

LOOK

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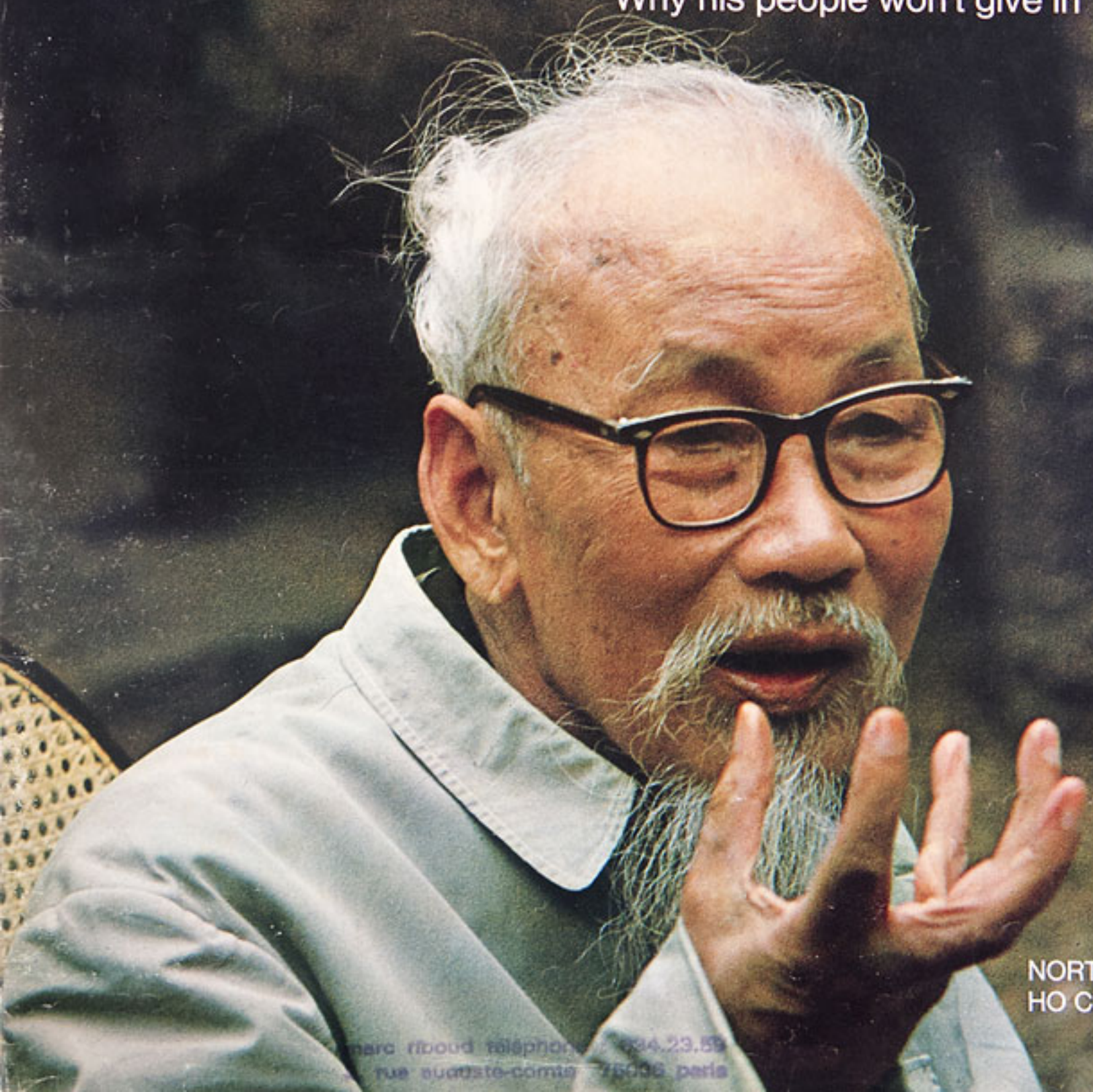
ABORTIONS

282 women tell what happened to them

Exclusive from Hanoi:

WHAT'S BEHIND HO

Why his people won't give in



NORTH VIETNAM'S
HO CHI MINH

COMMUNIST NORTH VIETNAM and the United States are finally on the road to peace—not because either side is winning the war but because neither side can. It will be a long, hard road, for it's always easier to get into a war than to get out—gracefully. And as we travel this road in the months ahead, many Americans will wonder how three administrations managed to delude themselves and the nation so convincingly and so long. For only stubborn self-delusion can explain our refusal to see that the Vietnamese who fought hardest fought for nationalism and its living symbol, Ho Chi Minh—not for the generals of Saigon; that patriotism more than communism is what made them stand up to American might; and that our soldiers in Asia looked no different to many of the long-suffering Vietnamese than the French who had been there earlier. Self-delusion has cost us dearly in blood, treasure, prestige, bitter dissent, strained alliances and neglected priorities. It has cost the



