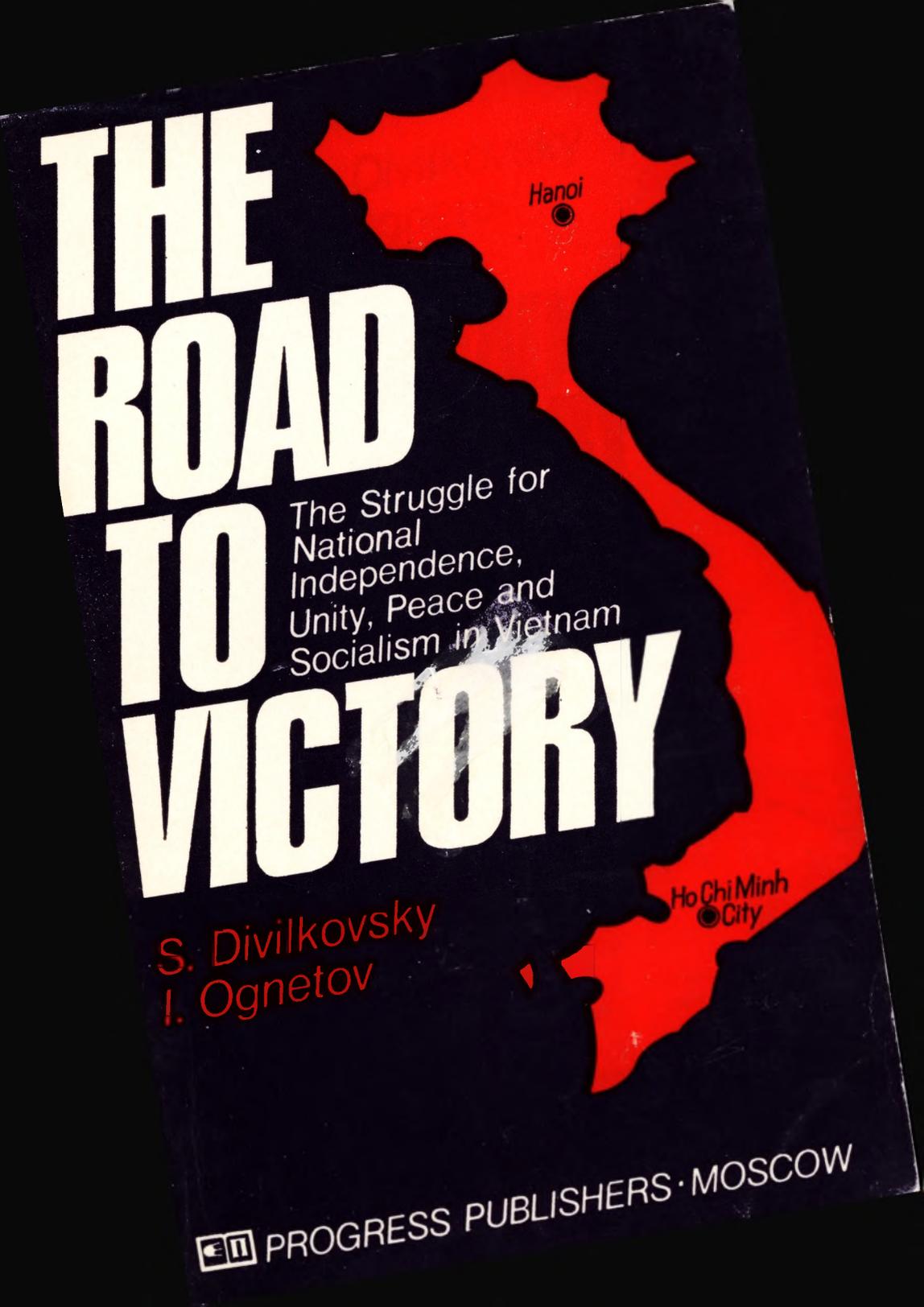


THE ROAD TO VICTORY



The Struggle for
National
Independence,
Unity, Peace and
Socialism in Vietnam

S. Divilkovsky
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Ho Chi Minh
City

 PROGRESS PUBLISHERS · MOSCOW

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*The Struggle for
National
Independence,
Unity, Peace and
Socialism in Vietnam*



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ПУТЬ К ПОБЕДЕ

Очерк борьбы за независимость,
единство, мир и социализм во Вьетнаме

На английском языке

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CPSU to the Congress stated:
"Anyone capable of taking a real-
situation in South Vietnam the
21st plenary session of

Introduction

The Vietnamese people's epic struggle which for three decades held the attention of the progressive world public, the meaning of what the valiant people of Vietnam have accomplished under the leadership of their Communist Party and relying on the support of the fraternal socialist countries and the progressive forces the world over have profound implications for the present stage of the world revolutionary process. The great victory scored by the Vietnamese reflects the salient features of our time, marked as it is by a transition from capitalism to socialism on a global scale.

