a carefully coordinated attack to begin on April 27.

A few days after the battle ended on April 30, Le Duang, North Vietnam's senior leader and First Secretary of the Lao Dong, or Workers Party, arrived in Saigon by plane along with Vo Nguyen Giap, the country's Minister of Defense.