CORRIGENDA.

(Major errors are marked * on left)

Page

iv after item "FLPH...", add new item "ICSC International Commission for Supervision and Control"

after item "RGNUC...", add new item "SCMP Survey of China Mainland Press (U.S. Consulate General, Hong Kong)"

4 2nd line: "March 1963" should read "March 1953"

6 9th line: "questions,[7]" should read "questions[7]."

7 2nd line: "encouragement,[10]" should read "encouragement[10]."

10 13th line: "apprendices" should read "apprentices"

11 3rd line: "was" should read "were"

11th line: "Burma,[25]" should read "Burma[25]),"

16th line: "to manifest to" should read "to manifest in"

12 19th line: "difference" should read "different"

14 15th line: "appeal to " should read "appeal of"

footnote 35, 2nd line: "Statues" should read "Statutes"

16 line 9 should read: military base [...]." The editorial concluded by arguing that if there had been any sincerity in the statement contained in the 22 May letter - that the southern authorities had been looking for practical solutions to the

19th line: delete comma

17 footnote 43: "Jen-min Jih-pao" should read "Renmin Ribao"

18 10th line: "Proganda" should read "Propaganda"

21 1st line: Hungry" should read "Hungary"

2nd line from bottom: "allays" should read "allay"

23 10th line: "in" should read "to"

26 13th line: "discenrible" should read "discernible"

28 footnote 84, line 3: "9 Politburo" should read "a Politburo"

29 3rd line: delete comma

footnote 86, line 3: "food-poising" should read "food-poisoning"

footnote 87, line 1: "Renmin Riabo" should read "Renmin Ribao"

footnote 87, line 4: "denciation" should read "denunciation"

33 15th line: "an" should read "and"

Page

36 last line: "seeded" should read "seemed"

38 2nd line: "issue" should read "issues"
footnote 120, line 2: "single-mindness" should read "single-mindedness"

39 1st line: "have learn" should read "have to learn"

42 2nd to last line: "out" should read "our"

43 6th line: "cligue" should read "clique"

45 footnote 149, line 17: "agression" should read "aggression"

46 1st line: "decision" should read "decisions"

47 footnote 156, line 11: "NLF" should read "NFL"

48 12th line: "NLF" should read "NFL"
14th line: "were reflection" should read "were a reflection"

49 8th line: "NPL's" should read "NFL's"

59 2nd line: "adjoined" should read "adjourned"

63 14th line: "south" should read "South"
footnote 24, line 3: add: "Emphasis added."

66 4th line: "south" should read "South"
14th line: "north" should read "North"

67 footnote 36: add: "Emphasis added."

68 4th line from bottom: "-emply" should read "-employ"

71 7th line from bottom: "FNL" should read "NFL"

73 footnotes 47 and 48: add "Emphasis added"

75 8th line from bottom: "south" should read "South"

78 4th line: "effect to" should read "effect was to"

79 10th line: "Eight" should read "Eighth"

81 6th line: "Saiton" should read "Saigon"
8th line from bottom: "convert" should read "covert"

82 12th line: "Renmin Ribao" should be underlined

83 footnote 83: "Peking Review" should be underlined

86 1st line: "of" should read "to"
footnote 87: add "Emphasis added"

Page

88 8th line: "particular Pham" should read "particular. Pham"

10th line: "face" should read "fact"

89 4th line: "south" should read "South"

93 1st line: "unlikely at" should read "unlikely, at"

3rd line: "then the" should read "then they"

94 * 7th line: "DRVN's" should read "PAVN's"
"capabilitity" should read "capability"

* 9th line: "had occurred" should read "had not occurred"

95 11th line: "alledgedly" should read "allegedly"

8th line from bottom: "14 November 3ith" should read "14 November with"

96 13th line: "US, involved" should read "US involved"

14th line: "armaments and" should read "armaments, and"

97 2nd line: "thinly-vieled" should read "thinly-veiled"

12th line: "by" should read "with"

98 3rd line: "drawned" should read "dawned"

100 9th line: "suprise" should read "surprise"

5th line from bottom: "thus" should read "their"

101 8th line from bottom: "to" should read "for"

7th line from bottom: "Nhan Dan" should be underlined

104 14th line: "which to" should read "which seemed to"

* 21st,22nd,23rd lines: delete "come increasingly to find expression in atangonism between the two States"

105 10th line from bottom: "south its" should read "south of its"

107 5th line from bottom: "insistance" should read "insistence"

109 14th line: "Agreemengs" should read "Agreements"

110 footnote 11: add "Emphasis added."

111 15th line: "Soviet leader's" should read "Soviet leaders'"

115 2nd line from bottom: "ifundamental" should read "fundamental"

116 1st line: "Repub" should read "Republic"

5th line from bottom: "VietN Nam" should read "Viet Nam"
delete "wti"

footnote 35, line 2: "Lair" should read "Liar"

footnote 36, line 1: "Janaury" should read "January"

Page

117 5th line from bottom: "bargin" should read "bargain"
footnote 39, line 2: "Peking Review" should be underlined

118 2nd line: "to counter" should read "(to counter"
14th line: "naval of air" should read "naval or air"
footnote 44, line 3: "Peking Review" should be underlined

119 9th line: "concent" should read "consent"

120 10th line: "doublt" should read "doubt"
16th line: "denuciations" should read "denunciations"

127 5th line: delete comma

129 5th line: "oninous" should read "ominous"

130 footnotes 93 and 94: "Peking Review" should be underlined

131 8th line: "persistance" should read "persistence"

138 footnote 106: "Ibid.," should be underlined; "Documents" should read "Document"

139 2nd line: "leaders" should read "leader"
8th line from bottom: "Kore" should read "Korea"

146 2nd line: "counteranced" should read "countenanced"
13th line: "consitute" should read "constitute"

156 2nd line from bottom: "directed" should read "designed"

157 3rd line: "Foreitn" should read "Foreign"

160 4th line: "Democractic" should read "Democratic"

161 3rd line: "Im" should read "I am"

162 footnote 178, line 1: "complains" should read "complaints"

165 1st line: "carried to" should read "carried through to"

167 12th line: "to China.[190]" should read "to China".[100]"

168 * 5th line from bottom: "impose" should read "oppose"
footnote 192, line 1: "in" should read "is"

169 6th line: "dicisions" should read "decisions"
6th line from bottom: "took" should read "had taken"

172 8th line: "conductive" should read "conducive
5th line from bottom: "dominatn" should read "dominant"

Page

214 11th line from bottom: "attitutude" should read "attitude"

215 2nd line: "for for" should read "for"

11th line: "express" should read "expressed"

12th line: "affirm" should read "affirmed"

2nd line from bottom: "finaly" should read "finally"

217 3rd line: "discuss other" should read "discuss any other"

225 18th line: "stresses" should read "stressed"
"Cambodian" should read "Cambodia"

227 * 16th line: add after "Cambodian people": [...]) was led by Sihanouk; that of the "Laotian people" ([...]

229 6th line: "fracternal" should read "fraternal"

233 7th line: "danagerous" should read "dangerous"

9th line: "Indochina,"[34]the" should read 'Indochina".[34]the'

14th and 15th lines should read: "Cambodia (hereafter RGNUC) under the leadership of the National United Front of Kampuchea; the text of the proclamation,"

5th line from bottom: "to break of its" should read "to break off its"

234 11th line from bottom: "RGNU" should read "RGNUC"

237 8th line: "may" should read "many"

3rd line from bottom: "it down.[52]" should read "it down".[52]"

238 10th line: "way of" should read "war of"

239 5th line from bottom: "people"" should read "people"

4th line from bottom: "Muriel" should read "'Muril'"

241 12th line: delete comma, substitute semi-colon

footnote 71: "Peking Review" should be underlined

243 3rd line: "it their" should read "in their"

244 15th line: "China's" should read ""China's"

246 11th line: "this also through in" should read "this was also implied in"

249 7th line from bottom: "heroib south" should read "heroic south"

250 10th line from bottom: "express" should read "expressed"

6th line from bottom: "there no initiatives were" should read "there were no initiatives"

251 10th line: "CPSU" should read "USSR"

last line: "Laotion" should read "Laotian"

Page

176 last line: "redoubled" should read "redouble"

179 footnote 221: "The New York Times" should be underlined

180 1st line of text: "Vietnames" should read "Vietnamese"
6th line of text: "war" should read "war was"

181 11th line from bottom: "rediness" should read "readiness"

183 5th line: "authoriative" should read "authoritative"
6th line from bottom: "Renmin Ribao" should be underlined

184 6th line: "Pekin's" should read "Peking's"

185 6th line: "Renmin Ribao" should be underlined

186 5th line from bottom: "danger of" should read "danger or"

189 8th line: "illusions" should read "illusions" "
10th line from bottom: "basis" should read "basic"

190 * 10th to 12th lines: delete the sentence "Since the...chapter"

191 12th line: "on the" should read "of the"

193 10th line: "enable" should read "enabled"
2nd line from bottom: "chow" should read "chou"

194 9th line from bottom: "Chow" should read "Chou"
footnote 32: add: "Emphasis added."

196 12th line: "before finally being" should read "before the latter were"
4th line from bottom: "1 November." should read "1 November)."

197 last line: "Renmi" should read "Renmin"

200 3rd line: "were" should read "was"

201 7th line: after "they" add: "(the Soviets)"

205 3rd line: "live" should read "lie"

208 last line: "purse" should read "pursue"

210 8th line: "CPS" should read "CPSU"

211 10th line from bottom: "On the" should read "In the"

213 * 4th line from bottom: "states" should read "Parties"
footnote 82: "Peking Review" should be underlined

Page

255 6th line from bottom: "fully" should read "full"

5th line from bottom: "seccesses" should read "successes"

258 2nd line: "classification" should read "clarification"

3rd line: "troops," should read "troops"

259 3rd line: "works" should read "words"

6th line: "success"" should be deleted

14th line: "lower Laoz" should read "lower Laos"

2nd line from bottom: "thoseoof" should read "those of"

262 16th line: "on" should read "in"

264 5th line: "Li Hsien-nieu" should read "Li Hsien-nien"

265 footnote 137, line 2: "Struggel" should read "Struggle"

266 6th line: "of" should read "on"

267 15th line: "in" should read "at"

footnote 140, 1st line: "Janusry" should read "January"

268 5th and 18th lines: "imperialist" should read "imperialists"

270 footnote 147, line 2: "Principle" should read "Principal"

272 3rd line from bottom: "sympath" should read "sympathy"

273 15th line: "incusion" should read "inclusion"

274 4th line: "expended" should read "expanded"

15th line: "generalization" should read "generalizations"

6th line from bottom: "nownmoving" should read "now moving"

277 * 2nd line: "taken their own hands" should read "taken their destiny into their own hands"

279 12th line: ""and the" should read "and that "the"

8th line: "Vietanmization" should read "Vietnamization"

footnote 169, line 1: "CMT" should read "GMT"

289 12th line: "lead" should read "led"

293 11th line: "of" should read "on"

295 7th line from bottom: "Hanoi, 1959" should read "Hanoi, 1959)"

296 14th, 15th and 16th lines: "Selected Works" should be underlined

297 1st line: "On the Socialist Revolution in Vietnam" should be underlined

Page	
300	9th line from bottom: "South Vietnam: US Defeat Inevitable" should be underlined
308	13th line "in" should be deleted
	11th line from bottom: "Insurgenct" should read "Insurgent"
309	11th line: "Affairs 1966" should be underlined
312	14th line from bottom: "Marjories" should read "Marjorie"
313	17th line: "Cambiddia" should be deleted
321	10th line from bottom: "Nos.1 ( )" should read "Nos.1 (March 1971)"

C H I N A A N D N O R T H V I E T N A M

1 9 6 3 - 1 9 7 1

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

OF THE

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

B . C . J . S H A W

JANUARY 1973

C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the contents of this thesis are entirely my own work based on research conducted whilst a Research Scholar in International Relations at The Australian National University.

B.C.J. SHAW

1 January 1973

Abstract of SHAW, B.C.J. : CHINA AND NORTH VIET NAM, 1963-1971

This study examines Sino-North Viet Nam State and Party relations during the nine years 1963 to 1971, primarily in the context of the conflict in Viet Nam. The policy goals of the two states, and the means used or proposed to advance these goals, are considered.

Chapter One introduces the study by considering somes aspects of relations between the states and Parties from 1954 to the eve of the period being considered in detail.

Chapter Two (1963 to February 1965) considers the reactions to mounting political chaos in South Viet Nam, the growing optimism for a rapid and successful conclusion to the insurgency there, China's desire to reconvene the Geneva Conference after April 1964, reactions to the Tongking Gulf incidents, the first exfiltration of North Vietnamese armed forces to South Viet Nam, and the US response.

Chapter Three (1965-1968) considers the relations between China and North Viet Nam during the period of sustained bombardment of the latter state. Chinese concern for its national security is considered; Chinese refusal to agree to "united action" with the USSR and objection to Vietnamese negotiations with the US are also analysed.

Chapter Four (1968 to March 1970) considers the growing strains between Chinese and North Vietnamese goals, with the latter agreeing to meet with the US in Paris for talks concerning a peaceful solution to the conflict, Chinese insistence on protracted war, the conclusion of the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" and the beginnings of a more "moderate" PRC line in foreign affairs after the Ninth CPC Congress.

Chapter Five (March 1970 to December 1971) considers some implications of the deposition of Sihanouk, the formal extension of fighting to all countries of Indo-China, the establishment of an "Indo-Chinese United Front" under Chinese auspices, and DRVN reaction to Chinese moves to normalize relations with the US, while reversing it China's former views on the conflict.

It is concluded that the People's Republic of China has consistently sought to enhance its own national interests, while paying little if any attention to North Vietnamese interests. The DRVN has sought to reconcile the CPC and the CPSU, and the conflict in Viet Nam has provided it with an opportunity to develop an independent policy line. For both China and the DRVN, national interests are a more fundamental basis for action than an avowedly common ideology.

P R E F A C E

Conflicts of interest among the United States, the People's Republic of China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were demonstrated in the 1960's and the first years of the 1970's in the Viet Nam conflict. Sino-Soviet differences in ideology were already apparent by the eve of the period surveyed in this study, and ideological differences soon extended publicly to the field of inter-state relations. Yet in the context of the Viet Nam conflict, many leaders of the "Western camp" considered that the leaders of North Viet Nam were tools of the Chinese communists, and that the cultural and geographical (as well as ideological) bonds between North Viet Nam and the People's Republic of China were such that there was little if any scope for the emergence of an Asian "Titoist" regime in North Viet Nam. This study examines the relations between the two Asian communist states and their ruling Parties from 1963 to the end of 1971, and concludes that during this period Vietnamese nationalist sentiment has been strengthened, that the Vietnamese have been able to reject Chinese advice and pursue a relatively independent line, but that the factors of history and geography continue to set limits on the extent of independent policy for the leaders of North Viet Nam.

The research on which this study is based was conducted in Canberra from February 1967 to April 1970, with a period of field work from November 1967 to November 1968. Further materials became available in Hong Kong after April 1970.

I should like to express appreciation to The Australian National University for the award of a Research Scholarship in the Department of International Relations for the period of my time there. A large number of persons assisted my enquiry; I am particularly indebted to the members of the United States Mission in Saigon for their helpfulness and advice. In Canberra, I should especially like to thank Professor J.D.B. Miller

and Mr J.L.S. Girling of the Department of International Relations, for their consistent helpfulness. In Hong Kong, I am grateful to my Head of Department, Professor P.B. Harris, for adjusting my teaching obligations in order to prepare the present MS.

Hong Kong
January 1973

C O N T E N T S

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

AP	Associated Press
BBC-SWB	British Broadcasting Service, Summary of World Broadcasts
CC	Central Committee
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DRVN	Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (North Viet Nam)
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FLP	Foreign Languages Press (Peking)
FLPH	Foreign Languages Publishing House (Hanoi)
JPRS	United States Department of Commerce, Joint Publications Research Service
NCNA	New China News Agency
NFL	South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation
PAVN	People's Army of Viet Nam (North Viet Nam)
PLAF	People's Liberation Armed Forces (South Viet Nam)
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRGRSVN	Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam
PRP	People's Revolutionary Party
RGNUC	Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia
UPI	United Press International
US	United States of America
USIS	United States Information Service
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VNA	Viet Nam News Agency (North Viet Nam)
VNWP	Viet Nam Workers' Party (Dang Lao Dong) (North Viet Nam)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The policy of the People's Republic of China (hereafter PRC) towards the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (hereafter DRVN, or North Viet Nam) since the Geneva Conference of 1954 has reflected the changing estimates by the Chinese leaders of felt threats from both the United States and theSoviet Union, as well as judgments concerning the correct application of ideological tenets. At the same time, the leaders of the DRVN, after an initial "low posture" of uncritical imitation of Chinese policies, have seized all available opportunities to stress the independent nature of their own policies, while striving to retain the maximum degree of ideological and material support from both the Soviet Union and China. Central to the relations between the two Asian communist states in recent years have been the implications flowing from the DRVN's policy of seeking to annex South Viet Nam by force of arms.

The primary purpose of the present study is to examine the development of the international relations between the DRVN and the PRC during the period 1963 to the end of 1971. This period of nine years saw important developments between the states through initiatives on the part of third parties - especially, the USSR and the US. In particular, the Sino-Soviet dispute became overt in 1963 and in due course affected the relations between fraternal States as well as between fraternal Parties. The United States increased its military commitment to South Viet Nam, engaged in a period of intense bombardment of the DRVN, and subsequently adopted a policy of disengagement. The PRC underwent

the traumatic experience of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, in an attempt to pre-empt revisionist tendencies, and subsequently reverted to a more moderate set of tactics to achieve her foreign policy goals.

A secondary concern of the present study is to examine whether - and if so, to what extent - the relationship between the PRC and the DRVN exhibited a "proletarian internationalist" quality distinguishable from purely "nationalist" considerations; in other words, whether an avowedly shared supranational ideology had wrought identifiable changes in the "traditional" relationship between these two states. At the same time, this study is not a new examination of the Sino-Soviet dispute; it is not a comparison of PRC and DRVN internal policies; it is not a study of US policy towards either the PRC or the DRVN. Nor is it a study in factionalism within either the PRC or DRVN; and neither is it a study of Sino-Vietnamese rivalry in Indo-China, except peripherally, although such a study deserves to be done and indeed would be essential for anything approaching a definitive study of Sino-Vietnamese relations during this period. Nor is it a study of the relative strengths of Sino-Soviet influence within the councils of the Vietnamese communist leaders.

* * *

Given the secretive nature of communist regimes, it should be clear from the outset that the external observer can reach judgments for the most part only on public information. The major sources for this study are the published pronouncements from Hanoi and Peking on a number of issues. What papers passed between the leaders in private is not known. There will no doubt be many

surprises when the definitive history of Sino-Vietnamese relations of this period comes to be written. The present study does not pretend to be such a definitive study, if only because of the limitation on the length of the analysis. Yet it is hoped that the present study sets out, in general terms, some of the major aspects of relations between the PRC and the DRVN during this period of nine years.

Virtually all of the relevant pronouncements concerning foreign policy issues which are in the public domain have been issued by the two states in official English-language translations, either through their daily radio-teletype news releases or in their foreign-language propaganda periodicals. Therefore, these official translations have been used for the most part as source materials in this study. Unofficial translations (for example, of domestic Chinese and Vietnamese broadcasts) have been used also to supplement the major sources. French-language sources for this period have been eschewed, in part because they exhibit, for the most part, a substantial bias, but also because they are less relevant to Vietnamese affairs after 1954 than they are for the period prior to the Geneva Conference.

* * *

The general developments in relations between China and Viet Nam prior to July 1954 have been ably presented by Professor King C. Chen, and need not be presented at length here. Nevertheless, because no comparable study of DRVN-PRC relations from 1954 to 1962, the eve of the period under review in the present study, has yet appeared in public, it seems appropriate to sketch the general developments during these years in order to set the context for the

detailed discussion in later chapters.

Following the death of Stalin in March 1963, the new leaders of the Soviet Union initiated moves designed to relax tension in East Asia, and these moves were strongly supported by the PRC's Foreign Minister and Premier, Chou En-lai. As Professor Chen has shown, the Vietnamese communists were pressured by the leaders of the PRC and the USSR to attend the Geneva Conference, and Chinese influence on the Vietnamese communists during that Conference was substantial.[1] It was Chou En-lai who persuaded the Vietnamese to withdraw armed forces from Laos and Cambodia, who proposed a compromise settlement on the question of membership of the International Commission for Supervision and Control, and who obtained Ho Chi Minh's agreement to a general peace plan when the two leaders met "on the Sino-Vietnamese border" from 3 to 5 July, 1954. The Joint Communique that resulted from this meeting stated only that the two leaders had "had a full exchange of views" on the Geneva Conference with respect to "the question of restoration of peace in Indo-China and related questions".[2] The formula "exchange of views" implied considerable disagreement between the leaders, yet Ho on 6 July told the Director of the Viet Nam News Agency (hereafter VNA) that the Conference had "opened the way" for the restoration of peace.[3]

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1. King C. Chen, Vietnam and China 1938-1954 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969): see especially pp. 279 - 321.
2. NCNA 7 July 1954 (SCMP 843, p. 1).
3. Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works (Hanoi: FLPH, 1961, Vol. III, pp. 444-445.

Whatever the precise pressures brought to bear by Chou En-lai on this occasion, and whatever the precise reservations of Ho Chi Minh, the Sixth Plenum of the VNWP's Second Central Committee (hereafter VNWP-CC) held on 15 July 1954 decided to endorse a policy of seeking to reach a peace settlement. According to VNWP historians, this decision was taken because the US "wanted direct intervention in Indo-China and were determined to lengthen and expand the war", a circumstance which would bring "an imbalance of power unfavourable to us".[4] To the extent that this perception reflected a genuine fear on the part of the VNWP, it was evidently also shared by the Chinese leaders. American intervention in Indo-China on a large scale might force direct Chinese confrontation, with its high attendant costs. The Chinese also wished to turn their attention to pressing domestic issues, including the consolidation of the CPC's domestic authority and the further development of socialist construction, which had necessarily been subordinated to other considerations during the period of the Korean War.

The Chinese made it clear at the Geneva Conference that their over-riding concern in the region was to ensure the absence of US military forces and bases from all territories of Indo-China.[5] In the years following, it was the growth of a US military presence there that caused greatest concern for the leaders in Peking, and this seems to have remained the primary (if not the only) concern of the Chinese in assessing the development of the conflict in Viet

4. US State Department, Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Viet-Nam (Saigon: n.d.)(May 1968), Appendix, Item 209, p. 16.
5. See e.g. the account given by Anthony Eden, Towards Peace in Indo-China (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 2.

Nam in particular.

Chinese and DRVN assessments of the results of the Conference were substantially different. The Conference demonstrated that international disputes could be settled by negotiations, according to the Chinese, and it had also raised the status of the PRC as an important unit of international politics;[6] the DRVN spokesmen stressed that while a big step had been taken, "[m]ore steps remain to be taken" and political unification of Viet Nam was the most important of the unsettled political questions,[7] Mao Tse-tung's message of congratulations[8] contained no reference to the proposed unification of Viet Nam by means of elections, and Peng Chen in addressing a rally in Peking on the same day stressed the enhancement of China's prestige which had come from the Conference decisions.[9] Thus it seemed clear that the CPC leaders placed their own national interest considerably higher than the furthering of VNWP interests, and even seemed to slight the latter.

There is some evidence that the DRVN leaders were displeased at the results of the Conference, and no doubt Vo Nguyen Giap in particular considered that the "temporary" division of Viet Nam into two zones did not fairly reflect the extent of the military victories. When Ho Chi Minh replied to Mao's congratulations after a rather lengthy delay, he stressed that the DRVN's future struggle would be "heavy and hard", and he added a curiously abrupt statement: "We

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6. See "Chou En-lai's Statement at the Final Session of Geneva Conference", People's China (issue of 1 August 1954), Supplement, pp. 6-7; also Renmin Ribao editorial of 22 July 1954 (NCNA 22 July 1954: in SCMP 854, pp. 14-17).
7. The quotation is from Pham Van Dong's statement to the final session of the Geneva Conference, as published by NCNA on 21 July 1954 (SCMP 854, p. 7); see also the text of Nhan Dan's 25 July editorial (NCNA 27 July: SCMP 857, pp. 8-10).
8. NCNA 23 July 1954 (SCMP 855, p. 21).
9. NCNA 23 July 1954 (SCMP 855, pp. 38-41; particularly see p. 39).

believe that the people and Government of the Chinese People's Republic will give us greater support and encouragement",[10] Pham Van Dong visited Peking for three days (from 2 to 4 August 1954) on his way home from Geneva.[11] Chou again stressed the demonstration of the possibility that international disputes could be settled through peaceful negotiations, although he warned that the "American war bloc" would not "reconcile itself to the defeat of its 'policy of strength'".[12]

* * *

Economic reconstruction in the DRVN was a priority task following the ceasefire, and on 16 November 1954 a DRVN communications delegation arrived in Peking to discuss Chinese aid for the restoration of communications and transport;[13] a communique issued on 28 December announced that Chinese engineers would restore rail links between the DRVN and China, that postal and telecommunications services would be resumed from 1 January 1955, and that China would supply equipment needed to restore highways and water conservancy projects.[14] In the process, China would send experts and technicians to the DRVN, a necessary

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10. His reply came after 10 days; the text is in NCNA 2 August 1954 (SCMP 861, p. 1).
11. NCNA 2 August 1954; SCMP 861, p. 4.
12. Chou En-lai's banquet speech on 2 August 1954 (NCNA 2 August 1954: SCMP 861, p. 7).
13. NCNA 16 November 1954 (SCMP 929, p. 5).
14. NCNA 28 December 1954 (SCMP 956, pp. 1-2). The communique noted that the talks had proceeded "in an atmosphere of sincerity, friendship and mutual understanding" and that the present agreements were "a good beginning for further economic cooperation" between the two sides. No indication was given of whether the Chinese "supply" of goods and equipment was to be as loan or outright grant.

provision which the DRVN seemed to regard as a sensitive issue.[15] At the start of 1955, DRVN leaders seemed anxious to have stronger expressions of economic assistance from the socialist countries, especially from China;[16] they were also at pains to stress that the existing aid extended by China was "genuine and disinterested" and rendered "entirely in the interests" of the DRVN.[17] A trade delegation arrived in Peking on 10 March 1955 to "conduct negotiations on Sino-Vietnamese trade for 1955",[18] but no indication of an outcome of the negotiations appeared during the next three months.

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15. The communique issued on 28 December had been signed on 24 December 1954. A VNA report of 29 December, carried by NCNA on the same day (SCMP 957, p. 13) stated that the DRVN Council of Ministers (meeting "last week") had decided to "request the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China to allow a number of Chinese technical experts and personnel to come to Viet-Nam and work in the economic and financial, social and cultural fields, firstly communications and transport". Since the reference to "last week" places the date of the meeting of the Council at no earlier than 22 December, it seems possible that at least one of the reasons for the four-day delay between the signing and the publication of the documents and the release of the communique was to enable the DRVN to make (perhaps at the request of the Chinese) a post-hoc request for the presence of Chinese experts. Both sides would have had good reasons for wanting any Chinese presence to be "invited", especially if Chinese were to come in great numbers.
16. E.g., in their reply to a message of congratulations from Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai at the return of the DRVN Government to Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong stated that the Vietnamese people "firmly believe" that they would have "the warm assistance of the Chinese people" in their tasks (NCNA 8 January 1955: SCMP 964, p. 7); in a message to Chou En-lai later in the month, Pham Van Dong expressed confidence that "with the whole-hearted assistance of the Soviet Union, China and other brotherly countries", the "Vietnamese people" would certainly achieve their goals (NCNA 18 January 1955: SCMP 971, p. 7).
17. See e.g. Nhan Dan editorial of 30 December 1954 (NCNA 30 December: SCMP 958, p. 29) and the editorial of 25 December (NCNA 25 December: SCMP 956, p. 3).
18. NCNA 10 March 1955 (SCMP 1005, p. 25).

On 17 June 1955 it was reported that a DRVN Government delegation would soon visit China at the invitation of the Chinese Government.[19] This delegation, led by Ho Chi Minh and Truong Chinh, arrived at Peking on 25 June and was met by Mao Tse-tung, Liu Shao-chi, Chou En-lai and other CPC leaders. Renmin Ribao's welcoming editorial stressed that the two countries "have always been closely related to each other and shared common aspirations and interests"; the continuous strengthening of this close friendship "not only conforms to the interests of the two peoples but is an important factor in safeguarding Asian peace". However, the editorial went on, the US ruling clique was intending to turn South Viet Nam "into a second south Korea" and was exerting itself "to undermine general elections, split Viet Nam and convert South Viet Nam into a U.S. military base". "Countries having undertaken obligations towards the Geneva agreements" had the particular responsibility to check these activities in time.[20]

Chou En-lai developed these themes in a banquet speech on 26 June 1955,[51] although he did not specifically pledge China's support for the "Vietnamese people's just cause of peaceful unification". In reply, Ho stressed that his delegation was in Peking "upon invitation", and that the two countries were not only "good neighbours" but also "brothers in need". He hoped that "the authorities concerned and all countries participating in the Geneva Conference" would honour their obligations, especially to hold consultations leading to general elections

19. NCNA 17 June 1955 (SCMP 1072, pp. 38-39).
20. NCNA 25 June 1955 (SCMP 1077, pp. 6-8 passim.).
21. Text in NCNA 26 June 1955 (SCMP 1072, pp. 11-12).

throughout Viet Nam; meanwhile the DRVN would "further consolidate and expand" the National United Front. On the evening of 7 July, NCNA announced[22] that Mao had given a dinner party for the DRVN delegation, thereby indicating that negotiations had concluded. The results were embodied in a joint communique issued on the following day, after the DRVN delegation had left for Ulan Bator and Moscow. The talks had been held in an atmosphere of "sincerity and harmony", and the PRC agreed to "present without compensation" the sum of 800 million yuan to the DRVN Government, to be used for rebuilding, restoring and reconstructing communication facilities and industrial plant. Chinese technicians would go to the DRVN for this purpose, while the DRVN would send workers to train as apprendices in China.

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The Afro-Asian Conference, held at Bandung in April 1955, provided an opportunity to observe the differing concerns of the PRC and the DRVN in foreign policy. Chou En-lai led the PRC delegation, and Pham Van Dong spoke for the DRVN. According to Professor Kahin, the principal objectives that the Conference's sponsors had in mind (and which afterwards they considered had been brought modestly closer to fulfilment) included the development of China's diplomatic independence of the USSR, and the containment of Chinese and "Vietminh" military power and political influence "at the southern border of China and the eastern boundaries of Cambodia and Laos".[23] PRC and DRVN presentations to the

22. In SCMP 1084, pp. 18-19.
23. George McTurnan Kahin, The Afro-Asian Conference (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), p. 3.

Conference were therefore received with considerable attention; Chou En-lai in particular found that suspicions of Chinese intentions was sufficiently widespread to justify a supplementary intervention[24] in an effort - largely successful - to counter them. Concerning the first objective of the sponsors, this was based on the misconception of a monolithic Sino-Soviet unity; Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin less than a year later freed entirely new factors to affect the world outlook of the CPC leaders. The second objective seemed (after the Conference) to have been advanced, first because of Chou's conciliatory references to China's intentions (particularly towards Burma,[25] and secondly because of a written agreement between Pham Van Dong and the Lao delegation concerning Lao-DRVN relations.[26]

The DRVN delegation at Bandung was especially concerned to solicit support for its goal of a unified Viet Nam. Pham Van Dong urged the Conference participants to manifest to an "energetic manner" the alleged Afro-Asian will for peaceful co-existence and opposition to "war plots", and to agree that since peace was

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24. NCNA 19 April 1955 (SCMP 1031, pp. 5-8; particularly see p. 7).
25. Ibid.
26. This agreement stipulated that the settlement of differences between the Royal Lao Government and Pathet Lao authorities was an internal Lao question, and that the DRVN and the Royal Lao Government would develop their relations on the basis of the Five Principles. Both Chou and Pham gave oral assurances to the delegates of Laos and Cambodia of the non-interference by China or the DRVN in the affairs of Laos or Cambodia; Nehru had convened the meeting between the DRVN, Laos and Cambodia, and had invited Chou to attend also (Kahin, op. cit., p. 26). Kahin points out (ibid., note 14 on page 27) that by 11 November 1955, the Lao Foreign Minister was charging the DRVN with having broken the agreement. Text of the agreement is given in ibid., p. 27.

"inseparable from national independence and equality among the peoples", it could not exist genuinely "if there are still territories occupied by alien invaders". The Vietnamese atruggle for unity was "a holy struggle of the entire Vietnamese people", he declared. He also reiterated the DRVN's willingness to establish normal relations with South Viet Nam, and to establish diplomatic relations with Laos and Cambodia.[27] The delegation distributed documents in support of their arguments, including one on the "facts" of the "refugee issue".[28]

The Conference's Final Communique made no reference to the "Indo-China question", except for a brief invitation to the U.N. Security Council to "support the admission of all those states which are qualified for membership in terms of the Charter", among which were listed Laos, Cambodia, and "a united Viet Nam".[29] The absence of support for the DRVN in this Communique, combined with expressions of concern by participants about the DRVN's regional intentions and possibly pressures from Chou En-lai to induce the DRVN's agreement with Laos, probably account for the markedly difference appraisals of the Conference made by China and the DRVN respectively. The Vietnamese, on return to Hanoi airport on 27 April, issued a written statement which said in part:

> Despite many difficulties the Asian-African Conference has achieved some results. The Conference has passed

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27. Substantial extracts from his main speech are given in NCNA 21 April 1955 (SCMP 1032, pp. 7-11).
28. NCNA 23 April 1955 (SCMP 1033, pp. 59-60).
29. The text of the final communique is given in NCNA 24 April 1955 (SCMP 1033, pp. 11-17); the extract quoted is from item F, "Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation", ibid., p. 15.

> some resolutions. [...] The delegation drove home to the Asian and African countries concerned our position, and they have expressed to us their support and sympathy [...].[30]

Renmin Ribao said that the meeting had "won important achievements both inside and outside the Conference"; Afro-Asian peoples wanted, and were determined to defend, peace; the Final Communique reflected this demand "to a considerable extent". The Conference had brought forth "positive proposals and measures" to realise friendly co-operation between participating countries. Concerning the "Indo-China question", many participants were "deeply concerned":

> Their contacts with each other contributed towards consolidation of peace in Indo-China. The joint statement issued by the [DRVN] and Laos showed that they would develop good neighbourly relations [...] on the basis of the Five Principles of peaceful co-existence. The Chinese people consider that the Geneva Agreement which restored peace in Indo-China should be guaranteed through implementation by all countries concerned.[31]

Following the Eighth Plenum, an "All-Vietnam Congress of the National United Front" convened in Hanoi from 5 to 10 September 1955.[32]

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30. NCNA 27 April 1955 (SCMP 1036, pp. 28-29).
31. Editorial of 26 April 1955: carried by NCNA 26 April (SCMP 1034, pp. 1-5).
32. Extracts from speeches to the Congress are in Viet Nam Fatherland Front and the Struggle for National Unity (Hanoi: FLPH, 1956). Despite the stress on the need to expand the national united front which was given by the Eighth Plenum, the decision to do this had in fact been taken at the VNWP's Sixth Plenum (15 July 1954)(see the article by Truong Chinh in Renmin Ribao of 2 September 1954 as carried by NCNA on the same day [SCMP 882, p. 11]), and the task of implementing this had been given considerable attention since the early part of 1955 (see NCNA 10 January 1955 in SCMP 965, pp. 29-30; NCNA 13 January 1955 in SCMP 968, p. 10).

In his opening speech, Ton Duc Thang stressed that the Congress had "a great historical significance".[33] Hoang Quoc Viet outlined three future tasks: first, to implement the Geneva Agreements, consolidate peace, and achieve unity of the Fatherland; secondly, to firmly consolidate the North, and preserve and develop the patriotic movement of the compatriots in the South; thirdly, to broaden and consolidate the national united front throughout the country, and to win the approval and support of peace-loving peoples throughout the world.[34] To fulfill these tasks, it was necessary to have a practical programme, a draft of which the Congress was to discuss, amend, and adopt.[35] The people in the North were to be mobilized to discuss the programme, and the document "should be extensively disseminated" in the South.[36]

Truong Chinh also addressed the Congress and made clear that the appeal to the Front to the presumed nationalist sentiment of all Vietnamese was not to be allowed to result in either non-communist control of the Front or unification under a non-communist regime; the basic premise of the Front strategy was that the VNWP was the sole legitimate repository of Vietnamese interests and the sole interpreter of what constituted Vietnamese patriotism:

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33. As cited by Hoang Quoc Viet, "The entire people united in the fight for peace, unity, independence, democracy and prosperity of Viet-Nam", in Viet-Nam Fatherland Front and the Struggle for National Unity, op. cit., p. 3.
34. Ibid., pp. 9-16.
35. The text of the Programme as adopted is in Viet-Nam Fatherland Front: Resolutions, Manifesto, Programme and Statues (Hanoi: FLPH, revised edition, 1956), pp. 17-28.
36. Viet-Nam Fatherland Front and the Struggle for National Unity, op. cit., p. 29.

> Opposing Communism is tantamount to opposing the nation. Those who oppose Communism reveal themselves to be the enemy of the nation. [...]
>
> The new programme puts the supreme interests of the nation above everything else. [...] [T]he Viet Nam Party of Labour eagerly supports [it] and pledges to exert all its efforts to mobilize our Party as a whole and our entire people in the stern struggle for its execution.[37]

On 24 July 1956, a Renmin Ribao editorial assessed the operation of the Geneva Agreements to date.[38] It noted that the military provisions had "been put into effect or basically carried out" (thanks to the "very valuable contributions" of the ICSC), but that there were "still difficulties" in implementing the political provisions. These had been "carried out in full" in Cambodia, whose neutralist policy and espousal of peaceful co-existence had resulted in "its positive influence in international affairs [...] being felt". In Laos, both sides had recently adopted a conciliatory attitude and were prepared to resume negotiations on outstanding political questions. But Viet Nam was "a serious problem". Despite the DRVN's request for the authorities in the south to hold negotiations on the election question, the editorial said, "the latter has refused to do so without giving any reasons". South Viet Nam was also "openly

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37. Text as "Let's Unite the Whole People and Strive to Implement the Programme of the Front", in Viet-Nam Fatherland Front and the Struggle for National Unity, op. cit., pp. 49-61.
38. Translated in SCMP 1343, pp. 22-23, from which the following quotations are taken.

violating" the provisions of the Agreements concerning the introduction of war material and personnel into Viet Nam, and concerning prohibition of reprisals. Referring to a 22 May 1956 letter from "the South Viet Nam authorities" to the British Foreign Secretary,[39] the editorial called it "an open rejection" of elections which "obviously was due to US instigation and encouragement". "The US has taken the place of France in effecting colonial rule in Viet Nam and turning it into a US military base [...]," been looking for practical solutions to the problems raised by the Geneva Agreements - then they would have no reason for rejecting the recent proposals of President Ho Chi Minh.[40]

On 16 October 1956, Renmin Ribao's Observer again drew attention to recent shipments of US war materials to South Viet Nam, but was content to observe that "the key question" for peace in Indo-China was the thorough execution of the Geneva Agreements. "So long as Viet Nam is not reunified, the enemy of peace will take every advantage of the situation there".[41] The situation in the DRVN was, one of growing peasant dissatisfaction with the VNWP's land reform policies; the intellectuals were also resentful of the tight Party control over publications. The CPSU's 20th Congress and Krushchev's denunciation of Stalin also had an effect in the DRVN.

The VNWP's delegation to the 20th Congress, on its return, arrived in Peking on 13 March 1956,[42] was received on the following

39. Note of the Republic of Viet Nam's Foreign Minister Vu Van Mau to British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd; text in SCMP 1332, p. 29.
40. "Letter to the Vietnamese People throughout the Country", in Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works (op. cit.), Vol. IV, p. 164.
41. NCNA 16 October 1956 (SCMP 1393, p. 17).
42. NCNA 13 March 1956 (SCMP 1249, p. 26).

day by the CPC Politburo,[43] and did not leave Peking until 20 March. On arrival at Hanoi on 24 March, Truong Chinh stated that the Congress "was of paramount significance to the Vietnamese people also".[45] The CPSU's Anastas Mikoyan arrived in Hanoi on 2 April and stayed until 6 April, reportedly to assuage fears and doubts as to the nature of and extent of "de-Stalinization".[46]

The VNWP-CC convened its Ninth Plenum a few days after Mikoyan had left Hanoi, and two weeks after the Chinese had published the article "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship" in which they indicated their dissatisfaction with the de-Stalinization policy flowing from the 20th CPSU Congress.[47] The details of the debates at the Plenum are not available, but to judge from the published version of Ho Chi Minh's speech closing the Plenum,[48] its work was probably equally divided between debating the 20th Congress and making intra-Party criticism. Ho judged that the Plenum had achieved "good results".

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43. Jen-min Jih-pao, 15 March 1956, p. 1.
44. NCNA 20 March 1956 (SCMP 1254, pp. 30-31)
45. Quoted in NCNA 24 March 1956 (SCMP 1257, p. 37).
46. Ho Chi Minh publicly welcomed Mikoyan at a rally on 3 April, but made no mention of Stalin or his policies, speaking instead of the Soviet Union's successes stemming from "correct policies", of how that country was "making giant strides towards communism", and of the sympathy and support accorded the DRVN by both China and the Soviet Union. "The Congress", Ho said, "has helped our people and the peoples of the world discover the correct line to follow in the struggle for independence, democracy and peace". (Speech at the meeting of Hanoi people to welcome the delegation of the Soviet Government" [3 April 1956], in Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol. IV, op. cit., pp. 146-152 passim.)
47. The Plenum met from 19 to 24 April 1956.
48. "Speech closing the 9th (enlarged) session of the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Workers' Party" (24 April 1956), in Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol.IV, op. cit., pp. 153-156.

The criticisms of Stalin revealed to Party members, and the apparent encouragement to criticism of Party and Government given by Ho, combined with DRVN emulation of the Chinese "Hundred Flowers" episode to bring forth a reaction in the DRVN against the VNWP's rule at the same time as "errors" were becoming apparent in rural policy.

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Mao Tse-tung had outlined the policy of letting "a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend" in an unpublished speech of 2 May 1956 to the Supreme State Conference, and on 26 May the director of the CPC's Proganda Department (Lu Ting-yi) had addressed a gathering of Chinese intellectuals in Peking on the CPC's policy towards artists, writers and scientists.[49] Ho Chi Minh was probably alluding to Mao's speech and Lu's exposition when, in the course of addressing intellectuals in Hanoi on 21 July 1956 he urged them to unite more closely with workers and peasants while supporting the regime; but he was rather more forthright than Lu on the limits to the freedom permitted intellectuals:

> Our regime being a democratic one there should be freedom of thought. What is freedom? In all matters, everyone is free to express his own view, thereby contributing to the establishing of the truth. That is a right and also a duty of all people.
>
> After everyone's view has been expressed and truth has been established, freedom of thought turns into <u>freedom</u>

49. Subsequently published in revised form as <u>Let A Hundred Flowers Blossom a Hundred Schools of thought Contend!</u> (Peking: FLPH, Thirdprinting 1958).

> to obey the truth.
>
> Truth is what is beneficial to the Fatherland and to the people. What is detrimental to the interests of the Fatherland and people is not truth.[50]

This nod to democratic centralism and the mass line seemed to place little importance on the many-sided and contingent nature of "truth", whose Orwellian definition might have been expected to caution the intellectuals; but the writers in particular were not to be silenced until they had delivered themselves of their views.[51]

* * *

The Chinese were evidently alarmed by evidence of Soviet vacillation and policy reverses in connection with the handling of the Hungarian revolution in October 1956. They were also concerned to establish that the PRC had no intention of introducing armed force into neighbouring Asian countries. The Chinese Foreign Ministry announced, on 17 November 1956, that Chou En-lai would visit the DRVN, Cambodia, India, Burma, Pakistan, Nepal, and Afghanistan. "His trip will start in the latter part of November", the communique stated,[52] but within hours Chou had left for Hanoi,[53] where the VNWP leaders were wrestling with the problems caused by the admission of errors, the Quynh Luu revolt, and the dissidence of the intellectuals. Nhan Dan's editorial welcoming Chou indicated that the purpose of his visit was well understood: Viet Nam and

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50. In Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol.IV (op. cit), pp. 175-176.
51. See Nhu Phong (Le Van Tien), "Intellectuals, Writers and Artists", The China Quarterly, No. 9 (January-March 1962), pp. 47-69; also P.J.H., (P.J. Honey), "Revolt of the Intellectuals in North Vietnam", in The World Today (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs), Vol. 13 No. 6 (June 1957), pp. 250-260.
52. NCNA 17 November 1956 (SCMP 1415, p. 15).
53. Ibid. (but a separate news item).

China fully respected each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, it said, and the two countries dealt with each other in the spirit of equality.[54]

Chou was banqueted on the evening of 18 November, and after an exchange of pleasantries, Chou stressed that "the relations between our two countries are firmly built on the Five Principles of peaceful co-existence", adding that the Chinese people regarded "the further strengthening of the friendly ties and unity of our two countries as a high international obligation".[55] At a rally the following morning, Chou made passing references to the events in Hungary, judging that the imperialists had been putting out "disgraceful slanders against the socialist countries with a view to diverting world attention from the imperialist aggression against Egypt", and drawing the lesson that the people of China and Viet Nam, "with their long experience of struggle, now see all the more clearly that unity is strength".[56] He was more forthright the following evening: China would always abide by the Five Principles and oppose great-nation chauvinism, he said, adding that while all countries of the world should abide by these principles, the socialist countries too should abide by them.[57]

The joint communique[58] issued after Chou had departed for Phnom Penh said that the talks had been cordial and that agreement had been reached to condemn the Franco-British-Israeli attack on Egypt and in support of the "Worker-Peasant Revolutionary Government"

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54. Editorial of 18 November 1956, as reported by NCNA on the same day (SCMP 1415, p. 17).
55. NCNA 19 November 1956 (SCMP 1415, p. 19).
56. NCNA 19 November 1956 (SCMP 1416, p. 26).
57. NCNA 20 November 1956 (SCMP 1417, p. 34).
58. NCNA 22 November 1956 (SCMP 1418, pp. 15-16).

of Hungry. The Premiers "exchanged views" on the situation in Indo-China (suggesting differences of opinion), and noted with satisfaction the "steady improvement" in the relations of Cambodia and Laos with the DRVN and China, as well as the contribution of the ICSC-VN. Both Premiers agreed that the participants of the Geneva Conference "should adopt effective joint measures" to thoroughly implement the Agreements. Both Premiers promised

> firm support for all measures which help to promote the mutual relations and strengthen the unity of the socialist countries. [They] pledge that, in their mutual relations and in their relations with other countries, their two countries will strictly abide by the five principles and resolutely avoid the mistake of chauvinism.[59]

Chou En-lai singled out this last sentence for attention in his farewell address at Hanoi airport, and expressed the belief that this would "consolidate and develop the friendly and cooperative relations between our two countries".[60] He repeated references to "great-nation chauvinism" in an address to the Cambodian Parliament (although no reference appeared in the Sino-Cambodian communique) and on arrival in Rangoon. No doubt, in the three cases, his concern was to allays fears concerning Chinese intentions; in the case of the DRVN, in view of the disturbed internal situation allied

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59. Ibid.
60. Ibid., p. 19.

with past relations with Chinese regimes, no doubt apprehensions were not entirely absent despite the avowedly shared ideology.[61]

* * *

Following Chou's visit, the DRVN entered a period of internal consolidation, correction of errors, and suppression of dissent.

Ho Chi Minh was absent from the DRVN during most of July and August 1957, visiting North Korea and Eastern European states (including Yugoslavia). On his arrival in Peking on 6 July, NCNA announced that he would stay "several days" before visiting Korea;[62] but in fact Ho stayed in Peking only 38 hours,[63] and while he was reported as attending a dinner as guest of the CPC-CC on his first evening, he spent the second evening at a cinema.[64] The curtailment of the stay was not explained. Ho's journeyings were reported from time to time in Renmin Ribao, but without comment. He arrived back

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61. At the same time, references to chauvinism could also be applied legitimately to the Vietnamese concerning their relations with Laos and Cambodia. Nhan Dan carried an editorial on 30 November 1956 which implicitly recognised this: after observing that chauvinism still existed in the form of big-nation chauvinism or narrow nationalism, it pledged that "the Vietnamese people [...] will strengthen their internationalism at the same time as their patriotism and [will] firmly combat all manifestations of chauvinism" (NCNA 30 November: SCMP 1423, p. 41).
62. NCNA 6 July 1957 (SCMP 1566, p. 57). This report stated that Ho would later visit "eight socialist countries" in Europe, i.e. including Yugoslavia; Ho did in fact visit Yugoslavia from 5 to 9 August 1957. However, in his report to the Hanoi populace on his return, he made no reference to this visit - at least according to the version of the speech published in the Selected Works - even though he had signed a communique with Marshal Tito on 9 August 1957 (see "Talk on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam", in Selected Works, Vol. IV, op. cit., pp. 238-247, particularly in context at pp. 241-242).
63. Arriving at 6 p.m. on 6 July 1957 and departing on 8 July at 8 a.m. (see NCNA for these dates; SCMP 1566, p. 57, and SCMP 1567, p. 40, respectively).
64. NCNA 6 July 1957 (SCMP 1566, p. 57).

in Peking, en route for Hanoi from Moscow, on 28 August, and on the following day all Peking newspapers carried editorials welcoming him; Renmin Ribao's editorial said that his tour had "promoted mutual understanding between Viet nam and the other socialist countries" and "strengthened the unity of the socialist bloc".[65] This favourable assessment was repeated in the formal message sent by the PRC leaders greeting the DRVN national day,[66] and by Chou En-lai in his speech at the DRVN Ambassador's reception for the same occasion.[67] No details of Ho's mediation were given, but in his report on his travels in the Seventh Session of the DRVN National Assembly, Ho stressed that the successes of the socialist countries were great and lasting, while the difficulties were temporary and could undoubtedly be overcome.[68]

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Outwardly, relations with China remained satisfactory during 1958. A new Chinese Ambassador to the DRVN, Ho Wei, arrived in Hanoi on 9 January 1958 by the same plane that brought the first Yugoslav Ambassador to the DRVN.[69] The normalisation of relations between Yugoslavia and the DRVN was however short-lived; the DRVN press and radio repeated Chinese criticism of Yugoslav revisionism in the campaign which began on 5 May with the publication of a Renmin Ribao editorial "Modern revisionism must be criticized".[70]

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65. 29 August 1957 (translated in SCMP 1604, pp. 43-44).
66. NCNA 1 September 1957 (SCMP 1604, pp. 44-45):"The contributions made by the [DRVN] toward consolidating the unity of the socialist camp, especially by President Ho Chi Minh's recent friendly visit to socialist countries, [...] will certainly be beneficial to the maintenance of peace in Asia and the world".
67. On 2 September 1957 (NCNA of same date: SCMP 1604, p. 45). Chou said that Ho's recent visits had "further enhanced the friendship, solidarity and cooperation of the great family of socialist countries headed by the Soviet Union".
68. As quoted by NCNA 10 September 1957 (SCMP 1609, p. 46).
69. NCNA 9 January 1958 (SCMP 1690, p. 40).
70. Text in e.g. SCMP 1767, pp. 4-7.

Some insight into the current Chinese view of Indo-Chinese affairs was provided when the ICSC-Laos withdrew in May 1958 at the request of the Premier of Laos (Prince Souvanna Phouma). On 2 June, Peking newspapers carried commentaries urging that the ICSC should stay in Laos; that carried in Renmin Ribao argued that the Commission had made "positive contribution" to the implementation of the Geneva Agreements on Laos, and supported a DRVN statement of 31 May which considered that it was "entirely necessary" for the ICSC-Laos to remain.[71] Renim Ribao's Commentator on 14 July agreed that "peace in Indo-China cannot be split", and the question of whether the ICSC-Laos should continue to exist "should he decided in relation to the development of the situation in [the] whole [of] Indo-China". He conceded that "proper adjustments in its activities and organization are permissible provided that these will not affect the carrying out of its mission". To wind up the ICSC would "help the American imperialists in their subversive activities."[72]

On 1 July 1958, in its editorial greeting the CPC's 37th anniversary, Nhan Dan stressed that the "great achievements" made by China in its economic construction were due to the "correct leadership" of the CPC "and its creative application of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism to China's revolution". The "great

71. NCNA 2 June 1958 (SCMP 1784, pp. 42-43).
72. Extracted in SCMP 1842, pp. 49-50.

leap forward" was "of great historic significance".[73] As if to underline Sino-DRVN unity of views against the Soviet Union, Renmin Ribao's Commentator chose to support, on the following day, a letter sent by Pham Van Dong to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference, saying that the "correct stand" of the DRVN "deserves careful study by the countries concerned".[74]

The Chinese turned their attention to Viet-Nam again in August 1958, for the occasion of the ICSC-VN's Eighth Interim Report. Renmin Ribao's Commentator said, on 23 August 1958, that the US and South Vietnamese violations of the Geneva Agreements were in fact more serious than was suggested by those pointed out in the Report. In particular, the US had not ceased to intensify its efforts to improve its military position in South Viet Nam - efforts which had

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73. As quoted by NCNA 1 July 1958 (SCMP 1806, p. 9). During the second half of 1958, there were occasional references by NCNA to the influence of Chinese theory and practice in the DRVN. On 27 July, a Hanoi dispatch (SCMP 1822, p. 40) stated that "several hundred" functionaries of the VNWP had begun to study Mao's On Contradiction and On Practice with the aim of stressing coordination between theory and practice and in order to criticize "the subjective method of thinking"; the report added that these two works had been widely studied by the "theoreticians of the Lao Dong" during the past three years. On 24 August, NCNA reported the publication in Hanoi of the first part of a long article entitled "Chinese experience - worthy of study", written by one "Tran Luc" and previously serialised by Nhan Dan. The same dispatch said that 15,000 copies of the Vietnamese booklet - re-titled "Chinese Great Leap Forward in Agriculture" - were published on that day by Su That (Truth) Publishing House. The complete text of the article was said to have been carried by Nhan Dan between 1 July and 23 August. The booklet now published was said to argue both that "the present great leap forward is the result of the rectification campaign carried out by the Chinese people", and that as a fellow socialist country "Vietnam should learn from the experiences of the fraternal countries so as to catch up with them".

74. But if the Chinese meant to imply DRVN dissatisfaction with the USSR's role as Co-Chairman, the Vietnamese on their side were careful not to add fuel to the developing Chinese criticisms of the CPSU leaders' international policies.

> the obvious purpose to speed up its building of South Viet Nam into its long-term military base to be used as a springboard for the sabotage of peace in Viet Nam and Indochina as a whole, for threatening and invading the /DRVN/ and for aggression and intervention in the Southeast Asian countries.[75]

Therefore, said Commentator, "we consider that the states which have taken part in the Geneva Conference are duty bound to adopt immediately measures for the complete implementation of the Geneva Agreement and to check US obstructions".

Despite this evidence of a new sense of urgency on the part of the PRC concerning the situation in South Viet Nam, there was no discenrible progress towards a change in the incremental enlargement of US military involvement in the south by the end of 1958. The VNWP maintained a Party apparatus in the South after the Geneva ceasefire, and developments there up to the end of 1958 have been analyzed in the so-called "Crimp" document.[76] In the north, the VNWP-CC held its 12th Plenum in March 1957 and summarised Vietnamese anti-French experiences "in order to prepare for our anti-US struggle".[77] This seemed to be a contingency strategy rather than a commitment to military action in the south, and there seemed to be two difficulties in the way of commencing an armed struggle against

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75. Renmin Ribao commentary, 23 August 1958 (SCMP 1842, pp. 49-50).
76. This document, so-called because it was captured during Operation Crimp in early 1966, is translated in US State Department, Working Paper /...7, op. cit., Appendix, Item 301. See also the discussion in Jeffrey Race, War Comes to Long An (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), especially pp. 39-121.
77. JPRS 48179, p. 80 (translation of an article by Nguyen Hoai in Nghien Cuu Lich Suu No. 117 /December 1968/).

the Ngo Dinh Diem - US forces: there was no guarantee that the southerners would join in such a struggle with enthusiasm, and there were fears that such a move would invite crushing defeat through US retaliation. While the 12th Plenum agreed that strengthening the national defence and building up PAVN was an essential task,[78] the Plenum seems to have agreed that the priority task of the North was to increase its economic, military and organisational strength, and that for the moment it would not be possible - because of the lack of these strengths - to encourage any adventure in the south. This policy was dramatically reversed at the VNWP-CC's 15th Plenum, held sometime between 1 and 19 January 1959:[79] the Plenum now assessed the indivisibility of the task of completing the national-democratic revolution in the south,[80] and the task of building up the strength of the North; it also assessed that the

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78. Vo Nguyen Giap, "Strengthening national defence and building up the people's armed forces", in Third Congress of the Viet Nam Workers Party: Documents, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 53.