The just cause of the Vietnamese people went far beyond the confines of Vietnam and in one form or another drew into its orbit many countries and peoples. Actually, the struggle of the Vietnamese people was part of the long-standing confrontation between the forces of socialism and peace on one hand and those of imperialism and reaction, on the other. In this confrontation socialism and peace have been victorious, a result that was inevitable.

The international movement in support of Vietnam during the years of its struggle against imperialist aggression assumed massive proportions. International forums, regional and national conferences of supporters of the just cause of the Vietnamese, the provision of medical and other humanitarian aid to Vietnam, the trips to that country made by competent delegations to investigate imperialist crimes there showed that the agony of Vietnam was the common agony of all the peoples fighting for peace and justice.

The Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet government have followed a consistent policy of extending to the people of Vietnam fraternal assistance in many different fields at every stage of their struggle. The truly internationalist policy of the Soviet Communist Party towards Vietnam was formalized in the documents of successive Party congresses, in the speeches made by the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme So-

viet, Leonid Brezhnev, and other Soviet leaders, and in the relevant joint Soviet-Vietnamese documents. The USSR is continuing to maintain close co-operation with Vietnam in the economic, political and cultural fields.

The struggle of the Vietnamese people against imperialist aggression, for the independence and freedom of their homeland and the construction of socialism in Vietnam has been the subject of many books, essays and press articles. This indicates both the intense interest shown throughout the world in Vietnam and the massive international support for the just cause of the Vietnamese.

In this book the authors attempt to trace the basic landmarks of the Vietnamese people's struggle for the independence and unity of their homeland, which was supported by their friends throughout the world. The authors make no claim to a comprehensive and exhaustive exposition of the history of this struggle. The conclusions made today may in course of time be adjusted in the light of new data when other investigators, above all, Vietnamese historians bring to light new facts about the Vietnamese people's struggle on the military, political and diplomatic fronts, and when information on events still unknown today will become available to historians and publicists.

The recent history of Vietnam is closely bound up with the country's tomorrow. The heroism displayed by the Vietnamese during the grim war years is still in evidence on the labor front, and in the efforts Vietnam is now making to maintain its independence and sovereignty in the face of the encroachments of great-Han hegemonists. The victory scored by the Vietnamese people came as a crowning achievement of a long period of valiant struggle. At the same time it marked the beginning of a new chapter in the chronicle of Vietnam's struggle for a socialist future. This was stated by the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam held in December 1976. The congress put the formal seal on the total triumph of the cause of national liberation, the country's reunification and advance towards socialism.

Defending Hard-Won Independence (1945-1954)

*Nothing is more precious than freedom
and independence.*

Ho Chi Minh

The First Steps of People's Government. Efforts to Avert Colonial War in Vietnam

September 2, 1945 was a doubly festive occasion for Vietnam. Together with the peace that came to the continent of Asia in the wake of militarist Japan's utter defeat a new and crucial chapter began in the centuries-old history of Vietnam: on that day in September the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the first state of workers and peasants in South-East Asia, was proclaimed.

The Declaration of Independence of Vietnam, promulgated on September 2, 1945, stated: "Viet Nam has the right to be a free and independent country—and in fact it is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty."¹

The revolution of August 1945 made under the leadership of the Communist Party was a national-liberation revolution which marked a crucial advance of the nation-

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, Hanoi, 1964, p. 24.

nal people's democratic revolution in Vietnam. It broke the chains of French colonialism which for almost a century had oppressed Vietnam and overthrew the golden throne of feudalism which dominated the country for over a millennium.

For fifteen years from its inception in 1930 the Communist Party of Indochina led the Vietnamese people to this victory. The Party had educated and organized the masses, trained them in the use of many different forms and tactics of political and armed struggle against the colonialists and local reactionaries.

During the Second World War when Vietnam was under Japanese occupation the people of that country led by the Party waged a determined struggle against a double yoke—the Japanese troops of occupation and the French colonialists whose administration had been maintained in Indochina until the spring of 1945 under an agreement with Japan. In 1941 on the initiative and under the leadership of the Communist Party of Indochina a broad-based united national front, Viet Minh, was formed on the basis of an alliance between the working class and peasantry. The Front brought together freedom fighters irrespective of their class origin, social status or religion. Self-defense units were formed up and down the country.

The growth and strengthening of the liberation movement in Vietnam was stimulated by Soviet victories over Nazi Germany. The Communist Party of Indochina set the task of preparing for an uprising against the Japanese invaders, who in March 1945 liquidated the French administration in Indochina to become its undivided rulers.

