

I COMRADE B ON THE PLOT OF THE REACTIONARY CHINESE CLIQUE AGAINST VIETNAM²⁴

Generally speaking, after we had defeated the Americans, there was no imperialist that would dare to fight us again. The only persons who thought they could still fight us and dared to fight us were Chinese reactionaries. But the Chinese people did not want it like that at all. I do not know how much longer some of these Chinese reactionaries will continue to exist. However, as long as they do, then they will strike us as they have just recently done [meaning in early 1979]. If war comes from the north, then the [northern central] provinces of Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Thanh Hoa will become the bases for the entire country. They are unparalleled as the most efficient, the best and the strongest bases. For if the Deltas [in the north] continued as an uninterrupted stretch, then the situation would be very complicated. Not at all a simple matter. If it had not been for the Vietnamese, there would not have been anyone to fight the USA, because at the time the Vietnamese were fighting the USA, the rest of the world was afraid of the USA.²⁵ Although the Chinese helped [North] Korea, it was only with the aim of protecting their own northern flank. After the fighting had finished [in Korea] and when the pressure was on Vietnam, he [this appears to be a reference to Zhou Enlai as the text soon seems to suggest] said that if the Vietnamese continued to fight they would have to fend for themselves. He would not help any longer and pressured us to stop fighting. When we had signed the Geneva Accords, it was precisely Zhou Enlai who divided our country into two [parts]. After our country had been divided into northern and southern zones in this way, he once again pressured us into not doing anything in regard to southern Vietnam. They forbade us from rising up [against the US-backed Republic of Vietnam]. [But] they, [the Chinese,] could do nothing to deter us.

When we were in the south and had made preparations to wage guerrilla warfare immediately after the signing of the Geneva Accords, Mao Zedong told our Party Congress that we had to force the Lao to transfer immediately their two liberated provinces to [the] Vientiane government.²⁶ Otherwise the Americans would destroy them, a very dangerous situation [in the Chinese view]! Vietnam had to work at once with the Americans [concerning this matter]. Mao forced us in this way and we had to do it.²⁷

Then, after these two [Lao] provinces had been turned over to Vientiane, the [Lao] reactionaries immediately arrested Souphanouvong [President of Laos, 1975-86]. The Lao had two battalions which were surrounded at the time. Moreover, they were not yet combat ready. Later, one battalion was able to escape [encirclement]. At that time, I gave it as my opinion that the Lao must be permitted to wage guerrilla warfare. I invited the Chinese to come and discuss this matter with us. I told them, .Comrades, if you go ahead pressuring the Lao in this way, then their forces will completely disintegrate. They must now be permitted to conduct guerrilla warfare..

Zhang Wentian,²⁸ who was previously the Secretary General [of the Chinese Communist Party] and used the pen name Lac Phu, answered me: .Yes, comrades, what you say is right. Let us allow that Lao battalion to take up guerrilla war..

I immediately asked Zhang Wentian: .Comrades, if you allow the Lao to take up guerrilla war, then there is nothing to fear about launching guerrilla war in south Vietnam. What is it that frightens you so much so that you still block such action?.

He [Zhang Wentian] said: .There is nothing to be afraid of!.

That was what Zhang Wentian said. However, Ho Wei, the Chinese ambassador to Vietnam at that time, [and] who was seated there, was listening to what was being said. He immediately cabled back to China [reporting what had been said between Le Duan and Zhang Wentian]. Mao replied at once: .Vietnam cannot do that [taking up guerrilla war in the south]. Vietnam must lie in wait for a protracted period of time!. We were so poor. How could we fight the Americans if we did

not have China as a rearguard base? [Thus], we had to listen to them, correct?²⁹ However, we did not agree. We secretly went ahead in developing our forces. When [Ngo Dinh] Diem dragged his guillotine machine throughout much of southern Vietnam, we issued the order to form mass forces to oppose the established order and to take power [from the Diem government]. We did not care [about the Chinese]. When the uprising to seize power had begun, we went to China to meet with both Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. Deng Xiaoping told me: .Comrade, now that your mistake has become an accomplished fact, you should only fight at the level of one platoon downward.. That was the kind of pressure they exerted on us.

I said [to the Chinese]: .Yes, yes! I will do that. I will only fight at the level of one platoon downwards.. After we had fought and China realized that we could fight efficiently, Mao suddenly had a new line of thinking. He said that as the Americans were fighting us, he would bring in [Chinese] troops to help us build roads. His essential aim was to find out about the situation in our country so that later he could strike us, and thereby expand into Southeast Asia. There was no other reason. We were aware of this matter, but had to allow it [the entry of Chinese troops]. But that was OK. They decided to send in their soldiers. I only asked that they send personnel, but these troops came with guns and ammunition. I also had to countenance this.