79. That the Plenum was held in January is confirmed by e.g. Truong Chinh, March Ahead Under the Party's Banner (Hanoi: FLPH, 1963), p. 30; and VNA 23 January 1970. That the meeting was held in the absence of Ho Chi Minh is extremely unlikely: Ho arrived in Peking on 20 January 1959 as the leader of the VNWP delegation to the CPSU's 21st Congress (NCNA 20 January 1959: SCMP 1940, p. 37).

80. According to several sources (e.g. March Ahead Under the Party's Banner, op. cit., p. 69; VNA 23 January 1970; Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works, Vol. IV, op. cit., p. 436) the Plenum defined the general tasks of the Vietnamese revolution: to consolidate the North, actively bring the North to socialism, and "resolutely to complete the national democratic revolution in the south". However, the Plenum's belated communique (see below) made no mention of this last point.

> direction and task of South Vietnamese revolution could not diverge from the general revolutionary law of using revolutionary violence to oppose counter-revolutionary violence, rising up to seize power for the people. It was time to resort to armed struggle combined with political struggle to push the movement forward.[81]

The 16th Plenum was held in April,[82] and a misleading communique on the 15th Plenum was issued only on 13 May 1959,[83] shortly after Ngo Dinh Diem had promulgated "Law 10-59".[84] By October 1959, the armed struggle in the south had commenced.[85]

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81. An Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party /1930-1970/ (Hanoi: FLPH, 1970), p. 108. (Emphasis in source).
82. This Plenum discussed co-operativization: the date of April 1959 is given in Vietnamese Studies No. 1, pp. 130, 132, and in No. 13, p. 122; however, VNA of 16 August 1970 dates it May 1959.
83. The communique (issued on 13 May 1959) refers to the "recent" 15th Plenum, despite the fact that the 16th Plenum had been held in April; observers have therefore erroneously dated the 15th Plenum as May 1959 (text of the communique as transmitted by VNA is in Working Paper, op. cit., Item J).
84. This law, which was promulgated on 6 May 1959, may have been the major factor in the timing of the communique on the VNWP-CC's 15th Plenum, in which case 9 Politburo decision of May 1959 referred to in the "Crimp document" was probably taken on or shortly before 13 May, the date of the communique. "Law 10-59" provided mandatory sentences of death or hard labour for life for those persons who, in the opinion of specially-constituted military courts, had committed or attempted to commit any "act of destruction or sabotage". The decisions of the special military courts were not subject to appeal in the Vietnamese High Court, although those convicted might make an appeal for mercy to the Head of State. For a DRVN analysis of this law, see Pham Van Bach, et al., Fascist Terror in South Viet Nam: Law 10-59 (Hanoi: FLPH, 1961); a version of the translated text of the law is given at pp. 71-77.
85. So stated in the "Crimp document", op. cit., p. 10. See also the Nhan Dan editorial of 14 May 1959 commenting on the 15th Plenum's communique: after recalling the southern insurrections of 1941 and 1945, it states:
    > Our people are determined to struggle with their traditional heroism by all necessary forms and measures so as to achieve the goal of the revolution. (In Working Paper, op. cit., Item K, p.2).

    DRVN sources designed for foreign readers tend to obscure the precise date of resumption of hostilities, but there is general agreement that the qualitative change occurred in the period 1959-1960.

There is no evidence that the VNWP leaders consulted with the CPC leaders before taking the decisions of the 15th Plenum; there is also no evidence, to suggest that they were acting at the behest of the CPC. Nevertheless, there is evidence of considerable liaison between the two Parties in the efforts to create an "international opinion" concerning the problem of unification of Viet Nam. In particular, the "Phu Loi incident" of December 1958[86] was greatly exploited in both China[87] and the DRVN;[88]

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86. On 1 December 1958, a disturbance occurred at the Phu Loi "re-education camp" in South Viet Nam. The event was variously attributed to deliberate food-poising on the part of the South Viet Nam authorities, and an attempt to massacre the inmates; and to the consequences of a rebellion on the part of the alleged communist inmates. Contemporary reports conflict on the details. However, it is agreed that a number of inmates lay dead after the disturbance. The matter passed relatively unremarked in the DRVN media until 18 January 1959, when Vo Nguyen Giap addressed a strong letter of protest to the Indian Chairman of the ICSC-VN concerning the alleged "massacre". The DRVN account is given in e.g. Central Committee of Protest Struggle Against the Mass Murder at Phu Loi, First Documents on the Phu Loi Mass Murder in South Vietnam (Hanoi: FLPH, 1959); Giap's letter is at pp. 9-13.

87. The signal was given in a Renmin Riabo editorial of 21 January 1959 which denounced the alleged massacre (SCMP 1940, p. 38): during the next two months, youth, women, trade unions, and peace organisations in China held meetings of denciation and sent messages of both protest and sympathy to the respective parties. However, the PRC Government took no formal action and issued no formal statement during this period.

88. More than two million persons reportedly demonstrated in the streets, 15,000 meetings of condemnation were held, and "tens of thousands" of resolutions were sent to the ICSC-VN demanding full investigation of the incident (Viet Nam Peace Committee, Five Years in the Implementation of the Geneva Agreements in Viet Nam /Hanoi: FLPH, 1959/, p. 28.

denunciations of this incident were fueled by "Law 10-59", which attracted further denunciations. The campaign culminated on the anniversary of the Geneva Agreements,[89] which the Cairo-based Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference had designated "Viet Nam Day".

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1960 was a year of consolidation for the VNWP and for the DRVN. As the co-operativization movement got under way, a new constitution for the State was put into effect on 1 January, the Party's 30th anniversary celebrations provided an opportunity to reflect on aspects of the struggle for unification, a visit in mid-year by Chou En-lai provided an opportunity to discuss the situations in Laos and in South Viet Nam, and the Party's Third Congress in September seemed to set the seal on the VNWP's more vigorous approach to the building of socialism in the North and the struggle for unification in the South.

Truong Chinh argued, in the January 1960 issue of Hoc Tap, about the application of Marxist-Leninist theory to the new situation. Recapitulating his earlier opinions about the interconnection of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist tasks during the national democratic revolution, he concluded:

> the correct co-ordination of the anti-imperialist task with the anti-feudal task is necessary to ensure the the victory of the people's national democratic

89. See e.g. the speech by Kuo Mo-jo at Peking rally on 20 July (translated in SCMP 2063, pp. 30-33).

> revolution; if these tasks are dealt with separately, the revolution will meet with difficulties, even with failure; a lack of proper co-ordination will result in rightist or "leftist" deviations.[90]

That was the prescription for the South: for Viet Nam as a whole, Truong Chinh insisted, the Party "must simultaneously carry out",[91] the two strategic tasks of the national democratic revolution (in the south) and "socialist revolution aimed at carrying out socialist transformation" (in the north). In implementing these policies, the Party must "continue our combat"[92] against both rightist[93] and "leftist"[94] views. The "correct co-ordination" of policies between north and south meant in particular that all policies and lines for the further development of the North "in whatever respect"[95] must therefore pay attention to the effect in the south. Truong Chinh seems to have been saying that the decision to launch armed

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90. Truong Chinh, "Strategic Principles of our Party", in March Ahead Under the Party's Banner (Hanoi: FLPH, 1963), p. 102, emphasis in source.
91. Ibid., p. 105.
92. Ibid., p. 113; thus these erroneous tendencies were present problems.
93. According to these views, "the advance of the North toward socialism would be detrimental to the struggle for national reunification; or it would be more beneficial to /this/ struggle /.../ did the North postpone its advance toward socialism" (ibid., p. 114).
94. These were "narrow-minded proposals and actions which /had/ failed to win over the sympathy of the various strata of people in the South", and consisted of "separating the question of consolidating the North from that of taking the South into consideration, or opposing them against each other, only thinking of building socialism in the North without thinking of the struggle for national reunification and of the people's national democratic revolution in the South" (ibid., p. 115).
95. Ibid., p. 107

struggle in the south was premature, that it was doomed to failure unless organizational changes were introduced in the south, and that in any case there was now no help for it but to adjust policies in the north in such a way that assistance of whatever kind from the north could be extended to the southern revolutionists should the latter run into difficulties in the future. His speech on the occasion of the VNWP's 30th anniversary[96] developed these themes: the Party had drawn "two great lessons" from its past: first, "it must combine Marxist-Leninist theory with the practice of the Vietnamese revolution"; and secondly, if the revolution was to succeed, "our Party must create, foster and strengthen the factors of success".[97]

Truong Chinh was answered by Le Duan in a speech delivered on the occasion of Lenin's 90th birthday anniversary.[98] The latter argued that a policy of concentrating on the economic strengthening of the North, while it had in the past and was at present creating "a number of complications for the revolution in the South", was nevertheless providing "fundamental" advantage for that revolution and "in good time" would "help the revolution in the South develop favourably".[99] In any case, given an imperialists (US) presence

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96. "March Ahead Under the Party's Banner", in ibid., pp. 9-77.
97. These factors included a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Party, a worker-peasant alliance, a national united front, a revolutionary army, people's power, and international solidarity.
98. "Leninism and Vietnam's Revolution", in Le Duan, On the Socialist Revolution in Vietnam, Vol. I (Hanoi: FLPH, 1965), pp. 9-56.
99. Ibid., p. 47. The "complications" presumably were those arising for the southern cadres, both in the past and presently, through the absence of any substantial overt assistance from the DRVN as the DRVN focussed its main attention on the attempt to stabilise the economy truncated by partition, and sought to make the north "a firm base for the revolution in the south". This view is also accepted by Donald S. Zagoria, Vietnam Triangle (New York: Pegasus, 1967), p. 105.

in the south, it was essential to contain it there and not give the imperialists cause for threatening or intruding into the North; if that were to happen, the gains since 1954 would likely be lost. Le Duan presented this view in the following terms:

> The liberation of the South is not only a task of the southern people, but also of the entire people, of the South as well as of the North. The northern people will never neglect their task with regard to one half of their country, which is not liberated.
> But in the present conjuncture [...] we can and must guide and restrict within the South the solving of the contradiction between imperialism and the colonies in our country.[100]

Thus, while Le Duan affirms the strategic responsibility of the northerners to join with an assist the southerners in the liberation struggle, he insists that the tactical responsibility for the revolution must for the time being belong to the southerners. At the same time, the revolutionists in the south could and should advance their cause through the "international opinion" which was able to exert itself against military counter-measures by the imperialists, according to Le Duan. In this view, the maintenance of peace is a strategic condition, brought about by the superiority of the socialist camp, which would stalemate (and therefore prevent)

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100. Ibid., p. 48

the US from intervening militarily in South Viet Nam on a large scale; thus, the situation would favour the further unfolding of the revolution in the south.[101] Le Duan's views prevailed for nearly four years, despite (as we shall see) a growing opinion within the VNWP Politburo and expressed by the CPC that the DRVN should take a more active part in the southern revolution, specifically by giving military assistance in the form of men and equipment, if the revolution were not to be crushed by the growing US military presence in the south.

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Chou En-lai visited the DRVN from 9 to 12 May 1960, at the invitation of Pham Van Dong, and from the speeches delivered on arrival at Hanoi airport[102] it seemed clear that a major purpose of his visit was to solicit DRVN support for the CPC's ideological differences with the CPSU which had been given public expression in "Long Live Leninism!" published on the occasion of Lenin's birth anniversary. The banquet speeches[103] also indicated that the VNWP would support the CPSU's views, while praising China's economic assistance to the DRVN. The two sides reportedly held "intimate" talks on an inter-Party basis, and reached "completely identical views on all questions discussed,"[104] how this was so,

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101. Ibid., pp. 49-50.
102. See the texts of these speeches carried by NCNA 10 May 1960 (SCMP 2258, pp. 36-37).
103. Text in NCNA 10 May 1960 (in SCMP 2258, pp. 39-44).
104. On the afternoon of 12 May, according to an NCNA item later that day (SCMP 2260, p. 53). The talks evidently did not require much time. Talks (presumably on a State rather than a Party basis) had also been held on the preceding day (NCNA 11 May 1960, in SCMP 2259, p. 41).

in view of the evident differences, was not explained, although both Chou and Pham Van Dong referred to further strengthening of relations of mutual aid and cooperation between the two countries in their farewell speeches at the airport on 14 May.[105] In any case, the Chinese leaders were evidently well pleased with the apparent results of their visit.[106] The VNWP's general line for the south was greeted enthusiastically in mid-July and in early September.[107]

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The Party's Third Congress (5-10 September) served to place the seal of approval on a detailed strategy for the southern revolution, and this was of greater moment than the further public exposure of Sino-Soviet differences (over which the VNWP leaned to the side of orthodoxy, i.e. the CPSU's view).[108] The

105. Text of both speeches are in NCNA 14 May 1960 (SCMP 2261, pp. 49-50).

106. Less than a week later, Mao Tse-tung, Liu Shao-chi, and Chou En-lai signed a message of greetings to Ho on the occasion of his birthday. The message extended "ardent and fraternal congratulations" to Ho; called him "the most respected and beloved leader" of the Vietnamese people, "an outstanding partisan" in the international communist movement and "the closest friend" of the Chinese people. It also spoke of his "outstanding contributions" to the Vietnamese revolutionary cause and to the international communist movement. This message probably marks the high point of Chinese respect for Ho.

107. See e.g. CPC-CC member Liu Ning-yi's address to a 19 July rally in Peking on the anniversary of the Geneva Agreements; the Vietnamese people's struggle would certainly be successful "with the strong support of the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union" (NCNA 19 July 1960: SCMP 2303, p. 25), see also the Chinese leaders' message to the DRVN leaders for DRVN National Day (NCNA 1 September 1960: SCMP 2333, p. 25).

108. See Ho Chi Minh's opening address, in Third National Congress of the Viet Nam Workers' Party: Documents, Vol. 1, op. cit. p. 17 et seq.

Political Report presented by Le Duan[109] stressed the related nature of the separate Northern and Southern strategies,[110] and attempted to meet Truong Chinh's earlier criticism concerning co-ordination of the anti-feudalist and anti-imperialist tasks in the south.[111] Truong Chinh's insistence on the need for a national united front in the south was accepted, and a precise strategy presented for the formation and future goals of such a front which would be "under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist Party of the working class".[112]

Li Fu-chun, a Vice-Premier and member of the CPC-CC Politburo, told the Congress that it was necessary to resist both revisionism and dogmatism, but that it was "absolutely impermissible to substitute Marxism-Leninism with revisionism";[113] the message to the Congress from the CPC-CC, which Li read to the gathering, urged the VNWP "to make fresh contributions to the defence of the Marxist-Leninist principles and to the cause of consolidating the international communist movement and the solidarity of the socialist camp"[114] i.e., to oppose the Soviet interpretations of Marxism-Leninism. That the VNWP chose not to do so must have been disappointing to the CPC delegation, yet Li Fu-chun agreed that the Congress had laid down "a correct, revolutionary line":[115] at the same time, he seeded to express displeasure at the election of Le

109. "Political Report of the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Workers' Party", in ibid., pp. 25-213.
110. Ibid., pp. 42-43.
111. Ibid., pp. 60-61.
112. Ibid., pp. 62-63.
113. See text of Li's speech, NCNA 6 September, 1960 (SCMP 2336, pp. 37-41); the quotation is at SCMP p. 40.
114. Ibid., p. 41.
115. See the text of his speech to a Hanoi rally on 11 September, in NCNA of same date (SCMP 2339, pp. 36-38); the quotation is at p. 37.

Duan to the post of First Secretary of the VNWP.[116] Renmin Ribao's editorial on the Congress also implied reservations on the new leadership.[117]

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Ho Chi Minh led the DRVN Government and Party delegation to Moscow for the October Revolution anniversary celebrations, and the party stopped over in Peking on its way both to and from Moscow.[118] The Moscow Statement that was drawn up by representatives of the world communist and workers' Parties was an ambiguous compromise representing "a victory on points for the Soviet Party",[119]

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116. Li had avoided any reference to the leadership of the VNWP being "correct", in his address to the Congress although he had used the word at the conclusion of a speech of 1 September for the occasion of the DRVN National Day (see SCMP 2333 p. 37). Although the adjective was used by him in his 11 September speech with reference to the leadership of the August revolution, it was absent in references in the same speech to the present VNWP leadership Thus, the distinction between a present correct line and a (implied) not-correct leadership seems to suggest that Le Duan was the object of displeasure. Ho was too much of an old revolutionary to be characterised as being incorrect. Perhaps the Chinese would have preferred Truong Chinh reinstated as the chief executive (now renamed First Secretary from the former Secretary-General: a symbolic re-assertion of the VNWP's historical links, through Ho, with the CPSU).

117. Editorial of 12 September 1960, published by NCNA on the same date; in SCMP 2340, pp. 28-31.

118. When the delegation arrived at Peking on 2 November, it was greeted by Liu Shao-chi, Chou En-lai, Chu Teh, and others, but Mao Tse-tung was absent, possibly as a diplomatic indication of displeasure at the VNWP's tendency to extend support to the CPSU at the expense of the CPC. However, Mao did attend a banquet that same evening given by Liu Shao-chi to the Vietnamese thereby suggesting that any point that was being made had been made (NCNA 2 November 1960: SCMP 2374, pp. 30-31). Ho left for Moscow in the company of Liu on 4 November; when Ho returned to Peking on 3 December, he was hanqueted by Mao who had "a cordial talk" with him (NCNA 3 December 1960: SCMP 2393, p. 42).

119. Donald S. Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict 1956-61 (New York: Atheneum reprint of 1962 edition, 1966), p. 365.

and while the exact position of the VNWP at the conference of Parties is not clear, Le Duan's report on the issue involved[120] suggested that the VNWP's attitude was also one of ambiguous compromise. On the question of "bloc unity", he insisted that the Soviet Union had entered the state of building communism while China was performing socialist construction, yet the solidarity of the CPSU and the CPC was "of special importance" for the destiny of the socialist camp. The DRVN would

> Study thoroughly and apply creatively the collective experiences of the fraternal countries in combination with our own experiences.[121]

It is relevant to note that Le Duan made his personal position quite clear three months later. Addressing a meeting to brief propaganda and educational cadres on a political remoulding drive (convened on 10 March 1961 by the VNWP-CC Secretariat), he insisted that educational methods and propaganda work must be of a form appropriate to the Vietnamese frame of reference, and he went on:

> The day before yesterday, I told Comrade To Huu [secretary of the Central Committee, in charge of propaganda and education] that we have learnt much from China, now as in the past, but that we do not model ourselves on the Chinese. In other words,

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120. A lengthy excerpt was published as "Strengthening Solidarity and Single-Mindness and Advancing Towards New Successes" (report to the Third Plenum of theThird VNWP-CC, December 1960), in Le Duan, On Some Present International Problems (Hanoi: FLPH, 1964), pp. 9-55.

121. Ibid., p. 56.

we have learn from others, but only what suits us.[122]

Although the announcement in late January of the formation of a "National Front for the Liberation of South Viet Nam" (hereafter NFL) was carried inconspicuously and without comment in Renmin Ribao,[123] the VNWP leadership was again being characterised as "correct" by 10 June 1961.[124] One of the first Chinese assertions that "the masses [in South Viet Nam] have been compelled to take up arms and engage in guerrilla warfare" in order to "resist the brutal suppression by the Ngo Dinh Diem clique" was made on 1 April 1961;[125] on 13 April the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement expressing "grave concern" at the situation in South Viet Nam.[126] On 13 May 1961, US Vice-President Johnson signed a joint communique in Saigon with President Ngo Dinh Diem, which indicated that US military involvement in south Viet Nam would be greatly stepped up.[127]

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122. "We must foster new thoughts to build up socialism", in Le Duan, On the Socialist Revolution in Vietnam, Vol. III (Hanoi: FLP, 1967), pp. 56-57.
123. 31 January 1961, p. 6.
124. Renmin Ribao editorial, 10 June 1961 (SCMP 2517, p. 45).
125. Renmin Ribao commentary on the 27-29 March SEATO meeting; in issue of 1 April 1961, translated in SCMP 2471, at p. 37.
126. NCNA 13 April 1961 (SCMP 2479, p. 45).
127. The communique announced that the two governments had agreed on an 8-point programme, including, inter alia,
    [...] to extend and build upon existing programs of military and economic aid [...].
    [...] that regular armed forces of the Republic of Viet Nam should be increased, and that the United States would extend its military assistance programs to include support for an additional number of regular Vietnamese armed forces.
    [...] that the United States would provide military assistance program support for the entire Vietnamese civil guard force.
    (From the text of the communique, as published in U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 4th revised ed., 1968], p. 116).

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NCNA announced on 5 June 1961 that a DRVN Government delegation would shortly visit China at the invitation of the PRC Government, and the delegation led by Pham Van Dong arrived at Peking on 12 June. Chinese newspaper editorials at the time called the VNWP leadership "correct", and the CPC leaders evidently had high hopes for influencing the VNWP to give greater ideological support to the CPC.[128] Pham Van Dong spoke of the "wisdom and correctness" of the CPC's line,[129] but balanced expressions of gratitude to the PRC for its economic assistance with thanks to the Soviet Union,[130] and laid emphasis on the need for united Sino-Soviet support both for the immediate struggle in the south and for the long-term goal of unification. Pham also made two references to the treaties of friendship and co-operation, and border agreements, recently concluded between China and third countries.[131] The joint communique signed between Chou En-lai

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128. A Renmin Ribao editorial of 10 June 1961 said that the visit was "a big event in the political life of the two countries" which would "open a new page" in the two countries' history of friendship (SCMP 2517, p. 44). This was Pham's first visit to Peking since that of August 1954. The composition of the DRVN delegation indicated that its concern was with economic and political issues.

129. Speech at banquet given by Chou En-lai, 12 June 1961; reported in NCNA of the same date (SCMP 2518, p. 49).

130. Ibid., p. 50.

131. The DRVN delegation itself signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Mongolia on departure from Peking; the PRC had already signed treaties of friendship and cooperation with Cambodia and Indonesia; the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was shortly to sign treaties of friendship with both the PRC and the USSR.

and Pham Van Dong stated that in "intimate talks" the two leaders had "reached complete identity of views" on important international questions of mutual concern, but had merely "exchanged views" on the question of socialist construction of the two countries.[132] The Chinese seemed disappointed at the DRVN's insistence on linking their own support with that of the Soviet Union.[133] but greetings from the Chinese leaders on the DRVN's National Day (2 September) still referred to the VNWP's "correct leadership".[134]

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The results of the visits to South Viet Nam of Dr Eugene Staley (in June and July 1961) and General Maxwell Taylor (in October 1961),[135] especially the latter, were regarded with concern by the CPC.[136] On 7 December, NCNA announced that a Chinese military

132. NCNA 16 June 1961 (SCMP 2522, pp. 41-45).
133. Not necessarily related to this question, but possibly an indication of marginally cooler relations between the two countries, is the fact that the attendance at the rallies held in Peking to mark the anniversary of the Geneva Agreements was much smaller in 1961 (1,500 according to NCNA of 20 July 1961 /SCMP 2545, p. 30/) than in 1960 (10,000 according to NCNA of 19 July 1960 /SCMP 2303, p. 22/).
134. Text in NCNA 1 September 1961 (SCMP 2574, p. 47).
135. Dr. Staley headed a US mission of experts which visited south Viet Nam for a month, in implementation of the sixth point in the 13 May 1961 Ngo-Johnson communique. Taylor left Washington on 15 October 1961 for a visit to south Viet Nam, Thailand and Laos, and returned on 3 November. US President Kennedy told a news conference on 11 October 1961 that he had asked Taylor to go to Viet Nam to discuss with Ngo Dinh Diem and US officials in Viet Nam ways in which the US might better assist the south Viet Nam government in meeting the insurgent threat (see e.g. China and U.S. Far East Policy 1945-1966. /Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1967/, pp. 108-109).
136. E.g., Ta-kung Pao's Commentator on 21 October 1961 saw the Taylor mission as "a serious threat to peace in Indo-China and Southeast Asia" (NCNA 21 October 1961: SCMP 2606, p. 38); on 5 November, he judged that it was "crystal clear" that the US was "preparing for a new military adventure in South Vietnam" (NCNA 5 November 1961: SCMP 2616, p. 35).

delegation would shortly visit the DRVN;[137] the mission, headed by Marshal Yeh Chien-ying, arrived in Hanoi on 15 December and stayed in the DRVN until 31 December. Spokesmen for the VNWP made it clear that it was not prepared to take sides with the CPC against the CPSU,[138] despite the aggravation of Sino-Soviet differences at the CPSU's 22nd Congress held in October. The purpose of the mission was not made clear in the published reports. Some commentators (e.g. P.J. Honey)[139] saw evidence for a Chinese attempt to obtain DRVN agreement on a formal military alliance between the two countries, especially in a sentence contained in Lin Piao's greetings to Vo Nguyen Giap on the occasion of PAVN Day (21 December): "We resolutely stand by your side and will make joint efforts with you to defend the security of our respective countries and to preserve Asian and world peace".[140] It is possible that this interpretation is correct. Yeh Chien-ying on 20 December declared that the situation was "extremely serious", and that the Chinese people would "never be indifferent" to increasing US intervention.[141] In Peking, Chief of Staff Lo Jui-ching declared on 22 December that the people and armed forces of the two countries "through out joint efforts, will make new contributions to the cause of building socialism and communism".[142] However, beyond

137. In SCMP 2638, p. 34.
138. E.g.: the Chinese PLA had been "a radiant example" to PAVN, which had "always learned invaluable experiences from it" (Vo Nguyen Giap's welcome speech at the airport on 15 December, in SCMP 2644, p. 34).
139. P.J. Honey, Communism in North Vietnam (London: Ampersand Ltd., 1965 edition), pp. 129-130.
140. NCNA 21 December 1961 (in SCMP 2648, p. 43).
141. NCNA 20 December 1961 (in SCMP 2647, p. 24).
142. NCNA 22 December 1961 (in SCMP 2649, p. 38).

expressing Chinese concern and a suggestion of continuing co-operation, these statements were essentially ambiguous, and failed to draw any perceptible response from the Vietnamese. The DRVN's military attache in Peking, speaking at the same function as Lo Jui-ching, on 22 December, warned that if the "US-Ngo Dinh Diem cligue" dared to attack North Viet Nam, then "the Viet Nam People's Army" would "resolutely smash all their aggressive designs".[143] There was no suggestion that PLA assistance might be sought.

However, it seems that at least one major concern of the delegation was to persuade the VNWP leaders that elements of the PAVN should be sent to South Viet Nam to support the beleaguered southern revolutionists;[144] the delegation failed to achieve this, and showed displeasure by withholding the adjective "correct" in reference to the VNWP leadership.[145] The Chinese evidently felt

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143. Ibid., p. 39.

144. See e.g. the reported remarks of Yeh Chien-ying at a reception hosted by the PRC's Ambassador to the DRVN on 29 December: "We believe that the heroic Vietnamese People's Army, under the leadership of the Vietnamese Workers' Party, will assuredly maintain sharp revolutionary vigilance, steadily increase its combat strength and make still greater contributions to the unification of the fatherland [...]" (NCNA 29 December 1961: SCMP 2653, p. 34). Vo Nguyen Giap's reply to these pointed "beliefs" was almost contemptuously reported by NCNA in two sentences (apart from his toast): "Speaking at the reception Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap said that Vietnam and China are close neighbours and their armies are fraternal armies. This is a flesh and blood relationship, he said". (ibid., p. 35).

145. Yeh Chien-ying referred to the "correct" leadership of the VNWP in his speech on arrival at Hanoi (see NCNA 15 December 1961: SCMP 2644, p. 35); but the adjective was rather pointedly omitted from his 15 December banquet speech (NCNA 15 December; SCMP 2644, p. 41), his 29 December speech at the Chinese Ambassador's reception (NCNA 29 December: SCMP 2653, p. 34), his 30 December speech at a farewell reception (NCNA 30 December: SCMP 2652, p. 53), and his 31 December farewell speech at Hanoi airport (NCNA 31 December 1961: SCMP 2653, p. 37)

that the insurgency in South Viet Nam was progressing favourably except for the vital factor of increasing US military support for Ngo Dinh Diem's forces;[146] this was evidently the view of the NFL also,[147] but the latter seemed to be attempting to pressure a majority faction within the VNWP-CC Politburo to change their views concerning the desirability or the necessity for committing PAVN units to the south.

* * *

The VNWP attempted to mediate the CPC-CPSU differences during 1962,[148] but its efforts were weakened by the Soviet reaction to the Sino-Indian border clashes in October and November 1962, and by the confrontation of the USSR by the US over the Cuban missile emplacements in October 1962. The situation in South Viet Nam deteriorated, from the VNWP and the southern revolutionists' point of view, by the setting up of a "US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam" (MACV), announced on 8 February 1962: the announcement

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146. NCNA 14 January 1962: SCMP 2662, p. 41.

147. As P.J. Honey has pointed out (Communism in North Vietnam, op. cit., p. 130) the NFL leaders had sent a message to foreign governments on 22 December 1961 stating that "if the need should arise" it would appeal to friendly countries for assistance. This possibility was also stated four weeks later in Peking by an NFL official, Huynh Van Tam, who had come from Moscow at the invitation of the Peking Trade Union Council. Addressing a rally in his honour on 12 January 1962, Huynh announced that the people in south Viet Nam would fight to the end "and, if necessary, would appeal to the peoples of various countries, and peace-loving governments and nations throughout the world [,] for all-round support, including material assistance, to drive the aggressors out of their country completely" (NCNA 12 January 1962: SCMP 2661, p. 38). No such suggestions had come from Hanoi. This foreshadowing of an appeal for aid implied a judgment on the part of the southern insurgent leadership that they might not otherwise be able to successfully counter the growing US military retaliation.

148. See the discussion in King Chen, "North Vietnam in the Sino-Soviet Dispute, 1962-1964", Asian Survey, Vol 4, No. 9 (September 1964), p. 1025.

drew immediate comment from both the DRVN and the PRC, but official statements came only after a lengthy delay.[149] The setting up of a Marxist-Leninist Party which, according to Le Duan's report to the Third Congress, must lead the national united front in the south, was announced on 1 January 1962;[150] the NFL held its First Congress

149. A DRVN Government statement on 18 February 1962 strongly condemned the action, and urged the Co-Chairman of the 1954 Geneva Conference to "urgently study effective measures" to halt the "acts of agression" by the US (quoted in U.S. Military Adventure in South Viet Nam [Hanoi: FLPH, 1962], p. 36). The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on 24 February expressing the Chinese Government's full support for the "just stand and righteous demand" of the DRVN, and insisted that the US should immediately withdraw all of its troops and equipment from south Viet Nam. The statement also expressed Chinese concern in stronger language than had hitherto been used on this issue:

> The armed U.S. imperialist intervention and agression in southern Vietnam constitutes a direct threat to the security of the [DRVN]; it also seriously affects the security of China and the peace of Asia. [...] As everyone knows, while the spearhead of the U.S. imperialist agression points directly to the [DRVN], it points [in] directly to China. [...] U.S. violations of the Geneva Agreements [...] have developed to an extremely dangerous stage. This stage of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. [...] the Co-Chairmen [...] and the countries concerned must promptly hold consultations and take appropriate measures to eliminate the serious danger of war in southern Vietnam by peaceful means [...]. (NCNA 24 February 1962: SCMP 2688, p. 32).

150. It immediately associated itself with the NFL. According to a later DRVN commentary:

> The followers of Marxism-Leninism are in fact the soul of the NFLSV and the centre of the unity of the southern people. [...]
>
> The experiences of the world and our country's revolutions have shown that in order to win the greatest success, the national democratic revolution must be led by a workers' revolutionary party. Faced with the ever-growing, keen, and decisive struggle of the southern people, the followers of Marxism-Leninism in the south have clearly noted the need of a thoroughly revolutionary party to act as a vanguard force for the southern revolution in order to ensure [success]. [...] the congress of representatives of the followers of Marxism-Leninism in the south was held in late December 1961. It was decided to establish the Vietnam People's Revolutionary Party [...]. [...] It assumed the historic mission of playing the role of vanguard body to the southern revolution. (Article by Hoang Vu in Hoc Tap, January 1966: as translated in JPRS 34518, p. 43).

Further details concerning the PRP are in Wilfred Burchett, Viet Nam Will Win! (op. cit.), Chapter 13; U.S. Mission in Vietnam, Viet Nam Documents and Research Notes, No.5 (October 1967) and No. 40 (August 1968); Hanoi's Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN)(Saigon: United States Mission in Vietnam, July 1969); Michael Charles Conley, The Communist Insurgent Infrastructure in South Viet Nam (two volumes)(Washington, D.C.: The American University, July 1967).

from 16 February to 3 March 1962[151] and made important decision on foreign policy, the situation in the south, the land question, and assistance from outside the south. The Chinese Ambassador to the DRVN (Ho Wei) was recalled and left for home on 24 March,[152] and his successor (Chu Chi-wen) did not take up his post for nearly five months.[153] The British Government decided to publish a Special Report from the ICSC-VN dated 2 June 1962,[154] which found that both North and South Viet Nam had committed breaches of the 1954 Geneva Agreement and accused the PAVN of giving support to the revolutionists: both the PRC and the DRVN attacked the Report. The Enlarged Geneva Conference on Laos, which had convened on 16 May 1961, reached agreement on 21 July 1962; Chen Yi linked the future of the agreements on Laos with the future developments in Viet Nam,[155] and the NFL

151. Declaration of the First Congress of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation (Hanoi: FLPH, June 1962).
152. NCNA 24 March 1962 (SCMP 2708, p. 37).
153. Chu was appointed on 27 July 1962 (NCNA of same date: SCMP 2791, p. 29), but he did not arrive in Hanoi until 18 August (NCNA of same date: SCMP 2805, p. 34). The delays were not explained.
154. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, June 1962 (Cmnd. 1755).
155. In his final address to the enlarged Geneva Conference on Laos, he said: The tension in Vietnam was created by the U.S. Government's refusal to assume its international obligations under the 1954 Geneva Agreements and its perpetration of armed intervention there. This situation has already reached a point of extreme danger. We hold that this armed intervention must be stopped and that the war flames in South Viet Nam must be put out through peaceful consultations in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreements. So long as flames of war are kept alive in South Vietnam, peace in Laos cannot be regarded as consolidated. (NCNA 21 July 1962: SCMP 2787, p. 24.)

proposed a solution to the Viet Nam question along the lines of that agreed for Laos.[156] The Chinese leaders referred to the VNWP's continuing "correct leadership" in their message for the DRVN's 17th National Day;[157] at the same time Chen Yi made ascerbic reference to the Soviet Union.[158]

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On 17 September 1962, NCNA announced that a National People's Congress delegation would shortly visit the DRVN at the invitation of Truong Chinh in his capacity as Chairman of the DRVN National Assembly's Standing Committee. The delegation, headed by Peng Chen, arrived in Hanoi on 29 September and remained in the DRVN until 11 October. Speeches exchanged during the visit were not especially noteworthy, but Peng Chen seemed to give emphasis to the virtue of relying on one's own strength in waging armed struggle,

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156. On 20 July 1962, the NLF made four "emergency proposals for national salvation": the US must dissolve MACV and withdrew its troops and weapons; the "interested parties" in the south to cease fire in order to settle their internal affairs by themselves; a national union government to be set up to organize free general elections in the south; south Viet Nam to follow a foreign policy of peace and neutrality (as quoted in Tran Van Giau and Le Van Chat, The South Viet Nam Liberation National Front [sic] [Hanoi: FLPH, 1962], pp. 37-38).

    All obstacles are thus removed on the side of the [NLF] to bring the South Vietnamese people to accept a solution similar to that which triumphed in Laos on June 12, 1962. (Ibid., p. 39).

157. NCNA 1 September 1962 (SCMP 2815, p. 31).

158. He said, during a reception in Peking on 1 September, that Our two countries [i.e. the PRC and the DRVN] have never imposed our opinions on others, nor replaced comradely discussions and consultations with the method of interfering in each other's internal affairs. (NCNA 1 September 1962: SCMP 2814, p. 27.

in references both to the anti-French war of Resistance[159] and to the insurgency in South Viet Nam. Concerning the latter, he also emphasized that the US would be driven out, "after protracted and arduous struggle", provided that the people in the south united closely under the NFL banner, that they relied on their own strength, and that they had the support "of their fellow countrymen in the north" as well as of the peace-loving people the world over.[160] These remarks seemed to imply that the Chinese had made a new assessment of the situation in the south during the past four months - during the visit of the DRVN delegation to China in June, Pham Van Dong had more than once referred to the leading role of the NLF, but the Chinese leaders had made no reference to the NFL at that time - and that the pre-requisites for victory set forth by Peng Chen were reflection of this new assessment. After the return of the NPC delegation to China, a Renmin Ribao editorial hailed the "brilliant achievements" of the Vietnamese people under the "correct leadership" of the VNWP, which had "applied creatively the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism to the reality in Viet Nam".[161]

The first formal NLF delegation to visit China did so between 23 September and 19 October 1962, "at the invitation of the China Peace Committee and the Chinese Committee for Afro-Asian

159. Speech in Viet Tri (NCNA 4 October 1962: SCMP 2836, p. 47).
160. Sppech to Hanoi rally, 7 October 1962 (NCNA of same day SCMP 2838, p. 34).
161. Renmin Ribao editorial, 13 October 1962 (SCMP 2841, pp. 37-38).

Solidarity";[162] the group met with Mao Tse-tung and other Chinese leaders for "intimate, friendly conversations",[163] and signed a joint statement with its host committees[164] before leaving Peking to travel in China en route to Hanoi.

The DRVN leaders do not seem to have entirely approved of the PRC military action against India over the disputed border territory,[165] and they tended to support the Soviet Union on the Cuban missile issue.[166] The Chinese took advantage of the NPL's second anniversary to draw lessons from the two episodes,[167] and

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162. NCNA 22 September 1962: (SCMP 2827, p. 36).
163. On 28 September 1962 (see NCNA for that date: SCMP 2831, p. 30); the description is from the joint statement issued on 5 October (NCNA 5 October: SCMP 2836, p. 4o).
164. SCMP 2836, pp. 40-42.
165. King Chen, "North Vietnam in the Sino-Soviet Dispute, 1962-1964", op. cit., has identified a shift in the DRVN attitude to India in the period from late October to early November 1962, in the direction of greater reservations (p. 1025). When the Chinese announced on 21 November their unilateral troop withdrawal, Ho Chi Minh addressed conciliatory letters to both Liu Shao-chi and to the Indian leaders (texts of the letters - both dated 24 November - are in NCNA 25 November 1962: SCMP 2869, p. 34); and on 1 December, Chou En-lai received a letter from Pham Van Dong which also spoke of the "correct stand" of the Chinese government (NCNA 1 December 1962: SCMP 2873, p. 40). At the same time, the DRVN did not express approval for the earlier Chinese military advance, and avoided mentioning the USSR as an arms supplier to India.
166. King Chen,"North Vietnam in the Sino-Soviet Dispute, 1962-1964", op. cit., pp. 1027-1028. The Soviet reversal of decisions must have raised, in the minds of many of the VNWP-CC members, the question of the USSR's dependability as an ally in the event of escalated confrontation between the US and the Vietnamese which might occur in the future.
167. Addressing a rally in Peking on 19 December 1962, Liao Cheng-chih said that "the struggle of the people of South Vietnam, Cuba and the whole world" bore out three facts: first, imperialism and all reactionaries were paper tigers, which looked outwardly strong but were in fact weak, and "so long as one slights them strategically and deals seriously with them tactically, "one would surely be able to win victory. Secondly, it was the struggle of the masses which decided the course of history, and not weapons, atomic or hydrogen bombs. Thirdly, "no force whatever" could suppress the struggle of the oppressed nations and people for liberation. (NCNA 19 December; SCMP 2886, p. 25; also see Peking Review, Vol. V, No. 52 /28 December 1962/, pp. 12-13).

the continuing intransigence of CPC attacks on the CPSU policies at the turn of the year encouraged the VNWP to make another major effort at reconciling the two parties.[168]

The CPC did not hide its displeasure at the VNWP's failure to condemn the CPSU for the Cuban affair,[169] and also implied continuing criticism of the VNWP over the nature and quantity of support which should be given to the NFL.[170]

* * *

Thus, by the end of 1962, on the eve of overt Sino-Soviet polemics, the VNWP had already demonstrated its independent line between the two major Parties, it was committed to underwriting the southern insurrection, US military assistance and advisors to South Viet Nam were increasing, and the Chinese were urging greater support from the DRVN to the southern insurrectionists. The following chapters attempt to demonstrate the general trends of these and associated issues as they developed, and in the concluding chapter an attempt is made to assess whether the events of the nine years 1963-1971 had brought about any recognisable changes in the relationship between the PRC and the DRVN - if so, to what extent, for what reasons and with what limits.

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168. Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op. cit., pp. 160-172, passim.: King Chen, "North Vietnam in the Sino-Soviet Dispute, 1962-1964", op. cit., pp. 1027-1029.

169. The Chinese press gave only limited coverage of DRVN affairs in January, February, and the first days of March 1963. The anniversary of the establishment of Sino-DRVN relations, and the VNWP founding anniversary, were ignored.

170. E.g., a Ta-kung Pao commentary of 20 March repeated Liao Cheng-chih's contention of 19 December 1962, that the struggle and victories of the south Vietnamese people proved US imperialism a paper tiger, that it was the struggle of the masses and not new weapons which determined the course of history, and that the struggle was a just cause and therefore was invincible. It also repeated the prescription put forth by Peng Chen five months previously: the south Vietnamese people,
> closely uniting under the banner of the [NFL], relying on their own strength and with the support of their compatriots in the north and the peace-loving people of the world would surely drive out the US. (SCMP 2944, p. 20).

CHAPTER TWO

JANUARY 1963 - FEBRUARY 1965

The period of just over two years surveyed in this chapter saw a marked increase in Chinese concern over the development of the conflict in Viet Nam. At the close of this period, that conflict was already in the process of being "internationalized", with consequences that were to severely strain Peking-Hanoi relations for many years. A number of main themes can be extracted from events, each interacting on the others. The most important of these was the further development of Sino-Soviet differences through overt polemics, linked to a growing unwillingness of the CPSU under Khrushchov's leadership to actively engage itself in the affairs of Indo-China. Both the CPSU and the CPC sought to gain the total adherence of the VNWP to their respective points of view; the Vietnamese, already committed to a forward policy in South Viet Nam, appeared to incline ideologically towards many of the Chinese points of view, but at the same time were concerned to establish and maintain an independent position which fell short of complete commitment to the CPC. Circumstances sometimes forced the VNWP to support the view of one of the two major communist Parties even when it was clear that the other Party was violently opposed to that view; but for the most part, these necessary declarations by the VNWP were balanced shortly afterwards by expressions of support for the other Party on other matters.

A second theme was a coincidence of Vietnamese and Chinese views concerning the need to press forward with the "national democratic revolution" in South Viet Nam. The Chinese urged, from December 1961, that the DRVN should extend greater help to the

southern insurgents in order to ensure victory for them in their struggle; the VNWP-CC decided in December 1963 to prepare to send regular forces to South Viet Nam to provide the necessary assistance. The US advisory presence and military assistance to the Saigon authorities continued to grow. Despite the warning of probable large-scale US intervention in South Viet Nam that was provided by the August 1964 Tongking Gulf incidents, the political chaos in the south encouraged the VNWP leaders to the view that a military victory for the insurgent forces was already within grasp during the final months of 1964 and the first month of 1965; North Vietnamese troops would provide the extra strength needed in order to topple the Saigon regime and rout its armed forces. This appeared to be the CPC's view also in early 1965.

A third theme turned on the question of how the conflict in South Viet Nam should be viewed. The Chinese, by July 1963, explicitly considered it a struggle against the power and prestige of US imperialism, and judged that the most important consideration was to ensure military victory for the insurgents, in order that this power and prestige should be humbled. In the Chinese view, any attempt to compromise with the US, whether by negotiations or otherwise, was a betrayal of the "world revolution". All socialist states should therefore extend practical aid on the political, military and diplomatic fronts in order to attack the US as strongly as possible. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was reluctant to engage the US in this manner; the Cuban incident had shown that uncompromising confrontation by superpowers could easily result in the most disastrous consequences. At the same time, the Soviet Union was committed in theory to the same goal of world revolution as was China. In the face of both Chinese

taunts and escalating US action in Indo-China, the Soviet leaders decided - after the fall of Khrushchov - to re-engage their authority and a part of their defence inventory on the side of the North Vietnamese. The Vietnamese accepted the CPC's theoretical view of world revolution, and of the necessity for revolutionary violence; but their basic immediate goal was intertwined with a nationalist one - to seize political power over South Viet Nam, in order to unify the two parts of Viet Nam. Therefore the Vietnamese were prepared to use any means to advance this goal, including the good offices of the Soviet Union, while placing primary emphasis on the armed struggle for the time being. The pragmatism of the Vietnamese communists did not find support from the Chinese leaders; and their unwillingness to denounce Soviet policies in other fields during these two years established the background for severly strained relations with the Chinese after January 1965.

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As the New Year of 1963 dawned, the CPC was preoccupied with its ideological dispute with the CPSU in the aftermath of the Cuban and Sino-Indian boundary confrontations. To the extent that the VNWP had failed to reproach the USSR for "adventurism" and "capitulationism" over the Cuban affair, and had been less than absolute in its support of the PRC's confrontation with India, it had drawn the displeasure of the CPC. This was expressed in particular by the failure of the PRC to greet the anniversary of the establishment of Sino-DRVN diplomatic relations (15 January), and the apparent absence of a message from the CPC to greet the VNWP founding anniversary (3 February). In order to redress the balance of what might have been taken as a growing degree of support for CPSU theses, the VNWP on 10 February again proposed a

cessation of open polemics between the two major parties in order to prepare the way for a meeting of Communist and workers' parties, which in turn could discuss and settle divergences of views.[1] This initiative was followed by a letter from the CPSU-CC to the CPC-CC on 21 February, in which the former party proposed a bilateral meeting of representatives of the two parties "at a high level". Such a meeting, the CPSU considered, would "play an important role in preparing a conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties".[2]

The CPC replied on 9 March welcoming the proposals, and agreed to "temporarily suspend" public polemics, while proposing that the meeting be held either in Peking or in Moscow.[3] Bilateral talks began on 5 July but soon proved abortive, and overt polemics resumed. In the meantime, the CPC made strong efforts to obtain a formal commitment of the VNWP to its theses. The 12 March issue of Renmin Ribao published the texts of four VNWP documents, including the 10 February proposal, and the VNWP leaders chose the anniversary of Marx's death (13 March) to express views more sympathetic to the CPC's viewpoint. In particular, a speech delivered by Le Duan on this date[4] (later reprinted in Renmin Ribao) was later acclaimed by Liu Shao-chi as a speech "of a high Marxist-Leninist level".[5] Le Duan aligned himself with the views expressed in the 1960 Moscow Statement concerning the nature of the present era and the strategy to be adopted, insisting at the same time that the actual situation in each country should determine the precise attitude of each

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1. VNA 10 February 1963.
2. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VI No. 12 (22 March 1963), pp.8-10.
3. Ibid., pp. 6-8.
4. Later extensively reprinted in English translation both in Hanoi and Peking, as "Hold high the revolutionary banner of creative Marxism, lead our revolutionary cause to complete victory!" In Le Duan, On Some Present International Problems (Hanoi: FLPH, 1964), pp. 59-122.
5. Liu's address to a Hanoi rally on 12 May: see NCNA 12 May 1963 (in SCMP 2980, p. 35).

communist party. Despite a lengthy attempt to maintain a position precisely in between the conflicting CPSU-CPC positions by use of the "on the one hand ... but on the other hand ..." style of argument, Le Duan leant to the side of the CPC's more militant line. This is especially clear when he refers to the revolution in South Viet Nam: given the national goal of unifying Viet Nam, this goal can only be achieved when the south is liberated; thus the southern communists "have no alternative" but to continue the revolution.[6] Because of the involvement of the US in opposition to the revolution, the revolutionary struggle itself takes on supra-national dimensions, as a struggle against US imperialism and a direct contribution to world peace.

Le Duan urged that the VNWP should give "powerful support" to the southern communists,[7] and seemed thereby to be adding his voice to that of various CPC spokesmen who had since December 1961 been urging greater DRVN assistance to the southerners.

On 3 April, the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Liu Shao-chi and Chen Yi would shortly visit Indonesia and Burma, and on 27 April it was announced that these leaders would also visit the DRVN and Cambodia. The entourage arrived in Hanoi on 10 May to the accompaniment of a 21-gun salute, and was met at the airport by Ho Chi Minh and other high-level DRVN leaders. The importance of the six-day visit was further indicated by the extensive coverage given to all major speeches by both the DRVN and the CPC press. The Renmin Ribao editorial marking the start of the visit indicated that the CPC was once again seeking a firm commitment of the VNWP to its side in the ideological dispute:

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6. Le Duan, op. cit., p. 119.
7. Ibid., p. 121.

> We believe that through this visit, the [...] friendship between our two parties and peoples will surely be further consolidated and developed and that the visit will make new contributions to the strengthening of the unity of the entire socialist camp on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism [...].[8]

Ho Chi Minh made it clear, in a banquet speech on the evening of his guests' arrival, that he understood the purpose, and that the VNWP would still decline to take sides.[9] He referred to the "correct leadership" of the CPC, yet insisted that socialist construction in the DRVN would succeed "with the vigorous support and devoted assistance of the Soviet Union, China and the other fraternal socialist countries", and pledged the Vietnamese people to wage a resolute struggle for peace "shoulder to shoulder with the peoples of the Soviet Union, China and the other fraternal countries". Concerning the unity of the socialist camp, he said that the VNWP

> warmly welcomes all efforts made by the fraternal parties, first of all the [CPSU] and the [CPC] - the two biggest and most powerful parties - for the strengthening of the solidarity and unity of mind of the socialist camp [...].

During the course of his visit, Liu made two speeches[10] critical of CPSU policy on proletarian internationalism, the struggle for peaceful co-existence, and support to revolutionary struggles; but the VNWP spokesmen chose not to argue with him, even when he insisted that on questions "of such an important struggle of principle we cannot act as lookers-on or follow a middle course".[11]

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8. Renmin Ribao of 10 May 1963; also in SCMP 2979, pp. 40-42.
9. Text in SCMP 2979, pp. 35-38.
10. Speech of 12 May (in SCMP 2979, pp. 38-39) and speech of 15 May (in SCMP 2982, pp. 37-38).
11. SCMP 2982, pp. 37-38.

It is noteworthy that Truong Chinh, long noted for his militant viewpoint, publicly stressed the VNWP's independent stand on issues of strategy and tactics by arguing that the Vietnamese people's victories were inseperable from "the sympathy, support and help of the international communist movement, particularly of the /CPSU/ and the /CPC/". He also argued that the "experience of the Chinese Revolution as summed up in the works of Comrade Mao Tse-tung" had "made contributions" to the Marxist-Leninist theoretical treasury, while Liu's How to be a good Communist and other works had "contributed" to the task of educating VNWP members in the communist world outlook and were "instructive" to the task of Party-building.[12] In other words, the Chinese experience would continue to be studied along with the Soviet experience, and the VNWP would decide for itself the relevance of these experiences to the Vietnamese situation.

The Liu-Ho joint statement issued on 16 May[13] seemed to suggest that Ho subscribed to many of the Chinese views, but the drafting indicated that in fact the VNWP had sought to preserve its freedom of decision. On the questions of peaceful coexistence and support to revolutionary struggles, for example, the statement merely observes that the two Parties and Governments had "repeatedly pointed out" that socialist countries "must" strive for peaceful coexistence with countries having different social systems, on the basis of the Five Principles; and "must" support the revolutionary struggles of all oppressed nations and peoples. Similarly, the two Heads of State agreed that a world meeting of communist parties

12. NCNA 15 May 1963 (in SCMP 2982, pp. 36-37).
13. NCNA 16 May 1963 (in SCMP 2983, pp. 36-42).

was necessary to "eliminate the differences and strengthen unity through internal consultations", but at the same time it was necessary to "make adequate preparations" for such a meeting. The DRVN side also expressed warm praise for the Chinese position on the Sino-Indian boundary question after the cease-fire, but left open the possibility that it was still embarassed by (and did not approve of) Chinese acts prior to the cease-fire.

Thus the VNWP avoided an unconditional commitment to the CPC's side, and avoided specific condemnation of the CPSU. The Chinese were surprisingly grateful, however, for the formula expressed in the joint statement, no doubt applying the principle that any party which did not wholeheartedly accept the CPSU's theses was still amenable to the CPC's arguments. In fact, of course, the VNWP had very little room in which to manoeuvre ideologically, since it remained firmly committed to the proposal that political power in South Viet Nam should be seized by force of arms, and was thereby committed to a more militant view of the issues being disputed than was the CPSU.

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The rapid deterioration of CPC-CPSU relations from this time onwards until the end of July has been well-documented elsewhere.[14] It is sufficient to recall that the CPSU-CC replied on 30 March to the CPC-CC's 9 March letter; on 14 May it was agreed that bilateral talks would begin in Moscow on 5 July; on 17 June the CPC published a reply to the 30 March letter and listed 25 points to be discussed by the two sides; on 14 July the CPSU published its "Open Letter" to

14. See, e.g., Gittings, John, Survey of the Sino-Soviet Dispute (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), Chapter XXIII (pp. 184-192).

the CPC; on 13 July the Renmin Ribao resumed publication of anti-Soviet materials; and on 20 July the Sino-Soviet talks were adjoined "until some later time". Until mid-July, the insurgency in South Viet Nam does not appear to have been specifically used by the CPC as an example of a national liberation struggle which was being deserted by the CPSU. With the resumption of open polemics, however, the CPC seized the opportunity to do this, rapidly raised the "Viet Nam question" to the front rank of issues which separated the CPSU and itself, and thereby invested the PRC's prestige and the CPC's ideological righteousness in a continuation of armed struggle until total victory for the insurgents.

The first indication of the CPC's intentions was contained in a Foreign Ministry statement on 18 July, on the ninth anniversary of the Geneva Accords. "In these nine years", the statement said, "the people of southern Viet Nam [...] have shown to the whole world that the correct way to win national liberation is not to effect 'peaceful coexistence' with the aggressors and oppressors, but to use a revolutionary armed force to defend oneself and fight the enemy".[15] The editorial of Renmin Ribao on the following day was quite explicit:

> The South Vietnamese people are standing at the forefront of the struggle against US imperialism. [...] It is therefore clear that what attitude one is to take towards the South Vietnamese people's struggle against US imperialism, whether to stand resolutely with them in opposition to the US imperialist aggression or to sit

15. NCNA 18 July 1963 (in SCMP 3024, pp. 29-31).

> idly by and make irresponsible remarks - has become a touchstone as to whether one is a genuine peace-lover or a sham peace-lover, a real revolutionary or a pseudo-revolutionary. It is also a serious test as to whether one truly abides by proletarian internationalism or merely pays lip service to it.[16]

It may be noted that the "touchstone" thus proposed by the CPC was a matter of "attitude", i.e. moral support, rather than action, i.e. the provision of material support, to the South Vietnamese insurgents, although the latter issue was to become a major one some six months later, as we shall see.