The rout of the Kwantung Army by the Soviet armed forces accelerated the popular uprising in Vietnam. On August 19 the uprising was victorious in Hanoi which had crucial repercussions throughout Vietnam. On August 23 the insurgents took Hué, liberating Saigon two days later. The revolution took eleven days to roll across the country reaching its remotest areas and sweeping away the hated puppet feudal-monarchic regime along with its French and Japanese backers.

Viet Minh representatives set up bodies of democratic power in liberated areas. These took the form of people's

councils which ended the country's artificial division introduced by the French colonialists into South Vietnam, a colony, Central Vietnam, an "empire", and North Vietnam, a protectorate. On September 2, 1945 a united and independent Vietnam stretching from the Chinese border in the North to Ca Mau in the South was formally proclaimed.

The people's government faced formidable problems in consolidating the hard-won independence and strengthening the country's unity. It was important above all to start eliminating the traces of French colonial rule and to heal the wounds inflicted on the country by five years of Japanese occupation. The Vietnamese had to learn to live in a new way, for the first time in their history they could now work for themselves and not for their feudal lords and overseas capitalists. The difficult problems facing the newly-born country were made worse by the intrigues of various imperialist circles which hatched plans to bring Vietnam back into their colonial orbit. Within weeks of the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam President Ho Chi Minh urged the people to defeat three of their main enemies: "the foreign interventionists, hunger and illiteracy".¹

Thus the upholding of the country's independence was given the highest priority by its leaders for the imperialist attempts to bring Vietnam back into the system of colonial bondage began right after the proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

As early as the time of the Potsdam Conference of 1945 the US and British representatives agreed that for purposes of disarming Japanese troops the part of Indochina lying between the eighth and sixteenth parallels would be placed under British control while the part north of the sixteenth parallel—under US control. Before long, however, the USA delegated the job of disarming Japanese troops to Chiang Kaishek. As *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party* puts it, "in reality Chiang Kaishek was a puppet of the US imperialists who tried to put into effect their sinister designs—to destroy our Party, to eliminate Viet Minh and help internal reactio-

¹ *The Democratic Republic of Vietnam*, Moscow, 1963, p. 19 (in Russian).

naires to overthrow the people's government and install a puppet government which would be their obedient tool." ¹

Together with Chiang Kaishek's troops many members of Vietnam's bourgeois-nationalist parties who had emigrated to China prior to the revolution of 1945 returned to Vietnam. The Chiang Kaishek forces moved into Vietnam (on September 9 they entered Hanoi) and immediately set about disbanding self-defense detachments and replacing people's councils by bodies of local government composed of returning Vietnamese bourgeois-nationalists or local right-wingers rather than concentrating on the disarmament of Japanese units. Although not empowered to interfere in the domestic affairs of the DRV the Chiang Kaishek troops strategically garrisoned in North Vietnam gave every assistance to the local reactionaries who tried to hamper the democratic measures taken by the people's government. They thus became the mainstay of the counter-revolutionaries who were bent on destroying the people's democratic state and bringing the country back into the imperialist fold. The Chiang Kaishek command in Vietnam also attempted to put direct pressure on the leadership of the young republic.

The entry of Chiang Kaishek troops into the north of Vietnam placed a heavy burden on the shoulders of the country's working people. Chiang Kaishek soldiers like a swarm of locusts invading from the North penetrated everywhere, seized control over everything. The railways and roads leading to China were packed with trains and lorries carrying their booty. It has been estimated that a total of 250 million piastres' worth of property was taken out of Vietnam by Chiang Kaishek's troops. The invaders received an estimated 400 million piastres through the Indochina Bank. ²

The situation was just as serious in the South of the country. On September 6, 1945 the first contingent of British troops landed in Saigon under the Anglo-American agreement in Potsdam to disarm the Japanese troops stationed in Vietnam. In gross violation of the Republic's

¹ *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party*, Moscow, 1971, pp. 42-43 (in Russian).

² See: *The Recent History of Vietnam (1917-1965)*, Moscow, 1970, p. 225 (in Russian).

sovereignty representatives of the British command declared that they recognized neither the government of the DRV nor its local government bodies and demanded immediate disarmament of the self-defense units of the Vietnam Liberation Army. What is more, British aircraft and warships rushed to South Vietnam units of the French Expeditionary Corps which on the night of the 22nd of September attacked the organs of the people's power in Saigon. This marked the start of the heroic war of Resistance in South Vietnam.

