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77 CONVERSATIONS
Between Chinese and Foreign Leaders
on the Wars in Indochina, 1964-1977

Edited by
Odd Arne Westad, Chen Jian, Stein Tønnesson,
Nguyen Vu Tungand and James G. Hershberg

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List of Abbreviations

(used in text and notes)

CC: Central Committee

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

COSVN: Central Committee Office for South Vietnam (of the VWP)

DRV: Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945-76), North Vietnam, became SRV after unification

FUNK: French abbreviation for National United Front of Kampuchea—the Sihanouk-Khmer Rouge alliance, formed on 5 May 1970

GMD: Guomintang [Kuomintang] Party

GRUNK: French abbreviation for the Beijing-based Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea (Cambodia) formed by Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge on 5 May 1970.

ICP: Indochinese Communist Party (name used 1930-51), became VWP

NLF: National Liberation Front of South Vietnam

PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam, North Vietnamese Army (founded 1944)

PLA: (Chinese) People's Liberation Army

PLAF: People's Liberation Armed Forces in south Vietnam

PRC: People's Republic of China

PRG: Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam

SRV: Socialist Republic of Vietnam (1976-)

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

VWP: Vietnamese Workers' Party, also known as Lao Dong, (name used 1951-76), became VCP

VCP: Vietnamese Communist Party (name used 1976-)

History, Memory, and the Languages of Alliance-Making

Odd Arne Westad

When talking with friends about these fascinating conversations—which appear to constitute some of the first true glimpses of the making and unmaking of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance as seen from the inside—I find that we read the texts in three distinct “modes”: as history, as memory, and as concepts of language and meaning.

The first is, as always, the historically interpretative mode, in which we try to integrate the information contained in the new materials into the historiography, to amend bits and pieces of the story as it has been told up to now. When approached in this mode, the texts have much to tell us, although not enough to allow a rewriting of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.¹

Among the issues which stand out in these materials are the links between the wars in Indochina and the increasing radicalization of the Chinese revolution in the mid-1960s. In Mao Zedong’s various conversations from 1964 to 1966, he perceived the weaknesses in the Chinese revolution as obstacles to an efficient Chinese involvement in Indochina in response to the large scale American military intervention. Beneath Mao’s exhortations to various visitors (among them the Cambodian ruling prince) to study Marx and follow the “mass line,” one senses increasing nervousness about *China’s* ability to perpetuate revolution at home.

¹ Among works on the Sino-Vietnamese relationship which have been of much use in compiling this collection are William J. Duiker, *China and Vietnam: The Roots of Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1986); King C. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938-1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969); Anne Gilks, *The Breakdown of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance, 1970-1979* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1992); and the recent work of Chen Jian: “China and the First Indochina War, 1950-54,” *China Quarterly* 133 (1993), pp. 85-110, and “China’s Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-69,” *China Quarterly* 142 (1995), pp. 356-387; and Zhai Qiang, “Beijing and the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1965,” *CWIHP Bulletin* 6-7 (1995-96), pp. 233-250; see also Zhai Qiang, “Beijing and the Vietnam Peace Talks, 1965-1968: New Evidence from Chinese Sources,” CWIHP Working Paper No. 18 (Washington, DC: Wilson Center, 1997), drawn from his forthcoming study of China and the Vietnam conflict.

Part of the background for the Cultural Revolution seems therefore to have been Mao's determination to "rectify" errors within China in preparation for a long-term conflict with the United States in Southeast Asia. This particular intersection between domestic politics and foreign relations is not uncommon in CCP history.² Neither is it unusual in other countries and time-periods that external pressure contributes to the radicalization of domestic revolution.

What is most interesting here is how Mao's perception of threat changed from the early to the mid 1960s: until 1963-64, Mao seems to have believed that the United States had weakened so much from within that it would not undertake major interventions outside its core areas (Europe and the Americas). This perception of U.S. weakness played an important part in the timing of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) full break with the Soviet Union around 1963. But when the Johnson Administration intervened in Vietnam in 1964, Mao's estimate of the American threat magnified, not just because Vietnam borders on China, but also because the intervention belied Mao's earlier belief that the U.S. was a weak and vacillating imperialist power.

Mao's decision in 1965 to turn the revolution inward by accelerating a party reform movement in part constituted his reaction to the increased sense of an external threat. Party radicals avidly prodded the Chairman to intensify the revolution at home as a response to imperialist attacks. For Mao, who had been obsessed with foreign subversion since well before the founding of the People's Republic of China, it was natural to view revolutionary "housecleaning" as the best form of defense—particularly since the timing coincided with his having grave doubts about the future of his party in the wake of the victory of "revisionism" in the Soviet Union.

Interestingly, however, increasing revolutionary vigilance at home did not go hand in hand with augmented support for the Vietnamese revolution. On the contrary, the party radicals in command in Beijing judged it essential to postpone a confrontation with the

² See Odd Arne Westad, "The Foreign Policies of Revolutionary Parties: The CCP in a Comparative Perspective," in Michael Hunt and Niu Jun, eds., *Toward a History of Chinese Communist Foreign Relations, 1920s-1960s: Personalities and Interpretative Approaches* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1992), pp. 115-128, or Frederick Teiwes, *Politics at Mao's Court: Gao Gang and Party Factionalism in the early 1950s* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1990).

United States until the building of new party norms and structures had been completed in China. The party leadership seems to have been particularly preoccupied with not being pushed into a war with the United States as a result of Soviet decisions (after Khrushchev's fall in October 1964) to provide offensive capabilities to the North Vietnamese army and air-force. Unlike in Korea, where Stalin had been able to goad the Chinese into a conflict they had not wanted to fight,³ Lin Biao and other leaders in 1965-66 counseled "caution" and "patience" as recipes for the victory of Vietnam's revolution.⁴

Showing how acute the political situation in Beijing was becoming, the opposite interpretation—that the Soviets wanted a settlement in Vietnam to control the North, while leaving the South to the US—also gained currency among CCP policymakers as early as 1965.⁵ This interpretation found wider adherence as Chinese leaders saw the Vietnamese as growing increasingly dependent on Soviet aid and military advice during 1966. At the same time, Mao and his entourage were extremely surprised at North Vietnamese successes in the war against the Americans. According to sources in Beijing with access to Mao's papers, the chairman explained to the Politburo in late 1966 that although the Vietnamese had fought well against the French, it was something quite different to inflict partial defeats on the most powerful military machine on earth.

The contradictory viewpoints and the increasingly chaotic policymaking process in Beijing left the high ground in the relationship to the Vietnamese. Even for Mao, it was difficult to reconcile advising military caution *and* refusal to negotiate at the same time.

³ On Stalin's role in pushing Mao to approve Chinese entry into the Korean War in the fall of 1950, see the documents and analyses published in *CWIHP Bulletin* 6-7 (Winter 1995/96).

⁴ Lin Biao, "Long Live the Victory of People's War," *Peking Review*, 3 September 1965, emphasizes "protracted war" as the correct way of defeating imperialism. According to Vietnamese party historians, the Hanoi leadership undoubtedly interpreted this much publicized article as a warning against any forward strategy of its forces in the South, particularly since it appeared in the wake of Beijing's refusal to send its pilots to fight in Vietnam. See Zhai Qiang, "Beijing and the Vietnam Conflict," pp. 236-37. As Zhai Qiang points out, Lin Biao's article was written by a collective writing group within the Beijing leadership and probably reflected a common view within the Politburo at the time. For an opposite view of factionalism in Beijing, see Allen S. Whiting, "Forecasting Chinese Foreign Policy: IR Theory vs. the Fortune Cookie," in Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh, eds., *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

⁵ In spite of their knowledge of Vietnamese fighting capabilities during the 1950s, the Beijing leaders did not seem to expect Vietnamese success in a war with the Americans. On the contrary, both Mao and the Ministry of Defense, headed by Lin Biao, as early as December 1964 worried that China would be pulled

For the Vietnamese, it was difficult not to suspect that what the Maoist regime really wanted was for Vietnamese soldiers to continue dying as a Chinese insurance policy against US and Soviet encirclement. Le Duan's and Pham Van Dong's retrospective criticism of the Chinese role during the 1954 Geneva conference, as recorded in the documents, shows how the double-sided Chinese position on the strategy in Vietnam had eroded the Hanoi leaders' trust in their partners.

With the Cultural Revolution in full bloom in China in late 1966 and 1967, Beijing's concerns with the international situation shifted again. Mao's perception of the US strategy in Vietnam as unsuccessful prompted new ideas of American vulnerability. On the other hand, the intensification of China's conflict with the Soviet Union—resulting, at least in part, from the ideological paranoia that emerged from the maelstrom of the Cultural Revolution—strengthened Beijing's notions of being encircled. The Chinese leaders became increasingly strident in their criticism of Hanoi's negotiating strategy, seemingly convinced that the Lao Dong (Vietnamese Workers' Party) was willing to ally with the Soviet Union against China if the war ended.

For the Chinese leaders, the latter part of 1968 and 1969 was a period of deep uncertainty, perhaps the greatest crisis of faith since the PRC's establishment. Even Mao himself started to feel that the Cultural Revolution, the last in his series of revolutionary convulsions intended to catapult China into Communism, had failed, and that the country was in a precarious position both domestically and internationally. As Mao searched for ways out of the crisis, he seems to have taken for granted that both North Vietnam and North Korea would, in the long run, follow Soviet policies against China.⁶

The strongest clashes between Beijing and Hanoi contained in these documents all date from the 1966-1968 period. The ideological climate in the PRC certainly contributed to the Maoists' extraordinarily sharp criticism of what had been China's closest ally in Asia. Seen from Beijing, however, the gradual rise in Soviet influence in Hanoi provided

in by American military advances into North Vietnam. In studying these matters, a number of Chinese historians point to the Korea analogy to explain the mood in Beijing.

⁶ North Vietnam's public support for the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 contributed to the Beijing leaders' sense of losing out in the competition with Moscow over Hanoi's allegiance. See Gilks, *The Breakdown of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance*, pp. 44-46.

the background for the conflicts, just as, from a Vietnamese perspective, the impact of the Cultural Revolution made a Soviet alliance more alluring.

It is very instructive in terms of Chinese politics at the time to see how Mao himself, although not always his colleagues, refrained from criticizing Vietnam's negotiating strategies as soon as the idea of a Sino-American détente started to take hold at the end of 1968. By April 1969, Zhou Enlai and Kang Sheng admitted that China's previous position had been wrong, and that "the policy that the Lao Dong and [its] Central Office for South Vietnam [COSVN] propose...is certainly most correct." But to their new-found enthusiasm for Vietnamese-American negotiations, the late-Cultural Revolution leadership in Beijing added advice to return to the concept of "people's war" in order to weaken the United States as much as possible while negotiations took place. The more the US got bloodied in Vietnam, Mao calculated, the easier it would be for Washington to accept some form of accommodation with China on his terms.

The 1970-1973 period is one of the murkiest in the study of Sino-Vietnamese relations. Even in this collection, the material provides only glimpses of how China and Vietnam prepared for the final rounds of negotiations. While China, for its own purposes, gradually adjusted itself to Vietnam's negotiation strategies, the spread of the war to Cambodia, the intensification of the war in Laos, and China's new opening to Washington all contributed to a climate of suspiciousness between the former comrades.

Already in 1968, the Chinese leaders had tried to get Hanoi to give at least some support to the Cambodian Communists (the Khmer Rouge). But until the toppling of Prince Sihanouk and subsequent US invasion in Spring 1970, both Hanoi and Beijing took care to avoid upsetting the excitable prince by direct support for his enemies. Indeed, as these documents show, even after the Cambodian war started, both North Vietnam and China attempted to manipulate all three major Cambodian factions alike—Lon Nol, Sihanouk, and the Khmer Rouge. The Chinese attempts to set the ground rules for Vietnam's involvement in Cambodia and in Laos must have annoyed Le Duan and other Hanoi leaders, since they knew that the military success of their own war to a considerable extent depended on their ability to counter US strategies in the neighboring countries.

After the setback caused by Nixon's invasion of Cambodia, the Sino-American dialogue resumed, at Zhou Enlai's initiative, in January 1971. Although we still do not know how closely the PRC and North Vietnam coordinated prior to U.S. National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing in July 1971 (which led directly to the dramatic announcement of Nixon's impending visit to China the following winter), it is instructive that Zhou Enlai left for Hanoi immediately after seeing Kissinger off. The Chinese made sure to keep Hanoi informed as the Sino-American talks developed. The problem from North Vietnam's perspective was that Beijing in the fall of 1972 increasingly aspired to the role of mediator in order to maximize its leverage both in Hanoi and in Washington.

During 1972 and early 1973, the Chinese leaders applied mounting pressure on Hanoi to accept South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu as a partner in a new coalition government in the South. Even after Washington's Christmas bombing of Hanoi and North Vietnam in December 1972, Zhou Enlai admonished the North Vietnamese negotiators that "the most important [thing] is to let the Americans leave," i.e., to come to some form of agreement in Paris. Zhou was willing to accept that another long-term division of Vietnam emerge from the Paris Accords, using language which must have struck the Vietnamese as eerily reminiscent of Zhou's position during the 1954 Geneva Conference.

Judging from these documents, Mao Zedong came to Hanoi's rescue in its eagerness to complete its military victory against the South. As Mao put it in the case of Laos, "the purpose of organizing a coalition government is to destroy the coalition government." While Zhou told the Vietnamese about the need for five to ten years of status quo, during which South Vietnam could "build peace, independence, and neutrality," Mao spoke of six months to strengthen the North Vietnamese forces and the need to destroy South Vietnam.

However, by the time the Communist forces rolled into Saigon in April 1975, the Sino-Vietnamese alliance had essentially collapsed. The main issue in the compact's final deterioration was Cambodia. As Pol Pot (Saloth Sar) and the Khmer Rouge leadership

turned increasingly anti-Vietnamese in the first months of 1974, China reaffirmed its support for the Khmer Communists. Hanoi, in turn, accused Beijing of fanning the flames of controversy between the Khmer and Vietnamese “brothers.” By the end of 1974, Hanoi and Beijing were locked in disputes concerning border issues, Chinese technical assistance, and propaganda—and these conflicts intensified after the fall of Saigon, as Deng Xiaoping noted in his September 1975 conversation with Le Duan.

But the enraged Deng moved beyond issues of territory and influence in his criticism of the Vietnamese. The real problem, Deng implied, lay in Vietnamese historical plays, textbooks, and newspapers—in other words, concepts of memory and language. And it is to these aspects of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship that we now turn.

“Vietnamese people and cadres,” Deng Xiaoping complained to Le Duan in 1975, “used history in order to imply the present, mentioning the threat from the North.” For anyone who has visited Vietnam (and particularly the National History Museum in Hanoi) since unification, this pervasive fear of the northern neighbor seems a permanent fixture in Hanoi’s foreign policy ideology. Those who today view China as Vietnam’s traditional enemy have of course much imagery to draw on; as for 20th-century Vietnamese nationalists the defining moment of their nation was its 10th-century emergence from a thousand years of Chinese “occupation.” For the two generations of Vietnamese nationalists who dominated the liberation struggle against the French and the Americans—the generations of Ho Chi Minh (born 1890) and Le Duan (born 1908)—their battles represented a continuation of a history of defiance of foreign domination. In their historical “memory” of oppression, China loomed large.

If historical (and present) enmity was what needed to be explained, further comment would be unnecessary. But what these documents show more than anything else is not enmity but its opposite: the very close coordination which existed for a long time between the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionaries. The conversations show how the two sides exchanged memories, experiences, and images, and how the troubles of their recent histories bound them together in a fashion which was unthinkable in Vietnam’s relationship with its other main ally, the Soviet Union.

To the Chinese leadership, and especially to Mao Zedong, the Vietnamese revolution's success was the core of revolutionary development in Asia from the CCP's victory in 1949 up to the early 1970s. In contrast to Korea, whose Communist Party always struck Beijing as a troublesome and messy affair, Mao viewed the situation in Vietnam as a classic example of the confrontation between Imperialism and Revolution. In conversations with the Soviets during the 1950s, Mao time and again held up Ho Chi Minh as the archetypal revolutionary in need of international solidarity.⁷ Ho had spent some time with the CCP's forces during China's war with Japan, and had adopted much of Mao's military and political strategies for use in Vietnam. He was, in Mao's view, closely tied to the Chinese revolution, in a way which North Korean Communist leader Kim Il Sung, for instance, was not.

To Mao, Vietnam fit exactly into the model of a weak Asian country ravaged by imperialism which he had described in theory at the outset of his revolutionary career. While China's experience never really conformed to Mao's Marxist view of imperialism—witness his and Zhou's hilarious guessing game as to precisely which riches the imperialist had extracted—Vietnam was the perfect example. From his talks with Vietnamese Communists in Yan'an in the early 1940s to the Paris negotiations thirty years later, Mao felt that he had to do something to drive the imperialists out of Vietnam. The close involvement of the CCP's supreme leader with events in Indochina is intriguingly documented in these conversations.

Starting before the PRC's setup, CCP support for Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh had been substantial. In 1949-50, Mao would have sent the PLA to fight in Vietnam but for Stalin's refusal to sanction such actions. Until 1954, China had sent the crucial supplies of weapons, food, and military experts for Ho to win his battles against France.⁸ As late as 1967, China was still the main provider of aid to Vietnam, ahead of the Soviet

⁷ See, e.g., Mao's conversation with Soviet Ambassador Pavel Iudin, 4 January 1954, fond 0100, opis' 47, delo 7, papka 379, listy 41-44, Archive of Foreign Policy, Russian Federation (AVPRF), Moscow.

⁸ See Chen Jian, "China and the First Indochina War, 1950-1954," pp. 85-110.

Union. According to Soviet estimates, which are not likely to be exaggerated, Chinese aid over the ten year period from 1955 to 1965 totaled more than half a billion US dollars.⁹

The memories of this close cooperation provide much of the reason for the strong political links which Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionaries had forged before the Cultural Revolution. During the initial phase of Sino-Soviet estrangement, there is little doubt that the Vietnamese leaders were considerably more attuned to Beijing's arguments than to Moscow's. The Soviets, when observing "socialist practice" in North Vietnam in the mid-1960s, saw little of their model, but much that had been lifted from the Chinese experience.

There was, however, one ticking time bomb in the gallery of memories of Sino-Vietnamese party cooperation. That bomb was (poorly) concealed in the image of the outcome of the 1954 Geneva conference. Hanoi still bitterly resented Chinese (as well as Soviet) pressure to agree to Vietnam's partition at the 17th parallel despite holding a clear military edge over the French. In the conversations presented here, throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, Geneva loomed over the relationship like memories of a past infidelity casting shadows over a marriage. The resilience of that image in Hanoi from the mid-1960s on seems to have been enhanced by two new developments: the sudden increase in Soviet support for Vietnam, which made it more difficult for both Hanoi and Beijing to write Geneva off as Soviet perfidy; and the advent of the Cultural Revolution, which made Chinese insistence on the centrality of its revolutionary model an acute problem for Hanoi. As soon as Sino-American détente began, the fear of a new Geneva must have been a visible specter for all Vietnamese leaders, notwithstanding Mao's pathetic attack of amnesia—in front of Zhou and Pham Van Dong, of all people—as to who had done what at Geneva.¹⁰

These three "events"—Soviet aid, Mao's new revolution, and the specter of Geneva—combined with issues of conflict, such as Mao's American romance and the rise of Pol Pot, to undermine and in the end defeat Sino-Vietnamese cooperation. But to fully

⁹ For Soviet estimates of Chinese support to Vietnam, see Ilya Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), p. 64.

¹⁰ See conversation 39, 17 November 1968.

understand the genesis of the defeat, we need to look below this level of interaction to complex issues of language and concepts.

Does language signify anything in international relations? The debate is heating up.¹¹ For most international historians, language and concepts are still only interesting in terms of their “real” content: the views, actions, and intentions of the protagonists. Some students of international affairs take this a step further, seeking to show how language signifies and symbolizes interactions between groups and individuals. Some even attempt to locate patterns of interaction based on historical and cultural precedent.

To this reader, these texts are laden with concepts, phrasings, and formulations, which (in their meanings to the parties involved) probably explain much about cooperation and tension in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. Since both sides had grafted Marxism-Leninism onto a Confucian root; their concepts tended to be similar, though not identical. The leaders of the CCP and Lao Dong therefore had reason to believe that they understood each other well, and that the form of discourse chosen by the other side was intentional as comprehended. For that reason alone, the form of these dialogues seems exceedingly important.¹²

There are, it seems to me, three discourses which stand out in these conversations. The first is a *discourse of inclusion*, in which Chinese and Vietnamese both attempted to define a common heritage and a series of common concepts: struggle against imperialism, battles of the past (anti-Japanese war, Dien Bien Phu, Korea), Marxist theory of development, and the occasional anti-Soviet banter. The perception of “ties” linked to a common border and a common cultural heritage also surfaced. The main point of this discourse is inclusion—historical, cultural, and political.

The second discourse is a *discourse of hegemony*, which attempted to subsume Vietnamese concepts and experiences under Chinese concepts and experiences. This

¹¹ For an excellent overview of the IR debate, see Iver B. Neumann and Ole Wæver, eds., *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making?* (London: Routledge, 1997).

¹² Part of the issue may rest with the language itself—as opposed to what Benedict Anderson sees as the function of Indonesian, Chinese is a language with extensive historical memories and connotations; for an instructive comparison, see Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 139-144.

discourse is strikingly Confucian and strikingly Marxist-Leninist in its origins. Mao, as was his wont with Vietnamese or Korean visitors, played with language and names in ways that reflected his belief in the use of Chinese characters as the core of a common cultural heritage. When asking for Vietnamese names to be “translated” into Chinese, he was—in a way obvious to most people on both sides of the border—affirming China’s cultural hegemony. Likewise, when Zhou lectured the visiting Vietnamese on the CCP’s experiences with Soviet aid in the late 1940s, he was establishing the political hegemony of the CCP’s history over that of the Lao Dong.¹³

Third, there is the *discourse of supplication*, in which the Vietnamese were appealing for China’s support against the attacks of imperialists. Many ritual elements of the procedures of high Ming or Qing tributary states seeking protection against foreign invaders were present: Going to Beijing to see the emperor, the almost mystical ties between the emperor and men of virtue on the fringes of the empire, and the emperors’ instructions as to how to fight the battles. China’s role in this discourse was a direct continuation of the CCP’s political role in post-1949 Vietnamese Communism, where—as both sides were fond of pointing out—Ho Chi Minh personally translated many of Mao’s works into Vietnamese.¹⁴

Based on later evidence, a large number of Lao Dong leaders never felt comfortable with the limits imposed on them by the discourses of hegemony and supplication, even if these forms of interaction during the 1950s and ’60s served their images of Vietnam’s needs. These discourses—the blending of an archaic form with a modern ideology—constrained Sino-Vietnamese relations at a time when great flexibility would have been needed to salvage the political alliance. It is likely that, in the long run, the cultural forms of Sino-Vietnamese interaction did more to explode the political relationship between them than both historical memories and contemporary issues.

¹³ Even in terms of the names of their nation, Vietnamese intellectuals traditionally related their position to China (Annam—“pacified South” or Vietnam—“Viet in the South”). See Christopher Goscha, “Annam and Vietnam in the New Indochinese Space, 1887-1945,” in Stein Tønnesson and Hans Antlöv, eds., *Asian Forms of the Nation* (Richmond: Curzon, 1996), pp. 93-130. For the acceptance of rites as defining Korean and Vietnamese relations to Chinese culture, see James L. Watson, “Rites or Belief? The Construction of a Unified Culture in Late Imperial China,” in Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, *China’s Quest for National Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 80-103.

In April 1966, as Washington's involvement in Vietnam escalated, the eminent American sinologist Benjamin Schwartz attempted to adjust his countrymen's commonly held view of North Vietnam as China's pawn. Commenting on the argument that "Chinese leaders still think of China as the center of civilization in a world of barbarians," Schwartz wrote:

Here I would point out that the cosmology of Chinese universal kingship on which this faith was founded has collapsed along with the world which made it plausible; that while Peking does regard itself as the center of an international faith, it is not the same faith which animated "sinocentrism" in the past (many of its tenets are not even Chinese); and that the China of the present finds itself in a world which will continue to reject its "sinocentric" claims. These are all considerations, it seems to me, which may be quite sufficient to overcome the pull of mental habits inherited from the past.¹⁵

In terms of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance, there is little doubt that Schwartz's conclusion was correct, and that his government would have done well to heed his advice. Becoming available a generation after the Vietnam War ended, these top level conversations document both the rejection of sinocentrism and the collapse of Marxist-Leninist solidarity. But the jury is still out on whether the "mental habits of the past" were ever completely overcome, during the time of war or in the post-Marxist re-framing of international relations in East Asia.

¹⁴ Neil L. Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p. 224.

¹⁵ "Chinese Visions and American Policies," *Commentary*, April 1966; reprinted in *China and Other Matters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 154-168, quotation on p. 168.

Personal-Historical Puzzles about China and the Vietnam War

Chen Jian

Historical study, to be sure, becomes most exciting when it not only leads to fresh scholarly insights but also provides meaningful answers to questions in one's own memory. This was certainly the case when I participated in translating, editing, and annotating the documents that are published in the following pages. To me, these documents concerning the People's Republic of China's involvement in the Vietnam War evoked memories of my teenage years, while allowing me to revisit some of the key questions I had been unable to answer satisfactorily in my previous research as a historian.

In late 1964-early 1965, I was a sixth-grader at a Shanghai primary school. Like many of my fellow Chinese students of that age, I felt much concern for the fate of Vietnam. How could we feel otherwise? Every day, broadcast and newspaper reports would transport us to the seemingly so remote southern jungles, and stories about how the heroic Vietnamese people were struggling against the American "paper tiger" would move us to tears. At the weekly political indoctrination courses that we were required to take, the teachers frequently made Vietnam the central subject of discussion. These classes had left such a deep impression on me that in taking my high-school entrance examination in July 1965, I wrote an essay about Nguyen Van Troi, a young National Liberation Front (NLF) activist who had been executed by the Saigon authorities for alleged involvement in a plot to assassinate the visiting U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara. I remember getting a very high mark.

In the fall of 1965, when I entered high school in Shanghai, my life, as well as that of all of my schoolmates, became dominated by an ever-rising revolutionary fever, reflected in discussions such as "if the war [with the American imperialists] breaks out tomorrow, what should I do?" Many of us expressed a determination to participate in the "final struggle to bury the imperialists, modern revisionists, and their lackeys."¹⁶ In 1967,

¹⁶ This was a very popular theme of discussion among Chinese youth all over the country on the eve of the Cultural Revolution, not just in my high school.

during the heyday of the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,” several of my fellow students and one teacher did in fact turn their words into action by going to Vietnam. Although they failed to stay there for long and were eventually escorted back to the school, the students regarded them as real heroes.¹⁷ Indeed, in the years when the “Cultural Revolution” was in ascendance, “Vietnam” became one of its mythical words with meanings far transcending a southern neighboring country.

Sometime around late 1967 and early 1968, however, the sacred halo around “Vietnam” suddenly began to fade. As a keen newspaper reader—during the years of the Cultural Revolution, when there was so little one could find to read—I was puzzled to notice that Chinese papers were giving less and less attention to the war. In fact, after the Tet offensive early in 1968, Vietnam as a topic almost completely disappeared from the Chinese media’s front-page coverage. In the meantime, we heard—through those who had access to the internally circulated *Cankao Xiaoxi* (Reference News)—that the Hanoi leadership, with the backing of “Soviet revisionists,” was conducting negotiations with the U.S. imperialists. When the Chinese media did begin to report openly the ongoing Vietnamese-American negotiations in Paris, the underlying tone, implying how Vietnam should be perceived, had changed subtly. Late in 1968 and early in 1969, for example, Chinese propaganda often referred to Albania as the only other genuine socialist country (besides China) in the world. In other words, the essence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a true and fraternal socialist state had been called into serious question.¹⁸ Why and how did all of this happen? No one would or could give me a satisfactory explanation.

¹⁷ It was quite common for young Chinese (and not just Red Guards) to go to Vietnam during the Cultural Revolution, especially in 1967-1968, with the purpose of personally participating in “the Vietnamese people’s struggle against the U.S. imperialists.” This, we now know, became an issue of dispute between Chinese and Vietnamese leaders. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai had to acknowledge that although “most of the Chinese Red Guards” were good, “they did not respect the rules of our two countries, thus causing some complications.” (See Doc. 24, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Pham Van Dong, Beijing, 10 April 1967.) For a comprehensive Chinese account of young Chinese and Red Guards crossing the Chinese-Vietnamese border during the Cultural Revolution, see Yu Qun ed., *Hong weibing milu* [The Secret Records of the Red Guards] (Beijing: Tuanjie Press, 1993), pp.107-142.

¹⁸ At that time, in addition to calling the Soviet Union, the socialist countries in East Europe (except for Albania and, to a certain extent, Romania), and pro-Soviet Mongolia “revisionist countries,” Beijing also had problems with both Communist Cuba and North Korea. Not until late 1969 and early 1970 would

Indeed, this was only the beginning of a dramatic turn in the basic Chinese image of Vietnam. In the following decade, the undertone of official Chinese descriptions of Vietnam shifted continuously, first from ambiguous uncertainty to obvious suspicion, and then, quickly after the 1975 Communist unification of Vietnam, from increasing suspicion to deepening hostility. Early in 1978, after experiencing the latter part of the Cultural Revolution as a “jobless youth,” construction worker, and porter, I became a history major at Shanghai’s East China Normal University. By then, signs of the deterioration in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship had grown quite visible. For example, the Chinese media featured charges that the Hanoi authorities were mistreating ethnic Chinese residents in Vietnam.¹⁹ At classes “introducing the situation at home and abroad” (which were then required for all college and university students), we heard that the “Le Duan Clique” within the Vietnamese leadership had “betrayed” the “traditional Chinese-Vietnamese friendship” by endeavoring to damage Vietnam’s relations with China (again, without explaining why the Vietnamese leaders did so). Finally, early in 1979, after the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, a bloody border war occurred between China and Vietnam when Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping ordered Chinese troops to invade Vietnam to teach Hanoi’s leaders “a lesson.” (What lesson, though, would the Vietnamese be taught? We were never given a clear explanation.)²⁰ Consequently, throughout the 1980s, Vietnam became China’s direct and dangerous enemy—indeed, PRC authorities sometimes described Hanoi as a more bitter enemy than the Soviet Union, especially as a series of military clashes turned the Sino-Vietnamese border into a battlefield for the whole decade. Not surprisingly, in the official campaign aimed at promoting patriotism among Chinese youth, the stories about People’s Liberation Army soldiers’ fighting heroically against the “Vietnamese regional hegemonists” constituted a major source for nationwide popular mobilization.

Beijing’s relations with North Korea substantially improve and Pyongyang again return to Beijing’s list of “true socialist countries.”

¹⁹ See, e.g., the statement by Chinese Foreign Ministry on Vietnam’s expulsion of Chinese residents in Vietnam, *Renmin ribao* [People’s Daily], 10 June 1978.

²⁰ For Beijing’s explanation of the Chinese-Vietnamese border war, see *Zhong-yue bianjie chongtu zhenxiang* [The Truth of the Chinese-Vietnamese Border Conflict] (Beijing: People’s Press, 1979).

In 1982, after getting an MA degree from Shanghai's Fudan University, I was assigned to a full-time teaching position in the History Department of East China Normal University and taught "contemporary history" there for four years. A combination of personal interest and scholarly curiosity drove me to delve into the history of the Vietnam War and Sino-Vietnamese relations. All kinds of questions permeated my mind: how and why did China and Vietnam change from "comrades-in-arms" to hated adversaries? According to Beijing's official interpretation, the conflict had stemmed from the inevitable confrontation between Hanoi's evil ambition of establishing regional hegemony in Southeast Asia and Beijing's determination to block that ambition. I was not in a position to challenge this interpretation openly. But, even by following the logic of the official Chinese position, I found myself puzzled by several simple yet fundamental questions. If Hanoi's policies were driven by such an evil motivation, what broader political, social, and historical sources underlay it? When and how, exactly, did it come into being? Or, perhaps, were the Vietnamese leaders (except for the legendary Uncle Ho) villains all along but merely knew how to conceal their true nature? If that were so, had China's support to Vietnam (according to Beijing's official statistics, China had provided Hanoi with aid totaling U.S. \$20 billion from 1950 to 1975) enhanced Hanoi's capacity to pursue its evil aim and thus been a serious mistake? Aside from teaching one to Hanoi, could *Beijing* learn any "lesson" from its dealings with Vietnam so that China's foreign policy would be wiser in the future?

In the early and mid-1980s in China, however, one was not supposed to ask, or even to think about, questions along these lines. In the "rethinking of the past" during the early post-Mao Zedong era, foreign policy issues remained a forbidden zone. During the age of "Reform and Opening to the Outside World," scholars challenged, or even rejected, almost every aspect of Mao's "continuous revolution," including its very pinnacle, the "Cultural Revolution." Not so his foreign policy: the practices and legacies of Mao's foreign policy decisions (including those concerning Vietnam) seldom received critical scrutiny.²¹

²¹ For a more detailed discussion of post-Mao China's lack of criticism of Mao's foreign policy, see Chen Jian, "Creating Chinese Centrality on the World Scene: The External Relations of the People's Republic

In 1986, I came to the United States to pursue my doctoral studies and grew increasingly interested in the study of Cold War history in general and China's external relations during the Cold War in particular. Inspired by the intellectual freedom in America's scholarly environment and unbound from the Party's official interpretation of the past, this interest expanded into the intellectual inquiry I had been unable to develop in the past. The first product of my efforts to construct new scholarly questions and answers related to Mao's foreign policy was a dissertation on "China's Road to the Korean War."²² In exploring the dynamics of the foreign policy and security strategy of Mao's China, I dug into previously unavailable Chinese sources to argue that there existed a profound linkage between Mao's "continuous revolution" programs and China's revolutionary external behavior; indeed, the latter was an integral component of the former. Mao and his fellow Beijing leaders decided to enter the Korean War, I asserted, not only to safeguard the physical safety of the Chinese-Korean border, but also to promote revolutionary China's international prestige and reputation, an "Eastern Revolution" following the Chinese model, and the domestic mobilization that would consolidate and strengthen the Chinese Communist Party's new revolutionary regime at home.

In order to further test these ideas, I also studied China's involvement in the Vietnam War.²³ Originally I had set three main goals for the study. First, I hoped to establish a relatively comprehensive and reliable account of China's wartime aid to Hanoi and the extent of its direct involvement in the conflict. Second, I intended to assess what had driven Beijing's leaders to provide assistance to the Vietnamese Communists, and why and how Beijing's policies toward Vietnam evolved during different stages of the war. Third, I was eager to discover why, despite Beijing's seemingly substantial support to Hanoi, China and Vietnam had turned from "brotherly comrades" to bitter enemies.

of China," in Taciana Fisac and Steve Tsang, eds., *China Facing the Challenge of Modernization* (forthcoming in Spanish and English languages).

²² The dissertation was completed in 1990 under the direction of David L. Wilson at Southern Illinois University. After revision, it later appeared as *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

²³ See Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," *China Quarterly* 143 (June 1995), pp. 356-385, and idem, "China and the First Indochina War, 1950-1954," *China Quarterly* 133 (March 1993), pp. 85-110.

The first goal appeared to be the easiest to attain. My research in available Chinese sources, supplemented by interviews in Beijing, quickly yielded the conclusion that China's support to the Vietnamese Communists had indeed been enormous. Among other things, from 1965 to 1969, a total of about 320,000 Chinese engineering and anti-aircraft artillery troops were present on Vietnamese territory.²⁴ Throughout the war years, Beijing continuously provided Hanoi with large amounts of military and other material assistance. I thus argued in my *China Quarterly* article that without China's support, "the history, or even the outcome, of the Vietnam War might have been different."²⁵

Nevertheless, my previous experience in using Chinese source materials had also instilled caution. Beijing authorities, as well as Chinese veterans of the war I had interviewed, had obvious incentives to emphasize or even embellish China's role. Such claims would, for example, bolster Beijing's long-time assertion that Chinese foreign policy, motivated by proletarian internationalism, had been selfless and altruistic. Therefore, I tried to read the information provided by Chinese sources with critical eyes. Without being able to pry into all aspects of the details of China's support to Vietnam, I did find that Beijing had dramatically reduced its military deliveries to Hanoi during the 1968-1971 period and that all Chinese troops had left Vietnam by the end of 1970. Were these changes a reflection of the simultaneous deterioration in relations between Beijing and Hanoi in the wake of Hanoi's increasingly cozy attitude toward Moscow and its decision to negotiate with Washington (both steps viewed dubiously from Beijing's perspective)? In the above-mentioned *China Quarterly* article on "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War," I maintained that a causal link existed between them.²⁶

In search of answers that would satisfy my second aim—to find out what had motivated Mao and the CCP leadership to come to the aid of Vietnam—I found a much more complicated scenario. One of the most important motives behind Mao's decisions to back the Vietnamese revolutionaries had been the desire to accelerate the momentum of

²⁴ The figure refers to the total number over the four-year period, not the level at any particular time.

²⁵ Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War," p. 380.

²⁶ In a recent persuasive study based on internal party documents relayed by Beijing to CCP provincial committees in 1965-1966, the scholar Zhai Qiang also reached the same conclusion. See Zhai Qiang, "Beijing and the Vietnam Peace Talks, 1965-1968: New Evidence from Chinese Sources," Cold War

the CCP chairman's "continuous revolution" at home. This seemed particularly true so far as Beijing's involvement in Vietnam in the 1960s was concerned. One of my main arguments was that Mao's decision to increase Beijing's support to Hanoi in 1963-64 had to be understood in the context of his leading the country toward the Cultural Revolution, and that, on the level of practical policymaking, this intention created a fundamental paradox for China's Vietnam strategy. On the one hand, Mao should welcome the escalation of the Vietnam War as it would create a source of international tension which would help justify his dramatic impending efforts to radicalize China's social and political life. In this sense, it is not hard to comprehend why Beijing made highly belligerent statements (e.g., "China would risk the largest national sacrifices to support Vietnam") in those years. On the other hand, however, at a time when Mao needed to focus China's limited resources on domestic issues, his real capacity to provide Chinese assistance to Vietnam was restricted. This paradox inevitably caused gaps to open between China's words and deeds, exacerbating basic Vietnamese suspicion of the essence of Beijing's real commitment to Hanoi.

At this point I encountered a crucial issue: How did Mao and his fellow Beijing leaders perceive Washington's decision to escalate the war in Vietnam in late 1964 and early 1965? If Washington had decided to bring the ground war to North Vietnam or the air war to China, would Beijing, as its leaders repeatedly warned in open statements, have entered a direct military confrontation with the United States?²⁷ While writing my *China Quarterly* article, I lacked direct documentary evidence to provide answers to these questions. Largely relying on information gained from interviews, I stated that in spring 1965, Beijing's leaders had rested on three basic assumptions in formulating China's strategy toward the escalation of the Vietnam War: "First, if the Americans went beyond the bombing of the North and used land forces to invade North Vietnam, China would have to send military forces. Second, China would give clear warnings to the Americans,

International History Project Working Paper No. 18 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1997).

²⁷ Former CWIHP director Jim Hershberg and I are working on a forthcoming study of mutual Chinese and American perceptions and "signaling" related to the escalation of the Vietnam War in late 1964-early 1965, integrating Chinese, U.S., and British sources. See also Zhai Qiang, "Beijing and the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1965: New Chinese Evidence," *CWIHP Bulletin* 6-7 (Winter 1995/1996), pp. 233-250.

so that they would not feel free to expand military operations into the North, let alone to bring the war to China. Third, China would avoid a direct military confrontation with the United States as long as possible; but if necessary it would not shrink from a confrontation.”²⁸ To further confirm these arguments, I knew, support from documentary sources and not merely interviews was necessary.

And, then, what caused the two countries to change from “brotherly comrades” to bitter enemies? In the *China Quarterly* article, I referred to such factors as the influence of the heavy historical shadow of the conflicts stretching back a millenium between China and Vietnam, Beijing’s and Hanoi’s potentially conflicting geopolitical interests in South-East Asia, and the negative impact of the widening Sino-Soviet schism. But I also believed that a more fundamental reason for the Sino-Vietnamese split could be found in the logic and mentality underpinning China’s foreign policy and security strategy. Although Mao and his comrades in the Beijing leadership emphasized repeatedly that the Vietnamese should be treated as “equals,” the statement itself already disclosed a strong sense of superiority on the part of Chinese revolutionaries, implying that they had occupied a position from which to dictate the terms and conditions according to which “equality” should be defined. I thus argued that “in the realm of Chinese-Vietnamese relations, although Beijing had never pursued political and economic control in Vietnam (which was for the Chinese too inferior an aim), and its huge military and material aid was seldom accompanied by formal conditions, Beijing asked for something bigger, that is, the Vietnamese recognition of China’s morally superior position. In other words, what Beijing intended to materialize was a modern version of the relationship between the ‘Central Kingdom’ and its subordinate neighbors.”²⁹ I understood, though, that these arguments must stand the test of other documentary sources that I hoped would emerge.

More than two years have now passed since my *China Quarterly* article appeared, and my participation in translating and editing the excerpts from the minutes of meetings between top Chinese and Vietnamese leaders published here has provided a useful opportunity to revisit China’s involvement in the Vietnam War and to reexamine some of the key questions concerning Beijing’s policies and strategies (including several

²⁸ Chen Jian, “China’s Involvement in the Vietnam War,” p. 366.

unanswered ones) that I had encountered in my earlier studies. I find that information provided by these documents, while confirming some of the old conclusions, enables researchers to lift their work on China's connection with the Vietnam War to a higher level.

These new documents contain much revealing information. They suggest, for example, that after the August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident, neither Beijing's nor Hanoi's leaders believed that Washington would bring the land war into North Vietnam, let alone into China. According to Pham Van Dong, the Vietnamese politburo even believed that it was possible for the Vietnamese Communists to continue "to restrict the war in South Vietnam to the sphere of special [i.e., guerrilla insurgency] war (meaning that the war in the South would continue without major American military involvement)."³⁰ Mao, for his part, did not believe that Washington really wanted to escalate the war either into North Vietnam or into China. Particularly interesting is the Chairman's interpretation of American warnings: "They claim that they will run after [you], and will chase into your country, and chase into our country, and that they will attack our air force. In my opinion, the meaning of these words is that they do not want us to fight a big war, and that [they do not want] our air force to attack their warships. If [we] do not attack their warships, they will not run after you. Isn't this what they mean?"³¹

The new documents also show that Beijing's relations with Hanoi were very close indeed in 1964 and 1965. The discussions between Mao and Vietnamese Workers' Party leader Le Duan on 13 August 1964 and between Mao and Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong on 5 October 1964 reveal an atmosphere of intimacy between Chinese and Vietnamese leaders. The leaders of the two sides not only exchanged important intelligence information but, it appears, also fully informed the other side of their intentions and capabilities. Le Duan was probably not just flattering his Chinese hosts and taking advantage of the Sino-Soviet dispute when, comparing the aid Hanoi was getting from Beijing and Moscow, he told Mao that "the support from China is indispensable, it is

²⁹ Ibid., p. 386.

³⁰ Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong, 5 October 1964.

³¹ Mao Zedong and Le Duan, 13 August 1964. See footnote 117 to conversation of Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong, Hoang Van Hoan, 5 October 1964.

indeed related to the fate of our motherland.... The Soviet revisionists want to use us as a bargaining chip, and this has been very clear.”³²

But Hanoi’s attitude toward the sharpening Sino-Soviet conflict would change quickly. Indeed, as these meeting minutes clearly indicate, it was exactly on the issue of how to deal with Soviet support to Vietnam that Beijing’s and Hanoi’s leaders found themselves in dispute after 1965. According to the records, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, belying his reputation as a sophisticated diplomat, crudely advised his Vietnamese comrades that “the Soviet revisionists want North Vietnam to talk with the US, to cast the NLF aside and sell out its brothers.”³³ Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese leader who later became famous for his pragmatic “cat theory,”³⁴ focused his attention on criticizing “Khrushchev’s revisionism” in meeting Vietnamese leaders, requesting that “[f]rom now on, you should not mention Chinese aid at the same time as Soviet aid.”³⁵ (Ironically, Deng made these statements on the eve of himself becoming a main target of the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” and being labeled as “China’s Second Largest Khrushchev,” after Liu Shaoqi.) Reading these documents, one may conclude that the “Soviet factor” played a crucial role in distancing Beijing and Hanoi.

The distrust (and even disgust) between Chinese and Vietnamese leaders deepened after Hanoi agreed in the spring of 1968 to start peace talks with the Americans in Paris, an act Beijing’s leaders regarded as clear evidence that Hanoi had yielded to the influence of the “Soviet revisionists.” This was most explicitly revealed in the meeting between Chen Yi, China’s vice premier and foreign minister, and Le Duc Tho, Hanoi’s chief negotiator with the Americans in Paris, on 17 October 1968.³⁶ Reading the minutes of the conversation, I had a feeling that this was a replay of the heated debates between Chen Yi (with Mao sitting beside him) and Khrushchev on 2 October 1959. At the October 1959 meeting, as the Chinese and Soviet leaders blamed each other for allegedly committing fundamental mistakes in assessing the international situation and formulating independent

³² Ibid.

³³ Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and Ho Chi Minh, 17 May 1965.

³⁴ Deng Xiaoping believed that “no matter whether a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice, it is a good cat.”

³⁵ Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Kang Sheng, and Le Duan, Nguyen Trinh, 13 April 1966.

³⁶ Chen Yi and Le Duc Tho, 17 October 1968.

strategies and policies toward Taiwan and the Chinese-Indian border war, Chen Yi and Khrushchev burst into an angry mutual criticism and traded charges of untrustworthiness. This meeting, as it turned out, became a landmark event symbolizing the existence of an unbridgeable chasm between Beijing and Moscow.³⁷ At the October 1968 meeting, Chen Yi and Le Duc Tho accused each other of making basic errors in handling the issue of negotiating with the Americans. While Chen Yi claimed that Hanoi had repeatedly “lost the initiative” by pursuing negotiations with the enemy, Le Duc Tho angrily reminded him that it was the Chinese who had advised the Vietnamese at the 1954 Geneva conference that they should not refuse to compromise when necessary (and bad advice that had been, he implied, leading as it did to the country’s division despite the Viet Minh’s military superiority over the French). Although the meeting minutes did not specifically describe the manners of the two leaders, one can sense the extreme tension in their language. It is not surprising, in retrospect, that such tension would eventually turn into hostility, producing the outright clash between China and Vietnam after Vietnam’s unification.

Were the relations between Beijing and Hanoi really “equal”? While reading these meeting records, my thinking repeatedly returned to this fundamental issue. What one feels from the conversations between top Chinese and Vietnamese (as well as Laotian and Cambodian) leaders, indeed, is a Chinese mentality of superiority. When Mao told Prince Sihanouk that he should study the *Communist Manifesto*,³⁸ when he discoursed (in a highly philosophical language) to Pol Pot on the fate and historical mission of Marxism-Leninism,³⁹ when Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, and other Chinese leaders informed their Vietnamese counterparts what supposedly would be the best strategy to manage the war, the Chinese leaders made very clear that it was they who best commanded the key to historical progress. Yet the Vietnamese seemed unwilling to embrace this Chinese assumption. As a result, despite China’s huge military and other material support to Vietnam, the gap between Beijing and Hanoi increased along with the development of the

³⁷ For a more detailed account of the 2 October 1959 meeting between Chinese and Soviet leaders, see Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong, “Mao’s Continuous Revolution, Chinese Politics, and the Decline of the Sino-Soviet Alliance,” in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Cold War International History Project Book Series, Stanford University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, forthcoming).

³⁸ Mao Zedong with Sihanouk, 28 September, 1964.

Vietnam War, and would eventually lead to China's total confrontation with Vietnam from the late 1970s to the late 1980s.

Now, after a whole decade dominated by confrontation and bloody border wars, the relationship between Beijing and Hanoi has “normalized” again. In January 1996, I went to Hanoi together with a small group of other historians of the Cold War—Mark Bradley, Warren Cohen, John Lewis Gaddis, Jim Hershberg, Mari Olsen, Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, Odd Arne Westad, David Wolff, and Vladislav Zubok—on a visit organized by the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC. While the five-day journey helped initiate contacts and exchanges with Vietnamese colleagues, as hoped, it made little evident progress, at least in the short run, toward the goal of promoting archival openness in Vietnam so that scholars, both inside and outside Vietnam, would be able to study Cold War history and especially the Vietnam and Indochina conflicts on a more solid evidentiary foundation.⁴⁰ But the food in Hanoi was wonderful and still inexpensive. One evening, we had dinner, together with several Vietnamese scholars, at a local restaurant. After several drinks, a spontaneous “cultural performance” began. When I sang a song about Sino-Vietnamese solidarity which I had learned in the 1960s, to my surprise, the Vietnamese scholars and waitresses at the restaurant joined in. At that moment, a hope emerged in my mind: one day, probably in the not too remote future, I will be able to explore some of the still unanswered questions concerning the Vietnam War together with scholars from Vietnam (and other parts of the world) on the basis of critical and direct use of archival materials released in Beijing and Hanoi.

³⁹ Mao Zedong with Pol Pot, 21 June 1975.

⁴⁰ Findings from Vietnamese, Chinese, Russian, East-Central European, and other communist-side sources on the Indochina/Vietnam conflicts are scheduled for publication by CWIHP in a forthcoming special issue of the *Bulletin*.

Tracking Multi-Directional Dominoes

Stein Tønnesson

The Domino Theory, as first formulated by President Eisenhower in 1954, was an inherent part of the Cold War and of the wars in Indochina.⁴¹ This conclusion emerged clearly, yet again, at a conference held in Hanoi in late June 1997, where American and Vietnamese former officials and scholars discussed the events and lessons of the Vietnam War.⁴²

While focusing on the mindsets of each side during the 1960s, several members of the US delegation, notably former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and former Central Intelligence Agency and State Department official Chester Cooper, tried to make the Vietnamese understand how deeply, albeit erroneously (“We were badly mistaken”), the Kennedy and Johnson administrations had believed in the domino theory. What McNamara, Cooper, and some other ex-U.S. officials wondered was why the Vietnamese leaders had allowed the United States to make such a tragic mistake. Why had not Hanoi taken initiatives to make Washington understand that the aim of the war was merely national independence and unification, not the expansion of communism to other countries? If Hanoi had made this clear, they implied, the escalation of the war could have been avoided.