Six days after the publication of this editorial, the treaty relating to the partial ban on the testing of nuclear weapons was initialled in Moscow. The treaty was denounced by the PRC in a statement issued on 31 July. The PRC went on to propose, in the same statement, that a conference of all countries in the world should be convened to discuss the prohibition and destruction of nuclear weapons "completely, thoroughly, totally and resolutely".[17] On 2 August, Chou En-lai addressed letters to all heads of government formally embodying the proposals of 31 July.[18] After a brief silence, Nhan Dan on 6 August front-paged an editorial which agreed with Chinese opposition to the treaty.[19] This was followed by a second editorial on 9 August, which stated that the treaty "restricts and hampers the strengthening of the national defence forces of the socialist camp", and that "the US and British

16. SCMP 3026, p. 35.
17. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VI No. 31 (2 August 1963), pp. 7-8.
18. Text in Peking Review, Vol.VI No. 32 (9 August 1963), p. 7.
19. Text in VNA 6 August 1963; the editorial was front-paged in other Hanoi papers on the following day, according to VNA of 7 August.

imperialists are actively using the [...] treaty to pit the Soviet Union and China against each other".[20]

The DRVN position on the treaty was seen by some contemporary observers as indicating a definitive and lasting commitment to the Chinese side. The evidence does not seem to support this interpretation. Premier Pham Van Dong replied to Chou's letter only on 19 August, to state that the DRVN "fully approves" the latter's proposal for a world conference of heads of state.[21] No doubt it was difficult to decline support for such a broad proposal, and the DRVN reply avoided any mention of (and therefore any advance commitment to) the aspects of the proposal other than the fact of holding a meeting. Even if such a meeting later took place, the DRVN would not be committed to a specific outcome. In any case, the delay in the DRVN reply - the North Koreans, for example, had sent their affirmative reply six days earlier - strongly suggests considerable uncertainty (or division) within the DRVN Politburo on how best to respond. It is also relevant to note that an official of the DRVN Ministry of Foreign Affairs reportedly told a French correspondent shortly before the issue arose, that the VNWP leaders were "torn" by the Sino-Soviet conflict, adding:

> It is true that our government agrees with certain Chinese theses, but it also believes that everything must be done to preserve the unity of the socialist camp. It refuses to align itself with either side, or to do or say anything to widen the breach. Instead, in due time, we shall

20. Text in VNA 9 August 1963; excerpts in Peking Review, Vol. VI No. 33 (16 August 1963), pp. 34-35.
21. Text in VNA 20 August 1963; also in Peking Review, Vol. VI No. 43 (23 August 1963), p. 14.

make all possible suggestions to promote a reconciliation [...].[22]

Given that the VNWP was justifying the southern insurgency as a national liberation struggle in opposition to US imperialism, it is difficult to see how the Party could have viewed the test ban treaty other than as a concession to US imperialism, and therefore as an action to be opposed.

Indeed, the editorial of the September 1963 Hoc Tap argued that compared with the USSR's previous stand on proposals for a test-ban treaty, the present document "is a step backward". The Chinese Government proposals were "fully correct and reasonable", and no fair-minded person could believe that "China has become 'warlike' and 'wants to plunge mankind into a nuclear holocaust'".[23] There is no reason to suppose that these comments did not represent the considered opinion of the VNWP, and their tone suggests that they were presented more in sorrow than in anger. But Vietnamese objections to this specific action by the USSR did not amount to a blanket condemnation of all aspects of Soviet policies, nor did it imply a contrary adoption of all aspects of the CPC's criticisms of the CPSU. In any case, the VNWP moved to adjust whatever deviation to its "middle course" strategy had been made necessary, when the Third Central Committee met for its Ninth Plenum three months later.

* * *

By late August 1963, the Buddhist crisis which had broken out in early May threatened to bring the Saigon Government of Ngo

22. "North Vietnam's Dilemma", in Atlas, December 1963, p. 353, citing a report by George Chaffard in Le Monde Diplomatique of 6 September 1963.
23. VNA 26 September 1963.

Dinh Diem to the verge of collapse. On 28 August, Ho Chi Minh issued a statement in which he spoke of the "extremely serious and heart-breaking situation" in South Viet Nam, and he called on foreign peoples and governments "to stay the bloody hands of the US imperialists and the Diem clique, and give stronger support to the just struggle of the South Vietnamese people until they achieve complete victory".[24] It seems likely that this plea for "stronger support" was addressed primarily to the USSR, since the PRC was already expressing its whole-hearted moral support to the insurgents, and the USSR was one of the few states which might be considered sufficiently powerful to bring effective pressures to bear upon the US in order to "stay the bloody hands". In any case, on the following day Mao Tse-tung issued one of his rare statements, commenting also on the situation in south Viet Nam, which was couched in vigorous terms.[25] Ngo Dinh Diem, he said, was a faithful lackey of US imperialism; but when a lackey had outlived his usefulness, the US imperialists would not hesitate to replace him with another. US imperialism had not changed, Mao said:

> Apart from those who are deliberately deceiving the people or are utterly naive, no one will believe that a treaty will make US imperialism lay down its butcher's knife and suddenly become a Buddha, or behave itself a little better. The oppressed people and oppressed nations must not entrust their liberation to the "wisdom" of imperialism and its lackeys. Only by strengthening unity and persevering in

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24. VNA 28 August 1963; also in e.g. Ho Chi Minh, Against US Aggression, For National Salvation (Hanoi: FLPH, 1967), pp. 39, but the date is incorrectly given as 29 August at p. 37.
25. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VI No. 36 (6 September 1963), p. 6.

their struggle will they triumph. This is what the people of southern Viet Nam have been doing.

Mao expressed the Chinese people's firm support for this "just struggle", and expressed his personal conviction that "through this struggle they will certainly attain the goal of liberating the southern part of Viet Nam and contribute to the peaceful unification of their fatherland". Mao's statement indicated that the CPC was giving close attention to the developments in South Viet Nam; the relative importance attached to these events was underlined by Chou En-lai a month later, when the "struggle in South Viet Nam" was mentioned first in a list of twelve "struggles" for which the PRC expressed "resolute support".[26]

In the DRVN, it was announced on 9 October 1963 that the first session of an "International Trade Union Conference for Solidarity with the Workers and People of South Viet Nam" would open in Hanoi on 20 October. (It is not without interest to record that on the same day a meeting was held in Hanoi to commemorate the 530th anniversary of the death of the national hero Le Loi, who had "waged a ten-year war of resistance against the Ming feudal invaders, liberating Viet Nam from foreign domination".[27] Moral support and encouragement from China was to be distinguished from, and subordinated to, the historic basis for Vietnamese patriotic sentiment.) The Conference, which was in session from 20 to 23 October, was another opportunity for the Chinese and Soviet delegations to put forward differing views. However, as the leader of the Chinese delegation later reported, "thanks to the cooperation of all the delegates and to the efforts of Vietnamese comrades in

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26. In his speech on the eve of the PRC National Day: in Peking Review, Vol. VI No. 40 (4 October 1963), p. 6.
27. VNA 10 October 1963.

particular, the meeting accomplished satisfactory results".[28] The Conference adopted a set of rules, and an "Appeal to Workers and Trade Unions of the World".

When Ngo Dinh Diem's government was overthrown on 1 November by military coup, response from Peking and Hanoi was restrained. Renmin Ribao's first comment came in an editorial on 4 November. One US lackey had been removed and another had been put in power, the editorial said, but the situation in South Viet Nam was "greatly favourable to the people there".[29] The NFL issued a statement dated 8 November, setting out six "urgent demands" which included the withdrawal of all US troops and war materials, the implementation of a "genuine and broad democracy", and consultations among South Viet Nam's "political parties" on a ceasefire and other questions in order to form a national union government ready to join with Cambodia and Laos to form a neutral zone in Indo-China.[30] On 2 December, Renmin Ribao's Commentator repeated a Chinese view expressed on 18 October that the US should immediately withdraw its military forces and honour the Geneva Agreements; he judged that the NFL's six demands were in accordance with these Agreements and therefore were "the only correct solution" for South Viet Nam.[31] Commentator made no mention of the NFL's plea for a "neutral zone", and it was unclear whether this concept was at this stage finding support in the CPC.

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28. NCNA 1 November 1963, quoting Liu Chang-sheng (in SCMP 3095 of 6 November 1963, p. 45).
29. NCNA 4 November 1963 (in SCMP 3097 of 8 November 1963, pp. 42-43).
30. First published by VNA on 17 November 1963.
31. NCNA 2 December 1963 (in SCMP 3113 of 5 December 1963, p. 26).

On 20 December, a rally was held in Peking to celebrate the third anniversary of the founding of the NFL. The rally adopted a message of support to the South Vietnamese people and the NFL which stated the conviction that the people of south Viet Nam, "uniting around the /NFL/ and carrying on unremitting struggles with the support of their compatriots in the northern part of Viet Nam and people all over the world", would certainly realize peaceful unification of their motherland.[32] This was a scarcely-veiled plea for a more forward policy on the part of the VNWP towards the southern insurgency. In fact, at about this time, the VNWP-CC was convened for its Ninth Plenum, and was debating the merits of this very issue.

The Chinese had been stressing the need for greater assistance from north Viet Nam to their southern compatriots for two years, from the time of the visit of the PRC military delegation led by Yeh Chien-ying in December 1961. The Chinese point of view appears to have been that the southerners could not hope to achieve decisive victory in the face of the modern weapons being deployed in increasing quantities by the US. In particular, the delivery of a large number of helicopters towards the end of 1962 had given the US advisers and the Saigon authorities a marked degree of superiority in mobility during the ensuing months. These helicopters were used in numbers at the battle for Ap Bac which commenced on 2 January 1963; the South Vietnamese government troops were routed, and the PLAF claimed a great victory on this occasion, yet it was clear that the communist leaders were concerned at the new development.

32. NCNA 20 December 1963 (in SCMP 3127 of 27 December 1963, p. 46). Emphasis added.

At the same time, the US military presence in South Viet Nam was continuing apace. In his 13 March 1963 speech, Le Duan urged a greater DRVN involvement in the south: "We cannot separate the socialist construction in North Viet Nam", he said, "from the efforts to support actively the national-liberation movements";[33] and although he argued that the southern compatriots "are strong enough to defeat US imperialism and its lackeys and carry the revolution to complete victory",[34] he nevertheless concluded his speech by urging (with reference to the southerners) that "We should all [...] give them powerful support".[35] A Chinese Commentary of 20 March repeated the prescription put forth by Peng Chen five months previously, that the South Vietnamese people would surely drive out the US, under the conditions that they were "closely united under the banner of the [NFL], relying on their own strength and with the support of their compatriots in the north and the peaceloving people of the world".[36] Following the visit to the DRVN of Liu Shao-chi, General Nguyen Chi Thanh - a VNWP-CC Politburo member - published an analysis of the situation in South Viet Nam in Hoc Tap which was immediately reprinted in the Renmin Ribao; he argued that the VNWP had "formulated a correct line of strategy and tactics" for the south, and he made a strong plea for greater DRVN support for the southerners, even though he assessed that the movement there "has yet to undergo many years of hard struggle before winning final victory".[37] In particular, the General summarised the line and

33. Le Duan, op. cit., p. 112.
34. Ibid., p. 120.
35. Ibid., p. 121.
36. NCNA 20 March 1963 (in SCMP 2944 of 22 March 1963, p. 31).
37. Nguyen Chi Thanh, Who Will Win in South Viet Nam? (Peking: FLP, 1963); reprinted in Renmin Ribao of 18 July 1963.

strategy for the south in a manner which confirmed VNWP strategic guidance of the southern revolution, making explicit that which Le Duan in his political report to the VNWP Third Congress had left ambiguous:

> A powerful North Viet Nam will be a decisive factor in the social development of our entire country. But this does not mean that simply because the North is strong, the revolutionary movement in the South will automatically succeed. [Both factors] are mutually complementary and must be closely co-ordinated [...]. If [...] we [had] called on the people in South Viet Nam to "wait" and "coexist peacefully" with the US-Diem clique, [we would have] committed an irreparable error. We have correctly handled the relations between North and South Viet Nam. [...]
>
> To overthrow the US-Diem clique and win victory for the revolution, South Viet Nam must:
>
> - be led by a Marxist-Leninist party;
> - have a broad national united front, based on a worker-peasant alliance, and with all the component forces concentrated and directed against the main enemy - the US-Diem clique;
> - have a strong political force and a determined armed force;
> - emply such tactics which serve to isolate the main enemy to the greatest extent possible, and take advantage of the enemy's inner contradictions to strengthen its own forces and weaken the enemy forces.[38]

38. Ibid., pp. 8-10 passim.

The PRC Foreign Ministry, in its statement of 18 July, had said that it was "a matter of course for the people of northern Viet Nam to support the struggle of their fellow countrymen in the south".[39] An article in the September Hoc Tap, reprinted in Renmin Ribao on 25 September, took a militant but curiously defensive tone: taking as its text the Marxist saw that violence "is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one", it attacked the "modern revisionists and Right opportunists" for their feeble support for revolution. As if to meet private criticism of the South Vietnamese adventure, the author argued:[40]

> Communists start an armed uprising only when the opportunity is ripe and when subjective and objective conditions are completely ready, and once it has started they intend to carry it through to the finish. [...] History has proved that the extremely heavy losses suffered by the working people from the brutal rule of the exploiting classes cannot be matched by the losses of a revolution, however relentless it may be.

The same issue of Hoc Tap also carried an article "Man and Weapons", by Lt.- Gen. Hoang Van Thai, Deputy Chief of Staff of PAVN, which in its turn was reprinted by Renmin Ribao (on 18 November).[41] The author is making a plea for the supply of modern weapons from abroad, and it is clear that he is speaking for the southern insurectionists as well as for PAVN:

> The equipment in weapons for our army must be improved on

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39. See footnote 15.
40. The article was not published by VNA, but it was printed in English translation as a pamphlet in Peking, Peace or Violence (Peking: FLP, 1963). The quotation is from pp. 13 and 32.
41. The text was published in Peking Review, Vol. VI No. 42 (18 October 1963), pp. 17-24, and also as "Man And Weapons" in On the Problem of War and Peace (Hanoi: FLPH, 1964), pp. 95-118. The quotation is from the latter source, at pp. 105 and 111.

> in keeping with the trend of modernization. We know that we have won with primitive weapons and will win with those weapons, but better weapons will also create material conditions for vigourously bracing up the combativeness of our army to defeat the enemy. [...] if we want to have whatever modern weapons the enemy has we will run against an insuperable obstacle because the present state of our national industry will not allow it for a rather long period of time [...].

He is also critical of impatience and of the tendency to "win great victories and learn transcendant things unsuited to the level of organization and equipment",[42] presumably to combat false optimism in the south.

Thus the Chinese recommendation that the DRVN give greater support to the southern insurgents was, identifiably by mid-March 1963 but very much more clearly by September 1963, supported by prominent personalities within the leadership of the VNWP. Yet evidently there were those within the VNWP who opposed such a move, since no decision to extend such support - in particular, to seek substantially increased quantities of advanced weapons from abroad - had yet been taken. The Chinese also, in addition to proposing increased direct involvement in the prosecution of the insurgency, were concerned to give their own advice to the DRVN on the strategy which they considered best suited the goals of the NFL. Renmin Ribao on 31 July 1963 had printed an article by Kao Ko entitled "The Victorious Road of National-Liberation War". Although the occasion for publication was the 25th anniversary of

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42. Ibid., p. 114.

publication of Mao Tse-tung's article "On Protracted War", the ideas reviewed by Kao Ko were clearly intended to have contemporary significance; indeed, the penultimate paragraph summarizes the "glorious road for a national-liberation war" pointed out by Mao, and the final sentence pronounces: "This is the Marxist-Leninist road and the fundamental road to victory in national-liberation war". The article was published in translation in Peking Review in mid-November 1963,[43] but with no indication of its source. Kao Ko gave a summary of Mao's thinking, stressing the need to mobilise the masses, to establish a worker-peasant alliance and build a broad united front on this basis in order to isolate the main enemy:

> and it is essential to employ flexible strategy and tactics taking the peasantry as the main force, the rural base areas as their supports and the people's armies as the mainstay, thus broadly developing anti-imperialist guerilla warfare as well as gradually raising guerilla warfare to regular warfare and finally winning victory.

Comparing this prescription with the laudatory comments on FNL tactics as expressed in Renmin Ribao's editorial of 20 December 1963 marking the NFL founding anniversary, it appears that the Chinese at this time fully approved the strategy and tactics of the PLAF, with one exception: the Chinese, like General Hoang Van Thai, probably considered that the time was not yet ripe to move from guerilla to higher forms of warfare, since they did not cease

43. Vol. VI No. 46 (15 November1963), pp. 6-14; the quote that follows is at p. 14.

references to the likelihood of a protracted struggle before final victory.

In this general context, with strong pressures from the Chinese and from leading members of the VNWP to adopt a more militant stance in support of the southern insurgents, and with resumed and bitter Sino-Soviet polemics inviting a reassessment of the VNWP ideological position, the VNWP's Third Central Committee convened its Ninth Plenum. The VNA published a communique on the Plenum only on 20 January 1964, stating that the meeting had been held in December 1963 "to discuss the international situation and the Party's international tasks".[44] A substantial portion of an address to the Plenum by Le Duan was not published until two months later;[45] and the texts of the Plenum's two major resolutions were published in Saigon only in 1971 after coming into the hands of the Americans.[46] The latter resolutions confirmed and elaborated what was evident from the published communique. The Plenum decided to move the VNWP once again onto an unambiguous "independent" ideological path between the theses of the CPSU and the CPC, although with a bias towards aspects of the CPC's militant position; and it also decided to extend military support to the southern PLAF.

Le Duan revealed that, at the time of his speech, the Plenum had already been meeting "for more than ten days", thus indicating

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44. Published as a pamphlet, together with Nhan Dan's 21 January 1964 editorial comment, as Communique of the Ninth Session of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party (Hanoi: FLPH, 1964).
45. VNA 11 April 1964; also as "Some Problems Concerning the International Tasks of Our Party" in Le Duan, On Some Present International Problems (Hanoi: FLPH, 1964), pp. 125-182.
46. Texts in Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes (Saigon: US Mission), No. 96 (July 1971) and No. 98 (September 1971).

that considerable debate had been going on presumably to reconcile divergent views. The relevance of the Chinese model was stressed in a much-quoted passage:[47]

> If in the past Lenin said that Russia's revolutionary tactics were exemplary tactics for all communists in the world, today we can also say that China's revolutionary tactics are exemplary tactics for many communists in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Towards the end of his speech, he proposes a more precise evaluation of Chinese and Soviet roles in the Vietnamese revolution:[48]

> The Soviet Union's support and help to our people's resistance war, and its role as Co-Chairman of the 1954 Geneva Conference greatly contributed to the success of the resistance war [...]. Since the restoration of peace, the Soviet Union has helped our people in every field in the socialist construction in the North, and warmly supported the patriotic struggle of our southern compatriots. [...] The [...] inestimable help of the Chinese people to our people's resistance war made an extremely important contribution to the success of the resistance war. Since the restoration of peace [...], China has constantly helped our people in their socialist construction in the North and wholeheartedly supported the revolutionary struggle of our compatriots in the South.

These nuances clearly indicate greater appreciation for the Chinese support and assistance. Nevertheless, the VNWP still sought to

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47. Le Duan, "Some Problems [...]", op. cit., p. 138.
48. Ibid., pp. 181, 182.

preserve an independent line, and to avoid all-out commitment to either the CPC or the CPSU. On the current polemics, Le Duan said that the VNWP's attitude was:

> first, to unambiguously speak the truth, lay bare the view-points of modern revisionism; second, to strive to strengthen the unity of the socialist camp and the international communist movement, especially the solidarity between the Soviet Union and China.[49]

The Plenum's public communique assessed that the goal of the international communist movement was still the overthrow of imperialism, that the struggle against revisionism ("the main danger") and against dogmatism must be pursued "if we are to restore and strengthen the unity of the socialist camp", and that the VNWP "defends the [CPSU], the [CPC] and the other fraternal parties". The apparent difficulty of professing support for both the major parties was overcome by the device of making the Yugoslav party a scapegoat:

> Our Party draws a clear political distinction between the Tito revisionist clique [...] and people within the international Communist movement who commit the error of revisionism or right-wing dogmatism.[50]

The VNWP's attitude towards the first group was "to expose and oppose them consistently"; towards the second (i.e., towards the leaders of both the CPSU and the CPC), "to struggle for the sake of unity and to achieve greater unity through struggle"[51] - itself an adaptation of the CPC's slogan for rectification within the

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49. Ibid., p. 180.
50. Op. cit., p. 9.
51. Ibid.

party. The communique said that the VNWP "earnestly wishes that the [CPSU] and the [CPC] continue talks to achieve solidarity and to create good conditions for the convening of the Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties".[52]

The second major decision of the Plenum was to adopt a more militant attitude towards the revolution in the south. This fact was hidden among a series of measures elaborated as "urgent work [to] be carried out":

> to extend active support to the patriotic struggle of our South Vietnamese compatriots [...].[53]

The captured text of "Central's resolution concerning the South" was marked "top secret", and like the "Crimp" document the resolution presented a detailed analysis of the Party's "present situation and tasks". The resolution reaffirmed that the Fifteenth Plenum of the VNWP's Second Central Committee (January 1959) and the VNWP's Third Congress (September 1960) had "clearly set forth the policy for the Revolution in the South and the struggle guideline designed to win victory". The general guideline for the people's revolutionary war in south Viet Nam was "to conduct a protracted war, relying mainly on our own forces, and to combine political struggle and armed struggle in accordance with each area and time. [...] We need time and efforts to overcome many difficulties and hardships in order to tip the balance of power [...] in our favour."[54] The present key task of the insurrectionists was: "to make outstanding efforts to rapidly strengthen our military forces in order to create a basic change in the balance of forces between the enemy

52. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
53. Ibid., p. 11.
54. Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes, No. 96 (op. cit.) p. 13. Emphasis in source.

and us in South Viet Nam".[55] The practical goal of the armed struggle was "to destroy and disintegrate the lackey government's army";[56] politically, it was necessary to "strive to consolidate and broaden the Liberation Front of South Viet Nam based on the worker-peasant alliance and led by the Party, so as to give it the ability to motivate the people on a wider scale, to accomplish its new political missions prescribed by the Party, and to assume part of the responsibilities as a revolutionary administration in the liberated areas".[57]

The resolution insisted that while "it is time for the North to increase aid to the South", it was still necessary to "confine this war within South Viet Nam", even though "we should be prepared to cope with the eventuality of the expansion of the war into North Viet Nam".[58] The nature of the increased aid proposed was not detailed.

Nhan Dan's editorial of 21 January 1964 supported the communique of the previous day and stressed the close connection and mutual influence of the struggle for peace and the revolutionary struggle.[59] Both the communique and the editorial were reprinted in full in Renmin Ribao on 23 and 25 January respectively, thereby suggesting the CPC's approval of the decisions taken. The nature of the proposed increased aid to the South Vietnamese communists was not detailed either in the public documents of the Plenum or in the "Resolution concerning the South"; however, an important component of military aid - modern weaponry to match that used by the Saigon

55. Ibid., p. 15; emphasis in source.
56. Ibid., p. 17; emphasis in source.
57. Ibid., p. 30; emphasis in source.
58. Ibid., p. 40.
59. Communique of the Ninth Session [...]. op. cit., p. 20.

government forces and by their American advisers - would have to come from abroad, since as General Hoang Van Thai had said "the present state of [the DRVN] industry will not allow it for a rather long period of time". When it was announced on 28 January[60] that a VNWP delegation led by Le Duan had arrived in Peking en route to the USSR "at the invitation of the CPSU-CC", it seemed likely that a major purpose of his visit was to secure increased Soviet military assistance. While in Peking, the delegation was received by Mao Tse-tung (on 30 January) for a "cordial talk";[61] no further details were released, but the fact of the meeting suggested that the Chinese were placing considerable importance on - and would be closely watching the results of - Le Duan's mission.

Le Duan arrived in Moscow on 31 January and left for home on 10 February via Peking (where the delegation stayed two days and was received by Liu Shao-chi). The CPC apparently failed to send a message to greet the 34th anniversary of the ICP-VNWP (3 February), perhaps from a sense of caution until the results of the Moscow visit had been established, but Renmin Ribao on 5 February did reprint the Nhan Dan article on the anniversary. The limited coverage of the VNWP delegation's visit by the TASS News Agency, and the brief CPSU-VNWP communique issued by VNA on 15 February, implied that the Soviet Union had declined to agree to extend greater aid and more sophisticated weaponry to the Vietnamese side; the CPSU leaders no doubt calculated that to do so at this juncture would not only raise the possibility of worsening US-USSR relations but would also give encouragement to the militant CPC opinions

60. NCNA 28 January 1964 (in SCMP 3151 of 31 January 1964, p. 33).
61. NCNA 30 January 1964 (in SCMP 3153 of 4 February, p. 32)

concerning the way in which the South Vietnamese conflict should be developed.

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Whatever disappointment the VNWP leaders may have felt as a result of this rebuff was not made public, but the effect to draw the VNWP closer to the views of the CPC, although still avoiding a complete identification to the exclusion of the CPSU's position. The CPC found satisfaction in this trend. An article by Hong Chuong in the January 1964 issue of Hoc Tap on the question of war and peace,[62] and which cited Lenin extensively in opposition to views held by the CPSU (although without naming the CPSU), was reprinted by Renmin Ribao on 25 March. On the previous day, the Chinese newspaper had published an article on "The Correct Road to Defend World Peace" from the same Vietnamese source;[63] this article closely paralleled the CPC line.

On 21 April, the VNWP issued yet another letter[64] to all fraternal parties, expressing concern at the "increasingly serious developments" "menacing the solidarity and unity of the socialist camp", and renewing its earlier proposals for an international conference to resolve the differences. On this occasion, the VNWP proposed a resumption of talks by the CPC and the CPSU, and the holding of a smaller preparatory conference to "make adequate preparations for the documents" of a larger conference of Communist and Workers' Parties. Renmin Ribao printed the text of this letter on 4 May, but a week earlier it had also reprinted the report

62. "Some Viewpoints on War and Peace", in On the Problem of War and Peace (op. cit.), pp. 61-93.
63. Text published by VNA on 20 March 1964.
64. VNA 29 April 1964; text also in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 19 (8 May 1964), p. 34.

of 14 February by Mikhai Suslov to the CPSU-CC which bitterly attacked the CPC,[65] the CPSU-CC's 15 February resolution which stated that "the vital interests of the world socialist system [...] call[s] for an ideological exposure of the anti-Leninist position of the CPC leadership and for a resolute rebuff to their splitting activities",[66] and Pravda's 3 April editorial.[67] The editorial outlined exchanges during preceding months between the CPSU and the CPC, and announced that the February documents were being published in the same issue of Pravda as a direct response to the CPC's publication on 31 March of the "Eight Comment on the Open Letter of the CPSU", entitled "The Proletarian Revolution and Khrushchov's Revisionism". Since the latter article was largely composed of a personal attack upon Khruschov, and since Pravda judged it to be "from the very beginning to the end [...] a most vile insult to our Party and the entire Soviet people,"[68] it was predictable that the VNWP's attempted mediation was unlikely to be successful. After a further exchange of letters between the CPC and the CPSU, which were for the most part made public by the opposing sides, the CPSU on 30 July extended an invitation to 26 Parties to meet in Moscow by 15 December 1964,[69] to constitute a preparatory committee for an international meeting. The CPC and the VNWP were included among the invitees; but events, especially the removal of Khrushchov from power, intervened to postpone the proposed preparatory meeting until March 1965. By that time,

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65. "Struggle of the CPSU for Unity of the International Communist Movement", in the pamphlet of the same title (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 7-104.
66. Ibid., pp. 3-6; the quotation is at p. 5.
67. Ibid., pp. 105-110.
68. Ibid., p. 108.
69. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 36 (4 September 1964), pp. 6-7.

Sino-Soviet relations had deteriorated to such an extent that the meeting itself was merely a formality and neither the VNWP nor the CPC attended.

Some time between the end of the Ninth Plenum of the VNWP-CC and early April 1964, the VNWP must have taken a decision to prepare units of the PAVN to exfiltrate to South Viet Nam, since at least some PAVN soldiers subsequently captured in South Viet Nam have said that their training for this mission commenced in April 1964.[70] This may have represented the first step in implementation of a contingency plan to stiffen the southern PLAF in response to continuing escalation of the US military presence in South Viet Nam; of course, the start of the training programme was not necessarily indicative of a firm commitment at that time to execute any such plan. The flare-up of fighting in Laos after early May probably involved an increase in the PAVN presence there, although this is not clear from the available documents; in any case, the first regular unit of the PAVN to enter South Viet Nam arrived there in December 1964 via Laos, after departing the DRVN in October.[71] It is possible (although on balance it seems unlikely) that the events in the Tongking Gulf during the first part of August may have precipitated a decision to immediately deploy soldiers into South Viet Nam.

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Despite the expressed desire of the VNWP to limit warfare to South Viet Nam, the possibility of US retaliation on the DRVN territory grew during first half of 1964. On 1 February, President

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70. US Department of State, Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Viet Nam (Saigon, mimeographed, May 1968), p. 27 and Item 86 of the Appendix to this document.
71. Ibid., Table III.

Johnson had told a Press Conference that he thought that "the operations should be stepped up there" (i.e. in South Viet Nam); in a speech on 21 February, he warned "those engaged in external direction and supply" of the PLAF that this activity "is a deeply dangerous game"; on 8 March, US Defence Secretary McNamara paid his fourth visit to Saiton and on his return told a Washington meeting that the situation had "unquestionably worsened, at least since last fall". On 24 April, McNamara told a news conference that the Administration had been forced to give up plans for withdrawing US military personnel from Viet Nam by the end of 1965. All of these comments were on the public record, and available to the VNWP. In addition, as the "Pentagon Papers" reveal a covert series of military operations against the DRVN - mounted by South Vietnamese and other Asians, but subject to approval in Washington - had commenced on 1 February under the code name Operation Plan 34A;[72] and on 17 March the US National Security Council had approved the preparation of contingency plans which included bombing strikes against the DRVN by the South Vietnamese with convert US assistance, although President Johnson did not at this time propose to implement the plans.[73]

The VNWP leaders seemed concerned, during the first half of 1964, to demonstrate to the US that the Vietnamese were not isolated from the world socialist camp: thus Nhan Dan on 11 February warned that if the DRVN was attacked, the US would have to fight "not only with North Viet Nam but also with China",[74] and Ho Chi

72. The New York Times, The Pentagon Papers (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 235.
73. Ibid., pp. 242 -245.
74. VNA 11 February 1964.

Minh told the DRVN's first (and to date only) meeting of the Special Political Conference on 27 March that the US "must understand that should they rashly venture to touch on the North, they would certainly sustain a shameful defeat [...] because our whole people will resolutely fight back, because the socialist countries and progressive peoples the world over will unreservedly support us [...]".[75] Yet in view of the intensification of CPSU-CPC polemics during April, the possibility of "united action" by the PRC and the USSR in such an eventuality must have seemed distinctly problematical to the VNWP.

For its part, the CPC displayed no such concern about the possibility of a US encroachment on North Viet Nam. An editorial in Renmin Ribao for 4 March had hailed the recent "successive major victories" credited to the PLAF. "South Viet Nam being a 'testing ground' for US 'special war', "the editorial said, "if the experiment fails there it can hardly hope for success in other areas either":

> In countries and places suffering from US aggression, so long as the people [...] dare to struggle, and are adept at struggling, they can always defeat the enemy. In this sense, the victory of the South Vietnamese people has universal significance.[76]

Noting that voices were being raised in the US favouring extension of the war to the DRVN, the editorial went on:

> Muddle-headed gentlemen! It is easier said than done; you see things too simple! [...] If the US aggressor,

75. VNA 27 March 1964.
76. Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 10 (6 March 1964), p. 24.

> already knee-deep in South Viet Nam quicksand, should try to lay his hands elsewhere, will he achieve anything better?[77]

Two months later, on 7 May, Renmin Ribao's editorial celebrating the 10th anniversary of Dien Bien Phu stated that if the Johnson Administration insisted on going its own way, then "the result can only be another Dien Bien Phu". The people of Viet Nam had proved, said the editorial, that: "In face of armed aggression and armed repression by the imperialists, [...] all oppressed nations striving for independence and liberation [...] can oppose armed counter-revolution only by armed revolution".[78]

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From early May until the end of July 1964, the Chinese expressed first concern and then an evident mounting alarm over the deteriorating situations in Laos and in South Viet Nam. In Laos, tension had been aggravated by a rightist coup on 19 April which deposed Premier Souvanna Phouma; although Phouma was re-installed in office on 2 May, fighting between the various Lao factions had begun, and continued during the following weeks. PRC Foreign Minister Chen Yi took the view that the US had encouraged and supported the rightists with the aim of instigating a civil war in Laos "in support of its plan of extending its aggressive war in southern Viet Nam". If the status quo ante was not established, he wrote on 13 May in a message to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference, then the PRC would ask them seriously to consider reconvening the Geneva Conference "so that the countries

77. Ibid., p. 26.
78. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 20 (15 May 1964), pp. 17-19.

concerned could jointly discuss the ways and methods to eliminate the tension in Laos and Indo-China".[79] This view was supported by Renmin Ribao on 18 May in an editorial which characterised the situation in Indo-China as "extremely grave".[80]

In a letter of 26 May addressed to the Co-Chairmen, Chen Yi stated that it had become "imperative and urgent" to arrange a new conference, "in order first to save Laos from [the present] ominous situation".[81] Renmin Ribao's 29 May editorial stressed that the Lao question was "not an isolated one", since it was "part of the US plan of aggression against all of Indo-China": but it was "the most urgent" question.[82] In a further letter of the Co-Chairmen on 13 June, Chen Yi insisted that the Conference "must not be put off any longer", otherwise "not only will it be impossible to restore peace in Laos, but there is the danger that the flames of war in Indo-China may spread";[83] six days later he said that the people of the world were watching the US to see "whether it will rein in before the brink of the precipice";[84] the warning was further escalated on 24 June, when he said that China's advocacy of the convening of the Geneva Conference should not be mistaken for a sign of weakness.[85]

From about the end of June, the Laos crisis was replaced by the situation in Viet Nam as the centre of China's concern. The PRC comments concerning Laos in May and June had exhibited what

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79. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 20 (15 May 1964) pp. 10-11.
80. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 21 (22 May 1964), pp. 8-9.
81. Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 22 (29 May 1964), p. 5.
82. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 23, at p. 13.
83. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 25 (19 June 1964), at p. 8.
84. NCNA 19 June 1964 (in SCMP 3245 of 24 June, p. 34).
85. NCNA 24 June 1964 (in SCMP 3248 of 29 June, p. 26).

seemed to be genuine mounting concern, that action by the US in Laos - particularly aerial bombardment - might get out of hand and force some direct confrontation between the military forces of the two countries on Lao soil, perhaps somewhat along the Korean pattern. At what stage the PRC might have considered that it had no alternative but to intervene militarily remains a matter for speculation, since the event was avoided; but US planes intruded on a number of occasions over Yunnan Province, whether by accident or by design, and a belligerent PRC could well have chosen these incidents as a causus belli. Another point that deserves attention is that the PRC looked at the increase of tension in Laos as an integral part of "the Indo-China problem", implying that a permanent political solution to the causes of tension in one of the states of Indo-China was not possible unless the causes of tension in the other states were also resolved. A third point of interest is that the PRC seems to have been much more concerned about US activity in Laos during this period than was the DRVN. This is partly illustrated by their separate reactions to the bombings of Khang Khay. Chen Yi's main purpose in writing to the Co-Chairmen on 13 June was to lodge a complaint that US fighter-bombers had bombed and strafed the Chinese economic and cultural mission at Khang Khay (in Pathet-Lao held Laos), causing the death of a Chinese staff member. DRVN Foreign Minister Xuan Thuy on 16 June informed Chen Yi of the DRVN's strong condemnation of the bombing, and expressed strong support for a reconvened Geneva Conference.[86] Up to this point, there had been no reference in either Chinese or

86. NCNA 17 June 1964 (in SCMP 3243, pp. 25-26).

DRVN media of the fact that the DRVN also had representatives at Khang Khay and that their offices had also been bombed; this was revealed by publication of Chen Yi's reply to Xuan Thuy, in which the PRC Foreign Minister drew the conclusion that the bombing was "an open provocation against the people of Laos, China and Viet Nam".[87] On 23 June the DRVN Foreign Ministry issued a statement strongly condemning the bombing and stating (for the first time from the DRVN side) that its mission had been bombed along with that of the Chinese.[88] The 27 June editorial of Renmin Ribao said that the bombing had "posed a direct threat" to the DRVN, and that the act was a "bare-faced war provocation against Viet Nam and China".[89] The 10-day delay in the DRVN's official response to this incident, and the initial silence over the involvement of the DRVN Mission, suggests that the DRVN was either embarrassed or uncertain how to react. The tone of the Chinese commentaries and messages concerning this incident suggest that the PRC was concerned to draw a more vigorous DRVN response to the US activities in Laos than had been evident prior to Chen Yi's 13 June letter. It is noteworthy that the PRC felt obliged to take the initiative, and to inform the DRVN that the bombing constituted a threat to the security of the DRVN. A final point of importance at this stage is that the DRVN purported to have a strategic concern for events in Laos which could be distinguished from the insurgency which the VNWP was guiding in south Viet-Nam. Premier Pham Van Dong told the first session of the DRVN's National Assembly, Third Legislature, on 27 June 1964 that

87. NCNA 18 June 1964 (in SCMP 3244, p. 33).
88. VNA 24 June 1964.
89. In SCMP 3250 of 2 July, p. 39.

> we are greatly concerned about the western border of our country: only with a peaceful and neutral Laos [...] can the western border of our country be safe, a point which we greatly desire [...]. But the US imperialists have sought every means and used every trick to intervene in Laos, in an attempt to turn it into a US military base from which they will encroach upon the Laos-Viet Nam frontier and permanently and directly threaten the security of our country from the west.[90]

This viewpoint was consistent with that expressed in the "Crimp" document more than a year earlier:

> The mountain areas [...] along with Lower Laos in [sic] a strategic military area vital to all of South Viet Nam and all of Indo-China. This area is a solid base of the South Viet Nam revolution through which communication with North Viet Nam is maintained. [...] In this area we are able to endure a prolonged struggle against the enemy even under the most difficult of circumstances [...]. The enemy is also aware of this vital area [...] If we allow the enemy to consolidate and expand his control in this area not only would our [bases] be reduced and destroyed in this area but the enemy could use the area as a means to divide and isolate the South Viet Nam from North Viet Nam [...] and oppress Lower Laos [...].[91]

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90. Some Documents of the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (Hanoi: FLPH, 1964), p. 77.
91. US Department of State, Working Paper [.../], op. cit., Appendix, Item 301, page 31.

The concept and practice of maintaining Laos as a neutral buffer state between the competing and expanding Vietnamese and Thai kingdoms during the nineteenth century had been well recognised at that time: it had also received acceptance by the PRC at the Geneva Conference on Laos. However, it is true that the DRVN had been sending cadres to South Viet Nam via Lao territory, and therefore had ulterior motives for expressing concern about any US military presence in lower Laos in particular Pham Van Dong's comment could also be used to justify a DRVN military presence in Laos, if it became necessary to publicly acknowledge the face, on the grounds that DRVN security was threatened by the US presence in Laos.

The DRVN welcomed the proposal that the 14-nation Geneva Conference on Laos should be reconvened, because, as Pham Van Dong told the National Assembly, it would take place "under new historical conditions in which the Laotian people's forces have grown stronger than before, and for that reason their successes will be further consolidated".[92]

In its editorial of 1 July, Renmin Ribao noted growing advocacy within the US of extension of hostilities to the DRVN and the PRC, and asked US policy makers

> What is your intention?
>
> Do you hope to cow the Chinese people by force of arms? [...]
>
> Do you intend to embark on an adventure such as extending the war? We would like to ask the US rulers: have you pondered carefully what consequences such an adventure would bring about?[93]

92. Some Documents [...], op. cit., p. 78.
93. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 27 (3 July 1964), p. 9.

This followed the despatch on 25 June of a Note by the DRVN Foreign Minister to the Co-Chairmen and signatory states of the Geneva Conference drawing attention to the "present grave situation" in south Viet Nam.[94] PRC Foreign Minister Chen Yi replied on 6 July that the Chinese people "cannot be expected to look on with folded arms in the face of any aggression aginst the DRVN".[95] Renmin Ribao's 9 July editorial stated that a US attack on the DRVN would be considered as "threatening the peace and security of China". "The Chinese people have always maintained that to uphold the peace and security of the whole socialist camp, to protect each of its members from imperialist encroachment and to defend the socialist camp is the inescapable duty of all socialist countries", the editorial also said.[96] A PRC Government statement issued on 19 July to mark the tenth anniversary of the Geneva accords was couched in stronger terms:

> [...] China has exercised the utmost self-restraint. Since China has signed the Geneva agreements, it abides by them in good faith. Despite the fact that the United States has introduced tens of thousands of its military personnel into southern Viet Nam and Laos, China has not sent a single soldier to Indo-China. However, there is a limit to everything. The United States would be wrong if it should think that it can do whatever it pleases in Viet Nam and Indo-China with impunity.[97]

This was in fact the strongest statement concerning Indo-China which

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94. VNA 26 June 1964.
95. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 28, p. 24.
96. Text in ibid., p. 25.
97. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 30 (24 July 1964), pp. 5-6; the quotation is from p. 6.

the PRC had made during the past ten years. Nevertheless, despite the clear threat that Chinese soldiers might intervene, the statement as a whole was couched in restrained and measured terms; and its value as an indication of the true intentions of the Chinese leaders seemed lessened by the fact that only some 10,000 people attended a rally in Peking on the following day in support of the Vietnamese people, when the rally was described as the "climax" of nationwide activities of a "week of common struggle" against the US.[98] There was also no suggestion that a unilateral decision by the CPC to send soldiers to Indo-China would have been welcomed by the VNWP. Further, the Peking rally's message to the Vietnamese people said that the Chinese people could not be expected to look on with folded arms "in the event of any invasion" of the DRVN,[99] suggesting that the Chinese leaders' primary concern was to deter any US ground combat forces from being deployed in the DRVN. An invasion would be aggression, but there were also other forms of aggression, especially including bombing, since the US air superiority in Indo-China was clearly evident.

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President Johnson's 23 June announcement of the appointment of General Maxwell Taylor, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to be US Ambassador to Saigon may well have been a major reason for the increased concern expressed by Peking and Hanoi towards the Viet Nam issue. In Saigon on 19 July, the South Vietnamese Premier Nguyen Khanh asserted that the Vietnamese people had "called for the war to be carried to the north", and that his government "cannot

98. Ibid., p. 6.
99. Ibid., p. 8.

remain indifferent before the firm determination of all the people who are considering the push northward as an appropriate means to fulfill our national history".

On 30 July, the CPC made public its letter of 28 July to the CPSU-CC, in which it stated that it would "never take part in any international meeting, or any preparatory meeting for it, which you call for the purpose of splitting the international communist movement".[100] This new evidence of impasse between the two parties followed a deterioration in relations between the states on the Laos question. In a note sent by the USSR to the participants in the 14-nation Geneva Conference on Laos, the USSR expressed the wish to "consider as a whole the question of the possibility of the Soviet Union discharging the functions of Co-Chairman"[101] - i.e., that the USSR would not be reluctant to relinquish this role. The PRC Foreign Ministry had received this Note on 25 July, and on 2 August it published its reply without failing to hide its exasperation. The Soviet Government should "truly shoulder its responsibilities as a Co-Chairman", the PRC said; in particular, the USSR should "use its capacity and influence" to "persuade the United States to give up its unreasonable preconditions" for the proposed 14-nation conference.[102]

The 37th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese PLA (1 August 1964) was marked by a reception in Peking given by Vice-Premier and Chief of General Staff Lo Jui-ching at which he addressed the US and warned that if they "dare to extend the war

100. NCNA 30 July 1964 (in SCMP 3272 of 5 August 1964, pp. 20-29).
101. Quoted in the PRC Government reply Note of 2 August: text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 32, 7 August 1964, p. 22.
102. Ibid., p. 22.

further", then "your claws stretching into Southeast Asia will be chopped off"; the PLA, he declared, was standing ready at all times to "deal a crushing blow to the aggressors".[103] On the following day, the USS Maddox was attacked by three DRVN torpedo boats while patrolling in the Gulf of Tonking. On the evening of 4 August, the USS Maddox and Turner Joy, also patrolling in the Gulf, opened fire on unidentified approaching craft "when it was evident from their manoeuvres that they were pressing in for attack positions".[104] When intelligence reached Washington in apparent confirmation of the attacks, aircraft of the US Seventh Fleet were ordered to attack DRVN motor torpedo boat and gunboat facilities at first light on the morning of 5 August, which they did.[105] Both the DRVN and the PRC issued statements only on 6 August, and both Governments claimed that the second "incident" had not in fact occurred. The PRC statement declared that the DRVN had "gained the right of action to fight against aggression", and that "all countries upholding the Geneva agreements" had gained the right of action to "assist" the DRVN. "Aggression by the United States against the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam means aggression against China", the statement said: "The Chinese people will absolutely not sit idly by without lending a helping hand".[106] Observers speculated in the Western press that this assistance to the DRVN might take the form of the movement of PLA units into Laos and into the DRVN; but the Renmin

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103. NCNA 1 August 1964 (in SCMP 3273 of 6 August 1964, pp. 1-3).
104. From testimony on 20 February 1968 of Robert S. McNamara, in US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, The Gulf of Tonkin, the 1964 Incidents (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1968), pp. 15-16. See also U.S.G. Sharp and W.C. Westmoreland, Report on the War in Vietnam (Washington: US Government Printing Office, April 1969), p.12.
105. Report on the War /...7, op. cit., p. 12.
106. The text of both statements was carried by VNA on 6 August 1964.

Ribao editorial of the same day indicated that this was unlikely at least for the present. If the US dared to continue their armed aggression against the DRVN, the editorial said, then the would "inevitably receive due punishment at the hands of the heroic Vietnamese people".[107] This cautious position was confirmed during the following days, when extensive demonstrations of support were organised throughout China; in particular, at a 100,000-man rally in Peking on 9 August, the principal speaker stressed that while the Chinese people were "determined by practical deeds to volunteer aid to the Vietnamese people", nevertheless they firmly believed that the Vietnamese people would surely destroy the aggressors "on their own soil".[108] Thus, there appeared to be no question of direct Chinese military intervention as a result of the 4 August incident and its sequel.

The immediate material effect for the DRVN was the supply of jet fighters from China by 7 August,[109] and in the opinion of at least one observer, the 4 August incident was staged with precisely this goal in mind.[110] The motivation for the incident remains unclear. Another observer judges that the attack was the result of a deliberate DRVN policy decision, involving a miscalculation of the intentions of the US, "in the hope that a successful torpedo attack would have made the United States halt its gradually but steadily mounting military effort".[111] On balance, it seems probable

107. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 32 (7 August 1964), Supplement, at p. iv.
108. See the text of the speech by Liao Cheng-chih in ibid., at p. 11.
109. Report on the War /...7, op. cit., p. 13.
110. Harold C. Hinton, Communist China in World Politics (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), pp. 365-366.
111. Fred Greene, U.S. Policy and the Security of Asia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), pp. 236-237.

that both factors were operating; Vo Nguyen Giap, in his 31 July message greeting the PLA's anniversary, had expressed the unusual wish that the PLA should continue raising its combat strength "and its capability to protect its motherland, so as to make great contributions to readiness for smashing the criminal schemes" of the US.[112] This may be interpreted as an oblique reference to the DRVN's serious felt lack in its capabilitity to protect its motherland. In addition, one explanation of the insistence by the PRC and the DRVN that the second incident had occurred is that this was a device to protect the DRVN from the charge of adventurism in directly provoking US military force. A further confrontation apparently took place on 18 September in the same region, but both the Vietnamese and the Chinese reacted in a measured manner.[113]

Despite the transfer of some MiG-17's and 19's from the PRC to the DRVN, the Vietnamese had virtually no defenses against the possibility of further US bombing. To deal effectively with this threat, the DRVN leaders needed to acquire a substantial inventory of modern arms and equipment, which China was unable to supply. Moscow, meanwhile, was apparently offering no support for moves by Hanoi to escalate the war in the south. According to one official US source, the decision to send units of PAVN into South Viet Nam was "taken in mid-1964",[114] but it is not clear - as mentioned above - whether this decision was implemented before the 4 August incident. In any case, in the absence of substantial Soviet support, an immediate requirement of DRVN diplomacy was to seek to restrain the

112. NCNA 31 July 1964 (in SCMP 3273 of August 1964, pp. 37-38).
113. See VNA 20 September 1964 and Renmin Ribao editorial for 20 September (text of the latter in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 39 [25 September 1964], pp. 10-11).
114. Report on the War [...], op. cit., p. 97.

US from further acts of destruction on DRVN territory until such time as the USSR could be persuaded to adopt a more vigorous policy of support. This need to gain time may have been behind Ho Chi Minh's reported willingness to have a representative meet with a US emissary in Rangoon towards the end of August.[115] Nevertheless, since the DRVN was already committed to a forward policy in South Viet Nam, it appears most unlikely that the DRVN would have seriously considered an abandonment of that policy at that time.

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On 14 October 1964, Nikita Khrushchov resigned his post of First Secretary of the CPSU-CC, alledgedly because of his "advancing age and ill-health", and on 16 October China exploded its first nuclear device. Both the DRVN and the PRC sent high-level delegations (headed by Pham Van Dong and Chou En-lai respectively) to the celebrations in Moscow of the 47th anniversary of the October Revolution on 5 November; they returned to their respective capitals on 14 November 3ith markedly differing assessments of the new CPSU leadership. The Chinese later stated that Khrushchov's successors had told them, during this visit, that "there was not a shade of difference between themselves and Khrushchov on the question of the international communist movement and in their attitude towards China",[116] but for the moment the CPC expressed the view that "the great Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the great Soviet people [...] are fully capable

115. See e.g. Chester L. Cooper, The Lost Crusade (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1970), pp. 327-328.

116. "A Comment on the March Moscow Meeting" (23 March), in Peking Review Vol. VIII No. 13 (26 March 1965), p. 8.

of making new contributions in safeguarding [...] the purity of Marxism-Leninism".[117] On the other hand, the Vietnamese seemed to have gained an understanding at least in principle from the CPSU which was more favourable to their cause and, especially, to their plea for defence weaponry. In Hanoi, copies of the November issue of Hoc Tap - normally distributed in mid-month - were hastily recalled immediately after the delegation's return, and an article with a strong bias towards the CPC viewpoint was replaced by an article expressing moderate views acceptable to the CPSU.[118] The revised attitude of the CPSU towards the Vietnam question no doubt would have been based on sensitivity to the CPC charge that the CPSU was failing to support national liberation movements, the relatively small risk of a direct confrontation with the US, involved in supplying the requested armaments and acceptance of the inevitable cooling of USSR-US relations as being worth the propaganda benefits of being seen to be actively engaged in "opposing imperialism". Among other considerations, the CPSU leaders were probably impressed by the dramatic and successful attack by the southern PLAF on the large US air base at Bien Hoa near Saigon on 1 November.

The withdrawal of the Hoc Tap article was not firm evidence of a new CPSU stance, but this was soon forthcoming. On 25 November, an international conference of solidarity with the Vietnamese people opened in Hanoi, attended by both Soviet and

117. "Why Khrushchov Fell", Hongqi editorial of 21 November 1964, in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 48 (27 November 1964), at p. 9.

118. See e.g. China News Analysis No. 555 (12 March 1965) pp. 3-4.

Chinese delegations. The chief Chinese delegate attacked the policies of the CPSU in thinly-vieled terms,[119] and a month later he told a Peking rally that the "overwhelming majority" of delegates to this conference had "angrily refuted the revisionists' various erroneous arguments".[120] The Soviet delegate, for his part, told the conference on 26 November of an authorised declaration from the TASS News Agency of the same day, in which the USSR specifically condemned the acts of aerial aggression against DRVN territory, and stated that it was ready to give the DRVN "the necessary help".[121]

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On 22 December, Peking celebrated the NFL's fourth anniversary by a rally, and Premier Chou En-lai sent greetings to the NFL's President, Nguyen Huu Tho, in which he congratulated the Front for "following a correct policy and a flexible strategy", so that it was now "facing an excellent situation".[122] The preceding day, Defence Minister Lin Piao informed Vo Nguyen Giap of the PLA's "great admiration" at the fact that the South Vietnamese people were "becoming stronger and stronger".[123] Renmin Ribao's editorial greeting the NFL's anniversary added that "a favourable strategic situation in which cities are encircled by villages" had appeared, and the "stormy mass and political struggles in the cities" had "opened up a second front".[124] All of these comments bore testimony

119. Text of his speech published in the record of the proceedings International Conference for Solidarity with the People of Vietnam Against US Imperialist Aggression and for the Defence of Peace (Hanoi: The Bureau of the International Conference, 1964), pp. 168-177.
120. See the report of Liu Ning-yi's report to a Peking rally of 22 December 1964, in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 52 (25 December 1964), at p. 10.
121. International Conference for Solidarity /...7, op. cit., p.212.
122. NCNA 19 December 1964 (in SCMP 3363 of 23 December 1964, pp. 37-38).
123. NCNA 21 December 1964 (in SCMP 3364 of 24 December 1964, p.33).
124. Issue of 20 December 1964; text in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 52 (25 December 1965), pp. 11-13.

to the Chinese enthusiasm at the undoubted progress which had been made by the insurgents during the past six months.

As the New Year of 1965 drawned, it seemed that it would only be a matter of time before the US would be forced to admit the untenability of its position in South Viet Nam and seek to retrieve itself from what had for more than twelve months been referred to as a "quagmire". As if to underline the allegedly passive position of the Saigon Government forces and their US advisors, PLAF cadres destroyed a seven-story bachelor officer quarters in Saigon on 24 December, injuring over 100 persons. In a six-day battle (from 28 December 1964 to 2 January 1965) at the village of Binh Gia, 40 miles from Saigon, the PLAF won their greatest victory of the war to date against South Vietnamese Government forces, and the protracted engagement led to speculation that the PLAF might be moving into the "mobile" phase of guerrilla warfare. Renmin Ribao's 6 January 1965 editorial praised this "magnificent battle of annihilation" which showed that the PLAF were "now capable of wiping out large numbers of the enemy's effectives"; the war initiative was now "entirely in the hands of the people's armed forces", and the victory had revealed "a marked change in the relative strength between the people and the enemy in South Viet Nam".[125] The first units of the North Vietnamese army had by now arrived in South Viet Nam, and more were on their way via Laos. "We did not believe that the armed forces of South Viet Nam could contain this expanding enemy military force", the then US military commander in Viet Nam

125. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 2 (8 January 1965), p. 23.

wrote of the situation at the start of 1965.[126] Mao Tse-tung told American writer Edgar Snow on 9 January that he thought the NFL-PLAF forces could win victory by their own efforts, and that while fighting in Viet Nam might go on for perhaps one to two years, the US troops would then find it boring and go home.[127] On 14 January, Renmin Ribao assessed that the US position in Viet Nam was that of "a dying person who is sinking fast like the sun behind the western hills", but the editorialist repeated a warning in a PRC statement of the previous day that if the US expanded or internationalized the war, "then the Chinese Government and people will have to give further consideration to the duties incumbent upon them for the defence of peace in this area".[128] The warning implied a willingness on the part of the PRC to tolerate the continuation of the conflict, provided that it remained confined primarily to South Viet Nam and provided that the level of involvement of the US and its allies was not significantly increased. In this situation, the initiative seemed to lie entirely with the insurgents; the potential military threat to China would be decreased through the continuing attrition of US power; the eventual withdrawal of US forces, and the consequent victory of the insurgent forces, would serve both the general anti-imperialist goal and the specific Chinese claim that people's wars could be victorious if only the people stood up to struggle in unity. The validation of the latter claim would also vindicate the CPC for their criticism of the CPSU's alleged faint-heartedness in support of "national liberation movements", and thus constitute a major ideological victory. All of these considerations,

126. Report on the War in Vietnam /...7, op. cit.,
127. First published in The New Republic, 27 February 1965.
128. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 4 (22 January 1965) pp. 6-7.

however, were premissed on a recognition by the US leaders that further escalation or internationalization of the conflict would be disadvantageous in terms of prestige, military costs, growing domestic dissent, over-extension of military resources on a global scale, and the evident inability of successive Saigon Government leaders to inspire the majority of South Vietnamese into positive opposition to the VNWP's attempt to annex the south by force of arms. As events were to show, such recognition came tardily.