Later, he [Mao Zedong] forced us to permit 20,000 of his troops to come and build a road from Nghe Tinh into Nam Bo [the Vietnamese term for southern Vietnam]. I refused. They kept proposing, but I would not budge. They pressured me into permitting them to come, but I did not accept it. They kept on pressuring, but I did not agree. I provide you with these examples, comrades, so that you can see their long-standing plot to steal our country, and how wicked their plot is.

.After the Americans had introduced several hundred thousand troops into southern Vietnam, we launched a general offensive in 1968 to force them to de-escalate. In order to defeat the US, one had to know how to bring them to de-escalate gradually. That was our strategy. We were fighting a big enemy, one with a population of 200 million people and who dominated the world. If we could not bring them to de-escalate step-by-step, then we would have floundered and would have been unable to destroy the enemy. We had to fight to sap their will in order to force them to come to the negotiating table with us, yet without allowing them to introduce more troops.

When it came to the time when they wanted to negotiate with us, Ho Wei wrote a letter to us saying: .You cannot sit down to negotiate with the US. You must bring US troops into northern Vietnam to fight them.. He pressured us in this way, making us extremely puzzled. This was not at all a simple matter. It was very tiresome every time these situations arose [with the Chinese]. We decided that it could not be done that way [referring to Ho Wei's advice not to negotiate with the US]. We had to sit back down in Paris. We had to bring them [the US] to de-escalate in order to defeat them. During that time, China made the announcement [to the US]: .If you don't attack me, I won't attack you. However many troops you want to bring into Vietnam, it's up to you.. China, of its own accord, did this and pressured us in this way. They [the Chinese] vigorously traded with the Americans and compelled us to serve as a bargaining chip in this way. When the Americans realized that they had lost, they immediately used China [to facilitate] their withdrawal [from southern Vietnam]. Nixon and Kissinger went to China in order to discuss this matter.

.Before Nixon went to China, [the goal of his trip being] to solve the Vietnamese problem in such a way as to serve US interests and to lessen the US defeat, as well as to simultaneously allow him to entice China over to the US [side] even more, Zhou Enlai came to visit me. Zhou told me: .At this time, Nixon is coming to visit me principally to discuss the Vietnamese problem, thus I must come to meet you, comrade, in order to discuss [it with you].. I answered: .Comrade, you can say whatever you like, but I still don't follow. Comrade, you are Chinese; I am a Vietnamese. Vietnam is mine [my nation]; not yours at all. You have no right to speak [about Vietnam's affairs], and you have no right to discuss [them with the Americans].³⁰

Today, comrades, I will personally tell you something which I have not even told our Politburo, for, comrade, you have brought up a serious matter, and hence I must speak: ? In 1954, when we won victory at Dien Bien Phu, I was in Hau Nghia [province]. Bac [Uncle] Ho cabled to tell me that I had to go to southern Vietnam to regroup [the forces there] and to speak to the southern Vietnamese compatriots [about this matter].³¹ I traveled by wagon to the south. Along the way, compatriots came out to greet me, for they thought we had won victory. It was so painful! Looking at my southern compatriots, I cried. Because after this [later], the US would come and massacre [the population] in a terrible way.

Upon reaching the south, I immediately cabled Bac Ho to ask to remain [in the south] and not to return to the north, so that I could fight for another ten years or more. [To Zhou Enlai]: .Comrade, you caused me hardship such as this [meaning Zhou's role in the division of Vietnam at Geneva in 1954]. Did you know that, comrade?.

Zhou Enlai said: .I apologize before you, comrade. I was wrong. I was wrong about that [meaning the division of Vietnam at Geneva]..³² After Nixon had already gone to China, he [Zhou Enlai] once again came to Vietnam in order to ask me about a number of problems concerning the fighting in southern Vietnam.

However, I immediately told Zhou Enlai: "Nixon has met with you already, comrade. Soon they [the US] will attack me even harder." I am not at all afraid. Both sides [the US and China] had negotiated with each other in order to fight me harder. He [Zhou Enlai] did not as yet reject this [view] as unfounded, and only said that "I will send additional guns and ammunition to you comrades." Then he [Zhou Enlai] said [concerning fears of a secret US-Chinese plot]: "There was no such thing." However, the two had discussed how to hit us harder, including B-52 bombing raids and the blocking of Haiphong [harbor]. This was clearly the case.