As the following documents suggest, the answer is very simple: the domino theory accurately reflected Communist intentions. Communist leaders in China, Vietnam,

⁴¹ The website “Vietnam War—A Critical Analysis of Australia’s Entrance Into War” (http://rubens.anu.edu.au/student.projects/vietnam/public_html/home.html) defines the domino theory as a “theory which holds that if one South-East Asian country falls to Communism, then the momentum caused by such an event would trigger the rise of Communism in its neighbouring countries in a chain reaction (reminiscent of dominos).” For a summary of how the domino theory affected the definition of US objectives in Indochina, see William J. Duiker, *U.S. Containment Policy and the Conflict in Indochina* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 364-367.

⁴² “Missed Opportunities?: Former U.S. and Vietnamese Leaders Reexamine the Vietnam War, 1961-1968,” conference organized in Hanoi, late June 1997, by the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Relations of Brown University (Providence, RI, USA) and hosted by the Institute of International Relations, Hanoi.

Cambodia, and elsewhere certainly intended to expand communism. They believed strongly in the fraternity of communist movements and states, and saw it as a matter of obligation and pride to use victories in one country to sustain and enhance revolutionary movements in the next. Hanoi and Beijing wanted dominoes to fall as much as Washington wished to keep them standing. The domino theory, then, was absolutely correct—as far as beliefs, hopes, and intentions were concerned.

How the Theory Was Right

It was always a presumption within the international communist movement that a successful seizure of power in one country would be used as a stepping stone to promote revolution in others, through political, financial and military means, although not in the form of outright military invasions. The communists saw their international movement both as a means of achieving national liberation for oppressed peoples and as an instrument for world revolution. The principle of proletarian internationalism rested on a sense of fraternity and shared mission within a movement in which all parties were, in principle, equal (everyone's title was "comrade" almost regardless of rank), but which in reality was quite hierarchic. The earlier and more successful its seizure of power, land reforms, collectivization, and industrialization, the higher a national communist party would rank in the international hierarchy of prestige. During Stalin's time all recognized him as the big boss (or elder brother), but after Stalin's death, Mao came to see himself as the true leader, not only of the revolutionary movement in China and Asia but worldwide. The Soviet leadership had, in his view, forfeited its right to leadership by choosing a revisionist line based on peaceful co-existence with the West. In Asia, Mao felt his supremacy to be self-evident: During his Moscow meetings in December 1949 and January 1950, and Liu Shaoqi's trip to Moscow the previous summer, he had gotten China's special responsibility for promoting revolutions in Asia explicitly recognized by Stalin.⁴³

⁴³ Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 104. Chen Jian's source was the memoirs of Shi Zhe, Mao's and Liu's Russian-language interpreter.

Note the didactic tone of Mao's oral statements to his Laotian, Vietnamese, and Cambodian visitors in the first of the documents published in this Working Paper. He acted as their teacher, conveying authoritative instructions as to how they were to conduct their local struggles. Note also the reverential way in which visitors (in the following cases three Vietnamese leaders) addressed the Chairman: "Our Politburo has made a decision on this matter, and today I am reporting it to Chairman Mao" (Pham Van Dong to Mao, 5 October 1965); "It is correct, Uncle Mao. We are persistently fighting until the South becomes entirely independent and free, until national unification is attained. By so doing, we adhere to the orders from our President Ho as well as yours" (Nguyen Van Linh to Mao, 17 November 1968); "We are very much in need of getting Chairman Mao's instructions" (Le Duan to Mao, 11 May 1970). Note also how Mao tried to initiate Prince Sihanouk to the fraternity by making him read *The Communist Manifesto* and ally himself with the masses (Mao to Sihanouk, 28 September 1964). This must have represented quite a problem for Sihanouk, not only because of his attachment to French culture and aristocratic habits, but also because of his blood. The blood metaphor was used to depict distinctions of class, across national border lines. On 10 April 1967, Zhou Enlai told Vietnamese leaders that neither the Cambodian Lon Nol nor the Laotian Phoumi Nousavan were trustworthy, despite their attempts to speak nice words about China and boast of Chinese blood: "But their blood is feudal, capitalistic." (Laotian Prince Souphannouvong, though, seems to have overcome this problem, becoming a brother and "Red Prince.")

Blood was not just a metaphor for class, but also, as always, a central element in the rhetoric of war. In the case of the Vietnam War, the enormous bloodletting became easier to accept because it served the cause of revolutionary forces worldwide. At a meeting with a Vietnamese party delegation on 23 March 1966, Zhou Enlai praised the Vietnamese people for shedding blood "for the Vietnamese revolution as well as for the world revolution." He also stated, during talks on 11 April 1967: "The struggle of Vietnam is in the common interest of the Indochinese and Southeast Asian peoples."

Mao certainly planned to expand the revolution in Vietnam not only to the rest of Indochina, but also to other countries in Southeast Asia. This is evident from a telling

remark to Ho Chi Minh on 16 May 1965, during a discussion about the construction of roads in northern Laos: “Because we will fight large-scale battles in the future, it will be good if we also build roads to Thailand.” It is also obvious from a discussion among Zhou Enlai, Pham Van Dong, and Vo Nguyen Giap, on 10 April 1967, that they had more than the Indochinese countries in mind. They discuss developments on the whole Southeast Asian scene, and as late as 7 March 1971, Zhou Enlai states to Le Duan and Pham Van Dong:

The Thai government is very much afraid of the Thai Communist Party’s armed forces. It knows that weapons to the TCP armed forces are transported via Vietnam and Laos. It also knows that China has a road that runs to the Sino-Lao border. Therefore, it faces the threat of the war expanding all over Southeast Asia. We hold that support to the peoples’ revolutionary struggles cannot be sacrificed for the sake of relations between governments. Only traitors do that.

Le Duan replies with an even more ambitious plan to knock down dominoes:

We want to smash the US-Japan alliance as well as the alliance between the US, Japan, and the regional bourgeois class. We have to establish a world front that will be built first by some core countries and later enlarged to include African and Latin American countries.

The Vietnamese Communist Party leader wanted China to take the lead in establishing a People’s Front to smash the Nixon Doctrine of building up regional allies to safeguard U.S. security interests. Le Duan had also on an earlier occasion gone quite far in advocating true internationalism. In a meeting on 13 April 1966, at which Deng Xiaoping had wanted to know if China had been showing “too much enthusiasm” in its help to Vietnam, thus causing suspicion among the Vietnamese comrades, Le Duan answered in the negative:

Now, there are more than a hundred thousand Chinese military personnel in Vietnam, but we think that whenever there is something serious happening, there should be more than 500,000 needed. This is assistance from a fraternal country. We think that as a fraternal socialist country, you can do that, you can help us like this...We need assistance from all socialist countries. But we hold that the Chinese assistance is the most direct and extensive.

Thus Le Duan seems to have been so committed to the idea of socialist fraternity that he had no objection to a massive presence of Chinese troops in Vietnam. Le Duan repeatedly declared his sincere commitment to revolution and proletarian internationalism,

not only in public speeches, but also in confidential talks with Chinese comrades. Obviously the Vietnamese leader must have wanted to impress Mao with such statements, but we must assume that Le Duan's words also reflected genuine internationalist conviction.

Beijing took the Vietnamese wish for more assistance most seriously, and suggested in late 1966 that a limited number of Chinese military experts be sent to serve the struggle in South Vietnam. When making this suggestion to Pham Van Dong on 23 August 1966, Zhou Enlai was unashamedly cynical in expressing the need to not seek peace, but instead prolong the suffering of the Vietnamese in order to encourage anti-imperialist movements in other countries:

Patience means victory. Patience can cause you more hardship, more sufferings. Yet, the sky will not collapse, the earth will not slide, and the people cannot be totally exterminated. So patience can be traded for victory, thus causing historic changes, encouraging the Asian, African and Latin American countries...

The record published here does not reveal any Vietnamese misgivings to such statements, but the incomplete sources available do not permit any firm conclusions concerning the Vietnamese leaders' true attitude toward the sacrifices their people had to endure in the interests of world (as opposed to national) revolution. For this, we must await access to documents concerning internal Vietnamese discussions.

The Chinese leaders also, of course, had a reverse version of the domino theory. During the height of the Cultural Revolution (1966-69), they felt encircled by hostile powers, with the Soviet Union to the north, and the United States to the south and east. North Vietnam was their only outlet, the only standing communist domino in China's vicinity that had not succumbed to "revisionism." If it fell in the wrong direction, it would topple into China, perhaps causing a war of aggression against the PRC itself. Vietnam would thus have to fall in the right direction. This provided an additional reason for Beijing to urge the Vietnamese to keep up their struggle instead of seeking peace. As will be seen from several of the documents published below, the Chinese leaders reacted strongly when on 13 April 1968 the Vietnamese declared their willingness to start talks with US representatives. The Chinese felt that Hanoi was being lured into peace talks by

the Soviets. But the Vietnamese assured their Chinese comrades that they would continue fighting until victory: “That we are victorious will have a positive impact in Asia. Our victory will bring about unforeseeable outcomes,” said Pham Van Dong on 29 April 1968, to which Zhou Enlai replied: “You should think that way.”

Later the Chinese were pleased to discover how obstinately the Vietnamese behaved at the negotiating table in Paris, so that the war could go on and maintain its stimulating effect on world revolution...well beyond the moment when China itself decided to abandon the struggle and invite Nixon to Beijing.

How the Theory Was Wrong

I have said that the domino theory was correct. Yes, it was correct, on the level of beliefs and intentions. Still the theory was wrong. Fraternity had its limits. Already by the time when our documentation begins, China had decided to no longer consider the Soviet Union as part of the international brotherhood. By 1964, the Chinese leaders were warning the Vietnamese comrades against Soviet revisionism. Mao decided to provide substantial assistance to Vietnam, including (as mentioned by Le Duan) more than 100,000 troops who were mainly constructing roads in northern Vietnam and Laos.⁴⁴ The Chairman clearly saw it as his prerogative to organize and control all fraternal help to the Vietnamese comrades, and did not want Soviet interference. Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin’s visit to Hanoi and Beijing in February 1965 therefore represented a watershed, causing consternation in China at how eager the Vietnamese were to receive aid from the Soviet and East European “revisionists.”

Moscow’s assistance led to many crises in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship, primarily over the use of Chinese territory for the transportation of Soviet weapons and other goods. Zhou Enlai lectured the Vietnamese on China’s bad experiences with the Soviets. And Deng Xiaoping took up the problem of friction between Chinese advisors

⁴⁴ For solid documentation of Chinese help to Vietnam, based on Chinese sources, see Chen Jian, “China’s Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-69,” *China Quarterly* 142 (June 1995), pp. 356-387. For China’s attempts to discourage peace talks and make the Vietnamese keep on fighting, see Qiang Zhai, “Beijing and the Vietnam Peace Talks, 1965-68. New Evidence from Chinese Sources,” Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 18, (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, June 1997).

and their Vietnamese comrades in a 1966 meeting, shortly before Mao turned against him. We have already heard how Le Duan, who was listening to Deng Xiaoping on that occasion, asked for more instead of less Chinese involvement. He also, however, tried to define what he saw as the main difference between Hanoi's and Beijing's perspectives. The Vietnamese party head shared the Chinese view, he said, that a relatively strong reformist movement had engulfed Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, but he also thought that China, "while upholding the revolutionary banner, should cooperate with reformist countries to help them make revolution." And he even went so far as to cite the precedent for Chinese Communist Party cooperation with the Guomintang in the 1920s and 1930s as an argument for cooperating with the Kremlin, actually comparing the Soviet Union to the Guomintang! This seems to indicate that Le Duan shared the Chinese desire to deepen the war against the United States and did not accept Soviet advice to seek a political settlement. On the other hand he needed Soviet help. By cooperating with the Soviet Union, then, he appears to have hoped that Vietnam and China could have a radicalizing influence on it.

A conversation between Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi and North Vietnamese negotiator Le Duc Tho on 17 October 1968 reveals the limits to the kind of "we" feeling that can exist between an elder and a younger brother. The word "we," as we know, can be used inclusively (we together) and exclusively (we as opposed to you). In this conversation, Chen Yi at first used the inclusive "we" when describing what had been done in Vietnam: "We withdrew our armed forces from the South to the North [after the Geneva agreement]. We at that time made a mistake in which [... and now he turned to the exclusive "we":] we [Chinese] shared a part." When Le Duc Tho answered, he used only the exclusive "we": "Because we [Vietnamese] listened to your [Chinese] advice" [the mistake was made in Geneva]. The elder thus went much further in his "we" feeling than the younger.

As the above-mentioned exchange reminds us, the 1954 Geneva settlement was a time-bomb within the Asian communist fraternity. The Chinese and Soviet comrades had more or less deceived their Vietnamese brethren by imposing on them a settlement leading to the abandonment of the revolutionary struggle in the southern half of the country.

Another significant aspect of the Geneva agreement, as agreed upon by Vietnamese and French representatives, is that it also led to the abandonment of armed struggle in Cambodia. Thus many Cambodian communists also felt deceived, not only by China and the Soviet Union, but by their Vietnamese mentors as well. As a result of the settlement, some 500 Cambodian communists were compelled to take refuge in North Vietnam and remain there until 1970-71; when they finally returned to Cambodia they were suspected of being Vietnamese agents. In the early 1960s, a new Cambodian communist leadership had emerged inside Cambodia, with Saloth Sar (Pol Pot) as secretary general from 1963 on. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the Vietnamese communists had fought hard to make Beijing and Moscow endorse a resumption of armed struggle in South Vietnam. In the second half of the 1960s, it was the turn of the Cambodian communists to try to compel Hanoi and Beijing to endorse a resumption of armed struggle in Cambodia. Beijing and especially Hanoi were reluctant to do so since they preferred to keep Sihanouk in place so long as he continued his neutral policy, allowed the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam to maintain its sanctuaries in eastern Cambodia, and permitted provisions for the NLF to be channeled through the port at Sihanoukville. Pol Pot's first serious attempt to obtain support for a Cambodian insurgency was made in mid-1965, when he met Le Duan in Hanoi and then went on to Beijing. The meeting between Pol Pot and Le Duan seems to have been a cultural clash. Pol Pot presented a resolution adopted by his party, which Le Duan criticized quite heavily in a rather paternalistic lecture. He wanted Pol Pot to understand that victory in Cambodia would come later, as a result of victory in Laos and southern Vietnam, and to make his point understood, he used the inclusive "we" throughout: "We will use Sihanouk's policy of peace and neutrality in order to avoid bringing Cambodia directly into the war...In Cambodia, we will go with Sihanouk. We cannot topple Sihanouk, but by going with him we must also score victory over him and not allow him to beat us."⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Thomas Engelbert and Christopher E. Goscha, *Falling Out Of Touch: A Study on Vietnamese Communist Policy towards an Emerging Cambodian Communist Movement, 1930-1975* (Clayton, Victoria, Australia: Monash University, 1995), pp. 73-74, 149. The above paragraph is based on this excellently researched publication, which builds on some highly interesting documents from Vietnamese libraries.

The available record does not reveal any occasion when a Vietnamese leader used the inclusive “we” when referring to shared Sino-Vietnamese concerns. The inclusive “we” seems to have been used only downwards, not upwards. Chen Yi was not alone among the Chinese leaders to use the inclusive “we” in talks with the Vietnamese. In a 16 July 1965 meeting with Hoang Van Hoan (held almost at the same time as Le Duan was lecturing Pol Pot in Hanoi), Mao also used the inclusive “we” when talking about military strategy in South Vietnam, and on 17 November 1968, Mao referred to “our forces [in South Vietnam]” in a conversation with Vietnamese leaders. However, Mao was not consistent in his use of the inclusive “we”. On 2 February 1973, he leaped from “we” to “your” in a rather interesting way: “...after the Paris agreements have been signed we need at least six months to stabilize the situation in South Vietnam (and) to strengthen your forces.” In this sentence he seems, perhaps subconsciously, to conceive of strategy and policy as fraternally shared whereas the military forces involved were Vietnamese. Similar linguistic leaps are also noted by Thomas Engelbert and Christopher Goscha in their analysis of the Vietnamese-Cambodian relationship.⁴⁶

The already mentioned conversation between Mao and a group of Vietnamese leaders on 17 November 1968 is noteworthy for the fact that in his final remark, Pham Van Dong had the courage to state directly to the Great Helmsman: “Ultimately, it is we [Vietnamese] who make the decisions based on the actual situation in Vietnam and on how we [Vietnamese] understand the rule of war.” He softened his point a little by adding that it was in accordance with what Mao himself had often said to Ho Chi Minh, and by assuring him that the Vietnamese were determined to fight till total victory. This was “the best way,” said Dong, “to express our [Vietnamese] gratitude for the support and aid provided to us by Chairman Mao and the CCP as well as the fraternal Chinese people.”

This meeting was apparently not the only time when the Vietnamese leaders needed to emphasize their right to decide for themselves. On 20 April 1969, Zhou Enlai stated to a group of Vietnamese party leaders:

⁴⁶ For their discussion of the inclusive “we”, see Engelbert and Goscha, *Falling Out of Touch*, pp. 103, 150.

You often say to us: “We are determined to fight and we make decisions by ourselves.” Of course, any party and country has the right to make decisions with regard to its own fate. And it is good to have such determination and belief. But as brothers we have to talk with each other in an open manner...

And then he spoke openly, urging his listeners to spend less time and money on negotiations in Paris, and more on keeping up the fighting. Almost three years later, in February 1972, Nixon came to Beijing while the Vietnamese continued to fight and suffer. After this, of course, China could not object to the signing of the Paris agreement. As we know, however, after the unification of Vietnam in 1975, Sino-Vietnamese relations rapidly deteriorated. The Cultural Revolution was then over, and Deng Xiaoping was back in the saddle. Again he complained to the Vietnamese about their behavior, declaring that their textbooks focused far too much on “the threat from the North” (conversation with Le Duan, 29 September 1975).

Only two years after Vietnam’s total victory, its revolutionary ambitions had been transformed in Beijing’s view from an example for all oppressed peoples to a regional threat. In the documentation below we include a Sino-Cambodian conversation from 29 September 1977 where the Vietnamese are not present. Now, it is Pol Pot who presents a new kind of domino theory to the post-Mao Chinese leader, Hua Guofeng. Vietnam, Pol Pot claims, not only wants to annex Cambodia and Laos, but “to occupy the whole of Southeast Asia.” Thus China and Pol Pot had come full circle. Their new domino theory was quite similar to the one in which Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and McNamara had once believed. The main difference was that now there were communists on both sides of the row of dominos, and in between them as well. This made it difficult to tell in which direction the dominoes might fall.

Conclusion

Much of the confusion in our debates about the domino theory stems from the human tendency to confuse intention with probability. Even though most communist leaders genuinely believed in the idea of a socialist brotherhood which was bound to win power worldwide, it does not follow that a wisely led non-communist power should have

perceived the world's likely future in similar terms. Wise governments base their strategies not primarily on the beliefs and general intentions of their adversaries, but on an overall assessment of their capabilities, relations with each other, and the likely outcome of their actions.

From the documentation below it is easy to see that although the communist leaders clearly intended to topple the dominoes, their capacity for doing so was limited not only by the weakness of revolutionary forces in many of the targeted countries, but also by conflicting interests among the already established communist states. Even regimes with expansionist aims will often be predominantly concerned with their own geopolitical interests, at least when the initial euphoria following a victorious revolution has died down. This could have been understood in Western capitals, and was—it seems—understood by some. The White House, however, decided to stem world revolution in the worst thinkable place: a country where the communist party was perhaps more popular and better entrenched in the rural villages than anywhere else in the world.

A major effect of the US intervention in Vietnam was to transform a vicious, but local, civil war into a highly popular internationalist cause. Communists and socialists all over the world, and eventually social democrats and liberals as well, could rival each other in supporting the NLF and the heroic people of Vietnam. Che Guevara would speak of making “two, three, many Vietnams.” Indeed, few events did more (albeit temporarily) to reinvigorate global sentiments of socialist anti-imperialist fraternity than the US war in Vietnam. And this happened at a time when the West, after a period of fabulous economic growth, should have been in a position to inspire confidence worldwide.

The Vietnam War reinforced the image of the United States as an imperialist enemy not only of liberation movements in “the third world,” but of all democratic left-wing movements. There was a tremendous Marxist upsurge during the 1970s. By the end of that decade, however, after *détente*, when the socialist countries had become more or less secure from direct imperialist intervention, their sense of brotherhood entered a period of terminal decline.

Zhou Enlai was correct when he told Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere on 4 June 1965: “The more America’s strength is bogged down in Vietnam, the better for the movement for national independence and liberation.” But the reverse would also prove true: The more America distanced itself from its involvement in Vietnam, the worse for the world revolution.

Instead of falling one way, many dominoes were never overturned, while others fell in multiple directions. It should, perhaps, already have been possible to predict a more complicated future at the time when the domino theory prevailed. For historians today, with the benefit of hindsight, it must be a challenge to track the complex trajectories of all those multi-directional dominoes. Thus may we liberate contemporary political history from the illusionary straitjacket of a two-dimensional confrontation. The present world disorder already existed, under the surface, while the Cold War raged. Both sides entertained the illusion that countries can be arranged into a single row of dominoes. They correctly interpreted their enemy’s mindsets. In that sense, the domino theory was right. And yet it was entirely wrong: the domino theory was a real existing illusion.

Interpreting Beijing and Hanoi: A View of Sino-Vietnamese Relations, 1965-1970

*Nguyen Vu Tung*⁴⁷

⁴⁷ I would like to thank Dr. Odd Arne Westad at the Norwegian Nobel Institute and Dr. Stein Tønnesson at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies for their invitation and encouragement to take part in this joint publication as well as for their comments on my essay. I am also grateful to Mr. Luu Doan Huynh, senior researcher at the Institute of International Relations in Hanoi, and Professor Allan Wachman at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy for their helpful suggestions and comments. I am, however, responsible for all that are shortcomings in the article. The arguments and findings presented here do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the Institute of International Relations (IIR), Hanoi, with which I am affiliated, or any other Vietnamese institutions.

The relationship between Beijing and Hanoi has been a complicated one. Students of Sino-Vietnamese relations have often been influenced by the thousand-year history of the Vietnamese struggle for independence from China. From this perspective, it seems, the relationship has always been one of suspicion and hostility. Yet, there have also been times when this relationship was one of friendship and even intimacy. The documents in this volume illuminate various facets of this complicated relationship: one can almost feel the suspicion and the intimacy in the talks between Chinese and Vietnamese leaders.

According to propaganda, relations between Beijing and Hanoi during the Vietnam War were like those between “teeth and lips,” or those between “comrades and brothers.” Yet, as it turned out, the Sino-Vietnamese alliance collapsed in the conflict’s aftermath. The seeds of enmity must have been sown earlier. This essay is an effort to assess how suspicion developed between Beijing and Hanoi at the time when Sino-Vietnamese relations were ostensibly at their peak.

In analyzing the patterns of policy-making in Communist countries, it has been very helpful to study their foreign relations with the support of documents that provide insights into their mutual interactions. The records of Sino-Vietnamese talks presented here exemplify this. Yet, as is often the case, several different interpretations might be offered from the same evidence. In this collection, this results from the complexity of the relationship in general, and in particular, of the language these leaders used and what it implied. Also, Sino-Vietnamese ties in the period under discussion were complicated by U.S. and Soviet actions which affected both DRV and PRC policies. Our ability to comprehend this complexity depends both on the degree of access we have to original documents and our general ability to analyze the roles of several actors at the same time. With that caveat understood, I set a minimum goal for this effort and take maximum pleasure to join well-established historians on China and Vietnam in discussing these materials.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, both the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the People’s Republic of China embarked on the path of socialist/Communist development. Joining the global fight for a Communist victory went together with their

search for their own nationhood. Therefore, both nationalism and internationalism strongly influenced their foreign policies and the relationship between the two countries.

With a long tradition of fighting foreign invaders, the Vietnamese had a strong sense of nationalism all through its complicated search to establish a modern and independent state. But, led by the Communist Party, the Vietnamese movement for national unity and independence from the 1930s onward blended nationalism and Communist ideology. This influenced the foreign policies of the newly established DRV after it proclaimed independence on 2 September 1945, and served as a context for relations between the DRV and PRC.

Ho Chi Minh was quoted as saying in 1946 to his comrades about his attitude toward China: “Better to sniff French shit for a while than eat Chinese shit for the rest of our lives.”⁴⁸ Ho was, of course, referring to China under Jiang Jieshi’s [Chiang Kai-shek’s] Guomintang [Kuomintang]. Ho and his comrades had an increasingly antagonistic relationship with the GMD [KMT] during the 1940s.

When the Communists won the civil war in China in October 1949, Ho Chi Minh went to China to seek support from the PRC.⁴⁹ In January 1950, Beijing became the first government to recognize the DRV, and shortly thereafter other socialist countries followed suit. A new phase thus began in Sino-Vietnamese relations. In September 1950, Ho Chi Minh wrote of these developments as follows:

After a couple of years of Resistance, the biggest-ever victory in the history of Vietnam has been brought about; i.e the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China, the two biggest countries in the world, and other democratic countries have recognized the DRV as an equal member of the large democratic family of the world. That is to say, we have joined the democratic bloc and joined the 800-million-people bloc to oppose imperialism.⁵⁰

This statement showed that Ho had recognized chances for realizing the hope for a new kind of relationship between the two countries, as well as for the rest in the

⁴⁸ Ho Chi Minh quoted in Paul Mus, *Sociologie d’une guerre* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952), p. 85; a more elaborate unattributed version of the quotation can be found in Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking Press, 1983), p. 153.

⁴⁹ For more on this trip, see Chen Jian, “China and the First Indochina War, 1950-1954,” in *China Quarterly* 133 (March 1993), pp. 84-110.

⁵⁰ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Writings, Vol. 5* (Hanoi: Truth Publishing House, 1985), p. 411.

international Communist movement, now based on socialist principles.⁵¹ Theoretically, these principles could ensure equality in interstate relations, thus harmoniously resolving the problems of nationalism and internationalism: Vietnam could be an independent and equal partner among others in the international Communist movement. Moreover, Vietnam could enjoy support from socialist countries to be victorious in the struggle for national independence, the first step toward achieving socialist goals in the country and expanding socialism/Communism in the world.

Both nationalist and internationalist perspectives may have contributed to the Chinese leaders' decision to assist Vietnam. These thoughts could be traced in PRC foreign policy since the Communist triumph in 1949. As evidenced by the latest round in the scholarly debate on whether a "lost chance" existed in China in 1949 to establish ties between Washington and the new revolutionary government, the PRC also attached a great importance to Communist ideology in its policy.⁵² The Chinese revolution, as seen by Beijing in the late 1940s and early 1950s, also constituted part of the global struggle for socialism. With regard to Vietnam, Beijing accepted the "division of labor" with Moscow for promoting revolution and was responsible for, indeed, played a crucial role in assisting, the revolution in Vietnam. In this connection, Beijing leaders expressed their belief in Lenin's teachings that "big countries had the responsibility to encourage the world revolution."⁵³

⁵¹ The principle that governs relations among socialist countries dictates that: "Relations between socialist states are based on a common identity rather than transitory interests. Socialist international relations are relations of a new type characterized by peace, long-term mutual interest, genuine cooperation, and fraternal solidarity. See Steven Levine, "Perception and Ideology in Chinese Foreign Policy," in Thomas Robinson and David Shambaugh, eds., *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 37-38.

⁵² For recent discussions on the role of ideology in the PRC foreign policy, see Chen Jian, "The Myth of America's Lost Chance in China: A Chinese Perspective in Light of New Evidence"; John Garver, "Little Chance: Revolutions and Ideologies"; Michael Sheng, "The Triumph of Internationalism: CCP-Moscow Relations before 1949"; and Odd Arne Westad, "Losses, Chances, and Myths: The United States and the Creation of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1950," all in "Symposium: Rethinking the Lost Chance in China," in *Diplomatic History*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Winter 1997).

⁵³ Talks on 11 April 1967 in Beijing between Zhou Enlai, Pham Van Dong, and Vo Nguyen Giap. For more details of the Moscow-Beijing agreement on a "division of labor" with regard to Vietnam, see Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), and Sergei Goncharov, John Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao and the Korean War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

Generally speaking, Communist ideology provided a strong common ground for the two countries to build their bilateral relations. This new approach to international relations, indeed, could even help both of them to render sacrifices in their national causes in order to advance the global Communist cause and solidarity within the international Communist movement as a whole. In other words, both the DRV and PRC seemed willingly to accept even losses and setbacks in the understanding that they were short-term and in the end, socialism would prevail. Hanoi's struggle against the US, as Vietnamese Workers' Party (VWP) General Secretary Le Duan vowed on 13 April 1966, should be carried out until "final victory" which was unification of Vietnam. Yet, he also acknowledged the connection of the Vietnamese struggle with that of the international Communist movement. "For the sake of the international Communist movement and international spirit [of proletarian internationalism]," he said, "it doesn't matter if the process of socialist development in the South of Vietnam is delayed for 30 or 40 years."⁵⁴

For its part, the PRC, according to Zhou Enlai, supported the DRV in 1950, even at the cost of losing Western countries' recognition of the PRC: "At that time," he told DRV Premier Pham Van Dong in April 1967, "the French were going to recognize us. But because we recognized Vietnam, they ignored us."⁵⁵

In his two important articles about Sino-Vietnamese relations in the period from 1950 to 1970, Chen Jian has described some friction in the relationship.⁵⁶ The friction, however, was not so serious as to cause a possible breakup of the alliance. In other words, it was thought, so long as the two countries remained socialist, relations between them would be fine. Similar arguments were applied to the relations between the Soviets and Chinese in the 1950s: even amidst misunderstanding and personal animosity, the two countries remained in the relationship of comradeship and tried to address their disagreements by evoking the common ground of Communist ideology.⁵⁷ The talks between Beijing and Hanoi leaders in this seminal period clearly displayed this spirit of

⁵⁴ Talk on 13 April 1966.

⁵⁵ Talk on 11 April 1967.

⁵⁶ Chen Jian, "China and the First Indochina War," and Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-69," *China Quarterly* 142 (June 1995), pp. 356-387.

⁵⁷ See "Symposium: Rethinking the Lost Chance in China."

“comrade in arms.” For example, in the talk on 13 April 1966, General Secretary Le Duan said that

the judgment by a socialist country on another socialist country should be based on internationalism, especially in the context of relations between Vietnam and China...It is not our concern that China is trying to take control over Vietnam. If China is not a socialist country then we [would be] really concerned. [We believe that] Chinese comrades came to help us out of proletarian internationalism.

The context of an escalating war in Vietnam served to forge a DRV-PRC closer relationship. In 1965, the United States, driven by the need to defend its global credibility (which would be tarnished by a possible failure of the Saigon regime in South Vietnam) began to send American ground troops to fight in the South. And following the Gulf of Tonkin and Pleiku incidents of August 1964 and February 1965, respectively, the US began an aerial war against the North. The Vietnam War thereby drew closer to China, and Beijing’s leaders felt that the PRC’s security was threatened. At the same time, they did not want to confront the United States directly unless the latter escalated the war into Chinese territory.⁵⁸ The best way to avoid a military confrontation with the US, Beijing calculated, would be to increase visibly Chinese support for Vietnam as a way to deter further American acts of war against the PRC.⁵⁹

Yet, Beijing’s decision to support Hanoi in the face of the American threat also stemmed from the belief that fraternal socialist countries had the responsibility to help each other in the struggle against imperialists. In the talk between Tao Zhu and Ho Chi Minh, the former relayed Chairman Mao’s message that “China as a whole is the rear for Vietnam.”⁶⁰ Defining the relations as those between the rear and the front, Beijing leaders thus saw a connection between the war in Vietnam and the common struggle for global revolution. In their assessments, Beijing considered the Vietnamese people to be “in the

⁵⁸ Chinese leaders tried to give this signal to Washington. One of the examples is the message that Zhou Enlai asked the Pakistani Prime Minister Ayub Khan to convey to Washington when the latter was to visit the US. See the Zhou Enlai-Ayub Khan talk on 2 April 1965. See also the talk between Zhou Enlai and Nguyen Van Hieu and Nguyen Thi Binh, 16 May 1965.

⁵⁹ Some authors have discussed this strategy. See, e.g., Allen Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Vietnam* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1975); Frank Roger, “Sino-American Relations and the Vietnam War, 1964-1966,” *China Quarterly* 66 (June 1976); John W. Garver, “China and the Revisionist Thesis,” in William Head and Lawrence Grinter, eds., *Looking back on the Vietnam War: A 1990s Perspective on the Decisions, Combat, and Legacies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993).

first front of the anti-American struggle. The blood of the Vietnamese has been shed for the Vietnamese revolution as well as for the world revolution...Vietnam is the great standard-bearer representing the world's revolutionary peoples."⁶¹

Chen Jian has elucidated Chinese assistance to Vietnam in the 1964-1969 period.⁶² The talks between Hanoi and Beijing leaders now offer further details. As some of the talks reveal, during this period, Chinese support to Vietnam came in both material and moral forms. The presence of more than 130,000 Chinese engineering troops in major defense construction projects in Vietnam not only made Washington more cautious in expanding the aerial war in North Vietnam but also increased the DRV's defense capabilities as well as enabling Hanoi to send more troops to fight in the South.⁶³ On 6 April 1965, Hanoi and Beijing reached a secret agreement under which Chinese pilots would be dispatched to combat in Vietnam. Talking of the importance of this agreement, Le Duan said: "We want the Chinese volunteer pilots to play a role in four aspects: (1) to restrict American bombing to areas south of the 20th or 19th parallels; (2) to defend the safety of Hanoi; (3) to defend several main transportation lines; and (4) to raise the morale of the Vietnamese people."⁶⁴ A Sino-Vietnamese conversation on 13 April 1966 made it clear that all Vietnamese ships and airplanes could have access to the ports and airports of China at any time if they were pursued by U.S. forces.⁶⁵ In a talk with Mao on 17 November 1968, Pham Van Dong and Nguyen Van Linh again mentioned Chinese aid that included food stuff and weapons as well as the former's letters of encouragement. To sum up how Vietnamese leaders valued Chinese aid, they said:

We hold that the moral support offered by China is most important. Even in the most difficult situation, we have the great rear area of China supporting us, which allows us to fight as long as it takes. Material assistance is also very important...

⁶⁰ Talk between Tao Zhu and Ho Chi Minh on 13 April 1965.

⁶¹ Zhou Enlai in the talk on 24 March 1966 between Chinese and Vietnamese Party delegations.

⁶² Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969."

⁶³ Talk between Chairman Mao and Ho Chi Minh on 17 May 1965.

⁶⁴ Talk between Le Duan and Liu Shaoqi on 8 April 1965. (*Wenhua dageming zhong de renmin jiefangjun*, p. 415.) However, on 16 July 1965, Beijing informed Hanoi that it was unable to abide by the agreement due to the lack of its own capabilities. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam's Foreign Ministry, *The White Book on the Vietnamese-Chinese Relations* (Hanoi: Truth Publishing House, 1982), p. 24.

⁶⁵ Talk on 13 April 1966 between Le Duan and Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping.

We are determined to fight until the final and total victory is gained. It is the best way to express our gratitude to the support and aid provided to us by Chairman Mao and the CCP as well as the fraternal Chinese people.⁶⁶

It was noteworthy that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, China faced great economic difficulties at home. Beijing's leaders, however, continued to support Hanoi. In his talk with Pham Van Dong on 23 September 1970, Chairman Mao declared: "Every Chinese province is now a fortress, ready in case of an American attack. But even in such a case, we still continue to help you because you are also in difficulties. Anyone who says that we do not help you because we are also in difficulty is a reactionary."⁶⁷

Yet, Sino-Vietnamese relations should also be put in another context. From the early 1960s on, the Sino-Soviet rift intensified. At the same time, following the ouster of Khrushchev in October 1964, Moscow improved its relations with and became more supportive to Hanoi. The "Soviet factor," therefore, increasingly complicated Sino-Vietnamese relations: Chinese suspicion of Hanoi rose with the augmented level of Soviet commitments to North Vietnam.

As far as discussions in 1965 can tell us, Chinese and Vietnamese leaders strenuously debated Hanoi's talking-while-fighting strategy, a summary of which will be made here to let readers better understand the context of these debates.

In February and December 1965, the VWP Central Committee passed two resolutions initiating the "international political struggle" with a view to winning world public opinion and support for the DRV's cause. Hanoi, however, distinguished between this struggle and the "diplomatic struggle" which consisted of negotiating with Washington as part of the talking-while-fighting strategy. In 1965, the U.S. and DRV conducted both direct and indirect contacts to explore each other's position with regard to negotiations.⁶⁸ The DRV made its position known in the four-point proposal on 8 April 1965 that demanded the cessation of U.S. acts of war against the DRV and the withdrawal of American forces from South Vietnam. Yet, as Pham Van Dong told journalist Harrison

⁶⁶ Talk with Chairman Mao on 17 November 1968.

⁶⁷ Talk on 23 September 1970.

⁶⁸ See Luu Van Loi and Nguyen Anh Vu, *Vietnamese-US Secret Contacts before the Paris Negotiations* (Hanoi: The International Relations Publishing House, 1990); Mai Van Bo, *Diplomatic Offensives and*

Salisbury of *The New York Times*, the four points constituted a “basis for settlement rather than conditions for peace talks.” On January 1966, in responding to the U.S. 37-day bombing pause, a DRV Foreign Ministry spokesman announced that the “complete and unconditional cessation of US bombing and other acts of war against the DRV” was a precondition for talks.⁶⁹ Hanoi diplomatic historians have summed up the diplomatic struggle before the Paris talks in three major “diplomatic offensives.” The first offensive was the statement by DRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh on 28 January 1967, and the second was his statement on December 29 the same year. Both statements insisted that the United States unconditionally cease all acts of war against the DRV before talks could begin. Yet, in the third offensive, which was in the form of a DRV Government official statement on 3 April 1968, Hanoi decided to open contacts with Washington in response to Johnson’s decision on 31 March 1968 to stop all aerial and naval bombardments of North Vietnam north of the 20th parallel. On May 2, the DRV and U.S. agreed on Paris as the place for bilateral talks. On October 31, following the announcement by Johnson that the U.S. would cease all air, naval, and artillery bombardments of North Vietnam as of November 1, Hanoi and Washington agreed to enter quadripartite talks—with the participation of representatives of the U.S., DRV, the National Liberation Front (NLF), and the Republic of Vietnam (Saigon regime)—for the purpose of finding a political solution to the Vietnam question. With those developments, conditions for the application of the fighting-while-talking strategy had materialized and the Paris agreements ensued in 1973.

While there was not much controversy about the international political struggle, Beijing did not embrace Hanoi’s demand for a U.S. cessation of bombing as a precondition for talks. In a talk among Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi, and Nguyen Duy Trinh on 19 December 1965, Zhou made it clear that the time was not yet ripe for talks. Moreover, according to him, Hanoi had complicated the situation by separating the questions of South and North Vietnam. Beijing then advised Hanoi to stick to its four-point proposal as conditions for talks. Chen Yi said: “It will be good if you do not put forward the

Secret Contacts (Ho Chi Minh City: Municipal Publishing House, 1985); and Luu Van Loi, “The Johnson Episode in the Vietnam War,” *Vietnamese Studies* 1 (January 1992).

⁶⁹ DRV Foreign Ministry File of Public Statements.

condition of the cessation of bombing. The Four Points are enough. We think that the condition of the cessation of bombing North Vietnam will make the matter more complicated. This is the point [on which] we disagree. We suggest that you consider this issue further.” Yet, Hanoi acted at its own initiative, announcing in January 1967 that the “complete and unconditional cessation of U.S. bombing and other acts of war against the DRV” were preconditions for talks.⁷⁰

Beijing also felt uneasy about Hanoi’s decision on 3 April 1968 to open contacts with Washington in response to the latter’s move to limit its hostilities against the DRV. This attitude prevailed throughout the four-session talks between Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong from 13 to 19 April 1968, at which Zhou expressed concern that Hanoi had compromised, accepting talks not on an “advantageous position.” He also surmised that the DRV had “de-escalated” its war efforts, an act that would preclude further diplomatic initiatives and put it in a passive position in the diplomatic struggle.⁷¹

It was interesting to note that Hanoi once again did not follow Beijing’s advice on how to conduct the diplomatic struggle. On 1 November 1968, Hanoi and Washington agreed on the quadripartite talks. Yet, as shown in the talk on 17 October 1968 between Le Duc Tho and Chen Yi, the two sides had already discussed this issue. Beijing criticized Hanoi’s move, considering it a failure and a cause for more losses. Chen Yi, conveying Zhou Enlai’s personal comments, said:

with your acceptance of the quadripartite negotiations, you have handed the puppet government legal recognition, thus eliminating the National Liberation Front’s status as the unique legal representative of the people in the South... This makes us wonder whether you have strengthened the enemy’s position while weakening ours. You are acting in contradiction with the teachings of President Ho, the great leader of the Vietnamese people, thus destroying president Ho’s prestige among the Vietnamese people.

Hanoi, however, entered these talks in order to find a political solution for the Vietnam question. In contrast to the 1954 negotiations in Geneva, on this occasion in Paris, Hanoi held direct talks with the United States and managed ultimately to reach agreements with Washington by itself.

⁷⁰ DRV Foreign Ministry File of Public Statements.

⁷¹ Talks on 13-19 April 1968 between Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, and Pham Vam Dong.

The reasons for the Chinese leaders' apprehension about Hanoi's diplomatic moves might have stemmed from their feelings that the DRV was not experienced enough to conduct the diplomatic struggle. Zhou Enlai said that Beijing "entirely" believed in Hanoi's fighting experience but added that "we are somewhat more experienced than you are as far as conducting talks with the US is concerned."⁷² The debate on conducting negotiations took on a higher level of seriousness when the two sides even referred to their experiences at the 1954 Geneva Conference. Replying to Le Duc Tho, who said that mistakes had been made in Geneva because the Vietnamese had listened to Chinese advice, Chen Yi said: "You just mentioned that in the Geneva Conference you made a mistake because you followed our advice. But this time, you will make another mistake if you do not take our words into account."⁷³

It seems that Chairman Mao played the role as a referee in those debates. In the above-mentioned talk, Le Duc Tho argued that Hanoi had gained experience over the past 15 years, and said that both sides should "wait and see, and let the reality justify." Yet, they did not have to wait long. In the talk on 17 November 1968, Mao came down in favor of Hanoi's strategy:

We agree with your slogan of fighting while negotiating. Some comrades worry that the U.S. will deceive you. But I tell them not to. Negotiations are just like fighting. You have drawn experience, understood the rules. But sometimes they [the U.S.] can deceive you.⁷⁴

In the talk on 23 September 1970 with Pham Van Dong, Mao Zedong reiterated the point: "I see that you can conduct the diplomatic struggle and you do it well. Negotiations have been going on for two years. At first we were a little worried that you were trapped. We are no longer worried...In short, what I want to say is: You are fighting very well on the battlefield. Your policy for the diplomatic struggle is correct."⁷⁵

⁷² Talk on 13 April 1968.

⁷³ Talk on 17 October 1968 between Chen Yi and Le Duc Tho.

⁷⁴ Talk on 17 November 1968. Similar lines have also been found in a second version that has Mao saying: "I am in favor of your policy of fighting while negotiating. We have some comrades who are afraid that you may be taken in by the Americans. I think you will not. Isn't this negotiation the same as fighting? We can get experience and learn patterns through fighting. Sometimes one cannot avoid being taken in." (*Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*, pp. 580-583.)

⁷⁵ Talk between Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong on 23 September 1970.

Some Vietnamese diplomatic historians have interpreted Beijing's opposition to Hanoi's strategy as an attempt to play a main role in finding a negotiated settlement for the war. They hold that: "Some wanted us to carry out mainly the military struggle...The advice supporting military struggle came from advisers intending to enjoy the monopoly of talks with the US, leaving us to do the fighting."⁷⁶ Yet, from these talks, it appears that what Chinese leaders sought was a better timing of this strategy's application so that it could be more fully utilized. They later acknowledged that Hanoi had been correct. Even Zhou Enlai said in 1971: "I gained some experience in negotiations before, but now I have to learn from you."⁷⁷ He also summed up the debates on strategy this way:

On the one hand, it is necessary to prepare for fighting. On the other hand, you have to negotiate. China has some experience on that. We also conducted fighting and negotiating with Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kaishek]. During the Korean War, we fought one year and negotiated two years. Therefore, your tactic of fighting and negotiating, which you have been conducting since 1968, is correct.

At first, when you initiated negotiations, some of our comrades thought that you had chosen the wrong moment. I even said to comrades Le Duan and Pham Van Dong that you had to choose the moment to start negotiations when you were in an advantageous position. Yet, comrade Mao said that it was correct to have negotiations at that time and that you had also been prepared to fight. Only you would know when the right moment for negotiations was. And your decision was correct, thus showing that comrade Mao was more farsighted than we were.⁷⁸

In the end, Hanoi and Beijing did not disagree seriously on the talking-while-fighting strategy. Both Chinese and Vietnamese strategists shared belief in the guiding principle that "we can only gain at the negotiating table what we have achieved on the battlefields."⁷⁹ And once Beijing was aware that Hanoi could conduct that struggle alongside the military one, debates over that strategy gradually ebbed.

PRC leaders might have felt uncomfortable with Vietnamese coolness toward their strategic advice. However, both Beijing and Hanoi seemed to agree on the mode under

⁷⁶ The Institute of International Relations, *An Epoch-Making Victory and the Diplomatic Struggle*, (Hanoi: Su That [Truth] Publishing House, 1985), p. 71.

⁷⁷ Talk between Zhou Enlai, Le Duan and Pham Van Dong, 7 March 1971.

⁷⁸ Talk between Zhou Enlai and Le Duc Tho, 12 July 1972.

⁷⁹ In the talk between Pham Van Dong and Zhou Enlai on 17 September 1970, the former once again explained objectives of the diplomatic struggle and made it clear that: "For us, and for Nixon, diplomacy is a play of words. Neither we nor he has any illusion about diplomacy."

which talks were conducted: the Vietnamese side first informed on new developments and its next moves; the Chinese side then commented on these, but often stressed that decisions had to be made by Hanoi. For example, Zhou Enlai and Kang Sheng in the talk with a VWP Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) delegation in Beijing on 12 April 1969 said that they followed what Mao had told Ho: all plans and policies should be decided by the comrades in the South based on the reality there, and the Vietnamese comrades should follow the principles of independence and self-reliance.⁸⁰

Beijing's stress on principles of independence and self-reliance had an implicit connection to the Soviet factor. And indeed, the reason for Beijing to harshly scrutinize and criticize the DRV on strategic questions lay in its fear that Moscow might influence Hanoi's decision-making process. In other words, these debates were not simply on the strategy itself. What made them tense was Beijing's suspicion that the Soviets had pulled Hanoi closer to their side.

Relations between Moscow and Hanoi were, in fact, much improved during this period. Previously, from 1960 to 1964, Moscow did not totally support Hanoi's war efforts in South Vietnam, fearing the military struggle ran counter to its foreign policy of peaceful coexistence. As the Sino-Soviet rift widened, Moscow perceived that Hanoi had sided with Beijing in the campaign against "revisionism." These views led the Soviets to reduce political and diplomatic commitments as well as assistance to Vietnam in the period before 1965. With the change in leadership in Moscow following the overthrow of Khrushchev, Soviet foreign policy toward the United States took a new, more hard-line turn. The Kremlin also changed its Vietnam policy, becoming more supportive to Hanoi's policies. In New Year Greetings sent in December 1964, Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin promised Hanoi "all necessary aid" for the DRV in its struggle,⁸¹ a promise he reiterated during his trip to Hanoi two months later.

⁸⁰ Zhou Enlai and Kang Sheng in the talk with a VWP Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) delegation in Beijing on 12 April 1969. In the talk on 17 November 1968, hearing Pham Van Dong, who said that "what Chairman Mao has said is very correct, very suitable for the situation in our struggle against the US," Mao corrected him, saying that some of his thinking "is not necessarily correct" and actual developments should be referred to.

⁸¹ DRV Foreign Ministry File on Soviet-Vietnamese Relations.

Beijing sharply criticized Soviet assistance to Hanoi. As Soviet aid began to increase in 1965, Beijing leaders warned Hanoi in general that Moscow provided “some aid for their own purposes...Soviet aid is aimed at serving their strategy. If Vietnam finds it inconvenient to expose it, let us do it for you.”⁸² In various talks with Vietnamese leaders, Chinese counterparts elaborated the reasons for vigilance toward the Soviet aid offers. In March 1965, Zhou Enlai told top DRV leaders: “We oppose [the Soviet] military activities that include the sending [to North Vietnam] of missile battalions and 2 MIG-21 aircraft as well as the proposal to establish an airlift using 45 planes for weapon transportation. We also have to be wary of the military instructors. Soviet experts have withdrawn, so what are their purposes [when they] wish to come back? We have had experience in the past when there were subversive activities in China, Korea, and Cuba. We, therefore, should keep an eye on their activities, namely their transportation of weapons and military training. Otherwise, the relations between our two countries may turn from good to bad, thus affecting cooperation between our two countries.”⁸³ Take the question of having Soviet pilots to fight in Vietnam as another example. In the talk on 23 March 1966, Zhou Enlai said: “There are many arguments concerning the requests by Vietnam for volunteer pilots from socialist countries. You will be in trouble. The Soviets may disclose secrets to the enemy. We, therefore, think that joint actions between the volunteers will be impossible. Moreover, even though these volunteers should be subject to your command, the Soviets will always have conflicting opinions. The gains you obtain from the Soviet pilots cannot compensate for the losses by them.”⁸⁴

⁸² Talks between Ho Chi Minh and Chinese leaders including Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and Liu Shaoqi on 17 May 1965. In his talk with Ho Chi Minh on 8 November 1965, Zhou Enlai elaborated the purpose of Soviet aid to Vietnam as follows: (1) to isolate China, (2) to improve Soviet-US relations, and (3) to conduct subversive activities as well as acts of sabotage, causing problems in China and perhaps also in Vietnam.