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In this context, there was little cause for suprise in the CPC-CC's 2 February 1965 greetings to the ICP-VNWP on the occasion of its 35th founding anniversary. Extending "sincerest fraternal greetings", the CPC hailed the VNWP for "correctly integrating Marxism-Leninism with the revolutionary practice of Viet Nam", and for having formulated "a strategy and tactics of revolutionary struggle conforming to the realities in Viet Nam". Under its "wise leadership", the VNWP had "stood on the side of the Marxist-Leninist fraternal Parties" and made "outstanding contributions to the international communist cause". For a long time, the message said, the two Parties and States had "consistently supported and assisted each other in their struggle for the common cause, linked their destinies and shared weal and woe"; thus friendship and unity would "surely be further consolidated and developed".[129] These sentiments and assessments represented praise of a high order, and in fact expressed a warmth of attitude towards North Viet Nam that had been matched in the past only by the Chinese comments in July 1960.

129. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 7 (12 February 1965), p. 5.

The warmth of the Chinese expressions of support to the VNWP contrasted with the continuing coolness of Chinese relations with the Soviet Union. Pravda had announced on 12 December 1964 that the CPSU proposed to press on with a preparatory meeting of fraternal Parties as a first step towards holding an international meeting of all Workers' and Communist Parties, but the initial meeting was now called a commission, and it was to meet in Moscow on 1 March 1965 rather than 15 December 1964 as had been announced before Krushchov's fall from power. At the end of January, it was announced that a Soviet Party and Government delegation would shortly visit the DRVN, and when Premier Kosygin stopped over in Peking on 5 February en route to Hanoi, he was given a decidedly cool welcome by the Chinese. The NCNA devoted only three brief paragraphs to his visit, saying that after a banquet given by Chou En-lai and Chen Yi for their guests, "the two sides had a conversation".[130] The North Vietnamese for their part did what they could to avoid taking sides; thus, both the CPC-CC and the CPSU-CC greetings to the VNWP's 2 February anniversary were front-paged in the Hanoi Party daily Nhan Dan on 5 February.[131]

By late January 1965, according to an official US source, "there was widespread conviction among senior United States and Vietnamese military commanders and civilian authorities in Viet Nam that the absence of a United States response to Viet Cong and North Vietnamese attacks against our personnel and forces in South Viet Nam would further encourage anti-United States incidents"[132].

130. Texts in SCMP 3394 of 10 February 1965, pp. 31-32.
131. VNA 5 February 1965.
132. Report on the War in Vietnam /...7, op. cit., p. 13.

and also, as the "Pentagon Papers" show, would do nothing to assuage the plummeting level of morale within South Viet Nam, already severely shaken by the attack on the Bien Hoa base, the Binh Gia battle, and the continuing crisis of political authority in Saigon.[133] Plans for US air strikes against the DRVN had been contemplated by the US leaders for several months. In particular, a plan for retaliatory action - codenamed "Flaming Dart" - had been developed; on 7 February - the day after Kosygin had landed at Hanoi - the southern insurgent forces carried out a major raid against a US airfield and barracks at Pleiku; and later the same day, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered that "Flaming Dart" be executed. A second and heavier reprisal raid, "Flaming Dart II", was executed on 11 February in response to an attack on US barracks at Qui Nhon; and on 13 February, US President Johnson authorised the start of "Operation Rolling Thunder", a sustained series of punitive bombings against the DRVN which was to continue with only brief pauses until 31 October 1968.

133. The New York Times, The Pentagon Papers, op. cit., especially pp. 332-342.

CHAPTER THREE

February 1965 - March 1968

The time-period to be discussed in this chapter is that of the sustained bombardment of the DRVN by the US, from the execution of "Flaming Dart I" on 7 February 1965 to President Johnson's announcement on 31 March 1968 that the bombing would be substantially limited and that he would not be available as a candidate for re-election to the Presidency later that year. These three years constituted the major part of what the DRVN leaders called the period of "limited war", as opposed to the earlier period of "special war" (from mid-1961 to February 1965). Whereas the US had relied primarily upon the armed forces of the Saigon Government to repress the insurgency in South Viet Nam during the period of "special war", the US now bore the brunt of the defence effort through the use of its own rapidly augmented air and ground combat forces.

The extension of regular bombing raids to the DRVN considerably complicated PRC-DRVN relations; further complications followed from the mutual escalation of North Vietnamese and US ground combat men in South Viet Nam. The PRC hardened its position on a number of important issues. The DRVN, for its part, endeavoured (with considerable success) to preserve its freedom of manoeuvre in political and military policy, and to extract the maximum aid and assistance from both the PRC and the USSR without making an absolute ideological commitment to the views of either the CPC or the CPSU. One may say that the Sino-Soviet differences in the particular circumstance of the

bombardment of the DRVN enabled the DRVN to exercise a greater degree of independence from CPC-PRC influence than at any previous time since 1954. The VNWP leaders took every opportunity to inculcate the ideals of "Vietnamese patriotism", flowing from the historical "Vietnamese resistance to foreign aggression", upon the North Vietnamese citizens; and in so doing, they likened the US presence in South Viet Nam and the bombardment of North Viet Nam to past invasions of the Viet Nam nation by Chinese armies.

A number of trends characterized the Chinese position during these years. First, the bombardment of the DRVN and the subsequent despatch of US combat troops to South Viet Nam raised the question of Chinese intervention in the Viet Nam conflict. The Chinese military leaders in particular became engaged in a complicated debate concerning policy matters which to have been resolved in principle by late 1965.[1] The analogy with the Korean War was drawn on a number of occasions, and both similarities and differences were stressed. Secondly, and perhaps most important of all the considerations affecting the Chinese policy towards North Viet Nam, the CPC assessment of the CPSU and of the USSR reached a new level of bitterness. Not only did the continuing deterioration between the two Parties come increasingly to find expression in antagonism between the two States come increasingly to find expression in antagonism between

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1. These policy issues are not considered in this thesis, since to develop them adequately would require substantial space and would require a broader discussion of Chinese, Soviet, and US policy goals and actions than has been contemplated here. Also, the issues involved have already been subjected to preliminary (and differing) analyses; see e.g. Uri Ra'anan, "Peking's Foreign Policy 'Debate', 1965-1966", and Harold Hinton, "China and Vietnam", in Tang Tsou (ed.), China in Crisis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), Vol. 2, "China's Policies in Asia and America's Alternatives", at pp. 23-71 and 200-267; also Donald S. Zagoria, Vietnam Triangle (New York: Pegasus, 1967), pp. 63-98; and Michael Yahuda, "Kremlinology and the Chinese Strategic Debate, 1965-66", in The China Quarterly, No. 49 (January/March 1972), pp. 32-75.

the two States; the CPSU was directly linked with the US in "collusion and contention" to betray the Vietnamese revolution, to establish a military encirclement of China, and ultimately to achieve world domination. The CPC leaders concluded by November 1965 that "united action" with the CPSU - whether on the Viet Nam question or on other matters - was impermissible as a matter of principle. Instead, they argued, it was necessary to isolate the CPSU, while uniting with all other forces that could be united with, to achieve the goal of defeating US imperialism. Related to these issues was an openly expressed fear that Soviet influence might come to dominate the VNWP leadership.

Thirdly, the Chinese leaders took it upon themselves to extend "advice" to the North Vietnamese, on the principal questions of negotiations and the conduct of the war in South Viet Nam. On negotiations, they insisted that a US troop withdrawal from South Viet Nam must be a pre-requisite for any peace talks. But they also argued that the US would never withdraw from the south its own accord. They also insisted at first that a US troop withdrawal would mean a return to the Geneva Agreements of 1954, thus leaving open the question of whether these Agreements might be considered a basis for discussions; but the CPC view rapidly hardened. Early in July 1966, Chinese spokesmen insisted that the 1954 Agreements no longer had any relevance - a view not shared by the North Vietnamese. Concerning the ground war in South Viet Nam, the CPC insisted that the Vietnamese communists should follow the practice of protracted war, and not seek quick

victories through large-scale fixed engagements with US forces. The strategic rationale for this advice was not hard to find. While US combat forces in South Viet Nam were still small in number and publicly holding an "advisory" capacity, the Chinese had been content to insist - from late 1961 until the VNWP-CC's Ninth Plenum decision of December 1963 - that regular forces from North Viet Nam should be used to bolster the southern PLAF in order to ensure a quick and decisive victory over the "puppet" forces of the Saigon Administration. The growth in US forces in March and after June 1965 altered the balance of forces against the favour of the communist troops; now it was better to trade space for time, in order to wear out the US. The North Vietnamese, however, increased their exfiltration of regular troops to match the US troop increases, in a hope of achieving a decisive (but not complete) military victory against the US at the 1968 Tet, and a second "Dien Bien Phu" at Khe Sanh.

Fourthly, the CPC leaders accepted - for both ideological and security reasons - that they had an obligation to extend material aid to the Vietnamese war effort. A substantial number of PLA construction units with supporting anti-aircraft batteries was sent to North Viet Nam by late 1965, and considerable quantities of military equipment (notably the AK-47 combat rifle, but including other small arms and ammunition and transport) were also sent to Viet Nam. The Chinese were reluctant to agree to various Soviet proposals concerning the transit of Soviet heavy equipment to the DRVN via China, although agreement was reached on transport of much of this by rail. The Soviet Union frequently

complained of the alleged theft of items or delay in transport occasioned by the Chinese side.

Fifthly, from early 1966 until beyond the end of the period being considered here, most of China became involved in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which brought the country to the brink of anarchy, and which was regarded with scarcely-veiled alarm by the DRVN. Nevertheless, although consignments of arms from the Soviet Union destined for Viet Nam were reportedly looted from time to time by various factions within China, on the whole the central Chinese authorities maintained the flow of these goods. The militant political atmosphere within China encouraged even greater denunciation of the Soviet "revisionist ruling clique" than formerly; yet complete denial of Soviet military aid on the part of the Chinese would have encouraged even greater dependence on the USSR by the VNWP, since this aid could also - and did - come by sea, from Odessa and Vladivostok. In any case, the VNWP shared the official CPC view that the Vietnamese revolution was the focal point of the world anti-imperialist struggle; assistance to the Vietnamese which demonstrated the good offices of the PRC was therefore not uncongenial to the militant viewpoint of the Chinese leaders despite Sino-Soviet tensions.

Finally, the fact that the North Vietnamese were not denounced by the Chinese leaders for their insistance on dealing with both China and the Soviet Union on approximately equal terms, may be taken as a measure of Sino-Soviet hostility. The Chinese leaders certainly made their views clear to the Vietnamese on a number of occasions on such matters as the revisionist nature of

the CPSU leadership, and constantly reiterated their concern at the "ulterior motives" of Soviet aid to Viet Nam; but these pressures remained on the oral level rather than on the level of action. Having denounced the Soviet Union, and having found the Vietnamese continuing to maintain correct (if not excessively cordial) relations with the Soviet leaders, the Chinese were clearly not prepared to accept that Soviet influence in Hanoi should become paramount through default of the PRC.

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The presence of the top-level Soviet delegation in Hanoi on 7 February 1965 was, realistically, a matter for congratulation rather than concern for the DRVN leaders, since the proximity of the bombing served to give substantial weight to the DRVN's request for defence equipment. The Joint Communique issued on 11 February included a Soviet commitment to "strengthen the defence capacity" of the DRVN,[2] and by April the first surface-to-air missile (SAM) site was detected under construction near Hanoi;[3] others were detected shortly afterwards. Premier Kosygin considered the 7 February raids as a personal insult,[4] and the prestige of the Soviet Union was thereby engaged more directly with the conflict than it had been formerly.

The Chinese reaction to the 7 February bombing was one of some confusion and alarm, but as further strikes followed and,

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2. VNA 11 February 1965.
3. U.S.G. Sharp and W.C. Westmoreland, Report on the War in Vietnam (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 18.
4. Chester L. Cooper, The Lost Crusade (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1970), p. 261.

from early March, were superceded by the continuing "Rolling Thunder" programme,[5] comment was more measured. Peking's first reference to the fact of bombing came in a radio report on the evening of 8 February, after the DRVN had published its formal protest;[6] a special edition of Renmin Ribao carried the text of the latter for distribution among crowds which assembled in Peking from 7 p.m. in order to demonstrate their protest.[7] That evening, PLA Chief of General Staff Lo Jui-ching told a reception at the Korean Embassy that if the US dared to "force an aggressive war on us", then the PLA was prepared "and we know how to deal with their aggression".[8] The PRC's formal statement of protest was published on 9 February. It stressed that the DRVN had "gained the right of action to fight against US aggression", that "all other countries upholding the Geneva Agreemengs" had gained the right of action to assist the DRVN, and that all socialist countries had the "unshirkable international obligation" to support and assist the DRVN "with actual deeds".[9] Renmin Ribao's editorial of the same day warned the US that "we are waiting for you in battle array", and that if a war was imposed on China, then the US was sure to receive "heavy counter-blows".[10] The impression that these comments were essentially defensive in tone - at least so far as the question of Chinese troop intervention in Viet Nam was concerned - seemed to be confirmed on the following day (10 February), when Liu Ning-yi repeated the formula used

5. The first "Rolling Thunder" strikes were launched on 2 March.
6. DRVN Government statement, VNA 8 February 1965.
7. NCNA 8 February 1965 (in SCMP 3395 of 11 February 1965, pp. 36-39).
8. Ibid., pp. 37-38.
9. Text in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 7 (12 February 1965), pp. 6-7.
10. From the text in ibid., at p. 18.

after the Tongking Gulf incidents: "the Vietnamese people [...] will certainly be able to completely and thoroughly wipe out the US aggressors on Viet Nam soil".[11]

The US had been "taught a lession" in the Korean war, a PRC Government statement said on 13 February:[12] did it want "to have the lesson repeated in Indo-China?" This warning was linked to the insistence, first expressed in the 9 February statement, that the Chinese people would "not stand idly by" in the face of attack against the DRVN; however, the DRVN's 8 February statement implied that drastic action by the Chinese would not be either necessary or desirable. If the US attacked the DRVN, then they would be "punished" by the Vietnamese people while meeting with "opposition" from the people of socialist countries, the latter statement had said.[13] Then, on 18 February, Foreign Minister Chen Yi told a reception that it was imperative to withdraw all US forces from Indo-China: only thus could peace in the region be ensured.[14] Chou En-lai said the same thing in a message to the Indo-Chinese Peoples' Conference, about to open in Phnom Penh, on 23 February: without such a withdrawal, "every international agreement seeking to solve the Indo-Chinese questions will, like the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962, be sabotaged and trampled underfoot by US imperialism".[15] This represented a substantial hardening of the Chinese position. During the second half of 1964, they had been prepared to discuss tension in Laos and in

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11. Ibid., p. 13.
12. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 8 (19 February 1965), p. 6
13. VNA 8 February 1965.
14. NCNA 18 February 1965 (in SCMP 3403 of 24 February 1965, p. 41); also Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 9 (26 February 1965), p. 4.
15. In bold type in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 10 (5 March 1965), p.4.

Viet Nam at a reconvened Geneva Conference; now, even before the US had massively built up its troop presence in South Viet Nam, it seemed that the Chinese were no longer prepared to consider such a political settlement without a prior US withdrawal. The Chinese also seemed to have dismissed all thoughts of the utility of a "return to Geneva". During the following days, they reiterated the view that US troop withdrawals were a precondition of any negotiations, although the issue was not made explicit until 16 April.

The basic reason for this change in PRC attitude between 20 January - when the Foreign Minister urged the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference to check US activities in Laos "and its adventurous scheme for expanding the war in Indo-China"[16] - and 18 February - when he insisted on withdrawal - seems to lie in a reassessment of the Soviet leader's aims. The Chinese later revealed that in January 1965 the USSR had transmitted a US message to Hanoi proposing that the DRVN cease supplying weapons to South Viet Nam and that attacks on cities in South Viet Nam should also cease; these "preposterous demands", the Chinese said, were "aimed at forcing the Vietnamese people into unconditional surrender".[17] Then, when Kosygin stopped over in Peking on his way to and from Hanoi, he allegedly stressed the need "to help the United States 'find a way out of Viet Nam' ".[18] Again, on 16 February, the Soviet Government "officially put before Viet Nam

16. NCNA 20 January 1965 (in SCMP 3384 of 25 January 1965, p. 25).
17. Editorial departments of Renmin Ribao and Hongqi, "Refutation of the New Leaders of the CPSU on 'United Action'" 11 November 1965), in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 46 (12 November 1965), at p. 15.
18. Ibid.

and China a proposal to convene a new international conference on Indo-China without prior conditions, which in fact was advocacy of 'unconditional negotiations' on the Viet Nam question".[19] By 23 February, the Chinese said, the DRVN Government had taken a stand against this proposal, although the PRC had not yet replied.[20] Allowing for Chinese distortion of the context, it nevertheless seems very probable that in the new situation created by the bombing, the actions of the Soviet leaders and Government must have appeared designed to rob the Vietnamese communist forces of the victory against Saigon forces which was considered imminent in January. It would therefore be desirable to reject all forms of negotiation, until the expected resounding victory on the ground had been achieved, in order to secure the maximum political advantage from this. It may be noted that (as will be discussed in more detail below) the Chinese leaders continued to express firm confidence in a communist military victory in South Viet Nam as late as August 1965. With such expectations, the PRC and the CPC seemed to have little to lose by taking a more intransigent stand than they had formerly, and they could also hope to score a substantial propaganda victory in due course by contrasting their own "principled position" in support of the Vietnamese fight until complete victory with the USSR's "collusion" with the US.

A PRC statement of 4 March pointed out that the US sought to negotiate from a position of strength; while one could not bow to "US war blackmail", nevertheless there was an honourable

19. Ibid., p. 16.
20. Ibid.

way out for the US - to stop armed intervention in Viet Nam, and to withdraw all her armed forces from South Viet Nam. This was "the only way" for the US to save face; there was no other way out.[21] A further statement on 12 March, commenting on the despatch of 3,500 Marines to South Viet Nam, described this as a "grave move" which further blocked the way to a political settlement.[22] Further calls for the US to withdraw were made on 22 March,[23] 29 March,[24] 12[25] and 16 April.

On the latter date, Renmin Ribao's editorial said:

> Only the withdrawal of all US armed forces from South Viet Nam can create the indispensable pre-condition for the peaceful settlement of the Viet Nam question in accordance with the Geneva Agreements [...]. The issue of war or peace on the Viet Nam question today hinges on whether the US aggressors will get out of Viet Nam or not.[26]

This position was clearly a more demanding one than that set out on 8 April by DRVN Premier Pham Van Dong in his report to the second session of the DRVN's National Assembly, Third Legislature, and which had been published by VNA on 12 April. Pham's "four points", subsequently adopted by the National Assembly, were (1) recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people, and withdrawal of US troops from South Viet Nam; (2) the two zones of Viet Nam must refrain from joining any military alliances; (3)

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21. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 11 (12 March 1965), p. 7.
22. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 12 (19 March 1965), pp. 5-6.
23. Renmin Ribao Observer; in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 13 (26 March 1965), p. 17.
24. Renmin Ribao editorial; in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 14 (2 April, 1965), p. 14.
25. Renmin Ribao editorial; in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 16 (16 April 1965), p. 9.
26. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 17 (23 April 1965), p. 15. Emphasis added.

the South Vietnamese people must settle their own affairs "in accordance with the programme of the SVNNFL"; and (4) the peaceful reunification of Viet Nam was to be settled by the Vietnamese people themselves. The National Assembly adopted an important - if ambiguous - rider as suggested by the Premier:

> The National Assembly and Government of the [DRVN] hold that the above stand constitutes the basis for the most correct political settlement of the Viet Nam question. Only when this basis is recognized can there be favourable conditions to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Viet Nam question; only then is it possible to consider the convening of an international conference along the pattern of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Viet Nam.[27]

The "four points" were not an original formulation of the DRVN position: they had been included in a resolution adopted by the international solidarity conference which met in Hanoi at the end of November 1964,[28] and the latter in turn were virtually identical with the "correct solution" set forth in a DRVN Government statement of 15 July 1964.[29]

The DRVN formula now expressed clearly implied that negotiations might be possible once the US "recognized" the four points as a "basis"for a political settlement, which would include

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27. Against US Aggression (Hanoi: FLPH, 1966), pp. 90-91. Emphasis added.
28. International Conference for Solidarity with the People of Vietnam [...], op. cit., p. 414; the text is also in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 50 (11 December 1964), p. 16.
29. VNA 15 July 1964.

recognition of the need for eventual US troop withdrawals. The Renmin Ribao formula of 16 April strongly implied that no negotiations towards a political settlement should be considered until after US troops withdrew. This interpretation of the Chinese position was confirmed by a resolution adopted by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on 20 April. The resolution, while expressing full approval and firm support to the DRVN's "four points", went on to state that

> the necessary conditions for a political settlement of the Vietnamese problem can be created only by resolutely putting an end to US imperialist aggression against Viet Nam and forcing the United States to withdraw all its armed forces from Viet Nam.[30]

The NFL-CC had issued a lengthy statement dated 22 March, in which it said, inter alia, that all negotiations with the US "at this moment" were "utterly useless if they still refuse to withdraw from South Viet Nam all their troops and all kinds of war material and means".[31] Despite the cautious time qualification, this formulation appeared to be less flexible than that subsequently adopted by the DRVN National Assembly, and the Chinese position may have taken this distinction into account.

The "four points" and their rider remained the DRVN's ifundamental position until mid-1969, when they were replaced by the more detailed "10-point solution" proposed by the newly-

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30. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 17 (23 April 1965), at p. 7. Emphasis added.
31. First issued by VNA on 23 March 1965; text in e.g. South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation: Documents (South Viet Nam: Giai Phong Publishing House, 1968), pp. 33-52. The quotation from this source is at p. 43.

publicized "Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam" (hereafter PRGRSVN). For its part, the PRC insisted on a prior US troop withdrawal from this time until July 1971, when it first gave support to the principle of a negotiated settlement.

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The Chinese revealed at the end of 1965 that on 25 February 1965 the USSR had requested Chinese railway facilities to help transport military equipment to Viet Nam, and offered to pay the transport charges. The PRC decided to carry the goods free of charge, but reportedly demanded the right to inspect the shipments. Other stipulations by the Chinese involved the two sides in negotiations, during which Soviet diplomats in Europe leaked word that the Chinese were holding up the supply of war material to the DRVN.[32] On 30 March 1965, the two sides signed a protocol stipulating that such shipments would continue to be carried through China free of charge. However, economic aid sent to VietN Nam through China was apparently arranged in accordance wti with existing arrangements agreed by the socialist countries, and freight charges were paid in rubles by the USSR.[33] The Soviet Union let it be known on a number of occasions thereafter - notably at the end of 1965,[34] in May 1966,[35] and early in 1967[36]- that the

32. Statement of 23 December 1965; published in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 1 (1 January 1966), p. 17. Cf. Seymour Topping's report in The New York Times, 23 January 1966.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid; see also Drew Middleton's report, citing "Asian Sources", in The New York Times, 4 December 1965.
35. PRC Foreign Ministry Statement, 3 May 1966, "Malinovsky is a Lair" (text in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 19 of 6 May 1966, pp. 25-26). See also Seymour Topping's report from Hong Kong in The New York Times, 20 March 1966.
36. See e.g. Renmin Ribao's Commentator article of 22 Janaury 1967, in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 5 (27 January 1967) p. 24; also UPI report in The Washington Post, 14 March 1967.

Chinese were hindering the transit of military suppliers, damaging arms consignments, and stealing rocket secrets. It was also charged that China demanded payment in dollars for the transport charges;[37] the Chinese angrily refuted this.[38]

The initial shipments in 1965 seem to have severely strained the Chinese railway system. No doubt the Soviet Union exaggerated what was happening in order to embarrass the PRC and in an endeavour to persuade the VNWP leaders that the CPC's support was less enthusiastic than it claimed. The CPC in turn complained publicly that while China was helping the Vietnamese people "to the best of her ability", the Soviet aid - both in quantity and in quality - was "far from commensurate with the strength of the Soviet Union".[39] A "great part" of the Soviet military aid consisted of "obsolete equipment discarded by the Soviet armed forces or damaged weapons cleaned out of warehouses"; it was "far, far inferior" to the military aid given by the USSR to India; and it was being given for ulterior motives: to try and "hookwink the people at home and abroad, to keep the situation in Viet Nam under their control, to gain a say on the Viet Nam question and to strike a bargin with US imperialism on it". The CPC said that China had always honoured her agreements and done the utmost to transport Soviet military aid with speed to the DRVN.[40] The North Vietnamese were not to be drawn into these exchanges, whatever their private reservations,

37. Renmin Ribao's Commentator article, 23 December 1965; in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 1 (1 January 1966), pp. 16-17.
38. Ibid.
39. "Refutation of the New Leaders of the CPSU on 'United Action'", in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 46 (12 November 1965) at p. 16.
40. Ibid., p. 17.

and insisted that Soviet aid had been transported "speedily"[41] to counter the Soviet charges) and had been "to good effect" (to counter the Chinese charges).[42]

In April 1967 it was widely reported that Moscow and Peking had reached an understanding to ensure that Soviet material shipments were not hindered en route to the DRVN.[43] The arrangement, said to have been agreed early in March 1967, apparently involved North Vietnamese officials taking title to the consignments at the Sino-Soviet border and then travelling with them to the Sino-Vietnamese border. The importance of rail shipments rested on the speed with which such items as SAM's could be transported to the DRVN. Other items were also transported by sea, but the journey took longer, and there was the additional risk of interception by US naval of air forces if the sea-borne volume should grow too substantial. This last point seems to explain Chen Yi's reported jibe that the Soviet Union "does not dare" to send them by ship.[44] Disruption to these rail consignments was reported particularly in mid-1968, in the southern provinces of China, by factions operating in

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41. See e.g. VNA statements of 19 June 1966, 19 September 1966, 28 February 1967, etc.
42. See e.g. Pham Van Dong's 11 January 1966 speech at a reception for a Soviet delegation (VNA 11 January 1966): aid, he said, had been transported to Viet Nam "according to plan and has exerted a good effect".
43. See e.g. Hedrick Smith's report in The New York Times, 12 April 1967, and Harrison Salisbury's report in the same newspaper of 17 April 1967.
44. In an interview with Akahata on 30 December 1965 (NCNA 4 January 1966; in SCMP 3612 of 7 January 1966, pp. 29-34; also in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 2 of 7 January 1966, pp. 5-9).

disregard of the central authorities.[45]

It was not necessarily true that the Chinese were transporting Soviet aid as speedily and as efficiently as they could, even given the inner turmoil of the country from mid-1966 onwards.[46] They did not accept other Soviet proposals made apparently shortly after the initiation of "Rolling Thunder". The Chinese claimed in mid-1965, that the USSR "wanted to send via China a regular army formation of 4,000 men to be stationed in Viet Nam, without first obtaining her concent"; "under the pretext of defending the territorial air of Viet Nam", they wanted to "occupy and use one of two airfields in south-western China and to station a Soviet armed force of 500 men there"; and they also wanted "to open an air corridor in China and obtain for Soviet aeroplanes the privilege of free fraffic" in China's air

45. A directive from the central authorities dated 13 June 1968 ordered the factions to restore the railway traffic in Liuchow district of Kwangsi Province and to return the goods destined for Viet Nam that had been looted (see the translation of Liuchow Workers' Headquarters Bulletin No.7 of 12 July 1968 which purports to be the text of the central directive: in SCMP 4226 of 26 July 1968, pp. 1-3). This directive was evidently not heeded, and was followed by a 3 July directive from the authorities in Peking - countersigned by Mao Tse-tung - repeating the terms of the earlier directive (see the translation of the Canton Middle School Red Guards Bulletin No. 8 of late July 1968, in SCMP 4232 of 6 August 1968, pp. 1-3; also Richard Harris, "Chinese chaos cuts aid to Vietnam", The Times, 9 August 1968).

46. While the USSR clearly wished to make political capital from charges of Chinese obstruction to aid goods in transit, and therefore very likely exaggerated the extent of that obstruction, nevertheless it seems entirely possible that many of these charges were justified - which, it is difficult to judge. John Gittings points out indirect confirmation from Chinese sources of Soviet charges concerning the PRC's disallowance of transit of goods by air, and reservations concerning the type of equipment being sent; see his Survey of the Sino-Soviet Dispute (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 257-258.

space.[47] All of these requests were rejected because, the CPC told the CPSU, "we do not trust you"; "China is not one of your provinces". "We cannot accept your control. Nor will we help you control others".[48] These reasons reflect a deep suspicion of Soviet motives stemming from the very clear memories of the withdrawal of experts from China in mid-1960 and the earlier attempt by the USSR to secure a Sino-Soviet naval defence arrangement, rejected by the Chinese in early 1958. The Chinese leaders were determined to guard their state sovereignty jealously, even though satisfactory safeguards could no doublt have been worked out between the two states had the will to unite for the benefit of the Vietnamese been the paramount consideration.

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Despite the good wishes expressed by Chen Yi to Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on 13 February 1965 for the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty,[49] Chinese denuciations of the Soviet Union were constant from early March 1965. On the 4th of that month, an "anti-US, pro-Viet Nam" demonstration in Moscow was broken up by Soviet police. The demonstrators included Chinese and Vietnamese students; a number were injured in the scuffles.[50] When some of the Chinese students returned to Peking shortly afterwards, the DRVN Ambassador and members of the Embassy visited them to "offer warm regards" and to present them with bouquets, according to NCNA.[51]

47. CPC-CC letter of 14 July 1965 to the CPSU-CC, extracted by Edward Crankshaw, "Peking pushes Moscow to the brink", The Observer (London), 14 November 1965.
48. Ibid.
49. NCNA 13 February 1965 (in SCMP 3400 of 18 February 1965, p.21).
50. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 11 (12 March 1965), pp. 15-16.
51. NCNA 15 March 1965 (in SCMP 3419 of 18 March 1965, p. 39).

A Chinese protest Note of 5 March[52] was followed by another on 16 March which rejected the Soviet explanation of its actions and scornfully pointed out, in a reference to Soviet apologies and restitution to the US Embassy in Moscow after the 4 March incident: "How ruthless you were to the demonstrators [...], and how abjectly subservient you were to the US imperialists!".[53] Then on 22 March the CPC released its comment on the "consultative meeting of communist and workers' parties" which had met in Moscow from 1 to 5 March: the CPSU leaders, it assessed, were "continuing to adhere to Khrushchov's reactionary policy of Soviet-US cooperation for the domination of the world".[54] A week later, Chou En-lai told a Tirana audience that while an anti-US united front was necessary in order to check US adventures, it was no less essential to isolate the modern revisionists as accomplices to the US.[55] A Soviet proposal of 3 April for a summit meeting of the DRVN, the PRC and the USSR was rejected by the PRC.[56] An article in the 22 April issue of Hongqi concluded that the CPC's views concerning the CPSU that were expressed five years earlier on the anniversary of Lenin's birthday had been proven "completely correct" on three main issues relevant to the Viet Nam issue: concerning "the nature of imperialism", the USSR was attempting to "make it appear that US aggression in Viet Nam arises not from the nature of imperialism but from some other cause"; concerning

52. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 11 (12 March 1965), p. 16.
53. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 12 (19 March 1965), p. 7.
54. The Editorial departments of Renmin Ribao and Hongqi, "A Comment on the March Moscow Meeting"; in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 13 (26 March 1965), p. 9.
55. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 14 (2 April 1965), p. 7.
56. According to the CPC-CC letter of 14 July 1965 to the CPSU, in The Observer, op. cit.

"peaceful coexistence", the CPSU yearned for Soviet-US agreements, which reflected "Soviet-US collaboration for the domination of the world"; and concerning "the national liberation movement", the Chinese view had correctly stressed the necessity for revolutionary violence, while by implication the Soviet leaders were afraid of the consequences of such violence.[57]

The suspension of US raids over the DRVN from 13 to 18 May 1965 was condemned by the PRC as a hoax to encourage the acceptance of "unconditional discussions" by the North Vietnamese; the PRC insisted on a prior troop withdrawal, while noting that "some people" who sought merely the cessation of US bombing were in fact serving the US plot.[58] These "people" clearly included the CPSU leaders; the Chinese later stated that the concept of a "bombing halt" had originated in Moscow. They also claimed that the CPSU had stated - in a note sent to a number fraternal parties "shortly before the bombing halt" - that it favoured negotiations with the US provided the latter stopped bombing.[59]

After this episode, direct Chinese criticism of the Soviet Union diminished relatively until early November 1965; then the public and direct attacks on Soviet policy were resumed with a rejection of the possibility of united action between the two parties on the Viet Nam question. The Vietnamese for their part

57. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 19 (7 May 1965), pp. 7-10, passim.
58. Foreign Ministry Statement of 21 May 1965; in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 22 (28 May 1965), pp. 10-11.
59. Renmin Ribao Observer, 30 April 1967, in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 19, at pp. 18-19.

tried to make the best of the situation by refraining from taking sides openly, by editing out all references by the Chinese to anti-Soviet comments, and by devoting roughly equal space to Chinese and Soviet messages and comments in the VNA daily bulletins. So long as the bombing of North Viet Nam continued, the DRVN needed sophisticated defence weaponry which China was not in a position to supply; yet the DRVN could not afford to antagonize the PRC's leadership by hewing too closely to the Soviet line. Thus, for example, a Vietnamese delegation led by Le Duan, and including Vo Nguyen Giap, visited the USSR from 10 to 17 April 1965,[60] presumably to discuss further Soviet military aid and transport arrangements, while a delegation led by Pham Van Dong visited Djakarta from 16 to 22 April to attend the anniversary celebrations for the first Bandung Conference and to hold talks with Chou En-lai and Indonesian leaders.[61] Soviet and Chinese messages greeting Ho Chi Minh's birthday were published together - with, as always, the Soviet message being mentioned first - on 19 May.[62] The messages of greeting from Leonid Brezhnev and Chou En-lai for the 2 June opening of an international trade unions conference in Hanoi were published in full,[63] as were the texts of speeches made by the Soviet and Chinese delegates.[64] However, for the DRVN National Day on 2 September, neither the Soviet nor the Chinese message was published; the VNA on 16 September merely noted that messages from these and other states "have been

60. VNA 18 April 1965 published a communique on the talks.
61. VNA 16, 21, 23 April 1965.
62. VNA 19 May 1965.
63. VNA 4 June 1965.
64. VNA 4 June 1965.

received".

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On 28 July, President Johnson announced that US forces in South Viet Nam would be raised from the 75,000 then present (some 25,000 having arrived during June and the first days of July) to 125,000, and that additional forces would be sent as requested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This raised once again the question of possible Chinese intervention, an issue which we have not yet touched on. There were a number of considerations to take into account from the Chinese point of view. First, there was the question of whether the threat posed to China's territorial integrity was a real and immediate one. As early as 9 February, when the PRC issued its first formal protest at bombing of the DRVN, the Chinese had said merely that the Chinese people would not "stand idly by" in the face of US aggression against a neighbouring country. The phrase "aggression against Viet Nam is aggression against China" was repeated.[65] Fear that the bombing might be extended to China was expressed in a PRC statement of 12 March;[66] on 28 March, Chen Yi said that China and Viet Nam "share each other's security and danger";[67] on 29 March, Renmin Ribao's editorial considered that the US was taking China for the "next target".[68] The same paper's Observer on 2 May said that President Johnson's executive order establishing a Viet Nam "combat

65. It will be recalled that this had been used on 6 August 1964 in a PRC Government statement (see e.g. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 32 of 7 August 1964, Supplement, p. iii).
66. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 12 (19 March 1965), p. 6.
67. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 9 (26 February 1965), p. 4.
68. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 14 (2 April 1965), p. 14.

zone" constituted "a menace to China's security" and an "encroachment on China's sovereignty";[69] on 1 June, he insisted that the threat to China's security was "more and more serious".[70] A 13 July protest concerning the bombing of Lao Cai on the Sino-DRVN border said that this action was "planned, deliberate war provocation pure and simple"; the Chinese people had "a full estimation of the madness of US imperialism"; the PLA stood ready in battle array. Nevertheless, this protest said, "We will not attack unless we are attacked; if we are attacked, we will certainly counter-attack."[71]

The tone of these statements implies concern over the possibility of US bombardment of Chinese territory, but no preparation for offensive action in Viet Nam by the Chinese. Leaving aside the question of the extent to which the PLA was "prepared" for an offensive, outside China's borders, there was no good reason for such action at this stage. The Chinese air power was considerably inferior to that of the US, and in fact there was little that the Chinese could do to prevent US bombardment of the DRVN (or indeed of northern Laos, which had been continuing since May 1964). In the worst possible case, the US might direct a nuclear or sub-nuclear attack on Chinese facilities, and it was proper that the PRC should make contingency plans for such an eventuality. It was also true that the Chinese leaders expressed uncertainty concerning the limits of US strategic goals on a number of occasions, despite US insistence that bombardment of

69. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 19 (7 May 1965), p. 23.
70. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 23 (4 June 1965) p. 17
71. Renmin Ribao editorial, in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 29 (16 July 1965), p. 7.

the DRVN was designed primarily to dissuade the VNWP from extending aid and support to the southern PLAF rather than to alter the nature of the DRVN's regime. At the same time, voices were heard among the domestic "hawks" in the US to the effect that the war should be carried to China. In the circumstances, the possibilities for misunderstanding and miscalculation were considerable both in Peking and in Washington. Nevertheless, it seemed that as long as US bombers limited their attacks to the DRVN, China's security was not directly threatened, no matter how unpalatable such attacks were to the Chinese leaders.

The disposition of US ground combat troops in South Viet Nam was a threat to be regarded in a somewhat different manner. The PRC's concern that all US armed forces should be removed from Indo-China in general, and from South Viet Nam in particular, occasions no surprise; yet total absence of these forces was a maximum desirable goal, and the policy problem which both Washington and Peking had to weigh was the extent of the maximum tolerable US involvement in the light of China's legitimate security concerns. The mere presence of US combat troops in South Viet Nam did not of itself pose any direct threat to Chinese security, since for practical purposes the DRVN acted as a buffer to protect the strategic southern provinces and the rail loop. A large-scale invasion of DRVN territory by combat troops would clearly represent a qualitatively greater threat to China, although even in this case the degree of felt threat would depend in part upon the size of the force and in part upon the apparent objectives of the incursion. A thrust towards Hanoi and Haiphong, for example, would clearly

present a much more substantial and immediate threat to Chinese interests than for example, forays in and around the demilitarized zone. Also, it may be recalled that Mao Tse-tung had told Edgar Snow in January 1965 that China would not intervene in Viet Nam unless the US first attacked China.[72], None of the many events of the following six months seemed sufficient of themselves to constitute a clear and present danger of such magnitude that it demanded pre-emptive action by China.

In addition to the question of whether Chinese military intervention in Viet Nam was necessary, there was a second consideration to be taken into account by the Chinese leaders: was intervention desirable? They very well understood that the Vietnamese would not welcome a large-scale Chinese troop presence either in North or in South Viet Nam, unless perhaps the very survival of the northern communist regime were at peril. The NFL statement of 22 March 1965 setting out the "five points" had also said that if the US troop strength should rise, then it "will call on the people of various countries to send youth and armymen to South Viet Nam to side with the South Vietnamese people in annihilating the common enemy".[73] Renmin Ribao's editorial of 25 March said that the Chinese people would send aid and were ready to send men whenever the "South Vietnamese people" needed them;[74] Chou En-lai in Tirana on 29 March said that China would give the

72. Interview of 9 January 1965: in The New Republic, 27 February 1965.
73. VNA 24 March 1965.
74. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 14 (2 April 1965), p. 11.

South Vietnamese all necessary material help, and was "also prepared to" send Chinese personnel "to fight alongside the South Vietnamese people whenever they [i.e., the South Vietnamese] deem it necessary".[75] A number of other references at this time stressed the "readiness" or "preparedness" of China to send men, yet none of them were formal commitments to actually do so if and when the "South Vietnamese people" sent out the call. The 20 April resolution of the National People's Congress Standing Committee added a further qualification: preparations should be made to "send our own people to fight together with the Vietnamese people", "in the event that US imperialism continues to escalate its war of aggression and the Vietnamese people need them".[76] A Foreign Ministry statement on 18 June repeated that Chinese volunteers would go to Viet Nam "when we receive the call of the Vietnamese people".[77] However, the call did not come to Peking; instead, on 3 August, the NFL called on the people of the DRVN to "actively assist the South Vietnamese people in all fields in order to increase our forces and step up the resistance of the war", and on the South Vietnamese regrouped in the DRVN after 1954 to "get ready to return to the South when they are ordered".[78] This call was clearly designed entirely for propaganda purposes, since North Vietnamese regular troops continued to infiltrate into South Viet Nam throughout 1965, and southern "regroupees" had in fact been coming south since at least 1961.

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75. Ibid., p. 6.
76. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 17 (23 April 1965), p. 7.
77. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 26 (25 June 1965), p. 13.
78. VNA 3 August 1965.

No further references seem to have been made publicly to the specific possibility of Chinese troop intervention in Viet Nam, from mid-1965. However, in the Chinese leaders' message greeting the DRVN leaders for the Vietnamese National Day in 1966, a vaguer - if perhaps no less oninous - reference was made to the fact that the Chinese people had "made every preparation to deal, together with the Vietnamese people, at any time and in any place joint blows at the US aggressors until final victory is achieved".[79] Also, on 19 December 1966, Lin Piao expressed the Chinese people's determination "not to flinch from maximum national sacrifice" in a message to the NFL's "Tran Nam Trung";[80] this phrase was repeated on 23 May 1967 by Renmin Ribao's editorial, following an incursion by US troops into the demilitarized zone;[81] and on 9 June 1967 Lin Piao told Vo Nguyen Giap that the Chinese people and the PLA were "ready at all times to take necessary actions in accordance with the demands of the Vietnamese Government and people".[82] The latter two "signals" should be seen as cautionary gestures in the context of a possible US invasion of the DRVN following the exercise in the demilitarized zone. In any case, the actions which the Chinese Government might take were clearly contingent - at least in the 9 June 1967 example - on the concurrence of the DRVN Government. Thus, to judge from public statements, it appears that the question of intervention ceased to be a major preoccupation of the Chinese leaders after mid-1965.

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79. In Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 37 (9 September 1966), p. 4.
80. Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 52 (23 December 1966), p. 5.
81. Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 22 (26 May 1967), p. 50.
82. Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 25 (16 June 1967), p. 10.

In order to explain why this was so, it is necessary to consider a third factor, closely linked to the previous two. The above discussion suggests that the Chinese leaders considered by the end of July 1965 that intervention was neither necessary nor desirable when assessed from the point of view of Chinese security interests. The third factor was the Chinese assessment that the Vietnamese themselves could achieve military victory. We have already seen that early in January 1965 the Chinese expressed great enthusiasm for the prospects of the southern PLAF following the battle of Binh Gia; it was evidently regarded as the beginning of the final, classic stage of "mobile warfare" which should lead rapidly to the collapse of the Saigon Administration and victory for the communist side. The PRC in its 9 February 1965 comment on the bombardment of the DRVN stressed that this action had given the DRVN the "right of action", strongly implying that the DRVN henceforth should continue sending its main force soldiers to South Viet Nam with less fear of condemnation by world opinion. On the same day, the Renmin Ribao editorial had stressed that the people's armed strength in South Viet Nam was growing so rapidly that they were "sure to win every battle they fight".[83] On 12 March, the PRC again stressed that the US expansion of the war had given the DRVN the "right to take the initiative in counter-blows".[84] Chinese encouragement to continuing DRVN commitment to the fighting in South Viet Nam was given by Renmin Ribao's 15 April editorial,

83. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 7 (12 February 1965), p. 7.
84. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 12 (19 March 1965), p. 6.

which said that both Viet Nam and "the Vietnamese nation" were single entities, and that the Vietnamese struggle was under a "wise leadership".[85] On the anniversary of Dien Bien Phu's fall, Renmin Ribao spoke of the "excellent situation" in South Viet Nam and the demonstration there of the "unrivalled power of people's war": even should the US send larger forces and modern equipment there, the balance of forces would return to the people's favour provided they had correct leadership and persistance in struggle.[86] An editorial in the same paper's 5 June issue argued that the PLAF had strengthened its fighting power and was "capable of concentrating superior forces to destroy large numbers of enemy effectives": it held the initiative.[87] Similarly, Peng Chen told a 15 July rally for a visiting DRVN National Assembly delegation that the Vietnamese people's armed forces were not only good at guerrilla warfare, but were "also able to wage mobile warfare".[88] And a number of sources reported that Chou En-lai, in Djakarta in late April 1965, had expressed expectation of a PLAF victory by September of that year.[89] These views all indicate that the Chinese were encouraging the continued stiffening of the PLAF by PAVN regular forces, and that it was considered very probable that the armed forces of the Saigon Administration could be defeated within a relatively short time.

85. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 17 (23 April 1965), p. 18.
86. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 20 (14 May 1965), pp. 23-24.
87. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 24 (11 June 1965), p. 21.
88. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 30 (23 July 1965), p. 6.
89. Wilfred Burchett told the present writer, in Phnom Penh on 8 January 1968, that Chou En-lai had told him -who was reporting the Djakarta meeting - that "the military results of the Southern Liberation Army had far exceeded the Chinese expectations". Another journalist who was in Djakarta at the time told the present writer that Chou had informally expressed confidence that the PLAF would be in control of Saigon by August or September 1965.

The rapid build-up of US forces in South Viet Nam during June and July, and especially President Johnson's 28 July announcement of a continuing commitment of forces, forced a serious reconsideration of these hopes and expectations. The leaders of the Vietnamese National Assembly delegation in Peking for the 15 July rally mentioned above said that the US intended to "fight a war of the Korean type in this area and to attack China" - but he went on to insist that the Vietnamese people were determined to carry the fight through to the end,[90] no doubt to underscore the judgment that while it would not be necessary for the Chinese armed forces to intervene, nevertheless it was necessary for the Vietnamese to step up their requests for aid and support.

The analogy with Korea was taken up a week later by Renmin Ribao's Observer, who considered that the US had the intention of accelerating its escalation and of expanding the war "into a Korean-type one".[91] On 3 August, Renmin Ribao's editorial judged that the essence of Johnson's 28 July message was that "US imperialism intends to fight a local war in Viet Nam, or even in the whole of Indo-China", and proceeded to draw an explicit analogy between the Korean war and the situation in Viet Nam. The Koreans had had experience in fighting the Japanese, but not the US - the Vietnamese had fought the Japanese, the French, and already had had ten years of fighting against the US. South Korea had had no powerful

90. Hoang Van Hoan's speech is in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 30 (23 July 1965), pp. 9-11.
91. Renmin Ribao of 22 July: in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 31 (30 July 1965), p. 11.

people's guerrilla movement - South Viet Nam already had a "powerful Liberation Army and consolidated liberated areas under the leadership of the SVNNFL". The fighting in Korea was confined to a narrow strip of the peninsula, whereas in Viet Nam and Indo-China there were "innumerable jungles which offer a vast area to manoeuvre". In Korea, the US had the assistance of a number of allies; in Viet Nam, it "fought alone" except for a "meagre force of mercenaries". In Korea, the Chinese took part in the "resist US, aid Korea" movement only one year after liberation; now, 15 years after liberation, the Chinese movement to aid Viet Nam was taking place when China was much stronger. In 1950, the armed forces of the US were not spread over the world; now, the US front was "far too extended". In 1950, the anti-US struggle was relatively small in scope; now, a world-wide anti-US front was being formed. As a result of all these factors, the editorial concluded, the US was headed for an "even more disastrous defeat" than that suffered in the Korean war.[92] It must be noted that all of these factors favoured success by the Vietnamese even though China was now better able to extend "aid"; there was no direct suggestion of Chinese "volunteers" bearing the brunt of the military effort.

In this context, it is clear that when Hongqi in its issue of 21 August reprinted Mao's 1938 essay "Problems of Strategy in the Guerrilla War Against Japan", it was with Viet Nam very much in

92. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 32 (6 August 1965), p. 18.

mind. The essay itself was originally designed to refute the view that regular warfare alone could bring victory, and the Hongqi editor noted that the theory of people's war found in the article was "of vital practical importance", particularly "for the oppressed nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America in their struggle for liberation".[93] This was followed on 3 September 1965 by the publication of Lin Piao's celebrated "Long Live the Victory of People's War!", which stressed that Mao's teachings on protracted war were "of outstanding and universal importance for the present revolutionary struggle of all the oppressed nations and peoples".[94] Lin stressed the necessity of correctly applying the line and policy of the united front concept, reliance on the peasantry, the establishment of rural base areas, the building of a people's army, the carrying out of the strategy and tactics of people's war, and adherence to a policy of self-reliance. These amounted to reiteration of well-known doctrine. The importance of the essay undoubtedly lay in Lin's assessment that Viet Nam wass "the most convincing current example of a victim of aggression defeating US imperialism by a people's war",[95] and that as the US forces were in danger of "being swamped in the people's war in Viet Nam", the people in other parts of the world would also come to see that the US could be defeated, "and that what the Vietnamese people can do, they can do too". Equally important was the implied injunction to the Vietnamese leaders that they should cease their concentration on large-scale battles against the rapidly

93. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 35 (27 August 1965), p. 6.
94. Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 36 (3 September 1965), p. 24.
95. Ibid., p. 27.

growing US forces, and revert to a strategy of guerrilla warfare in order to husband their forces and let time work for them.

> [...] if they are to defeat a formidable enemy, revolutionary armed forces should not fight with a reckless disregard for the consequences when there is a great disparity between their own strength and the enemy's. If they do, they will suffer serious losses and bring heavy setbacks to the revolution. Guerrilla warfare is the only way to mobilize and apply the whole strength of the people against the enemy, the only way to expand our forces in the course of the war, deplete and weaken the enemy, gradually change the balance of forces between the enemy and ourselves, switch from guerrilla to mobile warfare, and finally defeat the enemy.[96]

The VNWP made no reference in the following weeks to Lin Piao's essay, nor to Mao Tse-tung's strategy and tactics for people's war, thereby tending to confirm speculation that the Vietnamese leaders were unwilling to give any credit to Mao's specific tactics in the war in the south, and equally unwilling to accept Chinese advice, since to do so would imply that their existing strategy was both faulty and inferior to the Chinese appreciation of the war situation. The CPC leadership did not press its view concerning tactics at this time, at least openly; public insistence on the need for a "protracted war" if victory was to be achieved was made only from

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96. Ibid., p. 18.

September 1966, to become embarrassingly repeated on every possible occasion after February 1967 until beyond the end of the period being considered in this chapter. From September 1965 until a year later, the Chinese were primarily concerned about the possibility that the VNWP might seek to open negotiations with the US, with the active assistance of the USSR: the Chinese view appeared to be that to do so would not only mean that the Vietnamese sat down to negotiate from a position of weakness, but that the Vietnamese might not be able to resist the combined diplomatic and other pressures from the USSR and the US. The Chinese were perhaps equally concerned that any serious negotiations would only serve to enhance the extent of Soviet-US collusion, and that any compromise political settlement would be represented as a victory for the more moderate Soviet point of view. This would undoubtedly involve a considerable setback for the militant Chinese view that the world anti-imperialist revolution should be pressed forward strongly through the primary device of revolutionary armed struggle.

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After September 1966, CPC concern over such an outcome from negotiations did not diminish - if anything, it increased - but it became linked with the insistence on protracted struggle. However, before we consider how these issues developed from late 1965 to March 1968, it will be helpful to consider the Vietnamese view of military strategy. This will be sketched in general terms, since a detailed analysis of the vast documentation available would be out of place here, and is more properly the concern of the military historian.

Military command over the southern PLAF was assumed, apparently some time early in 1965,[97] by General Nguyen Chi Thanh, VNWP-CC Politburo member and second-ranking military leader of PAVN before he travelled to South Viet Nam. His approach to the fighting there was to push the offensive, using main-force units.[98] Nguyen Chi Thanh insisted on continuing his large-scale offensives during the 1965-66 dry season (from November 1965 to May 1966).[99] However, American spoiling operations - particularly in the first months of 1966 - had an effect, and suggested that the PAVN-PLAF units had been deprived of much of the initiative which they had held some 12 months earlier. As a result, the leaders in Hanoi reassessed the situation and from July 1966 gave publicity to the view that much greater attention should be paid to the role of guerrilla forces.[100] The leaders in the south met these views and criticisms by an insistence that the existing strategy was appropriate to the situation.[101] Both sides continued to exchange views until the end of 1966.[102] During the November 1966 - May

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97. The hoi chanh Lt.-Col. Le Xuan Chuyen said in a mid-1967 interview that the General had arrived shortly before September 1965; R.W. Apple reported for The New York Times of 17 February 1966 that the General was thought by "American experts" in Saigon to be in the south. His presence was confirmed on 20 February 1966 by other hoi chanh in Saigon (see Stanley Karnow's Saigon report in The Washington Post for 21 February 1966). However, it is still not apparent when Nguyen Chi Thanh first went to South Viet Nam.
98. See the useful analysis given in the "Introduction" to Patrick J. McGarvey, Visions of Victory (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1969), especially pp. 7-23, 47-55. Nguyen Chi Thanh's views had already been forcefully expressed - and widely publicized - in Who Will Win in South Viet Nam?, op. cit., a article first published in Hoc Tap of July 1963.
99. Notably in the battles of Plei Me, in October-November 1965 and Iadrang Valley, in mid-November 1965.
100. See McGarvey, op. cit., Documents 1-4, and "Introduction", pp. 10-17.
101. Ibid. See also Sharp and Westmoreland, op. cit., p. 115.
102. McGarvey, op.cit., p. 17.

1967 dry season offensive, the insurgents in the south appeared to continue to accept the desirability of an offensive posture, but at the same time seemed to accept the utility of elevating the supporting role of guerrilla warfare.[103] The military analyses published in May, June and July 1967 implied that greater stress on guerrilla warfare had been implemented around January or February 1967, so that guerrilla and main-force units were now being deployed in coordination; a further implication was that a decisive military victory by main force units was now out of reach, and that the war approached a stalemate for both sides in military terms.[104] By the end of July 1967, there were some indications that some military leaders in Hanoi were tilting towards a negotiated settlement to the conflict;[105] Vo Nguyen Giap, in an analysis of the previous dry season campaign which was published in September 1967,[106] also seemed to consider the war stalemated, and that this condition would enable the insurgents to protract the war further with the aim of forcing the US to sue for peace on the communist's terms. In this analysis, as always since 1954, Vo Nguyen Giap clearly indicated his understanding that political and military struggles were intertwined, each supporting the aims of the other, yet with ultimate primacy going to political

103. Ibid., p. 20 and Document 5 (pp. 114-118).
104. Ibid., Documents 5 and 6 (pp. 114-149).
105. Ibid., pp. 22-23
106. Ibid., Documents 9 (pp. 199-251).

goals. The plans for the January 1968 Tet offensive were already being laid as the PAVN leaders was writing. The offensive itself was very likely designed, as has been observed, to speed up the timetable for ultimate communist victory, but not to bring that victory about; rather, a major objective seems to have been to bring about the stage of "simultaneous fighting and negotiating", thereby giving greater play to the struggle on the political front.

At this point, it is revelant to note that the formal position of the VNWP-CC with regard to strategy in the south, established as early as the Ninth Plenum in December 1963, was to marry the concept of a protracted war with the concept of taking advantage of opportunities to gain victories in a short time.[107] This was also the view of Le Duan, writing to southern leaders in March 1966.[108] Both sources stressed that there was no contradiction between the two concepts. Le Duan linked these in turn to the general "fight and negotiate" strategy which, as he observed, had been used by the CPC in their civil war, and again in Kore; the VNWP-CC had delegated the matter of timing to the Politburo. In April 1966, General Nguyen Chi Thanh addressed a congress of southern cadres and rejected the notion of a defensive stance and insisted that during the current dry season (November 1965 - May 1966) both the insurgents and the enemy were attacking with mobile forces in order to gain the offensive. "If we want to take the defensive", he said scornfully, "we should withdraw to India".[109]

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107. Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes, op. cit., No. 96, pp. 13-14.

108. Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Viet Nam op. cit., Appendix, Item 302, pp. 18-19.

109. US Mission in Viet Nam, Press Release, 30 March 1967: "Viet Cong Documents on War Tactics", Item 1, "Speech by Anh Sau", p. 5.