.If the Soviet Union and China had not been at odds with each other, then the US could not have struck us as fiercely as they did. As the two [powers of China and the Soviet Union] were in conflict, the Americans were unhampered [by united socialist bloc opposition]. Although Vietnam was able to have unity and solidarity both with China and the USSR, to achieve this was very complicated, for at that time we had to rely on China for many things. At that time, China annually provided assistance of 500,000 tons of foodstuffs, as well as guns, ammunition, money, not to mention dollar aid. The Soviet Union also helped in this way. If we could not do that [preserve unity and solidarity with China and the USSR], things would have been very dangerous. Every year I had to go to China twice to talk with them [the Chinese leadership] about [the course of events] in southern Vietnam. As for the Soviets, I did not say anything at all [about the situation in southern Vietnam]. I only spoke in general terms. When dealing with the Chinese, I had to say that both were fighting the US. Alone I went. I had to attend to this matter. I had to go there and talk with them many times in this way, with the main intention to build closer relations between the two sides [meaning Chinese and Vietnamese]. It was precisely at this time that China pressured us to move away from the USSR, forbidding us from going with the USSR.s [side] any longer.³³

They made it very tense. Deng Xiaoping, together with Kang Sheng,³⁴ came and told me: .Comrade, I will assist you with several billion [presumably yuan] every year. You cannot accept anything from the Soviet Union.. I could not allow this. I said: .No, we must have solidarity and unity with the whole [socialist] camp..³⁵ In 1963, when Khrushchev erred, [the Chinese] immediately issued a 25-point declaration and invited our Party to come and give our opinion.³⁶ Brother Truong Chinh and I went together with a number of other brothers. In discussions, they [the Chinese] listened to us for ten or so points, but when it came to the point of .there is no abandonment of the socialist camp,.³⁷ they did not listen . Deng Xiaoping said, .I am in charge of my own document. I seek your opinion but I do not accept this point of yours..

Before we were to leave, Mao met with Brother Truong Chinh and myself. Mao sat down to chat with us, and in the end he announced: .Comrades, I would like you to know this. I will be president of 500 million land-hungry peasants, and I will bring an army to strike downwards into

Southeast Asia...³⁸Also seated there, Deng Xiaoping added: .It is mainly because the poor peasants are in such dire straits!.

Once we were outside, I told Brother Truong Chinh: “There you have it, the plot to take our country and Southeast Asia. It is clear now.” They dared to announce it in such a way. They thought we would not understand. It is true that not a minute goes by that they do not think of fighting Vietnam!

I will say more to you comrades so that you may see more of the military importance of this matter. Mao asked me: .In Laos, how many square kilometers [of land] are there?

I answered: .About 200,000 [sq. km].

.What is its population? [Mao asked]:

.[I answered]: Around 3 million!

.[Mao responded:] That.s not very much! I'll bring my people there, indeed!

.[Mao asked:] How many square kilometers [of land] are there in Thailand?.

.[I responded]: About 500,000 [sq. km].

.And how many people? [Mao asked].

.About 40 million! [I answered].

.My God! [Mao said], Szechwan province of China has 500,000 sq. km., but has 90 million people. I'll take some more of my people there, too [to Thailand]!

As for Vietnam, they did not dare to speak about moving in people this way. However, he [Mao] told me: .Comrade, isn't it true that your people have fought and defeated the Yuan army?. I said: .Correct.. .Isn't it also true, comrade, that you defeated the Qing army?. I said: .Correct.. He said: .And the Ming army as well?. I said: .Yes, and you too. I have beaten you as well.³⁹ Did you know that?. I spoke with Mao Zedong in that way. He said: .Yes, yes!. He wanted to take Laos, all of Thailand as well as wanting to take all of Southeast Asia. Bringing people to live there. It was complicated [to that point]. .In the past [referring to possible problems stemming from the Chinese threat during these times], we had made intense preparations; it is not that we were unprepared. If we had not made preparations, the recent situation would have been very dangerous. It was not a simple matter. Ten years ago, I summoned together our brothers in the military to meet with me. I told them that the Soviet Union and the US were at odds with each other. As for China, they had joined hands with the US imperialists. In this tense situation, you must study this problem immediately. I was afraid that the military did not understand me, so I told them that there was no other way to understand the matter. But they found it very difficult to understand. It was not easy at all. But I could not speak in any other way. And I did not allow others to grab me.⁴⁰

.When I went to the Soviet Union, the Soviets were also tough with me about China. The Soviet Union had convened a conference of 80 [communist] Parties in support of Vietnam, but Vietnam did not attend this conference, for [this gathering] was not simply aimed at helping Vietnam, but it was also designed to condemn China. Thus Vietnam did not go. The Soviets said: .Have you now abandoned internationalism [or] what? Why have you done this?. I said: .I have not abandoned internationalism at all. I have never done this. However, to be internationalist, the Americans must be defeated first. And if one wants to defeat the Americans, then there must be unity and solidarity with China. If I had gone to this conference, then the Chinese would have created very severe difficulties for us. Comrades, please understand me..