⁸³ Talk between Zhou Enlai, Peng Chen and Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Pham Hung in Hanoi on 1 March 1965. Sending Vietnamese students to Europe, mainly to the Soviet Union, therefore, was also subject to vigilance. Zhou Enlai, on 19 September 1970 said: “We think that it is better to train your students in Vietnam than sending them to Europe because the ways of life there are different. The young people will be influenced by other ideas, which will make it difficult for us when they return. Therefore, you should not send them abroad. We can send our teachers to Vietnam for their education.”

⁸⁴ Talk on 23 March 1966.

Pressing its view that the Soviet help was not “sincere,”⁸⁵ Beijing then warned Hanoi to differentiate in its public statements between Soviet and Chinese aid. On 13 April 1966, Zhou Enlai admonished DRV leaders: “that you mention [Soviet aid] together with Chinese aid is an insult to us.” Deng Xiaoping then chimed in: “From now on, you should not mention Chinese aid at the same time as Soviet aid.”⁸⁶ The Chinese leaders also gave a more profound reason for condemning Soviet aid. In Beijing’s assessment, the USSR was no longer a socialist country and was in fact pursuing an imperialist policy with regard to countries in the national liberation movement. Zhou Enlai and Kang Sheng said on 12 April 1969: “How can a socialist country have such an imperialist policy? It is clear that the Soviet Union is no longer a socialist country which would help the national liberation movement. Instead, the Soviets are selling out the interests of the countries in the movement. Lenin’s concept of ‘socialist imperialism’ has emerged in the Soviet Union in its revisionist policy.”⁸⁷

In fact, Beijing felt uneasy when the DRV enjoyed increased aid from Moscow primarily because it feared that it would translate into greater Soviet influence over Hanoi. Beijing, therefore, tried to persuade the Vietnamese that it would be “better [off] without Soviet aid.”⁸⁸ Earlier, as a Vietnamese historian noted, Beijing had even offered to step up Chinese aid so that Hanoi would not need Moscow’s assistance.⁸⁹ Such actions explain why Chinese leaders stressed the task of struggling revisionism as a way to counter Soviet influence. On 23 March 1966, Zhou Enlai said: “We hold that opposing the US should necessarily go hand in hand with opposing revisionism. These two things cannot be separated from each other.”⁹⁰

Noting the change in Soviet policy toward Vietnam in late 1965, beginning in early 1966 Beijing warned Hanoi of possible Soviet influence over DRV strategy. Zhou Enlai said: “If you are not vigilant, you can be sold out before you recognize it...What we are

⁸⁵ Talk on 9 October 1965.

⁸⁶ Talk on 14 April 1966.

⁸⁷ Talk with the COSVN delegation on 12 April 1969.

⁸⁸ Talk on 9 October 1965 between Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong.

⁸⁹ In his talk with leaders in Hanoi, Deng Xiaoping said if Hanoi “refused Soviet aid, Beijing would give Hanoi one billion yuan in aid.” Quoted in Nguyen Khac Vien, *Contemporary Vietnam: 1858-1980* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1981), p. 181.

⁹⁰ Talk on 23 March 1966.

most concerned about is that they [the Soviets] will exert their influence over the conduct of the war in Vietnam.”⁹¹ Some of the later talks in this collection show that Beijing not only criticized Soviet strategic thinking, but linked this with Hanoi’s choice of policy. One crucial issue was the choice between Chinese guerrilla warfare strategy and Soviet modern warfare strategy. From late January 1968, the Tet General Offensives and General Uprising had begun, signaling Hanoi’s hope that by escalating the war, this time in the urban areas, quick and decisive victories could be won.⁹² Beijing saw a Soviet hand in these developments, noting that Hanoi’s strategy now differed from the Chinese strategy of protracted war, and warned the DRV of possible negative consequences if the new strategy were to be adopted. Zhou Enlai argued this case to Pham Hung in June 1968, asserting that attacks on the cities:

are not of a decisive nature. The Soviet revisionists are claiming that attacks on Saigon are genuine offensives, that the tactic of using the countryside to encircle the urban areas is wrong and that to conduct a protracted struggle is a mistake. In their opinion, only lightning attacks on big cities are decisive. But if you do that, the US will be happy as they can concentrate their forces for counter-attacks, thus causing greater destruction for you. The losses that you would suffer would lead to defeatism on your side. And the Soviet Union will exploit this situation to exert more pressure on you, forcing you to negotiate.⁹³

Beijing also drew a connection between Hanoi’s decision to enter talks with the US and Moscow’s strategic advice, blaming the Soviets for trapping the Vietnamese. Criticizing Hanoi’s 3 April 1968 statement for accepting negotiations in a passive and disadvantageous position, Zhou said that it was “the fault of the Soviets” and added that the Chinese had made “a list of mistakes committed by the Soviets [and would] send it to President Ho for his consideration.”⁹⁴ The Soviets, according to Beijing, always advised

⁹¹ Talk on 25 April 1966.

⁹² Already on 7 February 1961, Le Duan had written in a letter to comrades in the South: “The revolution in the South will not follow the path of protracted armed struggle, surrounding the cities from the countryside and advancing to liberate the entire country by using military forces as China did, but will follow a Vietnamese path. That means there will be partial uprisings and the establishment of base areas, and there will be a guerrilla war leading to a general uprising, which will primarily use political force in coordination with armed forces to grasp political power in the hands of the people.” Quoted in Le Duan, *La thu vao Nam* [Letters to the South] (Hanoi: Su That, 1985), p. xv. The translation is taken from David Elliott, “Hanoi’s Strategy,” in Jayne Werner and Luu Doan Huynh, eds., *The Vietnam War: Vietnamese and American Perspectives* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), p. 73.

⁹³ Talk between Zhou Enlai and Pham Hung in Beijing on 29 June 1968.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

their friends to compromise, meaning that they would give up before winning a final victory. To make a stronger case for this argument, Beijing's leaders even referred to their experiences during the Chinese civil war to reveal the sinister Soviet intentions so far as negotiations were concerned. Zhou Enlai told Hanoi leaders about the Kremlin's involvement in the negotiations between the CCP and GMD from 1945 on and warned: "The closer your war comes to victory, the more obstructive and treacherous the Soviet revisionists will be." He also added that his reference to China's past experiences was to make Vietnamese friends "vigilant" toward Moscow.⁹⁵ And when they thought they had discovered traces of Soviet influence in Hanoi's policy, Beijing leaders reacted sternly. On 17 October 1968, Chen Yi conveyed a message from Zhou Enlai to Le Duc Tho: "In a short time, you have accepted the compromising and capitulationist proposals put forward by the Soviet revisionists. So between our two parties and the two governments of Vietnam and China, there is nothing more to talk about."⁹⁶

Feeling that Hanoi was edging closer to Moscow, Beijing now assessed developments in Sino-Vietnamese relations in a more critical way. While Beijing already considered Moscow as the number-one enemy, Hanoi showed its support to the new leadership in Moscow, praising Soviet socialism and Soviet aid to Vietnam as well as supporting its invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. These developments formed the context for Beijing's criticisms and suspicions regarding Hanoi's intentions. Beijing thus made a connection between changes in Soviet-Vietnamese relations and shifts in Hanoi's strategy and Sino-Vietnamese relations, thus criticizing Hanoi for tightening its bonds to Moscow and loosening its ties with Beijing. In this connection, Zhou Enlai told VWP General Secretary Le Duan:

since the visit by Kosygin last year [February 1965] with a view to driving a wedge [between us], some damage has been done and the threat [of more damages] still exists, thus affecting relations between our two parties and states as well as your assistance to the protracted war in the South.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Talks between Chinese and Vietnamese Party Delegations on 11 April 1967.

⁹⁶ Talk on 17 October 1968

⁹⁷ Talk on 25 April 1966. Earlier, Deng Xiaoping told Vietnamese leaders that the Soviets had "cast a shadow in the relationship between our two Parties." Talk on 13 April 1966.

Of all the talks, perhaps an April 1966 discussion between CCP General Secretary Deng Xiaoping and his VWP counterpart Le Duan was conducted in the toughest language. Deng mentioned several incidents in bilateral relations, including those involving Chinese engineering troops in Vietnam and a Chinese commercial ship being maltreated in a Vietnamese port. He then accused Hanoi of being suspicious of Beijing's "overenthusiasm."⁹⁸ Also in this talk, Deng posed a question to his interlocutor: Why are you afraid of displeasing the Soviets, and what about China? With that question, he implied Beijing's doubts and insecurities about Hanoi's preferences in the relations with the Soviet Union and the PRC, reflecting PRC sensitivity to the Soviet position in Vietnam.

A question then arises: Why was the PRC so sensitive to developments in Soviet-Vietnamese relations and critical of what it perceived as North Vietnam's distancing itself from China? Chen Jian has noted that what China really desired in return for providing huge military and material aid to Vietnam was recognition of a "modern version of the relationship between the 'Central Kingdom' and its subordinate neighbors."⁹⁹ In other words, Beijing sought reaffirmation of China's right to its traditional sphere of influence in Vietnam. Even Moscow had implicitly accepted this sphere in its agreement with Beijing on the "division of labor" reached between Moscow and Beijing in the 1950s. Therefore, in Beijing's eyes, Moscow's efforts to exert its influence in Vietnam violated that agreement. To put it differently, Moscow had changed its policy, no longer acknowledging the Chinese sphere of influence in Vietnam, and even trying to take it away from China, an outcome Beijing could never accept. In a broader context, during this period both the Soviets and Chinese claimed to be "genuinely socialist" and to be assisting Vietnam in order to advance its struggle with the US, thus trying to enhance their images in the world Communist and workers' movement. Thus, for each Communist rival, integrating Vietnam into their sphere of influence also meant consolidating their respective positions in the Communist world. Last but not least, both the Soviets and Chinese, since the early 1970s, began to adopt policies of accommodation with the US. They therefore hoped that the US would need Moscow and Beijing to use their leverage to help find a

⁹⁸ Talk on 13 April 1966.

political solution to the Vietnam question, which required both to consolidate their influence over Hanoi's strategy.

Hanoi thus found itself in a very complicated situation, being sandwiched between its two principal allies, each of whom was hostile to each other and at the same time wished to pull Hanoi to its side. It should be noted that Hanoi, in this situation, had its own policy: It tried to strike a balance, not taking sides with either ally, and attempting to bridge the gap between the Soviets and Chinese. At the same time, it attempted to gain maximum assistance from both, yet preserve maximum independence in the conduct of the war.

Yet, one can also see the difference in Hanoi's attitude with regard to the Soviets and Chinese. Beijing alone could not be blamed for the perceived mistakes at the 1954 Geneva Conference as well as the failure of the peaceful coexistence policy that ended in early 1959 when Hanoi started the war of liberation of South Vietnam. In general, Hanoi was advised jointly by Moscow and Beijing. Moreover, the Sino-Soviet rift, for which both Moscow and Beijing were responsible, prevented the socialist camp's united action in support of (North) Vietnam, thus encouraging the US to Americanize the war in South Vietnam and launch air attacks against North Vietnam. Yet, the same rift, among other things, caused Washington to be more careful in escalating the war against North Vietnam due to fear that reckless actions might provoke direct Chinese intervention and/or prompt a rapprochement between the two socialist powers. And in later stages of the war, Hanoi found itself the victim of a "big powers' game" that involved the US, the Soviet Union, and China.

It is also important to note from the personal perspective that the DRV leaders at the highest level, namely Le Duan and Pham Van Dong, who most frequently took part in these—sometimes tense—talks (and with the Soviet leaders, too), had personally experienced hard times caused by Soviet and Chinese advice. Both Le Duan and Pham Van Dong came from the South and thus had greater motivation to struggle for national reunification. Moreover, as the DRV's chief negotiator at Geneva in 1954, Pham Van Dong had been forced by the Soviets and Chinese to sign an agreement which even Beijing

⁹⁹ Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969," p. 386.

later admitted had been a mistake. For his part, Le Duan had stayed in the South for some years after 1954 and had witnessed losses and damages caused by the “peaceful coexistence” policy, which both Beijing and Moscow had then favored: Vietnamese revolutionary forces had been instructed to conduct only a political and non-violent struggle while South Vietnam leader Ngo Dinh Diem’s intensified violent repression of Communists and other patriots.

Although VWP General Secretary Le Duan acknowledged that Chinese aid to Vietnam had been “the most direct and fullest,” stressed that “the relations between Vietnam and China will exist not only during the struggle against the US but also in the long future ahead,” and pledged that Hanoi leaders wanted to “maintain close relations with China as this is a guarantee for the national survival,”¹⁰⁰ Hanoi felt more bitter about Beijing than it did about Moscow.

Several reasons may be adduced to explain this fact. First was the aforementioned division of labor between the Soviets and Chinese with regard to the Vietnam question. Under that division, which was partly due to the geographical proximity, the PRC directly assisted the DRV. In addition, Moscow seemed to adopt a policy that always tried to avoid direct connection with developments in Vietnam that could harm its relations with the US. This meant that Hanoi interacted with Beijing more often and more intensively than it did with Moscow. It could naturally be argued that the more Hanoi and Beijing interacted, the more chances for friction to emerge.¹⁰¹ The presence of Chinese engineering troops in North Vietnam in the 1960s, for example, also created some new problems.¹⁰² In the context of the Cultural Revolution, some actions by Chinese Embassy staff, Chinese Vietnamese, and members of the Red Guard in Vietnam confused Hanoi about China’s policy toward Vietnam, necessitating Beijing leaders to clarify the matter with Hanoi.¹⁰³

When Khrushchev was reluctant to support North Vietnam’s effort to step up the military struggle in the South, and when the Sino-Soviet rift took place, Beijing continued

¹⁰⁰ Talk between Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and Le Duan on 13 April 1966.

¹⁰¹ See a good account of the earlier period in Chen Jian, “China and the First Indochina War.”

¹⁰² Again, see Chen Jian, “China’s Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969.”

¹⁰³ Talks on 10-11 April 1967 and 23 September 1970.

to assist Hanoi. Its motive, however, as Chen Jian has pointed out, was to gain its influence over Hanoi and to play a “big brother” role in Sino-Vietnamese relations. This led to the second reason to explain why Hanoi became more suspicious about Beijing’s policies: it had hoped for an equal type of relations among socialist countries, not a return to the pattern of the tributary relationship in the past.

Third, when Moscow in early 1965 began to increase its commitments to North Vietnam, Soviet-Vietnamese relations greatly improved. And while Hanoi’s changes in its war strategy during this period did not necessarily flow from Moscow’s advice, the decisions to move away from the strategy of protracted warfare and to enter negotiations with the US certainly diverged from what Beijing had counseled Hanoi to do. PRC leaders interpreted the struggle for influence in Hanoi as a zero-sum game—an increase in Soviet influence meant that Beijing’s was waning. The result was a vicious cycle: as Beijing became more critical of Hanoi, Hanoi consequently felt more uncomfortable with Beijing, especially when its scope of maneuver in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship became more constrained than in the Soviet-Vietnamese relationship, and more importantly, when traditionally-held Vietnamese memories and experiences of being treated as an unequal subordinate partner to China had more scope to revive.

Finally, Hanoi simply felt that Beijing was not totally impartial in assisting Vietnam. While Chinese leaders always reminded Hanoi of the Soviet ulterior motives for assisting Vietnam, Hanoi observed the dramatic improvements in Sino-American relations and believed that Beijing also wanted to exploit the Vietnam War for its own benefits. In particular, Hanoi held Beijing responsible for tacitly approving the US bombing of North Vietnam to avoid a direct conflict with Washington.¹⁰⁴ It also believed that the trips by Kissinger and Nixon to Beijing in 1971-72 were evidence of Chinese attempts to use the Vietnam issue to improve Sino-US relations. In the aftermath of the breakup of the Sino-

¹⁰⁴ General Vo Nguyen Giap has recalled: “The Chinese government told the U.S. that if it did not threaten or touch China, then China would do nothing to prevent the attacks [on Vietnam]. It was like telling the U.S. that it could bomb Vietnam at will, as long as there was no threat to the Chinese border... We felt that we had been stabbed in the back.” General Giap as quoted in Douglas Pike, *Vietnam and the Soviet Union: Anatomy of an Alliance* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), p. 87. Chen Jian, however, interprets the thinking of Hanoi as follows: “From a Vietnamese perspective, between Beijing’s words and deeds (in spite of China’s enormous military and material support), there existed a huge gap,

Vietnamese relations in 1979, Hanoi referred to these actions by Beijing during the Vietnam war as “treacherous.”¹⁰⁵

In short, since the early 1950s there had been a novel chance to build the Sino-Vietnamese relationship on the bases of Communist/socialist principles. Both Beijing and Hanoi were then bound in a socialist friendship that in principle could ensure equality in state relations as well as mutual assistance in the common struggle against capitalism/imperialism. Yet, equality seemed to be the term that the weaker party more often referred to in the relations with the stronger one. It held true for the Sino-Soviet relations: the Chinese did not want to play the role of “little brother” vis-à-vis the Soviets, but, lacking the leverage to challenge the latter’s “big brother” behavior, it had to uphold the principle of equality. A comparable pattern held true in the Sino-Vietnamese relations: the Chinese now felt superior to the Vietnamese,¹⁰⁶ who in turn hoped for socialist principles to be strictly followed in the bilateral relations so that its independence could be preserved. Ironically, Vietnam also had the same attitude toward its smaller socialist neighbors, namely Laos and Cambodia, and wanted to have a controlling influence over these countries.

The chance for a new kind of bilateral relations—theoretically brought about by the socialist internationalist approach—thereby lost out to traditional sphere of influence strategic thinking. In other words, the “formal ideology” lost out to the “informal ideology”¹⁰⁷ in the foreign relations of the Communist/socialist system. For this reason, Vietnam and China came out of the Vietnam War quite disappointed with each other, a sentiment that soon developed into outright hostility.

This unanticipated legacy of the Communist victory in Vietnam extended into the postwar period, further damaging Sino-Vietnamese ties. With the signs of worsening

one that would increase with the development of the Vietnam War.” Chen Jian, “China’s Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969,” p. 386.

¹⁰⁵ Socialist Republic of Vietnam Foreign Ministry, *The White Book on the Vietnamese-Chinese Relations* (Hanoi: Truth Publishing House, 1982).

¹⁰⁶ Chen Jian has noted that while leaders in Beijing often stressed that “the Vietnamese should be treated as ‘equals’, the statement itself revealed a strong sense of superiority on the part of the Chinese revolutionaries, implying that they had occupied a position from which to dictate the values and codes of behavior that would dominate their relations” with the Vietnamese. See Chen Jian, “China’s Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969,” p. 386.

¹⁰⁷ Steven Levine, “Perception and Ideology in Chinese Foreign Policy,” pp. 30-46.

relations in 1975, and incidents in 1976-1978 which climaxed in Vietnam's joining the Soviet camp in November 1978 and sending troops to Cambodia in January 1979, Beijing felt that it had lost all its influence in Vietnam and the rest of Indochina to the Soviets. Therefore, it needed to "teach Vietnam a lesson," with the goal of reminding Hanoi of what Beijing perceived as Chinese superiority.

**77 CONVERSATIONS
BETWEEN CHINESE AND FOREIGN LEADERS
ON THE WARS IN INDOCHINA, 1964-1977.**

1. MAO ZEDONG AND THE HEAD OF THE CULTURAL GROUP OF THE
LAOTIAN PATRIOTIC FRONT¹⁰⁸ SANGSIV

Beijing, 4 September 1964

Mao Zedong: Your struggle is heroic. You are fighting on the first front, the front against U.S. imperialism. You have learned how to carry out the mass line and you are able to unite the majority—the workers, the peasants, and other patriotic figures—to participate in the joint struggle against U.S. imperialism. It is certain that you will win.

In order to carry out mass work, it is necessary to behave as the masses do. In order to make friends with the masses, first of all you need to share their spirit, and then you need to dress in the same way as they do. You should wear the same clothes as they wear. You also need to eat the same food as they eat. Whatever they eat, you eat. You also need to labor together with them. Otherwise they will fear you. You are intellectuals. Are you their friends or their enemies? They are not clear about this. If you are their friends, you should dress, eat, live and labor in the same way as they do. After one or two months, you become familiar to them. By doing so you will be able to unite with them in the struggle against U.S. imperialism.

I am not just talking about you, the cultural group. The army should follow the same principles. You are able to do this, which the imperialists are unable to do. The reactionaries exploit the masses and oppress the masses. Your army should carry out operational tasks, and should also carry out mass work. Our military has done this. We have tried for several decades, and have worked out the “The Three Disciplines and Eight Attentions.” The first discipline is that all soldiers should obey orders. Without obeying orders, everyone cares about everyone else’s business; this is not the correct way. Is your cultural work team under good discipline?

Lian Guan:¹⁰⁹ They are very well disciplined.

Mao Zedong: Without discipline, the cultural work team cannot do a good job. The second discipline is not to take a single needle and thread from the masses. Then,

¹⁰⁸ Neo Lao Hak Sat, front organization of the Pathet Lao.

¹⁰⁹ Lian Guan was deputy secretary general of the Standing Committee of the People’s National Congress of the People’s Republic of China, who was assigned to accompany the Laotian delegation during its visit to China.

what should the army do? What should they wear and what should they eat? You cannot demand these things from the workers and peasants. In addition to getting some from the enemy, our government will have to collect some taxes. We will need to collect some food tax and some commercial tax. We cannot exist without collecting some taxes. After collecting the taxes, part [of the income] should go to the army and part should go to the masses. We should let the common people share the benefit. Our party, our government and our army are the party of the workers and peasants, the government of the workers and the peasants, and the army of the workers and peasants. We have tried for several decades, and have won a victory. But we have also committed mistakes several times. For example, twice we have committed right-leaning mistakes, and three times we have committed left-leaning mistakes. You are fine. You have not committed the mistakes that we have committed.

Sangsiv: This is because we have drawn lessons from the comrades who have committed the mistakes, and therefore we are in a position not to commit the same mistakes.

Mao Zedong: When one commits mistakes, it is important to see what mistake it is. When the mistake concerns political lines, it could cause huge losses. For example, in 1927, [our party] committed a big mistake, which resulted in huge losses, and the party membership [was] reduced from 50,000 to less than 10,000. In order to correct the mistake, we took up guns to fight, and, as a result, we found a way out. Then we created several base areas and possessed an army of 300,000. But arrogance emerged at that time, and a left-leaning opportunist mistake was committed, leading to the loss of all the base areas in the South. [We] began the Long March of “ten-thousand li.” When we arrived in the North, from among the 300,000 soldiers, only 20,000 survived. But we felt comfortable at that moment. Why did we feel comfortable? This was because those who had committed the mistakes were no longer able to raise their heads. We used the method of persuasion, that is, through the rectification campaign, to unite with them. We did not abandon a single one of them. Finally we won today’s victory. When you come to China, you see some good things. But you also need to see our mistakes. Without an understanding of our mistakes, you will not benefit. We have won a victory, and we have conducted socialist construction for fifteen years, yet our cultural circle is not as good as yours. Several millions serving in the circle are bourgeois intellectuals left by the Guomindang [Kuomintang]. Among university professors, middle-school teachers, primary-school teachers in education, many are bourgeois intellectuals. There are also [bourgeois intellectuals] among drama actors, painters, and singers in the cultural circles. There are many among journalists, and some in the movie-making business. Now we

have begun another rectification campaign, and they cannot endure it. I will be happy to see that in the coming year or two bourgeois intellectuals will not sleep well as a result of the rectification campaign.

....

Mao Zedong: You should not look down upon yourself because your country is a small one. What's wrong with being from a small country. Heroes can emerge in a small country. Do you know the name of the chairman of the Indonesian Communist Party?

Sangsiv: Aidit.¹¹⁰

Mao Zedong: Yes, it is this comrade. I once asked him where he was from. He said that he was from a small island located southwest of Sumatra, and that he belonged to a minority race. You see, he is from such a small place, and how can he become the chairman of the Indonesian party? He told me that although that was a small place, Indonesia's language took the one there as the standard, and that it was there that the Indonesian Communist Party was the most active. Marx was from a minority race, he was a Jew. Jesus was also a Jew. In the past the Jews were a minority race. The Confucius of China lived in the State of Lu, which had only a population of several hundred thousand. He created the first school in Chinese history. But no one would take notice of him. He then tried to find a job in other states, and, again, no one would take notice of him. He had no other choice but to wander around. He propagated the feudal morals to serve the interests of the landlord class. Later everyone would call him a sage.

The intellectuals left over by the old society have to be transformed, something to which we did not pay much attention in the past.

Who will overcome whom? Will the capitalist class overcome the proletarian class, or will the proletarian class overcome the capitalist class? This problem has not been solved yet. Some people do not understand this. Khrushchev is one of them. You see, the Soviet Union has existed for forty some years, and now capitalism has been restored there. The party that was established by Lenin, and the Soviet Union that was established by Lenin, after forty some years, have become capitalist, and have adopted revisionism. We have tried only for fifteen years. In the future, Marxism-Leninism will win. How to educate the young people is a big question. If we lose our vigilance and fall asleep, thus becoming self-satisfied, the capitalist class will emerge to grab political power, and capitalism will come back. If Marxism fails to overcome revisionism, revisionism will overcome Marxism, and, as a result, capitalism will be restored. Under the signboard of

¹¹⁰ Dipa Nusantara Aidit (1923-1965), belonged to a group assuming power in the Indonesian Communist Party in 1951. He led the party as General Secretary during a period of tremendous growth in the membership. Aidit was executed after the military coup in November 1965.

Communism to carry out policies of capitalism, you know, this is a problem which is difficult to resolve in a decade or several decades.

When you return to your own country, please report to your Central Committee that hope is on our side. Khrushchev is not a good person. But he also has helped us. He has helped us to understand the Soviet Union—how the first socialist country has deteriorated into revisionism. Not only has he helped the Chinese, but also he has helped you and has helped revolutionary people all over the world. There are three types of bad guys in the world: the imperialists, the revisionists, and the reactionaries in various countries.

2. MAO ZEDONG AND CAMBODIAN PRINCE SIHANOUK¹¹¹

Beijing, 28 September 1964

Mao Zedong: The United States bombarded the [military] bases of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on August 5. The support from you [to DRV] has surpassed some socialist countries. Some socialist countries are not as good as you are. They make friends with the Americans, as well as talk about friendship with them. You are struggling against the Americans. Only by struggling will you be able to survive. In order to struggle, you need to rely on the vast masses. Those who talk about unity with the Americans and who fear the United States will eventually suffer.

....

We have established partial diplomatic relations with Britain. [Ed. note: This was done already in 1950.] At first, they proposed to exchange ambassadors and elevate the chargé d'affaires level relations to ambassadorial relations. But we disagreed. There are two reasons: First, they claim that Taiwan's status has not been determined. Second, they carry out a "two-China" policy at the United Nations.

The Americans have done all kinds of stupid things. Probably it will take nine years or ten years before they are forced to expel Jiang Jieshi's [Chiang Kai-shek's] representatives from the United Nations. Perhaps this cannot be done at the moment. But you may say that Taiwan should be expelled immediately. In actuality, it will take several years, or even longer. [Ed. note: It in fact happened in 1971.]

¹¹¹ Sihanouk (1922-), King of Cambodia 1941-55, Prime Minister 1955-60 and chief of state 1960-70, when he was deposed in a coup led by General Lon Nol. Returned to Phnom Penh with the Khmer Rouge in 1975. Went once more into exile after the Vietnamese invasion 1978-79. Returned as King in 1993. A year before this conversation (November 1963), Sihanouk had renounced US aid and had instead accepted economic assistance from the PRC and the Soviet Union. This meeting with Mao took place on the second day of a nine-day visit, leading to substantial Chinese military and economic aid.

Our policy line is to win over such countries as Japan, West Germany, and Italy to oppose the United States. This is because Italy, West Germany, and Japan are defeated countries. The monopoly-capitalists want to make money, and the big capitalists in these countries hope to stand up. In order to stand up, they will need to have colonies, which will cause their contradictions with the United States.

....

We have been engaged in wars for 25 years. During these years, we have fought Jiang Jieshi for 14 years, Japan for eight years, and the Americans in North Korea for three years.

It is possible to defeat the American troops. At first, among our soldiers and cadres only twenty percent were confident of defeating the Americans, and another twenty percent were unwilling to cross the [Yalu] River to fight the war. They said that the Americans should not be attacked, and that the Americans were something special. Sixty percent [of our soldiers and cadres] were middle-of-the-roaders, for whom it did not matter whether or not we were to fight [the Americans]. Subsequently, all went to [Korea].

Sihanouk: When they were there, one hundred percent of them fought well.

Mao Zedong: Not bad. But we also committed some mistakes. This was because the general in command was politically backward. That was Peng Dehuai.¹¹² Why did we dispatch him [and] not someone else there? This was because he was in good health at that time, and he was a marshal. The other marshal was ill, and was not in such good health as he was.¹¹³ Generally speaking, we fought quite well. But if the commander had been a more skillful general, we could have fought even better. To fight a war, it is important to be prepared. Once you are prepared, the enemy dares not to come, and if he comes, it is easy to deal with him.

....

I began to study Marxism when I was already 28 years old, and, before that time, I had learned nothing but feudalism and capitalism. I once believed in Kant's philosophy. I did not begin to study Marxism and dialectical materialism until I was 28 years old. Before that time, I had not studied them, and it was the Russians who exposed me to them. I was taught by the Russian Revolution of 1917. I did not even know who Marx and Engels were before 1917. I only knew the names of Napoleon, [George] Washington, [Jean

¹¹² Peng Dehuai (1898-1974) was the first commander of the "Chinese People's Volunteers" during the Korean War. He was a member of the CCP Politburo and the PRC's vice premier and defense minister until 1959, when he was purged by Mao and disappeared from China's political scene.

¹¹³ Mao is probably referring to Lin Biao.

Jacques] Rousseau, and [James and/or John Stuart] Mill, plus the stuff of Chinese feudalism, such as Confucius and Mencius, and plus some stuff of capitalism.

The last time I met you, I asked you to read a book, that is, a part of Engel's *Anti-D hring*, "Socialism: from Utopian to Scientific."

Sihanouk: Yes, I have read that book.

Mao: If you are interested, you may want to read another book, it is called *The Communist Manifesto*. This is the first book of Marxism.

Sihanouk: I know the book.

Mao Zedong: You know it. But you must make the determination to stand on the side of the majority. There might be some difficulties. I encountered the difficulty myself at first, and I changed my stand by making the determination. Then I turned to learning how to fight a war. I used to be a primary school teacher, and I had neither learned nor taught how to fight a war. My teacher was Jiang Jieshi. Because he murdered people. When he murdered people I began to learn from him, and I learned for ten years, and had learned almost everything. Then the Japanese invaded China, and we Communists again cooperated with Jiang Jieshi and the Guomindang. That was the year 1937. (Mao asks Wang Guangmei: Were you born at that time? Wang: Yes, I was already born.) We fought the Japanese for eight years. After the Japanese had left, Jiang again attacked us. After Jiang Jieshi's defeat, the Americans played the role as our teacher. Their troops approached the Yalu River at the border of our country. We dispatched our troops to fight them for three years before the armistice was reached.

Now, the United States is our adversary. But we are negotiating. We have negotiated in Warsaw for nine years. In the past, we met once a week, or once every two weeks, or once a month. Now we meet once every two to three months. We talk about nothing but repeat those old statements.

Our first statement is that the United States should pull the Seventh Fleet and its troops out [of Taiwan]. Our relations with Jiang Jieshi belong to China's internal affairs, in which you should not interfere. But it will not follow us. It requested the release of several American prisoners we have detained in our prisons, and the dispatch of journalists [to China]. We refused. The [American] special agents have committed crimes and should be dealt with in accordance with China's laws. Not a single journalist will be allowed to come. As the first step, the United States should withdraw its troops. We now announce that our territorial water covers 12 sea miles, but it refuses to recognize this and makes intentional invasions. We have issued warnings, but cannot stop it. We have issued over three hundred warnings and are prepared to issue three thousand warnings.

3. MAO ZEDONG AND PHAM VAN DONG,¹¹⁴ HOANG VAN HOAN¹¹⁵

Beijing, 5 October 1964, 7-7:50 (p.m.?)

Mao Zedong: According to Comrade Le Duan,¹¹⁶ you had the plan to dispatch a division [to the South]. Probably you have not dispatched that division yet.¹¹⁷ When should you dispatch it, the timing is important. Whether or not the United States will attack the North, it has not yet made the decision. Now, it [the U.S.] is not even in a position to resolve the problem in South Vietnam. If it attacks the North, [it may need to] fight for one hundred years, and its legs will be trapped there. Therefore, it needs to consider carefully. The Americans have made all kinds of scary statements. They claim that they will run after [you], and will chase into your country, and that they will attack our air force. In my opinion, the meaning of these words is that they do not want us to fight a big war, and that [they do not want] our air force to attack their warships. If [we] do not attack their warships, they will not run after you. Isn't this what they mean? The Americans have something to hide.

Pham Van Dong: This is also our thinking. The United States is facing many difficulties, and it is not easy for it to expand the war. Therefore, our consideration is that

¹¹⁴ Pham Van Dong (1906-), a long-standing member of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) who worked closely with Ho Chi Minh and was Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) until 1980 (from 1976 the Socialist Republic of Vietnam—SRV).

¹¹⁵ Hoang Van Hoan (1905-1994?), a long-standing member of the ICP and a Politburo member of the Lao Dong (Vietnam Workers' Party—VWP) from 1960 to 1976. Hoan was a crucial link between the DRV and China; ambassador to Beijing 1950-57; led many delegations to China as Vice Chairman of the DRV National Assembly Standing Committee in the 1960s. Lost much of his influence after Ho Chi Minh's death in September 1969. In 1973 Hoan again went to China to arrange for a visit by Le Duan and Pham Van Dong. He defected to China in July 1979. In 1986 he published his memoirs (*A Drop in the Ocean*) which gave a rare glimpse into the inner life of the ICP/VWP.

¹¹⁶ Le Duan, (1908-86) had been secretary of the Nam Bo (southern region) Party Committee, later COSVN, during the first Indochina War. Sent a letter to party leaders objecting to the 1954 Geneva agreement. From 1956 acting general secretary of the Lao Dong. (Ho Chi Minh was officially General secretary.) The prime mover, in 1957-59, for a resumption of armed struggle in the South. From 1960 until his death in 1986, Le Duan served as general secretary of the VWP (in 1976 renamed Vietnam Communist Party—VCP).

¹¹⁷ Right after the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, Le Duan visited Beijing and met Mao on 13 August 1964. The two leaders exchanged intelligence reports on the two incidents. Le Duan confirmed to Mao that the first incident (that of August 2) was the result of the decisions made by the Vietnamese commander on the site, and Mao told Le Duan that according to the intelligence information Beijing had received, the second incident of August 4 was “not an intentional attack by the Americans” but caused by “the Americans’ mistaken judgment, based on wrong information.” Touching upon the prospect for the war to be expanded into North Vietnam, Mao thought that “it seems that the Americans do not want to fight a war, you do not want to fight a war, and we do not necessarily want to fight a war,” and that “because no one wants to fight a war, there will be no war.” Le Duan told Mao that “the support from China is indispensable, it is indeed related to the fate of our motherland...The Soviet revisionists want to make us a bargaining chip; this has been very clear.” Ed. note: In some of the footnotes we have added additional information from the same sources as the documents themselves.

we should try to restrict the war in South Vietnam to the sphere of special war, and should try to defeat the enemy within the sphere of special war. We should try our best not to let the U.S. imperialists turn the war in South Vietnam into a limited war, and try our best not to let the war be expanded to North Vietnam. We must adopt a very skillful strategy, and should not provoke it [the U.S.]. Our Politburo has made a decision on this matter, and today I am reporting it to Chairman Mao. We believe that this is workable.

Mao Zedong: Yes.

Pham Van Dong: If the United States dares to start a limited war, we will fight it, and will win it.

Mao Zedong: Yes, you can win it.¹¹⁸ The South Vietnamese [puppet regime] has several hundred thousand troops. You can fight against them, you can eliminate half of them, and you can eliminate all of them. To fulfill these tasks is more than possible. It is impossible for the United States to send many troops to South Vietnam. The Americans altogether have 18 army divisions. They have to keep half of these divisions, i.e., nine of them, at home, and can send abroad the other nine divisions. Among these divisions, half are in Europe, and half are in the Asian-Pacific region. And they have stationed more divisions in Asia [than elsewhere in the region], namely, three divisions. One [is] in South Korea, one in Hawaii, and the third one in [original not clear]. They also placed fewer than one division of marine corps in Okinawa in Japan. Now all American troops in South Vietnam belong to the navy, and they are units under the navy system. As far as the American navy is concerned, they have put more ships in the Western Pacific than in Europe. In the Mediterranean, there is the Sixth Fleet; here [in the Pacific] is the Seventh Fleet. They have deployed four aircraft carriers near you, but they have been scared away by you.

....

Mao Zedong: If the Americans dare to take the risk to bring the war to the North, how should the invasion be dealt with? I have discussed this issue with Comrade Le Duan. [First], of course, it is necessary to construct defensive works along the coast. The best way is to construct defensive works like the ones [we had constructed] during the Korean War, so that you may prevent the enemy from entering the inner land. Second, however, if the Americans are determined to invade the inner land, you may allow them to

¹¹⁸ On 22 January 1965, Zhou Enlai told a Vietnamese military delegation: “As far as the war in Vietnam is concerned, we should continuously eliminate the main forces of the enemy when they come out to conduct mopping-up operations, so that the combat capacity of the enemy forces will be weakened while that of our troops will be strengthened. We should strive to destroy most of the enemy’s Strategic Hamlets by the end of this year. If this is to be realized in addition to the enemy’s political bankruptcy, it is possible that victory would come even sooner than our original expectation.”

do so. You should pay attention to your strategy. You must not engage your main force in a head-to-head confrontation with them, and must well maintain your main force. My opinion is that so long as the green mountain is there, how can you ever lack firewood?

Pham Van Dong: Comrade Le Duan has reported Chairman Mao's opinions to our Central Committee. We have conducted an overall review of the situations in the South and the North, and our opinion is the same as that of Chairman Mao's. In South Vietnam, we should actively fight [the enemy]; and in North Vietnam, we should be prepared [for the enemy to escalate the war]. But we should also be cautious.

Mao Zedong: Our opinions are identical. Some other people say that we are belligerent. As a matter of fact, we are cautious. But it is not totally without ground to say [that we are belligerent].

....

Mao Zedong: The more thoroughly you defeat them, the more comfortable they feel. For example, you beat the French, and they became willing to negotiate with you. The Algerians defeated the French badly, and France became willing to come to peace with Algeria. It has been proven that the more badly you beat them, the more comfortable they feel.

....

Mao Zedong: Is it true that you are invited to attend the [UN] Security Council meetings?

Zhou Enlai: This is still a secret. The invitation was made through U Thant.¹¹⁹

Mao Zedong: And U Thant made it through whom?

Zhou Enlai: The Soviets.

Mao Zedong: So the Soviet Union is the middleman.

Pham Van Dong: According to the Soviet ambassador to Vietnam, they met with U Thant on the one hand, and with [U.S. Secretary of State Dean] Rusk on the other.

Mao Zedong: It is not completely a bad thing to negotiate. You have already earned the qualification to negotiate. It is another matter whether or not the negotiation will succeed. We have also earned our qualification to negotiate [with the Americans]. We are now negotiating with the Americans on the Taiwan issue, and the Sino-American ambassadorial talks are now under way in Warsaw. The talks have lasted for more than nine years.

Zhou Enlai: More than 120 meetings have been held.

Mao Zedong: The talks will continue. One time, during a meeting at Geneva, they did not want to continue the talks. They withdrew their representatives, leaving there only

¹¹⁹ U Thant (1909-74), Secretary General of the UN 1962-71.

one person in charge of communication and liaison matters. We gave them a blow by sending them a letter, setting up a deadline for them to send back their representative. They did return to the talks later, but they did not meet the deadline we set for them: they were a few days late. They said that it was an ultimatum by us. At that time, some among ourselves believed that we should not set the deadline for them, nor should we make the harsh statement, and that by doing so it became an ultimatum. But we did, and the Americans did [return to the talks].

1965

4. ZHOU ENLAI AND HO CHI MINH¹²⁰

Hanoi, 1 March 1965

Zhou Enlai: When Khrushchev stepped down and the new leadership of the Soviet Party took power [in mid-October 1964], we thought that their policy would change somewhat in any case. This was why we proposed that we all should go to Moscow to celebrate, while at the same time observing the situation there. But the result made us greatly disappointed. As far as the new Soviet leadership is concerned, we believed that it was not sufficient to observe it just once, and we should observe for some more time. Now it is clear. The new Soviet Party leadership is carrying out nothing but Khrushchevism. It is absolutely impossible for them to change.

...

Kosygin suggested that the socialist countries should have a joint statement in support of Vietnam.¹²¹ I told him that each country had its own position and judgment, so it would also be good if each country had its own statement. However, during their visit to Vietnam they [the Soviets] could have a joint statement [with Vietnam].

....

So in our course of revolution, and in our struggle against the US, the matters of top secrecy should not be disclosed to them. Of course, we can mention the principles which we also want to publicize. We oppose [the Soviet] military activities that include

¹²⁰ Attending on the Chinese side were Zhou Enlai, Peng Zhen (member of the CCP Politburo and Mayor of Beijing), Yang Chengwu (Deputy chief of staff of the PLA; acting chief of staff until purged in March 1968), Wu Lengxi (director of the Xinhua News Agency and editor-in-chief of *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily]); on the Vietnamese side: Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Pham Hung. (For Giap and Pham Hung, see footnotes 147 and 200.)

¹²¹ On 4-11 February 1965, Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin visited Beijing and Hanoi and held a series of talks with Chinese and Vietnamese leaders, including five meetings with Zhou Enlai and one meeting with Mao Zedong.

the sending of missile battalions and 2 MiG-21 aircraft as well as the proposal to establish an airlift using 45 planes for weapon transportation. We also have to be wary of the military instructors. Soviet experts have withdrawn, so what are their purposes [when they] wish to come back? We have had experience in the past when there were subversive activities in China, Korea, and Cuba. We, therefore, should keep an eye on their activities, namely their transportation of weapons and military training. Otherwise, the relations between our two countries may turn from good to bad, thus affecting cooperation between our two countries.

5. ZHOU ENLAI AND ALGERIAN PRESIDENT BEN BELLA¹²²

Algiers, 30 March 1965

Zhou Enlai: The Vietnam question resulted completely from the trouble made by the Americans. Originally, according to the Geneva agreement of 1954, France withdrew from Vietnam, and two years later, south and north Vietnam should unite peacefully. But the American invasion hindered the realization of the peaceful unification of the north and the south. At present, the United States intends to scare Vietnam by expanding the war, hoping that Vietnam will yield to American bombardment, agreeing to negotiate. The United States also intends to scare China, forcing us to accept peace negotiations. Further, the United States is pursuing peace negotiation through the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and other countries. “Unconditional cease-fire”—this is nothing but requesting that the people in South Vietnam should stop armed struggle, that North Vietnam should stop supporting the struggle in South Vietnam, and that the puppet troops in South Vietnam would be given some breathing space, so that the United States would be able to strengthen its military presence in South Vietnam. An unconditional ceasefire in South Vietnam? No way. This would mean that South Vietnam would once again be enslaved, continuing to be ruled by the puppet regime. The activities for an unconditional ceasefire are conducted by all kinds of people, including the activities by the British. Some are directly, and some are indirectly, instructed by the United States [to do so]. But there are also some good-intentioned people who believe that the problems can be solved through peace negotiations. But all these activities are unfavorable to the liberation of the people in South Vietnam, if viewed objectively.

6. ZHOU ENLAI AND PAKISTANI PRESIDENT AYUB KHAN¹²³

¹²² Ahmed Ben Bella, 1919-, President of Algeria from its independence in 1962 until he was deposed on 19 June 1965.

Karachi, 2 April 1965

Zhou Enlai: I have recently visited two countries in Africa, they were both very much concerned about the development of the situation in Southeast Asia. I know that during [PRC Foreign Minister] Marshal Chen Yi's visit to Pakistan, he also had some discussion with Your Excellency.

Ayub Khan: We are very much worried. We don't know when the large-scale bombing will end.

Zhou Enlai: The Americans think that by expanding its aggression in South Vietnam and escalating its bombing in North Vietnam, they can bring Vietnam to its knees. This kind of thinking will fail completely.

During my recent visit, the African and European friends were all concerned about this issue. In sum, there are three questions. (1) Under the circumstance that the United States is expanding its aggression and strengthening pressure, even if the people of Vietnam and Indo-China are able to resist America's aggression, they will suffer heavy losses; if they are unable to resist, they may compromise in the face of the tremendous threat. They (the friends in Africa and Europe) worry that if Vietnam is to yield to America's pressure, [the people] in other parts of the world will also suffer from heavy losses. (2) The worry that the war may expand, gradually developing into a world war. (3) Between compromise and world war, does there exist the possibility of [solving the issue through] negotiations?

I have analyzed and answered these questions.

(1) There exists no possibility that Vietnam will yield [to American pressure]. On March 22, the NLF [National Liberation Front] of South Vietnam issued an extremely strong statement. They firmly believe that they can defeat the puppet troops, and that the puppet troops in South Vietnam will collapse gradually. The troops the United States is able to send can only occupy a small portion of cities and sea ports. According to America's planning, they can only dispatch, at the most, three divisions to South Vietnam: one is an infantry division from America, one is a marine division from Okinawa, and the last one is put together by units from the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand. These troops can only be used to defend sea ports, cities, and military bases in South Vietnam. The Americans hope to use these troops to replace the formal units of the puppet troops in South Vietnam, using the latter to deal with the people in South Vietnam. The NLF in South Vietnam is confident that the puppet troops will be eliminated. The American authorities worry what their troops should do if the puppet troops are eliminated. If they

¹²³ Muhammad Ayub Khan, 1907-74, military leader and president (1958-69) of Pakistan.

are far away from their strongholds, they will face the same fate of being defeated. Now their air and land forces are being eliminated continuously. The puppet regime in South Vietnam has changed about a dozen times, and the Americans can trust virtually none of them. The Ngo Dinh Diem brothers were assassinated by the Americans. The Americans are considering signing an agreement with the puppet regime, making it clear that America sends troops to Vietnam in accordance with the request of the puppet regime. But if the puppet regime in Saigon no longer exists, will the agreement still be effective? This indeed will become something unheard of. The United States signed many treaties with Jiang Jieshi. But after the People's Liberation Army occupied Nanjing, these treaties could no longer be maintained—only Taiwan is an exception. Now the Americans again try to use agreements to serve their purpose in South Vietnam. In actuality, the United States has long realized that it will certainly be defeated in South Vietnam, but it is unwilling to withdraw, and it tries to use this tactic to put up a last ditch struggle.

On the other hand, the United States tries to use the bombardment of North Vietnam to force the North to surrender. In August and September last year, the United States bombed North Vietnam once or twice a week. From late March this year to now, there is bombing almost every day. In the face of this, the NLF in South Vietnam stated that no matter how long the bombing lasts, it will continue the fighting, until winning victory. The government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam supports the NLF's statement, and is preparing to provide it with all kinds of assistance. The government of [North] Korea has also issued a statement to echo [that of the DRV's]. China published an editorial on March 25 in *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], expressing determination to support the people in South Vietnam to win victory, preparing to offer all kinds of support, including weapons, to the people in South Vietnam. When the people in South Vietnam are in need, China will send its personnel to fight together with the people in South Vietnam. Although this is only an editorial, it has caused strong reaction in foreign opinions, especially in the United States. Foreign Minister Chen Yi, in his response to the foreign minister of the DRV, has also confirmed this stand. The public opinion in the world has condemned the United States. In the face of American bombardment, the DRV has started evacuating the population and is determined to support the brothers in South Vietnam to carry the resistance to the end.

Under these circumstances, what is America's policy? The propaganda in the United States has reflected the contradictions it is facing. On the one hand, American propaganda claims that if Vietnam does not stop its "aggression," the United States will expand the war of aggression. This is the most ridiculous bandit-style logic of imperialism. According to this logic, South Vietnam's resistance to American aggression

is “aggression,” and North Vietnam’s support to South Vietnam is “aggression” against one’s own compatriots. If so, the resistance by the NLF in Algeria to the French colonists becomes Algeria’s “aggression” against Algeria, and Egypt’s taking back the Suez Canal becomes the Egyptians’ “aggression” against the Egyptians. This question became crystal clear as soon as I discussed it with the Algerians and Egyptians. This is nothing but America’s bandit-style logic.

On the other hand, the United States is propagandizing that the expansion of the war will be limited to South Vietnam, and that it only wants North Vietnam to stop its support to South Vietnam. The United States is hoping to separate South Vietnam from North Vietnam, thus isolating the South.

When the United States escalates the bombardment of North Vietnam, it again claims that the expansion of the bombing will be limited to North Vietnam, and that it has no intention to fight a war with China. It has not only propagandized this way, it has also made statements along this line in the Sino-American ambassadorial talks in Warsaw. After meetings in Washington, the British Foreign Minister said that the United States had confirmed to Britain that it will not expand the war to China. The British Prime Minister thus said that he had no worries at all. This means that the United States is now aimed at separating China from Vietnam, making Vietnam isolated.

The policy of the United States is a wavering one. First, it asks the Vietnamese to stop “aggression” against the Vietnamese, this is groundless. Second, it has been wavering on expanding the war. Whenever it takes a step, it will look around for taking the next step. It does not have a fixed policy. [US Ambassador to South Vietnam Maxwell] Taylor¹²⁴ returned to Washington to discuss this issue, that is, whether it is beneficial for the United States to send troops to South Vietnam, and to what extent should the bombing be expanded.

After the publication of the *Renmin ribao* editorial and response from Foreign Minister Chen Yi to the Foreign Minister of the DRV, the United States said that the Chinese were only paying lip service, which would play no role in the resistance by the people in South Vietnam. Sometimes the United States has said that it was uncertain if China would really enter the war. This means that America’s policy is not established on a clearly defined foundation. It has conducted aggression, realizing however that the reasoning is not on its side and that its position is not sound, yet it is unwilling to accept defeat and to withdraw. Because the reasoning is not on its side, its policy is wavering. To withdraw is the best way for it to save face, but to continue to act recklessly will cause it to lose more face.