PAVN General Nguyen Van Vinh, addressing the same congress of cadres, also stressed the similarity between the concepts of protracted fighting and achieving decisive victory within a relatively short period of time, and developed the VNWP's thinking concerning negotiations. The Eleventh Plenum, he said, had clearly stated that a situation where fighting and negotiations were conducted simultaneously might arise, although the time was not yet ripe. He also spoke of a stage of "negotiations and signing of agreements", during which there would not necessarily be fighting: but whether or not the war resumed after the conclusion of agreements would depend on the comparative balance of forces. "If we are capable of dominating the adversary, the war will not break out again, and conversely":[110] that is, a victory by political means was preferable to a victory by military means, but a victory was in any case to be preferred to a defeat. He contrasted the Chinese assessment with the VNWP-CC's:

> China holds the view that conditions for negotiations are not yet ripe, not until a few years from now, and even worse, seven years [1973] from now. In the meantime, we should continue fighting to bog down the enemy, and should wait until a number of socialist countries acquire adequate conditions for strengthening their main force troops to launch a strong all-out and rapid offensive, using all types of weapons and heeding no borders. What

110. Working Paper [...], op. cit., Appendix, Item 303, "Talk of General Vinh", p. 16.

> we should do in the South today is to try restraining the enemy and make him bogged down, waiting until China has built strong forces to launch an all-out offensive.
>
> Our policy: to continue fighting until a certain time when we can fight and negotiate at the same time.[111]

He also added, with relevance to the context of international support, that the Vietnamese could not "just sit by and wait until the socialist camp is united to achieve decisive victory": on the contrary, "we must achieve decisive victory within the next four years [i.e., by early 1970]".[112] He also insisted on the necessity for the VNWP to have an independent line at a time "when there is a polemic among various countries".[113]

The reference to China's alleged concern that negotiations should not begin until 1973 is somewhat mystifying, as is that to an all-out offensive. No doubt they should not be taken literally, but as a general guide to Chinese thinking at that time. It is indeed possible that the 1973 reference reflected a Chinese concern for the US Presidential elections, since if the CPC leaders believed that Johnson would be re-elected in 1968, then his second term of office would come to an end in January 1973; a number of public references suggest that the Chinese did in fact attach considerable importance to US foreign policy manoeuvring with a view to influencing the American electorate.[114]

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111. Ibid., p. 15.
112. Ibid., p. 21.
113. Ibid., p. 22.
114. See e.g. the PRC Foreign Ministry statement of 30 August 1967, in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 37 (8 September 1967), p. 18; also Chou En-lai's 19 December 1967 speech for an NFL anniversary rally, in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 52 (25 December 1967), p. 11.

Before we leave these general considerations of Vietnamese military and political strategy, the Chinese assessment of Nguyen Chi Thanh deserves comment. The VNA announced on 8 July 1967 that the general had died in Hanoi on 6 July of a heart attack; observers in Saigon considered it more likely that he had succumbed to a B-52 bombing raid in South Viet Nam.[115] On the day of the death announcement, Mao Tse-tung joined Lin Piao and Chou En-lai in a joint message of condolence to Ho Chi Minh. "He made outstanding contributions to Viet Nam's revolutionary cause and to the unity and militant friendship between China and Viet Nam and between the two Parties and armies of both countries", the message said. "His death is a great loss to our common revolutionary cause".[116] Chou En-lai represented the Chinese leaders the same day at the DRVN Embassy in Peking, where in offering his condolences he said that Nguyen Chi Thanh was "an outstanding Communist Party member, both politically and militarily". He had made "important contributions" to the anti-US struggle and to the struggle "against modern revisionism".[117] In these eulogies, there is no trace of criticism of the late General for pursuing a forward military line in South Viet Nam rather than a classical form of guerrilla warfare. By implication, any such criticisms which might justifiably have been levied were clearly sub-ordinated to the generally favourable view of his militant outlook taken by the Chinese leaders.

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115. However, a report by Richard Critchfield in The Washington Star of 10 July 1967 raised the question of whether Nguyen Chi Thanh might not have been a struggle victim of [illegible] factional differences in Hanoi, along the lines of Nguyen Binh's rumoured "elimination" in 1951.
116. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 29 (14 July 1967), p. 6.
117. Ibid.

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At the end of November 1965, it was reported from Hong Kong that China had expanded its shipments of military and industrial equipment to the DRVN and had assigned "several thousand" engineering troops of the PLA to help maintain the rail supply link between China and the DRVN.[118] The number of troops involved was estimated in May 1966 to be about 20,000;[119] a report in July 1966, citing State Department sources, said that the size of the force had been increased since early 1966 to some 40,000, and implied that the engineers were protected by an unspecified number of anti-aircraft units, also from the PLA.[120] The total number of men involved appeared to remain constant at around 40,000 - 50,000 until late 1968 when they began to be withdrawn. American officials professed to be unconcerned about this presence, arguing that they were not involved in combat duties and were unlikely to be so engaged. Their primary task appeared to be the maintenance of the railway proper, repair of bridges and roads, and construction of airfields in the northern part of the DRVN.[121] The 40,000 men represented a relatively large force, however, and their presence in the DRVN was apparently intended in part to signal a warning to the US that the latter should not extend the war into China, as

118. Seymour Topping reporting from Hong Kong and citing no sources, in The New York Times, 1 December 1965.
119. See e.g. Stanley Karnow's report from Hong Kong in The Washington Post, 15 May 1966.
120. The New York Times, 2 July 1966, citing "State Department officials".
121. Ibid.; see also e.g. Frederick Taylor's report in "The Wall Street Journal, 14 February 1967.

well as in part to free substantial numbers of the Vietnamese regular force from labour duties and thus make them available for support or combat duties in South Viet Nam. A usually well-informed Hong Kong foreign correspondent reported that the DRVN military attache in Peking had announced, in mid-December 1965, that China had volunteered to make available one million troops for Viet Nam "upon request"; the statement was not published by either the Chinese or the Vietnamese, although it was "heard by foreign diplomats at the time".[122] Since the statement was certainly reported to the US, it may be supposed that this was one of the major reasons for its being made: to indicate that there was a limit to China's forbearance concerning American military activity on its periphery. In fact, China's position was put clearly and firmly by Chou En-lai on 10 April 1966, in an interview with a correspondent of the Pakistan newspaper Dawn: China would not take the initiative to provoke a war with the US, but if any "Asian, African or Latin American country" met with aggression from the US, China would give "support and help"; if such action resulted in a US attack on China, then the Chinese people would "fight to the end"; should the US impose a war on China, then the US would not "be able to pull out"; and once such a war did break out, "it will have no boundaries".[123] This amounted to a declaration that any large-scale confrontation between the US and China would be the result of US, not Chinese, actions; it also implied that China

122. See footnote 119.
123. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 20 (13 May 1966), p. 5; the statement was not released by NCNA until 9 May 1966, one month after the interview (see SCMP 3696 of 11 May, p. 45).

would not take measures to encourage such a confrontation. As a result, although a number of US aircraft were shot down over Chinese territory during the period of the air raids on the DRVN, and although charges of deliberate provocation were levelled at the US, none of these intrusions into Chinese territorial air space was taken as a causus belli. The US leaders, for their part, insisted that the air force avoid entering various restricted areas which included the Sino-DRVN border area to a depth of some 25 to 30 miles inside the DRVN.[124]

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At the beginning of November 1965, Renmin Ribao and Hongqi published a joint editorial rejecting the possibility of "united action" with the CPSU leaders on the Viet Nam question,[125] and on 16 November - probably in direct response to this article - Pravda resumed overt polemics after a silence of more than twelve months. DRVN Premier Pham Van Dong reportedly visited both Peking and Moscow during this month to discuss the questions of further aid and of a united front between the two major communist states.[126] However, from this time on, it was quite clear that the CPC leadership as a whole - taking its stand from Mao Tse-tung - was unable to establish a majority in favour of joint action with the USSR, despite the DRVN's urging and despite the apparent willingness of individual Chinese leaders to make at least a partial accomodation

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124. Sharp and Westmoreland, op. cit., p. 21.
125. See footnote 17; the text of the article was published in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 46 (12 November 1965), at pp. 10-21.
126. See e.g. Stanley Karnow's report from Hong Kong, citing "reliable sources", in The Washington Post, 9 December 1965.

to such goal. Mao's point of view appears to have been that no compromise with revisionism could be counteranced, even when this would lead to an apparent enchancement of the anti-imperialist struggle. Mao's insistence on this point, coupled with the CPC's resolute opposition to the DRVN's entering into negotiations, remained the key points of the PRC's relationship to the DRVN during 1966, 1967, and after the first three months of 1968. The two points were related to a continuing concern by Chinese spokesmen that a faction of the VNWP-CC Politburo, inclined to a view that the military struggle in South Viet Nam should be subordinated to prospects for a political settlement, might through Soviet pressures attract to itself the "uncommitted" members of the Politburo, and thereby consitute a majority in favour of moving to the conference table.

Evidence in support of this assessment can be found in Chinese comments at the end of 1965. On 17 December, the US State Department released the texts of correspondence between President Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Amintore Fanfani, Italian President of the UN General Assembly.[127] The latter personage reported to the US President that Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong had indicated to third parties that the DRVN was prepared to "initiate negotiations without first requiring actual withdrawal of the American troops". However, "in order for the peace negotiations to come about", it was necessary that there should be a cease-fire throughout Viet Nam, and a declaration that the

127. In The New York Times, 18 December 1965.

Geneva Agreements of 1954 would be taken as a basis for negotiations. In his reply, Secretary Rusk pointed out that any reduction or cessation of hostilities prior to negotiations "would have to be on an equitable and reciprocal basis", and he said that the US Administration was "far from persuaded" that the reported views of the Vietnamese leaders indicated "a real willingness for unconditional negotiations". The issues were never tested. Publication of the exchanges drew an immediate disavowal from the VNA in an "authorized statement".[128] This became the standard reaction on the part of the Vietnamese when any of their "peace probes" became public, no doubt in part from a recognition that such delicate diplomatic activity could not proceed in a satisfactory direction when exposed to international observation and commentary, and in part from the DRVN's own delicate position between Peking and Moscow.

The Chinese reaction came directly. On 20 December 1965, at a reception given for the NFL's founding anniversary, Chou En-lai said:

> If a person covertly conspires with US imperialism while giving some superficial aid to the Vietnamese people, [...] and if he actually sows discord in an attempt to undermine the Vietnamese people's unity against US aggression and the unity of the Vietnamese and Chinese peoples against US imperialism while professing that the socialist countries should unite to fight imperialism, then he is [...] capitalizing on the revolutionary cause

128. VNA 18 December 1965; also in The New York Times, 19 December 1965. The reports, said VNA, were "sheer groundless speculation".

> of the Vietnamese people for a dirty deal with the United States and hoping to attain his ulterior motive through such aid. This is an impermissible betrayal [...] of the Vietnamese people [...]. [...] The heroic Vietnamese people are not to be cowed or duped.[129]

The reference to the USSR is clear; what is remarkable is that the Chinese assessed that "discord" had been sown - presumably within the ranks of the VNWP-CC Politburo - and that the CPC felt sufficiently strongly about the matter to make public reference to it in this way. An impartial observer might also conclude that it was not proper for the Chinese leaders to say what did or did not constitute "betrayal" of the"Vietnamese people"; surely this was a matter for the Vietnamese to decide, and surely the Chinese were coming close to interfering in Vietnamese policy decisions.

This episode was closely followed by an extensive pause in the bombing of the DRVN - from 25 December 1965 to 30 January 1966 - and a diplomatic offensive on the part of the US accompanied the pause. Secretary Rusk drew up a list of "14 points" to constitute a US "peace package".[130] However, Washington's diplomacy was heavy-handed: also, as a participant in the US planning processes later commented, Washington was unprepared for negotiations.[131] No positive response came from Hanoi: the DRVN's Foreign Ministry issued a statement on 4 January reaffirming the "four point stand"

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129. The excerpt was printed in bold type in Peking Review, Vol. VIII No. 52 (24 December 1965), p. 6.
130. These summarized "elements which the United States believes can go into peace in Southeast Asia", and were widely publicized. They are given in e.g. Chester Cooper, op. cit., pp. 293-294.
131. Chester Cooper, op. cit., p. 296.

and insisting that a "political settlement of the Viet Nam problem" could be "envisaged" only when the US had accepted that stand, had proved this "by actual deeds", and had concluded its "acts of war against the DRVN"[132] Renmin Ribao's Commentator on 9 January applauded this stand, saying that negotiations before withdrawal meant negotiations without withdrawal.[133] On 28 January, an appeal by Ho Chi Minh to heads of state of a number of countries was published by VNA, in which he reiterated the points of the 4 January statement. However, although he added that the Vietnamese people would resolutely fight against the US army so long as it "still remains on our soil", it seemed that there was a clear distinction being made between the possibility of negotiations after a bombing halt - now being advocated - and an insistence on troop withdrawals before negotiations - the consistent Chinese position, but one which had never been explicitly insisted on by the DRVN. When Liu Shao-chi replied to Ho's letter on 30 January, he reiterated the PRC's position: before a US troop withdrawal from South Viet Nam, "a settlement of the Viet Nam problem is out of the question".[134] This in turn echoed Renmin Ribao's Observer, who on 7 January had examined the "14-point package" of the US, and considered that the last of these points was "the essence" of the US position.

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132. VNA 4 January 1966.
133. Text in Peking Review, Vol. IX No. 3 (14 January 1966, pp. 15-16.
134. Text in Peking Review, Vol.IX No. 6 (4 February 1966), pp. 5-6.

> Reversing cause and effect, the Johnson Administration wants the Vietnamese people to stop their resistance first and demands that Hanoi stop its 'conquest' as a condition for the withdrawal of US troops. This actually means that it is not prepared to withdraw its troops. [...] The whole course of events proves that the gigantic US 'peace talks' fraud is an overture to wider war. [...] Therefore, the question in Viet Nam now is not so-called 'peace talks' but to deal the US aggressors further and still heavier blows.[135]

The contents of this article, published on the day that a Soviet Party and Government delegation led by **Alexander Shelepin** stopped over in Peking en route to Hanoi, were doubtless directed as much to the delegation as to the DRVN. In what may have been intended as more than a health precaution, two mats saturated with disinfectant were placed at the foot of the gangway of the Soviet plane at Peking airport, and the Soviet officials were obliged to walk on these when disembarking.[136] An NFL-CC statement published on the same day[137] seemed to be close to the Chinese views, and both seemed to express a concern that the VNWP leaders might be moved by Soviet arguments; the relative militancy of the NFL views at this time may be attributed to the fact that they reflected the

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135. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. IX No. 3 (14 January 1966), pp. 6 and 9.
136. David Oancia, reporting from Peking in The Washington Post, 8 January 1966.
137. VNA 7 January 1966. The satement was dated 5 January, and is substantially extracted in Peking Review, Vol. IX No. 3 (14 January 1966), at pp. 12-13.

assessment of General Nguyen Chi Thanh concerning the need to press on with offensive tactics.

During the visit of the Soviet delegation, Pham Van Dong stated that aid from the USSR had been transported to Viet Nam according to plan and had "exerted a good effect", thereby countering Chinese charges concerning the quantity and quality of that aid.[138] Shelepin stressed the need for unity within the socialist camp.[139] The communique on the visit, issued on 14 January,[140] indicated that the USSR was to increase its aid commitment, but left a number of issues vague. The two parties were reported as having merely "exchanged views", for example, on the situation created by US escalation in Viet Nam, thus implying substantially different assessments. Nevertheless, the VNWP agreed to attend the CPSU's 23rd Congress, to be held in March 1966.[141] The VNWP leaders appeared unchanged in their determination not to commit themselves to either the Soviet or the Chinese viewpoints on the Viet Nam conflict, but to maintain an independent and pragmatic middle road.

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Neither the Soviet nor the Chinese greetings to the VNWP for its 36th founding anniversary on 3 February 1966 - if any were sent - were published by the North Vietnamese. An article by

138. VNA 11 January 1966.
139. VNA 11 January 1966.
140. VNA 15 January 1966.
141. Le Duan in due course headed the VNWP delegation; the text of his speech to the Congress, which did not contain any indications of policy changes, is in the May 1966 issue of Hoc Tap, translated in JPRS 36012, pp. 4-11.

Hongqi's Commentator was published on 11 February,[142] reiterating that the CPC would "never take any united action with the new leaders of the CPSU" , so long as they did not abandon the Khrushchov revisionist line, did not change their line of "Soviet-US collaboration", and did not abolish "the Soviet-US-Indian-Japanese alliance". Thus, when a delegation of the Japan Communist Party, led by its General Secretary Kenji Miyamoto, visited China after some days in Hanoi and endeavoured to achieve some degree of "united action" within the socialist camp so that international aid to Viet Nam might be stepped up, it was unsuccessful. Mao Tse-tung reportedly rejected the terms of a proposed CPC-Japan Communist Party communique, on the grounds that it did not condemn the Soviet leadership by name, despite the fact that it had already been approved for the Chinese side by a group headed by Chou En-lai.[143]

At about this time, on the very eve of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Chinese comments on the regional situation appeared to reflect a defensive attitude. In particular, the 29 January Renmin Ribao published a map of China and what purported to be a listing of US military bases on the periphery demonstrating the present stage of a US scheme for the military encirclement of China. On 20 February, the same newspaper's Observer stressed the utility of the US presence for the task of social and political mobilization on the domestic front: to have such a "ferocious

142. "Confessions concerning the line of the Soviet-US collaboration pursued by the new leaders of the CPSU"; text in Peking Review, Vol. IX No. 8 (18 February 1966), pp. 6-12.

143. The facts surrounding this well-known episode are still incomplete, and no text of the proposed communique has apparently been published by either the JCP or the Chinese side. The incident is discussed in "Jay Tao", "Mao's World Outlook: Vietnam and the Revolution in China", Asian Survey, Vol. VIII No. 5 (May 1968), p. 249; Sheldon Simon, "Maoism and Inter-Party Relations: Peking's Alienation of the Japan Communist Party", and Kikuzo Ito with Minoru Shibata, "The Dilemma of Mao Tse-tung", both in The China Quarterly No. 35 (July-September 1965), at pp. 40-57 and 58-77 respectively.

enemy" "glowering at us and threatening us night and day", he wrote, "will make us Chinese people always bear in mind the danger of war while living in peace and redouble our vigilance. It will make us work harder to build a strong and prosperous country. And it will keep us always on the alert and sharpen our fighting spirit."[144]

As the Chinese leaders became preoccupied with domestic affairs after the end of March 1966, there were few indications of changes in either Peking's or Hanoi's assessment of the war, relations with the Soviet Union, and tactics for dealing with the US. Many third parties attempted, without success, to mediate between Washington and Hanoi, and in a 27 June speech delivered in Tirana, Chou En-lai seemed to be addressing himself to these unnamed persons when he insisted that the Viet Nam question was one "of aggression and resistance to aggression", and that "to adopt an eclectic attitude which makes no distinction between right and wrong will only encourage the US aggressors".[145]

On 29 June, US bombers attacked petroleum storage tanks in Haiphong, and, following a 30 June protest from the DRVN Foreign Ministry,[146] the PRC Government issued a statement on 3 July which extended firm but not notably enthusiastic support.[147] A July editorial in Renmin Ribao returned to the somewhat neglected theme of Chinese readiness to take "all necessary action to support the

144. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. IX No. 9 (25 February 1966), at p. 11.
145. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 27 (1 July 1966), at p. 30.
146. VNA 30 June 1966.
147. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 28 (8 July 1966), pp. 19-20.

fraternal Vietnamese people in accordance with their interests and demands", adding that the extension of the bombing to Hanoi and Haiphong had "scrapped the Geneva Agreements in their entirety". Fear that the Vietnamese might succumb to this additional pressure was also expressed: how can anyone imagine, the editorialist asked, that the Vietnamese people will hold peace talks with the US robber who is swinging his butcher's knife at them? "As long as a single US soldier remains on Vietnamese soil, peace in Viet Nam can never come about".[148] Similar fears were expressed by Chou En-lai on 9 July,[149] and by Chen Yi on 10 July.[150] Protest rallies were organized throughout China, culminating in a one-million-strong meeting in Peking on 22 July.[151] In a statement read to the rally, Liu Shao-chi said that the Chinese Government and people had "naturally ceased to be bound by the Geneva Agreements in supporting the Vietnamese people's struggle";[152] this ambiguous reference was only slightly clarified by Tao Chu, speaking at the same meeting, when he asserted that the US bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong spelt "the final burial of the Geneva Agreements and the total liquidation of all the restrictions and limitations laid down

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148. Text in ibid., pp. 20-23, 42.

149. "The United States is now declaring over and over again its intention of fighting to the finish in southern Viet Nam; evidently, its purpose is to force the Vietnamese people into begging for peace, or, failing this, to destroy Viet Nam. But the heroic Vietnamese people absolutely will not submit to the US war blackmail [...] "; from the text in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 29 (15 July 1966), at p. 7.

150. "US imperialism thinks that once it drops bombs on [Hanoi], it can cow the Vietnamese people and force them to stop their struggle against US aggression and for national salvation. This is a sheer daydream!"; from the text in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 29 (15 July 1966), at pp. 27-28.

151 Reported in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 31 (29 July 1966), pp. 19 - 21.

152. From the text in ibid., at p. 10.

in the Geneva Agreements".[153] Renmin Ribao's 24 July editorial also stressed the view that the Geneva Agreements were "already nonexistent".[154] On the other hand, the DRVN Ambassador to China, who also spoke at the rally on the 22nd, made no reference to the Geneva Agreements; he contented himself with the somewhat compromising view that so-called political solutions that confused the victim with the aggressor or put them both on the same footing would "meet with the strong opposition" of the Vietnamese people.[155] It is not clear whether the Chinese spokesmen, by their references to the alleged disappearance of the Geneva Agreement restrictions, were seeking to encourage some form of substantial retaliation by the armed forces of the DRVN and the southern insurgents. In any case, it was difficult to see what more could be done at the moment, at least in military terms, than was in fact being done. It is possible that these references were intended in part at least to declare that the Soviet Union had finally lost, in the eyes of the Chinese leaders, the final vestige of authority in its capacity as a Co-Chairman of the 1954 Geneva Conference; if so, this declaration merely served to publicly indicate what had long been implicit in Chinese criticism of the Soviet role.

The communique of the 11th Plenum of the CPC's Eighth Central Committee, adopted on 12 August 1966, stated that the Plenum "fully agrees to all the measures already taken and all actions to be taken as decided upon by the Central Committee of the Party and

153. Ibid., p. 15.
154. From the text in ibid., at p. 22.
155. From the Text of his speech in ibid., at p. 17.

the Government in consultation with the Vietnamese side concerning aid to Viet Nam for resisting US aggression".[156] No details were given. On 1 September, Mao Tse-tung, Liu Shao-chi, Chu Teh and Chou En-lai greeted the DRVN leaders for the latter's National Day. The message stressed that the Vietnamese people were "not to be intimidated or deceived" by the 'peace talks' fraud, and that China was their "reliable rear area"; the Chinese people had "made up their minds and have made every preparation" to deal joint blows with the Vietnamese against the US.[157] These sentiments were skilfully counterpointed by the DRVN Ambassador at a reception in Peking on the following day: the Vietnamese people, he said, had "made every preparation" and were determined to carry on a long struggle; and they "deeply understand" that the Chinese people provided a powerful backing.[158] On 9 September, Chen Yi yet again denounced the "peace talks" fraud, and insisted that the "only way" left to the Vietnamese people was "to fight through to the end": there was no possibility of compromises half way".[159] These comments may have been related to discussions between Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap and the Soviet leaders which reportedly took place secretly in the USSR around the middle of August;[160] but since no indications were given of the nature of the talks, it is impossible to judge whether the Chinese comments were directed to counter any major policy decisions which may have come from them.

156. Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 34 (19 August 1966), at p. 7.
157. Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 37 (9 September 1966), p. 4.
158. Ibid., p. 3.
159. Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 38 (16 September 1966), p. 6.
160. See Peter Grose's reports from Moscow, citing "diplomatic sources", in The New York Times, 27 August and 10 September 1966.

Chinese suspicion of "Soviet-US collusion" found vigorous expression in October, following a meeting in Washington between Soviet Foreitn Minister Gromyko and President Johnson on 10 October. On 16 and 23 October, Renmin Ribao's Observer especially stressed the view that a new "counter-revolutionary 'Holy Alliance' between US imperialism and the Soviet leading group" had already come into existence; while this alliance was setting itself against the Vietnamese people, its spearhead "is directed specifically against China".[161] Observer also considered that moves to reduce tensions in Europe would facilitate the despatch of further US troops to Viet Nam, a view repeated by Chou En-lai in a speech on 29 November. Chou also charged that the USSR was "scheming to use so-called 'united action' to control Viet Nam and sow dissension in the militant unity between the Chinese and Vietnamese people so as to sabotage from within the Vietnamese people's war [...]". As with so many of the Chinese public criticisms of Soviet motivations and behaviour, the precise meaning of this charge was not self-evident.[162] The USSR could use the Vietnamese desire for "united action" as a means of seeking to exercise "control" over Viet Nam only if Viet Nam became dependent upon the USSR for defence. The reference to sowing "dissension" very likely referred to Soviet claims that China was hindering aid to the DRVN: such charges were revived towards the end of 1966 and during the first months of 1967, when it was

161. "Confession of Worldwide US-Soviet Collusion on a Big Scale", in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 43 (21 October 1966), p. 21; and "Expose the US-Soviet Plot for a New Eastern Munich", in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 44 (28 October 1966), p. 9 respectively.

162. Extracted in Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 49 (2 December 1966), at p. 11; emphasis added.

claimed that the Chinese damaged Soviet arms shipments, "stole rocket secrets", and "simply lost" goods in transit.[163] The reference to the possibility of "sabotage from within" implies Chinese fears that a significantly large number of VNWP leaders might incline to the Soviet views and thus shift Vietnamese war policy from a relatively militant position to a more moderate one, presumably including increased concern for negotiations with the US.

Chinese fears that the DRVN might in fact agree to begin the negotiating process were further heightened in the period beginning with the bombing of Hanoi, and continuing for several months thereafter. On 5 December, the PRC Foreign Ministry judged that raids on Hanoi on 2 and 4 December were designed to "blackmail" the Vietnamese people and "force them into accepting its terms of peace talks": however, the statement insisted, none of the US "tricks" could ever "shake the Vietnamese people's determination to carry on the fight to the end".[164] Similar views were expressed in a PRC Government statement of 15 December,[165] which protested further bombing of Hanoi on 13 and 15 December. Again, on 16 December, a spokesman for the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested that the PRC Embassy in Hanoi had been seriously damaged during the 14 December raids; but, he said, the Chinese and the

163. Cf. Renmin Ribao's Commentator article on 22 January 1967, especially concerned to refute the charge of damaging arms and stealing rocket secrets: in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 5 (27 January 1967), p. 24; and the report (quoting East European sources) in The Sunday Telegraph (London) of 8 January 1967. The VNA reported on 26 January 1967 that Nhan Dan of that day had condemned the "odious slanders" spread by the imperialists who had spread "the false report that China had 'hijacked' missiles sent by the Soviet Union to help the Vietnamese people". The Vietnamese people had "always enjoyed the unreserved support and the great and heartfelt assistance" of the USSR and China, the report added.

164. Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 50 (9 December 1966), p. 23.

165. Peking Review, Vol. 9 No. 52 (23 December 1966), pp. 8-9.

Vietnamese people "cannot be cowed".[166] Chen Yi on 18 December expressed the deep conviction that the Vietnamese would "fight to the end until complete victory is won", and that none of the "bombing swindle" tricks could "fool the Vietnamese people".[167]

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There were many parties engaged in attempts to establish a formula whereby the North Vietnamese and the US could begin to move towards the negotiating table, from the last two months of 1966 in particular, and the "good offices" or pressures that the USSR could exert on the North Vietnamese were an important part of most of these. The Chinese thus had good reason to complain at the Soviet role, from their militant point of view. In particular, by early December 1966 there seemed reasonable prospects that some good might come of an American initiative dubbed "Phase A-Phase B" by some commentators, and at that time dubbed "Operation Marigold".[168] The essence of this proposal was that the US would agree to stop the bombing of North Viet Nam, and that this would be followed by mutual "deescalation" on the part of both the US and the DRVN. The DRVN leaders indicated their interest in following up these "peace feelers" by allowing the Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, to inform the Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett - in an interview on 28 January 1967 - that the cessation of bombing might lead to

166. Ibid., p. 11.
167. Ibid., pp. 12-15. However, he warned, "the Vietnamese people will have to go through an arduous fight before they can win final victory" (p. 13).
168. Chester Cooper, The Lost Crusade, op. cit., pp. 311, 333ff. See also David Kraslow and Stuart H. Loory, The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam (New York: Random House-Vintage Books, 1968), pp. 3-88.

productive talks:

> If it [the US] really wants talks, it must first halt unconditionally the bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. It is only after the unconditional cessation of US bombing and all other acts of war against the [DRVN] that there could be talks between the [DRVN] and the United States.[169]

As an American official involved in aspects of the negotiating process later observed, this was the first time Hanoi "had directly addressed the possibility of an official dialogue between North Vietnamese and Americans".[170]

On 6 February, Soviet Premier Kosygin arrived in London for talks with British officials. Early in the talks, both sides exchanged views concerning Viet Nam, and the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson put forward an abbreviated version of the "Phase A-Phase B" formula. Kosygin expressed interest, and asked to see the formula in writing; but the official Washington proposal reversed the phases of the earlier formulation. The bombing would stop after assurances had been received that PAVN infiltration into South Viet Nam had been stopped.[171] The same "Phase B-Phase A" formula was contained in a letter sent by President Johnson to President Ho Chi Minh on 8 February:

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169. VNA 28 January 1967.
170. Chester Cooper, op. cit., p. 351.
171. Ibid., pp. 357-361.

> I am prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of US forces in South Viet Nam as soon as Im assured that infiltration into South Viet Nam by land and by sea has stopped. These acts of restraint on both sides would, I believe, make it possible for us to conduct serious and private discussions leading toward an early peace.[172]

On the day this letter was despatched, a cessation of bombing came into effect in connection with the Vietnamese New Year festival. However, it was decided in Washington that Hanoi would have to give its assurances that PAVN forces north of the 17th parallel were at a standstill by 6 p.m. on 13 February (Hanoi time), for the bombing pause to be extended. The deadline was extended by some hours, but, as an American official involved in "Operation Marigold" later commented, it was an impossible deadline.[173] A few minutes after midnight on the morning of 14 February (Hanoi time), bombing was resumed. About half an hour before, Hanoi Radio had broadcast a reply from Ho to a peace appeal made by the Pope. Ho insisted that the US "must put an end to their aggression in Viet Nam, end unconditionally and definitively the bombing and all other acts of war against the [DRVN], withdraw from South Viet Nam all American and satellite troops [...]".[174] On 15 February, the DRVN representative in Moscow handed Ho Chi Minh's reply to the US representative. Dated the same day - i.e., after the resumption of the bombing - it was couched in uncompromising terms. Since the US had unleashed the war in Viet Nam, he said, it must

172. Text in e.g. Vietnam Courier, No. 103 (27 March 1967), p. 2.
173. Chester Cooper, op. cit., p. 366.
174. VNA 13 February 1967; text also in Vietnam Courier, No. 98 (20 February 1967), p.3.

cease that aggression. He insisted on an unconditional cessation of the bombing, and went on:

> It is only after the unconditional cessation of the US bombing raids and all other acts of war against the /DRVN/ that the /DRVN/ could enter into talks and discuss questions concerning the two sides.[175]

The Chinese were preoccupied, in late January and early February 1967, with further denouncing the Soviet Union. On 25 January, a group of Chinese students in Moscow were involved in a fracas with militia when they sought to lay wreaths at Stalin's tomb. The PRC Foreign Ministry issued a protest on the following day,[176] and on 27 January a Renmin Ribao editorial urged that these "rabid provocations of the filthy Soviet revisionist swine" should be strongly retaliated against.[177] On 26, 27, 28 and 29 January, huge demonstrations were mounted in front of the Soviet Embassy in Peking; these continued during the following days. Chinese students also demonstrated outside the Soviet Embassy in Paris on 28, 29 and 31 January; Chinese in Hanoi were also reported to have demonstrated in front of the Soviet Embassy there.[178] A further

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175. VNA 21 March 1967; text also in Vietnam Courier, No. 103 (27 March 1967), p.1.

176. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 6 (3 February 1967) pp. 21-23. The Soviet revisionists had been "running hither and thither and barking furiously and incessantly at socialist China", the statement said; "Since we dread neither heaven nor earth, neither devils nor gods, how can we possibly dread you, a few flies freezing to death in the whirling snow!" (p. 22).

177. Ibid., pp. 23-24.

178. Atlas, October 1967, p. 9, refers to Hoc Tap complains that the Chinese continued to utter anti-Soviet charges in the presence of Vietnamese, and that Chinese students and diplomats demonstrated before the gates of the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi. The present writer has not been able to verify this reference. An NCNA report from Hanoi on 11 February 1967, however, refers to letters of protest written by Chinese nationals in the DRVN, addressed to the Chinese Embassy there, concerning the incidents in Moscow.

incident occurred against the Chinese Embassy in Moscow on 3 February; a PRC Government statement on 5 February expressed the "strongest, most vehement protest";[179] Renmin Ribao's editorial on 6 February referred to the affair as a "savage outrage seldom seen in the history of world diplomacy".[180] Large-scale demonstrations continued throughout China in protest.

The depth of anti-Soviet feeling tended to displace attention from the Viet Nam situation. Nevertheless, the Chinese leaders returned to Viet Nam on 12 February, when Chen Yi condemned once again the "'peace talk' fraud". The US, he told a banquet audience, had now become "more and more unbridled and blatant in peddling its 'peace talks' swindle"; but the heroic Vietnamese people were "not to be crushed by force, nor intimidated by threats, nor deceived by cajolery".[181] Then, on 20 February, Renmin Ribao's Observer delivered one of the most outspoken official Chinese comments on the Viet Nam conflict to that time. It amounted to an instruction by the PRC to the DRVN to continue fighting. "The Viet Nam situation at the present moment is crucial", the commentary began, and continued:

> The Vietnamese nation is a single entity. [...] The loss of South Viet Nam inevitably means the loss of North Viet Nam. [...] And once this US imperialist beast heals its wounds, it will some day spring upon North Viet Nam.

179. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 7 (10 February 1967), pp. 6-7.
180. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
181. Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 8 (17 February 1967), p. 29.

> [...] The longer the war lasts, the greater, deeper, and more insoluble will be the difficulties confronting US imperialism. [...] The Vietnamese people have all the favourable conditions for fighting a protracted war on their side, while what US imperialism most fears is that the war will drag on. So long as the Vietnamese people pin down the [...] US aggressor troops by a protracted war and develop their all-nation war of resistance [...], they can certainly deal [...] the death blow and win final victory.[182]

The commentary also revealed concern that "the Vietnamese people" might be forced "to their knees" through the Soviet-US "trap" of "forcing peace talks through bombing", thereby tending to confirm that - at least in Peking's eyes - the Hanoi leadership as a whole was inclining towards negotiations. The peremptory comment concerning the inevitable loss of the DRVN, should major concessions (especially termination of DRVN military support to the southern insurgents) be made over South Viet Nam, implied a Chinese view that the DRVN was not viable as a truncated Vietnamese state: viability could be ensured only by carrying the military effort to the end. The commentary also implied that should the South be lost, China would be either unable or unwilling to prevent "the loss" of the DRVN; this in turn suggested an essentially defensive - rather than offensive - Chinese view of the current US threat.

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182. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 9 (24 February 1967), pp. 10-12.

Thus, the Vietnamese revolution had to be carried to the end; it had to be made by the Vietnamese themselves, and no others; and the tactic best securing these objectives was that of protracted war, since this would both bring greatest hurt to the US and ensure greatest political consolidation within South Viet Nam for the insurgent forces under Marxist-Leninist leadership.

Following the failure of "Operation Marigold" and the widespread dissemination of the above Observer commentary, the NFL-CC issued a statement on 28 February insisting that the South Vietnamese people would never give up fighting so long as the US persisted in intensifying the war. "It is clear", the statement said, "that the US obdurate policy of aggression in South Viet Nam is the cause of the present especially serious situation in Indo-China and Asia". This policy was "the only obstacle to the restoration of peace in Viet Nam".[183] The statement also called for governments and peoples of the world "to give still more vigorous support - moral, political and material - to the resistance war",[184] implying that the NFL leadership was dissatisfied with the existing level of support. The PRC Foreign Ministry hailed this statement on 5 March, but warned that since the February attempt to "induce the Vietnamese people to accept US terms for negotiations" had failed, military operations in Viet Nam would be further stepped up in order to

183. Text in e.g. Vietnam Courier, No. 100 (6 March 1967), pp. 1-2.
184. Ibid.: emphasis in source.

compel the Vietnamese "to stop fighting and lay down their arms [and] bring them to their knees".[185] The Chinese made no reference to the NFL plea for "still more vigorous support".

Since the 20 February Observer article appeared after Ho Chi Minh's reply to President Johnson had been delivered, it does not seem that Chinese pressures were a determining element for the content of that reply. However, the Vietnamese indicated that they were aware of Chinese sensitivities on the issues, and on 28 February VNA published an "authorized statement" which rejected unelaborated rumours "concerning the transit of aid goods from the Soviet Union and some other countries to Viet Nam through China".[186] The Vietnamese thus moved some little distance from the Soviet side and closer again to the "middle path" between commitment to the Chinese and the Soviet sides on the matter of aid, since the rumours, instigated by the USSR, alleged damage and misappropriation to the goods.[187] Then on 21 March, the DRVN published the texts of the letters exchanged between President Johnson and President Ho Chi Minh.[188] Whether this was the result of severe Chinese pressures on the Vietnamese leaders, a substantial disillusionment concerning the Soviet role, or other causes, the

185. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 11 (10 March 1967), pp. 12-13. The paragraph containing this view, as well as the following paragraph which attacked the USSR, was omitted by VNA when it reported on the statement on 7 March.
186. These "fallacious reports" were "sheer fabrications aimed at very wicked purposes", VNA said.
187. See footnotes 36 and 163 above.
188. VNA 21 March 1967.

disclosure brought considerable embarrassment to the USSR, since President Johnson had said in his letter that if bilateral discussions did take place, a suitable site for these could be Moscow "where contacts have already occurred".[189] The Chinese thus gained additional fuel for their continuing charges of Soviet "betrayal" of the Vietnamese communists.

The release of this correspondence coincided with a meeting at Guam between President Johnson and the South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu. Chen Yi on 23 March considered that the meeting indicated preparations for a further extension of the war "to the whole of Indo-China, to the whole of Southeast Asia and to China.[190] Renmin Ribao's Observer, commenting on 27 March on the meeting, directed most of his remarks against the Soviet Union. The USSR was playing the part of a Trojan horse, he said; it had "brought pressure" on the Vietnamese and "tried to wreck their struggle"; Kosygin's February visit to London was for "the dirty mission of openly betraying" the Vietnamese revolutionary cause. But, he went on, the Vietnamese would "neither submit to intimidation nor collapse under pressure"; they had "inexhaustible strength" and could "fight for generations and generations on their own soil"; final and complete victory would be theirs, provided they persevered in their war of resistance and fought a protracted war.[191]

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189. Source as for footnote 172.
190. Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 13 (24 March 1967), at p. 10.
191. Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 14 (31 March 1967), pp. 14-16.

These themes were linked to his 20 February article by Observer in a third commentary published in Renmin Ribao on 30 April.[192] This set out ten occasions since the first bombing pause in May 1965 when the Soviet leaders "worked hand in glove" with the US, and concluded that they were "a pack of rank traitors to the Vietnamese revolution, shameless scabs serving as advisors to US imperialism." It again insisted that

> the Soviet revisionist rulers have come out with the demand that the Vietnamese people should renounce their national aspirations for whose fulfilment they have striven at heavy cost to themselves for a hundred years, abandon their compatriots in the south, and let them once again sink into the dark abyss of colonial oppression and become slaves of imperialism. If this should come to pass, then there would be the danger that socialist North Viet Nam will be lost too and all the fruits of the Vietnamese people's revolution forfeited and destroyed overnight.[193]

Therefore, Observer insisted, "under no circumstances will we take any 'united action'" with the Soviet leaders. In order to oppose US imperialism, it was imperative to oppose the Soviet revisionist ruling clique.

This article, like that of 20 February, implied a warning to the VNWP leaders that if they should succumb to the Soviet

192. "Soviet Revisionist Ruling Clique is Rank Traitor to Vietnamese Revolution"; in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 19 (5 May 1967), pp. 18-21.
193. Ibid., p. 20.

blandishments, then they - and they alone - would have to bear the responsibility for forfeiting and destroying the gains of the revolution. However, there was no direct reaction in North Viet Nam to these strong and public expressions of Chinese views, and they continued to insist on balancing Soviet and Chinese advice and making their own dicisions, to resist Chinese pressures to break entirely with the Soviet Union and to "fight for generations and generations", and to resist Soviet pressures to move rapidly to negotiations. In mid-April,[194] it had been reported that a new Sino-Soviet agreement had been signed the previous month to ensure uninterrupted transit of Soviet military aid through China (as mentioned earlier in this chapter). That the two ideological foes had been thus persuaded was a substantial tribute to the diplomacy of the Vietnamese.

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Publication of an alleged interview by journalist Simon Malley with Chou En-lai in mid-May[195] led to an immediate denial from Chinese authorities that the meeting took place. The writer, who visited China in March on a transit visa while representing the weekly Jeune Afrique, said in his articles that China would send troops to Viet Nam in three separate circumstances: if Hanoi requested help, if US forces landed in North Viet Nam, and if Hanoi was "threatened with a 'sell-out peace'".[196] US

194. See footnote 43 above.
195. The 10 articles by Malley were widely reprinted. See e.g. The Chicago Daily News, from 13 May 1967 to 24 May 1967; The New York Times, 15 May 1967.
196. This report was contained in the first article of the series.

State Department officials expressed the view that the articles were genuine, and discounted the Chinese disclaimers.[197] However, Jeune Afrique did not publish the articles, pending clarification of "certain points".[198] The present writer considers that the interviews did not take place, and that Malley fabricated the details for his "reportage". However, the incident does serve to underscore the fact that although the Chinese had had opportunities to indicate concern over a "sell-out peace", the results of such an event were always projected in terms of the damage that would accrue to the Vietnamese, and there was never any suggestion that the Chinese would push their opposition to a negotiated settlement to the point of intervening militarily. The Chinese took their stand on the twin planks that the USSR's leaders were renegades to world revolution, and that protracted war in South Viet Nam could be waged successfully. The first plank was closely related at this time to the extremely strained relations between the two states; the second plank was related to the fact that protracted war did not require sophisticated modern weaponry of the kind that the USSR was supplying to Hanoi and which thereby linked Hanoi to Moscow in a relationship of dependence, even though it was not an absolute dependence.

While they insisted on the need for protracted war, the Chinese leaders now also began to resume praise for the tactics being

197. NCNA stated on 16 May 1967 that during Malley's two-day stay in China, neither Chou En-lai nor any other Chinese leaders saw him; a further disclaimer was issued on 28 May 1967 (see SCMP 3951 of 2 June 1967, pp. 29-30; also Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 24 of 9 June 1969, p. 37).

198. The New York Times, 17 May 1967.

used in South Viet Nam. Thus, a review on 10 April of the war over the first three months of 1967 judged that the situation was excellent, and that the liberation forces and people had gained in strength. Guerrilla warfare was conducted "on a more extensive scale", and the tactics of "luring the enemy in deep to beat him" and "concentration of troops for a war of annihilation" were being used in a clever manner to enhance victories.[199] On 12 June, Chou En-lai hailed the NFL President for "defeating the US" during the dry season just concluded; the events in South Viet Nam during this time were "a miracle in the history of mankind's liberation wars".[200] Four days earlier, a Renmin Ribao editorial also stressed that the Vietnamese had "grasped the most effective magic weapon - people's war - to cope with US imperialism".[201] A month later, the same newspaper said that those people who wanted to win complete victory against aggression "can rely only on the strategy and tactics of people's war". "No other strategy and tactics will work".[202] Vietnamese practice was explicitly linked to Chinese inspiration in a 21 July editorial: the Vietnamese people, it declared, had "applied Chairman Mao's theory of people's war and its strategy and tactics to their own practical fighting, made their own great creations and thus set another splendid example of people's war". However, victory was again linked to persistence in "the revolutionary line" and in protracted war.[203]

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199. "The Brilliant Record of our Comrades-in-arms in South Vietnam": in Jiefangjun Bao of 10 April 1967 (see SCMP 3919 of 14 April 1967, pp. 30-32).
200. Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 25 (16 June 1967), p. 10.
201. Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 25 (16 June 1967), p. 33.
202. Renmin Ribao editorial, 7 July 1967; Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 29 at p. 9.
203. Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 31 (28 July 1967) pp. 10-12.

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The DRVN must have begun preparing at about this time for the massive military activity that erupted in South Viet Nam at the end of January 1968. An agreement on China's economic and technical assistance to the DRVN in 1968 was signed on 5 August, and the leader of the Vietnamese delegation indicated his satisfaction with the results, which were of "extremely great significance". The aid would further strengthen "the economic and national defence potential" of the DRVN, and would also, he said, "be conductive to the further strengthening of the militant unity and fraternal friendship" between the two Parties and peoples.[204] When Mao Tse-tung, Lin Piao and Chou En-lai greeted the Vietnamese leaders on 1 September for the occasion of the DRVN National Day, they referred to the "wise leadership" of the VNWP for the first time in many months.[205] A second NFL Political Programme was released by VNA on the same day, elaborating its earlier Programme but insisting upon a coalition government in Saigon in which its representatives would no doubt seek to have a dominatn position;[206] the Chinese expression of approval of the programme came only on 21 September,[207] suggesting perhaps a relative lack of enthusiasm for the struggle on the political front by comparison with the purely military struggle in South Viet Nam. Any slight which the

204. Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 33 (11 August 1967), p. 28.
205. Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 37 (8 September 1967), p. 5.
206. Text in e.g. Vietnam Courier, No. 127 (7 September 1967), Special issue, pp. 4-7.
207. 21 September Renmin Ribao editorial: in Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 18 (29 September 1967), pp. 18-19.

NFL leaders may have felt, however, was countered by Chinese actions in December 1967.

First, on the diplomatic front, the PRC Foreign Ministry sent a Note to foreign embassies in Peking a few days before the NFL anniversary on 20 December, stating that henceforth the NFL mission in Peking would be granted "diplomatic facilities" and would also be entitled to the "usual courtesies accorded to foreign missions". The text of the Note was not published, but according to one diplomat, the wording was ambiguous: the Note could also be understood as a statement that henceforth all foreign missions would be accorded courtesy, i.e. they would not be subjected to discourtesy, from Red Guards in particular.[208] In any case, the NFL mission already received the courtesies appropriate to a diplomatic mission, such as being invited to important State functions at which foreign diplomats were in attendance.

Secondly, Mao Tse-tung personally sent a message of greetings to Nguyen Huu Tho for the occasion of the NFL anniversary. "You are putting up a good fight!", Mao acclaimed. The Vietnamese people, he said, had set "a brilliant example". At the same time, "Perseverance means victory".[209] The fact that Mao was not joined by either Lin Piao or Chou En-lai as co-signatories appeared to indicate the importance that the Chinese leadership was now giving

208. Interview with His Excellency T. Oldenburg, Ambassador of Denmark to the PRC, 27 April 1968.
209. Peking Review, Vol. 10 No. 52 (25 December 1967), p. 5.

to the situation in South Viet Nam, since Mao was investing the message with his undivided authority.

Thirdly, Chou En-lai was enthusiastic in his remarks at a rally on 19 December, also for the NFL anniversary. The Vietnamese people's war had "arrived at a crucial moment", he said, and the "road to ultimate victory lies before the people of Viet Nam". Complete victory would be theirs, "provided they rally in unity and unite as one, persist in people's war and persevere in the policy of protracted war".[210] In retrospect, this last admonition seemed designed to warn the South Vietnamese communists not to place too great expectations on an immediate military victory in the forthcoming offensive - a warning that was quite justified, from the military point of view. The Chinese Premier seemed relatively unconcerned about the Vietnamese leaders succumbing to further "peace talks frauds": the US was carrying out such a fraud at the moment, he said, but, since 1968 was election year in the US, the Americans were bound to use their counter-revolutionary dual tactics "even more". Chou also spoke highly of the NFL's status. It was "the great standard-bearer of the people of South Viet Nam in their struggle for complete liberation, and is their only genuine representative". The leader of an NFL delegation, responding to Chou's remarks, went further: the NFL was "actually performing the functions of a mighty and democratic state of the South Vietnamese people", he said, and it was

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210. Ibid., p. 12.

"worthy of being the sole genuine representative" of the southern people.[211] This claim that the NFL constituted an effective government did not prevent the unveiling of the "Provisional Revolutionary Government" in June 1969 as an institution which did not profess direct links with the NFL.

These views and acts of encouragement on the part of the Chinese leaders were followed by a new diplomatic initiative on the part of Hanoi, very probably designed as an integral part of the coming offensive. On 1 January 1968, VNA published extracts of a speech given by Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh to a visiting Mongolian delegation some days previously (the delegation had left for home on 29 December). The relevant sentences read:

> The US government has unceasingly claimed that it wants to talk with Hanoi but has received no response. If the US government truly wants to talk, it must, as was made clear in our statement on January 28, 1967, first of all stop unconditionally the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRVN. After the US has ended unconditionally the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRVN, the DRVN will hold talks with the US on questions concerned.

The crucial word "will" represented a significant concession on the "could" of 28 January 1967; but the DRVN did not immediately move to follow it up. It preferred to wait. As a "Letter from

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211. Ibid., p. 13.

Hanoi" expressed it, in the issue of Vietnam Courier sent for printing on 27 January; "The lunar year is drawing to a close and Tet is coming. [...] the 1968 Tet is, will be, a Tet like the others, notwithstanding US bombs. And also a Tet unlike the others".[212]

Aware of impending offensive action,[213] but without knowledge of the timing or the extent of the event, the US military command in Saigon on the afternoon of 29 January cancelled the announced Tet truce in five northern provinces of I Corps, and later on the same day cancelled the truce completely. On the morning of 30 January, VNA announced that "PLAF forces at about 3 a.m. today launched fierce attacks on the Da Nang airbase and many other positions of the US aggressors in Da Nang city [...] to punish [them] and their henchmen for unilaterally cancelling their own cease fire [...]". Twenty-four hours later, VNA reported: "In Saigon, at dawn today, the PLAF, in co-ordination with the population in Saigon-Gia Dinh area, launched massive attacks [...]". The Tet offensive was underway.

The Chinese response was restrainedly enthusiastic. Chou En-lai greeted Nguyen Huu Tho in a message of 2 February with congratulations, but warned him of the Chinese leaders' conviction that the Vietnamese people would "redoubled their efforts,

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212. Vietnam Courier, No. 148 (29 January 1968), p. 5.

213. United States Mission in Vietnam, Press Release, 5 January 1968: "Captured document indicates final phase of revolution at hand", was a translation of a captured document which said that "Central Headquarters concludes that the time has come for a direct revolution and that the opportunity for a general offensive and general uprising is within reach".

surmount all difficulties, press on valiantly, inflict thorough defeat on the US aggressors and win final victory".[214] On the following day, addressing the DRVN Ambassador, he expressed confidence that victory would be won "by persevering in protracted war".[215] Jiefangjun Bao on 9 February assessed that the offensive had carried the Vietnamese people's war "to a higher plane", but warned that victory was dependent on the Vietnamese people being able to "advance from strength to strength, surmount every difficulty, persevere in protracted fighting, give full play to the enormous power of people's war and constantly wipe out enemy effectives".[216] Lin Piao congratulated the southern armed forces in a 14 February message to the PLAF's "Tran Nam Trung" for having "creatively applied the strategy and tactics of people's war"; he too felt it necessary to express a belief that they would "fight a protracted war".[217] Neither the VNWP nor the CPC published the text of any message from the latter to the former for its 38th anniversary; none had been published the previous year either. This may be taken as a token of disapproval of current VNWP policy, or more likely, the content of the message was confidential. Whatever reservations the Chinese leaders may have had concerning VNWP policies on the political front, however, did not constrain them from continuing to express a good

214. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 6 (9 February 1968), p. 7.
215. Ibid., p. 6.
216. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 7 (16 February 1968), pp. 7-8.
217. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 8 (23 February 1968), pp. 6-7.

appreciation of the current military tactics. These were assessed - somewhat prematurely - on the basis of the prescription set out in Mao's military writings and in Lin Piao's recapitulative essay of September 1965; yet again, the Chinese experience was considered to be the only experience of relevance to the Vietnamese situation. Jiefangjun Bao's 16 February editorial, for example, assessed that the PLAF had "not only greatly consolidated and developed the rural base areas", but they had also "created highly favourable conditions for the final capture of the cities". These feats signified the development of people's war in South Viet Nam to "a new height", and once again demonstrated that Mao Tse-tung's "brilliant concept of encircling the cities from the countryside and seizing power by force of arms" - which had been "the only correct way" for the Chinese people to seize national power - was "indeed the highway to liberation for the Vietnamese people".[218]

"Final victory for the Vietnamese people is already in sight", proclaimed a PRC Government statement on 1 March.[219] A commentary in Renmin Ribao some three weeks later expressed a general satisfaction with the development of the anti-US struggle in Southeast Asia. The US was extended to the limit by the people in the area; it was finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the situation; and the imperialist colossus could be split up and destroyed, so long as the people "fight US imperialism in people's wars on their respective battlefields and closely

218. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 8 (23 February 1968), p. 8.
219. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 10 (8 March 1968), p. 7.

co-ordinate with and support each other, some striking at its head, others at its feet".[220]

The American commander in South Viet Nam, General Westmoreland, reportedly asked for an additional 205,000 troops at the beginning of March 1968,[221] to augment the 495,000 troops there in late February. The Johnson Administration began re-examining its Viet Nam policy. On 31 March, the US President announced the cessation of all air and naval bombardment of the DRVN except for an area immediately to the north of the Demilitarized Zone; this bombing could cease also, he said, "if our restraint is matched by restraint in Hanoi". He announced that a further 13,500 troops would be sent to Viet Nam during the next five months. He also announced that he would not seek, and would not accept, the nomination of his party to another term as President.

These decisions by President Johnson, and Hanoi's reactions to them, brought a sharp reassessment of Peking's policies and attitudes towards the Vietnamese communists. These are examined in the following chapters.

220. 23 March Renmin Ribao; in Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 14 (5 April 1968), p. 23.
221. The New York Times, 9 March 1968.

CHAPTER FOUR

APRIL 1968 - MARCH 1970

This chapter analyses the main features of Sino-Vietnames relations from the time of President Johnson's 31 March 1968 broadcast announcing that he would not stand for a second term as President of the United States, to 18 March 1970, when Prince Norodom Sihanouk was declared deposed by a coup d'etat in Phnom Penh with the consequence that large-scale conflict erupted in Cambodia, and war in fact being waged in all countries and regions of Indo-China.

These main features include the DRVN's agreeing to attend "conversations" with the US in Paris (with, later, both the Saigon Government and the NFL taking part in the exchanges), and the consistent opposition to these exchanges by the PRC. The PRC also stepped up its insistence that the PLAF and PAVN should continue to seek a decisive military defeat over the US and allied forces by persevering in protracted people's war, rather than risk all by mounting premature fixed battles.

The Chinese also became further estranged from the Soviet Union in both Party and state relations, especially after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, and to an even greater extent after the Sino-Soviet border clashes in March 1969, events which led the CPC to give the USSR the sobriquet of "social imperialism". Because of the DRVN material dependence on the Soviet Union as well as China, and because of the VNWP's desire to bring about an eventual reconciliation between the two large communist states, the North Vietnamese attempt to avoid complete commitment to either was accompanied by an increased stress on the VNWP's creative and independent line - a position that both the CPSU and the CPC found difficult to challenge openly without being charged by the other Party of hurting the Vietnamese in their struggle against imperialism.

The death of Ho Chi Minh in September 1969 left the VNWP with a nominally collective leadership, with First Secretary Le Duan clearly in the position of primus inter pares. The "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" came to a conclusion marked by the CPC's Ninth Congress in April 1969, and as Chinese Ambassadors began to return slowly to foreign countries there were other indications of a willingness on the part of the Chinese leaders to develop a more moderate stance in foreign affairs. Throughout the period being surveyed here, however, relations between the Vietnamese and Chinese Parties continued to be subject to considerable strains. Relations between the two Governments were those of independent states which shared some common objectives but differed on how these might best be pursued.