.In China there were also many different and contending opinions. Zhou Enlai agreed on forming a front with the Soviet Union in order to oppose the Americans. Once, when I went to the USSR to participate in a national day celebration, I was able to read a Chinese cable sent to the Soviet Union saying that .whenever someone attacks the USSR, then the Chinese will stand by your side..⁴¹[This was] because there was a treaty of friendship between the USSR and China dating from earlier times [February 1950]. Sitting next to Zhou Enlai, I asked him: “In this cable recently sent to the USSR, you have agreed, comrade, to establish a front with the Soviet Union, but why won't you form a front to oppose the US?” Zhou Enlai said: “We can. I share that view. Comrades, I will form a front with you [on Vietnam].” Peng Zhen,⁴² who was also seated there,

added: "This opinion is extremely correct!" But, when the matter was discussed in Shanghai, Mao said it was not possible, and to cancel it. You see how complicated it was.

.Although Zhou Enlai held a number of those opinions, he nonetheless agreed on building a front and [he] helped Vietnam a lot. It was thanks to him that I could understand [much of what was going on in China]. Otherwise it would have been very dangerous. He once told me: .I am doing my best to survive here, to use Li Chiang⁴³ to accumulate and provide assistance for you, comrades.. And that there was [meaning that Zhou was able to use Li Chiang in order to help the Vietnamese]. My understanding is that without Zhou Enlai this would not have been possible at all. I am indebted to him.

However, it is not correct to say that other Chinese leaders shared Zhou Enlai's view at all. They differed in many ways. It must be said that the most uncompromising person, the one with the Greater Han mentality, and the one who wanted to take Southeast Asia, was mainly Mao. All of [China's] policies were in his hands.

The same applies to the current leaders of China. We do not know how things will turn out in the future, however, [the fact of the matter is that] they have already attacked us. In the past, Deng Xiaoping did two things which have now been reversed. That is, when we won in southern Vietnam, there were many [leaders] in China who were unhappy. However, Deng Xiaoping nonetheless congratulated us. As a result of this, he was immediately considered a revisionist by the others.

When I went to China for the last time,⁴⁴ I was the leader of the delegation, and I met with the Chinese delegation led by Deng Xiaoping. In speaking of territorial problems, including discussion of several islands, I said: "Our two nations are near each other. There are several areas of our territory that have not been clearly defined. Both sides should establish bodies to consider the matter. Comrades, please agree with me [on this]." He [Deng] agreed, but after doing so he was immediately considered a revisionist by the other group of leaders.

But now he [Deng] is crazy. Because he wants to show that he is not a revisionist, therefore he has struck Vietnam even harder. He let them go ahead in attacking Vietnam. After defeating the Americans we kept in place over one million troops, leading Soviet comrades to ask us: "Comrades, whom do you intend to fight that you keep such a large [standing] army?" I said: "Later, comrades, you will understand." The only reason we had kept such a standing army was because of China[s threat to Vietnam]. If there had not been [such a threat], then this [large standing army] would have been unnecessary. Having been attacked recently on two fronts, [we can see that] it would have been very dangerous if we had not maintained a large army.

(B) [The meaning of this .B. in the original text is unclear] ? In the wake of WWII, everyone held the international gendarme to be American imperialism. They could take over and bully the entire world. Everyone, including the big powers, was afraid of the US. It was only Vietnam that was not afraid of the US.

I understand this matter for my line of work has taught me it. The first person to fear [the Americans] was Mao Zedong. He told me, that is, the Vietnamese and Lao, that: "You must immediately turn over the two liberated provinces of Laos to the [Vientiane] [government]. If you do not do so, then the US will use it as a pretext to launch an attack. That is a great danger." As for Vietnam, we said: "We have to fight the Americans in order to liberate southern Vietnam." He [Mao] said: "You cannot do that. Southern Vietnam must lie in wait for a long period, for one lifetime, 5-10 or even 20 lifetimes from now. You cannot fight the Americans. Fighting the US is dangerous." Mao Zedong was scared of the US to that extent. But Vietnam was not scared. Vietnam went ahead and fought. If Vietnam had not fought the US, then southern Vietnam would not have been liberated. A country, which is not yet liberated, will remain a dependent one. No one is independent if only one-half of the country is free. It was not until 1975 that our country

finally achieved its full independence. With independence would come freedom. Freedom should be freedom for the whole of the Vietnamese nation.

Engels had already spoken on people's war. Later the Soviet Union, China, and ourselves also spoke [on this matter]. However, these three countries differ a lot on the content [of people's war]. It is not true that just because you have millions of people you can do whatever you like. China also spoke on people's war, however, [they held that] .when the enemy advances, we must retreat.. In other words, defense is the main feature, and war is divided into three stages with the countryside used to surround the cities, while [the main forces] remain in the forests and mountains only . The Chinese were on the defensive and very weak [during World War II]. Even with 400 million people pitted against a Japanese army of 300,000 to 400,000 troops, the Chinese still could not defeat them.⁴⁵ I have to repeat it like that, for before China had sent advisers to us [some of our Vietnamese] brothers did not understand. They thought the [Chinese] were very capable. But they are not so skilled, and thus we did not follow [the Chinese advice].⁴⁶

In 1952, I left northern Vietnam for China, because I was sick and needed treatment. This was my first time abroad.⁴⁷ I put questions to them [the Chinese] and saw many very strange things. There were areas [which had been] occupied by Japanese troops, each with a population of 50 million people, but which had not [had] a single guerrilla fighter.