¹²⁴ Maxwell Taylor, US Ambassador to South Vietnam August 1964–August 1965.

Ayub Khan: If the United States continues to put pressure on North and South Vietnam, China will have to send its troops. It seems that the United States has no doubt about this. What it doubts is whether or not the Soviet Union will provide support.

Zhou Enlai: What you have said has some ground. I will discuss it later when I discuss whether the war will develop into a world war. Now, let me first discuss the first question, namely, the question concerning American pressure. Vietnam will not surrender under pressure. America has devoted a large portion of its strength to Vietnam and the whole of Indo-China, the result can only be [America] being defeated and losing face.

When Your Excellency visits the United States, if the Americans ask what China will do, Your Excellency may convey the following three points to the United States:

First, China will not take the initiative to provoke a war against the United States. Taiwan is a case in point. We have every right to recover Taiwan, but we have never used armed force. Although the Seventh Fleet of the United States is stationed in the Taiwan Straits, still we have been conducting talks with the United States in Warsaw.

Second, China means what it says, and China will honor whatever international obligations it has undertaken.

Ayub Khan: We know this.

Zhou: There is proof for the second point. Less than one year after China's liberation [in October 1949], the United States initiated a war of aggression in Korea, while at the same time dispatching the Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Straits, attempting to prevent China from recovering Taiwan. China, via India's then ambassador to China, told the United States: If the United States crossed the 38th Parallel and approached the Yalu River, it is certain that China will not stand by without making a response. The Indian government indeed informed the US government at that time. But the United States would not listen, not believing that China would support Korea. When Your Excellency visits the United States, please convey these points to them. Maybe they will again not believe us. Maybe, as Your Excellency has predicted, they will believe us. Both possibilities exist. However, our friend has changed this time, it is not India but Pakistan.

Ayub Khan: The United States should understand that if it puts too much pressure, China will provide support. Everyone with a mind should understand this. The United States says that it will not expand the war to China. It means to see to what extent the Soviets will be involved. The United States believes that probably the Soviet Union will not be involved, and whether or not it will expand the war will depend to what extent the Soviet Union will provide support.

Zhou Enlai: (2) Will the war be expanded into a world war? Your Excellency is a marshal. You know that the rules of war are not based on human will. The United States

believes that if it does not expand the war in Vietnam to China, China will not support Vietnam. Our position is that even if the war is not expanded to China, still China will support Vietnam, so long as the DRV requests it, so long as the NLF in South Vietnam requests it. When the war expands, it is impossible to draw a line. This is like the spread of a fire. The United States wants to play with fire and to take the risk. China hopes to extinguish the fire. The United States is not willing to do so, and is putting gas to the fire. As a result, the fire will be larger and larger. The expansion of the war is caused by the United States, not initiated by us. Although China has adopted an attitude of restraint, if the United States expands the war on this battlefield, the war flame will spread. The United States says that this is a regional war, and that it is doing limited bombing and limited expansion. But, even though it may want to limit the expansion of the war, in reality it cannot limit the war's expansion. Although the United States threatens that if the war in Indo-China develops into a Korean-type war, it will not, as it did during the Korean War, limit itself to a regional war, but will expand the war to China, so that China will no longer be the shelter. We know this. China is prepared.

We are prepared. This is the third point Your Excellency may want to convey to the United States. The United States says that China has not made war preparations, using this to deceive its people. China does not want to fight a war with the United States. In the broadcast speech Your Excellency made yesterday, you said that China is a peace-loving country. When Your Excellency was visiting Beijing and Shanghai, you saw no signs of war preparations among the people there. But, in a military sense, we cannot but make due preparations. If the United States brings the war flame to our side, we have to extinguish it. The United States tries to scare China by saying that a Korean-type war will not be limited to the DRV and Indo-China, this is completely useless.

If the United States expands the war, the war will gradually be expanded to China. We are prepared both materially and spiritually. We hope that when our friends in Asia have the opportunity to talk to American people, they should tell them that they should see the danger involved in American government's playing with fire. The possibility of an expanding war exists, and the American people will be brought into a great war.

The question is: after the expansion of the war, will it continue to expand? Your Excellency asked a moment ago if the war expands to China will the Soviet Union intervene. We are not going to answer this question, because you will be visiting the Soviet Union tomorrow. You can ask the Soviet friends, and let them answer it. As far as we are concerned, we are not considering this issue, and not expecting support from the Soviet Union.

If the United States expands the war to China, it will really suffer. Two marshals in the world have said this, you are the third marshal. Britain's Marshal [Bernard Law] Montgomery twice visited China. He advised his American friends that if America is to attack China, it may enter China, but will not get out. A new front is created on the front-line, but the rear will be in confusion. Before his death, [US Gen. Douglas] MacArthur also told this to Eisenhower and Kennedy. Johnson may remember this. If the United States imposes war on the Chinese people, the Chinese people will resist to the end, and there exists no other outcome. Under this circumstance, a faction in the United States says that the United States may only conduct bombing and will not use land forces. Your Excellency is a marshal, you know that a war fought in such a way will not solve the problem. If the United States conducts bombing from the air, we may carry out activities, using other strategy, everywhere on the ground. If the United States is to carry out an extensive bombing in China, that is war, and a war has no boundaries. Every person in the military knows this. China will be [strong] enough to make the United States suffer, how can it expand the war to other parts of the world? Therefore, it is unnecessary to answer whether or not the Soviet Union will be involved, and we do not need to expect Soviet support. If the United States bases its policy on the premise that China and the Soviet Union will not cooperate to resist aggression and thus expand the war, it will cause an even earlier defeat. The Chinese people will bear more sacrifice for the interests of the people in the world, that is worth it.

To summarize, the three points are: (1) China will not provoke a war against the United States. (2) We Chinese mean what we say. (3) China is prepared.

We are intimate friends, and this is why I tell you the truth. Especially since you are going to visit the Soviet Union and the United States, it is even more necessary to tell you the truth in clear language. [Ed. note: Khan's trip to the United States was subsequently postponed.]

It is impossible for the United States to pass China's test. [If the war is to] expand into a world war, the United States will be defeated even more badly.

(3) Is it possible the problem will be solved through negotiations? China does not fundamentally oppose holding negotiations. Any question, in the final analysis, has to be solved through negotiation. However, the conditions and timing for holding negotiations on the South Vietnam question are not mature. The United States has introduced conditions to begin negotiations, that is, Vietnam should stop "aggression," the NLF in South Vietnam should stop resistance, so that the puppet regime will be given some breathing space, and the United States will continue to oppress South Vietnam. The United States claims that any action on the part of the South Vietnamese people has been

directed by North Vietnam. It is impossible to conduct negotiations under these conditions. Such negotiations will not solve the question even if they are to last for ten years.

The Chinese-American negotiations have lasted for ten years, and have resulted in nothing. We are patient. Taiwan is that much land, and will not grow any larger. Jiang Jieshi is getting older and older, and he will die sooner or later. China is becoming stronger day by day. Some day the question will be solved through negotiations. This is what is workable on the Taiwan question. But the same is not workable on the South Vietnam question. If the resistance is stopped, even if the negotiations will last for only one year, more people will die during this period than during war time. The NLF in South Vietnam points out that this is not the time for negotiations. This stand is correct.

7. LIU SHAOQI AND LE DUAN

Beijing, 8 April 1965¹²⁵

Le Duan: We want some volunteer pilots, volunteers soldiers...and other volunteers, including road and bridge engineering units.

Liu Shaoqi: It is our policy that we will do our best to support you. We will offer whatever you are in need of and we are in a position to offer...If you do not invite us, we will not come; and if you invite one unit of our troops, we will send that unit to you. The initiative will be completely yours.

Le Duan: We want the Chinese volunteer pilots to play a role in four respects: (1) to restrict American bombing to areas south of the 20th or 19th parallels; (2) to defend the safety of Hanoi; (3) to defend several main transportation lines; and (4) to raise the morale of the Vietnamese people.

8. ZHOU ENLAI AND NGUYEN VAN HIEU, NGUYEN THI BINH¹²⁶

Beijing (The Great Hall of the People), 16 May 1965

¹²⁵ The same day as the DRV issued its four point peace formula in response to President Johnson's declared readiness for "unconditional discussions."

¹²⁶ Nguyen Van Hieu (1922-), a journalist and roving minister for the NLF, undertaking many goodwill tours abroad. He served as General Secretary of the NLF 1961-63. By 1967 he was nominally NLF ambassador to Cambodia, but was generally seen as responsible for NLF foreign affairs. In 1976 he became SRV minister of culture. Nguyen Thi Binh (1927-), Chief representative of the NLF at the Paris talks in 1968, Foreign Minister of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (PRG) from its foundation in June 1969. Headed the PRG delegation in the Quadripartite negotiations in Paris. She became Minister of Education in 1976, was elected Vice President of the SRV in the early 1990s, and reelected in 1997.

Zhou Enlai: I had talks with Mr. Ayub Khan when he was preparing the trip to the US at the latter's invitation. I asked him to tell the US the following four sentences. I was sure that the US would ask him whether Pakistan, having good relations with China, knew of China's thoughts. He should then tell them these sentences and say that they were the opinions of the Chinese premier.

The first one: China will never launch a war against the US. Taiwan is a case in point. China has had talks with the US for 10 years already. We are persistent in the principle that the US should withdraw from Taiwan. The US, however, does not agree and the problem cannot be solved.

There should be peaceful coexistence but this must be based on the 5 principles of peaceful coexistence, not be unconditional. The US has not accepted it because they do not want to withdraw from Taiwan. Because they do not want to withdraw from Taiwan, it also means that they do not want to withdraw from South Vietnam. The people in Taiwan have not risen up as in South Vietnam. We have to render self-criticism to our shortcomings not to lead them to rise up.

The second one: China's words and deeds are consistent. We will go to Vietnam if Vietnam is in need, as we did in Korea.

The third one: China is now ready. It is clear to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam that the provinces bordering with it are ready. The whole of China is also ready.

The fourth: The war will have no limits if the US expands it to Chinese territory. The US can fight an air war. Yet, China also can fight a ground war.

9. MAO ZEDONG AND HO CHI MINH

Changsha (Hunan), 16 May 1965

President Ho: We should try to build new roads. We have had discussions with Comrade Tao Zhu¹²⁷ on this issue. If China is able to help us build some roads in the North, near the border with China, we will send the forces reserved for this job to the South.

Mao Zedong: It's a good policy.

Tao Zhu: I have reported it over the phone to Comrade Zhou Enlai. He said that China could do it.

President Ho: First of all, we need China to help us build 6 roads from the border areas. These roads run south through our rear. And in the future they will be connected

¹²⁷ Tao Zhu was a CCP Politburo member and first secretary of the CCP Central-South China Bureau. He would later be purged during the Cultural Revolution.

to the front. At present, we have 30 thousand people building these roads. If China helps us, those people will be sent to the South. At the same time we have to help Lao comrades to build roads from Samneua to Xiengkhoang and then from Xiengkhoang to Lower Laos, and to the South of Vietnam.

Mao Zedong: Because we will fight large-scale battles in the future, it will be good if we also build roads to Thailand...

President Ho: If Chairman Mao agrees that China will help us, we will send our people to the South.

Mao Zedong: We accept your order. We will do it. There is no problem.¹²⁸

10. ZHOU ENLAI, DENG XIAOPING¹²⁹ AND HO CHI MINH Beijing, 17 May 1965

Zhou Enlai: [On Soviet- Vietnam relations] The Soviet revisionists want North Vietnam to talk with the US, to put the NLF aside and sell out its brothers.

Deng Xiaoping: They [the Soviets] provide you some aid for their own purposes...In short, the Soviet aid is aimed at serving their strategy. If Vietnam finds it inconvenient to expose this fact, let us do it for you.

11. ZHOU ENLAI AND INDONESIAN FIRST VICE PRIME MINISTER SUBANDRIO¹³⁰ Guangzhou, 28 May 1965

Zhou Enlai: [On the Vietnam question] The United States, prior to being prepared for fighting a war, began to dash around madly in Vietnam. All of its predictions are wrong. It put forward the strategy of “gradual escalation,” meaning that it will take a step, and watch before taking the next step. This is the worst taboo in a military sense.

¹²⁸ In Hanoi on April 13, Tao Zhu had told Ho that “our Party Central Committee and Chairman Mao have held our four border provinces responsible for being the immediate rear for Vietnam. Of course, China as a whole is the rear for Vietnam. But these four provinces represent the immediate one.”

¹²⁹ Deng Xiaoping was then general secretary of the CCP Central Committee and vice premier of the PRC. He would be purged during the early stage of the Cultural Revolution, would be rehabilitated in 1973, and again be purged in 1976. After Mao’s death in September 1976, he reemerged and became China’s preeminent leader.

¹³⁰ Subandrio (1914-) a medical doctor by training, was Indonesian foreign minister 1957-66 and second deputy first minister 1960-66. He had visited Beijing in early January 1963. In October 1966 he was convicted of complicity in an attempted Communist coup and sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted into life imprisonment in 1970, and on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Indonesian declaration of independence in 1995, Subandrio was released from jail.

Taylor and Johnson are extreme pragmatists. They do not have a long-term strategy. Our friends in South Vietnam told us that they were able to fight 200,000 American troops and 500,000-600,000 puppet troops. The population of South Vietnam is 14 million, and they dare to fight 200,000 American troops. If [the Americans] expand the war to China, with our population, which is 50 times that of South Vietnam, we can fight at least 10 million American troops.

Subandrio: If the United States bombards you from the air, what would you do?

Zhou Enlai: I have told many foreign friends about the four-sentence statement I made in Maowu [Bogor, Indonesia].¹³¹ (1) China will not take the initiative to provoke a war against the United States. We have conducted negotiations with the United States for over ten years on the Taiwan issue, which can be taken as evidence. (2) China will honor what it has said. The Korean War can be taken as evidence. (3) China is prepared. At present, our whole country is being mobilized. (4) If the United States bombs China, that means bringing the war to China. The war has no boundary. This has two meanings: First, you cannot say that only an air war on your part is allowed, and the land war on my part is not allowed. Second, not only may you invade our territory, we may also fight a war abroad.

12. ZHOU ENLAI AND TANZANIAN PRESIDENT JULIUS NYERERE

Dar es Salaam, 4 June 1965

Zhou Enlai: American aggression in Congo is aimed at changing Congo into its stronghold for further aggressive activities in Africa. The struggle against American aggression in Congo is a new one, and will last for a long period. By looking at the Congo question in isolation, it is truly serious. But from a worldwide perspective, the Vietnam question is the most serious in the current situation. The more America's strength is bogged down in Vietnam, the better for the movement for national independence and liberation. At present, how to support Vietnam is an issue of utmost importance. China is willing to provide all kinds of support to Vietnam. It is beneficial to the people of the world if America is bogged down in Vietnam. Although the United States is powerful, once its strength is dispersed, it will become powerless.

¹³¹ Zhou Enlai visited Indonesia in April 1965, and met with Subandrio in Bogor on April 20. He made the four-point statement during that meeting. The gathering at Bogor was held in conjunction with ceremonies marking the tenth anniversary of the Bandung Conference which established the non-aligned movement. The prominent role played by Asian communist leaders at the April 1965 conference, and the fact that Sukarno addressed a mass meeting dominated by Indonesian communists, were important factors in triggering the process leading to the September crisis when General Suharto seized power, and to the destruction of the Indonesian Left in a massacre.

13. MAO ZEDONG AND HOANG VAN HOAN¹³²

Beijing, 16 July 1965

Mao Zedong: ...We all believed in the Geneva Accords but the enemy did not respect them. After you regrouped your troops, they started killing people. They kill people in the South in order to teach them a lesson. At first, our motto was mainly for the political struggle and the military struggle was secondary. Later, the political and military struggles became equal. And then the military struggle will be the main [part], the political struggle will be supportive to the military one. So, we are also escalating step by step.

At first, we destroy a platoon, and then a company. Then we annihilate a battalion, and a regiment or two. That way, we can destroy from 4 to 5 battalions [in] each campaign. We should escalate and we should know how to escalate step by step.

14. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG

Beijing, 4 p.m. 9 October 1965¹³³

Zhou Enlai: ...During the time Khrushchev was in power, the Soviets could not divide us because Khrushchev did not help you much. The Soviets are now assisting you. But their help is not sincere. The US likes this very much. I want to tell you my opinion. It will be better without the Soviet aid. This may be an ultra leftist opinion. Yet, it is mine, not the CCP Central Committee's.

...Now, the problem of international volunteers going to Vietnam is very complicated. But as you have mentioned this problem we will discuss it and then you can make your decision.

As you have asked for my opinion, I would like to tell you the following: I do not support the idea of Soviet volunteers going to Vietnam, nor [do I support] Soviet aid to Vietnam. I think it will be better without it. It is my own opinion, not the opinion of the Party Central Committee. Comrades Peng Zhen and Luo Ruiqing¹³⁴ who are present here today also agree with me.

¹³² Hoang Van Hoan headed a DRV National Assembly delegation to China.

¹³³ Pham Van Dong talked with Zhou Enlai in Beijing before he went on to visit Moscow. This was the third meeting of the Vietnamese delegation in Beijing.

¹³⁴ Luo Ruiqing was a member of the CCP Central Secretariat and chief of staff of the PLA until he was purged in December 1965.

[As to] Vietnam, we always want to help. In our mind, our thoughts, we never think of selling out Vietnam. But we are always afraid of the revisionists standing between us.¹³⁵

Zhou Enlai: ...The war has been expanded to North Vietnam. It is, therefore, impossible for Laos and Cambodia not to get involved. Sihanouk understands it. When we were on a sightseeing tour on the Yangtze, I asked him how he would deal with the situation and whether he needed weapons. At present, China has provided Cambodia with 28,000 pieces of weapons. Sihanouk told me that this amount was enough to equip Cambodian regular and provincial forces and that all US weapons have been replaced.

I also asked him whether he needed more weapons. Sihanouk replied that because he could not afford to increase the number of troops, the weapons were enough. He only asked for anti-aircraft artillery and anti-tank weapons.

This is what he replied to my questions about weapons. He also added that if war broke out, he would leave Phnom Penh for the countryside where he had already built up bases. Last year, President Liu [Shaoqi] told Sihanouk: “large-scale fighting in your country is not equal to the [fighting] at our border.” If the US launches attacks along the Chinese border, China will draw its forces there, thus reducing the burden for Cambodia. Sihanouk now understands and prepares to leave for the countryside and to regain the urban areas whenever good conditions prevail. That is what he thinks. Yet, whether his cadres can carry out this policy is a different thing.

These changes in the situation show that Sihanouk has been prepared to act in case of an invasion by the US. At present, Sihanouk strongly supports the NLF because he knows that the more you fight the US the fewer difficulties there will be for the Cambodians. In addition, Sihanouk understands that he needs China. But at the same time, Sihanouk does not want to take sides because he is afraid of losing the support of France, losing his neutral position. At least, what he says shows that he seems to think of and understand the logic of the war: if the US expands the war to North Vietnam, it will be spread all over Indochina.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ In talks held in Guangdong province, 8 November 1965, Zhou told Ho Chi Minh that “The purpose of Soviet aid to Vietnam [is]: (a) to isolate China. (b) to improve Soviet-US relations, (c) to conduct subversive activities as well as acts of sabotage, make problems in China, and maybe also in Vietnam.”

¹³⁶ This conversation should be seen in the light of the triangular relationship between the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Cambodian communist parties. Pol Pot (1923-98), who had become secretary general of the Workers Party of Kampuchea in 1963 (the party later changed name to the Communist Party of Kampuchea, and was generally known as Khmer Rouge), had arrived in Hanoi in June 1965 and went on to Beijing in late 1965. In both countries he met prominent party leaders. Serious disagreements developed between him and Le Duan in Hanoi: see Thomas Engelbert and Christopher E. Goscha, *Falling Out Of Touch: A Study on Vietnamese Communist Policy towards an Emerging Cambodian Communist Movement, 1930-1975* (Clayton, Victoria, Australia: Monash University, 1995); and also David Chandler,

15. CHEN YI AND NGUYEN DUY TRINH¹³⁷

Beijing, 17 December 1965

Chen Yi: We fully understand that you are determined to fight for the final victory and to unmask the real face of the enemy. I personally think that the policy is correct and I can agree with you. In the history of the Chinese revolution, as well as in the history of the Vietnamese struggle, fighting while negotiating has taken place in some periods of time. We fight the enemy and when we reach certain stages, we start negotiating. The purpose is to unmask the enemy. That is correct. So far, we have held that the war in Vietnam would eventually come to a victory and a peaceful end. Our two parties agree that the US shows no sign of wanting to have peace. They just want to open the talks to deceive public opinion. We also open our political struggle in order to unmask them. If they want to talk, then we will talk. This is my personal opinion.

16. ZHOU ENLAI, CHEN YI AND NGUYEN DUY TRINH

Beijing, 2 p.m., 18 December 1965

Zhou Enlai: I don't know of the position of the United States on other issues. But for talks on the issue of Vietnam or China, they will even come to Hanoi or Beijing if we suggest [it]. Similarly, if we just hint that we want to talk with the U.S. on the issue of Taiwan, they will come at once.

Chen Yi: We may hint that we can have talks on the question of South Vietnam and may agree to the presence of the US in South Vietnam.

Zhou Enlai: No, it is not like this. We may agree to put aside the issue of the South, and they will come at once. Should you just agree to have contacts, they will come. If the conditions we propose are somehow less favorable for us, they will come more quickly.¹³⁸

Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992), pp. 73-77. Pol Pot wanted already at this stage to take up armed fighting in Cambodia, but at this juncture both the Vietnamese and Chinese were keen to avoid any struggle against Sihanouk. They preferred to see Sihanouk continue his neutralist policy, and if the US were to intervene in Cambodia, they hoped that Sihanouk and the Cambodian communists would join forces.

¹³⁷ Nguyen Duy Trinh (1910-), was the main ICP/VWP leader in Interzone 5 (the southern part of central Vietnam) during the First Indochina War. Head of the DRV's State Planning Commission until 1965, Foreign Minister and member of the Politburo from 1965 to 1979.

¹³⁸ On December 28, the US launched a so-called "peace offensive" which was denounced by the DRV Foreign Ministry as a large-scale deception.

17. ZHOU ENLAI AND NGUYEN DUY TRINH

Beijing, 10:30 a.m., 19 December 1965

Zhou Enlai: (1) We are not against the idea that when the war reaches a certain point negotiations will be needed. But, the problem is that the time is not ripe. (2) We agree that at present the military struggle is the main issue and should be coordinated with the political struggle. We also agree that in the political struggle, we should put forward our necessary conditions. But our conditions should be positive and from a high position. We should not put forth conditions which cause difficulties for ourselves, for our internal solidarity, and for the struggle. It means that we should not put forward unconditional cessation of bombing the North and cessation of violating North Vietnamese sovereignty and security as conditions. (3) We know that the North and the South are united as one, and we believe that the Vietnam Workers' Party is leading the whole Vietnamese nation in the anti-US resistance. But, when you put forward new conditions, the Vietnamese as well as the people of the world may think that you solve the issues of the North and the South in separate ways. Thus they cannot understand. (4) Vietnamese comrades consider that the US will not accept the new conditions. It's very dangerous to have such a way of thinking. So what will the situation be if they accept? If they do, we will be in a passive position, and this will have a negative impact on our struggle and on our solidarity. If we put forward tough conditions, they will not accept. But because your conditions are not tough, they may accept them. We sincerely hope that Vietnam's party and government would think further on this issue. Otherwise, you may fall into the trap set by the US imperialists, by the modern revisionists and their followers.¹³⁹

Chen Yi: It will be good if you do not put forward the condition of cessation of bombing. The Four Points are enough. We think that the condition of cessation of bombing North Vietnam will make the matter more complicated. This is the point we disagree [with]. We suggest that you consider this issue further.

1966

¹³⁹ On 20 December 1965, Zhou Enlai told Tran Van Thanh, head of the NLF resident delegation in Beijing: "America's 'unconditional negotiation' proposal is in fact with conditions, that is, the people in South Vietnam should lay down their weapons and stop their resistance activities, and the people in North Vietnam should give up the support to their compatriots in the South. The United States, which has now become deeply bogged down in the quagmire of the Vietnam War, is hatching a plot to expand the war, and it is possible that it would bring the war of aggression to all of Indochina, or even to China. The Chinese people are prepared. If the United States stubbornly insists on going along the path of expanding the war and thus runs into another encounter with the Chinese people, the Chinese people will face it and accept it, and will fight the war until the end."

18. ZHOU ENLAI AND LE DUAN¹⁴⁰

Beijing, 23 March 1966

Zhou Enlai: At present, the Vietnamese people are in the forefront of the anti-American struggle. The blood of the Vietnamese people has been shed for the Vietnamese revolution as well as for the world revolution. Vietnam is the great standard-bearer representing the world's revolutionary peoples.

...

Zhou Enlai: There have been some changes since last year when North Vietnam started talks with the US. We should tell you straight away that those changes began when the new Soviet leadership took power, especially after the visit of Kosygin to Vietnam.¹⁴¹ After Kosygin returned from Hanoi, the Soviets used their support to Vietnam to win your trust in a deceitful way. Their purpose is to cast a shadow over the relationship between Vietnam and China, to split Vietnam and China, with a view to further controlling Vietnam to improve [their] relations with the US and obstructing the struggle and revolution of the Vietnamese people.

Zhou Enlai: There are many arguments concerning the request by Vietnam for volunteer pilots from socialist countries. You will be in trouble. The Soviets may disclose secrets to the enemy. We therefore think that joint actions between the volunteers will be impossible. Moreover, even though these volunteers should be subject to your command, the Soviets will always have conflicting opinions. The gains you obtain from the Soviet pilots cannot compensate for the losses caused by them.

Zhou Enlai: Relating to the establishment of the front of the world's people in support for Vietnam's anti-American resistance, we prefer bilateral or multilateral contacts. It's good because we can have discussions in detail. We hold that opposing the US should necessarily go hand in hand with opposing revisionism. These two things cannot be separated from each other. Otherwise, people cannot be educated.

19. ZHOU ENLAI, DENG XIAOPING, KANG SHENG AND LE DUAN, NGUYEN DUY TRINH¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ A Vietnamese Party delegation headed by Le Duan visited China from 22-25 March 1966.

¹⁴¹ Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin visited Vietnam 6-10 February 1965.

¹⁴² Kang Sheng was then an alternate member of the CCP Politburo and a member of the CCP Central Secretariat. He would soon, during the early stage of the Cultural Revolution, become a member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee and an advisor to the "Cultural Revolution Group," the leading authority during the Cultural Revolution.

Beijing, 13 April 1966

Deng Xiaoping: You have spoken about truth as well as mentioned fairness. So what are you still afraid of? Why are you afraid of displeasing the Soviets, and what about China? I want to tell you frankly what I now feel: Vietnamese comrades have some other thoughts about our methods of assistance, but you have not yet told us.

I remember Comrade Mao criticizing us—the Chinese officials attending the talk between Comrade Mao Zedong and Comrade Le Duan in Beidaihe¹⁴³—of having “too much enthusiasm” in the Vietnam question. Now we see that Comrade Mao is farsighted.

Le Duan: Now, when you talk about it again, it is clear for me. At that time I didn't understand what Comrade Mao said because of poor interpretation.

Deng: We understand that Comrade Mao criticized us, that is Comrade Zhou Enlai, me and others. Of course, it doesn't mean that Comrade Mao doesn't do his best to help Vietnam. It is clear to all of you that we respond to all your requests since they are within our abilities. Now, it seems that Comrade Mao Zedong is farsighted in this matter. In recent years, we have had experiences in the relations between socialist countries. Is it true that our overenthusiasm has caused suspicion from Vietnamese comrades? Now we have 130 thousand people in your country. The military construction in the Northeast as well as the railway construction are projects that we proposed, and moreover, we have sent tens of thousands of military men to the border. We have also discussed the possibility of joint fighting whenever a war breaks out. Are you suspicious of us because we have so much enthusiasm? Do the Chinese want to take control over Vietnam? We would like to tell you frankly that we don't have any such intention. Here, we don't need any diplomatic talks. If we have made a mistake thus making you suspicious, it means that Comrade Mao is really farsighted.

Moreover, at present many hold China to be disreputable: Khrushchev is revisionist, and China is dogmatic and adventurous.

So, we hope that in this matter, if you have any problem, please tell us straightforwardly. Our attitude so far has been and from now on will be: you are on the front line and we are in the rear. We respond to all your requests within our abilities. But we shouldn't have too much enthusiasm.

The construction in the northeast islands has been completed. The two sides have discussed that the construction along the coast will be done by our military men.

¹⁴³ Beidaihe is a coastal sightseeing site northeast of Beijing where CCP leaders frequently vacation and have important meetings during the summer.

Recently, Comrade Van Tien Dung¹⁴⁴ proposed that after completing the construction in the northeast, our military men help you build artillery sites in the central delta.. We haven't answered yet. Now I pose a question for you to consider: Do you need our military men to do it or not?

Zhou Enlai: [The proposal is about] the construction of 45 artillery sites close to the Soviet missile positions.

Deng: We don't know whether it is good for the relations between two parties and two countries or not when we sent 100,000 people to Vietnam. Personally, I think it's better for our military men to come back home right after they finish their work. In this matter, we don't have any ill intention, but the results are not what we both want.

Not long ago, one thing happened, which we think not incidental: On its way to Hon Gai for coal, a Chinese ship was not allowed to enter the port. It had to stay offshore for 4 days. A request to make a call from ashore was refused. This ship was on duty under a trade agreement, it was not a warship.

Le Duan: We did not know about [this].

Deng: Our foreign ministry has sent a memorandum to yours, but the Vietnamese government has not yet replied. Nothing like this has occurred for the last 10 years.

Zhou Enlai: Even a request made by the Chinese ship to enter the Vietnamese port to hide from US planes, for getting supplies of fresh water and making telephone calls, was refused. One of our cadres, who is in charge of foreign trade, later had to come for discussions with the port authorities several times, and then the ship could enter your port. The comrade who is in charge of Cam Pha port even said: It is our sovereignty, you can only come when you are allowed to. Meanwhile, we are saying that all the ships and planes of Vietnam can have access to the ports and airports of China at any time if they are pursued by US planes.

Deng: Now, I want to talk about another aspect of the relations between the two parties and two countries. Among 100 thousand Chinese military men, who are now in your country, there may be someone who committed wrongdoing, and on your side there also may be some others who want to make use of these incidents to sow division between two parties and two countries. We should, in a straightforward manner, talk about it now as there is not only the shadow but some damages in our relations as well. It is not only the matters concerning our judgment on the Soviet aid. Are you suspicious that China helps Vietnam for our own intentions? We hope that you can tell us directly if you want

¹⁴⁴ Van Tien Dung (1917-) was second to Vo Nguyen Giap in the DRV military leadership. Chief of PAVN General Staff 1953-78, commanded the Ho Chi Minh offensive 1974-75. He was a VWP politburo member from 1972-86, vice minister until he became defense minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam sometime between 1978 and 1980. Retired in 1986.

us to help. The problem will easily be solved. We will withdraw our military men at once. We have a lot of things to do in China. And the military men stationed along the border will be ordered back to the mainland.¹⁴⁵

Le Duan: I would like to express some opinions. The difficulty is that our judgments are different from each other. As the experience in our Party shows, it takes time to make different opinions come to agreement.

We don't speak publicly [about] the different opinions between us. We hold that the Soviet assistance to Vietnam is partly sincere, so neither do we ask whether the Soviets [will] sell Vietnam out nor [do we] say the Soviets slander China in the matter of transportation of Soviet aid. Because we know that if we say this, the problem will become more complicated. It is due to our circumstances. The main problem is how to judge the Soviet Union. You are saying that the Soviets are selling out Vietnam, but we don't say so. All other problems are rooted in this judgment. Concerning China's assistance to Vietnam, we are very clear and we don't have any concern about it. Now, there are more than a hundred thousand Chinese military men in Vietnam, but we think that whenever there is something serious happening, there should be more than 500,000 needed. This is assistance from a fraternal country. We think that as a fraternal socialist country, you can do that, you can help us like this. I have had an argument with Khrushchev on a similar problem. Khrushchev said the Vietnamese supported China's possession of the atomic bomb so China could attack the Soviet Union. I said it was not true, China would never attack the Soviet Union.

Today, I am saying that the judgment by a socialist country on another socialist country should be based on internationalism, especially in the context of relations between Vietnam and China. In our anti-French resistance, had the Chinese revolution not succeeded, the Vietnamese revolution could hardly have been successful. We need the assistance from all socialist countries. But we hold that Chinese assistance is the most direct and extensive.

As you have said, each nation should defend themselves but they also should rely on international assistance. So, we never think that your enthusiasm can be harmful in any way. To the contrary, the more enthusiasm you have, the more beneficial it is for us. Your enthusiastic assistance can help us to save the lives of 2 or 3 million people. This is

¹⁴⁵ In a separate conversation on the same day, Zhou Enlai said: "After Kosygin visited Vietnam and promised to assist Vietnam, we have new disagreements with the Soviets over their demand to use two of our airports and their proposal to create an airlift for transportation of weapons to Vietnam. It is OK that you praise the Soviets [for giving] great aid. But that you mention it together with Chinese aid is an insult to us." Deng Xiaoping added, "So, from now on, you should not mention Chinese aid at the same time as Soviet aid."

an important matter. We highly value your enthusiasm. A small country like Vietnam badly needs international assistance. This assistance saves so much of our blood.

The relations between Vietnam and China will exist not only during the struggle against the US but also in the long future ahead. Even if China does not help us as much, we still want to maintain close relations with China, as this is a guarantee for our nation's survival.

With regard to the Soviets, we still maintain good relations with them. But we also criticize the Soviets if they are receptive to our criticism.

In the relations between our two parties, the more agreement we have the better we feel, the less agreement we have, the more we are concerned. We are concerned not only about your assistance but also about a more important matter, that is the relations between the two nations. Our Party Central Committee is always thinking of how to strengthen the friendly relationship between the two parties and two countries.

On the incident of the Chinese ship having difficulties to enter a Vietnamese port, I don't know about it. We are not concerned about your 130 thousand military men in our country, why should we be concerned about one ship? If it is the mistake of the person in charge of the port, this person may well be a negative agent trying to provoke. Or a mistake by this person can be used by other agent provocateurs. It is a personal mistake. The way we think about China has never changed.

We think that we should have a moral obligation before you and before the international Communist movement. We keep on struggling against America until the final victory. We still maintain the spirit of proletarian internationalism. For the sake of the international Communist movement and international spirit, it doesn't matter if the process of socialist development in the south of Vietnam is delayed for 30 or 40 years.

I would like to add some of my personal opinions. At present, there is a relatively strong reformist movement in the world, not only in Western Europe but also in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union. Many nationalist countries adopt either the path of reformism or that of fascism, as those countries are ruled by the bourgeoisie. So I think that there should be some revolutionary countries like China to deal with the reformist countries, criticizing them, and at the same time, cooperating with them, thus leading them to the revolutionary path. They are reformist, so on the one hand, they are counter-revolutionary, that is why we should criticize them. But on the other hand, they are anti-imperialists, that is why we can cooperate with them. In the history of the Chinese revolution, you did the same thing. Comrade Mao Zedong established the anti-Japanese United Front with Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek]. So my personal opinion is that China, while upholding the revolutionary banner, should cooperate with reformist countries to

help them make revolution. It is our judgment as well as our policy line. This is not necessarily right, but it is out of our sincere commitment to revolution. Of course, this matter is very complicated. As you have said, even in one party there are three parts: rightist, centrist and leftist, so is the situation in a big [Communist] movement.

The differences in judgment bring about difficulties which need time to be solved. It is necessary to have more contacts in order to reach agreement in perception.

It is not our concern that China is trying to take control over Vietnam. If China were not a socialist country then we [would be] really concerned. [We believe that] Chinese comrades came to help us out of proletarian internationalism.

.....

Deng: On the question of “enthusiasm,” please have more understanding for Chairman Mao’s wish to refer to the fact that relations between two countries [and] parties are not simple. [Neither] is the relationship among comrades [simple].

20. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG, HOANG TUNG¹⁴⁶

Beijing, 23 August 1966

Zhou Enlai: What about the fact that recently Vietnamese newspapers carried some documents about aggressions by Chinese feudal dynasties against Vietnam?

Hoang Tung: There have been no such documents in newspapers. Some institutes, however, are doing research on that historical theme.

Zhou Enlai: But you are studying this issue while you are struggling against the US. What is the implication?

...

Zhou Enlai: We should make full use of the road via Cambodia as well as the sea route. Yet, the best one is the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the road that runs through Laos to South Vietnam. And we should also find other roads. We agree to what you asked for [concerning] our reinforcement of forces for air defense, for defense of our railways, land roads, and for our aid to build roads. But we think there are limitations to that. These forces are not our volunteer combat troops. They are logistical forces. We therefore can refuse requests by some countries to send their volunteer troops to Vietnam, [saying] that Chinese volunteers are in Vietnam already. If it is said that China has volunteer troops in

¹⁴⁶ Hoang Tung (1920-), director of the ICP’s Su That publishing house during the first Indochina War. Editor-in-Chief of *Nhan Dan* [People’s Daily] 1951-82, from 1960 deputy and later Head of the Cultural and Ideological Committee of the VWP Central Committee. Retired in the late 1980s.

North Vietnam, then Cuba, Algeria, and the Soviet Union, etc., may ask to have their volunteers in Vietnam.

Zhou Enlai: ...The strategy has been defined: conducting a protracted war in the South, preventing the war from expanding to the North and to China...My fundamental idea is that we should be patient. Patience means victory. Patience can cause you more hardship, more sufferings. Yet, the sky will not collapse, the earth will not slide, and the people cannot be totally exterminated. So patience can be rewarded with victory thus causing historic changes, encouraging the Asian, African, and Latin American countries, and playing down the American imperialists.

We propose to send some Chinese military personnel serving in command staffs, logistics, chemistry, engineering, political training forces—the total number will be 100 people organized into 4 or 5 groups—to South Vietnam. They can go as far as to Tri Thien province, the Central Highlands, suburbs of Saigon, or to the central part of the Mekong delta.

1967

21. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG

Beijing, 7 April 1967

Pham Van Dong: [The Soviet] proposals were: (1) China increases the quota for shipments of Soviet aid to [Vietnam] via China from 10 to 30 thousand tons a month. If necessary, the Soviet Union will send some of its locomotives to China. (2) China sets aside 2 or 3 of its ports in the South for handling Soviet aid to Vietnam. If more equipment is needed in those ports, the Soviets will cover all costs.

22. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG, VO NGUYEN GIAP¹⁴⁷

Beijing, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., 7 April 1967¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Vo Nguyen Giap (1912-) had set up the first unit of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) in 1944 and had been commander-in-chief during the first Indochina War. Through the 1960s and most of the 1970s he was Deputy Premier, Minister of Defense, and Commander-in-Chief of the PAVN. He is generally thought to have been replaced by Van Tien Dung as Minister of Defense and Commander-in-Chief in 1980, but a military dictionary published in Hanoi in 1996 says that he was replaced by Dung already in early 1978. If this is correct, then Giap was not responsible for the decision to invade Cambodia, or for defending Vietnam against the Chinese attack in 1979. Giap remained on the VWP Politburo until 1982 and the Central Committee until 1991.

¹⁴⁸ This was the third meeting between the Chinese and Vietnamese delegations, during which Vo Nguyen Giap described the military situation in Vietnam and America's strategic aims. The first two meetings

Zhou Enlai: America's tradition and experience are based on the War of Independence, which was fought 190 years ago. There was also the Civil War, which was fought almost 100 years ago. During the First and Second World Wars, it gained much at the end. During the Second World War, the United States landed [in Europe] at a time when Hitler had already been dramatically weakened. They widely used artillery bombing, as if they were conducting exercises. The commander on the Western front at that time was Eisenhower, and the chief of staff of the United States Army was [Gen. George C.] Marshall. Marshall was very proud of the landing plan, which ran hundreds of pages. I once asked him whether he had read the plan. He said that he had only read the outline. Each one of them will only read the part that was related to himself.

23. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG, VO NGUYEN GIAP

Beijing, 3:30-6:30 p.m., 7 April 1967¹⁴⁹

Pham Van Dong: Some of the strategies we are adopting on the battlefield in South Vietnam follow what you suggested to us in the past. This demonstrates that our military strategies, as well as yours, are correct, and there are also new developments.

Zhou Enlai: Not only have your strategies had new developments, but also new creations. The latecomers become the first. This is what the Chairman has said. I have written a few words for you: The latecomers become the first. ... We have not fought a war for 14 years. All three of us are old. I am almost seventy. Comrade Ye Jianying¹⁵⁰ is seventy. Comrade Chen Yi is sixty-seven. We still want to fight, but we do not have much time left.

Ye Jianying: This is the rule of the nature.

Zhou Enlai: Although I am old, my ambition is still there. If the war in the South does not end next year, I will visit you and look around.

Ye Jianying: The old horse in the stable is still dreaming of heroic exploits; the heart of a hero in his old age is as stout as ever.

were held on 11:30 a.m.-? and 3:30-6:30 p.m., 29 March 1967. The Vietnamese delegation went on to visit the Soviet Union and then returned to Beijing.

¹⁴⁹ This was the fourth meeting between the Chinese and the Vietnamese delegations. Vo Nguyen Giap started the meeting with continuing to introduce the military situation in North and South Vietnam and Vietnam's strategies.

¹⁵⁰ Ye Jianying was vice chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission and a member of the CCP Politburo.

Zhou Enlai: Chairman Mao quoted these [words] from a poem by Cao Cao¹⁵¹ in a letter to Comrade Wang Guanlan.¹⁵² A historical figure during the feudal age still had his aspirations, how about us proletarians?

24. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG

Beijing, 10 April 1967

Zhou Enlai: ...Regarding the transit shipment, the agreement reached was that the quota is 10 thousand tons a month. Now, they want to increase to 30 thousand. They, however, don't refer to any concrete items, so we don't want to reply to the proposals in an unclear way. ...For the new Soviet military items, the Soviets should inform Vietnam first, and Vietnam will consider whether their utility is suitable and effective or not. It means that you will not take all of it. Then, you will inform us [of the amount]. Finally, we'll have to check. If it is correct, we will increase the quota.

At present, Hai Phong port has not been blockaded. Therefore, the use of China's ports has not been considered yet. The Soviet Union once said that the US would not attack Soviet ships. Of course, in case Hai Phong port is blockaded, and there are no other ports accessible in Vietnam, foreign shipments to Vietnam will have to be transported through China's ports. We have an agreement for this contingency. But as far as the utility of China's ports for Soviet aid to Vietnam is concerned, we will consider the factual situation and circumstances and then negotiate another agreement. The Soviets want to have access to China's ports not only for shipments of aid to Vietnam but for other ulterior motives as well.

.....

Zhou Enlai: There is another front, namely Cambodia. Cambodia is as attached to France as Laos and South Vietnam are to the US. France is determined not to abandon Cambodia. Sometimes Sihanouk curses us out of his anger, which is understandable. We have to win his sympathy, but at the same time, we have to understand his nature. The connections are like this: because France will not abandon Cambodia, the latter will not abandon us either. If Cambodia does so, it will be at odds with the coalition government in South Vietnam in which the pro-French faction will be invited to take part. And if Cambodia worsens its relations with China, the French influence in the Far East will be

¹⁵¹ Cao Cao was a politician and warlord during China's Three Kingdom period (second to third century, AD).

¹⁵² Wang Guanlan was vice minister of agriculture and deputy head of the Rural Affairs Department of the CCP Central Committee. He suffered from chronic sickness in the 1950s and early 1960s, and Mao wrote a letter to advise him to be patient in dealing with his illness.

further reduced, thus weakening the French leverage in relations with the US. The possibility for the US to open another front in Cambodia is not great. So exerting pressure on Cambodia can make it agreeable to our policies. Recently, the Australian prime minister [Harold Holt] visited Cambodia. He asked Sihanouk whether Cambodia helped the NLF. Sihanouk did not totally deny [this], saying that he helped a little in matters of transportation. I have known Sihanouk for more than 10 years and see that he is wiser than Sukarno.¹⁵³ Perhaps Sukarno was afraid of the people's movement, but Sihanouk is not that afraid.

The possibility of winning Sihanouk's sympathy is quite good. At the same time, however, we have to consider the possibility of a blockade. Therefore, we think that transportation of materiel during this rainy season will not be only for this year, but should cover next year's needs. We should always exploit the chances when they are available.

Vo Nguyen Giap: At present, the US wants to use the pro-US faction in Cambodia to conduct sabotage and coup d'états. Do you have any opinion on that matter?

Zhou Enlai: We should not rule out the possibility of a coup d'état. Sihanouk is similar to Sukarno to the extent that he is mastering all contradictions in order to hold power. Yet, he is unlike Ne Win¹⁵⁴ who controls the armed forces. Ne Win is, at the same time, increasingly critical of many factions in Burma, and therefore becomes more and more unpopular. I have talked with him several times on the strategy to govern, advising him to limit his number of opponents. What I know of him through U Thant¹⁵⁵ is that he is receptive to the Americans, but also to the British and French, to a lesser extent. He maintains relations with China and the Soviet Union as well.

Pham Van Dong: What about the state of civil war in Burma?

Zhou Enlai: The revolutionary movement over there is not developing fast and there have been some changes in the policy of the Party. Conditions and situations there have been good, but I do not know why revolution did not develop.

Pham Van Dong: What do you think about Lon Nol?¹⁵⁶

Zhou Enlai: He is not trustworthy.

Pham Van Dong: He used beautiful words to talk about China with us.

¹⁵³ Sukarno (1901-70), president of the Republic of Indonesia 1945-67. Lost power to General Suharto during a military coup in October 1965.

¹⁵⁴ Ne Win (1911-), Burmese general, head of state in Burma (now Myanmar) 1962-81.

¹⁵⁵ See footnote 119.

¹⁵⁶ Lon Nol (1913-1985), Cambodian Army General, Prime Minister from 1966 to April 1967. Returned to the government in April 1968, first as defence minister and then as acting premier. Appointed prime minister in August 1969. Seized power in a coup on 18 March 1970, while Sihanouk was abroad. Lon Nol was President of the Khmer Republic 1972-75.

Zhou Enlai: He did the same with us. He also said that he had Chinese blood. Phoumi Nousavan¹⁵⁷ is also said to have Chinese blood. But their blood is feudal, capitalistic.

Chen Yi: Lon Nol is pro-American. Sihanouk also knows about this.

Zhou Enlai: Lon Nol once visited China and he made some impression. If we spend money on him, he can be exploited for some time. Sihanouk's mother is also doing politics, the way some Chinese empresses did. The mother and the son are at odds with each other. But they are also exploiting each other. Sihanouk's disadvantage is that he, unlike Ne Win, does not control the armed forces.

...

Zhou Enlai: As far as our assessment of the prospect of the war is concerned, we indeed should consider two or three possibilities. First, the war may continue and may even further expand. The rule of war is not determined by human will, neither that of the enemy's, nor that of ours. War has its own rule. Even when the enemy wants to stop, it is difficult for him to do so. Therefore, when we assess the prospect of the war, we should prepare for its continuation and further expansion. Another possibility is that the enemy may blockade the coastline. If he begins a overall blockade, that means it is preparing for expanding the war, a total war. But if the enemy uses a blockade to force you to compromise and if you refuse to compromise, what will he do? He must do something as a follow-up. It is not simple for him to conduct an overall blockade along the coastline, which requires deploying many ships. This is a huge action, and will cause high tension in his relations with other countries. The third possibility, as you two have mentioned, is that the dry season of the next year will be a crucial moment, and that it is possible to defeat the enemy, forcing him to recognize his defeat and to withdraw from Vietnam. Is it possible that the war would neither end nor expand, but would continue like it is now? This is impossible. The war will end sooner or later, this is only a matter of time. It is impossible that the war would be protracted like this, neither dead nor alive. With regard to the question of political struggle, there is no doubt that the political struggle should be continued under any circumstance. War is the continuation of politics in its highest form, it is thus impossible to wage a war without conducting political struggle. To strengthen international propaganda, to win sympathy, to weaken and divide the enemies, and to utilize the contractions between the enemies are all different forms of political struggle. You have done this in the past. You should continue to do this in the future.

25. MAO ZEDONG, ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG

¹⁵⁷ Laotian general, right-wing strong-man in the government, 1960-1965.

Beijing, 10 April 1967

Zhou Enlai: Most of the Chinese Red Guards, who crossed the border to Vietnam, are good. They came to Vietnam because they wanted to fight the Americans. But they did not respect the rules of our two countries, thus causing some complications. We apologize to you for this.

Mao Zedong: Some Red Guards do not know what a national border means. Among the people who came to Vietnam, most of them [are] from Jiangxi, some from Yunnan. It is not necessary for you to take care of them. Just explain to them and then hand them over to us.

26. MAO ZEDONG AND PHAM VAN DONG, VO NGUYEN GIAP

Beijing, 11 April 1967

Pham Van Dong: We are very glad to see you healthy, Chairman Mao.

Mao Zedong: Just normal, not very well...Among all of you here, is there anyone from the South?

Vo Nguyen Giap: Comrade Pham Van Dong is a Southerner.

Pham Van Dong: My native village is in Quang Ngai province [in central Vietnam], where people are fighting the enemy very well.

Vo Nguyen Giap: Only in one year, people in Quang Ngai shot down almost 100 helicopters. They are fighting the puppet troops, [and] American and South Korean troops very well.

Mao Zedong: As you are fighting, you have drawn experience, you have come to understand the rule. If you are not fighting you will not have experience, will not know the rule... It looks more or less similar to your resistance against the French.

Pham Van Dong: We are now better than that and the fighting now is fiercer.

Mao Zedong: So, I said you now know the rule.

Pham Van Dong: We just began to do so.

Mao Zedong: It is a matter of course that in the process, changes can occur. The most difficult years were from 1956 to 1959...In 1960 there were some good changes. From 1960 to 1961, the armed forces were still small. But in 1963 and 1964, the situation changed. And now, in 1965 and 1966, you have better understanding of the rule, based on your experiences fighting against French, Japanese, and now American troops. You also fought the Japanese, didn't you?

Vo Nguyen Giap: Yes, we did, but not much; only in a small scale guerrilla warfare. In our fighting against the Americans, we always remember your words: try to preserve and develop our forces, steadfastly advancing forward.