COCKY AND PATRIOTIC

North Vietnamese dearly too. But after more than 25 years of battling against strangers in their midst, they are willing to go on paying the price. This is what Marc Riboud discovered in North Vietnam before and after the November bombing halt. He talked with the top Communist leaders—Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong and Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap. He took hundreds of historic pictures like the one above showing how supplies get to the front. His story begins on the next page.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARC RIBOUD

TEXT BY GEREON ZIMMERMANN



Top military man, General Giap exudes confidence.

Marc Riboud arrived in Hanoi on October 1 by way of Cambodia. He worked in the cities and the villages—where most North Vietnamese mistook him for a Russian—and negotiated constantly for a meeting with Ho Chi Minh. Now 78, "Uncle Ho" has made infrequent public appearances in the last few years. On the day of the American Presidential election, Riboud was driven to the former palace of the French governor-general and informed that he was to photograph and interview Ho and Premier Pham Van Dong.

After ritualistic cups of tea, Van Dong advised Riboud he could begin photographing. It was Van Dong who was in charge. Ho looked healthy, moved and spoke slowly, smoked many cigarettes. His peasant's cap rested on the table. Ho confined his remarks to memories of France and the charm of the Perfume River in Hue, where he went to school.

Premier Van Dong, 62, passionate and incisive, told Riboud: "You will never know how mean and little the Americans have been in the Paris talks. We shall win, we shall win! We shall fight as long as there is one American on our soil. We shall not betray the confidence the world has in us." Riboud believes that Van Dong—by turns emotional and detached—could be tough across a negotiating table.

Riboud also met with Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, 56, whose bicycle-guerrilla-war strategy crushed the French at Dienbienphu in 1954. The former history professor exulted: "We fought and won against the Mongols in the 13th century. Now, it is the Americans. We are conscious of our historic role. We have shaken the largest country in the world."

Steely trio: Giap, Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong



This peasant was decorated for downing a U.S. Phantom jet. His weapon: a Chinese carbine.



A rare photograph of Ho shows him talking with Premier Pham Van Dong, his "favorite nephew" and heir apparent.

continued

**Shouts of
"Gion-Son, Gion-Son!"
mean that U.S.
planes are near**



Scoreboard boast: 3,206 U.S. planes shot down.

General Giap told Riboud that his people had been fighting against the West's might for over 20 years and that "in a war like this, one bends or gets stronger." Everywhere, the North Vietnamese are exhorted to struggle. When the air-alert sirens scream, the cry goes up: "Gion-Son, Gion-Son!"—LBJ has become a synonym for American. In Hanoi, there are always people on hand to keep up to date a scoreboard of vanquished American aircraft, above, on Sugar Street. (The claim of 3,206 U.S. planes downed is highly disputable. The Pentagon said recently 1,236 U.S. fixed-wing craft had been destroyed.)

Giap declares that even with the use of relatively limited weapons such as the AK-47 Chinese automatic rifle, his militia destroys American Phantom F-4's. The Ham Rong bridge, right, which spans the Ma River near Thanh Hoa (85 miles south of Hanoi), was attacked at least 260 times by planes of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. It still stands, and supplies continue to flow over it. The bicycle factory, above right, is scattered in seven locations. Last year, the North Vietnamese say, it produced 50,000 units, including the rubber tires. Bombing hobbled the output of the "eight golden hours" of work, but, says Riboud, it also acted as a spur to this strange and supple economy.



Bicycle output is said to be up. Most factories are dispersed to many sites.



The Ham Rong bridge, a main link to the south, still stands after 260 attacks.



Schoolchildren wear flak vests and hats of fiber.

**They stay
skeptical about
the halt
in the bombing**



A ten-year-old girl sells metal replicas of MiG's.

Metal replicas of Russian MiG's—they sell for five cents, U.S.—are icons of war hawked by children on Silk Road. The child selling them sits on a lidded concrete bomb shelter. These shelters, almost five-feet deep and two-feet wide, pock the city of Hanoi. Many are camouflaged. The concrete cylinders were still being produced while Riboud was there after the bombing halt. Though the North Vietnamese are wary of the November 1 aerial cease-fire, after it went into effect, the straw garments that schoolchildren had worn as flak suits saw new use as rain gear. For defense against American aircraft, the North Vietnamese have sophisticated Chinese and Russian weapons, including surface-to-air missiles. They also have weapons of their own, including air aces like Col. Nguyen Van Bay, 32, who pilots a Soviet MiG-17. The Colonel says he was trained in North Vietnam. He counts among his seven kills four Phantoms, two Thunderchiefs and one Super Sabre. Two of the American pilots he shot down, he claims, are now prisoners. To Riboud, he offered compliments on the skill of the American pilots, but announced that their morale was not "very good." Premier Van Dong had told Riboud earlier: "Nothing, nothing can resist the bombing. Nothing except the Vietnamese man."