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The DRVN response to President Johnson's speech came in a statement issued on 3 April, in which the DRVN Government declared [1]

> its rediness to appoint its representative to contact the US representative with a view to determining with the American side the unconditional cessation of the US bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam so that talks may start.

The editorial comment in Nhan Dan of the following day reaffirmed that the DRVN's position concerning talks was still that expressed on 28 January 1967: that talks between it and the US "will begin as soon as the United States had [sic] proved that it has actually stopped unconditionally the bombing raids and all other acts of war" against the North. [2]

1. VNA, 3 April 1968.
2. VNA, 4 April 1968.

The DRVN decision to make the public concession of establishing "contact" with the US was evidently taken against strong opposing views: a 2 April Nhan Dan commentary had said that the US was planning a "new plot" and that the peace offer was a "fraud", [3] a DRVN official who was privy to some aspects of the private discussions among the VNWP leaders had told a visiting American that he was surprised at the extent of the DRVN "concession"; [4] and the English-language VNA report of the 3 April statement transmitted by radio-teletype, was prefaced by a request that the VNA correspondent in Paris should relay the text to DRVN diplomatic offices in East Europe - indicating that no advance warning of the likely decision had been given earlier through the regular diplomatic wireless link.

The US responded on the same day (3 April) with a message accepting the proposal for contacts, and indicating that Ambassador-at-large Averil Harriman was immediately available to establish contacts on the US side. [5] After a series of meetings between US and DRVN diplomats at Vientiane and elsewhere, and a series of proposals and counter-proposals concerning an appropriate site for the "contacts" during which the US seemed to take several steps back from the former "go anywhere, any time" stance enunciated by President Johnson, the DRVN issued a further statement on 3 May. [6] This announced that Minister Xuan Thuy had been appointed representative of the DRVN for the purposes of "entering into formal

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3. Tokyo AP despatch, 2 April 1968, citing Denpa agency despatch from Hanoi of same date.
4. Ashmore, Harry S., and William C. Baggs, Mission to Hanoi (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1968), p. 139.
5. International Herald-Tribune (Paris), 4 April 1968.
6. VNA, 3 May 1968.

talks" with the US Government representative; that Paris was "a suitable place for formal talks", and that these "will begin on May 10, 1968 or a few days thereafter". The US immediately accepted, noting that the proposed "contact" had thus been elevated to a more authoriative level, and on 10 May Xuan Thuy and Harriman met in Paris for the first time to determine their procedure before going on to substantive discussions.

The Chinese were silent at first concerning the DRVN's decision to talk to the US. The first direct comment was attributed to an NCNA correspondent in a 5 April despatch. Johnson's "new fraud to induce 'peace talks' was concocted in a collaboration with the Soviet revisionist renegade clique", the report said. The "fundamental purpose" of the US was "to partition Viet Nam permanently and occupy South Viet Nam for ever".

> Therefore, the Viet Nam question can be solved only by completely defeating the US aggressors on the battlefield and driving it out of South Viet Nam. [...] The Vietnamese people will certainly be able to drive the US [...] out of their sacred land if they persevere in fighting and fight on to the end. [...] US imperialism can in no way save itself from the fate of complete extinction on the battlefield in Viet Nam [...].

The same viewpoint was repeated by the more authoritative Commentator of Renmin Ribao on 15 April; VNA, in repeating excerpts from the commentary on 18 April, excluded all reference to the "defeat on the battleground" prescription. The NCNA on 28 April quoted from a speech given by Truong Chinh in which he said that the Vietnamese people "must go on fighting until the ambition of the enemy to commit aggression is smashed". On 2 May the American

columnist Joseph Alsop reported that "a large Chinese mission of unknown composition recently flew into Hanoi with a heavy escort of MiG fighter planes" for the certain purpose of "protesting negotiations in any form". [7] Whether this is true or not, the Viet Nam conflict received only passing mention in the 1 May joint editorial of Pekin's "two newspapers and one magazine". [8] The PRC's official viewpoint was presented formally on 26 April by Chen Yi in his capacity as a Vice-Premier. "US imperialism is vainly trying to gain at the conference table what it cannot get on the battlefield; this is a fond dream which will never come true", he told his audience at a reception for Tanzanian National Day in Peking. The Vietnamese people "fully realize from their own experience that without victory on the battlefield, it is impossible to settle any question". The US was "destined to be drowned in the vast ocean of people's war in Viet Nam", he added. [9]

The Chinese gave publicity to an 8 May letter from Ho Chi Minh addressed to the NFL's Nguyen Huu Tho, in which he said "Peace will come directly after the US imperialists have put an end to their war of aggression in Viet Nam, brought home all their troops, and let the Vietnamese people decide their own destiny themselves". [10] This made complete US and allied troop withdrawal a pre-requisite for the establishment of peace, and therefore met one aspect of the long-term Chinese goal: but the letter as a whole was silent on the question of whether a US military defeat should be given greater priority than

7. International Herald-Tribune, 2 May 1968.
8. See e.g. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 18 (3 May 1968), p. 10.
9. Ibid., p. 30.
10. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 20 (17 May 1968), p. 17.

a troop withdrawal. Ho did urge his compatriots in South Viet Nam to "win still bigger victories", however, and the Chinese chose to give prominence to this call in particular.

The Chinese showed their displeasure at the formal opening of the Paris talks by progressively limiting their coverage of Vietnamese affairs in Renmin Ribao.[11] Why should the PRC have been so concerned at the talks taking place, when they clearly could be justified in terms of the "negotiate while fighting" tactic? Part of the answer no doubt lies in the fact that as long as a US armed presence remained in Indo-China the potential threat to China's security would remain; if a peaceful solution were in fact to be negotiated, the US would withdraw relatively intact but "to fight again another day". A severe military trouncing, and at best a decisive military defeat, of US forces in Viet Nam, would serve as a strong lesson-reinforcing that of Korea from 1950-53 - concerning what would happen in the future if the US "poked its claws into Asia". But in terms of the Chinese foreign policy stance as a whole, and the CPC's world view which this policy must be presumed to largely reflect, it must be concluded that the major concern of the PRC's leaders was to ensure the weakening and humiliation of their most ferocious enemy, the leader of imperialism, in order to advance the revolutionary cause over the globe. The tactics which the Chinese proposed should be adopted by different revolutionary Parties and groups to advance this general goal were always relatively flexible - stressing self reliance, independence, and so on - but the goal itself remained unchanged. This revolutionary view of

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11. See e.g. Tretiak, Daniel, "Changes in Chinese Attention to Southeast Asia, 1967-1969", Current Scene (Hong Kong: United States Information Service), Vol. VII No. 21 (1 November 1969), pp. 8-10.

the world focussed for the moment on the conflict in Viet Nam as the focal point of the contradiction between the imperialist and the anti-imperialist forces. A military defeat of the US would certainly humiliate the US, but the sense of humiliation would pass, and the US would prepare to strike back at revolutionary forces everywhere.

If, however, the military phase of the conflict in Viet Nam could be prolonged, through protracted people's war, then the US would suffer increasingly from the growing drain on the resources of the country necessary for the continued prosecution of the war. The more forces that were sent to Viet Nam, the more over-extended the US would be, and the less able to cope with similar confrontations elsewhere. The longer the war dragged on, the greater the domestic crises that the US leaders would have to face. Ideally, when the beaten, humiliated, debt-ridden US imperialism eventually crawled back to its lair on the other side of the Pacific, its leaders would be most reluctant for a long time to send an expeditionary force abroad again; China's southern border would be made more secure, even though contingency plans against Soviet attack on the northern reaches were probably already developed.

In the Chinese view, since the US had come to Viet Nam, they had to be pushed out, preferably after a memorable defeat, partly for purely national reasons (the security of China) and partly for ideological reasons. Once it had been reasonably established that there was no immediate danger of a threat to China's territorial integrity, the ideological motivation dominated China's attitude towards the US. The Vietnamese view was somewhat different. In theory the VNWP was committed to the long-run support of revolution in order to bring about the complete defeat of US imperialism in all

parts of the planet. In practice, the VNWP's long-term goal was primarily nationalist: to unify (or reunify) Viet Nam. Since they had failed to achieve this goal by political means, they had no option but to resort to the use of armed force. They employed flexible tactics informed by the basic themes of Leninism. When the US increased its military presence to counter these tactics, the anti-imperialist theme from Leninism was used as a motive force to raise the level of armed struggle against the US and its "puppets" in Saigon. Escalation was inevitable: the US leaders justified their armed presence as part of the sacred struggle against communism, while the VNWP justified their increased involvement in terms of the sacred struggle against imperialism. Would the VNWP leaders, particularly Ho Chi Minh, have accepted unification of Viet Nam under non-communist rule? Or would they have considered unification as "imperfect" unless their party could exercise a monopoly of political power? The issues were never tested. In any case, the motivations of the Vietnamese communists and especially of the rank and file of the southern PLAF remained a mixture of nationalism and of Leninism, inextricably intertwined.

In their tactical prescriptions to the Vietnamese, the Chinese seem to have shrewdly estimated that the nationalist component of the Vietnamese world view was at least equally strong as their commitment to Leninism. They implied that without a decisive military defeat of the US, the goal of unification not merely <u>might</u> not but <u>would</u> not be achieved - and they pointed to the inconclusive political results of the 1954 Geneva Conference in support of their view.

The CPC's present mood of linking the conflict in Viet Nam with an aggravation of other problems besetting the US was reflected in, for example, Mao Tse-tung's 16 April 1968 statement "in support

of the Afro-American struggle against violent repression". This struggle was, he said, "a tremendous aid and inspiration" to the struggle of the Vietnamese people, [12] a view that was shortly afterwards echoed by sympathetic communist parties. Also, on 27 May, the Chinese Foreign Ministry handed a note to the British charge d'Affaires in Peking protesting at the entry of the US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Enterprise into Hong Kong, demanding that the ship leave immediately, and warning the British Government to cease "acting as a jackal to the lion". [13] US economic and domestic problems were also stressed.

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During May, Truong Chinh delivered an important speech to a cadres' conference for the occasion of Karl Marx's 150th birth anniversary (4 May). [14] The precise date of the speech was not revealed, although the text refers to the Paris talks which "have started" (thus placing it not earlier than 10 May). First reportage of the speech came only on 23 August, when VNA gave a brief resume of some aspects of it. Hanoi's domestic radio on the same day said that the speech had produced "several sessions of heated debate"; [15] and the text was widely reprinted during September. The main part of the speech reviewed the various ideological and practical considerations that the ICP-VNWP had taken into account in applying Marxism-Leninism to Viet Nam since 1954, and the most important sub-section concerned "the problem of violence in the Vietnamese revolution".

12. Text in e.g. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 16 (19 April 1968), pp. 5-6.
13. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 22 (31 May 1968), pp. 30-31.
14. Truong Chinh, Forward Along the Path Charted by K. Marx Hanoi: FLPH, 1969).
15. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report, No. 167 (26 August 1968), p. K6.

Truong Chinh reaffirmed that "the path of violent revolution is the only correct one to win national independence, people's democracy and socialism", that the "fundamental form of violence in the Vietnamese revolution is the close combination of political and armed struggle", that this line "has been proved and is being proved a correct one" and that under the present circumstances "to stand for a peaceful transition in the hope of seizing political power is to nurture reformist illusions, and that "a protracted people's war should /strongly/ embody the combination of armed and political struggles in many forms". [16] Elsewhere, he drew attention to the fact that the Party had, "under certain circumstances," fallen back on the defensive "to gain time, discourage the enemy, muster fresh forces and prepare for new attacks"; [17] yet the Party should "never deflect from the 'fight a protracted war and mainly rely on ourselves' guiding principle". [18] These comments were interpreted by some observers as representing a plea for a return to an essentially guerrilla strategy in South Vietnam, in keeping with the basis protracted war thesis, at the very time when in South Viet Nam a second major offensive was being launched with the goal of consolidating the gains of the January Tet operation.

This interpretation was very likely an accurate one; but the further conclusion that observers drew, that Truong Chinh was advocating a complete acceptance of Peking's "hard" line on the conflict, did not follow. In fact, Truong Chinh once again publicly indicated that he was first and foremost a Vietnamese nationalist, even though disposed to a "left" interpretation of Marxism-Leninism.

16. Truong Chinh, op. cit., pp. 64-65.
17. Ibid., p. 84.
18. Ibid., p. 112.

Marxism-Leninism was "'not a dogma but a guide to action'", he said, quoting from the VNWP statutes: the theoretical principles had to be applied in a "spirit of independence and sovereignty". "The fraternal parties' lessons of experience must be learned selectively, and neither modelling nor servile imitation is the right course of action". [19] He also reaffirmed that the VNWP stood "for the restoration and reinforcement of solidarity in the socialist camp and in the international communist and worker movement [...] as a step to further strengthen our force directed against the imperialists [...]". [20] Since the timing of publication of the speech was significant, further discussion on the above points will be reserved until later in this chapter.

During the following months, the Chinese maintained their views concerning the necessity for a complete military defeat of the US in South Viet Nam. The PLA Chief of General Staff, Huang Yung-sheng, insisted in a speech on 1 June that the Johnson Administration had "recently stepped up its 'peace talks' fraud in close collaboration with modern revisionism, in an attempt to gain at the negotiation table what it could not gain on the battlefield". [21] Soviet-US "collusion" was increasingly stressed. The adoption by the UN General Assembly on 12 June of the treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons was strongly opposed by Renmin Ribao's Commentator on the following day, on the grounds that since the treaty was "something imposed on the non-nuclear states to bind them hand and foot", and since the US and the USSR also wished to provide their "nuclear umbrella" to countries bordering China, it represented "a

19. Ibid., p. 130.
20. Ibid., p. 129.
21. See the report in Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 23 (7 June 1968), p. 7.

big step forward" in US-USSR "military collaboration against China".[22] This view was repeated by Premier Chou En-lai in a speech of 18 June, when he also opposed "peace talks schemes" and insisted: "This is what the Vietnamese people cannot permit".[23] Vice-Premier Li Hsien-nien on 10 July again referred to the "'peace talks' plot", and introduced a reference to Sino-Vietnamese differences by saying that in face of the "great unity" of the two peoples, "all attempts to sow discord between China and Viet Nam and undermine their friendship will definitely fail".[24]

Some evidence for the discord was not difficult to find. When NCNA on 21 July issued a summary of an appeal by Ho Chi Minh on the previous day, it omitted a reference to the Paris conversations; Huang Yung-sheng in his 1 August speech to the PLA's 41st anniversary reception again condemned the "peace talk swindle".[25] But the strength of the differences was not made clear until the DRVN's National Day (2 September), following the invasion of Czechoslovakia on 20 August.

The Chinese immediately expressed stern condemnation of the invasion. Renmin Ribao's Commentator on 23 August saw the "melodramatic dogfight within the modern revisionist bloc" as further evidence of the degeneration of the Soviet leaders into "a gang of social-imperialists", and of their collusion with the US in order to redivide the world. The relations between the social imperialists and the US imperialists, he wrote, "are relations of mutual collaboration and struggle"; despite some conflicts of

22. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 25 (21 June 1968), pp. 17-18.
23. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 26 (28 June 1968), p. 5.
24. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 29 (19 July 1968), pp. 4-5.
25. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 32 (9 August, 1968), p. 13.

interest between them, "they are at one with each other in their stand against communism, against the people and against revolution".[26] In a speech on the same day (23 August), Chow En-lai linked the event with the conflict in Viet Nam:

> The aggression by Soviet revisionism was carried out with the tacit understanding of US imperialism. [...] how is it possible for Soviet revisionism to oppose the forcible occupation of South Viet Nam by US imperialism? In fact, Soviet revisionism has long become the No. 1 accomplice of US imperialism in its aggression against Viet Nam and the rest of the world.[27]

The North Vietnamese reacted to the invasion in a quite different way. The radio "Voice of Viet Nam" on 21 August broadcast the text of the TASS statement on the entry of troops,[28] and on the following day both Nhan Dan and the PAVN daily Quan Doi Nhan Dan published the text of the TASS statement together with the previous evening's radio commentary preceding the broadcast of the text.[29] Premier Pham Van Dong reiterated DRVN support for the invasion in his major speech on 2 September. The Vietnamese people were always filled with deep concern, he said, "when socialism faces a threat in any part of the world", and the "serious danger" to Czechoslovakia's "very existence" as a socialist state had "required" that the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies should "take all measures including the use of military force" to defend socialism there.[30] The DRVN thus

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26. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 34 (23 August 1968), Supplement, p. V.
27. Ibid., p. IV.
28. VNA 21 August 1968.
29. VNA 22 August 1968.
30. Vietnam Courier, No. 181 (9 September 1968), Supplement, p. 4.

had clearly stated its acceptance of the Soviet action and of the arguments advanced to justify it, in the face of extremely strong Chinese disapproval. Whether the Vietnamese leaders had reservations was not revealed, because the issue was dropped almost as rapidly as it had arisen in the Hanoi press. In view of the Chinese attitude, it may be asked why the DRVN did not choose to remain silent; the explanation is probably that the Vietnamese considered it a matter of principle to support actions which prevented the "defection" of a state from the socialist camp as they defined it. The issue also enable the VNWP to give clear evidence of its independent line in foreign policy, which had in 1963 led them to express support for the CPC point of view on the nuclear partial-test-ban treaty. The expression of solidarity with the Soviet Union also avoided possible strain in the DRVN's relations with that country, and ensured that Soviet military aid continued to flow.

In their greetings of 1 September to the Vietnamese leaders for National Day, the Chinese leaders insisted that the Soviet leaders were collaborating with the US "in an attempt to have the Vietnamese people's war against US aggression and for national salvation abandoned half-way", and, as Chou En-lai had said earlier, they had "long become the No. 1 accomplice of US imperialism in its aggression against Viet Nam": indeed, the USSR and the US were "jackals of the same lair". However, the Vietnamese people would win so long as they "bring into full play their thoroughgoing revolutionary spirit and persevere in protracted war".[31] At the DRVN Embassy reception on the following day (2 September), Chow En-lai was even more critical, not only of the USSR but also of the

31. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 36 (6 September 1968), pp. 3-4.

VNMP position and its implications as the Chinese saw these:

> [...] the peace talks scheme on Viet Nam is jointly devised by US imperialism and Soviet revisionism. After the invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia [...], U.S. imperialism will definitely demand a higher price on the Viet Nam question, while Soviet revisionism will only serve US imperialism all the more obsequiously in the latter's scheme of splitting the Viet Nam nation and forcibly occupying southern Viet Nam. It is high time all who cherish illusions about Soviet revisionism and US imperialism woke up!

In case there were still some who thought that these comments were not directed at the VNWP, he added his conviction that final victory would come for the Vietnamese people "so long as they persevere in protracted war and oppose capitulationism and compromise".[32]

The Vietnamese made no direct response to these views. The Chinese side concentrated its attention on the Soviet Union during the next two months and gave increasing attention to the alleged new militarism of that state. Thus,Chow En-lai told a Peking rally on 7 September to celebrate the setting up of revolutionary committees in all of the 29 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions of continental China, that should "enemies from abroad dare to invade China", then the Chinese people would "wipe them out resolutely, thoroughly, wholly and completely!" [33] At his speech on 31 September celebrating the PRC national day, he stressed that the US and the USSR were "capable of any evil", and that therefore the Chinese people must "heighten our vigilance, intensify our preparedness

32. Ibid., p. 7.
33. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 37 (13 September 1968), p. 7.

against war and be ready at all times to smash any invasion launched by US imperialism, Soviet revisionism and their lackeys, whether individually or collectively". A "new historical stage of opposing US imperialism and Soviet revisionism" had begun, he said.[34] Chief of General Staff Huang Yung-sheng told a mass rally on 4 October that the USSR had "sent large numbers of troops to reinforce its forces stationed along the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Mongolian frontiers" and had "intensified its armed provocations against China".[35] Then, on 31 October, the Eighth CPC-CC's enlarged 12th Plenum (which had been meeting from 13 October) adopted a communique which said, inter alia, that the Chinese people "must heighten our vigilance a hundredfold against the rapacious US imperialists and the Soviet modern revisionist renegade clique". Should "the enemy dare to impose war on us, we will wipe him out resolutely, thoroughly, wholly and completely".[36]

This stress on the possibility of a Soviet attack on China was a new element in Sino-Soviet relations, stemming directly from the Czechoslovak incident. No doubt the Chinese were justified in taking military precautions, in view of the Soviet reinforcements in Mongolia and elsewhere; but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that a large part of Chinese motivation in giving wide publicity to the possibility of an attack sprang from the domestic situation. The conclusion of the process of setting up provincial-level revolutionary committees indicated that one of the goals of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had been achieved, at least in form, and the 12th Plenum's communique looked forward to the convening of

34. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 40 (4 October 1968), p. 15.
35. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 41 (11 October 1968), p. 9.
36. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 44 (1 November 1968), Supplement, p. viii: bold type in original.

the Ninth Congress of the CPC "at an appropriate time". Focus on, and perhaps also an exaggeration of, a felt external threat would do much to restore a semblance of unity among groups which had been in severe political and also at times military conflict for nearly two years.

Some of the repercussions from the anti-Soviet campaign were considerably embarassing to the North Vietnamese. For example, according to a mid-October report from the Czechoslovak news agency correspondent in Hanoi, employees of the Chinese Embassy there surrounded a group of Soviet citizens who had gone there to apply for Chinese transit visas, and forced them to "patiently listen to Chinese music" for seven-and-a-half hours, before finally being freed through the intervention of unarmed DRVN police and troops.[37]

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On 19 October, as commentaries in the Western Press suggested that the United States might be preparing for a cessation of bombing over the DRVN's territory, the Chinese made their first public reference to the existence of the Paris "conversations", in the form of an NCNA digest of foreign agency reports. The 28th session of the talks took place on 30 October, and on the following day President Johnson announced that all air, naval and military bombardment of North Viet Nam would cease as from 8 a.m. on 1 November, Washington time (i.e., 9 p.m. Hanoi time on 1 November. He added that the Saigon Government was welcome to attend the next session of the Paris talks, together with NFL representatives. This was hailed by Ho Chi Minh, in a 3 November appeal, as a victory of very

37. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report, No. 205 (18 October 1968), p. K2, and No. 206 (21 October 1968), pp. K8-K9, reporting Prague CTK agency reports from Hanoi in English on 17 October and 18 October respectively.

significant importance, but nevertheless only an initial victory; he called on the entire Vietnamese people to step up their resolve to liberate the south, and firmly demanded that foreign troops be withdrawn from South Viet Nam and that "the internal affairs of South Viet Nam be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves" in accordance with the NFL's Political Programme.[38] The last point repeated the position of the DRVN Government as expressed in a statement of the previous day [39] which insisted that the NFL's Programme and the DRVN's "Four Points" were a basis for settlement of the Viet Nam question "consistent with the fundamental principles of the 1954 Geneva Agreements".

The NFL-CC also issued a statement on 3 November detailing its stand on the political settlement of the South Viet Nam problem: a continuation of the struggle for independence, peace, democracy, neutrality, prosperity and ultimate peaceful unification with the North; complete withdrawal of foreign troops; the formation of "a broad national and coalition government" to prepare for the holding of "free general elections"; the reunification of Viet Nam to be decided step by step by peaceful means; South Viet Nam to follow a foreign policy of neutrality and peace, and in particular to set up good neighbourhood relations with Cambodia and Laos. The NFL insisted that it was the "authentic representative of the legitimate aspirations of the South Vietnamese people", and declared its willingness to participate in a conference consisting of the DRVN, the US, itself, and the Saigon Administration.[40]

Both of the 3 November statements were printed in Renmi Ribao

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38. VNA 3 November 1968.
39. VNA 2 November 1968.
40. Text of both statements in Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 46 (15 November 1968), pp. 22-25.

on 5 November without comment. The NFL's delegation arrived in Paris on 4 November, but the Saigon Government was reluctant to join an expanded conference which included its opponents; on 8 November, President Thieu put forward a compromise plan which would have the talks proceeding primarily between the Governments of North and South Viet Nam, but on 12 November the US Secretary of Defence warned that unless the Saigon Government agreed soon to participate in the talks, the US might feel compelled to proceed without them. The DRVN Foreign Ministry insisted that the NFL must necessarily attend the conference "as an independent and equal partner".[41] After some days of vigorous diplomacy, the South Vietnamese Government on 27 November issued a joint statement with the US finally agreeing to attend the meeting, and shortly thereafter despatched its delegation to Paris. Procedural exchanges concerning the shape of the conference table were not settled until 16 January 1969; the first plenary session of the conference was held on 24 January.

The Chinese made only limited commentary on the Viet Nam issue after the 2 September outbursts by Chou En-lai, until mid-December 1968. When comment was resumed for the occasion of the NFL founding anniversary, the former insistence on a battlefield victory was not mentioned; the ommission appeared to confirm a softening in the Chinese attitude that had been suggested earlier in the month. In an exchange of speeches at Tirana on 2 December, between Albanian party leaders and PLA Chief of General Staff Huang Yung-sheng, the Albanians twice referred to US-USSR collusion in an attempt to gain at the negotiation table what the US could not get on the battlefield,

41. VNA 16 November 1968.

and expressed confidence that the Vietnamese would "never be taken in" by these plots.[42] The Chief of General Staff in reply on both occasions merely noted that in both Viet Nam and in Czechoslovakia, there had been tacit consent by one party to the actions of the other; he made no reference to the Paris talks.[43] There was no explanation for this apparent change in attitude, but it may have been related to the victory by Richard Nixon in the Presidential elections held on 5 November, and the possibility of a change in US policy towards a Viet Nam settlement following his inauguration, which was due to take place on 20 January 1969. The Chinese leaders' 19 December message to NFL President Nguyen Huu Tho congratulated the South Vietnamese for having persisted in a people's war, warned of US "counter-revolutionary dual tactics of military adventure and political deception" in Viet Nam, and also warned of Soviet intensification of "dirty political dealings" with the US in order to help the latter put out the flames of the Vietnamese revolution. The Vietnamese people "by persevering in people's war" would certainly be able, the message concluded, to overcome difficulties, drive the US out, and win final victory (in that order).[44] In his 21 December message greeting the PAVN anniversary, Lin Piao expressed the belief that the Vietnamese people "will see through" the counter-revolutionary dual tactics of the US; they would surely be able to defeat the US by persevering in protracted war and with "the south and the north of one mind".[45] The same sentiments, including a reference to "the south and the north being of one mind", were repeated on 13 February 1969 by Wang Hsin-tang, a deputy Chief

42. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 50 (13 December 1968), pp. 6 and 11.
43. Ibid., pp. 8 and 13.
44. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 52 (27 December 1968), p. 3.
45. Ibid., p. 5.

of General Staff of the PLA, at a reception to greet the South Vietnamese PLAF anniversary.[46] Precisely what issues were dividing the North and South Vietnamese were not immediately clear, although there is some evidence that it may have involved both tactics at Paris and the military strategy appropriate to the new situation in the south. The Chinese leaders apparently sent no message to greet the VNWP anniversary on 3 February, suggesting a continuing estrangement between the two Parties; however, both the DRVN and the NFL responded in correct form to the news that China had exploded a new hydrogen bomb on 27 December 1968, and to the press communique on the event which styled it "a great inspiration and support to the heroic Vietnamese people".[47]

* * *

On 2 March 1969, an armed clash between Soviet and Chinese border guards occurred on the island of Chenpao, claimed by the PRC, on the eastern frontier of Heilungkiang province. The incident was followed by demonstrations outside the Chinese Embassy in Moscow on 7 and 8 March. Relations between the two states reached a new level of animosity. Large-scale demonstrations were held throughout China in condemnation of the alleged Soviet act of aggression. Renmin Ribao and Jiefangjun Bao published a joint editorial condemning the "new tsars", while repeating the formula used in 1965: "We will not attack unless we are attacked; if we are attacked, we will certainly counter-attack".[48] Messages of support came in from China's supporters: the Communist Party of Thailand, the Albanian Party of Labour, the Australian Communist Party (M-L), the Malayan

46. Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 8 (21 February 1969), p. 20.
47. Texts in Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 1 (3 January 1969) pp. 11-12.
48. On 4 March; text in Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 10 (7 March 1969), pp. 6-7.

Communist Party, and various organisations. The VNWP, the NFL and the Lao Patriotic Front were conspicuously absent from the roster, however, and no reference was made by the DRVN media to the incidents.

The Chinese expressed fears that the Soviet leaders were colluding with the US in order to encircle China, and renewed their earlier charges that they were actively working to betray the Vietnamese revolution. Then on 1 April NCNA carried a communique announcing that the Ninth Congress of the CPC had opened in Peking on that day. The VNWP-CC message of greetings[49] was in proper form, but - like the message from the NFL-CC[50] - made only perfunctory comment on the great proletarian cultural revolution. The political report to the Congress, delivered on 1 April and adopted on 14 April, concerned itself primarily with internal affairs. In the section on foreign relations, "US imperialism" and "Soviet social-imperialism" were linked together as the main opponents of China; but far more attention was devoted to the Soviet Union than to the US. The Sino-Soviet boundary question, Lin Piao said, was one left over from history, and the CPC and the PRC Government had "consistently stood for negotiations through diplomatic channels to reach a fair and reasonable settlement" for such questions. He said that the Soviet leaders had refused to accept that the former treaties relating to the Sino-Soviet boundary were unequal, thus leading to "disruption" of negotiations begun in 1964 on the question. Lin Piao also said that only this issue, and the issue of the Sino-Indian boundary, remained unsettled questions between China and her

49. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 15 (11 April 1969), pp. 15-16.
50. Text in ibid., pp. 19-20.

neighbours.[51] Presumably the Sikkim and Bhutan borders were included in the Sino-Indian boundary question; curiously, no mention was made of the Sino-Lao or Sino-Viet Nam boundaries, which have not been publicly agreed since 1949.

The foreign policy of the Chinese Party and Government was consistent, Lin Piao reported.

> It is: To develop relations of friendship, mutual assistance and co-operation with socialist countries on the principle of proletarian internationalism; to support and assist the revolutionary struggles of all the oppressed people and nations; to strive for peaceful coexistence with countries having different social systems on the basis of the Five Principles of mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence, and to oppose the imperialist policies of aggression and war.[52]

Nevertheless, in view of the joint efforts of the US and the USSR to try and isolate China, on no account was it permissible to ignore the danger of those two countries "launching a large-scale war of aggression". It was therefore necessary to make all preparations, "preparations against their launching a big war and against their launching a war at an early date, preparations against their launching a conventional war and against their launching a large-scale nuclear attack".[53]

The Congress concluded its work on 24 April with its final

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51. See the text in Peking Review, Special Issue (28 April 1969), especially section VII.
52. Ibid., p. 28.
53. Ibid., p. 29.

communique stressing the slogans of "maintaining independence and keeping the initiative in our own hands and relying on our own efforts" and "grasping revolution and promoting production and other work and preparedness against war". [54]

* * *

On 10 June, VNA announced that a "Congress of People's Representatives" had convened on 6, 7, and 8 June "somewhere in the liberated zone of South Viet Nam" and had decided to set up a Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam" (hereafter PRGRSVN) with Huynh Tan Phat as President. One of the first acts of the "Government" was to issue on 10 June a decision that the NFL delegation at the Paris Conference was henceforth to be the PRGRSVN delegation, and Madame Nguyen Thi Binh (appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRGRSVN) was to take over its leadership.[55] The DRVN Government, in a 12 June statement, declared that the PRGRSVN was "the legal Government, the authentic representative of the South Vietnamese people", and it had been agreed that the NFL representation in Hanoi should be raised to the status of "Special Representation of the Republic of South Viet Nam". On 14 June, the Chinese Premier sent a message to Huynh Tan Phat conveying the PRC's decision to recognize the NFL's Permanent Mission in Peking as "the Embassy of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam in China";[56] on the following day, he received the NFL's head of Mission and reportedly "extended to him congratulations on and recognition of the establishment" of the PRGRSVN.[57] This formulation was repeated in an NCNA report of a

54. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 18 (30 April 1969) at p. 46.
55. Text in South Viet Nam in Struggle, No. 37 (Special Issue), 15 June 1969, p. 8.
56. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 25 (20 June 1969) pp. 5-6.
57. Ibid., p. 6.

9 July reception.[58]

The proclamation of the PRGRSVN brought some technical difficulties for both Peking and Hanoi. It was clearly evident that Chou's "recognition" was not of an independent state; the delay in recognising the establishment of the PRGRSVN (the USSR, East European countries, and North Korea were among those states which extended recognition before 15 June),[59] and the fact that the NCNA did not report the establishment until 15 June,[60] suggests uncertainty on how to react. Also, the PRC did not offer to exchange diplomatic representatives, as the PRGRSVN and North Korea reportedly agreed[61] to do on 12 June. In his 14 June message to the PRGRSVN, Chou insisted that the US and the Saigon Government would not "ever agree to the establishment of a revolutionary coalition government which truly accords with the wishes of the south Vietnamese people" - a phrasing which, in context, implied that the PRC did not consider the PRGRSVN to yet constitute a government in fact. The PRC's reservations were further intimated in the carefully-worded wish that "after the establishment" of the PRGRSVN, still further blows would be dealt to the enemy. This also seemed to imply that the PRC did not yet consider the PRGRSVN "established". In addition, the message looked forward to the ultimate goal of reunifying the fatherland. Thus, the PRC, while expressing support, avoided commitment on the question of the legitimacy and the sovereignty exercised by the new entity: the Chinese leaders evidently wished to keep their options open.

The North Vietnamese would have compromised their former

58. NCNA 10 July 1969: in BBC-SWB FE/3122/A3/1 (11 July 1969).
59. BBC-SWB FE/3100/i (16 June 1969).
60. Ibid.
61. BBC-SWB FE/3099/A3/2 (14 June 1969).

assertion that Viet Nam was a single entity, if they had given the label of "Embassy" to the southern representation. The primary advantage of the initiative seemed to live in the hopes of advancement of the communist cause at the Paris talks. In this connection, it seems extremely likely that one of the main purposes of a three-week visit to the DRVN by an NFL delegation in March was to discuss the mechanics of setting up just such a "Government". Little detail of the delegation's visit, from 28 February to 20 March, was made public, but in a welcoming speech on 28 February Pham Van Dong had stressed that the NFL was not only the genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people, but was also "the organizer of all their victories over the past ten years, the victor on the battlefield".[62] The communique issued by the delegation on 20 March insisted that the NFL "wields absolute political supremacy, commands mighty armed and political forces, controls vast liberated areas, and is actually playing the role of a State with an ever firmer revolutionary administrative structure [...]".[63] Although no formal connection between the NFL and the PRGRSVN was announced, it was clear from the treatment of the NFL missions and delegations in Peking, Hanoi and Paris that between the two there was (at least for the moment) a distinction without a difference.

Confirmation of the PRC's reservations concerning the PRGRSVN was given on 9 July. On that day, NCNA reported that a reception had been given by Nguyen Van Quang, "Ambassador of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam", and that he had thanked the PRC Government for its "recognition of the

62. Text in Vietnam Courier, No. 206 (3 March 1969), p. 4.
63. From the text in Vietnam Courier, No. 210 (31 March 1969), p. 4: emphasis added.

establishment of" the PRGRSVN. In his speech at the reception, Vice-Premier Li Hsien-nien attacked the alleged Soviet-US collusion, and went on to insist that "the sacred goal of liberating the south, defending the north and reunifying the fatherland can be achieved only by carrying on with the fighting on the battlefield until the US imperialists completely admit their defeat". He again expressed the hope "that after its establishment" the PRGRSVN would further mobilize the people of South Viet Nam. The 700 million Chinese people would do everything within their power to resolutely support the Vietnamese people, he added ominously, "so long as they carry on their war against US aggression and for national salvation".[64]

Yet another indication of the PRC reservations was suggested by the editing by NCNA of the text of a 20 July appeal by Ho Chi Minh: references to the PRGRSVN having been "promptly recognized by over twenty fraternal and friendly countries" and to the Paris Conference, were omitted. Also omitted in the Chinese version of Ho's appeal was a reference to the organization of elections in South Viet Nam by a provisional coalition government after the withdrawal of US and allied forces.[65] Thus, the PRC seems to have been out of sympathy with the tactic of "establishing" a paper government, both from perhaps legalistic considerations as well as from a conviction that these political manoeuvres detracted from the military desirability of pursuing a protracted people's war against the US forces to the end. However, the PRC's Vice Chairman Tung Pi-wu on 1 July reportedly accepted Nguyen Van Quang's "letter of credence".[66]

64. NCNA 9 July 1969 (in SCMP 4456, 16 July 1969, pp. 22-24): emphasis added.
65. BBC-SWB FE/3131/A3/2 (22 July 1969).
66. NCNA 1 July 1969 (in SCMP 4450, 8 July 1969, p. 29).

On 8 May 1969, at the 16th session of the Paris conference on Viet Nam, the NFL delegation had tabled a document containing ten points as "principles and main content of an overall solution to the South Viet Nam problem", afterwards referred to as the "10-point solution". The main points were the second, which stated that the US must withdraw all its troops and military equipment and those of its allies; the fourth, which proposed that general elections be held, a Constituent Assembly set up, and a coalition government installed; and the fifth, which proposed discussions by the "peace forces" in order to set up a provisional coalition government to oversee US withdrawal and to organise the general elections envisaged in point four.[67] Essentially, these points followed the priorities of the NFL's Second Political Programme, and were clearly designed to ensure a place for the NFL - either directly or indirectly - in both the provisional coalition government and the proposed coalition government to follow general elections. Nothing was said about the presence - or the withdrawal - of PAVN forces in South Viet Nam. The lack of publicity given to this proposal by Chinese media, and the further deletion of reference to the fifth point from Ho's 20 July appeal, indicated continuing Chinese reservations concerning the plan.

* * *

Chinese and North Vietnamese differences were indicated again on 18 August, at a reception given by Vice-Premier Li Hsien-nien for a DRVN economic delegation which had arrived in Peking on the previous day. A comparison of the reports by VNA and NCNA

67. The text is in e.g. South Viet Nam in Struggle, No. 34 (15 May 1969), pp. 6-7.

respectively of Li's speech shows that VNA excluded the words underlined in the phrase "We are confident [...] that as long as the Vietnamese people carry on the war on the battlefield persistently, they will surely drive the US imperialists out of south Viet Nam [...]".[68] The leader of the delegation, Vice-Premier Le Thanh Nghi, said that the CPC's Ninth Congress was "a very important event in the political life of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people"[69]- a sentiment expressed in correct form, but possibly also intended to convey the DRVN's viewpoint that what was important for one Party was not necessarily important for other Parties, and that the viewpoint of one Party should not be imposed on another Party. VNA alone carried a paragraph in which Le Thanh Nghi stressed:

> In the interests of our two peoples and of the world peoples' revolutionary cause, the Viet Nam Workers' Party, the DRVN Government and the people of Viet Nam are determined to do their best for the further consolidation and development of Viet Nam - China friendship and militant solidarity. [...] Our Government economic delegation is convinced that these talks will bring good results [...].[70]

Since the delegation was in China to discuss China's economic and military aid to Viet Nam for 1970, and since Li Hsien-nien had made public a threat that Chinese aid might not continue if the Vietnamese seemed to be approaching a decision not to pursue the military phase of the conflict but to purse a political solution, Le Thanh Nghi's

68. The NCNA text issued on 18 August is given in BBC-SWB FE/3156/A3/1-3 (20 August 1969); the VNA report was issued on 20 August. Emphasis added.
69. Emphasis added.
70. VNA 20 August 1969: emphasis added.

comments are not surprising, although it may be noted that the extract given above tends to suggest that the Vietnamese felt (no doubt correctly) that they were making a concession by being prepared to put the Chinese criticisms to one side (at least for the time being) in the interests of the anti-US struggle.

* * *

President Ho Chi Minh reportedly died on 3 September 1969, but if the Chinese leaders had news of Ho's illness, they gave no indication of it in their message of greetings on 1 September. They denounced the Nixon Administration's counter-revolutionary tactics "in an attempt to use political deception and the trick of what it calls 'de-Americanizing the war' to attain its goal of perpetuating the occupation of the southern part of Viet Nam"; judged that the USSR and the US, being jackals of the same lair, were "the common enemies of the Vietnamese people", and expressed conviction of victory for the Vietnamese "by persevering in protracted war, persevering in maintaining independence and keeping the initiative in their own hands and persevering in self-reliance".[71] This prescription amounted to: people's war and an independent foreign policy, to judge from the context of the second slogan when it was publicized at the CPC's Ninth Congress. Independent of what? Presumably of the Soviet Union.

Ho Chi Minh died at 9.47 a.m. on 3 September, according to a VNWP communique first carried by Hanoi's domestic radio service at 6.15 a.m. on 4 September (both Hanoi times).[72] Later in the morning of 4 September, a CPC delegation headed by Chou En-lai and

71. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 36 (3 September 1969) p. 3.
72. Text in BBC-SWB FE/3168/B/2 (4 September 1969). The delay in reporting Ho's death - almost 24 hours - was not explained.

including Yeh Chien-ying (a Vice-Chairman of the CPC-CC Military Commission and a member of the Politburo) left Peking for Hanoi.[73] The delegation paid its last respects to Ho on the afternoon, and proceeded to hold "talks" with "leading members of the Vietnamese Party, Government and armed forces".[74] Then, on the evening of the same day, the delegation left for home. This rapid visit provoked much speculation in the Western Press that the Chinese leaders did not wish to be associated with the CPS delegation which was already preparing to leave for Hanoi, in view of the exceptionally strained relations between the two Parties and States. Alternatively, it was suggested, the CPC wished to be first to pay its respects to the late President, in order to stress the unity of the Sino-Vietnamese anti-US struggle. There may be truth in both of these explanations, although the first does not do much credit to the Chinese sense of occasion; the second point certainly seems of more substance, since it represented what might be termed a coup de protocol. A more important ingredient in the CPC's motivation seems to be indicated by the fact that the delegation talked with leaders of the DRVN armed forces: the CPC leadership was very likely concerned that the DRVN succession problem should go smoothly, and that any possibility of demoralisation in the DRVN - and consequent lowering of the spirit of the anti-US armed struggle - should be preempted if possible. This explanation would account for Chou En-lai's hope - expressed on 6 September when he formally tendered condolences at the DRVN Embassy in Peking - that the Vietnamese would "turn grief into fighting force, persevere in the war against

73. NCNA report of the same day: text in BBC-SWB FE/3169/C/5 (5 September 1969).
74. Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 37 (7 September 1969), p. 8.

US aggression and for national salvation [...]".[75] The only direct quote attributed by NCNA to the DRVN Ambassador on this occasion seemed to be intended as a reply to this hope:

> To liberate the south and reunify our fatherland is the behest left us by President Ho Chi Minh. We will follow the teachings of President Ho Chi Minh and go on fighting there until there is no US aggressor left on the soil of our fatherland.[76]

A second, less hurried, Chinese Party and Government delegation led by Vice-Premier Li Hsien-nien arrived in Hanoi on the morning of 8 September to attend the obsequies. After paying their last respects on the evening of that day, the delegation was received by leading members of the VNWP and DRVN Government. The funeral was held on the morning of 9 September, and on the afternoon of that day the Chinese delegation met separately with the members of "the Delegation of South Viet Nam" and with that of Cambodia, the latter headed by Norodom Sihanouk. On the evening, the delegation met with the Laotian Patrotic Front delegation. The Chinese left for home on 10 September. The NCNA reports[77] of the meetings with the North and South Vietnamese both stressed the determination of the Vietnamese to carry on the fight to the end.

The potential crisis concerning succession to the leadership was resolved, at least for the time being, by a Plenum of the VNMP-CC held apparently on the afternoon or evening of 3 September.[78] The aged Vice-President Ton Duc Thang was appointed Acting President, and the VNWP First Secretary Le Duan added his signature to official

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75. Ibid., p. 11; emphasis added.
76. Ibid., p. 11; emphasis added.
77. As republished in full in Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 38 (19 September 1969), pp. 11-12.
78. VNA 4 September 1969.

DRVN messages ahead of Truong Chinh. This in itself seemed significant of Le Duan's increased stature, since he had never during the past years been a signatory: these had been Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong, and Truong Chinh. On 23 September, the DRVN National Assembly met for the fifth session of its Third Legislature and confirmed Ton Duc Thang as President and Nguyen Luong Bang as Vice-President.

* * *

A number of important foreign delegations arrived in Peking in late September to attend the National Day celebrations and to have talks with Premier Chou-En-lai. These included Party and Government delegations from North Korea, Albania, North Viet Nam and South Viet Nam, and a National Delegation from Cambodia (the latter headed by Premier Lon Nol). The DRVN delegation led by Pham Van Dong arrived on 27 September, and on that evening Chou En-lai hosted a dinner for the members. In his speech, Chou particularly expressed confidence that the Vietnamese people would assuredly carry their war through to the end. Pham replied that the Vietnamese people would certainly follow Ho's teaching that the war must be carried through to the end "for the sake of national independence", and they would certainly act accordingly.[79] Chou made a similar point to the NFL-PRGRSVN delegation, led by Nguyen Huu Tho (suggesting again the subordination of the "Government" to the Front, despite the leader's role as President of the Advisory Council of the PRGRSVN), on the evening of its arrival at Peking on 29 September. Chou was reported by NCNA as saying: "So long as

79. Compare the NCNA extracts republished in Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 40 (3 October 1969), pp. 24-25, with the VNA report of 28 September.

the Vietnamese people fight on, it is our responsibility and our duty to assist them in carrying their war [...] through to the end".[80] Nguyen Huu Tho replied that when the delegation returned to South Viet Nam, "we will not fail to justify the trust the Chinese people have placed in us and the assistance the fraternal Chinese people have given us".[81]

China's 20th National Day was marked by speeches and commentaries equally divided between the themes of the need to further consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat internally, and to prepare against a war which might be launched by US imperialism and USSR social-imperialism externally. Stress was given to the alleged collusion and contention between the two super-powers for the control of the world, first through establishment of a ring of encirclement around China. This in itself was not a new theme, since it had been strongly stressed since the Czechoslovak invasion in August 1968, but the defensive mood was more in evidence than a year previously. Yet, as the PRC suggested in a statement of 7 October, it was not prepared to be intimidated, even should "a handful of war maniacs dare to raid China's strategic sites".[82] The Chinese side made it clear that, so far as it was concerned, the unresolved boundary question was the focal point of tension between the USSR and China, and that despite the existence of "irreconcilable differences of principle" between the two states, this should not prevent the two countries from "maintaining normal state relations on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence". The boundary question should be settled peacefully,

80. NCNA 29 September 1969 (in SCMP 4512 of 8 October 1969, pp. 36-37); emphasis added.
81. Ibid.
82. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 41 (10 October 1969), pp. 3-4.

and there was "no reason whatsoever" for the two states "to fight a war" over this question.[83]

From this point of view, it no doubt seemed more important than ever to avoid a circumstance where the US and the USSR joined forces in a joint attack on China. Such an event may in retrospect have always appeared to be improbable, but there seems no doubt that the possibility was being seriously prepared for, to the extent that the Chinese could establish an effective defence against the sophisticated weaponry of the super-powers. The Chinese defences seemed clearly inferior to the worst threat; time must therefore be made to work for China; an important part of the defensive strategy must be to discourage joint US-USSR military adventures against China; and an important tactic within that strategy must be to keep US military forces on the defensive in Viet Nam even as they were being steadily withdrawn from that theatre. This line of thought probably played an important role in the Chinese attitutude to their Vietnamese visitors in October.

The delegation led by Pham Van Dong departed from Peking on 3 October for East Germany and the Soviet Union, and returned to Peking on 20 October. The NFL delegation, on the other hand, stayed in China and visited Shanghai and Hangchow for a few days before returning to Peking on 12 October. On 15 and 25 October, communiques were issued on talks with Chou En-lai by Nguyen Huu Tho[84] and Pham Van Dong[85] respectively. A comparison of the two documents suggests slight differences of opinion between the two Vietnamese personalities: for example, the NFL "10-point solution"

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83. Ibid., p. 3.
84. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 43 (24 October 1969), pp. 6-7, and VNA 16 October.
85. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 44 (31 October 1969), pp. 6-7.

to the Viet Nam problem was described by Nguyen Huu Tho as "the basis" for for a settlement, while Pham Van Dong has it as "the correct basis"; and where the parties agree on "the road" to a settlement, Nguyen Huu Tho stresses that "the south Vietnamese people" should be left to deal with their own internal affairs, while Pham Van Dong prescribes this for "the Vietnamese people". However, none of these differences seem substantial in the overall context of the communiques. The Chinese side praised both for having persevered in protracted war, and reiterated that China would continue to give firm support and assistance to the anti-US struggle. Both Vietnamese leaders express their respect to the CPC and to Mao Tse-tung, and affirm their determination to fight on. The Chinese side added its belief in victory for the Vietnamese provided they maintained protracted war and insisted on independence and self-reliance.

At a banquet given by Chou En-lai for Pham Van Dong on 23 October, the Chinese Premier drew attention to what he considered to be a further manifestation of the Nixon Administration's counter-revolutionary dual tactics: withdrawing "a small number of US troops" from South Viet Nam, it was also actively stepping up "the arming and the expansion of the puppet troops", thereby demonstrating that it was still pursuing its aim of "trying to perpetuate its forcible occupation of South Viet Nam and the division of Viet Nam". The Vietnamese people's war had "come to an important and crucial juncture"; the Chinese people would do everything possible to give firm support to ensure that finaly the US were driven off Vietnamese soil.[86] Pham Van Dong accepted this renewed expression of confidence,

86. Text in ibid., pp. 8-9.

and insisted that no reactionary force whatsoever could prevent the Vietnamese people from "fighting to the end". He wished, he said, to voice the "deep feelings" of the entire Vietnamese people: "Thanks to respected Chairman Mao! Thanks to the Chinese Communist Party! Thanks to the Government and the fraternal people of China!" To balance these sentiments, which might otherwise be taken as those of a vassal in the court of the suzerain, he referred to the negotiations on Sino-Soviet boundary questions which had begun in Peking on 20 October, and expressed the "deep hope and wishes that these talks of important significance will achieve good results"[87] - clearly the hope and wish of an independent state, not a vassal, and also reflecting the words attributed to Ho Chi Minh's last Will:

> Having devoted my whole life to the cause of the revolution, the more proud I am to see the growth of the international communist and workers' movement, the more deeply I am grieved at the dissensions that are dividing the fraternal parties!
>
> I wish that our Party will do its best to contribute effectively to the restoration of unity among the fraternal parties on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, in a way consonant to the requirements of heart and reason.[88]

In a televised address on 3 November, President Nixon said that the withdrawal of US ground troops from Viet Nam would continue, and that his Administration continued to stand ready to discuss a just settlement of the Viet Nam war. He also released the text of

87. Text in ibid., pp. 9-11.
88. Text in e.g. Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 38 (19 September 1969), pp. 21-22.

letters exchanged between himself and Ho Chi Minh. Nixon, in his letter, said that he stood ready to discuss any proposals which were fair to all sides, but also was prepared to discuss other programme, "specifically the 10-point programme of the NFL".[89] The reply dated 25 August under the hand of Ho made no mention of the"10-point solution", but insisted that the US must withdraw all its troops.[90] The DRVN Government, in a 6 November comment on the speech, again insisted that the US must withdraw all its forces, cease supporting the "puppet administration" in Saigon, and let the South Vietnamese settle their own affairs. This was the spirit of the "10-point solution", the statement said, and it "opens the right way" to a settlement.[91] The PRGRSVN issued a statement in similar terms.[92]

For their part, the Chinese continued to express the view that "Vietnamization" was a trick for strengthening the "puppet troops", and that victory for the Vietnamese was dependent on maintaining a protracted war strategy, and maintaining independence and self-reliance. These points were made by Mao Tse-tung, Chou En-lai and Lin Piao in a joint message to Nguyen Huu Tho on 19 December (for the NFL anniversary),[93] by Lin Piao to Vo Nguyen Giap in his message on 21 December (for the PAVN anniversary),[94] and in the CPC-CC's message to the VNWP-CC on 2 February 1970 (for the Party's 40th anniversary),[95] and in Lin Piao's message to Tran Nam Trung of the southern PLAF on 14 February 1970 (to mark the ninth anniversary of

89. The text is given in e.g. Vietnam Courier, No. 242 (10 November 1969), p. 2.
90. Ibid., p.1.
91. Ibid., p.1.
92. VNA 8 November 1969.
93. Text in e.g. Peking Review, Vol. 12 Nos. 51-52 (26 December 1969), p. 5.
94. Text in ibid., p. 7.
95. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 6, (6 February 1970), pp.3-4.

the "unification of the South Vietnamese patriotic armed forces").[96]

On 23 November, Chou En-lai received the DRVN Ambassador Ngo Minh Loan, who was shortly to leave for home, according to the NCNA report. Early in December, Ngo Minh Loan was appointed to a ministerial post in the DRVN Government, and his successor, Ngo Thuyen - formerly Secretary of the VNWP Thanh Hoa provincial committee - was reported on 7 January to have presented his credentials on the 2nd to Vice-Chairman of the PRC Tung Pi-wu.[97] At a reception given by the new Ambassador on 23 January to mark the anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PRC and the DRVN, PRC Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Han Nien-lung stressed the friendship between the two peoples, adding that the "conspiratorial activities of imperialism and social-imperialism to sabotage the friendship between China and Viet Nam" were "bound to end in ignominious defeat".[98] At a parallel ceremony in Hanoi on 19 January, the DRVN Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Nguyen Duy Trinh said that the Vietnamese people "are making strenuous efforts to consolidate and develop the fraternal relations between Viet Nam and China on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism in the interests of our two peoples and that of the world revolution".[99] Precisely what problems were at issue was unclear, but their resolution evidently required a continuing even-handedness by Hanoi in dealing with both Peking and Moscow.

The entire content of the 14 February 1970 issue of Nhan Dan was given over to a major 50,000 word article by Le Duan which surveyed the broad sweep of achievement and shortcomings in the

96. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 8 (20 February 1970), p. 3
97. NCNA 7 January 1970 (in SCMP 4576 of 14 January 1970, p. 91).
98. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 5 (30 January 1970), p. 3.
99. NCNA 19 January 1970 (in SCMP 4585 of 27 January 1970, p.56).

VNWP's 40-year history. So far as the issues that are of direct relevance to Sino-Vietnamese relations are concerned, we may note that, first of all, he insisted on the continuation of a protracted war in South Viet Nam. This was the strategic guideline, he said, which enabled one to gain strength as one fought.[100] Secondly, he once again insisted that the victories of the Vietnamese revolution were due to the independent and creative manner in which its lines and methods had been developed.[101] Thirdly, the world situation urgently called for the restoration and consolidation of the unity of the socialist camp and the international communist and workers' movement.[102] Finally, he insisted that the DRVN would continue to consolidate and tighten the unshakable bonds of friendship with the members of the socialist camp, especially with the Soviet Union and China.[103] These were the guidelines of 1963, here reaffirmed, and indicating clearly that the post-Ho Chi Minh leadership of the VNWP did not intend to alter its independent line between Moscow and Peking.

* * *

What economic and military aid was extended to the DRVN during the period April 1968 - mid-March 1970? In 1968, the annual agreement on China's economic and technical aid to the DRVN in 1969, and associated protocols, was signed on 23 July;[104] the agreement on mutual commodity supply and payments was signed on 23 September.[105]

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100. Le Duan, The Vietnamese Revolution: Fundamental Problems Essential Tasks (Hanoi: FLPH, 1970), p. 73.
101. Ibid., p. 154.
102. Ibid., p. 191.
103. Ibid., p. 194.
104. Peking Review, Vol. 11 No. 31 (2 August 1968), p. 30.
105. VNA 30 September 1968.

The agreement on China's economic assistance to the DRVN in 1970 was signed on 26 September 1969,[106] along with a protocol; the agreement on goods supply and payments in 1970 was signed on 23 November 1969.[107] A protocol on the Sino-Vietnamese agreement on scientific and technical cooperation for 1970 was signed on 14 March 1970.[108] The Chinese side did not mention military aid in its announcements, but the Vietnamese side indicated that this form of aid was included in the main annual agreements on "economic assistance";[109] no further details were disclosed. However, in the wake of the partial, and then complete, cessation of bombing of the DRVN, it was reported by Western news agencies that the Chinese units of the PLA which had been involved in road and rail reconstruction were being withdrawn,[110] and on 3 September 1969 the New York Times reported "Washington official sources" as saying that China was believed to have withdrawn all of its 40 - 50,000 labour and engineering battalions from the DRVN. The sources said that "withdrawal is believed to have been completed within the last month or so" - i.e., by early August 1969. The main reason for their withdrawal was considered to be the fact that they had completed their mission in the DRVN.