Mao Zedong: We have a saying: “if you preserve the mountain green, you will never have to worry about firewood.” The US is afraid of your tactics. They wish that you would order your regular forces to fight, so they can destroy your main forces. But you were not deceived. Fighting a war of attrition is like having meals: [it is best] not to have too big a bite. In fighting the US troops, you can have a bite the size of a platoon, a company, or a battalion. With regard to troops of the puppet regime, you can have a regiment-size bite. It means that fighting is similar to having meals, you should have one bite after another. After all, fighting is not too difficult an undertaking. The way of conducting it is just similar to the way you eat.

...I was told that you wanted to build a new 100 km railway, do our Chinese counterparts agree to help you?

Zhou Enlai: We have had discussions on the issue. Some people will be sent [to Vietnam] to make a feasibility study.

Mao Zedong: It is not too long, shorter than the distance from Beijing to Tianjin.

Pham Van Dong: We will make the feasibility study together with Chinese comrades.

Mao Zedong: It's all right, for the sake of war. What about the matter of food supply?

Zhou Enlai: We discussed this with Comrade Li Xiannian.¹⁵⁸ We will provide 100 thousand tons of rice, 50 thousand tons of maize.

Pham Van Dong: So, this year alone, China helped Vietnam with approximately 500 thousand tons of food. This help is very great.

Mao Zedong: We can help you. Last year we had good crops.

Pham Van Dong: Thank you, Chairman Mao.

Mao Zedong: If you want to say thanks, you should say it to our peasants...Later, when you have dinner with Comrade Zhou, you can ask Comrade Wei Guoqing how he was criticized by the Red Guards. I know comrade Wei because he often visits and reports to me when he comes back from working visits to Vietnam. Who is now the new [Vietnamese] ambassador?

Zhou Enlai: Comrade Ngo Minh Loan.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Li Xiannian was a member of the CCP Politburo, and vice premier and finance minister of the PRC.

¹⁵⁹ Ngo Minh Loan was an alternate member of the VWP CC 1960-76, and Vietnamese ambassador to Beijing 1967-69. Had been Vice-Minister of Light Industry 1959-67. In 1968 visited Pakistan as “special

Mao Zedong: Which [Chinese] character is [Loan]?

Zhu Qiwen: Phoenix-like.

Mao Zedong: This kind of bird is very strong.

Pham Van Dong: Comrade Loan will try his best to continue the job by Comrade Tran Tu Binh,¹⁶⁰ that is, to strengthen the friendship between the two countries.

Mao Zedong: I am sorry that Comrade Tran Tu Binh passed away.

Pham Van Dong: We are also very sad about it.

Mao Zedong: What kind of illness did he have?

Pham Van Dong: The same illness he had before and after he came back home, he was too busy.

Vo Nguyen Giap: He passed away after having a serious cold. He was in the same hospital with ambassador Zhou Qiyun.

Zhu Qiwen: The Friendship Hospital. I also have a record of high blood pressure.

Pham Van Dong: Today, we would like to pay a courtesy visit to you, Chairman Mao, Vice Chairman Lin [Biao] and other comrades. Once again, thank you very much.

....

Mao Zedong: You have been bravely struggling both in the North and in the South.

Pham Van Dong: It's because we are learning Chairman Mao's military thinking.

Mao Zedong: [It is] not necessary. Without it, you still can gain victory. In the past, you were fighting the Japanese, the French. Now you are fighting the Americans.

Pham Van Dong: Thanks to the military policy of our Party and also to Mao Zedong's military thinking.

....

Vo Nguyen Giap: As I remember, at one time during our resistance war against the French, Comrade Zhou sent president Ho a telegram that read: "Now is not the right time to have a peaceful solution. You should continue fighting." [Ed. note: Giap refers to late 1949 or January 1950.]

Zhou Enlai: At that time, the French were going to recognize us. But because we recognized Vietnam they ignored us. As Lenin taught, big countries have the responsibility to encourage the world revolution. At that time revolution was victorious in Russia, so Lenin thought of China and India. Now, Lenin's desire has been half-realized:

envoy" and held talks with President Ayub Khan. From 1969-71 Minister of Food and Foodstuffs, ranked as minister up to 1976.

¹⁶⁰ Tran Tu Binh (alias Pham Van Phu) (1907-67), long-standing member of ICP, Inspector General of PAVN for three years during the First Indochina War. Succeeded Hoang Van Hoan as DRV ambassador to China in 1957 and served until his death in 1967; was succeeded by Ngo Minh Loan.

the Chinese revolution has been successful. Yet, reality has not developed the way people want it to be. Some smaller countries gained victory earlier. Victory in Korea is followed by the one in Vietnam.

27. VIETNAMESE AND CHINESE DELEGATIONS

Beijing, 11 a.m., 11 April 1967

Zhou Enlai: ...So, we hold that the closer to victory your struggle is, the fiercer our struggle with the Soviet Union will be. Because when you are closer to victory, the US wants to exert more pressure in order to cease the war, so that they can have some parts of the South of Vietnam, not losing totally. At present France is critical of the US, but when you are closer to victory, France may come closer to the US, and other nationalist countries which want to compromise may come to speak like the US.

The Chinese have a saying that you really start a 100-mile journey after traveling the first 90 miles. Because traveling the last 10 miles is always as hard as traveling the first 90 miles. On a level path, you cannot see it clearly, but it's clearer to you when you climb the Himalayas. We believe that you will try your utmost for the final victory and we will encourage the world's people to support you. But the Soviet Union will give up.

Here, I want to tell you the truth: even Stalin did so once. In 1945, Japan surrendered. The US sponsored Jiang Jieshi. The Soviet Union was victorious but suffered great war damages. So the Yalta conference was one of compromises on the spheres of influence between the Soviets and the US after the Second World War. It was an erroneous conference. To consider compromise as a tactic is correct, but it is wrong to consider it as a policy. The two US atomic bombs shook Stalin, making him eager for a compromise. So he signed an agreement with Song Ziwen,¹⁶¹ recognizing [that] the US had the greatest influence in China, in exchange for the recognition of the US of the influence of the Soviet Union in the Northeast [of China] and in Xinjiang as well as in Mongolia.

Stalin sent a telegram to Comrade Mao Zedong, saying that the Chinese Communist party should cooperate with the Guomindang, [and] not start a civil war because this might lead to the annihilation of the Chinese nation. It was very clear that Stalin had felt threatened by the two US atomic bombs. At that time, Lu Dingyi¹⁶² was

¹⁶¹ Song Ziwen (T.V. Soong) was Jiang Jieshi's brother-in-law and Nationalist China's prime minister and foreign minister.

¹⁶² Lu Dingyi was an alternate member of the CCP Politburo, a member of the CCP Central Secretariat, head of the Propaganda Department of the CCP CC, and vice premier of the PRC until his purge early in 1966.

most supportive to this. Stalin also proposed that Comrade Mao Zedong should go to Chongqing for negotiations with Jiang. And shortly after that, there was a message of invitation conveyed to Comrade Mao from Jiang. At that time, we faced the fact that the Comintern no longer existed; neither did its role in issuing general instructions. But we thought that China was a part of the common movement, and we had to serve the general cause. Based on the thoughts of Comrade Mao Zedong, we held that a civil war could not annihilate the Chinese nation. We also could prove that the civil war was caused by the Guomindang, not by the Chinese Communist party. But the problem at that moment was whether Comrade Mao Zedong should go to Chongqing or not. If not, it would be said that the Chinese Communist party was to blame for the civil war. So, now you see, Khrushchev's thoughts have their roots. [Later] Khrushchev held that the Chinese killed the Indians, so the Sino-Indian border conflict was caused by China. Of course, Stalin didn't say so. Therefore, Comrade Mao Zedong decided to go to Chongqing. At that time, the whole CCP position was unanimous: messages of protest against negotiations were sent from all parts of the country to the central committee. But Comrade Mao, Comrade Wang Ruofei¹⁶³ and I had already departed. At that time, Comrade Mao appointed Liu Shaoqi to act on his behalf. This was 22 years ago.

The results of our trip to Chongqing was that Jiang, with one hand, signed an agreement, and with the other hand started the civil war. After the signing, Comrade Mao returned to the liberated zone and a negotiating group consisting of three people, Zhang Zhizhong, [U.S. envoy George C.] Marshall, and Zhou Enlai remained in Chongqing. Many talks were conducted and many agreements were signed. But in July 1946, the Guomindang launched large-scale attacks, first of all on the troops commanded by Comrade Chen Yi in the liberated zone of Northern Jiangsu. Jiang's troops occupied some cities, especially Zhangjiakou, Andong...Thinking that they could definitely win, they convened a meeting of the puppet National Assembly without consulting us. We, the negotiators, then returned to Yanan. In early 1947, Hu Zongnan¹⁶⁴ waged an attack on Yanan, and after less than six months, by July 1947, he occupied all cities and towns in this area. At that time, Comrade Mao commanded the guerrilla warfare in Shanbei and concurrently led the nationwide struggle. I was with Comrade Mao. A Soviet doctor,¹⁶⁵ who accompanied us at that time, conveyed a message from Stalin expecting Comrade Mao to come to Moscow. We didn't know why; we thought that it was for discussions on conducting the war. Due to the situation inside the country, however, Comrade Mao

¹⁶³ Wang Ruofei was a CCP Politburo member who died in a plane crash in 1946.

¹⁶⁴ Hu Zongnan was one of the leading GMD generals.

¹⁶⁵ A.Y. Orlov (?-1949), also known as Zhelepin, also known as Terebin, Soviet military intelligence agent who served as liaison with the CCP leadership in Yanan and later in northern Shanxi and Hebei.

could not go. Shortly after that, we received the news that troops under the command of Comrade Liu Bocheng¹⁶⁶ had crossed the Yellow river and attacked the Dabie mountain area. This happened only one year after the civil war started. Before that, almost all liberated [from Japanese] cities and towns were lost to Jiang's troops. So, the majority of Jiang's troops were then busy in the newly occupied areas. When Liu Bocheng's troops attacked the Dabie mountain area, this seemed to be a strike at Jiang's heart. He was very much frightened and had to resort to a trick. Through Song Ziwen—the younger brother of Madame Song Qingling¹⁶⁷—Jiang met with Federenko, who at that time was the Soviet chargé d'affaires, requesting Moscow to inform the CCP that he was willing to negotiate with a view to ceasing the war. At that time, although Jiang suffered defeats, he still enjoyed advantages. The Soviets conveyed his message to us and implied that we should go to negotiations. With regard to Jiang, we did not close the door to negotiations.

When I left Nanjing at the end of October 1946—Comrade Dong Biwu¹⁶⁸ left Nanjing in January 1947—I said it was the Guomindang that had closed the door to negotiations. We, however, saw that it would be a disadvantage if negotiations started in July 1947. Because, like you said, the balance of forces was not to our advantage. As a result, we continued to fight until 1949, the year we could ensure our victory in a decisive way. At that time, Jiang had retired and asked Li Zongren¹⁶⁹ to lead negotiations on his behalf. It was OK! We accepted negotiations and put forward some principles. Zhang Zhizhong¹⁷⁰ headed the GMD side. He arrived in Beijing and negotiations went on for 20 days. We proposed [a draft with] 8 chapters and 24 clauses. In the meantime, our armed forces were ready to cross the Yangtze. If the draft were signed, nothing would happen. If not, we crossed the river. The GMD delegation agreed to sign the draft, but when brought back to Nanjing, the draft was rejected by the American Ambassador. So Li retired and a million troops of ours crossed Yangtze. During the campaign, the armies under Comrade Lin Biao's command captured Wuhan.

There was an ironic development: when the negotiations were going on, Li Zongren moved his government to Guangzhou, [and] the Soviet Ambassador went with him. The American counterpart, however, stayed in Nanjing. When Nanjing was

¹⁶⁶ Liu Bocheng was one of the most important CCP military commanders during the Chinese civil war from 1946 to 1949.

¹⁶⁷ Song Qingling (Soong Chingling) was Sun Yat-sen's wife and Jiang Jieshi's sister-in-law. She was the only pro-Communist member of the Song family.

¹⁶⁸ In the 1940s, Dong Biwu was a CCP Politburo member and, second to Zhou Enlai, deputy secretary of the CCP's Southern Bureau.

¹⁶⁹ Li Zongren was acting president of the Chinese Nationalist government in 1949 after Jiang Jieshi's resignation in January that year.

¹⁷⁰ Zhang Zhizhong was head of the delegation representing the Nationalist Government in peace negotiations with the CCP in spring 1949.

liberated, he was still there. He told a Chinese intellectual that if the Chinese Communist Government wanted diplomatic relations with the United States, then the US would not withdraw its Embassy from China, and would even be the first to recognize the new China and be willing to render China aid worth \$5 billion. The US ambassador wanted to buy us, but the liberation armies did not care, storming the [embassy] compound and he had to escape. Britain was sillier, sending a gunboat that fired at us. We terminated this boat.

Yet, at any rate, we still think that Stalin is a great Marxist-Leninist. After Shanghai was liberated, Liu Shaoqi went to Moscow. Stalin rendered self-criticism—in an implicit way—asking this question: “Did my telegram sent in August 1945 obstruct your war of liberation?” Liu Shaoqi answered “No.” and did not say [anything] further. Maybe Comrade Jiang Qing¹⁷¹ was also at that meeting because she was in Moscow for medical treatment. When proposing a toast, Stalin even said: “Now I am quite old. My concern now is that after my death, these comrades—he pointed to Voroshilov, Molotov and others—will be afraid of imperialism.” The reason Stalin said so was that his worry about atomic bombs had not cleared. But maybe, the atomic issue had found some solution as it was 1949 at that time—i.e., the Second World War had ended five years [earlier], the Chinese Revolution had ended—yet the US had not used its atomic weapons. What Stalin spoke of now has come true.

That is to support my opinion that the closer your war comes to victory, the more obstructive and treacherous the revisionist Soviets—who for sure cannot compare to Stalin—will be. Maybe I am overstating. It will be better if this prediction is not proven true. But I refer to past experiences in order to make you vigilant.

Vo Nguyen Giap: It is said that when the liberation armies reached the Yangtze, Stalin advised you not to move further southward. Is it true?

Zhou Enlai: Our armies attacked Dabie in mid-1947 and crossed the Yangtze in 1949. The Soviet Embassy accompanied Li Zongren’s [Nationalist] government to Guangzhou. At that time, Jiang was in Ningbo. The US Embassy remained in Nanjing.

The US ambassador stayed in Nanjing because he understood that Jiang could not stop us. But the Soviets went to Guangzhou because Soviet intelligence had predicted that the liberation armies could not cross the Yangtze. According to them, if we did so, the US would intervene, and use atomic bombs. So they believed that the Yangtze in the end would be the dividing line: the North would be controlled by the CCP and the South by the GMD. The US thought otherwise: if they supported Jiang, the situation would not be different. If they intervened, they would have an additional burden at the time when the European issues had not been settled.

¹⁷¹ Mao Zedong’s third wife, who was in Moscow for medical treatment in the summer of 1949.

....

Zhou Enlai: Now I turn to the second issue. You have heard about the recent incident in Battambang. It is said that this was caused by the Red elements [in Cambodian forces]. However, maybe it was caused by the US-backed forces with the aim of dividing our forces.¹⁷²

Pham Van Dong: Perhaps. This area is under the influence of the Son Ngoc Thanh¹⁷³ group which came from Thailand.

Chen Yi: Not under the influence of the Cambodian Party?

Pham Van Dong: Concerning the Cambodian Party, we cannot say whether they played any role [in this incident] or not.

Zhou Enlai: Is there any suspicion that the weapons we sent to you through Cambodia were distributed to Chinese [living in Cambodia] by the Cambodian Party?

Pham Van Dong: No, maybe these are old weapons. But we are not sure. When we return to Hanoi, we will ask and then inform you about it.

Zhou Enlai: On Sept. 30th, Douc Rasy, Cambodian vice premier, said that Lon Nol might reform his cabinet. Sihanouk once said that Lon Nol should invite some red elements into his cabinet, according to which Chau Seng¹⁷⁴ will be appointed vice premier in charge of financial affairs, So Nem¹⁷⁵ will replace Douc Rasy and be minister of planning. Maybe So Nem is a real leftist, so he was rejected. Chau Seng belongs to Sihanouk's faction. Yet, he is said to be leftist. He also said that the Lon Nol cabinet should be reformed. He suggested a list of nominees but Lon Nol disagreed. This news was disclosed by Meyer.¹⁷⁶ If the Lon Nol cabinet collapses, Sihanouk will invite Pen Nouth,¹⁷⁷ who is neutral to form a government.

On 4 April 1967, the Cambodian National Assembly held an urgent session. A resolution giving Sihanouk special powers passed after heated debates. Some people held

¹⁷² A reference to the early 1967 "Samlaut uprising" in western Battambang province, which was directed against then provincial governor Lon Nol's collection of rice at prices far below market value.

¹⁷³ Leader of Cambodia's small nationalist movement in the 1930s, held power briefly as Prime Minister August-October 1945, opposed Prince Sihanouk in the 1960s, prime minister again under Lon Nol from March to October 1972.

¹⁷⁴ Cambodian leftist politician.

¹⁷⁵ Son Ngoc Minh (Achar Mean) (1920-72), a Cambodian Buddhist monk who composed his pseudonym from his two heroes Son Ngoc Thanh and Ho Chi Minh when he joined the struggle against the French. Chairman of the Khmer Issarak Front in the 1950s. After the 1954 Geneva Agreements, he and 500 other Cambodians went into exile in North Vietnam. Many of them returned to fight with the Khmer Rouge in 1971-72, and disappeared shortly thereafter. Rumors in Vietnam have it that Son Ngoc Minh was poisoned to death by Ieng Sary in Beijing.

¹⁷⁶ Charles Meyer, a close adviser of Sihanouk.

¹⁷⁷ Pen Nouth (1906-?) was Sihanouk's closest political adviser, serving as prime minister 1948-49, 1952-55, 1958, 1961-62, and 1967-69. He also headed the Royal Government of National Union, set up in Beijing in May 1970, and greeted Sihanouk when he returned to Cambodia in 1975.

a demonstration in front of the Royal Palace. They were then invited inside the Palace and were received by the Queen. Sihanouk announced the resolution of the National Assembly and said that he was determined to be neutral, against both rightists and leftists. Our embassy there came to the conclusion that he was mainly against the leftists. But why did he appoint Pen Nouth to set up the government? There are some contradictions here. Later, the Queen called on the people to unite against the enemy. In Kamdan province, there were leaflets against Khimsamthan who might be leftist. And in Kompong Chom and Stungstreng, there were demonstrations supporting Sihanouk's policy against the leftists.

In short, the situation is still changing after the Battambang incident. In Cambodia, there are two cabinets: the official and the shadow one. The shadow cabinet wrote: "Our country is under a threat. The Vietminh is opening a front in Battambang. We have to deal with the enemy on two fronts: against the liberal Khmers and against the Red elements. In the past, the Cambodian Government had to fight only the US imperialists and now the Communist imperialists as well. Our attitude towards the Communists is always correct. So why do they attack us now?" Why does Cambodia have such an attitude towards the NLF? The reasons as I see it are: the NLF tries to pull the US troops to the Cambodian border in order to cause Cambodian troops to shoot at them, thus getting Cambodia involved in the war. The NLF intentionally ordered more than 2,000 people to come to Cambodia as refugees. There are 7 medical doctors operating among these people, rendering medical care and influencing the Cambodians. Lon Nol was criticized by the leftists and he was also unhappy. Lon Nol said that because of the serious situation, he suspended helping the NLF. Yet, he did not mention the weapons that had arrived in Cambodia. He also suspended the transportation of rice. In addition, Lon Nol ordered a stricter control over border smuggling to threaten the NLF. This, however, was for show only, [and did] not have important substance.

Vo Nguyen Giap: Some cases occurred recently in the border areas between South Vietnam and Cambodia. These include: an attack by an American battalion across the border. Forces from our Liberation Army helped units of the Cambodian armed forces to fight back. The American battalion had to withdraw. During the US Junction City Campaign, Vietnamese civilians and troops evacuated to Cambodia.

Pham Van Dong: Some Vietnamese medical doctors came there to treat [Cambodian] people. However, we have to be very careful with this.

Zhou Enlai: That's correct. Because misunderstanding can originate from small matters. According to our sources, representatives of the NLF, with directives from the Front, met with representatives of the "people's" faction in Cambodia [Ed. note: the

Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot] and exchanged opinions with them on the situation in Cambodia. Disagreements are mostly on policies to deal with Lon Nol. We wish to win the sympathy of Lon Nol, but they oppose him. Struggle can be intensified, but it is not necessary to conduct armed struggle in Cambodia. At this moment, Vietnam's victory is the first priority. If the Vietnam-Cambodian border areas are blockaded, armed forces in South Vietnam will be facing difficulties, [and] then the Cambodian revolutionary forces will not proceed. The struggle of Vietnam is in the common interest of the Indochinese and Southeast Asian peoples, and the victory of this struggle is of a decisive nature. In this situation, the Cambodian struggle, even an armed struggle, has limited objectives. Therefore even in case victories are gained, they are also limited, and indecisive in nature, not to mention that they are easily lost. So on this matter, one has to know how to place the overall interest above the limited ones. However, if the struggle is initiated by the people themselves, the story will be different. In that case, the struggle is irresistible, because the people will naturally stand up against oppression. They will have to undergo repression, but will also learn lessons. The job of a revolutionary party is to lead the struggle. In sum, in the event that the struggle of the South Vietnamese people succeeds, there is hope for the struggle in Cambodia. This logic should be made clear to the "people's" faction in Cambodia.

Pham Van Dong: We have often tried to persuade them. And we have to continue to do so.

Zhou Enlai: That's correct, as each party has its independence.

Vo Nguyen Giap: But before they agreed with us.

Pham Van Dong: We still do not know fully to what extent the struggle is organized, and to what extent it is provoked by the enemy.

Vo Nguyen Giap: Our comrades in the South have sent people to talk with the "people's" faction.

Pham Van Dong: The information that the NLF contacted the "people's" faction is correct because we asked COSVN [Central Office for South Vietnam] to contact directly the faction.

Zhou Enlai: Comrade Nguyen Thuong¹⁷⁸ said that it was necessary to develop good relations with Cambodia. I see two possibilities. One, Sihanouk uses this situation to exert pressure on Cambodian revolutionary forces with a view to balancing the left and the right forces. This is the maneuver that he usually resorts to. Two, to show his policy

¹⁷⁸ Nguyen Thuong, career diplomat and lawyer who, after having served as ambassador to Guinea, became DRV representative to Cambodia in 1966, and ambassador when the DRV recognized Cambodia in August 1967. Served until 1975 (from 1970 with Sihanouk's GRUNK government). Later President of Vietnam's Association of Lawyers (until 1989).

of neutrality: all forces in Cambodia, whether they are pro-Chinese and pro-Vietnamese or pro-US, are controlled by him. In general, as I told you before, we have to win his sympathy, and at the same time, be ready for delivering goods through Cambodia when the situation permits. Frequent contacts with the Chinese General Staff and Ministry of Transportation and Communication, therefore should be maintained.

28. ZHOU ENLAI, CHEN YI AND PHAM VAN DONG, VO NGUYEN GIAP
Beijing, 12 April 1967

Zhou Enlai: ...In the past ten years, we were conducting another war, a bloodless one: a class struggle. But, it is a matter of fact that among our generals, there are some, [although] not all, who knew very well how to conduct a bloody war, [but] now don't know how to conduct a bloodless one. They even look down on the masses. The other day while we were on board the plane, I told you that our cultural revolution this time was aimed at overthrowing a group of ruling people in the party who wanted to follow the capitalist path. It was also aimed at destroying the old forces, the old culture, the old ideology, the old customs that were not suitable to the socialist revolution.

In one of his speeches last year, Comrade Lin Biao said: In the process of socialist revolution, we have to destroy the "private ownership" of the bourgeoisie, and to construct the "public ownership" of the proletariat.

So, for the introduction of the "public ownership" system, who do you rely on? Based on the experience in the 17 years after liberation, Comrade Mao Zedong holds that after seizing power, the proletariat should eliminate the "private ownership" of the bourgeoisie. But the process will be left unfinished if it relies on the "from the top down" mode of leadership.

As I have told you, in our society, "private ownership" still exists. It is due not only to the influence of the international bourgeois ideology, but also to the fact that inside the country there are remnants of the bourgeoisie, of feudalism, and newly emerging capitalists, speculators, embezzlers...An even greater factor is that in the countryside, there are a great number of peasants who belong to the petit-bourgeois class. They are petit-bourgeois not only in their thinking but also in their actions. And still there exists private ownership, privately owned land, free market, free business. Therefore capitalism can recur at any moment. Moreover, in China the remnants and influence of thousands of years of feudalism and of capitalism are everywhere. As Comrade Mao said, if the broom is not good, the dust is not swept out, and even if it is swept out, there will be new dust. All the above-mentioned factors are fertile ground for the restoration of capitalism and the

appearance of revisionism. In the past 17 years, we have been struggling against the “three anti-elements,” and now there are three new anti-elements. We have reeducated the capitalists, but now within our party, there are new capitalists. We have criticized the rightists, but now there are new rightists in our party. The ruling circles in the party who followed the capitalist path have been dethroned. Now there are new elements in the ruling circles again following the capitalist path.

We planned to visit Sashi. But because the weather is bad, we had to cancel the visit. Now, it will also be good if you can visit Dazhai. During the Cultural Revolution, Comrade Chen Yonggui¹⁷⁹ firmly stood on his position because he always respected “public ownership.” It is one of Dazhai’s characteristics. Dazhai is not developed in terms of technologies. Yet, political activities come into play. The production team led by Comrade Chen Yonggui for the last 14 years borrowed money from the state just once, in 1953. But it paid the loan back the very next year. It did not ask for disaster relief aid from the state even though it was seriously affected by natural calamities. This production team consists of no more than 400 people. The natural conditions are not good there. But every year, it contributes between 100 and 150 tons of food to the State. If this example is multiplied nationwide, the state annually will have about 4 billion tons of food.

The most telling characteristic of Dazhai is that it has destroyed the notion of individualism, [and] upheld communalism according to the thoughts of Mao Zedong. This serves as an example. Comrade Mao asked me whether it was true. I answered yes. Later Comrade Mao visited Dazhai and acknowledged what Dazhai had done.

In such a production unit as Dazhai, consisting of between 300 and 1000 workers, the problems of private and public ownership still exists and poses complicated problems. So you can imagine the scope of the problem nation-wide where there are between 800,000 and 900,000 production units. There are about 200 households in each production unit, and about 160 million households across the country. There are also a large number of factories in the cities. So, without a mass movement in which the people take part, there is no way to identify who is receptive to the capitalist path, who is a capitalist agent.

On which forces do we have to rely in order to mobilize the peasants and workers? If we rely on members of the Party and the Youth League, they will use mechanisms of a hierarchical nature. And by so doing, the officials can cover each other’s wrongdoings, thus leaving all the objectives half-achieved.

¹⁷⁹ Chen Yonggui was a peasant from Dazhai, a poor and barren mountainous village in Shanxi province. In the 1960s, Dazhai and Chen Yonggui became the model of China’s socialist revolution in the countryside. Chen would later become a CCP Politburo member and vice premier of the PRC.

Chen Yi: And if these bad officials cannot be uncovered and overthrown, they will form a new clique of bad people.

.....

Zhou Enlai: So we solve the problem by mobilizing students and youngsters. They are eager and more receptive to the thoughts of Mao Zedong. On 1 June 1966, Comrade Mao released his article in Beijing University's Big Character Newspaper, thus mobilizing students and youngsters across the country. This initiative by Comrade Mao was approved by the Central Committee. But Comrades Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping still maintained the old way of doing things. They sent work units down to the provinces. What were the results? At the places where the leaderships were dismissed by the people, the work units took control of everything, without knowing who were good, who were bad among the dismissed officials. Moreover, the work units repeated the same old way of doing things, i.e., refusing to rely on the people. The latter disagreed, [but were] oppressed by the former, who said that opposition to them was opposition to the Central Committee and Chairman Mao. Thus fiercer opposition mounted. The situation, therefore, was that the masses—echoing Chairman Mao's appeal—stood up, but at the same time, the new leadership—replacing the Party's line—oppressed them. At the central level, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were in charge. They are repressive to the masses, dividing them into three categories: Left, Center, and Right. Anyone critical of the work units belonged to the Right category, i.e, reactionary, thus being subject to physical harassment, even imprisonment. After less than two weeks of applying the work units' methods, there appeared nationwide a counter-movement to what Comrade Mao initially proposed. During June and July, for less than 50 days, there was repression in all universities and schools against those who had criticized the leadership. This situation verified what Chairman Mao had said some years before: mistakes by someone at the Central level could become mistakes nation-wide because of the hierarchical mechanism that allowed blind obedience. This also helps explain why Khrushchev could seize power in the Soviet Union.

When Comrade Mao learned of the situation, he immediately returned to Beijing. And after investigations showed clearly what was going on, he was determined to withdraw the work units and launch a bottom-up cultural revolution with a view to letting the masses liberate themselves. He convened the 11th Plenum with the participation of all heads of Provincial Party Committees. This Plenum criticized Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping for their mistakes. In connection with the Plenum, Comrade Mao released

another big-character article, and Comrade Chen Boda¹⁸⁰ read a report and the Standing Committee of the Politburo was extended. No other measures were taken. The 16-point decision and a statement of the Plenum then were released.

On 18 August 1966 Comrade Mao received representatives of the Red Guards. Following these events, the Red Guard movement developed across the country, first in schools and universities, then spread to the whole society.

At that time, leadership at all levels was passive. Most of the Secretaries of Party Committees in all 28 provinces and cities used to take part in revolutions and wars. They used to rely on the people. But after peace was restored, after they came to power, they were afraid of the people.

Chen Yi: When the people criticize them, they oppress the people.

Zhou Enlai: When power was not gained, they relied on the people. But when they came to power, they privatized it and were afraid of being criticized, of losing power. During August and September, Party Committees at all provincial and municipal levels were attacked by the Red Guards. The General Secretaries at these levels were, to various extents, very much afraid.

Wei Guoqing:¹⁸¹ All of them were afraid.

Zhou Enlai: This showed that they found it easy to revolutionize others' lives, but hard to avoid privatization of their own privileges.

In October 1966, another Central Committee meeting was convened. The question now was clear as far as theoretical matters were concerned. The previous Plenary meeting only mentioned a struggle between two lines. But at this meeting, the two lines were defined as the revolutionary and proletarian line on the one hand and the capitalist and reactionary line on the other.

During the national liberation revolution, different lines, whether bourgeois or proletarian, could still have imperialists as common enemies. But at present, in the socialist revolution, different lines, in the absence of a common enemy, naturally become antagonistic.

The Red Guards find it easy to absorb the thoughts of Mao Zedong and the revolutionary-proletarian line, so they criticize the reactionary-capitalist lines. In the meantime, a small group of leaders at the provincial and ministerial levels organized their own forces to defend themselves. These units are para-military units among the workers and conservative groups among the students. Comrade Mao has mentioned them. These

¹⁸⁰ Chen Boda was head of the "Cultural Revolution Group," and a member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee.

¹⁸¹ Wei Guoqing was then head of the Revolutionary Committee of China's Guangxi province bordering Vietnam. In the early 1950s, he headed the Chinese military advisory group to Vietnam.

leaders resort to materialism, buying other people with money and at the same time creating economic difficulties, opposing strongly the revolutionary-proletarian lines. The Red Guards are vehemently defending the correct lines, introducing their movement to the whole society, especially to government offices and to the countryside and they win the support of the people. As Comrade Mao has mentioned, the revolutionary forces in Shanghai developed from 2000 [people] into a million. They then moved into the second phase: seizing power. The deeper the movement went, the more the capitalistic leaders were isolated.

Since the beginning of this year, the struggle's objective is seizing power by combining the forces of the revolutionary people, the revolutionary cadres, and representatives of the armed forces. They denounce any relationship with capitalist leaders, form Revolutionary Committees—provisional governments—in government offices and factories. The countryside is busy with agricultural production, so seizing power has not yet started. Comrade Mao, other comrades, and I believe that the Great Cultural Revolution first of all has to rely on the masses because after 17 years of socialist construction, they have been educated, their level of knowledge has been raised, and the absolute majority of them accept the path of socialism. At the same time, we believe that the [People's] Liberation Army will support us, defend the socialist system and the Revolution since they are the children of the people and they are educated by the thoughts of Mao Zedong. We also believe that the majority of our cadres are relatively good. In the end, we will be able to unite more than 95 percent of our cadres and people.

Of course, it takes time to destroy “individualism” and establish “communalism” and produce great unity. This also has to be done over and over again and smooth sailing is not assured. That is why Comrade Mao predicted that the main trends of the movement would be clear between February and May this year and results of the movement will be seen between February and April next year.

First of all, we have to understand that once the masses are educated and enlightened, once they are equipped with the thoughts of Mao Zedong, their strength is limitless. Last year alone, the production outputs were very high, surpassing the standard quotas, especially in industry, agriculture and transportation. The activities of this year focus on seizing power and the situation will be more complicated. On the one hand, factionalism can be seen in mass organizations, thus making it more difficult to achieve great unity. And on the other hand, revolutionary cadres, who denounced the capitalistic line and stand on the side of the people, now want to return to their previous posts. We cannot restore their positions, because if we do so, we will in effect restore the old system. We therefore have to fight both tendencies.

Vo Nguyen Giap: What are these two tendencies?

Li Fuxian: One is total confirmation and the other is total denial.

Zhou Enlai: One tendency among the masses is advocating total denial. They hold that everything attached to the old system should be destroyed. And another tendency among the cadres is advocating total confirmation, total restoration, and total coalition.

There is another important issue, namely the role of the armed forces. The armed forces have to help the people both in production and revolution, helping them to seize power. In addition to that, the armed forces have to provide military training in schools, offices, and factories. The tasks of the armed forces, therefore, are heavy. There have been several meetings of the armed forces, and some are taking place now, to discuss those tasks.

We see many big difficulties. However, we also believe that these difficulties can be overcome by mobilizing the people. The focus of the work of mobilization is propagandizing the difference between the two lines, namely the revolutionary-proletarian one and the reactionary-capitalistic one. In order to propagandize we have to set examples.

Since our talk with President Ho in Hangzhou in May and June last year [1966] and especially after the 11th Party Central Committee Plenum in August last year, the situation has changed much with great developments. The movement has grown in depth, the masses have been mobilized, several examples have been studied, and the nature of the issues has been addressed. We have brought the Liu Shaoqi-Deng Xiaoping case, especially the records of Liu Shaoqi's mistakes in the past, to public attention. Over the past 20 years, Liu's thoughts have turned reactionary. The works that he wrote, the documents that he initiated, all show that he opposed the Party's lines and opposed the thoughts of Mao Zedong. I have told you some of these on the plane. Liu also committed mistakes in international relations. In reality, he was conducting a big-country, big-party policy, even though he was verbally feigning opposition to this policy. You may have felt and detected this mistake during his visit to Vietnam in 1963. Under the leadership of Liu, Peng Zhen and Deng Xiaoping also have this behavior, and they do not respect equality among the fraternal parties. We have not found out all of their specific mistakes. But the mistakes by Liu are clear now. He was practicing chauvinism in the relations with the fraternal parties and defeatism in relations with Sukarno. Examples of the mistakes of this kind are many.

The question then is: will these mistakes affect our party's prestige and leadership? Our answer is no. Detecting the mistakes and getting rid of them will make the party healthier. And we see even more clearly that the people represent a creative force.

We want to tell you another problem we are now facing. Before coming into power, our party was operating in various settings and party members were recruited from different sources. It was therefore difficult to detect some traitors inside the party. After the victory, under the leadership of Liu and Deng, party organizational bodies shied away from screening our cadres. Now, when the Red Guards have been mobilized, many documents have been found, involving many cadres' past behavior. A number of leaders have to be replaced because of their past wrongdoings.

Another question is posed: will examinations of the past obstruct the party's development? Our answer is no, provided the party has a correct policy to mobilize the people. As you have known, once the people take part in the people's war, revolution will proceed, sweeping away remnants of the old system, preventing revisionism from coming into being and capitalism from being restored. The history of the CCP has shown this. That previous CCP leaders were corrupted did not prevent the Chinese Revolution from succeeding. The founder of the CCP—Chen Duxiu¹⁸²—later became a Trotskyist and a traitor. Then Qu Qiubai¹⁸³ defected from the party when he was arrested and imprisoned in Jiangxi. Xiang Zhongfa¹⁸⁴ and Li Lisan¹⁸⁵ also committed wrongdoings: the former betrayed the party but was killed by the enemy in the end, and the latter is still holding an incorrect point of view. Wang Ming¹⁸⁶ is the worst. He is now residing in Moscow and used by the Soviets to attack China. Before his defection, Wang Ming wrote articles against the CCP under a pseudonym. Zhang Wentian¹⁸⁷ is also a case in point: after the Zunyi Conference [15-18 January 1935], Comrade Mao should have been elected to the post of CCP Chairman. But as a modest person, Comrade Mao proposed Zhang to the chairmanship. Zhang held the post for 10 years until the 7th Congress which elected Comrade Mao to the post. In 1959, Zhang participated in the group against the Party that included Peng Dehuai and Huang Kecheng.¹⁸⁸ For 32 years out of the 45-year history of the CCP—i.e., before the Zunyi conference—the CCP was led by corrupted leaders. The

¹⁸² Chen Duxiu was one of the founders of the CCP, but was later expelled from the party because of his “rightist mistakes.”

¹⁸³ Qu Qiubai was a CCP leader of the late 1920s who committed “leftist mistakes.”

¹⁸⁴ Xiang Zhongfa was elected the CCP's general secretary in 1928 largely because of his worker's background. He was later arrested and executed by the Guomindang.

¹⁸⁵ Li Lisan was a CCP leader who committed “leftist mistakes” in the early 1930s.

¹⁸⁶ Wang Ming (also known as Chen Shaoyu) was a CCP leader who controlled the Party leadership after returning from Moscow early in the 1930s, and who had committed, according to official CCP history, both “leftist” and “rightist” mistakes.

¹⁸⁷ Zhang Wentian was a veteran CCP leader who was purged together with Peng Dehuai in 1959.

¹⁸⁸ Huang Kecheng was chief of staff of the PLA and deputy defense minister of the PRC before his purge, together with Peng Dehuai, in 1959.

Chinese Revolution, however, did succeed. The situation has been different under the leadership of Comrade Mao Zedong and Comrade Lin Biao as successor.

In a broader context, the international Communist movement since Marx, Engels, and Lenin has also been led by corrupted leaders. This fact, however, did not prevent the revolutionary parties from progressing. The decisive factor, therefore, is the correct policy of each party, as shown in your people's warfare. Our socialist revolution, which is conducted in the absence of bloodshed, has also proved this.

29. CHINESE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER QIAO GUANHUA AND VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR NGO MINH LOAN

Beijing, 13 May 1967

Qiao Guanhua: I have a problem to discuss with Comrade Ambassador. It is a specific problem relating to the Soviet aid to Vietnam.

On 6 May 1967, we were informed both in Hanoi and in Beijing by Comrade Deputy Minister Nghiem Ba Duc¹⁸⁹ and Comrade Pham Thanh Ha¹⁹⁰ respectively that in May and June 1967, the Soviets would provide Vietnam 24 Mig-17 and Mig-21 planes (12 planes of each type) and we were also asked to help transport them via China.

On 9 May 1967, Comrade Pham Thanh Ha officially informed our External Economic Relations Committee that these 24 airplanes would be transported by railway. There would be two shipments, each of which could handle 12 airplanes.

On the same matter, however, the Soviet Union informed us differently: on May 8, they requested that their AN-12 aircraft carry these 24 airplanes over China's air space in a 10-day period from May 16 to May 24 1967.

On 9 May 1967, Comrade Nghiem Ba Duc in Hanoi proposed the [same] plan for air transportation.

Our leadership puts this issue high on the agenda. We have studied the requests by both Vietnam and the Soviet Union very carefully. On behalf of the Chinese government, I would like to inform you, Comrade ambassador, that we agree with the plan proposed by Comrade Pham Thanh Ha for railway transportation of these 24 airplanes, but not with the plan for air transportation.

¹⁸⁹ Nghiem Ba Duc, DRV Vice Minister of Foreign Trade from 1954; member of the economic delegations to the USSR and Eastern Europe between 1965 and 1975. Thereafter economic adviser in Laos.

¹⁹⁰ Pham Thanh Ha was a military logistics officer in the PAVN who headed the military assistance mission in Vietnam's embassy in Beijing from 1965 to 1973.

The air transportation of these 24 airplanes is a question of great importance. As Comrade Ambassador has known, our opinions have long been different from those of the Soviets. Since early 1965, when Soviet aid started coming to Vietnam, the Soviets more than once proposed that their shipment go to Vietnam by air, over China's air space. In general, we do not agree with the idea. Before, Vietnam also did not agree with air transportation because you understood our position [in this matter]. This time, I would like to make it clearer to Vietnamese comrades the reasons why the Soviet Union wanted this method of transportation for its aid to Vietnam.

For the last few years, using its mass media, the Soviet Union has been trying to publicize its large-scale aid to Vietnam. We hold that the Soviets intentionally do so in order to let the US know of the Soviet large-scale aid to Vietnam and by so doing, the Soviets reveal some secrets to the US.

For the last few years, we have helped Vietnam transport the aid by train, which is very timely and safe. The Vietnamese side has been very satisfied.

So why do the Soviets this time ask for air transportation? If the Soviets resort to air transportation in a grandiose manner, US spy planes—which are always flying over Chinese air space—would detect it at once after the Soviet airplanes take off from Irkutsk. Our position on this matter has been clear to Vietnam: the Soviets, by doing so, want to be boastful to the US [about its aid to Vietnam], publicly revealing military secrets to the enemy. They also make use of its aid to Vietnam in order to control the situation and cooperate with the US to force Vietnam to accept peace negotiations. The Western press has even mentioned that the Soviets increased their aid to Vietnam in order to create a situation of direct Soviet-American confrontation which will clear the way to compromises. I refer to this judgment of ours on this matter with a view to making you clearly understand our position. We, however, have no intention to impose it on you. In short, we hold that:

(1) the Soviet proposal for air transportation has bad intentions and is a conspiracy,

(2) transportation of these planes is a major military act, but the Soviets did not consult with us and [want to] force us to accept. This is nothing else than a chauvinist attitude.

1968

30. ZHOU ENLAI AND HO CHI MINH

Beijing, 7 February 1968

Zhou Enlai: Since the war in Vietnam has reached the current stage,¹⁹¹ is it possible for [the Vietnamese comrades] to consider organizing one, two, or three field army corps? Each of them will be composed of 30,000-40,000 soldiers, and each of their combat operations should aim at eliminating 4,000-5,000 enemy soldiers in whole units. These field army corps should be able to carry out operational tasks far away from their home bases, and should be able to engage in operations in this war zone, or in that war zone. When they are attacking isolated enemy forces, they may adopt the strategy of approaching the enemy by underground tunnels. They may also adopt the strategy of night fighting and short-distance fighting, so that the enemy's bombers and artillery fire will not be in a position to play a role. In the meantime, you may construct underground galleries, which are different from the simple underground tunnels, in three or four directions [around the enemy], and use them for troop movement and ammunition transportation. You also need to reserve some units for dealing with the enemy's reinforcements.

31. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG

Beijing, 13 April 1968

Zhou Enlai: ...According to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's (DRV's) previous position, if the US didn't cease its bombing completely and unconditionally, there could not be any conversations.¹⁹² But the April 3rd statement of the Government of DRV was a surprise not only for the world's people but even for Johnson's opponents. However, in your statement you only used the word "contact." You have had secret contacts before there was limited bombing. Now with this statement you made public those contacts. And, to the world's people, it partly is your compromise, and it helps the US solve their difficulties. After the Tet Offensives, the US tried to cover up its difficulties. After [Gen. Earle] Wheeler visited Saigon, he returned to Washington and talked with President Johnson and [Gen. William] Westmoreland. They had to admit their difficulties...Westmoreland then asked for an additional 200,000 troops but the US Congress and government refused...Primary elections in some states showed that the

¹⁹¹ This conversation was held in the context of the battle for Khe Sanh, which had started on January 21, and the Tet Offensive, which had begun on January 31.

¹⁹² On March 31, President Johnson had announced a partial end to the US bombing of North Vietnam and his intention not to seek reelection. The DRV had responded on April 3, announcing its readiness to open contacts with the US.

number of expected votes for Johnson had decreased to only 38%. It proved that Johnson's policy of aggression was a failure. All over the world, everyone was asking Johnson to stop bombing. We all knew about it, even De Gaulle admitted it. And the dollar crisis also occurred at that time. There was only one thing we didn't expect, namely the murder of [civil rights leader Martin] Luther King on April 4th, one day after your statement had been issued. Had your statement been issued one or two days later, the murder might have been stopped. Like Gandhi of India, Luther King advocated a non-violence policy. Even a person like him was killed, not to mention other black people. This explained the growth of the black American movement which spread to over 100 cities. Johnson therefore, had to cancel his trip to Honolulu as well as to postpone the deployment of 10,000 additional troops in the South [of Vietnam]...In this international situation, the monetary crisis became worse, leading to an impasse. In the end of March 1968, the US held an ANZUS meeting in Wellington [New Zealand]. Johnson had planned to go there, but he was not able to. Rusk went instead. There, the US asked its allies to send more troops to Vietnam but didn't enlist their support. The US even asked Jiang Jieshi to withdraw his 7 divisions from Jinmen-Mazu [Quemoy-Matsu], and send at least 2 divisions to Vietnam. Jiang didn't accept it, and asked his ambassador in Washington to delay making the position known. The proposals for more troops, tax increase, and an increase in expenditures for the Vietnam War were not accepted by the US Congress.

In these circumstances, Johnson was forced to release the March 31 statement. It was a wicked and deceitful scheme. In fact, he doesn't want to give up the war. The statement is only a means for them to overcome the difficult time. And Johnson even declared that he should not run for reelection. It is also a familiar means being used in the history of the US presidential campaigns...But as it turned out, your April 3rd statement solved his difficulties. The whole situation has been changed. Its impacts may be temporary, but disadvantageous.

Kang Sheng: The number of expected votes for Johnson increased from 38% to 57%.

Zhou Enlai: (continues) So many people don't understand why the Vietnamese comrades were so hurried in making this statement...It is the judgment of the world's people.

In the eyes of the world's people, you have compromised twice. In his statement, Johnson used the word "meeting" whose weight is less than the word "contact." He also stated that the US could go to any place for the meetings. He already appointed [Averell] Harriman for the job...Then you proposed Phnom Penh. It was a good tactic as you

could win Sihanouk's sympathy and put the US into a difficult situation. When the US rejected it, you again compromised without contesting. Of course, it was correct when you rejected the five places in Asia that the US proposed. Then you proposed Warsaw. We understood that your proposal was based on the fact that the China-US negotiations were also held there. You have appointed Comrade Ha Van Lau¹⁹³ for the meeting but the US once again rejected this proposal.

The situation showed that Vietnamese comrades find it easy to compromise. The world's people can't help thinking that you are facing some difficulties in your struggle. That you changed your positions has increased the number of expected votes for Johnson, increased the price of stocks in New York, and decreased the gold price in free markets...So, you now have created conditions for them to play a double-dealing policy. Under these circumstances, they do not bomb the entirety of DRV territory, but continue bombing north [sic: clearly should be south] of the 20th parallel and, at the same time, prolong the talks. We entirely believe in your fighting experience. But we are somewhat more experienced than you are as far as conducting talks with the US is concerned.

I said many times last year and two years ago that negotiations could take place during the war. At a certain point, negotiations can begin. Comrade Mao Zedong also reminded Comrades Le Duan and Pham Van Dong of negotiating, but from a stronger position. But with your statement, it has been seen that your position is now weaker, not stronger. It is for the sake of our two parties' relations that we take every opportunity to remind you of this matter. And when we tell you this, we tell you all what we think.

32. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG

17 April 1968

Zhou Enlai: You must be prepared to fight for the next two or three years, namely 1968, 1969, and 1970. Comrade Mao said that the question is not that of success or failure, nor of big or small success, but of how you gain the great victory. It is high time you gain a complete victory. That task gives rise to the need for large-scale battles.

33. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG

¹⁹³ Ha Van Lau, PAVN colonel, member of the Vietnamese delegation to the Geneva Conference in 1954. Headed the PAVN Liaison Mission to the International Commission for Control and Supervision in Vietnam 1954-73. Represented DRV at the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal in Copenhagen in 1967, and was a member of the DRV delegation to the Paris peace talks 1968-70. Thereafter served successively as ambassador to Cuba, the UN, France, and as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

19 April 1968

Zhou Enlai: According to us, at present, your acceptance of Johnson's proposal for a limited cessation of US bombing of the North is not good timing and not advantageous. We are insistent on that judgment. For Johnson, it is now a question of how to survive the election year, how to avoid being held responsible for a lost war. He also wants to be seen as a man of "peace" as well as wanting to overcome present internal and external difficulties. These are his objectives, and his calculations are not [propitious] for any concrete outcome of the meeting.

Comrade Nguyen Duy Trinh's statement of January 28 last year [1967] had some influence on the international arena. It was not only felt in African and Asian countries, but some Western and Nordic countries as well. These countries understood that total cessation of bombing the North was the precondition for negotiations. Thus, that statement was supported not only by people in the world, but some Western governments, including De Gaulle's.

So, when Johnson was facing the most difficult moment—I have not mentioned the exploding movement by the black Americans—you accepted his proposal. This act disappointed the people of the world. Pro-American circles were happy. The African and Asian countries, which had been supportive of your demand for a total cessation of bombing, were surprised. So were some Western countries, including France. You had accepted partial cessation of bombing, and then accepted the place for talks which was not Phnom Penh. You, therefore, compromised twice. You are not initiating, but to the contrary, are losing the posture for initiating. You were very quick to accept Warsaw as the meeting place, and by so doing, you did not create more difficulties for Johnson, but in fact helped him out. So Johnson now demanded more: he then proposed a list of 15 meeting places. Rusk mentioned this list too, without mentioning any place in Eastern Europe or Phnom Penh. I do not mean that Phnom Penh is necessarily a suitable place, but once you mentioned Phnom Penh, you have to keep insisting on it. Since you compromised from the position of totality to that of partiality [on the bombing halt], you now have to keep Phnom Penh [as the meeting place].