Complex weapons like this Russian missile are operated by North Vietnamese.



Air ace Col. Nguyen Van Bay stands before the wreckage of a U.S. plane.

Above a bomb crater, the pace is quick-time



"The Catholic Church here is pre-Vatican Council II."



Catholics crowd the church of Binh Xa in the province of Phat Diem, 65 miles south of Hanoi. Women sit on the left side of the church.

A procession for Ho is a mix of piety and patriotism



"It is easier to be a Roman Catholic in North Vietnam than it is to be a Communist in South Vietnam," says Riboud. "At this time, in the North, there is a surprising tolerance of Catholicism. The Church here is a pre-Vatican Council II Church. The Mass, for example, is celebrated as of old—the priest's back is to the congregation. Since the bombing, however, because of a new rule from the Vatican, any Mass can now be celebrated on Saturday evenings. But the old custom of men occupying the pews on the priest's right and the women on the left still persists. Interestingly, the wine for the consecration is French."

Before the North-South split, Vietnam had about 2,000,000 Catholics, almost equally divided between the two sections. Some 500,000 fled to the South. Riboud was told that the largely Catholic North Vietnamese district of Phat Diem has 119 churches, many of which, he says after looking at them, have been bombed, some pulverized.

Nationalism, says Riboud, pervades North Vietnam's Catholicism. One Sunday after Mass, he saw Phat Diem peasants parading in a procession of reverence for Ho Chi Minh. It was a syncretic ceremony, mixing piety and patriotism. Elsewhere, he saw the traditional dragon dances celebrating the bombing halt. The "personality cult" does not seem to be gathering about the aging Ho Chi Minh. Yet there are the processions, and in cities and villages everywhere, party leaders broadcast Ho's response to the American bombing halt. At Phat Diem, Riboud heard one "comrade," right, read Ho's remarks—unrelenting and righteous in tone—to a gathering of the faithful.



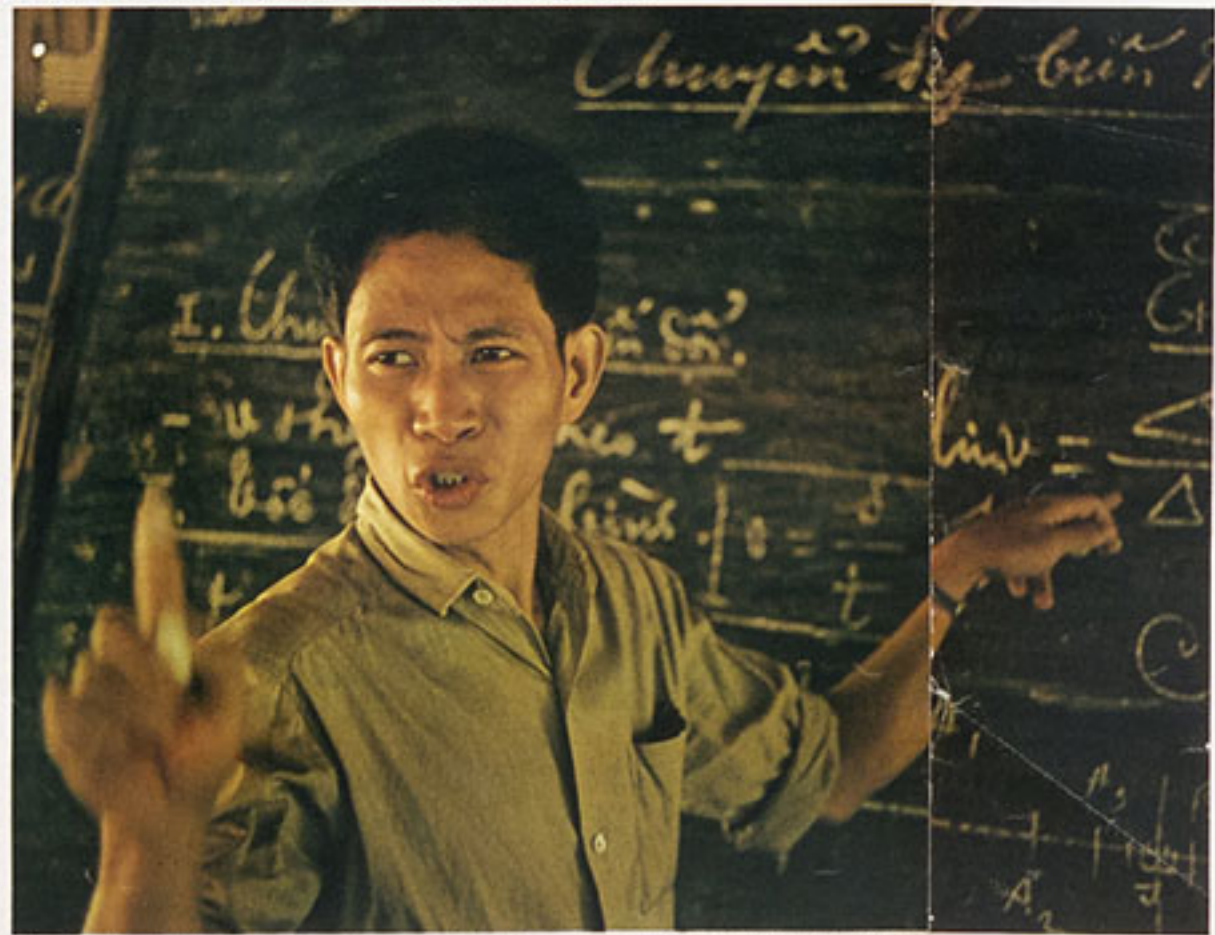
A party leader reads Ho's reply to Lyndon Johnson.