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Although it is not directly relevant to the present purpose, it should be recalled that when the bombing of the DRVN ceased in 1968, the bombing of Laos was stepped up several times and continued

106. Peking Review, Vol. 12 No. 40 (3 October 1969), p. 40.
107. NCNA 23 November 1969 (in SCMP 4547 of 1 December 1969, p.28).
108. NCNA 15 March 1970 (in SCMP 4619 of 19 March 1970, p. 143).
109. See, e.g., the 2 December 1969 communique of the DRVN Council of Ministers, in Vietnam Courier, No. 246 (8 December 1969), p. 1.
110. See e.g. AP report from Paris, 5 October 1968, citing "qualified Western diplomats".

at a high level. The main purpose of these sorties was to disrupt the traffic of arms and other supplies, as well as soldiers, coming to South Viet Nam by way of the "Ho Chi Minh trail" network. The increased level of bombing, and the consequent losses to the PAVN transportation system, evidently involved the transfer of considerable numbers of soldiers and civilians to the task of keeping the network open and of securing the terrain in the vicinity of the trails. As the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese troops sought to extend the area under their control in Laos, the reaction to their presence grew. Beginning in mid August 1969, the US-supplied irregular Lao troops under the command of General Vang Pao, supported by several thousand Thai soldiers, endeavoured to take and secure the militarily important Plain of Jars - Xieng Khoang region of Laos; further PAVN troops had to be committed to the action in order to secure the region for the North Vietnamese. American air-support missions from Thai bases and elsewhere, and the Thai troop presence, continued into the 1970's; so did the PAVN presence in Laos, concerned both to secure the trails and to maintain a political authority in the Pathet-Lao held territory further north. Lower Laos was also a logical region in which to concentrate PAVN units in preparation for their action in South Viet Nam: thus it was subjected to considerable attention from US and allied forces. The Chinese, like the Vietnamese communists, had always seen Laos - along with Cambodia - as an integral part of the Indo-China strategic area; in March 1970, events in Cambodia were to link Cambodia - and indirectly Laos - more closely to the problem of Viet Nam.

North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese communist forces had long used Cambodian territory as a sanctuary. On 11 March, 1970, while Cambodian Head of State Norodom Sihanouk was abroad, raids were

instigated against the North and South Vietnamese Embassies in Phnom Penh. The demonstrators protested at the continuing presence in Cambodian territory of elements of communist forces. These incidents foreshadowed a coup d'etat in Phnom Penh on 18 March by Premier Lon Nol, and the deposition of Sihanouk as head of state on the grounds that he had betrayed the interests of the Khmer people by tolerating the PAVN-PLAF forces in Cambodia.

CHAPTER FIVE

March 1970 - December 1971

The 18 March 1970 coup d'etat in Cambodia gave the US and South Vietnamese Government forces an opportunity to conduct spoiling operations in Cambodian territory on a wide scale during May and June against PLAF and PAVN forces. It also formally opened the whole territory of Indo-China as a battlefield between communist-directed insurgents and anti-communist military forces. However, from the point of view of Peking-Hanoi relations, the most important result was an at least nominal unity of the communist forces under the banner of the "Summit Conference of the Indo-Chinese Peoples". Under this banner, for the first time, the PRC acquired an opportunity to increase its direct authority in the affairs of Indo-China as a whole, and - more importantly - to play a greater and more active role in the eventual political settlement of the conflict than might have been possible while the war was essentially confined to Viet Nam.

A further striking feature of the period discussed in this chapter was the change in China's foreign policy tactics which became noticeable from March 1971 with the advent of "ping-pong diplomacy". For the DRVN, these new tactics found public expression in early July 1971, when the PRC indicated approval for the first time of the communist negotiating position at the Paris peace conference on Viet Nam. Welcome though this undoubtedly was to the Vietnamese, it was followed very shortly by the announcement of President Nixon's proposed visit to China, and the Vietnamese expressed strong misgivings about the possibility of a Sino-US "deal" on Viet Nam. Chinese leaders also stopped their references to the desirability and necessity of fighting a protracted war in Viet Nam, in keeping with the new approach to internation problems and priorities. Yet the PRC leaders reaffirmed

their commitment to the basic goal of revolution throughout the world - revolution which had to be made by the people of each country themselves, but which nevertheless would always be assured of Chinese support.

* * *

Prince Sihanouk arrived in Peking from Moscow on the morning of 19 March and was received with the ceremonies appropriate to a Chief of State. He indicated on several occasions during the rest of March that it was his intention to live alternately in Peking and Moscow,[1] but it soon became clear that he had for whatever reasons decided to remain in Peking. In the coming months he travelled extensively, both within China and abroad, and the Chinese afforded him the facilities of the NCNA for his many and lengthy messages to the Khmer people, not all of which were consistent with the views of either Peking or Hanoi. In his important "Declaration" of 23 March, however, he adopted the classical CPC line on national liberation struggles: he declared the Lon Nol Government and the Parliament in Phnom Penh dissolved, and proceeded to announce the impending establishment of a "national Union Government", a "national liberation army", and a "national united front", the latter to be styled the "National United Front of Kampuchea" (unhappily abbreviated from the French as FUNK).[2] A major ingredient was lacking: a Marxist-Leninist Party to lead the United Front. An obvious candidate for such a role was the "Procheachon" or People's Group of Cambodia (a pro-DRVN front group founded in 1955[3]),

1. See e.g. his Press statement dated 21 March, and a further "note to the Press" dated 22 March 1970 (both in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 13 (27 March 1970), at p. 18 & p. 20 respectively.
2. The text of the declaration is in ibid., p. 14.
3. Little seems to be known about this group; even the transliteration of the Cambodian name into the Roman alphabet is a matter is dispute, variants including "Pracheachon", Procheachun" and "Pracheachun". Here I use "Procheachon" consistently, but without claim for its superiority.

which in one of its rare public statements was reported on 23 April 1970 to have reaffirmed "its policy of uniting the entire Khmer people to struggle against the US imperialists and their henchmen in Cambodia".[4]

Sihanouk was at first concerned to justify his former policies in Cambodia, and to stress that he was not a Marxist. In his first message to the Khmer people, he said that he had wanted to make his nation avoid "running into great danger in the future by provoking recklessly and with undue hostility socialist Viet Nam";[5] in a Press statement of 20 March he referred to the communist Vietnamese infiltration into Cambodia "which I myself have denounced to the world many times", and said that the Cambodian frontier guards had "considerably reduced the numbers of the NFL elements stationed on our territory" by the eve of the anti-Vietnamese demonstrations in Phnom Penh.[6]

In a frank article written before his deposition, Sihanouk stresses the operation of "Red Khmers" in Cambodia ("on the orders of their foreign masters") and the problem of infiltration of Cambodian territory by Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. He also expressed reservations concerning the PRC:

> Our relations with the People's Republic of China, at the present time, are very correct. (...) Whatever its friendship and respect for the present Cambodia, Communist China cannot escape its "proletarian duty" of solidarity with the "liberalization movements of peoples oppressed by bourgeois and reactionary regimes". Well, the Sangkum and myself are, and always will be, put into this category of regime by our "reds".

The major problem for Cambodia, Sihanouk wrote, was "the issue of its <u>territorial integrity within the present frontiers</u>".[7]

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4. As quoted by NCNA of 5 May 1970, citing a VNA report from Cambodia (in SCMP 4656 of 14 May 1970, p. 166).
5. From the text in <u>Peking Review</u>, Vol. 13 No. 13 (27 March 1970), at p. 13.
6. From the text in <u>ibid.</u>, at p. 16.
7. "How Cambodia Fares In the Changing Indochina Peninsula", in <u>The Pacific Community</u>, Vol. 1 No. 3 (April 1970), p. 349.
8. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 346; italics in source.

When, therefore, shortly after his arrival in Peking Sihanouk received cables from both Pham Van Dong and the leaders of the NFL and the PRGRSVN reaffirming the desire of both North and South Vietnamese communists to maintain friendship and good neighbourliness with Cambodia, he sought to ensure that the coup would not undo his efforts to secure Cambodia's territorial integrity within its present frontiers. He wrote to both the DRVN and the PRGRSVN pointing out that it was "advisable to regulate in the spirit of peace and mutal respect the possible disputes or other problems that may arise between our two countries",[9] and expressing the hope that friendship with Cambodia would soon be restored "in the spirit of mutual respect of each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity within the existing frontiers".[10] He also wrote to Prince Souphanouvong in similar terms.[11] The DRVN Government, the PRGRSVN, and the Lao Patriotic Front immediately issued statements reaffirming that their former policies were unchanged.[12] Sihanouk can have had little trust in these reassurances, but he had at least secured them for the public record. Chou En-lai also, on 5 April, publicly pledged China's support for Cambodia's integrity.[13]

* * *

The Chinese Press carried little substantive comment on the situation in Cambodia until the middle of April 1970, preferring instead to reprint commentaries and statements from foreign sources and from Sihanouk himself. However, a commentary in the 17 April issue of Renmin Robao spoke of the

9. From the text of his 21 March letter to Pham Van Dong, in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 14 (3 April 1970), at p. 24.
10. Ibid. His 24 March letter addressed to Nguyen Huu Tho and to PRGRSVN President Huynh Tan Phat, in the same terms, is given in ibid., pp. 25-26.
11. Letter of 25 March, in ibid., pp. 26-27.
12. The texts of the responses at in ibid., at pp. 23, 23-24, and 21-22 respectively.
13. The text is in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 15 (10 April 1970), pp. 15-16.

Cambodian people "fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Vietnamese and Laotian peoples" in an anti-US struggle, a phrase which had been used by Chou En-lai in speeches on 5 and 7 April. An article in the same paper two days later by Hung Chuang-chih was carried by NCNA: in the face of the new designs of US imperialism to expand its aggression, he wrote, the peoples of Indo-China "will surely unite still more closely, fight shoulder to shoulder and support one another and completely defeat the US aggressors and their lackeys".[14] This formula was again used by Renmin Ribao's commentator on 21 April.

On 27 April, it was announced that a "Summit Conference of the Indo-Chinese Peoples" had been held on 24 and 25 April "at a place in the frontier region of Laos, Viet Nam and China" - thought by some observers to be Mengtzu, in Yunnan - on the initiative of Sihanouk. The delegation of the "Cambodian people" by Prince Souphanouvong; that of the "people of the Republic of South Viet Nam" by NLF President Nguyen Huu Tho; and that of the people of the DRVN by Pham Van Dong.[15] It is an unexplained curiosity that the "Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam" was not directly represented; Nguyen Huu Tho held no formal position with the PRG, and neither had any member of his delegation. Chou En-lai reportedly made "a special trip from Peking" to attend the meeting, and gave a grand banquet on 25 April "to celebrate the success" of the Summit Conference (implying that the work of the Conference had concluded before his arrival).[16] The leaders of the four delegations gave a return banquet for Chou En-lai on 26 April.

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14. NCNA 19 April 1970 (in SCMP 4645 of 29 April), p. 127.
15. NCNA 27 April 1970; the text of the "Declaration" and associated documents in in Peking Review, Vol. 13, Special Issue, 8 May 1970.
16 NCNA 2 May 1970; reported in ibid., p. 33.

Curiously, NCNA did not report Chou's presence at the conference site until 2 May when it published the text of his 25 April speech.[17] Nor was any mention made of Chou's presence there, by a 28 April statement by the PRC Government[18] or a 30 April Renmin Ribao editorial,[19] both welcoming the Joint Declaration issued by the conference: Hanoi Radio, however, had on 29 April mentioned this fact. These facts suggest that Chou's attendance had been decided at the very last minute, and/or that both the 28 April statement and the 30 April editorial had been prepared some time in advance. Both aspects may be true. It is a most curious fact that, apart from brief one-phase references by the delegation leaders to support for "China's recovery of Taiwan", none of the leaders - with one exception - made any reference to China before the arrival of Chou. Neither was there any reference to China in the Joint Declaration. The exception who did speak of China was Sihanouk, whose total of four references in his opening and closing speeches included two of thanks for the PRC's hospitality to himself and his entourage, and two referring to the "powerful support" which he said the Indo-Chinese peoples enjoyed from China.[20]

A review of Chou En-lai's speech to the 25 April banquet suggests the major motive for his presence. He said that he extended "the most cordial greetings and the highest respects" to the delegations, on behalf of "the Chinese people's great leader Chairman Mao Tsetung and his close comrade-in-arms Vice-Chairman Lin Piao and on behalf of the Chinese Government and people". Thus, he was conveying that both the Chairman

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17. The text is in ibid. at pp. 34-35.
18. Text in ibid., pp. 7-8.
19. Text in ibid., pp. 9-10.
20. Text of the speeches in ibid., pp. 14-15 and 30-32.

and his successor were keenly interested in the event, and its outcome. Chou also stressed that

> the 700 million Chinese people provide a powerful backing for the three Indo-Chinese peoples and the vast expanse of China's territory is their reliable rear area. The three fracternal Indo-Chinese peoples may rest assured that in the common struggle against US imperialism, the Chinese people will always stand by their side.[21]

Thus, he also stressed the strategic relationship between the Indo-Chinese struggle and Chinese interests. He may also have meant to imply that Chinese interests should henceforth be taken into greater account by the Indo-Chinese delegations; by implication, strategy for the region should henceforth be subject to closer joint planning between China and the other parties, especially the DRVN; such implications would not be inconsistent with his remarks taken as a whole. More broadly, by asserting its interest in the affairs of the region in this manner, Chou seemed to be concerned to secure for the PRC a substantial say in the political settlement that would inevitably develop. In their reply speeches at this banquet, the leaders of the delegations exhibited mixed feelings. Sihanouk again spoke of the powerful support of China, and he quoted Mao, but he took advantage of the presence of Chou En-lai and the Vietnamese to stress that "the liberation of our country should be essentially the work of the Khmers".[22] Nguyen Huu Tho was eloquent in his praise for Chinese aid and support.[23] Prince Souphanouvong seemed unconvinced:

> The Delegation of the Laotian people is particularly happy to see that the Chinese people (...) are always anxious to give the Indo-Chinese peoples wholehearted assistance and all-out support in their struggle <u>in a disinterested way, materially and morally</u> (...).[24]

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21. Text in <u>ibid.</u>, pp. 34-35; the quotation is at p. 35
22. Text in <u>ibid.</u>, pp. 36-37.
23. Text in <u>ibid.</u>, pp. 39-40.
24. Text in ibid., pp. 38-39.

Pham Van Dong paid minimal attention to China's support and aid; he referred to "the warm support and aid and the meticulous attention of the great People's Republic of China" which had attended the work of the Conference,[25] perhaps implying that the PRC's attention had become too meticulous.

The complete texts of speeches at the return banquet for Chou, on 26 April, were not published: only Sihanouk and Chou spoke. According to the extracts of the Chinese Premier's speech which were published by NCNA, he dwelt on the new theme of an Asian united front, and on the unity of the national aspects of the Indo-China problem:

> The three Indo-Chinese peoples' cause of liberation is an integral whole, and only by uniting to drive US imperialism out of the whole of Indo-China can the three Indo-Chinese peoples achieve genuine independence and liberation. (...)
>
> In Asia, the peoples of China, Korea and the three Indo-Chinese countries in particular, are confronted with the aggression, intervention and sabotage against the integrity of our respective countries by US imperialism and its lackeys, and our struggle is a common one. We must stand together, support and assist each other and wage a common fight, until the US aggressors completely withdraw from Taiwan, South Korea and the three Indo-Chinese countries.[26]

This appears to be the first reference during this period to an Asian united front; it was much-referred to in mid-1970, as will be shown, but it was then quietly ignored. The VNWP had stressed the importance of co-operation on the part of all three Indo-Chinese states as early as February 1951, when its Manifesto and Programme were published.[27] The VNWP leaders had commemorated the anniversaries of the Indo-Chinese People's Conference each year after the 1965 meeting, and in May 1968 Truong Chinh had publicly insisted that "the Vietnamese, Lao and Khmer peoples should unite to resist US aggression", adding

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25. Text in ibid., pp. 40-41.
26. NCNA 3 May 1970; the extracts are in the report in ibid., p.44.
27. See People's China, Vol. III No. 9 (1 May 1951), Supplement.

that "The Indo-Chinese Peoples' Conference held in Phnom Penh a few years ago may be regarded as the embryo of the future Indo-Chinese people's united front against US imperialism".[28] It seems likely, therefore, that he at least was disappointed at the inability of the April 1970 conference to agree on a more united "united front" than was displayed in the Joint Declaration. For the VNWP leaders generally, they may have felt that while their own paramountcy within an "Indo-China Peoples' United Front" would be assured, it would be subject to substantial dilution within a broader "Asian peoples' united front" such as Chou had proposed, and which would clearly be dominated by China.

The important aspect of the Joint Declaration was a call for the three peoples to "strengthen their solidarity and wage a herioc and tenacious fight", to "further heighten their vigilance" in the face of the "Nixon doctrine" of "making Asians fight Asians, sowing discord and provoking chauvinistic hatred among the three peoples". The parties pledged themselves to give each other reciprocal support "on the basis of mutual respect" and looked forward to "lasting co-operation in the building of each country according to its own way", and affirmed that "all problems arising in the relations between the three countries can be solved through negotiations in a spirit of mutual respect, mutual understanding and mutual assistance".[29] The qualifications concerning "respect" were no doubt intended for the satisfaction of Sihanouk, but the reference to "chauvinistic hatred among the three peoples" probably referred to a more generalized phenomenon - Lao dislike of North Vietnamese, South Vietnamese dislke of North Voetnamese, and Khmer dislike of all Vietnamese - in the war context.

28. Truong Chinh, Forward Along the Path Charted By K. Marx (Hanoi: FLPH, 1969) p. 88.
29. From the text, in Peking Review, Vol. 13, Special Issue, 8 May 1970, at p. 6.

Chinese concern over the effect of ethnic conflict in Indo-China is indicated in the 28 April PRC Government statement, which said that it was certain that "the conference will greatly enhance the revolutionary fighting spirit of the three Indo-Chinese peoples and their confidence in victory", and that the Indo-Chinese peoples would surely defeat the US if they were "united closely and fighting persistently".[30] The 30 April Renmin Ribao editorial stressed the same formula for victory, after saying that it was the US which had "tried in a thousand and one ways to fan up racist hatred, engineer rascist massacres and sow discord among the Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese people".[31]

The last aspect of the Summit Conference that deserves attention is the formal response of the DRVN Government. In a joint statement with the Viet Nam Fatherland Front, issued only on 1 May, it is not surprising to find that China is not mentioned anywhere in the document.[32] In fact, the excessive praise bestowed upon a conference which achieve little in public is matched by a clear arrogation of "leadership" of the Indo-Chinese peoples by the DRVN, which pledged itself to "make all-out efforts to contribute to the strengthening of the relations among the three countries, so that in the generations to come the three peoples will live in concord, mutual affection and esteem, in cordial solidarity and mutual support against the common enemy".[33] There is no reference to ethnic frictions.

Whatever gains the DRVN may have hoped to receive from the Summit Conference evidently accrued to China instead. To judge from their respective Government statements, Chou En-lai and

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30. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
31. Ibid., p. 10.
32. The Indochinese People Will Win (Hanoi: FLPH, 1970), pp. 127-133.
33. Ibid., p. 131.

Pham Van Dong had substantially different perspectives on Indo-Chinese problems.

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The two-month incursion into Cambodia by US and South Vietnamese Government troops that was announced by President Nixon on 30 April was predictably denounced by both the PRC and the DRVN. The DRVN reacted first, with a statement on 2 May that described the action as an "extremely danagerous US escalation, resulting in an expansion of the war to the whole of Indo-China",[34] the PRC two days later called the invasion and the concomitant general expansion of war in Indo-China "frantic provocations against China".[35] In Peking, Sihanouk was received by Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao on the afternoon of May Day; on 4 May, he proclaimed the Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia under the leadership of the National United Front of Kampuchea (hereafter RGNUC); the text of the proclamation, together with the text of the Front's Political Programme, was made public the following day.[36] The proclamation stressed that Cambodia's foreign policy would "remain" one of "neutrality and non-alignment", and invited recognition of the new Government as the "sole legal and legitimate Government of Cambodia". The PRC (on 5 May) and both the DRVN and the PRGRSVN (on 6 May) formally recognized the Government; but the USSR declined to break of its relations with the Lon Nol Government in Phnom Penh both at this time and beyond the period of the present study, much to the chagrin of Sihanouk. The Political Programme was clearly patterned after the Neo Lao Haksat's 1968 Programme and the NFL's 1967 Programme, with

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34. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 19 (8 May 1970) at p. 18.
35. Text at ibid., p. 14.
36. Text of the proclamation is at Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 20 (15 May 1970), p.6.

allowances made for the differing circumstances of Cambodia; the principal point was a commitment to create and strengthen a "National Liberation Army" to oppose the "American imperialists".[37] Three major ministries of the RGNUC were held by members of the Procheachon Group - National Defence (Khieu Samphan), Information and Propaganda (Hu Nim) and Interior (Hou Yuon) - and these three ministers were also named as members of the 11-man "Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the National United Front of Kampuchea".[38] It was reported later that a "Congress of Cambodian People's Movement of United Resistance" had been held "in a liberated area of Cambodia" on 7 and 8 May, attended by Khieu Samphan and others, and that the Congress had approved the Political Programme's "correct line and policy".[39] The Congress also "unanimously" approved the establishment of the Front's Political Bureau with Penn Nouth as Chairman and of the RGNU headed also by Penn Nouth. Khieu Samphan was named concurrently a Vice Premier on 19 August 1970.[40] Thus the political organization in Cambodia opposed to the regime of Lon Nol had now taken on the general characteristics of the communist front structures in South Viet Nam and in Laos, with the exception that in Laos there was not yet a formal "Government" claiming legitimacy in opposition to the authorities in Vientiane. The evidence strongly suggested, but did not absolutely confirm, that the VNWP exercised a dominant role in all three insurgent political entities.

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37. Ibid., p. 8.
38. Ibid., p. 11.
39. Reported in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 25 (19 June 1970), p. 33.
40. "Communique of Secretariat of Central Committee of NUFK", in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 36 (4 September 1970), p. 27.

In a speech to a 500,000-strong rally in Peking on the 21 May, Sihanouk stressed that the RGNUC was not an exile Government: "its principal ministers, in particular the Ministers of National Defence (Khieu Samphan) and of the Interior (Hou Yuon), govern the country, defend and administer it in close co-operation with the people".[41] It remained unclear, however, how policy-making powers were distributed between the "internal" and "external" components of the RGNUC, and in particular how much authority Sihanouk was able to assert as "Head of State" in exile. Nevertheless, the PRC dealt with the Peking component of the RGNUC, at least in public: thus, as was later announced, the two Governments in May "signed an agreement" on providing the RGNUC with a loan from the PRC, and in August 1970 the two Governments signed an agreement "on providing gratuitous military aid to Cambodia in 1970".[42] The arrangement led to some curious formalities: according to NCNA reports of 29 March 1971[43] and 9 April 1971,[44] the "Ministry of Foreign Affairs" in Peking of the RGNUC delivered Notes to the "Embassy of the People's Republic of China to Cambodia", also in Peking.

Sihanouk visited Hanoi for two weeks from 25 May to 8 June 1970; in his speeches, he continued to emphasize his concern that after "our common victory" there would be "absolute respect for each other's national independence and territorial integrity". In a major speech, Pham Van Dong affirmed that

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41. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. 13, Special Issue, 20 May 1970, at p. 17.
42. Both agreements are reported in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 35 (28 August 1970), p. 22.
43. In SCMP 4874 (8 April 1971), p. 144.
44. In SCMP 4914 (9 June 1971), p. 146.

the DRVN "had" and would exercise such respect; but his major theme was that the destinies of the three Indo-China countries "are closely linked together". "None of our three countries can live in peace, independence and freedom if the territory of the others remains a target of imperialist aggression", he said;[45] and the theme was given prominence in their Joint Communique issued at the close of the visit.[46] Sihanouk said on his departure from the DRVN that "no problems and no disputes" existed between the two states.

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On 18 May, as North Vietnamese and pro-Sihanouk forces were engaging US and Saigon Government troops in Cambodia, the CPC-CC had sent a message to the VNWP-CC for the occasion of Ho Chi Minh's 80th birthday anniversary.[47] The Indo-Chinese peoples' war was "developing with the force of a thunderbolt" and had "entered a new stage", the message said; but the Chinese could not resist extending further advice: to persist in protracted war, to maintain independence, to keep the initiative in their own hands, to persist in self-reliance, and to unite closely with the Cambodian and Laotian peoples. Except for the last point, this was the prescription as before. When Mao Tse-tung issued his widely-publicized statement on 20 May in support of the Indo-Chinese peoples' anti-US struggle, he also proffered advice: victory would be theirs, provided they strengthened their unity, supported each other, and persevered in protracted people's war.[48] It is significant to note that the DRVN response to Mao's statement indicated the North Vietnamese

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45. From the text of his 27 May speech: in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 23 (5 June 1970), p. 24.
46. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 25 (19 June 1970), pp. 15-19
47. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 21 (22 May 1970), p. 3.
48. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 13, Special Issue, 23 May 1970, pp. 8-9.

irritation at this advice: Nhan Dan's 22 May editorial called it "an important statement", but went on to stress that the VNWP was "well aware that our people owe their great victories first and foremost to their own efforts and also to the valuable support and assistance given by the fraternal socialist countries and the people the world over".[49]

Mao's call for unity was given extensive publicity during June and the first half of July, when may speakers in Peking and in Pyongyang - whence Sihanouk had gone for a visit from 15 June to 2 July - stressed the concept of an "Asian united front" against the US, including not merely Indo-China but also Korea and China. This concept had already found expression, as we saw above, in Chou En-lai's speech to the Indo-Chinese Peoples' Summit Conference on 25 April; it was also stressed on 9 June by Kang Sheng, member of the Standing Committee of the CPC-CC Politburo, when he said that the anti-US front "from Korea and Japan to Indo-China and the whole of Asia" had made "great advances";[50] and on 25 June, when Vice-Premier Li Hsien-nien said that the "revolutionary unity between the peoples of China, Korea, Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos" was being "strengthened and consolidated".[51] North Korean Premier Kim Il Sung also made reference to such a front on 15 June, saying that such a development was "of very great importance" for enabling the countries concerned to "join together in dealing collective blows" at the US "in order to knock it down.[52] The theme was repeated in the Cambodian-North Korean Joint Statement issued on 30 June,[53] and in a 5 July speech by Chou En-lai.[54]

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49. Quoted in NCNA 22 May 1970 (in SCMP 4668 of 2 June 1970), p. 77. Emphasis added.
50. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 25 (19 June 1970), p. 7.
51. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 27 (3 July 1970), at p. 21.
52. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 26 (26 June 1970), at p. 13.
53. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 28 (10 July 1970), at p. 14.
54. From the text in ibid., at p. 9.

This Chinese concern for co-ordination in the anti-US struggle was, however, dominant for only a brief period, although it received a mention by Li Hsien-nien in a speech on 2 September.[55] The dominant aspect of Sino-Vietnamese relations from early July to the end of November 1970 were the twin Chinese calls for unity of the Indo-Chinese peoples and for DRVN opposition to "peace talk hoaxes".

Nixon's report on 30 June on the Cambodian incursion was greeted by the Renmin Ribao Commentator on 4 July as a "smokescreen for strengthening and expanding (the US) way of aggression against that country",[56] the same view was taken by Vice-Premier Li Hsien-nien in a speech on 15 July, when he linked the "camouflage of 'troop withdrawal' " to "the so-called 'peaceful settlement' in Indo-China put forward by US imperialism and its accomplice".[57] The VNA on 15 July also issued an authorized statement reiterating that the DRVN's stand on "the indo-China question" remained "unchanged" from that most recently expressed in the DRVN-Cambodia Joint Statement of 7 June. On 14 July, Chou En-lai reiterated that "the aggressor troops of the United States and all the armed forces of its satellites should be withdrawn from the three Indo-Chinese countries so that the people of these countries may solve their problems on their own".[58]

On 25 July, a Korean military delegation arrived in Peking, and at a banquet on the same evening the Chief of the PLA General Staff, Huang Yung-sheng, said that the US

> in collaboration with certain people, is contriving peace talk proposals for a so-called "political solution" of the Indo-China question, in a vain

55. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 36 (4 September 1970), p. 15.
56. From the text at Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 29 (17 July 1970), p. 23.
57. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 30 (24 July 1970). p. 6.
58. In an interview with French correspondents reported in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 31 (31 July 1970), p. 3.

> attempt to stamp out the three Indo-Chinese peoples' war against US aggression and for national salvation.[59]

The Asian united front, he said, would certainly drive US out of Asia, "so long as they strengthen their unity and persevere in struggle". "Strengthened unity" and "perserverance in struggle" was also the formula for the success of the Asian people as expressed by a joint editorial in Jiefangjun Bao and Renmin Ribao on 27 July, and this also directed major attention to Indo-China.

> The Nixon government is now again vigorously peddling a new "peace" fraud, contriving so-called Geneva-Conference type negotiations in a vain attempt to stamp out the raging flames of the three Indo-Chinese peoples' war against US aggression and for national salvation and to seize what it has failed to obtain on the battlefield. Nevertheless, certain people have gone so far as to run errands for US imperialism and serve as its accomplice in an overt or convert way. Such trickery performed by US imperialism and its collaborator, however, can deceive nobody.[60]

This seemed as warning to certain parties that they might be deceived, although the DRVN Government, in a statement on 19 July, had said that "all the peace hoaxes of the US imperialists can dupe nobody", and had expressed firm conviction that friends "will afford greater assistance" to the struggle "of the Vietnamese as well as other Indo-Chinese peoples".[61] Huang Yung-sheng again referred to US's "fiercer outcries for a new world war so as to intimidate some people" into helping it to push its "Munich" plots in the Middle East and Indo-China, in a vain attempt to undermine the unity of the three Indo-Chinese peoples", when he addressed a PLA day celebration in Peking on 1 August.[62]

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59. Quoted in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 31 (31 July 1970), p.17.
60. From text in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 31 (31 July 1970), at p. 18.
61. Vietnam Courier, No. 279 (27 July 1970), p. 1.
62. From text in Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 32 (7 August 1970), at p. 10.

On 2 September, in a speech at a mass rally in Peking for the DRVN's 25th anniversary, Li Hsien-nien noted that both US imperialism and social-imperialism were "trying in a thousand and one ways to peddle a so-called 'peaceful settlement', contriving Munich plots to sell out the interests of the people", in both Indo-China and the Middle East.[63] The DRVN Ambassador, at a reception given by him on the same day, declared that the US had "obstinately avoided discussing the 10-point overall solution" put forth by the NFL-PRGRSVN, that the US would "still resort to many evil schemes of farcical peace" in an attempt to extricate itself, and said that the Indo-Chinese peoples would continue fighting so long as the US "refuse to send home speedily, completely and unconditionally the US expeditionary troops" and "refuse to recognize the fundamental national rights" of the Indo-Chinese peoples.[64] Chou En-lai at the same reception referred to "peace talk schemes" being contrived "in a vain attempt to put out the raging revolutionary flames".[65] The message of the Chinese leaders to their DRVN counterparts, sent on 1 September to greet National Day, again stressed the need for the Indo-Chinese peoples to strengthen their unity, support and assist each other, and persevere in protracted people's war.[66] The same views were expressed on 11 October by Kuo Mo-jo in a speech[67] at a Laotian Day reception in Peking and in Renmin Ribao commentaries on 13 October and 7 December.

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63. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 36 (4 September 1970), p. 15.
64. Ibid., p. 17.
65. Ibid., p. 21.
66. Ibid., pp. 3-4.
67. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 42 (16 October 1970), p. 29.

Opposition by Chinese spokesmen to any concessions on a political settlement continued after 17 September, when the PRGRSVN delegation in Paris issued an elaboration of its "10-point proposal" of 8 May 1969. This "eight-point elaboration" proposed that the US should declare that it would withdraw its troops and those of its allies before 30 June 1971, and proposed that the PRGRSVN should be included in the envisaged "provisional coalition government" as one of three components.[68] President Nixon responded on 7 October by proposing a "ceasefire-in-place" of all armed forces throughout Indo-China, to be followed by an Indo-China peace conference, he also expressed a willingness to "negotiate an agreed timetable for complete withdrawals as part of an overall settlement".[69]

Renmin Ribao's commentator rejected these proposals in a 13 October article which claimed that they were a "clumsy fraud". Commentator reiterated that the key to the settlement of the Indo-China question was the "immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal" of allied troops. As for the proposed conference, "it is merely a plot US imperialism has long been hatching to strangle the revolutionary struggle of the peoples of Indo-China through international conference".[70]

Chou En-lai also charged, in a 9 November speech, that the US was "feverishly engaged in political deception, in a vain attempt to stamp out the flames" of struggle.[71] A Renmin Ribao editorial of 22 November, supporting a DRVN protest on US bombing raids on the previous day, claimed that the US was

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68. The relevant details are in Vietnam Courier, No. 287 (21 September 1970), pp. 1 and 7.
69. Documentation (USIS, Hong Kong), 8 October 1970, p. 3.
70. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 42 (16 October 1972), pp. 15-16.
71. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 46 (13 November 1970), p. 8.

trying to extricate itself from defeat by resorting to peace frauds, and that when these went bankrupt, "it again turns to a new adventure".[72]

In early December, US bombers again attacked DRVN targets, On 10 December, in a statement issued under the joint authority of the DRVN Government and VNWP-CC, the North Vietnamese issued an appeal to "the other countries in the socialist camp" to "raise stern condemnations and stay the criminal hands" of the US. The statement complained that the US were "bent on preventing the Paris conference from making any progress and have not shown a good will". "More than ever", the statement went on, "faced with the new scheme of the US imperialists, our entire Party, people and army must unite even more closely and be of one mind, (...) persist in and step up the resistance war, be determined to fight and to win and fight till all the US troops have been forced to withdraw (...)". It added that the Vietnamese people "are resolved to fight side by side with the brother peoples of Laos and Cambodia".[73] The phrasing of the statement suggested that there were severe divisions of opinion within the ranks of the Party, people and army, presumably because many saw the bombings as an indication of a return to the continual raids of 1965-1968.

When Chou En-lai received the DRVN Ambassador on the following day to accept the statement, he warned that the US "may resort to adventurism in order to save itself from defeat",[74] a fear that was repeated in the Chinese statement responding to the DRVN's appeal. The Chinese statement, issued on 13 December,[75] was also subscribed by both the

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72. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 48 (27 November 1970), p. 6.
73. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 51 (18 December 1970), pp. 7-8; emphasis added.
74. Ibid., p. 6.
75. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Government and the Party. It said that the NFL and PRGRSVN had "long set forth the correct way for the settlement of the Viet Nam question", it their "10-point proposal" and in the "eight-point elaboration"; and it warned the US not to "misjudge the situation and miscalculate". "Should you (...) dare to act recklessly, what awaits you will certainly be an even more disastrous defeat". But the essential point of the statement, in response to the DRVN's plea that socialist states should "raise stern condemnations" of the US, was an insistence by the Chinese that the Vietnamese should fight their own battles. The DRVN "is an independent sovereign state, and it is the sacred right of the Vietnamese people to defend their motherland against encroachment"; at the same time, since the Vietnamese nation was an integral whole, "it is the sacred duty of the people in the northern part of Viet Nam to support and assist their kinsmen in the south". The statement also, in its paraphrase of the DRVN's 10 December appeal, said that it "solemnly calls on the armymen and people of Viet Nam to unite still more closely, fight shoulder to shoulder with the Laotian and Cambodian peoples and carry on the war (...)".[76] This phrasing strongly implied Chinese annoyance for the apparent flagging morale in the DRVN, even though it did not in fact distort the 10 December appeal's wording. This interpretation, that the Chinese were expressing a sentiment coming close to scorn, finds support in the editorial of Renmin Ribao for 13 December. The editorialist states that "an excellent revolutionary situation prevails throughout Indo-China", and the wars of the separate peoples are co-ordinated with each other to form a single theatre of war; and the

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76. Emphasis added.

Chinese people "will do all they can to support and assist the Vietnamese people till complete victory".[77] Also, the Chinese leaders' 19 December message to the NFL leaders on the occasion of the NFL's 10th anniversary stressed only one condition for victory: perseverance in protracted people's war.[78] Further, as will be shown, the DRVN-VNWP's response to the Chinese statement of 13 December was unusually sharp.

The 1971 New Year's Day editorial by Peking's "two newspapers and one magazine" devoted most of its attention to domestic affairs. So far as foreign matters were concerned, the editorial judged that the world was undergoing a revolutionary change, and that the revolutionary situation "is developing faster than was expected". The Indo-Chinese peoples were judged to have won "great victories" in their war. China's foreign relations are daily developing", the editorial went on, but, after Albania's Party of Labour, only the VNWP and its Korean counter-part were mentioned,[79] suggesting that foreign relations between fraternal parties were capable of substantial development.

After a delay of nearly three weeks, the North Vietnamese responded on 31 December 1970 to the PRC-CPC statement of 13 December concerning the Vietnamese 11 December appeal. The message[80] was of unusual significance. First, the NCNA did not release the text until 8 January 1971. Secondly, the message was signed by Le Duan and Pham Van Dong, in that order, on behalf of the VNWP and the DRVN Government respectively; and, although the addressees were Mao Tse-tung, Lin Piao, and Chou En-lai - the letter in his capacity as "Premier of the State

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77. Text in ibid., pp. 4-6.
78. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 52 (25 December 1970), p. 5.
79. Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 1 (1 January 1971), pp. 8-10.
80. Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 3 (15 January 1971), p. 5.

Council" - the signature of Truong Chinh was conspicuously absent. Truong Chinh had signed the 30 September greetings to the PRC's national day, in his capacity as Chairman of the standing committee of the DRVN's National Assembly, and the addressees on that occasion were the same three Chinese leaders. The absence strongly implied Truong Chinh's unwillingness to be associated with the latest message.

Thirdly, and most revealingly, the text of the message was designed to rebut the charges made in the Chinese message of 13 December. The message stressed that Le Duan and Pham Van Dong considered that they could speak for both North and South Viet Nam: "The entire Vietnamese people" welcomed the Chinese statement, which was "a powerful support" to "all the people of Viet Nam". The Vietnamese people <u>were</u> "firmly resolved to smash any new adventure of US imperialism", <u>were</u> "persisting in and vigorously stepping up the struggle" against the US, <u>were</u> "fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Laotian and Cambodian peoples". In addition, the message said, they "are making contribution to the common struggle of the world people for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism". All of these points were imbedded in a single lengthy sentence; the construction of the sentence strongly suggested that the Vietnamese wished to remind the Chinese of the last point, that the Vietnamese contribution to the common struggle was not to be overlooked. The message went on to repeat the reference to "this powerful support" and thanked the Chinese for their past support in their anti-US struggle and in socialist construction; the penultimate paragraph wished that the Chinese people would "win many new and enormous victories in socialist construction and in the struggle against imperialism headed by US imperialism". In context, it seems a very sharp retort. The wish concerning China's socialist construction, seen in the context of the bombardment of DRVN's socialist

achievements during the past weeks, must certainly have been meant to contrast with the fact that the DRVN had suffered - and was continuing to suffer - destruction of its factories and plants as a direct consequence of its determination to fight on against the US. The Vietnamese seemed angry at the fact that the PRC could continue with socialist construction without the threat of such bombardment and yet consider it proper to issue injunctions to the DRVN to continue the struggle. There is also an implication that Le Duan and Pham Van Dong felt that China could extend more extensive aid to the DRVN; this also through in a speech by Pham some two months later.[81]

The Chinese did not make public reply directly to these criticisms; an indirect reply may perhaps be seen in the fact that it was such a high-ranking leader as Chou En-lai who greeted the Laotian Patriotic Front's 15th anniversary on 5 January, and yet again insisted that victory would come as a result of unity, support, and perserverance on the part of the Indo-Chinese peoples.[82] On 19 January Lin Piao hailed the Laotian PLA for "uniting as one with the Vietnamese and Cambodian peoples and co-ordinating closely with them" and for "persevering in a people's war"; but he urged continued unity and perseverance in order to drive the US from Laos.[83]

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81. Speech of 6 March; see the text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 11 (12 March 1971), esp. p. 11.
82. Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 3 (15 January 1971), p. 3.
83. Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 5 (29 January 1971), p. 3.

Whatever the true depth of feeling on the part of the VNWP leaders towards the Chinese prescriptions in December 1970, the rapid escalation of conflict in Laos at the end of January 1971 and in the first days of February evidently encouraged a partial retreat, at least in public, on the part of the Vietnamese. "Operation Lam Son 719", as the main spoiling operation into lower Laos was styled, was conducted primarily by South Vietnamese Government troops with US air support. The operation was regarded with concern by the various "Indo-Chinese peoples". On 3 February, the RGNUC spokesman called on governments and peoples "which cherish peace and justice" to "further increase their support to the just struggle" in Indo-China;[84] the Laotian Patriotic Front on the following day also called for "timely and drastic actions to force the United States and its henchmen to stop immediately their aggressive operation";[85] the PRGSVN on February 5 called for "staying in time the hands of the stubborn US aggressors" and for governments and peoples to "intensify their support to the patriotic struggle" of the three peoples;[86] and on the same day, the DRVN Foreign Ministry expressed its form belief that its "brothers and friends in the five continents" would "continue to give still stronger support to the just cause of the peoples of the three Indo-Chinese countries".[87]

This clear plea for increased material and moral support contrasted with the PRC's reactions. The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on 4 February which expressed stern condemnation, warned that if the war was expanded further the US "will certainly suffer even more

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84. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 7 (12 February 1971), p.15.
85. Text in ibid., p. 10.
86. Text in ibid., p. 14.
87. Text in ibid., p. 12.

severe punishment by the three peoples of Indo-China", and said that it was the Chinese people's "duty and obligation to give all-out support and assistance" to the Indo-Chinese peoples.[88] A second statement on 8 February said that the US were "wildly plotting to launch a sudden attack on north Viet Nam", that this and the present actions would only arouse the Indo-Chinese peoples to more resolute resistance, and that the invasion of Laos was a "grave provocation" against "the Chinese people". Concern was also expressed concerning the possibility that the US might use nuclear weapons in Indo-China.[89]

A more authoritative statement, by the PRC Government rather than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was issued on 12 February, in which the PRC reiterated that the Chinese people "will take all effective measures to give all-out support and assistance" to the three Indo-Chinese peoples. "US imperialism's aggression against Laos is also a grave menace to China",[90] the PRC declared, implying that the situation was by no means as grave as in August 1964 when it had said that "aggression against the DRVN is also aggression against China".[91]

The value of the 12 February statement, which must have been very limited in any case, was lessened by the fact that the first half of the text was devoted to the PRC's "firm support" to joint statements that had recently been issued by Norodom Sihanouk with the DRVN's President Ton Duc Thang and Prince Souphanouvong respectively. These meetings with

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88. Text in ibid., p. 5.
89. Text in ibid., pp. 5-6.
90. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 8 (19 February 1971), p. 6. Emphasis added.
91. Statement of 6 August 1964; in Peking Review, Vol. VII No. 32 (7 August 1964), Special Supplement, p. iii.

Sihanouk, the statement said, "will certainly further mobilize the three peoples of Indo-China to unite still more closely and persevere in the protracted war of resistance". The patronizing tone was clearly evident, and it underscored the PRC's inaction in the face of an avowed "grave menace".

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Sihanouk had made his second visit to the DRVN from his exile in Peking from 26 January to 9 February; on his return to Peking he was greeted at the airport by Chou En-lai and also by Huang Yung-sheng and Wu Fa-hsien of the PLA General Staff, implying that his mission had been concerned at least in part with discussions concerning the military aspects of the Indo-China conflict. During his time in the DRVN, the fact of his visit was kept a secret: when Part Two of his 17th message to the Khmer people was carried by NCNA on 3 February, it was said (no doubt correctly) that it had been issued in Peking on the previous day, implying that Sihanouk too was in Peking. The first reference to his presence in the DRVN came in a VNA report on the day of his departure, 9 February, and it said merely that President Ton Duc Thang and other state leaders of the DRVN "held many talks and exchanges of viewpoints" with the Cambodian guests "on problems concerning the common struggle of the Vietnamese and Khmer peoples against US aggressors". No indication was given of when the talks had taken place. The Ton Duc Thang - Sihanouk Joint Statement, signed on 8 February, was issued in Peking on 10 February, and contained little that was new. The two leaders assessed, however, that while the people in South Viet Nam had "inflicted <u>initial</u> setbacks on the 'Vietnamization' plan", the people in North Viet Nam had "<u>ful-filled</u> the sacred obligations of the big rear towards the heroib south and their noble international obligations towards the fraternal peoples of Cambodia and Laos". Both parties

declared their "respect for the fundamental principles of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indo-China". The DRVN "reaffirms that it recognizes the territorial integrity of Cambodia within the present borders and that it commits itself to respect this". No specific mention was made of either China or the USSR.[92]

The Souphanouvong - Sihanouk Joint Statement was signed on 9 February and released in Peking on 11 February. The meeting between the two signatories was said to have taken place "in a locality of the frontier region of Laos", but a photograph of the two leaders published in Peking Review has the same background as a photograph of Sihanouk and Ton Duc Thang,[93] suggesting that both meetings in fact took place in Hanoi. It is of course possible that both meetings took place at some other place; but the statement signed by Ton Duc Thang is subscribed "Hanoi", while the second statement has no subscription indicating place of signature. The Lao Patriotic Front also reaffirmed its past declarations concerning Cambodia's territorial integrity, and the leaders express the determination of the Lao and Khmer peoples "to cement ever more closely their solidarity with the brotherly Vietnamese people, to give the maximum aid and support to each other and to struggle side by side against the US aggressors"; otherwise, there no initiatives were expressed in the document.[94]

Meanwhile, the PRGRSVN on 10 February renewed its call to all governments to stay the hand of the "US agressors" in Laos, and again expressed its firm belief "that the whole progressive mankind will continue to support the Indochinese peoples'

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92. Text of statement in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 8 (19 February 1971), pp. 8-13.
93. Cf. Ibid., pp. 9 and 14.
94. Ibid., pp. 13-16.

resistance".[95] The DRVN Government statement of the same day was more explicity addressed: "The Vietnamese people and the Government of the (DRVN) earnestly call on the peoples and governments of the fraternal socialist countries (....) to struggle with determination to check in time the new US military adventure in Laos (....) and to increase their support".[96] Clearly only the USSR among the fraternal countries was in any position to endeavour to mediate with the US, but Chinese weaponry would of value along with that from the CPSU. The statement added that the Vietnamese people and Government "have always been eager to see at their western frontiers a genuinely peaceful and neutral Laos and to establish and develop with it relations of good neighbourhood on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence". Also on the same day (10 February), Renmin Ribao's Commentator wrote that the heroic people of Laos, Viet Nam and Cambodia "are fully determined and strong enough to defeat the frantic attacks by US imperialism and its lackeys"[97]- a strange sentiment to express when the peoples concerned had on 3, 4, and 5 February indicated their need for "further support".

In his press conference of 17 February, President Nixon was asked for his evaluation of the likelihood of China's reaction to, among other things, the Laos incursion; he replied that "the actions in southern Laos (....) present no threat to Communist China and should not be interpreted by the Communist Chinese as being a threat against them."[98] Renmin Ribao's Commentator responded on 20 February in a distinctly defensive manner: "Nixon's attempt to tie the hands of the Chinese people in supporting the Laotion people and the other peoples

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95. Ibid., pp. 19-20
96. Ibid., pp. 18-19: emphasis added.
97. NCNA 10 February 1971 (in SCMP 4841 of 19 February 1971, p. 150).
98. Documentation (USIS Hong Kong), 18 February 1971, p. 4.

in Indo-China in their war against US aggression (....) can never succeed. (....) By spreading the flames of aggressive war to the door of China, US imperialism certainly poses a grave threat to China".[99]

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If the CPC-CC sent a message greeting the VNWP's 41st founding anniversary (3 February), it was kept confidential by both sides. In any case, the VNWP-CC at that time had just re-assessed its strategy against the US. The Central Committee's 19th Plenum was held apparently during January, for on 1 February VNA released a communique on the meeting. Most attention in the document was given to domestic tasks; so far as these related to the war effort, they seemed to reflect increased war-weariness and a flagging patriotism as the VNWP defined it. It was necessary, said the communique, to "increase the fighting will and working capabilities of all cadres and Party members", "our entire Party, people and Army have to make new efforts", and all forces of the Vietnamese nation "must be mobilized", "everybody must persist in and step up the fight to win new victories".

> In the interest of the nation and for the sake of their international duty, our people will do their utmost to fight shoulder to shoulder with the fraternal Lao and Cambodian peoples to drive the US aggressors out of the Indochinese peninsula. Our people will constantly strive to contribute to the consolidation of the solidarity in the socialist camp and the international communist movement.[100]

This implied that the barrier to fighting "shoulder to shoulder" with the fraternal peoples was not essentially one over which the Vietnamese had control; it also implied that, in the field of relations between fraternal Parties, the VNWP-CC did not expect that their efforts for the "consolidation of solidarity"

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99. Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 9 (26 February 1971), p. 6.
100 VNA 1 February 1971.

would reach any rapid success. No public mention was made of relations with either the Chinese or the Soviet Parties or states.

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It was in this atmosphere of apparently strained relations between the Chinese and the North Vietnamese that a Chinese Party and Government delegation led by Chou En-lai and including Yeh Chien-ying (CPC-CC Politburo member and Vice-Chairman of the Military Commission of the CPC-CC) paid a visit to the DRVN from 5 to 8 March 1971 "at the invitation of the VNWP". The visit was made without publicity; the first indication of it to outside observers was an announcement by NCNA on 8 March, when the group was already on its way back to Peking. A major purpose of the visit was evidently to discuss military affairs, to judge from the presence not only of Yeh Chien-ying in the delegation but also of Chiu Hui-tso, a member of the CPC-CC Politburo and Deputy Chief of the PLA's General Staff, and of Yuan Hua-ping, head of the Armaments Department of the General Logistics of the PLA.[101]

In speeches exchanged at a welcome banquet on 5 March, Pham Van Dong stressed that the US action in "widening the war on a large scale in southern Laos and close to the Demilitarized Zone" posed "a direct threat to the DRVN",[102] while Chou En-lai stressed that these events posed "a grave threat to China".[103] On the following evening, the two leaders made "important" speeches at a rally held in honour of the visiting delegation.

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101. NCNA 8 March 1971.
102. Long Live the Great Friendship and Militant Unity Between the Chinese and Vietnamese People (Peking: FLP, 1971), p. 21. Emphasis added.
103. Ibid., p. 27: emphasis added.

Pham Van Dong expressed happiness and elation "because we have proved by our valiant and staunch struggle (....) worthy of the great and very precious support and assistance we have received from the brother Chinese people".[104] He went on to praise Chinese achievements, during the past 21 years, and expressed the deep belief of the Vietnamese people in the brilliant future of China-

> a nation of 700 million people with immense natural resources, a splendid civilization, credited with wonderful inventions made thousands of years ago, and endowed with great revolutionary ardour, intelligence and creativeness. Such a nation will surely make extraordinary leaps forward, and will rank among the most powerful socialist countries in the world.[105]

It is tempting to see in this description an expression in modern terms of a former suzerain state acknowledging due and proper subordination to the source of all good things; and so it is, except for the sting in the tail. A little earlier in his speech he wished that the Chinese people would record "many more and still greater successes" both in their cause of socialist construction "as well as in their struggle against US-led imperialism, thereby making a worthy contribution to the world people's revolutionary struggle".[106] This last phrase, like so much of the content of Chinese and Vietnamese exchanges, is ambiguous; Pham had himself said, in his 31 December 1970 message with Le Duan to the Chinese leaders, that the Vietnamesepeople were already making contribution to the common struggle; did he now imply that China had not yet made a contribution of its own? or that, if it had, that it was not yet "worthy"? At the very least, it was an expression of reservation concerning the content of the Chinese people's anti-US struggle.

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104. Speech of 6 March 1971: Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 11 (12 March 1971), p. 11.
105. Ibid., p. 12: emphasis added.
106. Ibid.

Pham went on to denounce the US for its activities in Indo-China and then expressed "the Vietnamese people's warm sentiments towards the Soviet people" - an acceptable statement for the Chinese delegation, since there is no reference to either the Soviet Government or to the CPSU. Then he dwelt on Sino-Vietnamese relations. In recent days, he pointed out, the PRC Government and the Chinese people had "many times served severe warnings to the US" and had "declared with solemnity that the Chinese people will not sit with folded arms and will not allow the US imperialists to rule the roost in Indo-China". These statements, he said, "have given us added belief and strength to resolutely fight and defeat the US aggressors". These possibly sardonic comments were immediately followed by a mixed comment on aid: "China's non-refunded economic and military aid to Viet Nam in the past years of struggle (....), especially her huge economic and military aid to Viet Nam in 1971, have contributed a very important share to the Vietnamese people's extremely valiant struggle" against the US.[107] This was the first reference to the level of the PRC's military and economic aid in 1971;[108] the adjective implies gratitude to China, while the reference to valour implied (as he said at the start of his speech) that the North Vietnamese had earned this level of support.

Pham also pledged the Vietnamese "to give fully play to our seccesses, to learn more from the valuable experiences of the Chinese people's staunch revolutionary struggle and their very diversified people's war, as well as the wealth of experience of the revolutionary struggle of the peoples of the socialist countries and the world's people at large".[109] Thus,

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107. Ibid., p. 14: emphasis added.
108. China's military and economic aid is discussed briefly at the end of this chapter.
109. Ibid., p. 14.

once again a senior DRVN official clearly indicated that the Chinese revolutionary model had advisory status only, and that the DRVN would continue to pursue a path of independent judgment concerning revolution and war.

Chou En-lai dwelt at some length on the situation of the US and the three Indo-Chinese peoples, and he characterised the Nixon Administration's policies on negotiations and troop withdrawal as "nothing but sheer hoax".[110] He made no reference to the PRGRSVN proposals for a settlement of the Viet Nam question, which Pham had mentioned briefly. Chou stressed the "profound revolutionary friendship" that existed between the two Parties, Governments and peoples, "personally nurtured" by Mao Tse-tung and Ho Chi Minh; Pham had said the same things about the two states and peoples, but avoided reference to relations between the two Parties, which Chou characterized as those of "fraternal Marxist-Leninist Parties".

Finally, the Chinese leader used a phrase which was much quoted by foreign commentators at the time as an implied warning:

> If US imperialism should obdurately go down the road of expanding its war of aggression in Indo-China, the Chinese people will take all necessary measures, <u>not flinching even from the greatest national sacrifices</u>, to give all-out support and assistance to the Vietnamese people's war (...)[111]

The phrase had been used before (for example, by Lin Piao in a speech reported by NCNA on 19 December 1966), however, and in context it was clearly meant to imply that the PRC would not abandon its "support and assistance" to the Vietnamese and other Indo-Chinese peoples' anti-US struggle rather than that the PRC might act to directly confront the enemy.

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110. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 16.
111. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 17: emphasis added.

The joint communique signed on 8 March repeated this undertaking, and stressed that the intensified US role in Laos, the concentration of South Vietnamese Government troops near the 17th Parallel, and the increased number of South Vietnamese Government troops in Cambodia, represented a "new and extremely grave war escalation". Nevertheless, while this situation "directly menaces" the security of the DRVN, it at the same time merely "menaces" the security of the PRC.[112] Thus the degree of threat posed to the PRC's security was considered to be measurably less that the degree of threat to the DRVN's security.

The communique said that both sides "have noted with great pleasure" that since the April 1970 Summit Conference, "the militant unity of the Indochinese peoples haa witnessed important development"; the two sides specifically referred to the "wise leadership" of the VNWP, of Sihanouk, of the National United Front of Cambodia, and of the Laotian Patriotic Front. The Vietnamese people would "never forget the enthusiastic and powerful support and gigantic and effective aid" rendered by China both in the past and in the present; the Chinese side considered that the Vietnamese and other Indochinese peoples were "a model and example for the Chinese people to learn from". Both sides pointed out "with great satisfaction" that "the revolutionary friendship and militant unity" between the two Parties, Governments and peoples "are being continuously consolidated and developed" - a formulation which could accommodate the VNWP's reservations concerning the CPC's advice on the war. The communique implied less concern for the modalities of settling the Lao and Cambodian questions than for the settlement of the Viet Nam issue; the latter "must be" settled

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112. Ibid., pp. 18-21.