It is our assessment that these two compromises have diminished the firmness of the statement of January 28th. From our experience, we see that negotiations must start when we have a stronger position, not a weak one. Johnson does not consider that the negotiations, meetings, or contacts will bring about any result. For him, at present, open contacts represent some assets. Or do you plan to obstruct the meeting when it is

convened? If so, why did you accept partial cessation of bombing? What if they do not plan to obstruct the meeting?

We do not understand your whole plan. We do not believe in other plans that have been mentioned by the Western press, either. Logically, there is one feasible plan.

Pham Van Dong: What plan?

Zhou Enlai: As I said, you have to ask for total cessation of bombing and contacts begin. But now, contacts will begin when there is a partial cessation. Before, the US stated that they would go anywhere to meet you. But when you proposed Phnom Penh, then they did not accept. Then you proposed Warsaw. I guess that the US would choose Warsaw, but they will play for time, suggesting 15 other places, waiting for you to suggest another place and then finally accepting Warsaw. When meeting you in Warsaw, they may propose that in return for American total cessation, you must stop assisting the South, which you of course will not accept. They then may mention indirect support from the North. The other day, Comrade Pham Van Dong said that [the North] would send weapons, and stop sending people to the South.

Pham Van Dong: No, I have never said that, never, never.

[The two sides argued on this point and finally Zhou Enlai agreed that the misunderstanding was due to misinterpretation.]

Pham Van Dong: I would like to add one point: That we send people and troops to the South shows our entire nation's will to fight the United States. This will of ours is like iron and stone, which is unshakable. We have faced some extremely difficult moments and you also have been concerned for us. But we are determined to advance forward, never allowing retreat. The whole of our nation is fighting the US to the final victory. The whole of the 31 million Vietnamese people are fighting to the final victory. Because you misheard, we have to tell you again.

Zhou Enlai: For the North, US bombing and blockading are the acts of aggression. Maybe because of poor interpretation, one thing remains unclear to me: The US asked for the cessation of indirect assistance [to the South] and you accepted partial cessation of bombing [the North]. Is it a way of admitting that you are indirectly assisting the South?

Kang Sheng: This was repeated in the statements of January 1st, December 8th and 12th.

Pham Van Dong: I do not know what you mean by referring to indirect assistance to the South?

[The two sides again argued on that point and the Chinese side introduced the term de-escalation.]

Pham Van Dong: Do you want to talk about de-escalation in assisting the South?

Zhou Enlai: That's correct.

Pham Van Dong: I would like to tell you our grand strategy applied in the anti-American war. We have talked with you about it since late 1966. This strategy is demonstrated in the following slogans: to defend the North, to liberate the South... We divided it into two aspects, or two steps, two stages, with a view to step by step defeating the US. We are still following this strategy....

Now, I return to your question of whether we are de-escalating. If it is understood that de-escalating means less fighting, the answer should be an absolute no. If it is understood that de-escalation means some compromise, the answer is no; we didn't think and act that way. To the contrary, we are all the more attacking, using diplomatic tactics, forcing them into a corner, mobilizing world opinion against the enemy. It is now the time for us to escalate and win over the enemy, not to de-escalate.

Zhou Enlai: As far as the South is concerned, from present small-scale fighting, you will conduct large-scale fighting, it means you escalate. But for the North, from asking for a total cessation of bombing to accepting the partial cessation, how can you consider it an escalation?

(Pham Van Dong smiled.)

Zhou Enlai: The other day, you accepted our assessment that the US would concentrate their forces to bomb the area between the 17th and 20th parallels, thus creating difficulties for us. More than that they can resume bombing at any time they want even when they have contacts with you. Whenever you do not respond [to their requests], they will resume bombing. Yet, world opinion has been supporting your demand for a total cessation. In all, we still hold that your statement helped Johnson out. We are talking to you on this matter in a frank way.

... You Vietnamese comrades say that your policy is to force the US into a corner. If you want to do so, you should have asked for the total cessation of bombing when they proposed partial cessation.... You accepted partial cessation and then accepted to meet; it means a compromise as compared with the previous position. The world public opinion also noticed that. Or do you still insist on either Warsaw or Phnom Penh to be the meeting place and then become obstructive if they do not respond? So what is your purpose in accepting the US proposal? For the US, they calculate that they would try to prolong the negotiating process once it starts. We hypothesize the situation as follows: you will insist on total cessation of bombing, upholding your 4 or 5-point position, then Harriman will not oppose it totally, playing for time and adding some more conditions. When you reject, the process will be prolonged. When you obstruct the meeting, they will not. They prolong it, thus reaching their target of solving their difficulties in this election

year. So you help them a lot. The coming situation will prove this judgment. We believe in our judgment, it's not my personal judgment but the one of our [Party] Central Committee. You said that you didn't have any illusions. For the world public opinion, you have compromised. For your diplomatic struggle, you have been put in a passive position. You may suspect our assessment, but you will see it very clearly when negotiations start.

...Still, the key factor is the war itself. Victory is decided by the war. But, so far as negotiation is concerned, we are still holding on our point of view, namely that you have lost your initiative and fallen into a passive position. Had you insisted on your January 28th statement, we would all have been driving them into a corner, Johnson would have been facing more difficulties, both internally and externally. Johnson had been in a corner, even without the April 3rd statement. Now you should analyze the consequences of the contacts. I think that they will certainly accept Warsaw or Phnom Penh, but with some conditions. They intentionally mentioned 15 other places. But it was only their tactic before coming to acceptance [of one of your proposed meeting places]. In all, your statement is a compromise. If you cannot see the consequences now, later you will.

Pham Van Dong: You have stated your opinion in a constructive way, and we should pay more attention to it. Because, after all we are the ones fighting against the US and defeating them. We should be responsible for both military and diplomatic activities.

Thank you very much for your opinion. We will consider it for our better performance, for our victory over the US.

34. ZHOU ENLAI, KANG SHENG, AND PHAM VAN DONG

Beijing, 29 April 1968¹⁹⁴

Zhou Enlai: For a long time, the United States has been half-encircling China. Now the Soviet Union is also encircling China. The circle is getting complete, except [the part of] Vietnam.

Pham Van Dong: We are all the more determined to defeat the US imperialists in all of Vietnamese territory.

Zhou Enlai: That is why we support you.

Pham Van Dong: That we are victorious will have a positive impact in Asia. Our victory will bring about unforeseeable outcomes.

Zhou Enlai: You should think that way.

¹⁹⁴ The Vietnamese Party and Government delegation went to Beijing after a visit to the Soviet Union.

Pham Van Dong: The Soviet comrades listened to us with great enthusiasm. They wanted to know the situation as well as our experiences. Comrade Nguyen Don¹⁹⁵ then informed Comrade [Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei] Gromyko [about] some issues of national defense. The Soviet comrades wholeheartedly support us and they also expressed support for our complete victory. They, however, did say that there would be more sacrifices since large-scale battles would occur. We answered that hardship would be inevitable. In the coming period, we would be more prepared for both large-scale battles and hardship. We would definitely be victorious.

Kang Sheng: The Great Cultural Revolution originated from the idea that classes and class struggle still exist in the socialist system. This idea is both theoretical and empirical. Experiences have shown that even in the Soviet Union—the homeland of Lenin—the Bolshevik party adopted revisionism. Our experiences over the past 20 years in building a proletarian dictatorship, and especially the recent incidents in Eastern Europe where bourgeois liberalism and capitalism were restored,¹⁹⁶ also pose the question of how to conduct a revolution in the context of the proletarian dictatorship and under socialist conditions. To solve the problem, Chairman Mao himself initiated the Great Cultural Revolution in China.

Chairman Mao put forth a three-year plan, starting from June 1966. The task of the first year was mobilization of the people, [that of] the second year was to gain significant victories and [that of] the last year is to conclude the Revolution. As for a great revolution like this, three years is not a long period of time. Moreover, according to Chairman Mao, the Great Revolution does not consist of only one or two smaller revolutions.

Now I talk of the preparatory phase from December 1965 to June 1966. [This consisted of p]reparations for readiness in opinion and thought. During this period, we exposed Peng Zhen, Luo Ruiqing, Lu Dingyi, Yang Shangkun.¹⁹⁷ Also in this period, we released two important documents: the decision in February 1966 by Comrade Lin Biao empowering Comrade Jiang Qing to convene the Conference on the Armed Forces Cultural Activities and the 16 May Statement of the extended Politburo meeting. The

¹⁹⁵ Nguyen (Van) Don (1918-) was a southerner (born in Quang Ngai). He served as commander and political officer in Interzone V (south-central Vietnam) until 1967, and subsequently played a key role in Hanoi as Vice Minister of Defense and Deputy Chief of Staff. He seems to have lost his influence in 1976.

¹⁹⁶ Possibly an allusion to reformist movements in Czechoslovakia (the “Prague Spring”) and perhaps Poland, where authorities had recently begun a crackdown on dissidents.

¹⁹⁷ Before being purged late in 1965, Yang Shangkun was an alternate member of the CCP Central Secretariat and director of the Central Administrative Office of the CCP CC.

latter is a document of great historic significance, laying theoretical foundations for the Revolution to begin. President Ho had a copy of the statement before it was announced.

Let me talk about the reactionary crimes committed by Peng Zhen, Luo Ruiqing, Lu Dingyi, Yang Shangkun. Once, when Peng Zhen was arrested, he confessed to Jiang Jieshi. He was not only a traitor, but also continued to have relations with Jiang's secret agents. His father-in-law was also a big traitor. Peng's confession led to the arrest of many members of the CCP. He took advantage of the clandestine situation to cover his crimes.

Luo Ruiqing is a pseudo CCP member, as he later confessed that he had never been admitted to the party. He also confessed that he was in Wuhan, studying in an Army College, but he had not participated in the Nanchang uprising. In 1929, he was in Shanghai, self-styled as a CCP member. His past records were revealed during the Cultural Revolution. We also know that when he was working in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, he made use of the counterintelligence work to steal secret state documents and send them to the enemy. I just take two cases: he reported to the enemy on both the visit by Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union in 1949-1950 and one of the visits by Comrade Pham Van Dong to China.

Lu Dingyi participated in the revolution with a negative attitude and motives of racketeering. In 1930, he returned to China, restoring connections with his old friends in the Guomindang. During the CCP-GMD cooperation against the Japanese in 1937, he was working in the CCP office in Nanning and was defending the interests of his family which had feudal and capitalist roots. The Red Guards searched his house and found the documents on these deeds. Therefore, he cannot help but confess that he has been a GMD agent since 1930.

Yang Shangkun has sent many documents to the revisionists in the Soviet Union.

During the preparatory phase, apart from exposing these persons, we also got the people psychologically ready and laid the theoretical base for the Great Cultural Revolution to start.

Zhou Enlai: In the Politburo Conference in May 1966, Comrade Lin Biao delivered an excellent report, analyzing the characteristics of the Mao Zedong era and focusing on the following point: all the struggles are aimed at seizing power and consolidating power. This report not only exposed these four persons but also implied criticism of Liu Shaoqi who has never publicized the thoughts of Mao Zedong. I have had Comrade Lin Biao's report sent to Vietnamese comrades.

Kang Sheng: On 16 May 1966, Chairman Mao stressed: revisionists, reactionaries, and traitors are hiding among us and enjoying our friends' trust. At that time, many

cadres did not understand what Chairman Mao really meant, thinking that the allusion was to Luo and Peng. But in fact, Peng Zhen had been exposed. No one dared to think of who were traitors among us.

Zhou Enlai: Yet, Comrade Mao had thought of this.

Kang Sheng: In his report, Comrade Lin Biao had a famous statement: “The whole country will rise up to confront anyone who opposes Chairman Mao and the policy of proletarian dictatorship.”

In the period between June 1966 and January 1967, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were exposed as being capitalistic and reactionary.

On the first of June 1966, Chairman Mao decided on the publication of the big-character newspaper of Beijing University nationwide, igniting the torch of the Great Cultural Revolution. He later sent a letter of support to the Red Guards, thus helping the Red Guards movement develop across the country. After August 13, Chairman Mao received representatives of the Red Guards 8 times. Then the 11th Plenum criticized the reactionary policy of Liu and Deng and adopted a 16-point manifesto on the Great Cultural Revolution and released a statement of the Plenum. Chairman Mao wrote an article entitled “Storming the Headquarters.”

In November 1966, another conference was convened by the Central Committee to continue criticism of Liu and Deng and enlarge the anti-Khrushchev drive in China. By then, the revolutionary policy of Chairman Mao had succeeded and the long-hidden faces of counterrevolution of Liu and Deng were exposed. The Red Guards examined French and GMD documents and found out that in 1925 Liu surrendered to the enemy. In 1927, Liu ordered Wuhan workers to surrender their weapons to the GMD government. According to Japanese documents, Liu surrendered to the Japanese in 1929 in Manchuria and as bank papers showed, since 1936, Liu has received GMD money.

There is also another point we want to make: Liu’s wife—Wang Guangmei—is an agent of American Intelligence. I still recall criticizing Luo Ruiqing, saying that the enemy, because of our lack of vigilance, could send tanks into our beds—tank is jargon for wife. The reason I said that was the marriage of Luo with a Japanese agent who upon her exposure had to flee. At that time Luo’s tank was small. Now in Liu’s bed, there was a big and sophisticated Chinese tank sent by the US.

For his part, Deng was clearly a defector during the Civil War. He also opposed the thoughts of Mao Zedong in a consistent way. He tried to block Chairman Mao and send members of his family as well as bad agents to the Party. We have uncovered the Chinese Khrushchevs who have been hiding among us.

The Party School and its branches at the provincial and district levels have for the last 18 years represented a stubborn fort opposing the thoughts of Mao Zedong. Liu controlled the Party school from 1948 until the Cultural Revolution, using the School to exchange intelligence documents with the Soviets.

Zhou Enlai: In the period from September 1967 until now, Chairman Mao said that an all-round victory has been gained. With whom did we struggle in this period? The remaining reactionaries in our ranks. But in general, the revolutionary policy of Chairman Mao has gained great victories and reactionary policies have collapsed. Revolutionary Committees have been established in all except 8 provinces. Reality has proved the success of Chairman Mao's policy. The traitors, defectors within the party, have been exposed, the level of education of the people and cadres has been raised, and the party membership has been purified and is now relatively pure.

At the 7th Party Congress, Liu Shaoqi read a report on the State of the Party in which there was a part devoted to the thoughts of Mao Zedong. In fact, someone wrote this part for him and he used this part to deceive the CCP members and the Central Committee in order to win the party's trust. After the Congress, Liu never mentioned the thoughts of Mao Zedong again, and he did not use the thoughts of Mao Zedong to criticize the book "On the Betterment Of Party Members." To the contrary, he used the book to oppose the thoughts of Mao Zedong.

Comrade Lin Biao has written many works in support of Mao Zedong Thought. But as a modest person, he did not publicize them. Comrade Lin Biao has undergone the tests of the protracted struggle. 40 years have passed since his first meeting with Chairman Mao. He has proven himself a comrade in arms of Chairman Mao.

Kang Sheng: After national liberation, Liu Shaoqi went to Tianjin and delivered a speech saying that the Chinese technological foundation was weak, not even equal to that under the Tsarist system. He even said that capitalist exploitation was not wrong but rewarding.

Theoretically, Liu is a descendant of Bernstein, Kautsky, Bukharin and Khrushchev. In China, we have the same people, namely Qu Qiubai, Chen Duxiu, Li Lisan, Wang Ming, Zhang Guotao, and Liu Shaoqi. Their theory is very harmful for the international Communist movement.

35. ZHOU ENLAI, CHEN YI, AND XUAN THUY¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Xuan Thuy (1912-), first worked as a journalist and senior official in Communist front organizations during the First Indochina War. Minister of Foreign Affairs 1962-65, cabinet minister and head of the DRV delegation to the quadripartite negotiations in Paris 1968-73.

Beijing (The Great Hall of the People), 9:45 p.m., 7 May 1968

Zhou Enlai: The situation of the negotiation on the Korean issue was different from your situation. At that time, [the Korean issue] concerned half of Korea, but the situation you are facing now concerns the unification of Vietnam. Half of Vietnam was the problem [we were facing] fourteen years ago. When Comrade Mao Zedong met President Ho Chi Minh the last time,¹⁹⁹ he said that it was possible that our signing the [1954] Geneva agreement was a mistake. After we signed the agreement, many soldiers of South Vietnam retreated to the North. The United States refused to sign the agreement. If we also refused to sign the agreement, there were reasons for us to do so. But President Ho said that there were benefits involved in [signing the agreement]. By doing so, after a period of difficulty, during which Ngo Dinh Diem made arrests, detentions, and suppression, causing the deaths of over 200,000, the people of South Vietnam, with this painful experience, had been awakened to make revolution, which led to today's situation. Therefore, the situation of the Korean negotiations was quite similar to the situation around the Geneva Conference of 1954. The Korean negotiations were conducted on the battlefield. The war lasted for almost three years, and the negotiations lasted for two years. But when the Korean issue was discussed at the Geneva Conference in 1954, the war had already stopped, and it was then difficult to solve the problem through negotiation. Whatever we said they would not agree. Therefore, the Korean negotiations resulted in only an armistice, and no other political agreement had been reached. On the issue of withdrawing [foreign] troops from Korea, they refused to discuss. We withdrew our troops [from Korea] in 1958, but they refused to withdraw their troops. The situation you are facing this time is different. You are negotiating with the Americans step by step. This might be fine. Take one step and you may watch for the next step. But the fundamental question is that what you cannot get on the battlefield, no matter how you try, you will not get at the negotiation table. Dien Bien Phu set up the 17th parallel, therefore the Geneva Conference could reach an agreement. Probably Comrade Pham Van Dong had conveyed our attitude after returning to Vietnam. It is our opinion that you have agreed to [negotiate] too fast and too hurriedly, which might have left the Americans with an impression that you are eager to negotiate. Comrade Mao Zedong told Comrade Pham Van Dong that negotiation is acceptable, but [first] you must maintain a lofty stance. Secondly, the Americans, the subordinate countries, and the puppets have a military force of over 1,000,000, and, before their backbone has been

¹⁹⁹ Not specified, but possibly in the winter-spring of 1968, when Ho is reported to have been in Beijing for medical treatment. Our thanks to William Duiker for clarification on this point.

broken, or before five or six of their fingers have been broken, they will not accept the defeat, and they will not leave.

...

Chen Yi: You should not inform the Soviets about developments in the negotiations with the US because they can inform the US.

Zhou Enlai: You should not inform them what you plan to do as there have been cases of disclosure of military and diplomatic secrets by the revisionists. You should be highly vigilant.

36. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM HUNG²⁰⁰

Beijing, 19 June 1968

Zhou Enlai: I would like to mention that I do not know how the Khmer Communists solve the class contradictions between them and the reactionary forces in Cambodia. The Khmer Communist Party conducted an armed struggle in the area bordering with Vietnam. The Khmer government oppresses them and also does not want the supply line of rice to the Vietnamese revolutionary forces to go via Cambodia. Thus, the Vietnamese comrades have to face difficulties.

It is said that weapons that China sent to Vietnamese comrades once fell into the hands of Khmer Communists and Sihanouk was not happy with that. Did it really happen, or did Khmer Communists seize Chinese weapons that the Khmer government's armed forces already possessed?

Have you met Khmer Communists when you were traveling via Cambodia?
Comrade Son Ngoc Minh²⁰¹ does not have any contacts with his comrades inside

²⁰⁰ The Vietnamese delegation included Pham Hung, Ba Long, Ngo Minh Loan, and Tran Van Quang. Pham Hung (1912-88), member of the VWP politburo from 1957, from 1967 directed the war in the South as secretary of the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) and as political commissar of the People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF). Deputy Premier from 1976 and Prime Minister of SRV from June 1987 until his death in 1988. Ba Long (alias Le Trong Tan, Le Trong To) received military training in China and the Soviet Union and served as a PAVN divisional commander during the First Indochina War. Director of the Army War College 1954-60, Deputy Chief of Staff 1961-62. Went south to serve as PLAF Deputy Commander 1964-69, and took up several essential posts during the campaigns in South and Central Vietnam and Laos 1970-75, most notably as Deputy Commander of the Ho Chi Minh Campaign in April 1975. Ba Long succeeded Van Tien Dung as PAVN Chief of Staff when the latter became minister 1978-80. Tran Van Quang (alias Tran Thuc Kinh; 1917-), veteran of the 1945 revolution in north central Vietnam, member of the VWP CC 1960-76. Deputy Chief of the PAVN General Staff 1959-61, and played a crucial role in the COSVN during the first half of the 1960s. Later held important commands in central Vietnam while also serving as a member of the Central Military Committee in Hanoi. Again Deputy Chief of the General Staff 1974-77, and commanded the Vietnamese forces in Laos 1978-81. In 1992 elected President of the Vietnam War Veterans' Association.

Cambodia, does he? We do not want the Chinese Embassy in Cambodia to have any relations with the Khmer Communist Party because the problem will be too complicated.

Recently, our embassy in Cambodia reported that the Khmer Communist Party complained that Vietnamese comrades did not supply them with weapons when the opportunity had been ripe for an armed struggle. It will be good if the opportunity arrives. But if it does not and an armed struggle starts anyhow, it will not be good.

We have told Comrade Pham Van Dong and later President Ho that we did not have direct relations with the Khmer comrades. It will be easier if Vietnamese comrades can directly exchange opinions with them. Comrade Pham Van Dong said that we should not interfere in the internal affairs of the Khmer Communist Party. However, I hear them complain that Vietnamese comrades have a chauvinist attitude, do not want to help, to discuss with them, or give them weapons. This matter is very complicated. Even when you have weapons, it is still difficult to give them. Is it because of Vietnamese cadres at the lower levels? Do they have improper attitudes in dealing with Khmer comrades, thus causing misunderstandings? Maybe you should educate Vietnamese troops passing through Cambodia to be more attentive to the question of relations with the Khmer Communist Party.

Of course not all your troops are involved in these contacts. But you should let officers in charge of political affairs at some levels know about this issue and ask them to show attitudes of equality, [and] to clearly explain the policy of the Vietnamese Party. You should make them understand the overall context, be aware of the greater task of defeating the US. Defeating the US will create favorable conditions for the Cambodian revolution. In short, you should make them understand the international approach and understand that one cannot fight many enemies at the same time.

I propose that you report this to President Ho and the Central Committee and ask for permission to inform certain officers in charge of political affairs of this issue in order to avoid trouble. We have to face a situation where Cambodians may ask for weapons when Vietnamese troops are marching through Cambodia. Will you give them weapons? If you do, Sihanouk will be displeased. If you do not, what will the revolutionary people in Cambodia think?

The problem is very complicated. The Cambodian comrades wish to develop the armed struggle. Sihanouk will oppress them, and you can no longer go through

²⁰¹ Cambodian Communist leader who for many years stayed in exile in Hanoi. He lost touch with party developments inside Cambodia when Pol Pot rose to power in the Cambodian Communist Party during 1960-63. See also note 175.

Cambodia. And if Sihanouk oppresses the Cambodian Communists, China can no longer provide Cambodia with weapons.

If the whole of Indochina joins the efforts to drive the US out of Vietnam, then the Laotian and Cambodian revolutions will be successful, although not as fast as expected. As our cadres in the [Chinese] Embassy in Cambodia are of low rank, we do not want them to contact the Cambodian Communists. So I propose that you should consider the situation and if it is suitable, you should invite Cambodian comrades to Tay Ninh or Tay Nguyen [in the Central highlands] to discuss how to join efforts to fight the Americans first and then fight the reactionary forces in Cambodia. You should also see whether this will be more beneficial or it will be better if each party conducts the struggle in its own way.

I heard from Comrade Pham Van Dong that the present General Secretary of the Khmer Communist Party graduated from France and used to travel to Hanoi.

37. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM HUNG

Beijing, 29 June 1968²⁰²

Zhou Enlai: ...It is good that you today make it clear to us that you are preparing for a protracted war. Your recent attacks on the cities were only aimed at restraining the enemy's forces, helping the work of liberating the rural areas, mobilizing massive forces in urban areas. Yet, they are not of a decisive nature. The Soviet revisionists are claiming that attacks on Saigon are genuine offensives, that the tactics of using the countryside to encircle the urban areas are wrong and that to conduct a protracted struggle is a mistake. In their opinion, only lightening attacks on big cities are decisive. But if you do [that], the US will be happy as they can concentrate their forces for counter-attack, thus causing greater destruction for you. The losses that you would suffer will lead to defeatism on your side. And the Soviet Union will exploit this situation to exert more pressure on you, forcing you to negotiate.

That you accepted holding talks with the US put you in a passive position. You have been trapped by the Soviets. Now, Johnson has the initiative. Faced with difficulties, he authorized partial bombing. And when he has fewer difficulties, he will resume bombing, and when he has more difficulties, he will again return to partial bombing. In reality, recently, bombing has become fiercer, concentrated on a smaller area,

²⁰² Zhou Enlai received the Vietnamese delegation and had talks from 11 am-6 pm. Participants in the talks from Chinese side: Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, Li Xiannian, Ye Jianying, Li Qiang (PRC foreign trade minister), Han Nianlong; Vietnamese side: Pham Hung, Ba Long, Ly Ban, Ngo Minh Loan.

thus causing you more losses and creating more obstacles for your assistance to the South. That you accepted their partial bombing, and agreed to talk with them has bettered their present position compared with the one they were in in 1966 and 1967. Though you still maintain your principles in negotiation, you have reduced the amount of their difficulties in this election year. It is the fault of the Soviets. For long, the Soviets have been the US' henchmen and lent them a helping hand to oppose the world's revolutionary people....

We have made a list of mistakes committed by the Soviets. We would like to convey it to President Ho Chi Minh for his consideration.

Not long ago, the Soviets, in collaboration with the US, proposed at the United Nations the nuclear nonproliferation treaty which is aimed at opposing China. But China is not subject to the treaty. This treaty is designed to prohibit nuclear development by some countries other than the US and the Soviet Union because it allows no nuclear storage or underground tests. The treaty prohibits countries without nuclear industry to build up their nuclear capabilities. This is an act of Soviet neo-colonialism, Soviet nuclear neocolonialism. The Soviet Union has become the country of socialist imperialism.

...On June 27th, Gromyko delivered a speech to the Supreme Soviet. This speech was widely welcomed by the imperialist mass media.

38. CHEN YI AND LE DUC THO²⁰³

Beijing, 17 October 1968²⁰⁴

Chen Yi: (1) Since last April when you accepted the US partial cessation of bombing and held peace talks with them, you have lost the initiative in the negotiations to them. Now, you accept quadripartite negotiations. You lost to them once more. Therefore, this will cause more losses for the Vietnamese people, especially the people in the South.

(2) At present, Washington and Saigon are publicizing the negotiations, showing the fact that you have accepted the conditions put forward by the US. Your returning home for party instruction all the more proves it to the world's people. With your

²⁰³ Le Duc Tho (1910-1990), senior member of the ICP who was deputy secretary of COSVN (under Le Duan) 1949-1954. Member of the Lao Dong Politburo from 1954. From 1963 head of the committee for supervision of the South, held secret talks with Henry Kissinger in Paris from February 1970, and served as the DRV's chief negotiator during the peace talks in Paris. With Kissinger, in 1973 awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which he declined.

²⁰⁴ On the way back from the Paris talks, Le Duc Tho stopped in Beijing. He met with and reported to Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi. He then asked the latter to inform Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai as well as the CCP CC and the Leadership Group of the Cultural Revolution about the contents of the conversation. On October 17, Chen Yi met Le Duc Tho again to convey Zhou Enlai's personal comments based on general directives of Chairman Mao and the CCP CC.

acceptance of the quadripartite negotiations, you handed the puppet government legal recognition, thus eliminating the National Liberation Front's status as the unique legal representative of the people in the South. So, the Americans have helped their puppet regime to gain legal status while you have made the Front lose its own prestige. This makes us wonder whether you have strengthened the enemy's position while weakening ours. You are acting in contradiction to the teachings of President Ho, the great leader of the Vietnamese people, thus destroying President Ho's prestige among the Vietnamese people.

(3) This time, your acceptance of quadripartite negotiations will help Johnson and [US Vice President and Democratic Party presidential candidate Hubert H.] Humphrey win their elections, thus letting the people in the South remain under the rule of the US imperialists and their puppets. You do not liberate the people in the South but cause them more losses. We do not want you to make another mistake. We believe that the people in the South of Vietnam do not want to surrender and they will win the war. But now the cause is more difficult and the price [for victory] more expensive.

(4) In our opinion, in a very short time, you have accepted the compromising and capitulationist proposals put forward by the Soviet revisionists. So, between our two parties and the two governments of Vietnam and China, there is nothing more to talk about. Nevertheless, as President Ho has said, our relationship is one of both comrades and brothers; we will therefore consider the changes of the situation in November and will have more comments.

Le Duc Tho: On this matter, we will wait and see. And the reality will give us the answer. We have gained experience over the past 15 years. Let reality justify.

Chen Yi: We signed the Geneva accords in 1954 when the US did not agree to do so. We withdrew our armed forces from the South to the North, thus letting the people in the South be killed. We at that time made a mistake in which we [Chinese] shared a part.

Le Duc Tho: Because we listened to your advice.²⁰⁵

Chen Yi: You just mentioned that in the Geneva Conference, you made a mistake because you followed our advice. But this time, you will make another mistake if you do not take our words into account.

39. MAO ZEDONG AND PHAM VAN DONG²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ See the introductory essay by Stein Tonneson for a comment on the pronouns used in this exchange.

²⁰⁶ In November 1968, a DRV delegation headed by Pham Van Dong (on his way back from Moscow) and a COSVN delegation headed by Muoi Cuc (Nguyen Van Linh) visited China. They had three meetings with Zhou Enlai, on November 13, 15, and 17, during which Pham Van Dong informed the Chinese about his talks with the Soviets and the negotiations in Paris. After seeing Zhou Enlai, the delegations asked for

Beijing, 17 November 1968

Mao Zedong: You have been here some days, haven't you? I am a bit bureaucratic.

Pham Van Dong: How are you, Chairman Mao?

Mao Zedong: Not very well. I have had a cough for some days. It is time to go to Heaven. It seems that I am summoned to meet the Good God. How is President Ho?

Pham Van Dong: [He is] well. He is better than [when] he was in Beijing. The main reason is that he received good medical treatment in Beijing, and since he came back, he is doing well.

Mao Zedong: The weather in Beijing may not be suitable for President Ho.

Pham Van Dong: Very suitable.

Mao Zedong: In my opinion, maybe Guangzhou is better.

Pham Van Dong: On behalf of our President Ho, our Politburo, I would like to convey to you, Chairman Mao, Vice Chairman Lin and other comrades our honorable greetings.

Mao Zedong: Thank you.

Pham Van Dong: Today, in our delegation there are two comrades from the South (pointing to Comrade Muoi Cuc, and Comrade Le Duc Anh²⁰⁷).

Mao Zedong: Is it the first time Comrade Le Duc Anh came to China? (Shaking Muoi Cuc's hands, Chairman Mao said that they had met each other in 1966.)

Le Duc Anh: I came to China once, in 1962, but it is the first time I meet Chairman Mao.

Mao Zedong: I am bureaucratic. You came here, but I haven't met you. You may dismiss me from my post because of my being bureaucratic. We are going to convene a Party congress, and the congress may dismiss me. It may be good, too. Maybe now I should relax, only do small things such as sweeping my house. Recently, I haven't engaged in any battle.

a meeting with Chairman Mao Zedong. On the evening of 17 November 1968, Mao received the delegation at his home in Zhongnanhai. Present were Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, Chen Boda, Kang Sheng, Wang Xinting (Deputy Chief of Staff of the PLA), Ye Jianying, and others on the Chinese side, and Pham Van Dong, Le Thanh Nghi, Nguyen Van Linh, Le Duc Anh, and others on the Vietnamese side.

²⁰⁷ Le Duc Anh (1920-), an army officer who was PAVN Deputy Chief General Staff 1963-64, Chief of Staff and subsequently PLAF Deputy Commander 1964-68 (a function he still held when he visited China together with Nguyen Van Linh in 1968), commander of Military Zone 9 (the Mekong Delta) 1969-74. One of the deputy commanders of the Ho Chi Minh offensive in April 1975, and overall commander of the forces invading Cambodia in 1978. Member of the VCP politburo 1982-97, and President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1992-97.

You want to have talks with the US, and so do they with you. The US has great difficulties in their undertaking. They have 3 problems to be dealt with, namely the issues in America, mainly in the US, in Europe, and in Asia. They already have been involved in Asia for 4 or 5 years now. It is not even-handed. The US capitalists who invested in Europe should be displeased and disagree. And in US history, the Americans always let others engage in wars first and only get involved when the wars are half way over. But after the Second World War, they started fighting in Korea and then in Vietnam. They mainly fought these wars themselves, with little involvement of other countries. You call it a special war, a limited war, but for the US, they concentrate all their forces on it. At present their allies in Europe are complaining a lot, saying that [the US] reduces the number of its troops [in Europe] and withdraws its experienced troops and good equipment [from Europe], not to mention the troops withdrawn from South Korea and Hawaii. The US has a population of 200 million people, but it cannot stand wars. If they want to mobilize some tens of thousand of troops, they must spend a lot of time and money.

(The transcript at this point contains a conversation between Chairman Mao and a young woman who entered, serving him a cup of hot tea. He turned to her. Young woman: Please do not wipe your face!

Mao: Why not? Does the towel contain poison? I will not comply.

Mao picks up a pack of cigarettes. He tries, but fails to open it. Then, he gives the pack to the young woman.

Mao: I cannot open it. You open it. What is your name?

Young woman: Leng Feng.

Mao: Does it mean cool summer breeze?

(Then he turned back to the Vietnamese guests: Please try these cigarettes!)

Mao Zedong: After some years of struggling against them, you should consider not only your difficulties but also your enemy's. You have been fighting for more than a dozen of years. 23 years have passed since the Japanese surrender in 1945 but your country is still existing. You have fought the Japanese, French, and now you are fighting the Americans. But Vietnam still exists like other countries, and more than that, it has developed to a greater extent.

Pham Van Dong: That is true.

Mao Zedong: Why was the Geneva Conference convened? ([he] asks Comrade Zhou Enlai). In the past, I did say that we had made a mistake when we went to the Geneva conference in 1954. At that time, President Ho Chi Minh wasn't totally satisfied. It was difficult for President Ho to give up the South, and now, when I think twice, I see

that he was right. The mood of the people in the South at that time was rising high. Why did we have the Geneva conference? Perhaps, France wanted it.

Zhou Enlai: It was proposed by the Soviet Union. Khrushchev at that time was in power. And in January 1954, the Soviets wanted to solve the problem.

Mao Zedong: Now, I cannot remember the whole story. But I see that it would be better if the conference could have been delayed for one year, so the troops from the North could come down [to the South] and defeat [the enemy].

Pham Van Dong: At that time, we were fighting in the whole country, having no division between the North and the South.

Mao Zedong: We had to fight in a sweeping manner. The world public opinion at that time also wanted to have this conference. In my opinion, at that time the French wanted to withdraw, the US was not yet [ready] to come, and Diem was facing many difficulties.²⁰⁸ I think that to withdraw our forces [to the North] meant that we lent them a helping hand. I once talked about it with President Ho, and today I talk about it again with you. Maybe my opinion is incorrect. But I think that we lost an opportunity, as in the treaty, there is a provision on the withdrawal of troops.

Zhou Enlai: To withdraw the armed forces.

Mao Zedong: But it is not a very serious problem. It is the simple question of killing. And killing led to war. When the war broke out, the Americans came, at first as advisers, and then as combat troops. But now, they again say that the Americans in Vietnam are advisers.

Pham Van Dong: It is impossible for them to be advisers.

Mao Zedong: I, however, think that they will be advisers.

Pham Van Dong: Let Comrade Muoi speak on that.

Muoi Cuc: Dear Uncle Mao! Our President Ho, Political Bureau and Party Central Committee give us the order to fight until there is no American left in our country, even as advisers. Our blood has been shed for several years now. Why do we have to accept them to stay as advisers?

Mao Zedong: So, it will take some time if you do not accept them as advisers.

Muoi Cuc: It is correct, Uncle Mao. We are persistently fighting until the South becomes entirely independent and free, until national unification is attained. By so doing, we adhere to the order by our President Ho as well as your [orders]. This is what our Party Central Committee thinks and also what the entire Vietnamese people desire.

²⁰⁸ In fact, Ngo Dinh Diem first became prime minister on 16 June 1954, during the Geneva Conference.

Mao Zedong: It is good to think that way. It is imperative to fight and to talk at the same time. It will be difficult if you rely only on negotiations to request their departure.

Pham Van Dong: They will not go anywhere and just stay.

Mao Zedong: As far as fighting is concerned, the US relies on its air force. There are about 9 or 10 US divisions. The number of American troops fighting in the Korean War was bigger. It is said that they have 5 divisions—approximately 200 thousand troops—deployed in Europe. But this number is overstated. The number of airplanes has been reduced. Some troops have been sent to reinforce the Seventh Fleet. I do not know how many divisions are deployed in the US.

Wang Xinting: Nine divisions. [Ye Jianying corrected: 6 divisions and 4 regiments.]

Pham Van Dong: The best American divisions are deployed in South Vietnam.

Mao Zedong: [The US faces three problems:] First the lack of troops; second the lack of equipment and last the lack of experienced people.

Zhou Enlai: They have 6 divisions and 6 regiments deployed in the US.

Mao Zedong: But the battlefield in Vietnam is of first priority. There, they have 9 divisions and 4 regiments. But as far as I remember, they had 7 divisions there.

Zhou Enlai: Later, they were reinforced.

Mao Zedong: I still have not understood why the US imperialists went to Southeast Asia and what interests the American capitalists found there. Exploitation of natural resources? Of course, the region is rich in natural resources. Oil, rubber in Indonesia. Rubber in Malaysia. Is there rubber in your country?

Pham Van Dong: Plenty.

Mao Zedong: Rubber and tea. But I do not think that the US needs food or plants.

Pham Van Dong: The US is looking further than that when fighting in Vietnam.

Mao Zedong: They fight in the South, but target the North and further, China. They are not strong enough to target other areas.

Pham Van Dong: But they are imperialists.

Mao Zedong: Of course, imperialists must have colonies. They want countries like ours to become their colonies. Before, China used to be a semi-colony of imperialists for over 100 years. What did they rob us of? China's technology and agriculture did not develop.

Zhou Enlai: They robbed materials.

Mao Zedong: What materials?

Zhou Enlai: Soybean.

Mao Zedong: Britain exploited Chinese coal. The US does not need Chinese coal. They say that China does not have oil. Basically, they do not involve themselves in steel production and engineering. They do some textile production, but Japan and Britain do the most. I, therefore, see that their target is to put out the fire, because fire has burst out in your country. Because the capitalists want to put out fire, they must design machinery to do so, thus making money. How much money do they spend in Vietnam every year?

Pham Van Dong: More than 30 billion [dollars].

Mao Zedong: The US cannot prolong the war. Approximately 4 years at best. At present, the fire is not put out, but to the contrary, [it has] become fiercer. Some capitalist groups gain more benefits, but others do not. Since benefits have not been divided equally, they are at odds with each other. This contradiction can be exploited.

Additionally, the capitalists who enjoy fewer benefits now become less committed. I have seen this in different speeches during the election campaign. Recently, there was an article by an American reporter warning of another trap. The reporter's name is [Walter] Lippman. [He wrote that] the US is now trapped in Vietnam and trying to get out of the quagmire. Yet, it is afraid of getting into another quagmire. That is why your cause is hopeful. In 1964, in a 5-hour conversation with President Ho, I said that that year might be decisive because it was an election year in the US. Every presidential candidate has to face this problem. Will the US continue to fight or get out of the quagmire? I think that it will be more difficult for them to continue to fight. But Europe has not participated, which is different from the Korean War.

Pham Van Dong: That's correct.

Mao Zedong: During the Korean War, Britain and Turkey participated.

Pham Van Dong: So did France.

Mao Zedong: Only nominally and really not much.

Pham Van Dong: There was a regiment from France.

Mao Zedong: We were not impressed by the French participation.

Zhou Enlai: There were totally 16 countries participating in the war, including South Korea.

Mao Zedong: Japan and Taiwan do not participate in the Vietnam war.

Pham Van Dong: They are wise. At times, we were very much afraid that Japan would.

Mao Zedong: Japan will not, generally. It may involve itself financially. At least, Japan benefits in terms of weapons.

The US overestimated their forces. They again committed the same old mistake: scattering their forces. It is not my opinion but [US President-elect Richard M.] Nixon's. He said that American forces were too scattered. Their forces are now scattered in America, Europe and Asia. Even in Asia, American forces do not concentrate. There are 70,000 American troops, including 2 divisions of marines, in South Korea. There is a division in Hawaii. Other naval and air bases need more reserve troops. You, therefore, can understand how the American ruling circles think. If you were American presidents, what would you think? I never thought that they would attack North Vietnam. But my prediction was wrong when they bombed the North. But now, when they stop, my prediction is proven right. If, in the future, they resume bombing, I will be wrong again. Anyway, I will be right one day.

It is good, nevertheless, that you have prepared for several alternatives. For all the years of fighting, the US armies have not attacked the North, Haiphong port has not been blockaded, and the streets of Hanoi have not been bombed. It shows that the US is keeping a card in reserve. At one time, they warned [that they would] pursue your planes to your air bases. But in fact, they did not. This shows that their warnings are empty.

Pham Van Dong: We have noticed this.

Mao Zedong: Later, they did not reiterate this warning. They did not mention the movement of your planes. They also know how many Chinese people are working in Vietnam, but do not mention this, just ignoring it. Maybe we should withdraw the [Chinese] troops which are not needed. Have you discussed that matter?

Zhou Enlai: We shall discuss this with Comrade Ly Ban, with our Ambassador and military experts.

Mao Zedong: In case they come, we will be back. There will be no big deal.

Pham Van Dong: Let us think again.

Mao Zedong: You do think again. Keep what you still need and we withdraw what you no longer need or do not yet need. In the future, when you need [assistance], we shall be back. The same will be with your air force: if you need China's air bases, you just use them; if you do not need them, you do not use them.

We agree with your slogan of fighting while negotiating. Some comrades worry that the US will deceive you. But I tell them not to [worry]. Negotiations are just like fighting. You have drawn experience, understood the rules. But sometimes they can deceive you. As you said, the US did not keep their word.

Pham Van Dong: They are very wicked.

Mao Zedong: They in many cases even said that the signed treaties were worthless. But things have their rules. The Americans cannot do this all the time. Will

you negotiate with them for 100 years? Our Comrade Prime Minister said: If Nixon cannot solve the problem in two years' time, he will be in trouble. Are you the chief representative in negotiations?

(Asking Le Thanh Nghi²⁰⁹)

Zhou Enlai: Comrade Le Duc Tho is. This is Comrade Le Thanh Nghi.

Mao Zedong: Both have the family name of Le!

Pham Van Dong: As Chairman Mao said, we conduct fighting while negotiating. But fighting should be conducted to a certain extent before negotiations can start. Sitting at the negotiating table does not mean [we] stop fighting. On the contrary, fighting must be fiercer. In that way, we can attain a higher position, adopt the voice of the victorious and strong, who knows how to fight to the end and knows that the enemy will fail eventually. This is our attitude. If we think otherwise, we will not win. In this connection, the South must fight fiercely, at the same time carry out the political struggle. At present, conditions in the South are very good. The convening of talks in Paris represents a new source of encouragement for our people in the South. They say that if the US fails in the North, they will definitely fail in the South.

Mao Zedong: Is it true that the American troops were happy when talks were announced?

Muoi Cuc²¹⁰: I would like to tell you, Chairman Mao, that the Americans celebrate the news. Thousands of them gather to listen to radio coverage of the talks. When ordered to fight, some wrote on their hats: "I am soon going back home, please do not kill me."

Saigon troops are very discouraged. Many of them openly oppose Thieu,²¹¹ saying: "If Mr. Thieu wants to fight, just let him go to Khe Sanh and do it." The morale of the Saigon troops and government officials is very low. Our people, cadres, and troops in the South are encouraged and determined to fight harder. We see that because we are strong, we can force the US to stop bombing the North. Therefore, [this] is the time we

²⁰⁹ Le Thanh Nghi (1911-), a long-standing member of the ICP who had been on the CC already during the First Indochina War. From the 1960s until the 1980s a politburo member and a Deputy Premier in charge of economic affairs, including economic assistance from foreign countries.

²¹⁰ Nguyen Van Linh (Nguyen Van Cuc or Muoi Cuc) (1913-98), a long-standing member of the ICP who originally came from northern Vietnam, but spent most of his life in the south. Became the main party leader in the south when Le Duan went to Hanoi in 1957, and later served as the principal deputy to Nguyen Chi Thanh and his successor Pham Hung in the COSVN leadership. After 1975 became responsible for administering South Vietnam, and served as VCP General Secretary during the reform period 1986-91.

²¹¹ Nguyen Van Thieu (1924-), Army General, President of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) 1967-75.

should fight more, thus defeating them. This is the common aspiration and spirit of our people, cadres, and troops in the South, Uncle Mao.

Mao Zedong: Is the number of American troops welcoming talks [and] wishing to go home big or small?

Muoi Cuc: Big. We will fight more, and at the same time, push the task of mobilizing the people and demoralizing the enemy.

Mao Zedong: That is good. I was told that the American troops have to stay in underground shelters. You also have to do so. How is it in the rainy season?

Muoi Cuc: We have to use water-proof cloth to cover [the soldiers].

Mao Zedong: How long is the rainy season?

Muoi Cuc: Six months each season, dry and rainy ones.

Mao Zedong: That long?

Muoi Cuc: But it rains most during three months.

Mao Zedong: Which months?

Muoi Cuc: May, June, and July.

Mao Zedong: Is it now the dry season?

Muoi Cuc: The end of rainy season and beginning of the dry one.

Pham Van Dong: Seasons are different in our country.

Mao Zedong: Seasons in the North are different from those in the South, aren't they?

Muoi Cuc: Uncle Mao, this time, like before, we are summoned to the North to report the situation in the South and receive new directives from President Ho and the Political Bureau. Then, President Ho and our Central Committee asked Comrade Le Duc Anh and me to accompany Comrades Pham Van Dong and Le Thanh Nghi to China to report to Chairman Mao, Vice-Chairman Lin Biao, and other Chinese leaders about the situation in the South. The day before yesterday, through Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, we know that Chairman Mao praised us. We felt very encouraged.

Mao Zedong: We mentioned it here, in this room.

Muoi Cuc: We know that every time when a victory is gained, Chairman Mao sends us a letter of praise. This is really a great encouragement for our people, cadres, and troops in the South. Our victories gained in the South are due, to a great extent, to the assistance, as well as the encouragement, of the Chinese people and your [encouragement], Chairman Mao.

Mao Zedong: My part is very small.

Muoi Cuc: Very big, very important.

Mao Zedong: Mainly because of your efforts. Your country is unified, your Party is unified, your armed forces are unified, your people, regardless in the South or North, are unified, which is very good.

Muoi Cuc: We hold that the spiritual support offered by China is most important. Even in the most difficult situations, we have the great rear area of China supporting us, which allows us to fight for as long as it takes.

Material assistance is also very important. That we force the American troops into underground shelters [is] also because of pieces of artillery that China gave us.

Pham Van Dong: That is true.

Muoi Cuc: We even used Chinese weapons to attack Saigon. The enemy is frightened.

Mao Zedong: You seem to be receptive to the logic of weapons.

Pham Van Dong: It is true that we rely on Chinese weapons.

Muoi Cuc: We rely on the strength of our people, but without Chinese weapons, it will be more difficult.

Mao Zedong: Bare hands cannot do. There must be good weapons in [those] hands.

Muoi Cuc: As Uncle Mao said, we have to fight the enemy with guns and bags of rice.

Mao Zedong: Maybe I am receptive to the logic of weapons, too.

Pham Van Dong: China has provided us large amounts of weaponry and rice.

Muoi Cuc: Our troops are very moved when they know that Chairman Mao pays attention even to their health. In addition to weapons, we receive from China rice [and] food so that our troops can be better fed, thus being stronger.

Mao Zedong: Have the supplies arrived?

Muoi Cuc: Some have. For example, egg powder, soybean, seasoning.

Pham Van Dong: Very good.

Mao Zedong: More supplies may be available. We have to thank Sihanouk too.

Pham Van Dong: We have considered his role.

Mao Zedong: Some road-fees are needed. It is worth spending for this.

Pham Van Dong: We estimate that this amount is even bigger than that of American aid.

Muoi Cuc: Before, the US gave Cambodia \$20 million a year. Now, the amount China pays Sihanouk for rice and road-fees exceeds \$20 million. In helping us, Sihanouk gains both good reputation and benefits.

Pham Van Dong: He also benefits from our defense of Cambodia's eastern border with the South of Vietnam.

Muoi Cuc: Plus Chinese sympathy.

Mao Zedong: As far as politics is concerned, he still sometimes surprises us. Recently, he may have felt abandoned by the US, so he has twice stated that the US should withdraw some of its troops, but not all. Recently, he has stated on Paris Radio that the US should withdraw its troops but not bring them to the US, and that the US should not deploy its troops [in] Cambodia but in Thailand or in the Philippines, so that China will not invade his country. He often talks in an anti-Communist tone. According to what he said, there is evidence of the US wanting to withdraw its troops. If they do withdraw, Sihanouk will be worried, and so will Thailand and the Philippines. In the South [of Vietnam], the first person to be worried is Thieu. Every one of them really wants US troops to stay.

So, the world now is in great chaos. Those countries that lack their own strength need the help of superpowers, as in the case of Sihanouk. Even Japanese capitalists still need US support. The Japanese seem to welcome negotiations. However, in fact, they do not, because as capitalists they get a lot of profit from the war. Many US weapons are made in Japan.

Pham Van Dong: We have been attentive to this point. We are very surprised that Japan seemingly wants to make a contribution to solving the war. But we have to consider their real attitudes.