When I returned from China, I met Uncle [Ho]. He asked me: "This was your first time to go abroad, isn't that right?"

"Yes, I went abroad for the first time"

"What did you see?"

"I saw two things: Vietnam is very brave and they [the Chinese] are not brave at all."

I understood this from that day on. We [the Vietnamese] were entirely different from them. Courage is inherent in the Vietnamese person, and thus we have never had a defensive strategy. Every inhabitant fights.

Recently, they [the Chinese] have brought several hundred thousand troops in to invade our country. For the most part, we have used our militia and regional troops to attack them. We were not on the defensive, and thus they suffered a setback. They were not able to wipe out a single Vietnamese platoon, while we wiped out several of their regiments and several dozen of their battalions. That is so because of our offensive strategy.

The American imperialists fought us in a protracted war. They were so powerful, yet they lost. But there was a special element that is the acute contradictions between the Chinese and the Soviets. [Because of this,] they have attacked us hard like this.

Vietnam fought the Americans, and fought them very fiercely, but we know that the US was an extremely large country, more than capable of amassing 10 million troops and bringing all of its considerably powerful weapons in to fight us. Therefore we had to fight over a long period of time in order to bring them to de-escalation. We were the ones who could do this; the Chinese could not. When the American army attacked Quong Tre, the Politburo ordered troops to be brought in to fight at once. We were not afraid. After that I went to China to meet Zhou Enlai. He told me: "It [the attack in Queng Tre] is probably unparalleled, unique. In life there is only one [chance,] not two. No one has ever dared to do what you, comrades, have done."

Zhou Enlai was the Chief of the General Staff. He dared to speak, he was more frank. He told me: "If I had known before the ways which you comrades employ, we would not have needed the Long March". What was the Long March for? At the beginning of the march there were 300,000 troops; and at the end of the Long March there were only 30,000 remaining. 270,000 people were lost. It was truly idiotic to have done it in this way . [I] speak as such so that you, comrades, know how much we are ahead of them. In the near future, if we are to fight against China, we will

certainly win . However, the truth is that if a different country [other than Vietnam] were to fight against China, it is not clear that they would win like this [like Vietnam].

If China and the USSR had been united with each other, then it is not certain that the US would have dared to fight us. If the two had been united and joined together to help us, it is not certain that the US would have dared to have fought us in the way in which they did. They would have balked from the very beginning. They would have balked in the same way during the Kennedy period. Vietnam, China, and the USSR all helped Laos and the US immediately signed a treaty with Laos. They did not dare to send American troops to Laos, they let the Lao [People's Revolutionary] Party participate in the government right away. They did not dare to attack Laos any more. Later, as the two countries [the USSR and China] were at odds with each other, the Americans were informed [by the Chinese] that they could go ahead and attack Vietnam without any fear. Don't be afraid [of Chinese retaliation]. Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong told the Americans: .If you don't attack me, then I won't attack you. You can bring in as many troops into southern Vietnam as you like. It's up to you..⁴⁸

We are [presently] bordering on a very strong nation, one with expansionist intentions which, if they are to be implemented, must start with an invasion of Vietnam. Thus, we have to shoulder yet another, different historical role. However, we have never shirked from our historical tasks. Previously, Vietnam did carry out its tasks, and this time Vietnam is determined not to allow them to expand. Vietnam preserves its own independence, and by doing so is also safeguarding the independence of Southeast Asian nations. Vietnam is resolved not to allow the Chinese to carry out their expansionist scheme. The recent battle [with China] was one round only. Presently, they are still making preparations in many fields. However, whatever the level of their preparations, Vietnam will still win. Waging war is no leisurely walk in the woods. Sending one million troops to wage war against a foreign country involves countless difficulties. Just recently they brought in 500,000 to 600,000 troops to fight us, yet they had no adequate transport equipment to supply food to their troops. China is presently preparing 3.5 million troops, but they have to leave half of them on the [Sino-Soviet] border to deter the Soviets. For that reason, if they bring 1 or 2 million troops in to fight us, we will not be afraid of anything. We have just engaged 600,000 troops, and, if, in the near future, we have to fight 2 million, it will not be a problem at all. We are not afraid.

We are not afraid because we already know the way to fight. If they bring in 1 million troops, they will only gain a foothold in the north. Descending into the mid-lands, the deltas, and into Hanoi and even further downwards would be difficult. Comrades, as you know, Hitler's clique struck fiercely in this way, yet when they [the German Nazis] arrived in Leningrad they could not enter. With the cities, the people, and defense works, it is impossible to carry out effective attacks against each and every inhabitant. Even fighting for two, three, or four years they will still not be able to enter. Every village there [in the north] is like this. Our guidelines are: Each district is a fortress, each province a battlefield. We will fight and they will not be able to enter at all.