A cave factory turns out spare parts for motor trucks. The dispersal of all North Vietnamese activity is a direct result of U.S. bombing strikes.



Medical students in Hanoi observe heart surgery.



He expounds physics in a mud-hut classroom north of Hanoi, where a "dispersed" school operates.

Ho's allies pile Haiphong's docks high with aid



Offhand tribute to American power: This roll of Soviet newsprint at Haiphong bears a very un-Russian label.

The bikes, loaded with 500 lbs. of war matériel, spare parts and food, slither across the damp trails in the mountains and in the bush to fill the needs of the armies. In underground factories, young men and women work at lathes, drill presses and gear-cutting machines. Medical schools function—nurses and doctors are trained. All this effort works on the principle of a full dispersal of facilities, to cut the losses from American bombing.

It is ironic that war has raised North Vietnam's industrial capacity, which was negligible 15 years ago. And the Vietnamese are adding modern knowledge to their arsenal of nationalism. Reportedly, 150,000 students are studying in engineering and technical schools. There are 35 institutes of higher learning—15 of which have been constructed since 1965. School facilities are dispersed outside of Hanoi.

The students live with peasant families and often help out with farm chores.

Interestingly, more than one-fourth of the total of 200,000 students at the universities are women; most of them study medicine or pharmacy. The government claims that its effort has cut illiteracy from 95 percent to 15 percent in 23 years.

Textbooks come from almost everywhere—as do the materials for war.

On the goods-crowded docks of the North's chief port, Haiphong, above, Riboud witnessed frenzied activity. He noted that cargo waiting to be shipped inland had come from Communist Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and the Soviet Union. One freighter—the *Fortune Glory*—flew the British Union Jack. Chinese merchant ships were on hand, too, waiting their turn to be unloaded.



A Sunday task force of peasants clears a silt-clogged irrigation canal in Ninh Binh province.

Unanswered: "Would you invite U.S. postwar trade?"



Everybody, including 14-year-olds, gets a work load.

"While they use Russian bulldozers and power shovels," Marc Riboud observes, "much of the work done by the North Vietnamese is done the way it was centuries ago. But they want to take their country out of the mud. Their energy, when compared to that of some of their neighbors in Southeast Asia, is extraordinary. An official told me that despite the bombing—which began February 7, 1965—they have actually increased the number of bridges in operation."

"Bicycles are more important to the North Vietnamese than automobiles. They are proud to produce their own, importing only bearings, drive chains and sprockets. For them, that is a tremendous advance."

The North Vietnamese, says Riboud, are both proud and resolute, and they are already looking forward to the time when they will be free of war's ravages. The emphasis on education is but one example.

In discussing postwar plans for his nation, Premier Van Dong asked Riboud: "What are you going to do for Vietnam after the war is over? What is your homeplace of Lyons in France going to do for a city like Hue? We will rebuild our nation with the help of our friends. We will invite technicians and scientists to come to Vietnam like missionaries! And what a beautiful and noble mission! And we deserve it!"

Would he invite postwar U.S. economic cooperation and trade? Van Dong's reply: "We are not vindictive . . . but you have asked a difficult question."