Mao Zedong: Some people talk one way and think another way. When the Korean war ended, many Japanese industries went bankrupt. When the US starts to fight, Japan starts to benefit.

Pham Van Dong: It's the best policy of Japan.

Mao Zedong: The Filipino capitalists do the same. They do not contribute many troops to US war efforts in South Vietnam. But since the US troops are based in the Philippines, the Filipino capitalists gain a lot from that. So do the Thai capitalists.

Pham Van Dong: It's very clear in the case of Thailand. But it is not they who make decisions. It is the Vietnamese who decide whether the US will stay or go. We, all the Vietnamese people, are determined to fight and to drive them away. We are preparing to concentrate our forces and fight the US in the South. Probably, we will engage in large-scale battles in the coming period. Certainly, the war will be fiercer.

Mao Zedong: Early this spring you fought quite well. We have suggested that you fight large-scale battles like the one in Dien Bien Phu. At that time we didn't know that your liberated zones were terribly divided. Is this [still] the situation in every province?

Pham Van Dong: Yes, but this situation doesn't affect our efforts to encircle Saigon and other bases or blockade important points in their communication and transportation network. We have also thought of large-scale battles like Dien Bien Phu, but we must calculate carefully and thoroughly before we do so.

Mao Zedong: You should have your bases geographically interrelated with each other. Without this condition, it's difficult for you to concentrate your forces for large-scale battle. And there is another matter: Thieu's regime is afraid of the NLF. This fact proves that the NLF enjoys influence among the people in the South, not Thieu. Their mass media have talked about it, not in an official way, but based on official sources.

Which government has real prestige in South Vietnam? Nguyen Huu Tho's²¹² or Nguyen Van Thieu's? Both of them have the family name of Nguyen. Recently, Thieu has tried to play hard, pretending that he didn't want to attend the Paris conference. But in fact, the US has very clearly seen that the Vietnam problem cannot be solved without the participation of the NLF. You have read all these [facts], haven't you?

Muoi Cuc: They are perplexing.

Mao Zedong: The US now respects the Party and Government in Vietnam led by President Ho, respects the NLF led by President Nguyen Huu Tho. The US also does not think highly of the Thieu clique, considering them ineffective.

Pham Van Dong: That is correct.

Mao Zedong: The US gives Saigon a lot of money, but much has been embezzled.

Pham Van Dong: In Paris, Thieu's representatives verbally opposed the US. We then asked the American representatives why the US allowed Saigon to do so. Harriman replied that Saigon by so doing tried to show that they are not puppets.

Mao Zedong: They have been ordered to show opposition to the US, that's why. Maybe the Harriman team will be replaced. Nixon probably will assign new negotiators.

Pham Van Dong: Of course.

Le Duc Anh: Chairman Mao, our armies in the South are undergoing political education and military training. We are prepared to receive weapons provided for by Chairman Mao, [and] the Chinese Communist Party, and to set up battlefields for coming fierce campaigns. We are also prepared to inflict severe damages on several elite contingents of American troops in the South. Following the directives by President Ho, drawing on our most recent experience, we believe that we are going to achieve great victories.

²¹² Nguyen Huu Tho (1910-95?), a lawyer and secret member of the ICP, who was vice-chairman of the Saigon Peace committee following the 1954 Geneva agreements, was detained by the Diem government for several years, then liberated by NLF forces. NLF Chairman from its founding in 1960, and from 1969 chairman of the advisory committee of the PRG. SRV Vice President 1976-80.

Chairman Mao, since the beginning of this year, we have inflicted heavy casualties on some American elite contingents, such as the 25th division, the 1st division, and their armored vehicle units. In a battle in August in Tay Ninh alone, we killed and wounded 12,000 troops, the majority of which were Americans, destroyed 1,100 tanks, armored vehicles, more than 100 pieces of artillery. When our infantry troops were advancing, American tanks and armor retreated—they were very afraid of our troops equipped with weapons provided by Chairman Mao. Such weapons included [the] B40, for example.

Mao Zedong: Is that weapon powerful?

Le Duc Anh: Very effective for fighting tanks.

Mao Zedong: Did we have this weapon before? (Asking Wang Xinting)

Wang Xinting: No, we did not.

Ye Jianying: We used the B90 during the Korean War.

Pham Van Dong: Tanks will melt when they are hit by this weapon.

Le Duc Anh: And the drivers will be burnt to death.

Mao Zedong: Good. Can we produce more of this?

Wang Xinting: Yes, but to produce ammunition for this weapon is more difficult than to produce the weapon.

Le Duc Anh: The enemy has internal contradictions. Saigon troops criticize Americans for being cowards [and] do not believe in them any more.

Mao Zedong: Saigon troops criticize Americans?

Le Duc Anh: American and Saigon troops do not believe in each other. They are both afraid of the Liberation Armies.

Mao Zedong: It may well be so.

Le Duc Anh: In the recent incident occurring from October 25 to November 7, a unit of the American First Infantry Division refused to fight. During the August campaign, we killed a division commander. Troops in that division celebrated his death.

Muoi Cuc: This General was brutal.

Mao Zedong: Not civilized.

Le Duc Anh: In Tay Ninh, we eliminated 14 companies of the 25th Division. The US has acknowledged that.

Mao Zedong: Where is Tay Ninh?

Le Duc Anh: 60 kilometers northwest of Saigon and close to the border with Cambodia.

Mao Zedong: We know the 25th Division fairly well. We fought against it in Korea. At that time, due to the mistakes of Peng Dehuai, it was not totally crushed. Our

40th Army under the command of Ye Jian-ying first fought it. We do not know much about the First Division.

Ye Jian-ying: We terminated a regiment. At that time, the First Division had not been in Korea.

Mao Zedong: Do American cavalry units fight well? In fact they are infantry units, aren't they?

Le Duc Anh: They are cowardly infantry units.

Mao Zedong: In Korea, they were arrogant. But now, since being beaten by you, they also became cowards. Were they deployed in Western Korea? (Asking Ye Jianying)

Ye Jianying: In Eastern Korea.

Mao Zedong: The mistake we committed in Korea was that we wanted to swallow one or two divisions in a single battle. But we could not. The battles showed that we could only swallow a regiment. If we used all of our forces in order to terminate the 25th Division, it would take several weeks.

Hoang Van Thai²¹³: At that time, there was not the B40.

Mao Zedong: At that time, there were 800 pieces of artillery for each enemy division. On our side, there were 800 pieces of artillery for three armies. 9 Chinese divisions put together were not equal to one American division.

Pham Van Dong: At present, they are very well equipped.

Mao Zedong: Certainly, as 18 years have passed since 1950.

Le Duc Anh: Chairman Mao, we are now able to penetrate and fight anywhere. We can even penetrate the most heavily guarded bases.

Mao Zedong: That is why they curse you for fighting indiscriminately. They want to imply that they are the only ones that are discriminate.

Muoi Cuc: The more they are defeated, the more they curse us.

Le Duc Anh: Now, the American troops in Saigon and other cities cannot relax. They have to stay in underground shelters. They know that we are fighting them with Chinese weapons. So we are fighting more, focusing our forces on fighting them in the countryside as well as on their big bases. We are going to fight more fiercely.

Mao Zedong: It is necessary to have political education for your troops. You should take advantage of the negotiations for political education. Before every big battle,

²¹³ Hoang Van Thai, alias Hoang Van Xiem (1906-86), an army officer who directed a military-political school at the Viet Minh's HQ in Tan Trao before the August 1945 Revolution. Served as the first chief of the PAVN General Staff 1945-53, commanded several of the main campaigns during the First Indochina War, became member of the VWP CC in 1961, and a member of the National Defense Council in 1964. Commander of Interzone 5 (south central Vietnam) 1966-67. Commander of the PLAF 1967-73, Deputy Chief of the PAVN General Staff and Deputy Minister of Defense 1974-81. Member of the VWP/VCP CC 1960-76, and again 1982-86.

it is always an imperative to spend time on political education. There should be only two or three, or four at most, big campaigns every year. The regular troops should spend the remaining time on political education.

Pham Van Dong: That is what we do.

Mao Zedong: When we were fighting the Japanese in the war of liberation, every year, we only fought a couple of campaigns. However, we found that we still lacked time for political education. It is impossible to fight every month. We need time for military training, recruiting, and getting more supplies of weaponry and ammunition as well as consolidating the rear. There are a lot of things to do in-between battles.

Muoi Cuc: We are trying to be ready in every aspect. That is why we see the imperative of politically educating our troops.

Mao Zedong: It is necessary. There should be at least one big period of political education conducted. It may take two or three months, or several weeks. The interval between battles is the right time for that.

Muoi Cuc: It is what we are doing now. We are drawing experience, getting more prepared both materially and psychologically for the coming big battles and big victories. While negotiations are going on, we continue to fight as we see that it is the battlefield that decides the final outcome. During the period of political education, we have to prevent the thought of expecting too much to develop from negotiations.

Mao Zedong: This kind of thought can emerge. There always is a trend of thinking at any given time. But every trend is short-lived and temporary.

Muoi Cuc: This time, when we were summoned to the North, President Ho and the Politburo told us that the enemy was suffering big defeats, so they had to accept negotiations even though they were still persistent. In this connection, we have to maintain the thought in favor of patience, of total revolution and of big battles. And we are strictly following this guidance.

Mao Zedong: Good.

Pham Van Dong: Comrades Muoi Cuc, Le Duc Anh, other comrades and I are grateful for the fact that you, Chairman Mao, have taken time to receive and talk with us. What the Chairman told us today and what Comrade Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and Comrade Kang Sheng told us the other day have made us all the more encouraged. We think that what Chairman Mao has said is very correct, very suitable for the situation in our struggle against the US for national salvation.

Mao Zedong: Some [of my thinking] is not necessarily correct. We have to refer to the actual developments.

Pham Van Dong: Ultimately, it is we who make the decisions based on the actual situation in Vietnam and on how we understand the rules of the war. This is also what Chairman Mao has told President Ho and other Vietnamese comrades. Once again, we would like to reiterate before Chairman Mao and other leaders of the CCP that we are determined to fight until the final and total victory is gained. It is the best way to express our gratitude for the support and aid provided to us by Chairman Mao and the CCP as well as the fraternal Chinese people. We wish you, Chairman Mao, good health.

Mao Zedong: I wish President Ho good health, longevity. I also wish other comrades in your Politburo good health.

Pham Van Dong: Thank you, Chairman Mao.²¹⁴

²¹⁴ An edited version of this conversation was published in Beijing in 1994 (*Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*, pp. 580-583). This version follows:

Mao Zedong: Because there has been no battle to fight recently, you intend to negotiate with the Americans. It is all right to negotiate, but it is difficult to get the Americans to withdraw through negotiations. The United States also wants to negotiate with you because it is in a dilemma. It has to deal with problems in three regions: the first is the Americas—the United States, the second is Europe, and the third is Asia. In the last few years, the United States has stationed its major forces in Asia and has created an imbalance. In this regard, American capitalists who have investments in Europe are dissatisfied. Also throughout its history, the United States has always let other countries fight first before it jumps in at halfway. It is only after World War II that the United States has begun to take the lead in fighting, first in the Korean War and then in the Vietnam War. In Vietnam, the United States is taking the lead, but it is followed by only a small number of other countries. Whether the war is a special war or a limited war, the United States is totally devoted to it. Now it cannot afford to pay attention to other countries. Its troops in Europe, for example, are complaining, saying that there is a shortage of manpower and that experienced soldiers and commanders have been removed and better equipment has been relocated. The United States has also redeployed its troops from Japan, Korea, and other areas of Asia. Did not the United States claim that it has a population of 200 million? But it cannot endure the war. It has dispatched only several thousand troops. There is a limit to its troops.

After fighting for over a dozen years you should not think about only your own difficulties. You should look at the enemy's difficulties as well. It has been 23 years since Japan's surrender in 1945, but your country still exists. Three imperialist countries have committed aggression against you: Japan, France, and the United States. But your country has not only survived but also developed.

Of course, imperialism wants to fight. One purpose for its war is to put out fire. A fire has started in your country, and imperialism wants to put out the fire. The second purpose is to make money through producing munitions. To put out fire they must produce fire-extinguishing machines, which will bring about profits. Every year the United States expends over 30 billion dollars in your country.

It has been an American custom not to fight a long war. The wars they have fought average about four to five years. The fire in your country cannot be put out. On the contrary, it has spread. Capitalists in the United States are divided into factions. When this faction makes more profit and that faction makes less profit, an imbalance in booty-sharing will occur and trouble will begin domestically. These contradictions should be exploited. Those monopoly capitalists who have made less money are unwilling to continue the war. This contradiction can be detected in election speeches made by the two factions. In particular, the American journalist Walter Lippmann has published an article recently, warning not to fall into another trap. He says that the United States has already fallen into a trap in Vietnam and that the current problem is how to find ways to climb out of that trap. He is afraid that the United States may have fallen into their traps. Therefore, your cause is promising.

1969

In 1964, I had a conversation with President Ho Chi Minh in Hangzhou. At that time, the United States had already resumed its attacks on North Vietnam, but had not renewed bombing. I said that the United States might end the war that year because it was an American election year. No matter which president came to power, he would encounter the problem of whether the United States should continue the war or withdraw now. I believed that the difficulties that the United States faced would increase if it continued the war. Countries in all of Europe did not participate in the war. This situation was different from that of the Korean War. Japan probably would not enter the war. It might lend some help economically because it could make money by producing ammunition. I think the Americans overestimated their strength in the past. Now the United States is repeating its past practice by overstretching its forces. It is not just us who make this argument. Nixon has also said so. The United States has stretched its forces not only in the Americas and Europe but also in Asia. At first I did not believe that the United States would attack North Vietnam. Later the United States bombed North Vietnam, proving my words incorrect. Now the United States has stopped bombing. My words are correct again. Maybe the United States will resume bombing, proving my words incorrect a second time. But eventually my words will prove correct: the United States has to stop bombing. Therefore I believe that it is all right for you to make several contingency plans.

In sum, in the past years the American army has not invaded North Vietnam. The United States has neither blockaded Haiphong nor bombed the city of Hanoi itself. The United States has reserved a method. At one point it claimed that it would practice a [policy of] "hot pursuit." But when your aircraft flew over our country, the United States did not carry out a "hot pursuit." Therefore, the United States has bluffed. It has never mentioned the fact that your aircraft have used our airfields. Take another example. China has so many people working in your country. The United States knew that, but has never mentioned it, as if such a thing did not exist. As to the remaining people sent by China to your country who are no longer needed, we can withdraw them. Have you discussed this issue? If the United States comes again, we will send people to you as well. Please discuss this issue to see which Chinese units you want to keep. Keep the units that are useful to you. We will withdraw the units that are of no use to you. We will send them to you if they are needed in the future. This is like the way your airplanes have used Chinese airfields: use them if you need to and do not use them if you do not need to. This is the way to do things.

I am in favor of your policy of fighting while negotiating. We have some comrades who are afraid that you may be taken in by the Americans. I think you will not. Isn't this negotiation the same as fighting? We can get experience and know patterns through fighting. Sometimes one cannot avoid being taken in. Just as you have said, the Americans do not keep their words. Johnson once said publicly that even agreements sometimes could not be honored. But things must have their laws. Take your negotiations as an example, are you going to negotiate for a hundred years? Our Premier has said that if Nixon continues the negotiations for another two years and fails to solve the problem, he will have difficulties in winning another presidential term.

One more point. It is the puppet regime in South Vietnam which is afraid of the Nationalist Liberation Front of South Vietnam. Some people in the United States have pointed out that the really effective government popular among the South Vietnamese people is not the Saigon government but the Liberation Front. This is not a statement attributed to someone in the U.S. Congress. It is reported by journalists, but the name of the speaker was not identified. The statement was attributed to a so-called U.S. government individual. The statement raises a question: Who represents the government with real prestige in South Vietnam? Nguyen Van Thieu or Nguyen Huu Tho? Therefore although the United States publicly praises Nguyen Van Thieu, saying that he will not go to Paris to attend the negotiations, it in fact realizes that problems cannot be solved if the NLF of South Vietnam does not participate in the negotiations.

40. ZHOU ENLAI'S AND KANG SHENG'S COMMENTS TO A COSVN²¹⁵
DELEGATION

Beijing, 12 April 1969

Zhou Enlai: I am clear about the situation now. I also see your determination to fight until the US and the Saigon troops are defeated. We are happy about that. Nixon is facing a lot of difficulties, but he is still stubborn in promoting neocolonialism in South Vietnam. Chairman Mao once said to President Ho and other Vietnamese leaders: "There are still hundreds of thousands of US troops in Vietnam and they will not withdraw until they are defeated." Comrade Kang Sheng and I therefore wish to know more about the situation in South Vietnam, the difficulties you are facing, and the measures you are adopting so that we can respond fully to your problems.

Kang Sheng: We can also offer our experience in fighting, producing, and transporting.

Zhou Enlai: I have to tell you straight that you have sent many people abroad to study various subjects. Later, it will be difficult as the levels of technology and thinking will differ, thus causing complications. As comrade Hoang Van Thai has said, the supply of ammunition will be difficult if you use various types of weapons. We think that after victory is gained, if well-equipped with political thinking, students can be trained in technology in half a year. Earlier, we faced the same problem. We relied on other countries, especially the Soviet Union. When the Soviets cut their aid, we had a lot of difficulties.

Kang Sheng: At present, you have about 6,000 students in China. If they are in Vietnam, they can be grouped into 10 combat units. Will it be better?

Zhou Enlai: You send them abroad for two or three years. When they return, the war is not over. So the knowledge they have will not be used and will be forgotten gradually. We have the same problem. After the Cultural Revolution, a number of members of the intelligentsia are not creative any more; they are not absorbing anything new, neither ideologically nor technologically.

You have informed us about the present difficulties as well as your valuable experience. This experience is worthy for us to study. We follow what Chairman Mao told President Ho: all the plans and policies should be decided by the comrades in the South based on the reality there. You often stress the principles of self-reliance, independence. We have been taught these principles by chairman Mao since the [time of] the [Chinese] civil war.

²¹⁵ Vietnamese Workers' Party Central Committee Office for South Vietnam.

Kang Sheng: The policy that the Lao Dong and COSVN propose, based on the actual conditions, are certainly most correct. The last time, after comrade Nguyen Van Linh [Muoi Cuc] had told us about the situation in South Vietnam, we suggested that you should conduct large-scale battles. Now, after we have had time to consider, we think that this suggestion is not feasible. Therefore, you should strictly follow the principles of independence and self-reliance in the protracted war.

Zhou Enlai: Today, I would like to ask you a question. How will the situation proceed when you are both fighting and negotiating?

Nixon is now facing those internal difficulties he inherited from Johnson. And also external difficulties. He has not realized any promise he made during the election campaign. Some American capitalists have come to South Vietnam only to realize that not only can no benefit be gained, [but] capital can also be lost. The situation will be different if all are exploiting these visible difficulties. Yet, some are even lending Nixon a helping hand. I am not talking about the British imperialists, nor the American Democrats, but the Soviet revisionists.

Let me not talk about the Vietnam question and [now] turn to the Middle East. Nixon wanted to solve the Middle East question. A four-power conference proposed by the Soviet revisionists and supported by France is now taking place at the United Nations. The 6-point plan proposed by the US has been supported by the Soviet Union while the Arab countries are holding a different view. At the same time, the Soviet Union—through King Hussein of Jordan—put forth a 6-point proposal with the demands being less than those [made] by the US. The US 6-point plan is a bad one. Yet, the Soviet/Jordanian plan is worse. It forces the Arab countries to recognize the existence of the occupied zones. In this way, the Palestinian forces will be isolated and some bases of theirs along the banks of the Jordan river will be lost.

The Soviets also interfere in the internal affairs of the Arab countries. Syria is a case in point. Syria wants to have some changes in its coalition government, but the Soviets said it would cut its aid, thus forcing Syria to listen to what the Soviets had said and to retain the status-quo. The same situation can be seen in the United Arab Emirates. Other countries like Algeria and Morocco used to oppose Israel. However, after [Soviet President Nikolai] Podgorny visited and promised aid to them, these countries changed their position, supporting the US 6-point plan. The Soviet revisionists are doing that in order to share influence and the benefit from oil in the Middle East and North Africa with the US and Britain. The Soviet Union is close to the Mediterranean. It has asked for access to the port of Alexandria in Egypt and now wants to have access to seaports in Algeria. Why can a socialist country have such an imperialist policy? It is clear that the

Soviet Union is no longer a socialist country which would help the national liberation movement. Instead, the Soviets are selling out the interests of the countries in the movement. Lenin's concept of "socialist imperialism" has emerged in the Soviet Union in its revisionist policy. In Czechoslovakia, [Alexander] Dubcek has been replaced by [Gustav] Husak and [Josef] Smrkovsky has been removed from the Presidium. This has created a precedent that allows a socialist country to intervene into another socialist country's affairs. The Soviets are luring Mongolia into the Warsaw Pact. Before, Czechoslovakia and Romania were opposing them. But now, Czechoslovakia has failed. Mongolia has in effect entered the pact. In a short time, North Korea will also join. There are two objectives in the policy of the revisionists to use these countries. One is to threaten China and the other is to compromise with the Western countries. As a result, there has been some response from NATO to the moves by the Warsaw Pact.

41. ZHOU ENLAI, KANG SHENG AND PHAM VAN DONG, HOANG VAN THAI, PHAM HUNG AND OTHERS IN THE COSVN DELEGATION
Beijing, 20 and 21 April 1969

April 20

Zhou Enlai: New developments have been seen in Indochina. We have to acknowledge that Nixon is more intelligent than Johnson. He established diplomatic relations with Cambodia and recognized Cambodia's borders with the neighboring countries. As far as the situation in Cambodia is concerned, we are not as optimistic as you are. Even though [Sihanouk] carries out a policy of double-dealing, he is tilting to the right. The US also knows that China is supplying materiel to forces in South Vietnam via Cambodia and that the NLF armed forces are using part of Cambodian territory for their operations.²¹⁶

As we are comrades in arms, I would like to talk straightforwardly. You often say to us: "We are determined to fight and we make decisions by ourselves." Of course, any party and country has the right to make decisions with regard to its own fate. And it is good to have such a determination and belief. But as brothers we have to talk with each other in an open manner, so I say that it is impossible to think that you can deceive the US and the revisionist Soviets with your tactics. We are somewhat concerned that you will be deceived by them instead. We have to be vigilant because both the Soviets and the US are imperialist chieftains.

²¹⁶ The US had begun its secret bombing of eastern Cambodia on March 18.

You may think that with your proposal on the establishment of a government of peace and the subsequent withdrawal of American troops you can trap them. We think, however, that your proposal will make the people less vigilant and lose sight of the principles. During negotiations, if you do not accept their [the Soviet] advice, they can cut their aid. (Perhaps you know this better than we do.) The Soviets may exert pressure, forcing you to negotiate when you do not want to or they may recognize and secretly contact a neutral government. In case this happens, what kind of situation will the Vietnamese Party and people be in? You have to think it over. The Soviets talk about peace and socialism, but what they really want is to preserve their interests.

I still maintain what I told comrades Pham Van Dong and Muoi Cuc earlier on, that you should spend less foreign currency and [time of] officials on the negotiations in Paris.

April 21

Kang Sheng: Many North Vietnamese students and trainees have been sent abroad. It seems that you have abundant human resources, so that you can send people abroad and at the same time do not have difficulty in supplying manpower for the armed forces as well as the production forces. At present, there are about 6,000 Vietnamese students and trainees in China. Will it be better if these people can be organized into 10 combat units and be sent to the battlefield? The enemies in the South are suffering human losses, but their forces are also reinforced at a quick pace. At the same time, China has some problems. We would like you to consider this matter with a view to better and more reasonably using your human resources.

42. LI XIANNIAN AND LE DUC THO

Beijing, 29 April 1969

Li Xiannian: The problem in the war in South Vietnam is not that of a big or a small victory but of the final [victory]. I still recall Vice-Chairman Lin Biao stressing the word “patience.” The final victory depends on fighting. According to our experience, the victory cannot be gained at the negotiating table. We have to be determined to fight the enemy until he has nothing else to resort to. In all, negotiation is of secondary importance with a view to exposing the enemy’s schemes and we have to rely on fighting with a view to annihilating the enemy. This is our experience.

1970

43. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG

Beijing, 4:20 pm, 21 March 1970

Zhou Enlai: France is concerned that if Sihanouk tilts toward us Cambodia will be another battlefield. French interests, therefore, will be affected. So France wants to win Sihanouk's sympathy. France also wants to win the Soviets' sympathy. France may explain to the Soviet Union that Lon Nol is not entirely pro-American, that he is pro-French and he is following the policy of neutrality. The Lon Nol government, therefore, can be recognized.²¹⁷ France may also promise that it will advise the Lon Nol government not to attack North Vietnamese and the NLF troops. These can be seen in the context of the last two days' developments: the Lon Nol government promised a policy of neutrality, respect to the treaties Cambodia had signed before. It especially ordered security measures to protect Chinese and Soviet Embassies in Phnom Penh.

We should support Sihanouk for the time being and see how he will act. We should support him because he supports the anti-American struggle in Vietnam, because the Indochinese countries opposed the Japanese [and] French in the past and because we have been supporting him after the [1955] Bandung Conference [of nonaligned nations]. We will also see whether he really wants to establish a united front to oppose the US before we support him. But because of the circumstances he may change his position. However, the more we can win his sympathy the better. It is what we initially think.

I think that Lon Nol's coup d'état against Sihanouk is approved by both the French and Americans. Of course, when talking about it, he mentioned only the Americans, not the French. However, according to Rayer [?] who had a talk with the Chinese writer—Hanzi—France does not believe in Sihanouk anymore. So both France and the US supported the coup.

The fighting capability of the Sihanouk faction cannot match yours. So if Sihanouk agrees to establish a united front, Cambodian forces can be stronger. But France advises him not to with the reason that if he allows the Vietnamese to enter Cambodia, they will not leave. France, at the same time, thinks that Sihanouk does not entirely listen to France, so France wants to replace Sihanouk by Lon Nol. Yet, Sihanouk is tilting to the Soviet Union and China, thus reducing French influence. For his part, Lon Nol does not want to displease China and the Soviet Union. On March 18, after the coup, Lon Nol did not attack your forces in the border areas and he did not press us to solve this problem. On March 18, they destroyed houses of Chinese and Vietnamese living in Svay

²¹⁷ Prime Minister Lon Nol had led a coup against Sihanouk on March 18, while the Prince was abroad.

Rieng province. On the 19th, however, they stopped these acts. And on the 20th, they issued a special order not to damage the Chinese and Soviet embassies in Phnom Penh. Lon Nol is also afraid that the Khmer people will rise up against him and at the same time, afraid that if he attacks [forces in South] Vietnam, North Vietnam will fight back. China will support North Vietnam. In that way, the war will broaden. War has broken out in Laos. A similar situation can occur in Cambodia. Thus the situation in Indochina will return to the one before the Geneva Conference of 1954. I am sure that you still remember what comrade Mao told President Ho: “Indochina is united as a bloc. This situation was created by the French.” If the situation develops that way—which is what the US actions will lead to—Indochina will become a united battlefield.

I do not know whether the forces of Um Savuth²¹⁸ have reached Rattanakiri, and have they contacted Vietnamese forces?

Pham Van Dong: We received information that they have. These forces may turn against Lon Nol. We also got the information that troops in Seam Reap are opposing Lon Nol.²¹⁹

Zhou Enlai: In the talk with him, you raised the possibility of cooperation between the Khmer People’s Party [Khmer Rouge] and Sihanouk’s forces. You also mentioned the principle of no interference into the domestic affairs of Cambodia. We have the feeling that Sihanouk wants us to help on that. Therefore, we would like very much to hear from our Khmer comrades before we advise Sihanouk.

Pham Van Dong: We stated clearly that contacts should take place on both high and lower levels in order to have good cooperation at the grass roots.

Zhou Enlai: What was his reaction?

Pham Van Dong: He said nothing except giving general consent. He did not mention what he wanted us to do. Maybe he will ask you. That will be good, as both China and Vietnam will help.

Zhou Enlai: We can exert political influence, but they, as Khmers, have to deal directly with each other.

Pham Van Dong: It will not be difficult if we agree on the guiding principles. In this situation, we can ask both sides to cooperate. Sihanouk is now waiting for your reply to his requests, isn’t he?

²¹⁸ Um Savuth, a Lt.-Col. in the Royal Armed Forces, was stationed in Rattanakiri in 1970. He did not “defect,” but remained in the Armed Forces of the Khmer Republic, in which he was promoted to Colonel, and later fought in the Chen La II campaign in Kampung Thom against combined Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge forces.

²¹⁹ Several rebellions against the central government in Cambodia had broken out in early 1969. Some of these rebels later joined the Khmer Rouge or the Vietnamese forces.

Zhou Enlai: Yes. Because I told him that I will answer them after my meeting with you. At first, Lon Nol and Sirik Matak²²⁰ will negotiate with both North and South Vietnam. How will you solve this matter?

Pham Van Dong: Before I came here, we discussed this. We held that negotiations would not bring about any results, because they would eventually fight against us. But we are not to be defeated. So what is the use of negotiations? However, at present when we are still talking with you and with Sihanouk to see how the situation will develop, we ask our comrades to wait, explore their attitude, and play for time. As for Sihanouk, our attitude is affirmative and our position on other issues will be based on that.

44. ZHOU ENLAI AND PRINCE SIHANOUK

Beijing, 11:40 pm, 22 March 1970

Zhou Enlai: The speech Your Highness has given to the Cambodian people is of great appealing power. I believe that the Cambodian people, after listening to Your Highness's voice, will be greatly inspired and will respond to it. China is determined to support Your Highness until Your Highness returns to his own country in victory. So long as Your Highness is determined to fight to the end, it is for certain that we will provide Your Highness with our support.

Prince Sihanouk: With China's support, I will persist in the struggle. No matter how long the struggle will last and how many difficulties it will endure, I will never yield.²²¹

45. ZHOU ENLAI AND PRINCE SIHANOUK

Beijing, 9:10 pm, 28 March 1970

Zhou Enlai: [North] Korea will support Your Highness. Several among the Arabic countries will also support Your Highness. The situation among African countries is the same. In the future, more and more countries will support Your Highness's just cause.

Prince Sihanouk: There is a situation which makes me uneasy. Chea Sam²²² told me that the attitude of the Soviet Union is very cautious. Quite a few socialist countries in Eastern Europe followed the Soviet Union's example in taking their actions.

²²⁰ Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia, close associate of Lon Nol.

²²¹ On the following day, Sihanouk announced the formation of the United National Front of Kampuchea (FUNK).

Zhou Enlai: The Soviet Union always acts like this, not only on the Cambodia issue, but also on the Vietnam issue. In the future, when the three sides issue the statement, the Soviet Union will be embarrassed and have to reconsider its position.

46. ZHOU ENLAI AND PRINCE SIHANOUK

Beijing, 4 p.m., 1 April 1970

Zhou Enlai: The people in Cambodia have been extremely excited after hearing Your Highness's speech to the people and the five-point statement. The people in many places have been mobilized. In the provinces in northeastern Cambodia and close to Phnom Penh there are protest demonstrations. The slogan of the masses is to request that Your Highness return to Cambodia. Lon Nol originally planned to organize a demonstration supporting the reactionary regime, but this plan has failed.

47. MAO ZEDONG AND LE DUAN²²³

Beijing, the Great Hall of the People, 6:45-8:15 p.m., 11 May 1970

Mao Zedong: When did I meet you the last time?

Le Duan: In 1964. We see that Chairman Mao is in good health, and we all feel excited. This time Chairman Mao finds the time to meet us, we are very happy. At present, the situation in Vietnam and in Indo-China is complicated, and there exist some difficulties.

Mao Zedong: Every country is facing some difficulty. The Soviet Union has its [difficulty], and the United States has its [difficulty].

Le Duan: We are very much in need of getting Chairman Mao's instructions. If our Central Committee and Politburo learn that Chairman Mao has given instructions about how we should do our job, they will certainly be very happy.

Mao Zedong: You have done a very good job, and you are doing better and better.

Le Duan: We have tried our best to do our job. We have been able to do a good job because we have followed the three instructions Chairman Mao gave us in the past: first, no fear, we should not fear the enemy; second, we should break up the enemy one piece after another; third, we should fight a prolonged war.

²²² Chea Sam (or Chea Som) was Cambodian ambassador to the Soviet Union until the 18 March 1970 coup which toppled Sihanouk; he then joined Sihanouk's exile government in Beijing as justice minister.

²²³ The participants on the Vietnamese side included Ly Ban (DRV vice minister of foreign trade) and Ngo Thuyen; on the Chinese side Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, and Huang Yongsheng (CCP Politburo member and PLA chief of staff).

Mao Zedong: Yes, a prolonged war. You should prepare to fight a prolonged war, but isn't it better if the war is shortened?

Who fears whom? Is it you, the Vietnamese, Cambodians, and the people in Southeast Asia, who fear the U.S. imperialists? Or is it the U.S. imperialists who fear you? This is a question which deserves consideration and study. It is a great power which fears a small country—when the grass bends as the wind blows, the great power will be in panic. It is true that during the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in 1964 you hit the U.S. imperialists, but it was not your intention to fight a war with the U.S. Navy. In actuality, you did not really hit it [the U.S. naval ship], but they themselves became nervous, saying that Vietnam's torpedo boats were coming and began opening fire. At the end, even the Americans themselves did not know if there had been a genuine [Vietnamese torpedo attack] or not. The journalists in various places of the United States believed that there had never been [such an attack], and that it was a false alarm. Since the war had already begun, there was no other choice but to fight it. The munition makers and dealers are benefiting from it. American presidents have had much less sleep every night [since then]. Nixon says that he uses his main energy in dealing with Vietnam.

Now there is another person, Prince Sihanouk. He is not an easy person to deal with either. When you offend him, he will come out to scold you.²²⁴

Some of our embassies, in my opinion, need to be rectified. Great-power chauvinism exists in some of the Chinese embassies. They only see the shortcomings of the others, paying no attention to the interests of the whole. Who was the last [Chinese] ambassador to Vietnam?

Zhou Enlai: Zhu Qiwen.²²⁵

Mao Zedong: Zhu Qiwen had very bad relations with you. As a matter of fact, Zhu Qiwen was a member of the Guomindang, and he planned to escape abroad. We did not know that he was a Guomindang member. Since you were coping with the Guomindang, how could he fail to make trouble for you? We did not know at that time, but we were not happy when we saw those telegrams [he sent back].

Le Duan: We Vietnamese people keep Chairman Mao's great goodness always in our mind. During the nine years of the war of resistance against the French, if there had not been the support from the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao, it would have been impossible for us to win the victory. Why are we in a position to persist in fighting a prolonged war, especially in fighting a prolonged war in the South? Why dare

²²⁴ On May 5, Sihanouk had formed a Cambodian government in exile, based in Beijing.

²²⁵ Zhu Qiwen was Chinese ambassador to Vietnam from August 1962 to 1968, when he was purged and labeled a "Guomindang agent."

we fight a prolonged war? This is mainly because we have been dependent upon Chairman Mao's works.

Mao Zedong: This is not necessarily true.

Le Duan: Of course this is true. We also need to apply [Chairman Mao's teachings] to Vietnam's practical situation.

Mao Zedong: You have had your own creations. How can one say that you do not have your own creation and experience? Ngo Dinh Diem murdered 160,000 [of your people]. This was reported to me, and I did not know if it was accurate, but I know that over 100,000 people had been killed.

Le Duan: Yes, 160,000 had been killed, and many others had been put into prison.

Mao Zedong: I think this is good. You can kill our people, why can't we kill your people?

Le Duan: Exactly. In 1969 alone we have killed and wounded 610,000 enemies, among whom 230,000 were Americans.

Mao Zedong: The Americans do not have enough manpower to distribute in the world, since already they have been overextended. Therefore, when their people were killed their hearts were broken. The death of several dozens of thousand is a huge matter for them. You Vietnamese, both in the North and the South, in my opinion, it is inevitable for some of you also to be killed.

Le Duan: Our current ways of fighting cause low casualties. Otherwise, it is impossible for us to persist for a long time.

Mao Zedong: That is true. Maybe the situation in Laos is more difficult. Are there any people of Lao nationality living in China?

Zhou Enlai: There are some.

Mao Zedong: Where are they?

Zhou Enlai: In Yunnan province, the areas bordering Laos.

Mao Zedong: Is that Xishuangbanna?

Huang Yongsheng: There are some living in Xishuangbanna.

Zhou Enlai: Our Zhuang people are very similar to them.

Mao Zedong: When the fighting has entered a decisive stage in Laos in the future, we may recruit some Zhuang people in Guangxi and some Dai people in Yunnan. The Zhuang people have a great fighting capacity. In the past the warlords Bai Chongxi and Li Zongren were dependent upon the Zhuang people. How many are the Zhuang people now? Eight million?

Zhou Enlai: There are more now, over ten million.

Mao Zedong: This is the ethnic group of Wei Guoqing's, which he did not acknowledge. I once asked him, to which nationality he belonged and if he belonged to one of the minority nationalities. He said that he was a Han. Only later did he acknowledge that he was a Zhuang.

Zhou Enlai: The soldiers of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom were capable of fighting. Some of them were Zhuang people.

Mao Zedong: Some of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's troops were from Guangxi.

Le Duan: The Nung nationality in Vietnam are also capable of fighting. They and the Zhuang people in Guangxi belong to the same nationality.

Mao Zedong: Southeast Asia is a hornets' nest. The people in Southeast Asia are awakening day by day. Some pacifists think that cocks like fighting. How can there be so many cocks? Now even hens like fighting.

Le Duan: There is no way out if one does not fight.

Mao Zedong: Yes, there is no way out if one does not fight. You [Mao speaks rhetorically to the Americans] compel the others [to fight] and leave them no other way to go. You are bullying them.

Le Duan: The people in Cambodia and Laos are believers of Buddhism who do not like fighting. Now they have also become fond of fighting.

Mao Zedong: This is true. You cannot say that they are not fond of fighting because they believe in Buddhism. The Chinese are also believers in Buddhism, but the 1911 Revolution was followed by seventeen years of fighting. Later it became the fighting between two factions [among the revolutionaries], and thus the people had been educated. Then the Northern Expedition War began, and then the Red Army emerged. Then the Japanese invaded China. After the surrender of the Japanese, Jiang Jieshi fought a war against us. The war lasted for less than four years, he could not continue and fled to Taiwan. He now claims at the United Nations that he represents the whole China. He had very close relations with several of us. I met with Jiang Jieshi quite a few times. When the Guomindang held its Central Committee plenum in Guangzhou I met him. I was a member of the Guomindang. I was a person who shared the membership of two parties. I was a Central Committee member of the Communist party and I was an alternate member of the Central Committee of the Guomindang. During that period several of us joined [the Guomindang]. Our premier [Zhou Enlai] was director of the Political Affairs Department of Jiang Jieshi's Huangpu Military Academy and deputy party representative of Jiang Jieshi's First Army. I do not need to mention Comrade Lin Biao. He was Jiang Jieshi's

student. He studied at Huangpu for nine months. In China, there are very few among the people of the old generation who had not dealt with him [Jiang Jieshi].

Lin Biao: I was also a member of both parties.

Mao Zedong: Even the party branches of the Guomindang were all organized with our help. Without the help from the Communist Party, it would have been impossible for the Guomindang to conduct the North Expedition. At that time, the Guomindang had no party organization, no party branch, in areas along the Yellow River in the North. It depended upon the Communist Party to help it.

....

Le Duan: Recently Nixon claimed that the United States had never been defeated in the past 190 years. He meant that this time it would not be willing to be defeated by Vietnam.

Mao Zedong: Never defeated?

Le Duan: In actuality it has been defeated several times. In China, in Korea, and during the anti-French war in Indo-China. The Americans covered 80 percent of France's military expenditures. Still it was defeated.

Mao Zedong: That is true. You mentioned a moment ago that first of all one should not fear the imperialists. After all, who really fears whom? Small countries. There exists such a problem on the part of small nations. It will gradually try. After trying for a few years, it will understand.

...[Mao recalled and discussed the Cultural Revolution].

Mao Zedong: ...At that time, I also told you that if the Americans did not come to China's borders, and if you did not invite us, we would not dispatch our troops [to enter the war].

Le Duan: This was also what we thought. When we are still able to continue the fighting, we hope to make our "great rear" more stable. When we Vietnamese are fighting the Americans, China is our "great rear." Therefore, we once issued such instructions that even though our planes had been attacked they should not land at the airports in China.

Mao Zedong: You can [land at our airports]. We do not fear. If the American air force come to attack the "shelters" of Vietnamese air force, let them come.

Le Duan: Although we issued such instructions, still we needed to rely on your support. At that time, you dispatched several divisions to Vietnam, also engaged in fighting American planes.

Mao Zedong: That is true. The Americans are afraid of being beaten, and they have no guts. You may negotiate [with the Americans]. I am not saying that you cannot negotiate, but your main energy should be put on fighting. Who sabotaged the two

Geneva conferences? Both you and us truthfully abided by [the resolutions of the conferences]. But they did not. It is better that they did not.

Therefore, even Premier Kosygin of the Soviet Union, when making a public speech, had to say that as long as convening an international conference was concerned, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia must be consulted. Many of their current leaders I am not familiar with, I do not know them. I know Kosygin and have talked with him. The newspapers in the West frequently make rumors about them, saying how divided is their leadership. I am not clear about this either. It is said that the common people are more interested in Kosygin as a leader.

Le Duan: We have also heard it.

Mao Zedong: You have also heard it? In my opinion, Stalin is alive again. The main tendency in the world today is revolution, including the whole world. There exists the possibility that the big powers may start a world war. But, because of a few atomic bombs, no one dares to start the war. This mainly concerns the two superpowers. At present many say that there are three big powers. China should not be included. China's study of making nuclear weapons is a recent experience.²²⁶ We are at the stage of research. Why should someone fear us? China is populous and therefore they fear China. But we also have our own fear, we need to feed and to provide clothing for such a large population. Therefore we have now begun the study of birth control so that the large population will be reduced a little bit.

....

Le Duan: We have been able to continue our fighting, this is because the Chairman has said that the 700,000,000 Chinese people are firmly backing the Vietnamese people. The United States is scared. This is very important.²²⁷

Mao Zedong: Why should it be scared? You invade another country, why is it wrong for us to back that country? You dispatch hundreds of thousands of naval, air and land forces to bully the Vietnamese people, who forbids China to become the rear [of the Vietnamese people]? Which law has set up this?

Le Duan: The Americans say that they can mobilize 12 million troops, but they can only dispatch half a million troops to Vietnam. They are scared if they cross this limit.

Zhou Enlai: China has a large population, which makes them fear.

²²⁶ China exploded its first fission bomb in 1964 and its first thermonuclear weapon in 1967.

²²⁷ A week earlier, four American students, demonstrating against the war, had been shot to death by National Guard troops at Kent State University in Ohio.

Mao Zedong: Because we have a large population sometimes we do not need to fear. In the final analysis, we do not have relations with you. You have occupied our Taiwan Island, but I have never occupied your Long Island.

48. ZHOU ENLAI AND NGUYEN THI BINH

Beijing, 12:45 p.m., 17 June 1970

Zhou Enlai: We fought the Korean War during Truman's time. The United States tried to take advantage [of the fact] that China had just been liberated to start a war of aggression. Chairman Mao said that as you have already reached the Yalu River we cannot but intervene. If we failed to support North Korea, North Korea would be lost, falling into the hands of the United States. At that time, we indeed were not certain about the result [of our intervention]. However, Chairman Mao said, the Chinese people had the right to support Korea. If we were repulsed, we could fight back. We first fought the puppet troops. But when battles began we encountered the American troops. After two and three campaigns, [we found the Americans] not so powerful. Isn't it true that you also experienced the growth from weak to strong, and you have been fighting a war which is even larger than the war [in Korea]. This is the truth Chairman Mao has revealed in his May 25th Statement: Not necessarily does a small country fear a big power, a big power sometimes fears a small country. China is not a small country, but, at that time [of the Korean War] was a weak country. So long as we dare to pick up weapons to fight, finally we are able to use a revolutionary war to defeat the war of aggression. The Korean War has proved this point. The Vietnam War will further prove it. Now the war has expanded to Cambodia and the entire Indochina. It is not you, nor Prince Sihanouk, nor China, who planned the expansion. It is the United States which did it. Fine, let the war expand. In the past, only areas on the east bank of the Mekong River were the shelter. Now the whole Cambodia becomes the shelter, and the whole Indochina becomes the shelter, not to mention that there exists the big shelter—China.

49. MAO ZEDONG AND KAYSONE PHOMVIHANE²²⁸

Beijing, The Great Hall of the People, 3-4 p.m., 7 July 1970

²²⁸ Kaysone Phomvihane (1920-1992), General Secretary of the Laotian People's Revolutionary Party (the Communist party of Laos) from its formation in 1955 until his death. On the Laotian side, participants in this conversation included Sisavat, Saman Vignakhet, Khampang; on the Chinese side, participants included Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, Huang Yongsheng, Qiu Huizuo, deputy chief of staff and head of the PLA General Logistics Department, and Sheng Jian, deputy head of the CCP CC External Liaison Department.

Kaysone Phomvihane: During our delegation's visit to China, we have reported the situation in Laos to the Chinese party. According to the new situation at the current time, we have formulated a plan for the struggle in the coming three years. The purpose of this plan is to promote further our struggle of resisting America and saving our country, in order to pursue even greater victories.

....

Mao Zedong: After fighting for so many years, do you feel short of manpower and material power?

Kaysone Phomvihane: We are short of a few things.

Mao Zedong: What are they?

Kaysone Phomvihane: For example, in terms of manpower, when we want to recruit new soldiers there are very few available. Because we have inadequate manpower, we also encounter difficulties when we try to organize production. We also have difficulties in improving our production to serve the need of the front lines, and to improve the quality of life of the masses.

Mao Zedong: It seems that the war will be prolonged.

Kaysone Phomvihane: This is also the result of our analysis. It is very possible that the war will be prolonged. This is because the imperialists are very stubborn, and their military and economic potential are also very strong. Although the war will be prolonged, we are determined to continue the fighting.

Mao Zedong: This is fine. When you encounter difficulties, you need to have determination. There is nothing more serious than difficulties, lack of manpower, and lack of materials.

Kaysone Phomvihane: What Chairman Mao has said is right. Our difficulties are the ones emerging in pursuing victory whereas the difficulties facing the U.S. imperialists and their running dogs are ones leading to defeat.

Mao Zedong: Yes. Last time I mentioned to you whether or not you could organize an army to fight in Thailand. This is because the Thais attacked you. If you can attack me, why cannot I attack you?

Kaysone Phomvihane: I have clearly remembered these words of Chairman Mao's.

....

Mao Zedong: What is he [Mao points to Sisavat²²⁹] doing?

Kaysone Phomvihane: He is the chief of the general staff of our army.

²²⁹ Sisavat Keobounphan, later vice-president of Laos.

Mao Zedong: You are in charge of fighting. Do you know our chief of general staff Comrade Huang Yongsheng?

Sisavat: I met Comrade Huang Yongsheng during my last visit to China. The relationship between us is very close.

Mao Zedong: That is not necessarily reliable. Is it true that our support to them is not enough?

Zhou Enlai: We have satisfied all the requests they have put forward. Now the main problem is the difficulty involved in transportation.

Mao Zedong: Haven't we constructed a road?

Zhou Enlai: It has not been fully completed.

....

Mao Zedong: The world has changed. This has also been proved as far as Laos is concerned. Imperialism has dug the grave for itself. Its purpose is to occupy more territory, and it will find more people to bury it. We have experience [in this regard]. For example, Japan had occupied more than half of China, many places. Except for Sichuan and several other provinces, all had been occupied by it. Consequently it helped us. The common people all rose to resist it. At the time of its surrender, the number of our troops had passed one million. When the war against Japan began, we had only 20,000 troops. The Japanese have educated the Chinese. Then the Americans helped Jiang Jieshi to attack us. After Japan's surrender, Jiang Jieshi signed a peace agreement with us. But when he had completed the preparations, he began to use force to attack us. Therefore, we do not quite believe in such things as treaties and signatures. There are some reasons there. For example, there is no treaty between our two sides, and we have not signed anything, but we mean what we have said. The imperialists, including America's running dog Prince Souvanna Phouma, do not quite mean what they have said. Something, such as organizing a coalition government, is fine. But you need to prepare for something else. The purpose of organizing a coalition government is to destroy the coalition government.

Kaysone Phomvihane: That is correct.

Mao Zedong: A permanent coalition government? There is no reason to believe in it.

...

Mao Zedong: In Vietnam, or in Cambodia, or in Thailand, or in Burma, it is all like this. Now the guerrilla forces in Burma and Thailand have achieved some development, although their scale is not large. The guerrilla force is a school for training cadres. The capitalist class will never train cadres for us.

Kaysone Phomvihane: What Chairman Mao has said is right.

Mao Zedong: The military forces of it [the capitalist class] want to eliminate us. That is fine, and we will fight. If you want to fight, you need to have a military force, and this force is capable of training cadres [for you]. We should make it clear that we need the people and we need the soldiers for the military force. But the people and the soldiers need the leadership of the cadres, and without the leadership they are dispersed.

....

Mao Zedong: In history, wars have never ended. I told Comrade Le Duan the last time I met him that it seemed to me that our world was not so peaceful. The imperialists are still making trouble in the world. In my opinion, the people in various countries, including those in the imperialist countries, are about to rise. Some are making pacifist movements; some are fighting guerrilla wars; some are considering problems; but there are still many others who are yet to be awakened. Who believes that there have been the [Russian] October Revolution, the Chinese revolution, the Vietnamese revolution, and the Laotian revolution, and no revolution will happen in other places? That is impossible.

Lin Biao: Wherever there is oppression and exploitation, there is revolution.

Mao Zedong: If no revolution is to happen in other places, that means that Marxism-Leninism is out of date. Lenin said that imperialism is dying capitalism. Otherwise we will need to change it so that imperialism is rising capitalism. The imperialists do not feel so comfortable. Can you say that Nixon feels so comfortable?

....

Mao Zedong: For economic and military [matters], you can talk to these people [who are sitting here].

Kaysone Phomvihane: Let us report to Chairman Mao, the economic aid group and the military aid group have done their job. We have met with them and have had very good discussions. In the face of the new situation at the current time, we also request that the Chinese Communist Party strengthen the support and aid to us.