"on the basis of" the NFL-PRGRSVN's May 1969 "ten points" and the "eight point classification" presented on 17 September 1970. American and allied troops, "must wholly and unconditionally withdraw" from South Viet Nam and let "the Vietnamese people" (not "the South Vietnamese people") settle their own questions by themselves.

Little was said concerning the content of the discussions between the two sides, although they had "held discussions on questions as to how to deal with possible military adventures by US imperialism" and had reached "completely identical views".[113]

Renmin Ribao's 11 March editorial hailed the visit for having "strengthened the great friendship and militant unity between the two Parties and peoples", and singled out "the patriotic armymen and people in South Viet Nam" for having persevered in protracted war. The Vietnamese people's war of resistance had "set a brilliant example for all the oppressed peoples and nations of the world": they had demonstrated the spirit of the firm resolve to fight and win, feared no sacrifice, carried on protracted resistance, tied down and weakened the aggressive strength of US imperialism, and disrupted the counter-revolutionary global strategy of US imperialism. This was "a very important contribution to the anti-US struggle of the people of the world".[114] Nhan Dan's editorial of the same day said that the visit marked "a new, very important development" in the friendly relations "between the fraternal peoples" of the two countries, making no reference to improved relations between the two Parties. The editorial also said

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113. Ibid., p. 19.
114. From the text in Long Live the Great Friendship (...), op. cit., p. 75.

that Chou's expressions of resolute support represented "a contribution" to the world people's struggle against imperialism, again apparently contrasting Chinese works with Vietnamese action.[115] On the whole, the Vietnamese were more pleased with the results of the visit than the Chinese were; Pham Van Dong had said that the visit "has been crowned with splendid success" success",[116] while Chou En-lai considered that it "has been crowned with satisfactory results".[117] Since the communique and the subsequent editorial comment suggested no concrete basis for these differing assessments, it seems that the Vietnamese probably received pledges of greater economic and military support.

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By 22 March, after some six weeks of combat operation in lower Laos, the South Vietnamese Government forces were in sometimes undisciplined retreat after having sustained considerable casualties. In a television interview on that day, President Nixon justified his assessment that Operation Lam Son 719 had nevertheless been a success, because its purpose had been "simply to disrupt supply lines" - which it had done by tying down some of the PAVN's best divisions for six weeks and forcing them to expend material - and that it had shown that the Saigon forces "have been able to handle themselves quite well" in a situation where they were outnumbered by two to one by the PAVN. He argued that only four of the 22 battalions of Saigon troops demonstrated poor morale, and that the PAVN losses "by conservative estimates" were five times thoseof the Saigon forces.[118]

115, Radio Hanoi in Vietnamese to South Viet Nam, 0330 GMT 11 March 1971, in Principal Reports from Communist Radio Sources, (Saigon: USIS), Special, 12 March 1971.
116. Long Live the Great Friendship (...), p. 63.
117. Ibid., p. 65.
118. Documentation (USIS, Hong Kong), pp. 7-8.

The losses to PAVN that Nixon referred to were evidently substantial, since delegations from the VNWP, the Laotian Patriotic Front, and the NFL arrived in Peking on 25, 23 and 26 March respectively for talks with the CPC. The talks evidently concerned military matters; Chou En-lai and Chiu Hui-tso, deputy Chief of the PLA, met with all three delegations during 25 and 26 March, and the Chief of General Staff (Huang Yung-sheng) joined these two in discussions with the VNWP representatives Le Duan and Nguyen Duy Trinh.[119] The atmosphere of the talks, as reported by NCNA, suggested different levels of cordiality: the CPC-NFL talks were "very friendly and cordial", those with the Laotian delegation proceeded in a "cordial and friendly" way, while those with the VNWP proceeded "in an atmosphere which fully demonstrated the profound militant friendship and great unity" between the two Parties.[120] On the evening of 26 March the Chinese side hosted a grand banquet ostensibly to celebrate "the brilliant victories" won by the Indochinese peoples; the Lao, South Vietnamese and North Vietnamese delegation leaders paid particular attention to the battle in lower Laos. Chou En-lai warned that the US would "embark on still greater war adventures in a last desperate struggle for Nixon's campaign for the next Presidential election", particularly in the dry season "between the winter this year and the next spring".[121] The Renmin Ribao editorial on 28 March assessed that the Indo-Chinese peoples now had a more powerful fighting strength, a closer militant unity, and a firmer confidence in victory "than ever", and that they would certainly win "by persevering in protracted people's war"[122]. Mao Tse-tung, Lin Piao and Chou En-lai on 29 March

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119. Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 14 (2 April 1971), p. 19.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid., pp. 4-7
122. From text in ibid., at p. 8.

addressed a message to nine Indochinese leaders hailing the Laotian battle as "a splendid battle of annihilation" which was "of great strategic importance".[123]

Le Duan and Nguyen Duy Trinh left for Moscow on 27 March. The purpose of Le Duan's visit was to attend the CPSU's 24th Congress, which began on 30 March. The CPC-CC did not send a delegation and gave no publicity to their reasons for not attending, but Nhan Dan on 30 March expressed the wish that the Congress would be crowned with success.[124] In its message of greetings to the CPSU Congress, the VNWP-CC thanked the CPSU for the aid and assistance rendered in the past, and reiterated that the correct way for the peaceful settlement of the Viet Nam problem was the 10-point overall solution and its eight-point elaboration. "That also is the way for the US imperialists to withdraw 'in honour' from the Viet Nam war", the message said.[125] The NFL-CC's message also thanked the CPSU for its aid and support to the South Vietnamese people, but seemed to take a more militant line concerning the anti-US struggle, and omitted all reference to the 10 and the eight points.[126] On 14 April, the VNWP delegation was received by the CPSU General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, who accepted Le Duan's invitation to the CPSU-CC and the Soviet Government "to send a Soviet Party and government delegation this year to the DRVN".[127] Le Duan stayed in the USSR until 10 May, when he left for Peking.

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123. Text in ibid., p. 3.
124. Hanoi Domestic Service, 0430 GMT, 30 March 1971, in Principal Reports (...), 31 March 1971, p. 6.
125. VNA 31 March 1971.
126. Text in Principal Reports (...), op. cit., 31 March 1971, pp. 5-7.
127. Moscow TASS, 1704 GMT, 14 April 1971, in Principal Reports (...), op. cit., 16 April 1971, p. 9.

On his arrival, he was met by Chou En-lai and a number of PLA leaders, including Huang Yung-sheng, and on the following day held talks with Chou "and other comrades" in what NCNA described as "an atmosphere which fully manifested the fraternal unity and militant friendship" between the two Parties.[128] Le Duan was much more concerned than in the past to cultivate the friendship of the Chinese, for, as Chou En-lai put it at a banquet on the same evening (11 May), "Comrade Le Duan has come to Peking on his way home, and will visit Shaoshan, the home village of Comrade Mao Tse-tung, and go to Kwangchow to acquaint himself with the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution there". Chou said that the Chinese were "very grateful to Comrade Le Duan for his attention". Again referring to the February-March battle in Lower Laos, Chou assessed that this had "accelerated the defeat of the US aggressors and brought the three peoples on Indo-China together in closer unity in combat".[129] Le Duan returned to Hanoi on 15 May after his visit to south China.

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On 1 June, a Romanian Party and Government delegation arrived in Peking for a friendship visit. At the opening banquet on the same evening, Chou En-lai praised the Romanian Communist Party for "advancing in big strides along the road of maintaining independence and keeping the initiative in their own hands". Nicolae Ceausescu, leader of the delegation, took advantage of this view to state that his Party and Government made "every effort for the overcoming of the difficulties existing at present between the socialist countries and between the Communist Parties"; in a speech to a rally on

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128. NCNA 11 May 1971 (in NCNA 4902 of 20 May 1971, p. 186).
129. Extracted in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 21 (21 May 1971), p. 3.

7 June, he expressed his views more boldly:

> each Communist Party must formulate independently its political line, strategy and tactics for struggle. Under present conditions, the existence of a centre in the communist and workers' movement is neither necessary nor possible. The relations between (...) Parties must be based on (...) the autonomy of each Party to the exclusion of all forms of interference in the internal affairs of other Parties, on mutual respect and mutual trust and on the development of comradely solidarity and mutual assistance.[130]

Chou avoided assenting to these positions, but at a farewell banquet on 8 June he stressed that maintaining independence, keeping the initiative in one's own hands and relying on one's own efforts was "the fundamental principle for building socialism", even though certain people vilified it as "nationalism".[131] The Joint Communique signed on 9 June included the opinion by the Romanian side that "the recent increasingly manifest tendency of certain capitalist countries to normalize their relations with the People's Republic of China is in the interests of co-operation between countries having different social systems and of peace and international security".[132] The PRC's agreement to this inclusion presumably indicated that although it did not consider it proper to formally agree with this opinion, nevertheless it did not object to it.

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On the occasion of the anniversary of the establishment of the PRGRSVN (6 June), Renmin Ribao hailed the "correct leadership" of the NFL and PRGRSVN and the fact that the PLAF had "persevered in a protracted war".[133] The same sentiments

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130. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 24 (11 June 1971), at p. 19.
131. Ibid., p. 13.
132. From the text in ibid., at p. 11.
133. From the text in ibid., pp. 22-23.

were expressed in a message from Chinese State leaders on 14 June to the DRVN State leaders who had been re-elected at the recent DRVN National Assembly session.[134] On 11 June, DRVN Vice-Premier Le Thanh Nghi met with Chou En-lai and Li Hsien-nieu for talks in a "most cordial and friendly atmosphere".[135] On 21 July, in a half-year report on the Indochinese battlefields, NCNA saw three main features pointing to an excellent situation: the Indochinese peoples had (a) "successively defeated US imperialism's aggressive plans and further taken the initiative on the battlefield"; (b) had strengthened their armed forces in fighting; and (c) had made their liberated zones "more consolidated and expanded and merged into one", so that they were now "vast, consolidated and closely linked". "The fighting ability of the three Indochinese countries is stronger than ever, their militant unity closer than ever and their confidence in victory firmer than ever".[136]

It was in the context of this apparently optimistic view of the military situation in Indo-China that the PRC made public a dramatic reversal of its often-expressed view that the US should be defeated on the battlefield. The occasion was a Renmin Ribao editorial of 4 July, commenting on the "seven point" proposal presented on 1 July to the Paris peace conference by the representative of the PRG. These proposals had two main points. First, the US must "set a terminal date" for the withdrawal of its forces from South Viet Nam; if this date was within six months, then the parties would " at the

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134. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 25 (18 June 1971), p.3.
135. Ibid.
136. In SCMP 4947 of 30 July 1971, pp. 274-275.

same time agree" on the modalities of a safe withdrawal and of the release of prisoners of war. Second, the US must stop backing the Nguyen Van Thieu regime in Saigon, a new Saigon administration should be formed, and the PRGRSVN would immediately commence talks with the interim administration in order to agree on a three-segment "government of national concord", which in its turn would arrange for general elections in South Viet Nam.[137] Although it was clearly not acceptable to the US or to the Saigon Government in its present form, the proposal did represent a limited concession on the part of the PRGRSVN, and could conceivably provide a basis for more fruitful negotiations. The Chinese Government expressed its "firm support" for the proposals, the Renmin Ribao editorial said; they represented "another important effort" made by the PRGRSVN "for the peaceful solution of the Viet Nam question". Although the "total withdrawal" of allied troops was "crucial" to the peaceful solution, nevertheless the present proposals had "provided a correct way for the peaceful settlement of the Viet Nam question".[138]

This was the first public statement from the Chinese side to the effect that the Viet Nam question could indeed be settled peacefully, without a prior US troop withdrawal or a military "solution". Renmin Ribao's 20 July editorial, for the occasion of the Geneva Agreements anniversary, also stressed that the "seven-point proposal" had provided "a correct way for the peaceful settlement of the Viet Nam question".[139] It is noteworthy that the Chinese had refrained

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137. Text of the "seven points" is in e.g. South Viet Nam in Struggel. No. 104 (8 July 1971), pp. 4-5.
138. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 28 (9 July 1971), pp. 15-16.
139. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 30 (23 July 1971), pp. 4-5.

from giving a direct opinion on the earlier "10-point solution", advanced at the Paris talks in May 1969; and the reference in the 8 March 1971 Sino-DRVN communique to the "Viet Nam question" - that it "must be settled on the basis of the '10-point overall solution' " - had been immediately followed by an insistence of US withdrawal, thus leaving the Chinese position on negotiated or peaceful settlement ambiguous, to say the least.

The change in the Chinese position on this important matter may have been part of the more moderate foreign policy tactics which developed slowly from the time of the Ninth Party Congress; it may also have been related to an assessment that the Paris talks on Viet Nam were about to move onto a more productive level. A third factor which may have been important was the impending arrival in Peking of Dr. Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's envoy; China's support for the principle of a peaceful settlement at this time would have been an important evidence for the CPC leaders' goodwill towards the US. Possibly all three of these factors were equally important in the eyes of the Chinese.

The DRVN predictably publicized the Chinese response, but without paying greater attention to it than to the Soviet expressions of support for the new proposals. It is possible that the secret exchanges between Dr. Kissinger and the DRVN side, in Paris, encouraged the Chinese - assuming that they were kept informed by the Vietnamese. Dr. Kissinger later revealed that the US side had for the first time unilaterally proposed a withdrawal of US forces from South Viet Nam, in a meeting on 26 May. Then, on 26 June, the DRVN put forward a "nine-point proposal" - to date not published - which, on a number of issues, had the same substance as many of the "seven points" published six days later. As Kissinger expressed it,

> On the political solution, that is, on the political content of the future of South Viet Nam, the seven points are much more detailed than the nine points. On the ceasefire, the nine points are more detailed than the seven points; indeed, the seven points, in effect, are a truce made with American forces while we withdraw. The nine points are a ceasefire in our sense, to be concluded together with the overall settlement. So, therefore, the ceasefire is not in itself an issue in the negotiations, the principle of the ceasefire.[140]

Thus, although the modalities of both the political solution and the ceasefire were yet to be worked out, the communist side appeared to have committed itself to the principle of a ceasefire in this meeting of 26 June. If the Chinese were aware of this, then, in the context of the other factors mentioned above, they may have judged that they could gain political capital from throwing the CPC's authority behind the principle of a peaceful settlement.

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However encouraging the VNWP leaders may have found the terms of the 4 July editorial support, they were to be enraged within two weeks. The reason was the dramatic announcement by NCNA on 16 July that Chou En-lai had extended an invitation to President Nixon to visit China "at an appropriate date before May 1972", and that President Nixon had accepted the invitation "with pleasure".[141] NCNA added that the purpose of the proposed meeting was "to seek the normalization of relations between the two countries and also to exchange views on questions of concern to the two sides". One such major question was evidently that of the conflict in Indo-China, and the immediate Vietnamese response was to consider that the announcement foreshadowed a possible Sino-US bilateral arrangement on the question.

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140. Background (USIS, Hong Kong), 27 Janusry 1972, giving the text of Kissinger's 26 January press conference at p. 7.
141. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 29 (16 July 1971), p. 3.

The DRVN's first comment was contained in a strongly-worded editorial in the 19 July issue of Nhan Dan. Headed "The 'Nixon Doctrine' Will Surely Fail", the critical part of the editorial read:[142]

> It is the traditional practice of the imperialist to impose their will on others by force and to rely on their strength as big powers to bully smaller countries. Now they want again to resort to this ridiculous practice. But today the world has changed. Only those indulging in daydreams do not see that the small countries have stood up to take their destiny into their own hands. (...) This era is the era of uprising of the nations, when even a small country can defeat big aggressors. Viet Nam is not a big country, with neither a vast territory nor a large population. Yet she has "defeated several big imperialisms" one after the other. (...) The time when the imperialist could dictate their will to the world has definitively (sic) gone. The time when a big power could bully a smaller country has also ended for good.

In this official translation, the critical word "also" makes it clear that the bullying "big power" is not a member of the imperialist camp.

The DRVN leaders must also have had earlier misgivings concerning the "ping pong diplomacy" which had its beginning in late March 1971, when the Chinese team to the 31st World Table Tennis Championship being held in Japan extended an invitation to a number of teams - including the US team - to pay a friendly visit to China. The teams had arrived in Peking on 9 April, and on 14 April they were met by Premier Chou En-lai who had "a friendly conversation" with the members. Chou was reported to have told the US team:

> Contacts between the people of China and the United States had been very frequent in the past but later they were broken off for a long time. Your visit to China on invitation has opened the door to friendly contacts between the people of the two countries. We believe that such friendly contacts will be favoured and supported by the majority of the two peoples.[143]

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142. VNA 19 July 1971. Emphasis added.
143. Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 17 (23 April 1971), p. 5.

In addition, it had been reported that Chou En-lai had expressed support for a Geneva Conference during an exchange of views with the leader of an Australian Labour Party delegation in Peking on 5 July.[144] As the adviser and interpreter to the delegation later pointed out, a reconvened Geneva Conference seemed out of the question, because of the setting and the dominant participants of the 1954 meeting; but "Geneva is also used as a shorthand for an international conference on the Indo-China problem", and "China's general stance suggested that such a conference would have to be initiated by the 'aggrieved' parties and that it would have to be fully representative, probably more Asian than last time, and possibly in an Asian setting".[145]

This viewpoint paralleled the analysis given by Edgar Snow shortly afterwards concerning the Chinese view of desirable solutions to outstanding issues between the US and China. First, as always, the PRC should be seated in the United Nations and Taiwan should be returned to mainland sovereignty. Secondly, there should be a "total US withdrawal from Viet Nam" and an international conference arranged to guarantee Indo-China's independence; and there should be "a negotiated Hanoi-Saigon settlement which would preserve some shell of the American-made regime, at least for a decent interval". Thirdly, and only after the other matters had been resolved or were well on the way to resolution, was the matter of formally establishing Sino-American diplomatic relations. He added that a settlement in Taiwan could not be separated from a prior cease-fire

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144. See e.g. Newsweek, International Edition, 26 July 1971, p. 15.

145. Stephen FitzGerald, "Impressions of China's New Diplomacy: the Australian Experience", in The China Quarterly, No. 48 (October-December 1971), pp. 674-675.

aggrement and withdrawal from Viet Nam; that nothing less than total evacuation of all foreign forces from Viet Nam would satisfy Hanoi; and that no Geneva conference solution could be advanced by China which did not have the full support of both Hanoi and the NFL.[146]

The DRVN leaders continued during the coming weeks to express their concern over Chou's reference to a Geneva Conference and Nixon's forthcoming visit to the PRC. The 20 July editorial of Nhan Dan had stressed that the most important cause of the Vietnamese people's victories "is our correct and creative independence line";[147] that for 22 July asked: "How can Nixon divide the peoples of the socialist countries who share the common ideal of communism and conduct the common struggle against imperialism?".[148] The editorial of the August Hoc Tap also insisted: "Only those who are fighting against the US can have the last say on the future of their country".[149] An American academic visitor to the DRVN during August was told by Pham Van Dong that the projected visit to China by President Nixon showed that he did not understand "even the elementary historical and geographical factors" in the Viet Nam problem.[150]

Chou En-lai moved quickly to retrieve the situation. On 21 July, in an interview with visiting American scholars, he reportedly said that the first question that must be settled

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146. Edgar Snow, "China Will Talk from a Position of Strength", Life, International Edition, Vol. 71 No. 5 (30 July 1971), p. 24.
147. Hanoi Radio in Vietnamese to South Viet Nam, 0100 GMT, 20 July 1971; in Principle Reports (...), op. cit., 21 July 1971, p. 3.
148. VNA 22 July 1971.
149. The Vietnamese Trade Unions (Hanoi), No. 87 (July-September 1971), Supplement, p. 7.
150. Joseph Kraft citing a report by Professor G. McT. Kahin on the latter's visit to the DRVN; in International Herald Tribune (Paris), 30 September 1971, p. 6.

between the US and China was that of Indo-China; and that in settling it the two states would be acting not only in the interests of the Indo-Chinese people but also of the American people. He went on:

> The thing which in our view is most called for, whether in the United States or abroad, is the withdrawal by the United States of their troops from Viet Nam, and the evacuation of troops of other countries which followed the United States in Indo-China.
> It can be said that this demand for evacuation is even stronger than the call for the restoration of relations between the Chinese and American people.[151]

Edgar Snow had also warned that while a more realistic world was indeed in sight, it should be understood that a world "without change by revolutions" was "inconceivable" to Peking. The Chinese made this clear in the joint editorial published on PLA day, 1 August, in which the PRC foreign policy principles set out by Lin Piao to the Ninth Congress on 1 April 1969 were reaffirmed:

> To develop relations of friendship, mutual assistance and co-operation with socialist countries on the principle of proletarian internationalism; to support and assist the revolutionary struggles of all the oppressed people and nations; and to strive for peaceful coexistence with countries having different social systems on the basis of the Five Principles of mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence, and to oppose the imperialist policies of aggression and war. (...) Whoever opposes imperialism or makes revolution has our support.[152]

Lin Piao had gone on to say, in April 1969, that the CPC had "always held that the internal affairs of each country should be settled by its own people"; this was not now specifically reaffirmed. However, the DRVN's 26th anniversary provided the Chinese leaders with an opportunity to reassure their fraternal neighbours once again. The Party and State

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151. AFP report from Peking, 21 July 1971.
152. From the text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 32 (6 August 1971), at p. 9.

message sent on 1 September to the DRVN leaders made no mention of the desirability of persevering in protracted war. Instead, the VNWP was once again described as having a "wise" leadership (to be distinguished from "correct"), the Indo-Chinese peoples were praised for "fighting valiantly for the seizure of victory", and the Chinese once again reiterated that the Chinese people would "as always, resolutely fulfill their internationalist obligations".[153] Renmin Ribao's 2 September editorial stressed that the Vietnamese people's "fighting spirit and invaluable experience" were "worth learning from by the Chinese people" - an acceptable gesture of humility. The 7-point peace initiative was now clearly described as "the correct way to a peaceful settlement of the Viet Nam issue".[154] The relations between the two Governments, Parties and peoples could "withstand any storm". However, at the 2 September reception in Peking organised by the DRVN Embassy, Ambassador Ngo Thuyen described the VNWP's leadership as "correct".[155]

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On 30 August, VNA announced that a Soviet Party and Government delegation led by Politburo member N. Podgorny would visit the DRVN early in October. Both the achievements of the Soviet people and the Chinese people were warmly acclaimed (in that order, as was customary) by Pham Van Dong in his 1 September National Day speech, and support was expressed for the Chinese people's recovery of Taiwan; but otherwise no specific mention was made of either the Soviet Union or the PRC, apart from a passing reference to the sympath, support and assistance extended by the peoples of the Soviet Union and China.[156]

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153. Text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 37 (10 September 1971), p. 3.
154. Text in ibid., pp. 5-6.
155. SCMP 4974 of 14 September 1971, pp. 91-93.
156. VNA 1 September 1971.

In the same speech, Pham Van Dong announced that during the last weeks of August the DRVN had been affected by "a very big flood, even bigger than that of 1945 which was a catastrophe".[157] Many areas in the midlands and delta had been submerged. Both the USSR and the PRC sent messages of sympathy, and on 19 September VNA announced - in parallel items - that first shipments of aid from each country had arrived in Hanoi. On 24 September, the Chinese made the unusual gesture of sending a Government Economic delegation to Hanoi in order to negotiate the 1972 agreement on China's economic and military assistance to Viet Nam, which was signed on 27 September[158] - a very rapid conclusion to the discussions by comparison with the average three weeks or so which DRVN delegations to the PRC had in former years had to wait, and even more remarkable in view of the incusion of military aid. The impending visit of the Soviet delegation, with their almost certain offer of substantial aid, perhaps encouraged a faster agreement on this occasion.

The Soviet delegation to the DRVN visited from 3 to 8 October, and agreements on Soviet economic assistance, and on military aid for 1972, were signed on 7 October.[159] There were no outstanding issues in the Joint Statement; the two sides agreed that the present international situation was "very favourable" to the revolutionary movements, condemned the US for its role in Indo-China, "voiced their resolve to do everything in their power to contribute to the restoration and consolidation of the solidarity" between the socialist countries and the workers' and communist Parties on the basis

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157. Ibid. On 24 September, Le Thanh Nghi said that the flood was "the biggest in about a century" (SCMP 4989 of 6 October 1971), p. 83.
158. Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 40 (30 September 1971), p. 22.
159. VNA 7 October 1971.

of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, and congratulated each other on their respective achievements. They noted that "over the past years" the relations between the two Parties and states had been "further expended", and that "favourable premises already exist for their further consolidation and extension". Detailed plans were to be worked out for long-term development of economic co-operation and commercial, cultural, scientific, technological and other relations between the two states. A Viet Nam - USSR Joint Committee on economic, scientific and technological co-operation was to be established. The USSR agreed to draw up plans for a hydro-electric station on the Da River. The exchange of high-level delegations was to be increased.[160]

Although no details of the full extent of aid and assistance were released, the generalization recorded in the Joint Statement implied that the USSR was substantially stepping up its aid to the DRVN in a variety of fields, and on a long-term basis. Very likely this would also give the USSR some increased leverage with the DRVN leaders on important policy issues, although it appeared extremely unlikely that the USSR could ever dominate North Vietnamese policy in view of the consistent stress of the VNWP on the "creative independent line" which they pursued. It may have been in part to balance any Chinese concern that the VNWP was nowmmoving closer to the Soviet viewpoint, that Premier Pham Van Dong led a Party and Government delegation to China from 20 to 27 November.

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At the welcoming banquet on 20 November, Pham Van Dong devoted considerable attention to further elaborating the 7-point peace plan presented on 1 July, which he called "an

160. Text in e.g. Vietnam Courier, No. 343 (18 October 1971), pp. 1, 4-5.

integrated whole". he said, "in which two particularly important points stand out". First, the US must withdraw "totally and without condition" from South Viet Nam. Secondly, the US must "relinquish all its commitments with the fascist Nguyen Van Thieu clique". The US scheme of "Vietnamization", he went on, meant withdrawal of US troops but also to extend "very strong US aid" to the "puppet forces". Thus, "only should the US withdraw the totality of US troops and at the same time cease the maintaining of Nguyen Van Thieu puppet administration as a tool of the US policy of aggression could the war be settled and peace restored in Viet Nam". He also expressed the DRVN Government's support to the various proposals which had been put forward concerning the political solution to the conflict in other countries of Indo-China. At the same time, while pledging that the Vietnamese people were resolved "to do everything to strengthen the militant solidarity, to consolidate and develop the relations of friendship and co-operation" between the two Parties and people, he did not resist a comparison with the USSR. The Vietnamese people's cause, he said, was "closely linked with the great and valuable support and assistance of the fraternal Chinese people"; and it was also "closely linked with the great and valuable sympathy, support and assistance of the Soviet Union, and the other fraternal socialist countries".[161]

Chou En-lai also linked the various political solutions proposed for each country of Indo-China, in speeches on 20 and 23 November. On the latter occasion, he said that the various proposals (including the Joint Statement of the April 1970 Summit Conference, the DRVN's 4-point proposal of 8 April 1965,

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161. Emphasis added. The text is in SCMP 5025 (1 December 1971), pp. 167-168.

and the 1 July 1971 7-point proposal of the PRGRSVN) "are the correct way for a complete, just, and reasonable settlement of the questions of Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia". This was the first such characterization of the proposals as "complete" for the whole of Indo-China, and indicated that the CPC had moved its position substantially during the past months.[162]

There was no longer any reference to "peace-talk hoaxes" or the necessity to defeat the US on the battlefield. Chou En-lai's 23 November speech set out some of the reasons for his optimism. First, "the revolutionary situation in the Indochinese region is unprecedentedly fine". The three countries' revolutionary armed forces were "becoming stronger through fighting; the anti-US united front is daily becoming stronger; and the liberated areas have been further consolidated and expanded". Also, "the initiative on the battlefield is in the hands of the Vietnamese people and the people of all the other Indochinese countries". "Time is on the side of the Indochinese peoples".[163]

Mao Tse-tung met the DRVN delegation on 22 November, and the atmosphere of the meeting was "most cordial and friendly";[164] the same description was applied to the Sino-Vietnamese talks in the Joint Communique signed on 25 November. The general tone of optimism in the document is especially evident if one compares the text of this communique with that of 8 March. Also, relations between the two parties appeared to be much improved, although a concession was made to the Vietnamese in the later document by permitting them to include a fairly transparent reference to the Chinese people having kept the

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162. Text in ibid,, pp. 164-167.
163. Peking domestic service in Mandarin, 0813 GMT, 23 November 1971; in Principal Reports (...), op. cit., pp. 1-9, passim.
164. Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 48 (26 November 1971), p. 3.

initiative in their own hands, relied on their own efforts, and taken their own hands - goals which had been injunctions to the Vietnamese a few months previously. The November communique also covers a much broader ground in the field of foreign relations than that of March: there is a paragraph on the United Nations, one on Japanese militarism, another on Cuba, and one generally reviewing the international situation. The Vietnamese side is also much more forthcoming in its praise for China's help and assistance, than in March. This is perhaps balanced by the penultimate paragraph of the later document, in which both sides (but no doubt especially the DRVN) point out the value of the exchange of delegations "and the exchange of views between the leaders of the two countries on questions of common interest" are of "great importance to the advancement of the friendship and unity" between the two Parties, Governments and peoples.[165] This seems to clearly suggest Vietnamese concern at not being briefed on Kissinger's visit to China and the details of Nixon's forthcoming visit.

On the whole, to judge from published sentiments, the visit was considered a success by both sides. An unusual feature was a lengthy speech delivered at the 23 November rally[166] by Pham Van Dong, in which he reviewed in eloquent terms the whole course of the Vietnamese revolution. Although the Marxist-Leninist categories were present in this text, nevertheless his presentation especially stressed the nationalist features of that revolution. In a number of places, but especially when he spoke of South Viet Nam, the Vietnamese Premier allowed himself to speak with great sentiment and nostalgia, almost as if he were marking the end of an era.

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165. NCNA 26 November 1971; text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 49 (3 December 1971), pp. 8-13. Emphasis added.
166. NCNA 23 November 1971; also in e.g. Principal Reports (...) op. cit., 26 November 1971, especially p. 17.

An aspect of the visit which deserves attention is that both parties probably discussed details of the forthcoming North Vietnamese military offensive in South Viet Nam, which commenced on 30 March 1972. Dr Kissinger has reported[167] that the US made further concessions to the DRVN negotiators at a number of secret meetings after that of 26 June 1971. At a meeting on 11 October, the US proposed that withdrawal of US forces would take place within six months of the signing of a ceasefire, and also proposed a number of principles by which the political issues might be settled in South Viet Nam. In transmitting these, the US said that it believed that they went "to the limits of possible generosity" and fully took the North Vietnamese proposals into account. The US also indicated the willingness of Dr Kissinger to meet with a Hanoi official on 1 November 1971. The DRVN on 25 October counter-proposed a meeting on 20 November, which the US accepted; but on 17 November, the DRVN indicated that its special advisor Le Duc Tho was "ill" and therefore unable to attend a meeting on 20 November. No further meetings were held during 1971. Thus, as Dr Kissinger later commented, "it is a very interesting question, (...) what happened between October 25th and November 17th". The latter date, of course, was three days before the DRVN delegation visited the PRC.

A full attempt at explanation must await more detailed disclosures of diplomatic materials. However, it seems entirely possible that the DRVN leaders were persuaded that they might still achieve a resounding political victory against the US, by the 29 October 1971 vote in the US Senate which rejected President Nixon's foreign aid. A DRVN domestic commentary on

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167. Source as in footnote 140 above.

the vote judged that it was "a quite devastating blow to the Nixon Doctrine", that it was "another ill omen (...) now that the race to the presidential office is becoming heated", and that it had "brought into even bolder relief the thoughts, doubts, and worries which are torturing millions of Americans".[168] A 13 November commentary insisted that the Vietnamese people would further "step up their struggle" against "Nixon's criminal Vietanmization policy".[169]

In this context, the optimism expressed by Chou En-lai on 23 November, concerning the military situation on the Vietnamese battlefield, may have reflected agreement with the Vietnamese plan to endeavour to extract a decisive military victory in early 1972; or at the very least to encourage additional domestic pressures on President Nixon to make further concessions to the DRVN in Paris in order to enhance his chances of re-election in November 1972.

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The last noteworthy event in Peking-Hanoi relations for 1971 was the signing of aid agreements for 1972,[170] and it is appropriate at this stage to note briefly the formal economic and other agreements between the two states from March 1970 to the end of 1971, during which the extent of aid was evidently extensively increased by comparison with that for earlier years. The increase in military aid in particular was probably a reflection of the increased burdens on PAVN through the presence in Cambodia after Sihanouk's ouster, and in Laos during and after Operation Lam Son 719.

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168. Hanoi domestic radio, 1430 GMT, 3 November 1971; text in Principal Reports (...), op. cit., 5 November 1971, pp. 1-6.
169. Hanoi domestic radio, 1430 GMT, 13 November 1971; text in Principal Reports (...), op. cit., 15 November 1971, pp. 1-4.
170. NCNA 5 December 1971; in SCMP 5034 (15 December 1971), p. 128.

A "supplementary protocol for China's supply to the DRVN of economic and military materials as gratuitous aid" was signed in Peking on 25 May 1970[171] following negotiations directed by Ly Ban (a Vice Minister of Foreign Trade in the DRVN) who had arrived in Peking on 2 May. A further DRVN delegation arrived on 12 September 1970, led by Vice-Premier Nguyen Con, with Ly Ban as a deputy leader, thus indicating the higher level of negotiations by comparison with the May discussions. The entire delegation was granted the unusual honour of a reception by Mao Tse-tung on 23 September, and on 6 October, Nguyen Con and his Chinese counter-part signed an "agreement on Chinese economic and technical aid to Viet Nam" and a "protocol on Chinese military aid to Viet Nam".[172] His deputy Ly Ban remained for further negotiations on the annual "agreement on mutual supply of goods and payments for 1971", which was signed on 31 October.[173] On the latter occasion, four protocols were also signed: "on the supply of materials by China to Viet Nam in 1971" (this protocol regularly accompanied the annual agreements on mutual supply and payments), "on China's aid to Viet Nam in the form of complete projects" (no doubt at least in part related to replacements for facilities destroyed by US bombardment), "on the living standards and working conditions of the Chinese technical personnel sent to Viet Nam" (implying that a relatively large number of experts had been or would be sent to the DRVN), and "on the delivery by China to Viet Nam of the equipment and materials for complete projects".[174]

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171. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 23 (5 June 1970), p. 38.
172. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 42 (16 October 1970), p. 28.
173. Peking Review, Vol. 13 No. 45 (6 November 1970), p. 29.
174. Ibid.: the latter protocol was signed between the PRC's Commission For Economic Relations with Foreign Countries, and the DRVN's Ministry of Foreign Trade.

DRVN Vice-Premier Le Thanh Nghi arrived in Peking on 11 February 1971 at the head of another economic delegation, and on 13 February Chou En-lai told the group that the Chinese Party, Government and people "were determined to continue their all-out support and assistance",[175] probably as reassurance in the context of the developing allied spoiling operation in Laos and as an answer to the pleas for "greater support" which had recently been made. An agreement was signed on 15 February "on supplementary economic and military aid to be given by China to Viet Nam in 1971",[176] and a protocol to the agreement was signed on 22 February.[177] This agreement was made in part to "further strengthen the militant friendship and unity" between the two countries. A new boundary railway agreement and a protocol were signed in Hanoi following the 13th meeting of the Joint China-Viet Nam Boundary Railway Commission from 2 to 12 April,[178] and a mutual agreement on civil air transport was "re-signed" in Peking on 30 May to extend the original agreement signed on 5 April 1956.[179] The DRVN Vice-Minister of National Defence General Tran Sam led a military delegation to China on 24 June, and on 4 July signed a "protocol on a supplementary gratuitous supply of military equipment and materials to Viet Nam in 1971".[180] A protocol "on the 1971 plan for scientific and technological co-operation" was signed on 31 July.[181] The "agreement on China's economic

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175. Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 8 (19 February 1971), p. 5.
176. Ibid., p. 16. This aid was "non-refundable": see Vietnam Courier, No. 309 (22 February 1971), p. 2.
177. Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 9 (26 February 1971), p. 5.
178. NCNA 14 April 1971 (in SCMP 4884 of 26 April 1971), p. 40.
179. NCNA 30 May 1971 (in SCMP 4914 of 9 June 1971), p. 146.
180. NCNA 5 July 1971.
181. NCNA 31 July 1971 (in SCMP 4954 of 11 August 1971), p. 138.

military and material assistance to Viet Nam in 1972" was signed in Hanoi on 27 September after three days of negotiations.[182] Finally, an "agreement on the mutual supply of goods and payments for 1972" was signed in Peking on 5 December, along with a "protocol on China's supply of general goods in 1972" and a "protocol on China's supply of complete projects" to implement the appropriate sections of the 27 September agreement.[183]

US Defence Secretary Melvin Laird was reported in September 1971 to have estimated that the USSR provided the DRVN with US$500 million worth of military assistance a year, "or 65 per cent of Hanoi's foreign aid", with China "providing about 25 per cent of outside assistance".[184] While these references do not clearly distinguish between economic and military aid, they indicate that China was providing some US$195 million a year in aid to the DRVN, if the above percentages in fact relate only to military aid. This compares with a reported Chinese supply of arms aid to the DRVN in 1965 of US$35 million and in 1966 of US$50 million.[185] In view of the substantial dollar-equivalent of the sophisticated USSR aid - particularly the surface-to-air missiles, but also including MIG jet fighters and tanks - the Chinese contribution at about US$200 million for the beginning of the 1970's must be judged quite considerable. But the increased cost of Chinese aid in 1970 and particularly in 1971, although borne publicly in the spirit of proletarian internationalism and no doubt privately as a necessary cost to be paid in order to balance Soviet influence in Hanoi, must have been reluctantly assented to by many in the CPC-CC. This seems to be one conclusion to be drawn from Mao Tse-tung's teaching which Chou En-lai first publicized in his 6 March 1971 speech in

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182. See footnote 157 above.

183. See footnote 165 above.

184. 13 September Washington report by Murrey Marder, in International Herald-Tribune (Paris), 14 September 1971, p. 1.

185. AP report of 6 February 1967, citing "information reaching Washington".

Hanoi: "if anyone among us should say that we should not help the Vietnamese people in their struggle against US aggression and for national salvation, that will be betrayal, betrayal of the revolution".[186]

186. See the text in Peking Review, Vol. 14 No. 11 (12 March 1971), at p. 17. Stylistically, it is interesting to note that in this source and elsewhere, this reported "teaching" of Mao Tse-tung is not presented in bold print as are other direct and indirect quotations from Mao's published and unpublished writings and sayings.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In attempting to draw general conclusions from the analysis presented in the previous chapters, it may be useful to first set out the presumed foreign policy goals of both the PRC and the DRVN. For the PRC, the major goal was to secure her territorial integrity, and to fix her international boundaries where her leaders considered that these should run. This process had been largely completed by the eve of the present study, with the border disputes with India and the Soviet Union representing the major outstanding issues at the end of 1971. However, it is worthy of comment that, according to the public record, no agreements have been formally concluded between the PRC and the DRVN to define and delimit their mutual border. One explanation for this may lie in the description of this border as "a new-type border of socialism and friendship",[1] which suggests that neither state saw any immediate need to resolve this issue in terms of traditional "bourgeois" international law. If this is so, then it also implies that there existed some kind of special relationship between the PRC and the DRVN which did not exist, for example, in the case of the PRC-USSR relationship. On the other hand, it may be that the PRC leaders have considered that the time is not yet ripe to resolve this "question left over from history", and that it will not be ripe until DRVN intentions concerning Laos (which also has no formal border agreement with the PRC) have been clarified. The question of territorial integrity also involved the PRC's desire to re-establish central Chinese authority over Taiwan, which continued to be frustrated by US policies. The US Defence Treaty with Taiwan, as well as the US's refusal to acknowledge the PRC's claimed right of sovereignty over Taiwan, was linked explicitly in 1966 to a Chinese perception of an American military encirclement of China. US involvement in Viet Nam was seen as an integral part

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[1] NCNA, 5 March 1965 (SCMP 3413 of 10 March 1965), p. 45.

of a general strategy aimed at maintaining a permanent US military presence on the periphery of China. China's national security was thus seen to be threatened so long as the US military presence remained in Viet Nam in particular, and on China's neighbouring territory in general.

A second policy goal was to establish Chinese influence and paramountcy in Asia. Influence should be distinguished from direct control; there was no convincing evidence that the Chinese leaders were committed to territorial expansion. Pursuit of this goal implied that it was unacceptable to the leaders of the PRC that non-Asian powers should be dominant in Asia. The US "had no business" in Viet Nam, or indeed elsewhere in Asia. Likewise, it was argued in 1965, the USSR was not an Asian state, and therefore should not play any part in an Afro-Asian conference. Asian affairs should be settled by Asian states; but other Asian states should not impose their policies onto third countries by force.

A third policy goal was to gain leadership of the "international communist movement", in the sense that the CPC should become the accepted source of authority for strategy and tactics in the anti-imperialist struggle. This implied a belief that the Chinese revolutionary experience was distinct from that of the USSR, that it was universally applicable, and that it was especially appropriate for the newly-independent states or "oppressed peoples" of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In particular, the CPC insisted on the desirability of other peoples and communist Parties following the CPC's own path of revolutionary armed struggle for the seizure of political power, while at the same time it stressed the necessity of self-reliance. By the end of 1965, the CPC was arguing that "in order to oppose imperialism, it is necessary to oppose revisionism". The VNWP in particular declined to publicly accept this invitation to directly oppose the Soviet Union; to do so would be clear endorsement of the CPC's claim to sole ideological authority. Despite the CPC's insistence that there was no "middle path" between its policies and those

of the CPSU, the VNWP was not openly denounced by the Chinese Party for its support for the invasion of Czechoslovakia, thereby indicating that the CPC was reluctant to risk pushing the Vietnamese Party more closely towards the Soviet line.

Fourthly, and related to the last two goals, the PRC was concerned to gain for itself a position of leadership in the less-developed world in general, and the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America in particular, in order to develop a united front against the US and the Soviet "revisionist ruling clique". China's efforts to achieve this goal received substantial setbacks in 1964 and 1965, especially in Africa and in Indonesia.

A further goal of China's leaders was to obtain international acceptance and recognition for their state as a great power with world interests. The Chinese congratulated themselves on being so recognized in 1954, when they were invited to attend the Geneva Conference; this status was re-affirmed by the PRC's attendance at the 1962 Enlarged Geneva Conference on Laos, by the responses to her first nuclear test in October 1964, and in late 1971 when the PRC's representatives were granted occupancy of China's seat in the United Nations Security Council.

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The DRVN's policy goals were headed by the desire to unify Viet Nam. The reasons for this were several. In nationalist terms, a northern half of a truncated Viet Nam was not self-sufficient in food. The further supplies needed were obtained largely from China, and this supply provided the Chinese with a basic means of pressuring the DRVN leaders into acceptance of Chinese policies. It must, of course, be added that there was no evidence that the Chinese had in fact used this dependence as a bargaining point; but its potential for pressure remained. The fertile Mekong delta of South Viet Nam, which in times of peace produced an abundant surplus of rice, could make up the rice deficit in the north and so

do away with continuing reliance on Chinese good will for food supply. At the same time, a unified Viet Nam would provide a more solid political base for a Vietnamese nation wishing to retain a cultural identity separate from that of China. In ideological terms, the development of the national democratic revolution in South Viet Nam would lay the foundation for the future building of socialism in the south as well as in the north, thus contributing to the national goals within a Marxist-Leninist framework.

A second goal, implicit in the first, was to resist all efforts by the Chinese to dominate Vietnamese policies. This goal found expression in the VNWP's insistence on an independent and creative line which drew on the experiences of all fraternal Parties. It was also implicit in the continuing stress in the DRVN, especially from 1963 onwards, on celebrating the tradition of Vietnamese patriotism and "revolutionary heroism" in resisting foreign aggression, whether on the part of the Japanese, the French or the Chinese. There can be no doubt that the Chinese leaders, from 1963 to 1971, did attempt to influence Vietnamese policies - on the question of military tactics for South Viet Nam, on the question of dealing with the USSR, and on the question of negotiations to end the conflict. The remarkable fact is that the Vietnamese were able to sustain their independent line during this period.

Thirdly, the VNWP sought to achieve dominant political influence over the states of Indo-China. This goal had been suggested by the 1951 Programme of the Party, and was apparently confirmed by the development of Hanoi-dominated Marxist-Leninist Parties and front organisations in both Cambodia and Laos, although these formed no part of the present inquiry. The Maoist model provided a suitable means by which this goal might be furthered, although it is tempting to consider the goal as an expression of nationalist sentiment alone. The long-term pursuit of this goal was necessarily subordinate to the primary goal of the unification of Viet Nam. Nevertheless, an Indo-China under Hanoi's effective political control would provide a geo-political unit of some size and of considerable strategic

significance. In particular, Vietnamese control of the Plain of Jars region of Laos would give control over access to northeast Thailand, should they consider it necessary or desirable to resume their historic expansionist tendencies. Also, an enlarged "Democratic Republic of Indo-China" would help strengthen (although it would not absolutely ensure) Vietnamese ability to resist Chinese political and other pressures if these were to be applied in the future. In order to secure a dominant Vietnamese influence in such an enlarged political unit, large tracts of Laos and Cambodia might be colonised by Vietnamese from the Tongking Delta region.

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It is clear that the order of priority accorded to these goals by the PRC and the DRVN respectively has varied at different times during 1963 to 1971. The goals and perceptions of the leaders of one state were not necessarily those of the other. The discussion in the foregoing chapters has shown that the PRC sought the status of a "great power" in world affairs, while the DRVN sought to achieve goals which at best could be described as regional. The PRC at first considered the US as the main enemy, but after August 1968 the US was jpined by the USSR to be regarded as joint enemies of the Chinese state; the DRVN was constant in its appreciation of the US as its main enemy allegedly controlling the "Saigon puppet clique". The PRC was cautious, and reluctant to take unnecessary risks, in its relations with the US; the DRVN matched the US escalation in South Viet Nam with its own counter-escalation of PAVN soldiers sent to the south, and as early as the Tongking Gulf incident seemed almost to invite and welcome US retaliatory destruction in response to Vietnamese communist initiatives. The PRC leaders judged from February 1965 to July 1971 that negotiations with the US were impermissible without either a prior US military withdrawal or a decisive military defeat of the US forces; the DRVN never completely closed its negotiation options,

although it insisted on certain pre-conditions. The PRC urged a protracted war strategy on the DRVN leaders after the US build-up in mid-1965, later arguing that the Vietnamese could "fight on for generations if need be"; the VNWP leaders decided as early as December 1963 that while their principle was to fight a protracted war, nevertheless a "decisive victory" should be sought in the quickest possible time; guerrilla tactics were never used exclusively, even after 1967.

These contrasts may be summarized in the proposition that, from 1963 to 1971, the PRC consistently followed - and advocated that the DRVN should follow - policies designed to enhance China's security and ideological interests. The most notable of these was that dubbed "ping pong diplomacy", which lead to the formal invitation to President Nixon to visit China. The invitation was evidently extended after the Chinese leaders had become convinced that Nixon was genuine in his desire to conclude the US combat role in South Viet Nam and to seek a normalisation of relations with the PRC. Since the invitation would not have been extended unless there were good reasons to expect that useful results would flow from the visit, the Vietnamese were justifiably outraged at this apparent act of perfidy on the part of the Chinese. In fact, with the major exception of the 4 July 1971 support for the principle of a peaceful settlement of the Viet Nam conflict, the Chinese made very few (if any) concessions to Vietnamese interests. Even the transit of materiel from the USSR to the DRVN via China was regarded as an issue which might be used to embarrass the USSR, rather than as a practical matter calling for an unconditional fulfilment of a "proletarian internationalist" obligation on the part of the PRC.

It was ironical that the Chinese leaders chose to assess (in July 1963) that a person's attitude towards the "Viet Nam question" was the basis of deciding whether that person was a true or a sham revolutionary, since the gap between revolutionary protestations and pragmatic actions which was deplored at the time was precisely what the Chinese leaders themselves

demonstrated eight years later in relations with the US. The VNWP spokesmen made many strong references in 1972 - beyond the time of the present study - to the contradiction between serving "narrow national interests" while claiming to advance the cause of the revolution, apropos President Nixon's visit to China. From 1963 to 1971, the DRVN leaders had been pragmatic in their approach to and relations with the USSR, and concentrated their attention on the primary goals - to advance the cause of seizing power in South Viet Nam through armed struggle, and to gain as much practical and material support as possible from the "fraternal socialist countries". The Vietnamese sought to unify both halves of Viet Nam under communist rule, and to reconcile the Soviet and Chinese Parties; the Chinese sought to embarrass the Soviet Union and to weaken the US.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Chinese leaders were concerned to gain time, during the period examined in the above chapters, but particularly after 1965, during which they might still further push forward their plans for modernization -especially in the nuclear weapons field - and to prepare their subjects to resist any war that might be imposed by either the US or the USSR. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution itself was considered by many official spokesmen as the most important way of preparing against war through a reactivation of the revolutionary ardour that had helped the CPC achieve power in 1949. In order to maximize the time available for strengthening the state, the PRC leaders undoubtedly had a vested interest in wishing the Viet Nam conflict - especially the "bogging down" of the US armed forces there - to be a drawn-out one. This general proposition is especially forceful if reports of Mao Tse-tung's conviction that a Sino-US war was inevitable, are taken at face value. Nixon's "Vietnamization" policy indicated that the US under his Administration was moving away from a "collision course" with China, and therefore the justifications for encouraging a protracted war in Viet Nam lost much of their former strength - in terms of practical

politics, if not in terms of ideology. With the Sino-US deadlock thus broken, it became possible and was desirable for the Chinese leaders to take measures designed very largely to isolate the USSR - named China's "main enemy" in 1972.

The Vietnamese gave their struggle the slogan "against US aggression, for national salvation". The Chinese put major stress on the first component of this slogan, insisting that the Vietnamese struggle was the "focal point" of th world anti-imperialist revolution. The Vietnamese placed equal, or indeed greater, emphasis on the "national salvation" component. The Chinese showed by their comments - in early 1967 in particular - that they recognized the strength of this component as a motivating force for the North Vietnamese.

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The Vietnamese had early developed tactics for declining absolute support to either the CPSU or the CPC on any particular issue, unless there was no practical alternative but to take some public stand on that matter. In the years after 1963, the Vietnamese diplomacy and tactics became more sophisticated, and their confidence in their ability to pursue an independent line - in ideology and in practice - correspondingly increased. In this situation, it is interesting to note that the Vietnamese reaction to the many Chinese public criticisms and advisory comments was for the most part passive. The Chinese side, too, went no further than its public protests and admonitions; that is to say, Chinese disapprobation did not extend into the field of action and therefore that of state relations, so far as can be ascertained from the published record. Occasionally the Vietnamese made public references to China which implied that they accepted a relationship of subordination to China which was not so very different from that of the early nineteenth century, and was not at all one of sovereign and equal states in a socialist commonwealth; but these occasions were balanced by equally diplomatic expressions of independent judgment concerning matters affecting the two states and their relations with third parties.

When the North Vietnamese leaders did take a "low posture" towards China,

it did not imply a sense of inferiority towards China, but it was merely to accept that China was the greater state, and that respect was due accordingly. The Chinese, for their part, implied that between China and North Viet Nam there existed a special relationship, one of "lips and teeth", of mutual dependence and mutual reliance, which was not the case in China's relations with other countries. Thus, the Chinese spokesmen indicated that "aggression against Viet Nam is aggression against China"; but "aggression against Laos" was a "grave threat" to China. Also, the Chinese authorities maintained a flow of supplies to the DRVN even at the height of the cultural revolution: there was apparently never any question at this time of a deliberate policy decision by Central to stop the transit of aid goods. Further, no matter how VNWP decisions and policies ran counter to what the CPC leaders considered the best policies, the Chinese state never attempted - so far as can be ascertained - to exercise pressure on the Vietnamese leaders by threatening to limit or cease food supplies. The Chinese pressures on the DRVN seem to have taken the form of persuasion , no doubt often very vigorously expressed in private, but on the whole the PRC leaders appeared to respect the right of the DRVN leadership to make their own policies as they thought necessary.

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The above discussion of relations between the two states indicates that considerations of security were of greater importance for the PRC than issues of ideology, although this is not to say that ideological differences between them might not be the cause of friction once the threat to China's territory had been removed. By exploiting the circumstances of Sino-Soviet differences, the VNWP had been able to develop its "creative" policies: the provision of Soviet aid in particular, while necessary for air defence, provided an alternative to dominant dependence on China as a sole source of economic and military assistance. It seemed likely that the VNWP would continue to seek Soviet assistance after the impending

withdrawal of US combat forces; it also seemed likely that the Soviet Union would be prepared to grant such assistance. Yet even if this was not to be forthcoming, it did not follow that the DRVN was destined to become a satellite or province of China. The Vietnamese had survived Chinese pressures concerning policy, and had enhanced their sense of national identity; these achievements would not be willingly nor easily foregone. All of the VNWP leaders were Vietnamese first and foremost, although individually they might (and did) incline to favour this or that aspect of CPC or CPSU policy at any particular time. At the same time, there was no evidence to suggest that the PRC had territorial designs on the DRVN or indeed of Indo-China as a whole. Between the minimum programme of expulsion of foreign powers from the region, at least so far as military presence was concerned, and a presumed maximum programme of a Vietnamese state fully responsive to Chinese policies, there were many intermediate points at which the two nations could co-operate to further shared goals while the DRVN could preserve its essential sovereignty.

In assessing the main features in Sino-Vietnamese relations from 1938 to 1954, Professor Chen stresses the elements of geographical contiguity ("a reasonably permanent factor") with its implications for sanctuary; Vietnamese longing for "sympathy and support" from China; the natural ties based on common socio-economic conditions and ethnic affinity; and the similar but not identical revolutionary cause and ideology of the two communist Parties.[2] All of these factors were important during the period 1963 to 1971, but it seemed some of them had become more complicated. The Vietnamese were not enthusiastic about the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the cult of the leader that surrounded Mao Tse-tung during these years[3], for example, although China continued to provide training

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2 King C. Chen, Vietnam and China, 1938-1954, op. cit., pp. 332-333.

3 "Leaders and the Masses", in Hoc Tap, May 1967, pp. 61-66: translated in JPRS 41648, pp. 75-81.

facilities for the North Vietnamese air force at this time [4] while making public and bitter critisism of DRVN policy concerning the conflict in the south and negotiations. A clue to the limits of Hanoi's freedom of action in the foreign policy field may perhaps be found in the tactics employed concerning negotiations and dealings with the US. The various "peace feelers", to be effective, had to be extended without the glare of publicity. In effect, the DRVN leaders seem to have accepted the view that the PRC should be presented with a fait accompli on the matter if the Vietnamese interests were to be preserved and Chinese pressures successfully resisted. The 3 April 1968 decision by the DRVN to meet with US representatives was merely one of the more spectacular examples of this approach. Otherwise, whenever any "peace feeler" was publicized, the DRVN denied that the feeler had been extended.

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The developments and arguments in the above chapters suggest that in the case of Sino-Vietnamese relations from 1963 to 1971, national sentiment on the part of the Vietnamese has been a more enduring source of political action than the avowedly common ideology; yet geography and an ethnic and cultural affinity draw the two states together to oppose the distance created between the two peoples by the sense of patriotism. Thus policies are sprung from patriotism, but are constrained by geography and history. The result is an uneasy balance. A genuine "peaceful coexistence" between the two states, with non-interference in each other's internal affairs - especially by the stronger power - can not be expected to come to pass until each of the states has completed the process of achieving their separate major foreign policy goals.

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4 Neil Sheehan's report from Washington, citing "well-placed military sources", in The New York Times, 14 March 1967, said that some of the DRVN's MIG fighters were being rotated to south China for maintenance, particularly to Mengtze.

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