However, it is never enough just to fight an enemy at the frontline. One must have a strong direct rearguard. After the recent fighting ended, we assessed that, in the near future, we must add several million more people to the northern front. But as the enemy comes from the north, the direct rear for the whole country must be Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh . The direct rear to protect the capital must be Thanh Hoa and Nghe Tinh. We have enough people. We can fight them in many ways . We can use 2 to 3 army corps to inflict a strong blow on them that will make them stagger, while we continue to hold our land. To this end, each soldier must be a real soldier and each squad a real squad.

Having now fought one battle already, we should not be subjective. Subjectivism and underestimation of the enemy are incorrect, but a lack of self-confidence is also wrong. We are not subjective, we do not underestimate the enemy. But we are also confident and firmly believe in our victory. We should have both these things.

The Chinese now have a plot to attack [us] in order to expand southwards. But in the present era nothing can be done and then wrapped up tidily. China has just fought Vietnam for a few days, yet the whole world has shouted: [.]Leave Vietnam alone![,] The present era is not like the olden times. In those days, it was only us and them [meaning the Chinese]. Now the whole world is fastened closely together. The human species has not yet entered the socialist phase at all; instead this is a time where everyone wants independence and freedom. [Even] on small islands, people want independence and freedom. All of humankind is presently like this. That is very different than it was in olden times. In those days, people were not yet very aware of these things. Thus the sentence of Uncle Hò: .There is nothing more precious than independence and freedom. is an idea of the present era. To lay hands on Vietnam is to lay hands on humanity and infringe on independence and freedom . Vietnam is a nation that symbolizes independence and freedom.

When it came to fighting the US, our brothers in the Politburo had to discuss together this matter to consider whether we dared to fight the US or not. All were agreed to fight. The Politburo expressed its resolve: In order to fight the Americans, we must not fear the USA. All were of the same mind. As all agreed to fight the US, to have no fear of the USA, we must also not fear the USSR. All agreed. We must also not fear China. All agreed. If we don't fear these three things, we can fight the US. This was how we did things in our Politburo at that time.

Although the Politburo met and held discussions like this and everyone was of the same mind, there was later one person who told a comrade what I said. That comrade rose to question the Politburo, asking for what reason does Anh Ba⁴⁹ once again say that if we want to fight the Americans then we should not fear the Chinese? Why does he have to put it this way again?⁵⁰

At that time, Brother Nguyen Chi Thanh, who thus far was suspected of being sympathetic to the Chinese, stood up and said: .Respected Politburo and respected Uncle Ho, the statement of Anh Ba was correct. It must be said that way [referring to the need not to fear the Chinese], for they [the Chinese] give us trouble on many matters. They blocked us here, then forced our hands there. They do not let us fight ..⁵¹

While we were fighting in southern Vietnam, Deng Xiaoping stipulated that I (toi) could only fight at the level of one platoon downward, and must not fight at a higher level. He [Deng Xiaoping] said: .In the south, since you have made the mistake of starting the fighting already, you should only fight at the level of one platoon downward, not at a higher level.. That is how they brought pressure to bear on us.

.We are not afraid of anyone. We are not afraid because we are in the right. We do not fear even our elder brother. We also do not fear our friends.⁵² Of course, we do not fear our enemies. We have fought them already. We are human beings; we are not afraid of anyone. We are independent. All the world knows we are independent. We must have a strong army, because our nation is under threat and being bullied . . . It cannot be otherwise. If not, then it will be extremely dangerous, but our country is poor.

We have a strong army, but that does not in any way weaken us. The Chinese have several policies towards us: To invade and to occupy our country; to seek to weaken us economically and to make our living conditions difficult. For these reasons, in opposing China we must, first of all, not only fight, but also make ourselves stronger. To this end, in my view, our army should not be a force that wastes the resources of the state, but should also be a strong productive force. When the enemies come, they [the soldiers] grab their guns at once. When no enemy is coming, then they will produce grandly. They will be the best and highest symbol in production, producing more than anyone else. Of course, that is not a new story.⁵³ At present, our army shoulders an historical task: to defend our independence and freedom, while simultaneously protecting the peace and independence of the whole world. If the expansionist policy of the reactionary Chinese clique cannot be implemented any longer, that would be in the interest of the whole world. Vietnam can do this. Vietnam has 50 million people already. Vietnam has Lao and Cambodian friends and has

secure terrain. Vietnam has our camp and all of mankind on its side. It is clear that we can do this.