Mao Zedong: Yes, so long as you request. But you must request, otherwise who will know it?

Kaysone Phomvihane: Yes, we have put forward the request.

Mao Zedong: You have made the request, there are ways to resolve it. You certainly can talk to them. You do not need to be nervous. (laughs and points to Qiu Huizuo) They are now making revolution.

Kang Sheng: In the economic respect, with Comrade Li Qiang in charge, basically the problems have been resolved. As far as the requests they have put forward, so long as we have what they need, and so long as we are in a position to help, basically the problems can be resolved.

....

Kaysone Phomvihane: We are very happy to meet Chairman Mao today. The Chairman has discussed many important problems with us today, including problems concerning the Laotian revolution and problems concerning the world revolution. These words of Chairman Mao are of great importance in directing our revolutionary struggles.

50. ZHOU ENLAI AND TRINH DINH THAO²³⁰

Beijing, 5 p.m., 23 July 1970

Zhou Enlai: There were both advantages and disadvantages involved in our signing of the Geneva agreements [of 1954]. In terms of advantages, North Vietnam won a period of stability, allowing it to conduct socialist construction. In terms of disadvantages, the soldiers in South Vietnam evacuated to the North. Some soldiers in Cambodia also evacuated to the North. In Laos, only Xam Neua and Phong Saly provinces were designated as the concentration area for the revolutionary forces. At that time, President Ho Chi Minh was reluctant. [US State Department official Walter Bedell] Smith refused to sign the agreements. At that time we had two choices, either to sign [the agreements] or not sign [the agreements] if the United States failed to do so. After the consultation among socialist countries, we believed that it was better to sign. Later Chairman Mao mentioned that the choice of not signing [the agreements] should be considered. President Ho Chi Minh, and Comrades Le Duan and Pham Van Dong all said that it seemed the advantages [of signing them] surpass the disadvantages. In retrospect, for a period the people in South Vietnam suffered, but there was also something good in the suffering, as the people in South Vietnam spontaneously emerged to conduct the fighting. Completely relying on their own strength, they have created the situation of today.

51. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG²³¹

Beijing, 17 September 1970

Pham Van Dong: We always think that political and military struggles have decisive importance. Yet, in the case of Vietnam, to a certain extent, the diplomatic struggle is effective and has proven itself to be so for the past several years. I would like

²³⁰ Trinh Dinh Thao was vice chairman of the advisory committee to the Provisional Republican Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, who was then leading a delegation of “The Alliance of Nationalist, Democratic and Peaceful Forces in Vietnam” to visit China.

²³¹ This conversation took place on the same day as all four delegations to the Paris Peace Talks listened to the presentation of the PRG’s new eight-point peace plan.

to address the question of how the diplomatic struggle will be effective at the time when Nixon is carrying out his “Vietnamization” of the war. We hold that Nixon’s Vietnamization is still aimed at gaining a military victory in South Vietnam. It, however, does not mean that Nixon does not think of diplomacy. But we understand well that when they are talking of diplomacy, peace, they are trying to deceive the world, and they do not have any illusion about diplomacy. That they sent [US official David] Bruce to Paris is also aimed at deceiving the world. What should we do in facing Nixon’s calculations? As a matter of course, we will be persistent in the military and political struggles, holding that these struggles are decisive to the victory. At the same time, we are doing our best, as the situation allows, to step up the diplomatic struggle. For us and for Nixon, diplomacy is a play of words. Neither we nor he has any illusion about diplomacy. Yet, we also see some advantages of the diplomatic struggle. First, we have to win the sympathy of the people in South Vietnam, especially the ones in the urban areas. Furthermore, we have to influence the anti-war public opinion in the US that includes not only the people at large but also the political, business, academic, and clerical circles to ensure a stronger support by them. The world public opinion has been mobilized. Yet, it will be better if the opinion of political groups can be influenced. From this calculus, we hold that the diplomatic struggle can serve as another front. Therefore, the NLF delegation is conducting new diplomatic offensives.

We are focusing on the following two points:

- The unconditional withdrawal of American troops. What is new here is that we ask for a timetable for the withdrawal.

- The question of a coalition government. This is a more important issue. The focal point is the demand to remove Thieu, Ky,²³² and Khiem.²³³

These points are not quite new as they have been mentioned in the previous 10-point proposal. But the reason we focus on them is that we want further to corner Nixon by influencing public opinion in the US and the rest of the world. These points are also aimed at supporting the military and political struggles in the South. We do not have any illusion that they will bring about any results.

Zhou Enlai: I would like to talk about cooperation between North Vietnam and China. Comrade Mao has often reminded us of understanding your difficulties and helping

²³² Nguyen Cao Ky (1930-), Air Marshal, commander of the South Vietnamese Air Force, prime minister 1965-67 and vice president under Nguyen Van Thieu 1967-71.

²³³ Tran Thien Khiem (1925-) a South Vietnamese General, was a key figure in the coup against Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963. After he had participated in Nguyen Khanh’s coup in 1964, he was sent into honorable exile as ambassador to Washington. In 1968 he returned as Minister of the Interior, and served as Prime Minister under Thieu from 1969-75.

you to solve them, of considering these difficulties ours because our relations are the ones between the front and the rear. I have to say clearly that we have basically to satisfy your demands. We have also reviewed some issues that have not been brought up by you. From now on, if new difficulties come up, we would like you to inform us and we will try our best within our capacity to help you. Some kinds of weapons that you ordered have now become obsolete. We have improved them, making them more effective and less heavy. So we propose them for you to consider. The Great Rear has to help the front. Yet the Great Rear has to go to the front to understand the problems in order to solve them. The report by comrade Fang Yi about his recent trip to Vietnam is a good document for us to learn about the situation in Vietnam. We are bureaucratic. There are many people who suffer from this in our embassy in Vietnam. Chairman Mao once got angry with the reports by the Embassy. He said that he did not want to read them because these reports were written by [people] who spent all their time inside their offices. We therefore want to send our people to the front line to observe the situation. If you agree, we will not only send high-level officials, but also representatives of the armed forces, revolutionaries, and workers to Vietnam as important steps to prepare for war. At present, China is encircled. Yet, the fighting has begun only in Indochina. We cannot understand our enemies. There is no fighting in Korea. The border with the Soviet Union is sealed off. So we have to look to the front in Vietnam.

52. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG

Beijing, 19 September 1970

Zhou Enlai: We think that it is better to train your students in Vietnam than sending them to Europe because the ways of life there are different. The young people will be influenced by other ideas, which will make it difficult for us when they return. Therefore, you should not send them abroad. We can send our teachers to Vietnam for their education.

...

Zhou Enlai: As we observed, you have gained experience from the diplomatic struggle. We have read the report by comrade Huang Chen about his meeting with comrade Nguyen Thi Binh and read the speech given by her. We see that comrade Nguyen Thi Binh is very sharp. We also have read the report of the meeting between comrades Huang Chen and Xuan Thuy on secret contacts between the latter and Kissinger. The last reply by comrade Xuan Thuy is very good and humorous. I then told

our cadres in the Foreign Ministry that such a good deed could only be gained from diplomatic practice.

53. WANG YOUPING²³⁴ AND PHAM VAN DONG

Beijing, 20 September 1970

Ambassador: Premier Zhou would like to know as soon as possible Vietnam's position on the following points:

1. Will North Vietnam recognize Lon Nol's Government if it continues to negotiate with both North and South Vietnam?
2. Will North Vietnam support Sihanouk or Lon Nol if war breaks out in Cambodia?
3. Right now, based on the whole context, [how will Vietnam think if] China supports Sihanouk?

Pham Van Dong: Vietnam cannot recognize Lon Nol. We recognize Sihanouk. China and Vietnam are determined to support Sihanouk and support the struggle by the patriotic forces against Lon Nol. Yes, we support Sihanouk. China supports him, so does Vietnam. I think that it is the time to persuade the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and others to support Sihanouk, to isolate and condemn Lon Nol [and] Sirik Matak.

54. MAO ZEDONG AND PHAM VAN DONG²³⁵

Beijing, 23 September 1970

Mao Zedong: It seems to me that it is unlikely that a world war will erupt. The big powers do not want to fight such a war, they are afraid of each other. In the meantime, many countries in Europe, such as Britain, France, Italy, and West Germany, do not want to fight such a war.

...

Mao Zedong: Why have the Americans not made a fuss about the fact that more than 100,000 Chinese troops help you building railways, roads and airports although they knew about it?

²³⁴ Wang Youping was Chinese ambassador to Vietnam from June 1969 to August 1974. He previously (from the early 1950s to late 1960s) served as Chinese ambassador to Romania, Norway, Cambodia, and Cuba, and would in the late 1970s serve as Chinese ambassador to Malaysia and the Soviet Union.

²³⁵ On the Chinese side, Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, Huang Yongsheng, and Li Xiannian were present.

Pham Van Dong: Of course, they are afraid.

Mao Zedong: They should have made a fuss about it. Also, their estimate of the number of Chinese troops in Vietnam is less than their real number.

Pham Van Dong: We think that they find it difficult to deal with China.

Mao Zedong: If they did this, what would they do later? The Americans still want to go to Beijing for talks. It is what they propose. They said that Warsaw was not suitable and we replied that if they wanted to go to Beijing, [they should] just go. Later, they did not dare to go. Kissinger is a stinking scholar. I have read the report about the meeting between comrade Xuan Thuy and Kissinger.²³⁶ The last part of it is very funny. Kissinger is a university professor who does not know anything about diplomacy. I think that he is not someone who can compete with Xuan Thuy, even though I have not met Xuan Thuy.

Pham Van Dong: We have two comrades who are good at diplomatic struggle. They are Xuan Thuy and Nguyen Thi Binh.

Mao Zedong: I see that you can conduct the diplomatic struggle and you do it well. Negotiations have been going on for two years. At first we were a little worried that you were trapped. We are no longer worried.

...

Mao Zedong: Now I want to talk about the activities by the Chinese Embassy in Vietnam. Zhu Qiwen turned out to be a GMD agent. It is better to give his records for you to read. You will know what he did when he joined the GMD, how he betrayed us, how he fled and was arrested. He caused troubles during the time he served in Vietnam. He is not a good person.

There are some people conducting a chauvinist policy, [and who are] never sincere in helping other people. They send bad diplomats abroad.

...

It is therefore better for you to come here to talk directly with us. It will be easier than to do business with our “mandarin ambassadors” when they are abroad. You do not have to fear that they will report negatively about you if they are not pleased. You do not have to accept entirely their views. I heard that some Chinese living in Vietnam committed wrongdoings. They should have been punished by Vietnam’s laws. They must be punished because you have enough evidence against them. Yet, the Chinese Embassy was protecting them and the Embassy listened to them. Maybe there is corruption in the Embassy.

²³⁶ Secret talks between Xuan Thuy and Kissinger had been going on alongside the official negotiations in Paris since 4 August 1969.

Zhou Enlai: There are also secret service people over there.

...

Mao Zedong: Every Chinese province is now a fortress, ready in case of an American attack. But even in such a case, we still continue to help you because you are also in difficulties. Any one who says that we do not help you because we are also in difficulties is a reactionary. We have held the provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunnan, [and] Guangzhou responsible for helping you as well as the rest of the Southeast Asian region. The entire production by these provinces is for you. Cadres from these provinces will visit Vietnam to prepare for an American attack on China. Because you pin them down, they have not attacked China yet. In short, what I want to say is: You are fighting very well on the battlefield. Your policy for the diplomatic struggle is correct. We must give you what you want. I have no further comments.

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55. ZHOU ENLAI WITH LE DUAN AND PHAM VAN DONG

Hanoi, 7 March 1971

Zhou Enlai: Comrade Mao Zedong has said to comrades Le Duan and Pham Van Dong that the Vietnamese comrades knew how to fight and how to negotiate. I also told comrades Xuan Thuy and Nguyen Thi Binh that the negotiations went quite well. I gained some experience in negotiations before, but now I have to learn from you.

...

The Thai government is very much afraid of the Thai Communist Party's armed forces. It knows that weapons to the TCP armed forces are transported via Vietnam and Laos. It also knows that China has a road that runs to the Sino-Lao border. Therefore, it faces the threat of the war expanding all over Southeast Asia. We hold that support to the peoples' revolutionary struggles cannot be sacrificed for the sake of relations between governments. Only traitors do that.²³⁷

If we take the Soviets' side, they will control us. And if there is disagreement between us, we should talk it out on the basis of independence and self-reliance. If we establish a world-wide people's front that includes the Soviets, they will control this front. So you have to take the initiative on this matter. Our government has supported your 8-

²³⁷ This conversation took place just as the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos, which had started on February 8, was coming to a standstill and North Vietnamese forces were regaining the initiative.

point and 10-point proposals. The Soviets wish to establish a united front in which we have to listen to them.

Yesterday I told you what Chairman Mao asked me to convey to you. These words are sincere. It is we who have to thank you and learn from you as far as the anti-American war is concerned. Not to support the revolution of the Vietnamese people is like betraying the revolution. At the same time, we are also prepared to render our sacrifices in case the enemy expands the war.

Le Duan: Japan has a plan for Southeast Asia. It wants to control the region. We want to smash the US-Japan alliance as well as the alliance between the US, Japan, and the regional bourgeois class. We have to establish a world front that will be built first by some core countries and later enlarged to include African and Latin American countries.

Pham Van Dong: We have to stress the front's role in the name of the peoples.

Le Duan: The world's people wish to oppose the "Nixon doctrine," which also means opposing the US-Japan alliance. The questions, therefore, are how we establish this front, who is capable of doing this. Only China and no one else. Everyone knows that the Indochinese Summit took place in China. So in the future, it will be more influential if a conference of the world peoples is held in China. We propose this initiative to oppose the Nixon Doctrine, further isolate the US, weaken the US-Japan alliance and shake the Southeast Asian bourgeois class, thus contributing to the defeat of the US global strategy. The result is not only [good] for the near future, but is of long-term benefit as well. It is only China that has the strength to do this.

Zhou Enlai: This is a new issue. East Asia is a part of the world. The people in Asia, especially in Southeast Asia, are suffering from American and Japanese reactionaries' policies. Yet, on the problem of establishing a People's Front to oppose them, we need more time to think. Sometimes, you are in a more advantageous position than us. Sometimes and on some issues we [are in a more advantageous position].

56. ZHOU ENLAI AND LE DUAN²³⁸

Hanoi, 6:30 p.m., 13 July 1971

Le Duan: In the war of aggression against Vietnam, the US goes from one surprise to another. Until the withdrawal of troops is completed, Nixon will be unable to expect what surprise is next. So the visit of Kissinger is designed to forestall these surprises.

²³⁸ Premier Zhou Enlai flew to Hanoi right after seeing Kissinger off at the airport. This is presumably a small portion of the talk between Zhou Enlai and Le Duan on Kissinger's visit to China.

57. LE DUC THO AND IENG SARY²³⁹

7 September 1971 [place not provided]

Le Duc Tho: We will always remember the experience in 1954. Comrade Zhou Enlai admitted his mistakes in the Geneva Conference of 1954. Two or three years ago, comrade Mao also did so. In 1954, because both the Soviet Union and China exerted pressure, the outcome became what it became. We have proposed that the Chinese comrades admit their mistakes and now I am telling you, the Cambodian comrades, about this problem of history.

We should be independent in thoughts, promote international solidarity and solidarity with the Soviet Union and with China. We have to fight a big imperialist country. If we take sides in the Sino-Soviet dispute, the situation will become more complicated. At present, China considers that it has two enemies, namely the Soviet Union and the US. It therefore will not be beneficial if we take sides.

58. ZHOU ENLAI AND LE DUAN²⁴⁰

Beijing, 1971 [day and month not provided]

Zhou Enlai: We agree with your view that there are two possibilities with regard to the situation in Vietnam. The first one is that the US will withdraw its troops from Vietnam so that Nixon will be re-elected and the second one is that Nixon will deceive public opinion to be re-elected. After re-election, he will expand the war. Therefore, our objective is to ask for a total withdrawal and if they do not comply, we will fight hard. The other objective is to expose Nixon's deceptive schemes. We also agree with your

²³⁹ Ieng Sary (1930-), Pol Pot's closest collaborator in the Cambodian Communist Party Politburo. He moved to Beijing in 1971, where he established the authority of the Khmer Rouge over Sihanouk's government in exile. He was responsible for foreign affairs in the government of Democratic Kampuchea after 1975. Defected to the Hun Sen-Ranaridh government in 1996.

²⁴⁰ Le Duan stopped in Beijing after a trip to the Soviet Union and met with Zhou Enlai. The Vietnamese side included Le Duan, Ha Huy Giap, and Ngo Thuyen. Giap was a south-based revolutionary veteran who worked as a high-ranking official in the COSVN during the 1960s, together with Le Duan, Le Duc Tho, Pham Hung and Ung Van Khiem. From 1954 he was one of the leaders of the VWP CC Cultural and Ideological Committee. Thuyen was a long-standing member of the ICP who was party secretary in Thanh Hoa province 1956-70, a Central Committee member 1966-76. He succeeded Ngo Minh Loan as ambassador to China 1970-74, and was Deputy Head of the VWP Control Commission from 1974. The Chinese side included Zhou Enlai, Zhang Chunqiao, a CCP Politburo member, deputy head of the "Cultural Revolution Group," and First Party Secretary of Shanghai City, Yao Wenyuan, a CCP Politburo member, a member of the "Cultural Revolution Group," and Second Party Secretary of Shanghai City, and Fang Yi, head of the PRC External Economic Liaison Commission.

demand in Paris that the US must announce a fixed timetable for the withdrawal of troops and your position of not recognizing the Thieu-Ky-Khiem government.

1972

59. ZHOU ENLAI AND NGUYEN TIEN²⁴¹

Beijing, 9:50 p.m, 12 April 1972

Zhou Enlai: (After accepting a statement issued by the DRV government dated April 11) We have noted in early April that the United States is to expand bombardment and use warships to shell the territory of the DRV.²⁴² It tries to use expanding bombing and expanding fronts to prevent its defeat. This certainly will not work. The people in Indochina are standing together and fighting together. No matter where the United States will bring the war to, it will suffer from heavy strikes. China firmly supports the serious stand of the DRV government, and will try its best to support the Vietnamese people to carry the anti-American patriotic war to its end.

60. ZHOU ENLAI AND XUAN THUY, LY BAN²⁴³

Beijing, 5:40 p.m., 7 July 1972

Xuan Thuy briefed Zhou Enlai on the development of the Paris negotiations, mentioning that the Vietnamese side is preparing for two possibilities: on the one hand, prepare to continue to fight; on the other, not to let pass any opportunity to solve the problem on the basis of reasonable negotiations.

Zhou Enlai: Whether the war in Vietnam will continue or will be solved through negotiations as the result of a less rigid attitude on the part of the United States will be determined in the four crucial months from July to October of this year.

61. ZHOU ENLAI AND LE DUC THO

Beijing, 12 July 1972

Zhou Enlai: On the one hand, it is necessary to prepare for fighting. On the other hand, you have to negotiate. China has some experience with that. We also conducted

²⁴¹ Vietnamese chargé d'affaires in China.

²⁴² On 16 April 1972, two months after Nixon's visit to Beijing, US bombers attacked Hanoi and Haiphong for the first time since 1968.

²⁴³ See footnote 223.

fighting and negotiating with Jiang Jieshi. During the Korean War, we fought one year and negotiated two years. Therefore, your tactic of fighting and negotiating, that you have been conducting since 1968, is correct.

At first, when you initiated negotiations, some of our comrades thought that you had chosen the wrong moment. I even said to comrades Le Duan and Pham Van Dong that you had to choose the moment to start negotiations when you were in an advantageous position. Yet, comrade Mao said that it was correct to have negotiations at that time and that you were also prepared to fight. Only you would know when the right moment for negotiations was. And your decision was correct, thus showing that comrade Mao was more farsighted than we were.

We do not recognize Nguyen Van Thieu as he is a puppet of the US. Yet we can recognize him as a representative of one of the three forces in the coalition government. The coalition government will negotiate the basic principles for it to observe and control the situation after the US withdrawal of troops. The US will see that Thieu is sharing power in that government, and therefore, find it easier to accept a political solution. In case negotiations among the three forces fail, we will fight again. Similar situations can be found in Kashmir and the Middle East.

Le Duc Tho: But we still think of a government without Thieu.

Zhou Enlai: We are asking the US to remove Thieu. However, if we hint that Thieu can be accepted, the US will be surprised because they do not expect that. Of course, Thieu cannot be a representative of a government. But in negotiations, surprise is necessary.

In the pro-American force, Thieu is a chieftain. He is the one that sells out his country. Yet, he plays a decisive role in his party. We, therefore, cannot solve anything if we only talk with other figures in his party rather than him. Of course how to solve this problem is your job. However, as comrades, we would like to refer to our experience: In the civil war, no result would be gained if we insisted on talking with Jiang's ministers but not with Jiang himself. In the Korean War, we talked with Eisenhower. At the Geneva Conference, because [French Prime Minister Georges] Bidault was stubborn, siding with the US, talks did not continue. When [Bidault's successor as Prime Minister in 1954, Pierre] Mendes-France came to power and was interested in negotiations, the problem was solved. That means we have to talk with the chieftains. Again, our talks with the US did not proceed until the visit by Nixon to China. [North Korean Prime Minister] Comrade Kim Il Sung is also trying to talk directly with [South Korean President] Park Chung Hee. We do the same in our relations with Japan. These are historical facts. The CCP Politburo has discussed this matter, but it is up to you to decide.

May I put it another way: you can talk directly with Thieu and his deputy, thus showing that you are generous to him when he is disgraced. Since Thieu is still the representative of the Right faction, and there is not yet anyone to replace him, the US can be assured that their people are in power. The NLF should also name its representative, who may be Mr. Nguyen Huu Tho or Mr. Huynh Tan Phat,²⁴⁴ and the neutralist faction should also do the same. However, the real struggle will be between the NLF and the Right faction.

Le Duc Tho: We are asking Thieu to resign. If he does not, we will not talk with the Saigon government.

Zhou Enlai: If he does, who will replace him?

Le Duc Tho: We are ready to talk with anyone.

Zhou Enlai: That also means Thieu's policy without him.

Le Duc Tho: But they have to compromise.

Zhou Enlai: On general elections?

Le Duc Tho: We have not mentioned general elections. If they agree on a tripartite government and recognize the power of this government, then we agree to hold general elections.

Zhou Enlai: General elections will be very dangerous, maybe more dangerous than Thieu being the representative of the Right faction, not to mention international supervision and control of the elections.

Le Duc Tho: We hold that a tripartite government must be established. One of the duties of this government is to hold elections. And free elections require realization of democratic rights.

...

Le Duc Tho: Another complicated question relates to the neutralist faction's participation in the coalition government. We have to discuss and define the term of neutrality.

Zhou Enlai: Is Duong Van Minh²⁴⁵ acceptable?

Le Duc Tho: This is a complicated problem. Duong Van Minh is not totally pro-American. Yet, the tripartite government is very provisional.

²⁴⁴ Huynh Tan Phat (1913-89), an architect who was twice arrested by the Diem government after 1954, NLF general secretary 1964-66 and PRG President from its foundation in 1969 to 1976, when he became SRV deputy premier.

²⁴⁵ General Duong Van Minh (also known as "Big" Minh), one of the main figures in the coup against Ngo Dinh Diem 1963, head of state 1962-64, when he was deposed. In 1975 he became the last president of South Vietnam before the fall of Saigon.

Zhou Enlai: Eventually, we have to fight again since the tripartite government is provisional.

Le Duc Tho: It also is difficult for France to become involved because of the US influence.

Zhou Enlai: So the neutral position is both pro-French and pro-American.

Le Duc Tho: Duong Van Minh is exactly like this. But the important thing is how to make the US accept the principle of the establishment of a tripartite government. And further discussion on dividing positions and power should be held after this.

Zhou Enlai: Chairman Mao has also spent much time talking with me on the question of a tripartite government. He told me to talk with you on this issue. We also have experience on this issue. A coalition government could be established, but we later had to resume fighting. The question is to play for time with a view to letting North Vietnam recover, thus getting stronger while the enemy is getting weaker.²⁴⁶

62. MAO ZEDONG AND NGUYEN THI BINH²⁴⁷

Beijing, 29 December 1972

Mao Zedong: We belong to the same family. The North (Vietnam), the South (Vietnam), Indochina, and Korea, we belong to the same family and support each other.

If you succeed in the [Paris] negotiations, not only South Vietnam but also North Vietnam may reach normalization to a certain extent with the Americans. Now, some so-called “Communists” say that you should not negotiate, and that you should fight, fight for another 100 years. This is revolution; otherwise, it is opportunism.

...

During the Cultural Revolution, all under heaven was in disorder. A faction controlled power, and set fire and burned the British consulate. These bad guys belonged to the Lin Biao faction. Behind them was Lin Biao.

63. ZHOU ENLAI AND TRUONG CHINH²⁴⁸

Beijing, 8:40 pm, 31 December 1972

²⁴⁶ In his peace plan of October 1972, Le Duc Tho actually dropped the demand for the resignation of President Thieu and the immediate formation of a coalition government.

²⁴⁷ This meeting was held during the heavy US “Christmas bombing” of Hanoi and Haiphong. On the Chinese side, Zhou Enlai and Ji Pengfei were present.

²⁴⁸ Truong Chinh (1907-1988), ICP/VWP general secretary from during WW II to 1956. Stepped down in 1956, after admitting mistakes during the land reform program in North Vietnam. Became deputy premier in 1958 and chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly in 1960, a position he kept until 1981. Returned briefly to the post of General Secretary after Le Duan’s death in 1986.

Truong Chinh inquired about Zhou Enlai's opinions about the prospects of the Paris negotiations.

Zhou Enlai: It seems that Nixon is truly planning to leave [Vietnam]. Therefore, this time it is necessary to negotiate [with them] seriously, and the goal is to reach an agreement. Of course, you also need to prepare [for the possibility] that the negotiations will not result in an agreement, and that some setbacks may occur before [the agreement is finally reached].

1973

64. ZHOU ENLAI AND LE DUC THO

Beijing, 5:30 p.m., 3 January 1973

Zhou Enlai: The US strategy of using bombing to put pressure on you has failed. Nixon has many international and domestic issues to deal with. It seems that the US is still willing to get out from Vietnam and Indochina. You should persist in principles while demonstrating flexibility during the negotiations. The most important [thing] is to let the Americans leave. The situation will change in six months or one year.²⁴⁹

65. ZHOU ENLAI AND PRINCE SIHANOUK

Beijing, 6 p.m., 24 January 1973

Zhou Enlai: According to what the Vietnamese side told our ambassador in Hanoi, the armistice in Vietnam does not cover Cambodia and Laos. This was Point 7 in the original nine-point agreement. But this time the agreement makes it clear that the problems of the three Indochina countries should be solved by the three countries themselves. This point was not included in the previous drafts, and is added this time. If this is true, the agreement is better than the previous one. This means that other countries cannot interfere with [the affairs of the three countries.]

66. MAO ZEDONG AND LE DUC THO

²⁴⁹ When meeting with Ngo Thuyen, DRV ambassador to China, and Nguyen Van Quang, PRG ambassador to China, in Beijing, 8:00 p.m. 24 January 1973, Zhou received their report that a peace agreement had been reached in Paris. Zhou said: "Please accept my congratulations. The victory is easily won. As Prime Minister Pham Van Dong says, it is important to continue the struggle. The important [thing] is that the Americans have been driven away."

Beijing, 2 February 1973

Mao Zedong: Before we received Nixon in China, we had conflicting opinions on strategy. Some said that you should find ways to bind the hands of the US. Some said that you should conduct a protracted warfare strategy. I myself advocated large-scale battles because large-scale battles can cause heavy losses to the enemy, forcing him to accept solutions.

I also think that after the Paris Agreements have been signed you need at least six months to stabilize the situation in South Vietnam [and] to strengthen your forces.

67. ZHOU ENLAI AND PEN NOUTH²⁵⁰

Beijing, 4:50 pm, 2 February 1973

Zhou Enlai: Chairman Mao said: It is good that the Vietnamese-American agreement lets the American troops leave Vietnam. This agreement is a success. After the withdrawal of American troops, including American naval, air, and land forces, and after the withdrawal of American military bases, it is easy to deal with Nguyen Van Thieu. The troops of the allies [of the Saigon regime] will all leave. For example, the troops of South Korea have begun to leave. Why does the United States do this? For the purpose of getting out. It has dispatched so many troops to Indochina, and spent so much money there, and the problem has not been solved. And new problems emerge continuously. Finally the agreement has been reached. While the American troops will leave, the agreement does not formally and openly ask the North Vietnamese troops to leave. Nguyen Van Thieu made a really loud noise against the United States. It was because of Nguyen Van Thieu's opposition that the agreement was not signed last October. Of course, the rightists in the United States do not favor the agreement either. In addition, the Pentagon wants to ship ammunition and weapons to South Vietnam, and, with the signing of the agreement, the shipping will become impossible. Therefore, the signing of the agreement was delayed, and a large amount of ammunition was transported to South Vietnam. But Nguyen Van Thieu was not in a position to know how to use it. [North] Vietnam does not recognize its troops to be foreign troops. At this point, the United States made concessions. If there had not been victories on the battlefield, there would not have been gains at the negotiation table.

68. ZHOU ENLAI AND LE DUAN, PHAM VAN DONG AND LE THANH NGHI²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ See footnote 177.

Beijing, 5 June 1973

Zhou Enlai: The world is now in a state of chaos. In the period after the Paris Agreements, the Indochinese countries should take time to relax and build their forces. During the next 5 to 10 years, South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia should build peace, independence, and neutrality. In short, we have to play for time and prepare for a protracted struggle. Each country has enemies of its own. So each has to prepare, both by increasing production and training armed forces. If we are not vigilant, the enemy will exploit our weakness. If we are well-prepared, then we will be ready for any move by the enemy.

At present, the cease-fire is well observed. The Cambodian problem is not solved. Yet, the people, after 20 years of fighting, wish to relax. So it is necessary that you restore production and effectively use the labor forces. These are big things to do. We agree with you that we have to restore production and train armed forces at the same time.

Le Duan: The US was aiming at political objectives when fighting in Vietnam. Strategically speaking, they did not use a consistent strategy. Instead, in this neocolonial war, they changed several strategies, from one of special war to limited war and “Vietnamization.” Their objective was not only to turn South Vietnam into their colony, but also to realize their global strategy in Vietnam. That means, they wished to control the South, then attack the North of Vietnam, thus damaging the defense system of socialism in Southeast Asia and threatening the national independence movement in the world.

Zhou Enlai: So you fought, and were not patient as Lin Biao advised. Patience is the maxim of Lin Biao’s strategy. He knew of nothing else.

²⁵¹ Later that same day Le Duan met with Mao Zedong (Zhou Enlai and Ye Jianying were also present). Records show the following exchange took place:

Le Duan: The Chairman’s correct judgment is for us a tremendous encouragement.

Mao Zedong: Our Foreign Ministry has issued a circular, in which it says that the strategic emphasis of the United States lies in Asia and the Pacific. I say that this is not true. The United States has many problems in Europe, the Middle East, and America itself. Sooner or later it needs to withdraw some of its troops, and it will not stay in Asia and the Pacific forever. Therefore, Comrade Le Duc Tho’s negotiation in Paris would result in something.

...

Mao Zedong: Lin Biao knew only guerrilla warfare with a view to keeping the US bogged down in Vietnam. I, however, wish to see you fighting mobile warfare and destroy their forces.

Zhou Enlai: We mean their regular forces.

I would like to share with you some intelligence information that we have just received. The US wants Saigon to decrease fighting. [US envoy William] Sullivan²⁵² has to fly to Saigon to tell the same thing that he told Tran Van Huong²⁵³—Saigon's Ambassador to Washington: Nixon is in trouble and Saigon should not make the situation more complicated. This is true, because it explains why Kissinger wants to have a joint declaration with you.

I also would like to stress that the US should definitely drop Lon Nol to let the Cambodian people solve the problems themselves. This is a Cambodian civil war so the US should leave Cambodia. As for FUNK, this war is to punish Lon Nol. So we have to consult with Prince Sihanouk whether to negotiate. We at the same time are not representing GRUNK.²⁵⁴

Le Duan: Cambodian comrades are making much progress. They are doing very well.

Zhou Enlai: There is still uncertainty in the situation. I recall that last year, Lon Nol went to China for the 20th anniversary celebration of the Chinese National Day and met with comrade Pham Van Dong. He was so confident. At that time, he still controlled all the transportation of materiel for South Vietnam.

Pham Van Dong: We did not anticipate that things would change in a very short time afterward. But he deserved it.

Zhou Enlai: Things always happen beyond our wishes. At that time, you had military and medical bases in Cambodia and we did not know about this. But Lon Nol did. And when Lon Nol asked for road fees for transportation of materiel via Cambodia, we had to pay.

Le Duan: We would like to talk about our policy in the South. The situation will be clear in three or four years' time. At any rate, the government there eventually must be a democratic and nationalist one. This government can exist for ten or 15 years. And then the name can be changed. So we are not in a hurry to turn South Vietnam into a socialist entity.

Pham Van Dong: In this struggle, our objective is independence and democracy. We are not in a hurry with the goal of national unification. One thing we should do is to

²⁵² William Healy Sullivan (1922-) was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State from the end of his term as US ambassador to Laos in 1969 until he became ambassador to the Philippines in 1973; he later served as envoy to Iran until the Iranian Revolution in 1978-79.

²⁵³ Tran Van Huong (1903-), former mayor of Saigon who twice served as Prime Minister in the Republic of Vietnam November 1964-January 1965, and May-August 1969. Later became Vice President to Nguyen Van Thieu and served as President for 7 days in April 1975.

²⁵⁴ The Beijing-based Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea (Cambodia) formed by Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge in 1970.

highlight the NLF role and the Provisional Revolutionary Government with a neutral foreign policy.

Zhou Enlai: And the main problem is the leadership of the Party.

Pham Van Dong: That is correct. Lenin also discussed this problem in his book entitled "The Two Strategies." The whole problem is the leadership. We will highlight the NLF role both in internal and external policies.

Le Duan: In carrying out "Vietnamization," the enemies are clearly expanding the war. We hold that the US has great strength and it can accept defeat to a certain extent. It is difficult to defeat the US because it is a strong country. You have advised us to solve the problem of US withdrawal first and solve the Saigon problem later. We think this is correct.

69. ZHOU ENLAI AND LE DUAN, PHAM VAN DONG AND LE THANH NGHI
Beijing, 6 June 1973

Le Duan: We would like to have a multi-process refinery system with the capacity of 3 million tons a year so that we can produce gasoline, fiber, plastic, etc. Comrade Zhou Enlai last time said that this system could produce hundreds of different kinds of products. I was very happy and immediately reported to the Politburo. Everyone was glad because this would be a very valuable gift. However, later I was disappointed when I was told that China would be ready to help us to produce just a few kinds of oil. And we are unhappy. This time, I would like to raise the issue again, hoping that Chairman Mao would reward Vietnam with this system. This system is very important for us. I hope that you are positive this time.

Zhou Enlai: I was too careless in speaking the last time. I talked out of my enthusiasm. I myself was deceived by the Red Horizon Refinery Factory. I also talked about it with our African guests, including Emperor [Haile] Selassie of Ethiopia. Now I found that it is not that easy. The head of this project has died. Moreover, we have not been successful in handling the problem of waste processing. We are trying our best. And in case we fail, we have to send our people abroad to study more. Other things like feeding fish, ducks and watering rice fields with this waste are no good. I was told that in Canada, they have to burn this waste and that Japan is still unable to solve this problem. How can we be more developed than others? The whole thing related to this system was fabricated by bad people.

It is true that I brought up this issue with you. If we are unable to solve the waste problem, we will harm you and us as well because your sea is smaller than ours. There is

no difficulty in helping you building the refinery system. This is the basic principle. So you do not have to ask Chairman Mao for this reward. To build one or two factories like this when the problem of waste is not solved will do harm to the fishing industry.

Le Duan: I have to tell you this. A Japanese company has offered to build for us a system capable of producing 4 tons of products. We, however, prefer to do business with China.

Zhou Enlai: Has it mentioned the cost?

Le Duan: It has not. But it said that it would send experts to Vietnam to make a feasibility study and later build a factory.

Zhou Enlai: What group does it belong to? At present, we have to import from the Netherlands a system capable of producing 2 tons of products.

....

Zhou Enlai: You have gained some experience in maintaining production during the period of American bombing. Yet, industrial production is different from agricultural production. The former should be concentrated even though resources are scattered. Before, under Lin Biao's policy, Chinese industrial production was scattered. Now comrade Ye Jianying is improving the situation.

You have also to improve transportation by sea, railway and roads. Transportation is an urgent problem. You should think of a plan to standardize the railways connecting Hanoi and Haiphong.

...

You are requesting facilities for another missile battalion in order to have 4 battalions according to standards. We accept the request. The Soviet standard requires 4 battalions, but the Chinese standard requires only three. We do not have to fight any more, so it will be all the same if the fourth battalion is placed either in China or in Vietnam. And it is not necessary to file the records of the placement of this battalion in Vietnam.

...

Zhou Enlai: I say that we have to help Vietnam for at least 5 years to come. I hope that all other comrades present here will remember this, because I may not be here when that time comes. I do not mean that after five years we will not help you any more. We will, but the amount may be reduced.

Yesterday Chairman Mao said that the people in the world, including the Chinese people, should be grateful to you. He also said that we should keep our commitments.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ During a separate conversation on this visit, Zhou Enlai said, "The Vietnamese people's great victory in the anti-American war is a great contribution to the cause of the people of the world. The people of the

70. ZHOU ENLAI AND PHAM VAN DONG

Beijing, 16 August 1973

Zhou Enlai: The Americans told comrade Huang Chen that they want to solve the Cambodian question and that they were ready to talk with Sihanouk or with his representative. At the same time, they want representatives of the United National Front in Cambodia to hold talks with Lon Nol's faction.

What we are concerned about is that Sihanouk will change his position. We cannot change the joint position adopted by the Indochinese countries' summit. As long as the US continues its bombing operation, talks cannot be held. But at this moment, the US wishes to withdraw from Cambodia. If we can win the sympathy of some people in Lon Nol's faction, we will be in an advantageous position. It is therefore unwise if these chances are not exploited.²⁵⁶

71. ZHOU ENLAI AND LE THANH NGHI

Beijing, 8-10 October 1973

world, including the Chinese people, have to thank you." Le Duan replied: "Without the aid from the international fraternity, especially from China, we could even be facing famine. We are very grateful to you. When we return to Vietnam, we will have to think how to do things better, otherwise we will lose your trust."

²⁵⁶ At the the 10th CCP congress in August 1973, Zhou Enlai said the following on the international situation: "We recognize that the US imperialists are the number one enemy of the people of the world and of the Chinese people. The Japanese imperialists are also our enemy. We, however, have to understand the contradictions between our enemies to solve our contradictions. We should define what are main contradictions and what are not. The US made much noise but it has not attacked us. The so-called Asian alliance headed by Japan is in fact designed to defend them from our attack. But the so-called brothers, namely the Soviet revisionists, are attacking us, threatening us. They collude with the American imperialists and the Indian reactionaries. If we do not know how to make friends with the ones who used to oppose us and establish relations with them, the Soviet revisionists will encircle and attack us. Then, we will be attacked from many directions, and our people will lead a miserable life again. Therefore, we have to base our policy on our national interests. Otherwise, our policy will be incorrect and wrong. The Soviet revisionists want to attack us. They have many new weapons that we do not have. We can buy them from other countries. The Soviet revisionists do not provide us with technical equipment. We can buy it from others. The other countries, because of their national interests, and moreover, because of having been cheated by the Soviets before, will want to have relations with us. So there will be benefits for international détente as well as benefits for us. Nothing bad with that! We, therefore, have to be flexible, taking into account different opportunities to solve different contradictions. Traitors like Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao—the puppets of the Soviet revisionists—were trying to publicize their sinful allegation that the Soviets somehow are still our brothers and that the Soviet Union is still a socialist country. They were also saying that mistakes are avoidable and they should be settled between the two parties on the basis of fraternity. The two parties should not openly curse and attack each other, otherwise, the enemy will be happy and friends will be pained."

Zhou Enlai: I would like to comment on the second point about the government in Saigon. I have to make it clear that to have an early withdrawal of American troops, we did not demand the resignation of Thieu and, moreover, we proposed that internal affairs in South Vietnam be solved by the South Vietnamese people themselves. We calculated that a ceasefire, withdrawal of American troops, and exchange of prisoners of war are the conditions for the US to get out of Vietnam. The internal affairs in South Vietnam should be solved by the people of South Vietnam themselves. That you recently dropped the demand for Thieu's resignation has deprived the US of reasonable arguments and created more favorable conditions for the US to withdraw its troops from Vietnam. The following argument should be consistent: we will not impose the Communist system in South Vietnam, but we will not allow the maintaining of the neocolonial system there.

Negotiations in Cambodia are not suitable for the time being. Sihanouk is against negotiations. So is the internal faction of FUNK.²⁵⁷ They want to prolong the fighting for some more time. Therefore, if you see any possibility for talks, please tell them. We are not in a position to do so because we have talked with them a lot about fighting and encouraged them to fight. We suggest that the Vietnamese Workers' Party find a suitable moment to tell them.

1974

72. ZHOU ENLAI AND LE THANH NGHI

Beijing, 10 p.m., 3 August 1974

Zhou Enlai: In actuality, I have been sick for more than two years. This time I have been hospitalized since June 1. After attending the state banquet in honor of Prime Minister Razak²⁵⁸ [of Malaysia] on May 31 I have been hospitalized. My illness is probably much more complicated than Comrade Pham Van Dong's [illness] two years ago. If my illness were like his, I would probably need only two days' sleep to recover.²⁵⁹

...

Since the beginning of your patriotic war to resist America, we have always placed the support to Vietnam as the top priority in our foreign aid affairs. We are still doing so today. Some of our aid is in the form of loans, but the majority is given gratis. The total monetary value of our economic and military support to Vietnam is equal to 48% of the

²⁵⁷ National United Front of Kampuchea—the Sihanouk-Khmer Rouge alliance. The “internal faction” is a reference to the Khmer Rouge.

²⁵⁸ Tun Haji Abdul Razak bin Hussein (1922-76), prime minister of Malaysia 1970-76.

²⁵⁹ Premier Zhou Enlai was diagnosed with cancer in 1973.

whole of our foreign aid. When you are fighting a war, if we fail to support you, we disqualify ourselves as true proletarian internationalists. Under the leadership of Chairman Mao and our Party's Central Committee, I have fulfilled my duty as far as handling the support to Vietnam is concerned. Now, I am not in good health, and Comrade Li Xiannian is to take over this duty.²⁶⁰

1975

73. MAO ZEDONG AND POL POT

Beijing, 21 June 1975

[Mao Zedong:] During the transition from the democratic revolution to adopting a socialist path, there exist two possibilities: one is socialism, the other is capitalism. Our situation now is like this. Fifty years from now, or one hundred years from now, the struggle between two lines will exist. Even ten thousand years from now, the struggle between two lines will still exist. When Communism is realized, the struggle between two lines will still be there. Otherwise, you are not a Marxist. This is unity existing among opposites. If one only mentions one side of the two, that is metaphysics. I believe in what Marx and Lenin have said, that the path [of advance] would be tortuous. From the era of Lenin to the era of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the Soviet Union has changed. But in the future it is certain that it will return to Lenin's path. China is also like this. It may turn to revisionism in the future, but it will eventually return to the path of Marx and Lenin. Our state now is, as Lenin said, a capitalist state without capitalists. This state protects capitalist rights, and the wages are not equal. Under the slogan of equality, a system of inequality has been introduced. There will exist a struggle between two lines, the struggle between the advanced and the backward, even when Communism is realized. Today we cannot explain it completely.

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²⁶⁰ In Beijing, on 18 April 1975, Mao Zedong commented further to Kim Il Sung on the health situation in the Chinese leadership:

“Comrade Dong Biwu has passed away. The Premier [Zhou Enlai] is sick. Comrades Kang Sheng and Liu Bocheng are also sick. I am sick too. This year I am 82 years old. I cannot hold on for very long. We will be depending upon you. I am not going to discuss politics [with you], but he will. [Mao points to Deng Xiaoping] His name is Deng Xiaoping. He knows how to fight a battle; he also knows how to fight against revisionism. The Red Guards purged him, but he is fine now. In those years several [of our leaders] were purged, and they have been rehabilitated now. We need them.”

You should not completely copy China's experience, and should think for yourself. According to Marx, his theory is a guideline for action, but not a doctrine.

74. MAO ZEDONG AND LE DUAN

Beijing, 24 September 1975

Mao Zedong: Today, you are not the poorest under heaven. We are the poorest. We have a population of 800 million. Our leadership is now facing a crisis. The Premier (Zhou) is not in good health, he had four operations in one year and [the situation] is dangerous. Kang Sheng and Ye Jianying are not in good health either. I am 82 years old. I am very ill. [Mao points to Deng Xiaoping] Only he is young and strong.

75. DENG XIAOPING AND LE DUAN

Beijing, 29 September 1975

Deng Xiaoping: There have been some problems in the relations between our countries. Some of them emerged when President Ho was still alive. We have to say that we are not at ease when we get to read Vietnamese newspapers and know [Vietnamese] public opinion. In fact, you stress the threat from the North. The threat from the North for us is the existence of Soviet troops at our northern borders, but for you, it means China.

Le Duan: We did not say that.

Deng Xiaoping: I still recall a meeting between President Ho and Premier Zhou and myself in which President Ho mentioned this problem. At that time, we had several hundred thousand troops stationed in Guangdong and Guangxi. Vietnamese people and cadres used history in order to imply the present, mentioning the threat from the North. The Soviet question was also mentioned. Premier Zhou then told President Ho straight: "You are threatening us." For my part I asked President Ho whether you were concerned that we were intimidating you. If you did think so, we would withdraw our troops from Guangdong and Guangxi and place them in the North. The reason we had to have them there was to prepare for a scenario like the Korean War. We had to consider the possibility of an American attack. Did President Ho tell you about that meeting?

Le Duan: To tell you the truth, we heard nothing about it from President Ho. Yet, I was told about that theater play.

Deng Xiaoping: There were at that time some articles and public discussions that hurt our bilateral relations. We told President Ho about that for the sake of relations

between us. President Ho immediately replied: “I disagree with you that we are threatening you.” He also did not agree with the withdrawal of our troops from these two provinces. Later, as the situation changed, we withdrew [them] and placed them elsewhere.

For the last few years, such things have still occurred and they seem to be more frequent than before. The threat from the North is the main theme, even in your textbooks. We are not at ease with this. Our relations are very profound. We have not annexed a centimeter of your territory.

1976

76. HUA GUOFENG’S STATEMENT TO VIETNAMESE LEADERS

22 November 1976 [place not provided]

We have cadres with chauvinist attitudes. But this is not the policy of Chairman Mao and of the CCP Central Committee.

1977

77. HUA GUOFENG²⁶¹ AND POL POT²⁶²

29 September 1977 [place not provided]

Pol Pot: The Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Cuba are cooperating in order to fight us in the border areas. We think that they have prepared intelligence personnel inside our forces. At the central level, they have 5 agents; at the division level, they have between 4 and 10; and in addition, they have some in the provinces. Since September 1975, they have been preparing to attack Phnom Penh, Preyveng, and the border areas. They are also preparing to assassinate our leadership with high-accuracy guns and poison. They have several times poisoned food that we by chance did not eat. Thailand, the Soviet Union, and Vietnam are cooperating to do so. We also have documents to show that the US and Vietnam also cooperate on this issue. In 1976, we started to solve the problem of the

²⁶¹ Hua Guofeng, as Mao’s hand-picked successor, was then CCP CC chairman and PRC premier.

²⁶² Right before his departure for Beijing, in late September, Pol Pot made a speech in Phnom Penh in which he publicly revealed the existence of the Cambodian Communist Party and that he himself was its General Secretary. On September 24, Khmer Rouge forces had launched attacks against a number of villages on the Vietnamese side of the border.

Vietnamese agents and by June 1977, the job was basically completed. We have placed carefully selected cadres to be in charge of Phnom Penh and the border areas, especially on the Eastern border [with Vietnam] where there are many CIA agents.

We understand that the nature of the Vietnamese armed forces has changed. They can no longer bear hardship. They now rely on heavy weaponry, tanks, and aircraft. At the same time, the nature of their infantry forces has also changed. Their troops do not want to fight. Many of their troops from the North have taken additional wives in the South and they cannot fight. We are not concerned about fighting, but about the constant threat from Vietnam. Not only does Vietnam want to annex Cambodia and Laos. It also wants to occupy the whole of Southeast Asia. We have conducted negotiations with them many times, but to no avail.

To solve the problem by military means will lead to a decrease in our forces. The strategic orientation, therefore, should be to develop revolution in Southeast Asia. Otherwise, it will take centuries to solve the problem between Vietnam and Cambodia. Laos, to our knowledge, will play an important role in the strategy of Vietnam. The Vietnamese-Lao Treaty of 13 July 1977 is a treaty under which Vietnam annexes Lao territory. Laos' population is three million. Yet, the number of Vietnamese in Laos alone—not to mention the Vietnamese Laotians—is three million. The Vietnamese population is increasing by between one and two million every year. After five years, the Laotians will be a minority. Vietnam, however, is not able to control Laos because it has insufficient human, financial, and food resources. If the revolution in Southeast Asia advances strongly, exploiting the opportunities, then the situation will be better and we shall solve our problem.

We have conversed with our Burmese, Malaysian, Indonesian, and Thai friends and reached agreement with them. This is a big political victory even though it will be more complicated when we go into details. We rely on our Chinese friends in the North. Southeast Asia is united. This situation encourages us strategically.

As far as our foreign policy is concerned, we try to unite the Southeast Asian forces. Our Central Committee considers this an important task. We spend time working with parties in Southeast Asia.

That Cambodia can defend itself is contributing to the defense of Southeast Asia. As before, we feel safe having the Chinese as friends. The recent 11th CCP Congress encourages us and promises us and the Southeast Asian revolution a bright future.

Hua Guofeng: Your strategy regarding the neighboring countries is correct.

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