Do our comrades know of anyone in our Party, among our people, who suspects that we will lose to China? No one, of course. But we must maintain our friendly relations. We do not want national hatred. I repeat: I say this because I have never felt hatred for China. I do not feel this way. It is they who fight us.

Today I also want you comrades to know that in this world, the one who has defended China is myself! That is true. Why so? Because during the June 1960 conference in Bucharest, 60 Parties rose to oppose China, but it was only I who defended China.⁵⁴ Our Vietnamese people is like that. I will go ahead and repeat this: However badly they behave, we know that their people are our friends. As for our side, we have no evil feelings towards China. Yet the plot of several [Chinese] leaders is a different matter. We refer to them as a clique only. We do not refer to their nation. We did not say the Chinese people are bad towards us. We say that it is the reactionary Beijing clique. I again say it strictly like this.

Thus, let us keep the situation under firm control, remain ready for combat, and never relax in our vigilance. It is the same with respect to China. I am confident that in 50 years, or even in 100 years, socialism may succeed; and then we will not have this problem any longer. But it will take such a [long] time. Therefore, we must prepare and stand ready in all respects.

At present, no one certainly has doubts any more. But five years ago I was sure there [were no] comrades who doubted] that China could strike us. But there were. That as the case because [these] comrades had no knowledge about this matter.⁵⁵ But that was not the case with us [Le Duan and the leadership].⁵⁶ We knew that China had been attacking us for some ten years or more. Therefore we were not surprised [by the January 1979 Chinese attack].

[Source: CWIHP Bulletin 12/13, 2001; People's Army Library, Hanoi. Document obtained and translated for CWIHP by Christopher Goscha (Groupe d'Etudes sur le Vietnam Contemporain, Sciences Politiques, Paris).]

NOTES:

²⁴ This document is a translation of a copy of the extracts of the original. It was copied by hand in the Library of the People's Army, Hanoi. The translator of this document, Christopher E. Goscha, had full authorization to do so. The text is attributed to .comrade B.. It can either have been written by comrade B himself, or (much more likely) it is the typed notes of someone who listened to an oral presentation by comrade B. In the text, comrade B reveals that during a Politburo meeting he was referred to as Anh Ba (Brother Number Three), the alias we know was used by Secretary General Le Duan within the Vietnam Workers' Party (from 1976 Vietnamese Communist Party.). Although the document is undated, it is clear from the text that it was written sometime in 1979, in the wake of the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. This is supported by another highly charged document, published in 1979 at the behest of the Vietnamese Communist Party, which chronicles Chinese perfidy and, not entirely surprisingly, mentions many of the same incidents which Le Duan describes in this document. See, *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations over the Past 30 Years* (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban in Thet, 1979) [hereafter cited as *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese*]. The endnotes includes references to the page numbers of the French version of the same document: *La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises durant les trente dernières années* (Hanoi, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, 1979). The translator would like to thank Thomas Engelbert, Stein Tonnesson for their invaluable suggestions and corrections. The translator is responsible for all errors.

²⁵ All ellipses indicated as such are in the original; translator's ellipses and comments are in brackets: [.]

²⁶ The Geneva Accords of 1954 allowed the Pathet Lao, closely allied with the DRV, to maintain a provisional presence in the two Lao provinces of Phongsaly and Sam Neua. No similar concession was made to Khmers allied with the Vietnamese during the resistance against the French.

²⁷ The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations puts these high-level discussions on Laos in August 1961. (La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises, p. 34.)

²⁸ Zhang Wentian was one of the members of the Chinese delegation who was present when Comrade B made this remark. He was also then Deputy Foreign Minister, as well as a longtime member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party. During the 1950s, he had been an alternate member of the Politburo in charge of relations with socialist countries.

²⁹ The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations puts the meeting, this way: .In an exchange of opinions with the Vietnamese leadership, the Deputy Chinese Foreign Minister, Zhang Wentian expressed his view that one could carry on with guerrilla warfare in southern Vietnam. But afterwards, in accordance with a directive from Beijing, the Chinese Ambassador to Hanoi informed the Vietnamese side that this had not been the official opinion of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, but rather a personal view.. The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations, p. 40. (La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises, p. 31.)

³⁰ See The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese, p. 60. (La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises, p. 47.)

³¹ Le Duan is referring to the task of explaining the repatriation of southern cadres to the north. Le Duan forgets conveniently to mention that the Chinese helped the Vietnamese to win at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

³² See The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations, p. 60, where the Vietnamese reportedly told the Chinese in November 1972: .Vietnam is our country, you comrades, are not to negotiate with the US about Vietnam. You have already admitted your mistake of 1954, now you should not commit the same mistake again.. (La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises, p. 47.)

³³ One of Le Duan.s close advisors, Tran Quyen, has recently circulated his memoirs in Vietnam, providing interesting details on Le Du An.s policy towards the Sino-Soviet split and the divisions within the Vietnamese Worker.s Party on this issue in the 1960s. Tran Quyen, Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts), undated, privately published, copy in the translator.s possession.

³⁴ Kang Sheng (1903-1975), one of the PRC's top national security experts. He had been trained by the Soviet NKVD in the 1930s, and had become Mao's closest advisor on the problem of interpreting Soviet policies. Kang Sheng was Secretary of the Central Committee of the CCP in 1962, a member of the CCP Politburo from 1969; between 1973 and 1975 he was member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo.

³⁵ See: The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations, p. 43, in which the Vietnamese claimed that in exchange for renouncing all aid from the Soviet Union, Deng Xiaoping promised to make Vietnam China's number one priority in foreign aid. (La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises, p. 33.)

³⁶ See, The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese, p. 43. (La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises, p. 33.) and also Tran Quyen, Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts).

³⁷ In November 1966, the Soviets charged the Chinese with having abandoned the world Communist line adopted at the 1957 and 1960 Moscow Conferences. See also Tran Quyen, Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts).

³⁸ The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations has Mao making this statement to a delegation of the Vietnamese Worker.s Party in Wuhan in 1963. Mao is quoted by the

Vietnamese as saying: "I will be the Chairman of 500 million poor peasants and I will send troops down into Southeast Asia." (La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises, p. 9.)

³⁹ This could also translate as "and I'll beat yours as well" or "I could beat your's as well."

⁴⁰ It is not exactly clear to the translator to whom Le Duan is referring by the .military..

⁴¹ This appears to be a reference to the words relayed to the Soviets by the Chinese Ambassador to Moscow, on 14 February 1965, on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. As Ambassador Pan Tzu-li told the Soviets: ..if the imperialists dare to attack the Soviet Union, the Chinese people, without the least hesitation, will fulfill their treaty obligations and together with the great Soviet people [...] will fight shoulder to shoulder until the final victory.... Quoted by Donald S. Zagoria, Moscow, Peking, Hanoi (New York: Pegasus, 1967), pp. 139-140.

⁴² Peng Zhen was member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CCP from 1951 to 1969.

⁴³ Li Chiang was Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Economic Relations with Foreign Countries within the Chinese State Council from 1965 to 1967. Between 1968 and 1973, he was Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade and from 1973 served as Minister of Foreign Trade.

⁴⁴ A reference to Le Duan.s trip in November 1977.

⁴⁵ Le Duan forgets the fact that even fewer French had been able to rule Vietnam without too much trouble until March 1940.

⁴⁶ On Chinese advisors, see Qiang Zhai, *China & the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), and Christopher E. Goscha, *Le contexte asiatique de la guerre franco-vietnamienne: Réseaux, relations et économie* (Paris, thesis, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, La Sorbonne, 2000, section chinoise).

⁴⁷ While Le Duan traveled often to northern Vietnam during the war against the French, he is normally assumed to have stayed in southern Vietnam at this time, at the head of the southern branch of the party which became COSVN in the early 1950s. The translator doubts that Le Duan traveled to China in 1952. Ho Chi Minh did, but not Le Duan.

⁴⁸ On this, see the 2000 Hong Kong Conference paper by Chen Jian and James Hershberg, *.Sino-American Signaling,. presented at the Conference .China, Southeast Asia and the Vietnam War, January 2000.*

⁴⁹ This confirms that comrade .B. is the same person as .Anh Ba.. With the knowledge that Anh Ba is another name for Le Duan, comrade B, by extension, is Le Duan. From the events described in the text, this is certain and Tran Quyen, *Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts)*, confirms it.

⁵⁰ This may be a reference to Hoang Van Hoan. For a contending view, one must consult *A Drop in the Ocean (Memoirs of Revolution)* (Beijing: NXB Tin Viet Nam, 1986).

⁵¹ See also Tran Quyen, *Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts)*.

⁵² Perhaps an allusion to the Soviet Union.

⁵³ This type of warfare had existed in China as well. And elsewhere in the world of guerilla warfare.

⁵⁴ This took place in June 1960. For more on Le Duan's position on this matter, see Tran Quyen, *Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts)*. After the Party Congress of the Romanian Communist Party in June 1960, the Soviets organized an on-the-spot meeting with the leaders of the foreign delegations present, during which Khrushchev severely criticized the Chinese, especially Mao whom he denounced as a "dogmatist" for his views on the question of peaceful co-existence. See

Adam B. Ulam, *The Communists. The Story of Power and Lost Illusions 1948? 1991* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), p. 211.

⁵⁵ This seems to be a stab at Hoang Van Hoan and no doubt others.

⁵⁶ This is probably a reference to the group of leaders listening to Le Duan's talk, and can be taken as an indication that the pro-Chinese comrades referred to above, were not part of the group listening. See also Tran Quyen, *Souvenirs of Le Duan* (Excerpts).