In January 1946 Britain, fearing a rising tide of national liberation in its colonies and for this reason anxious to disengage itself from the quagmire of Indochina, handed over full control of the British-occupied parts of South Vietnam to France. The French lost no time in restoring the former colonial administration, setting up political organizations of the local bourgeoisie and feudal lords which favored reforms approved by France and which nurtured separatist ideas. The French colonialists, however, put their money on suppressing the newly-born democratic state by force of arms.

This policy pursued by the French imperialists was backed by the military and political leadership of the USA. Immediately after the end of World War II US imperialism assumed the role of guarantor and protector of the international system of exploitation and oppression. The subsequent actions of the USA in Indochina, its attitude to the DRV and to France's intentions to re-establish its colonial domination in Vietnam should be seen in this light.

The US long-range strategic plans to establish its influence in the Pacific area assigned a very special role to Indochina. Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia had never been in the sphere of influence of US capital. Here was a new area for US foreign policy at a time when the USA began exploring ways and means of penetrating Indochina. As early as August 22, 1945 a group of US experts from the Office of Strategic Services (strategic intelligence) arrived in Saigon on a fact-finding mission. The experts stated bluntly that the USA was prepared to uphold the DRV's independence in exchange for vital advantages for US business in Vietnam.

General Gallagher, who headed the Office of Strategic

Services during the war, made even more specific proposals to President Ho Chi Minh. General Gallagher said that US capital would look after the rebuilding and re-equipment of the country's railways, roads and airports provided they would be exploited by the Donovan monopoly group. The Republic's leaders turned down this "offer" of US help, rightly seeing it as an intention to impose upon the Vietnamese US neo-colonialism in place of French colonialism. Having failed in its attempt to penetrate Vietnam by negotiating with the Republic's government, the USA sided with the internal reactionaries who were working to strangle the young state in its cradle.

On February 28, 1946 Chiang Kaishek with US consent signed an agreement on replacing before March 31, 1946 Kuomintang forces in North Vietnam by French units to be moved in to disarm the Japanese troops. In fact, however, since the disarmament of the latter had by then been in effect complete, the agreement was the diplomatic key which enabled the French colonialists who had already intervened openly in the South to occupy North Vietnam as well. Ignoring the DRV government and running roughshod over its sovereignty and independence, the French ruling circles had "granted" Kuomintang China the right of free transit of goods across North Vietnam and into South China along with a "free zone" in Haiphong and substantial privileges to Chinese nationals resident in Vietnam.¹

By agreeing to the replacement of the flag of troops of occupation in North Vietnam the USA helped the French authorities to implement their plans to turn Vietnam back into a colony. In so doing Washington was guided by the sole desire to prevent the strengthening of the focus of revolution in South-East Asia and stem at all costs the rising tide of national liberation in the area.

The main problem facing the Communist Party of Indochina and the Viet Minh Front in the early days of the DRV was to secure the survival of revolutionary government. In the incredibly difficult conditions engineered by the reactionaries and made worse by the direct occupation of South Vietnam by French colonialists, the

¹ See: *The Recent History of Vietnam (1917-1965)*, p. 228.

Communist Party and Viet Minh Front put through a series of important measures to consolidate the national forces.

On November 25, 1945 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Indochina passed a decision on "The War of Resistance and Building the Homeland" which became a programme of action for the government of the DRV and mass organizations in the social, economic, state and foreign policy fields. The decision stressed that the main task was "to consolidate the people's power, to fight against the aggression of French colonialists, to eliminate internal reactionaries and to improve living standards". In a situation when the French expeditionary corps in the South was grabbing area after area the Central Committee emphasized that the main enemy was "the French aggressor-colonialists against whom we have to concentrate the fire of war."¹

A nation-wide grass-roots movement developed in support of the patriots fighting in the South. Committees in support for the embattled fellow countrymen in the South mushroomed up and down the country. Volunteer contingents formed in the North streamed down to the South, in the teeth of resistance and obstruction by the Chiang Kaishek troops of occupation, to join their compatriots fighting against the colonialists. At the same time the DRV government relying on the Viet Minh Front took measures to solve the more pressing social and economic problems and set up a state and administrative apparatus.

Within the first few months of the establishment of revolutionary government measures were carried out to eliminate the traces of the hunger of 1944-1945. It was decided to abolish all former taxes and cut by twenty-five per cent the land rent for the peasants and by twenty per cent the land tax (in areas which were the scene of recent natural disasters the land tax was abolished altogether). The land formerly owned by French colonialists was confiscated, as was the land in possession of traitors to the nation, and distributed among the landless peasants. A law on an eight-hour working day and protecting the interests of workers vis-à-vis their employers

¹ *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party*, pp. 43, 47.

was introduced. Unfair income-tax payments that had to be made by national industrialists and traders were abolished. Close attention was given to developing culture, education, public health and especially to an anti-illiteracy campaign. By the end of 1946 over two million people had been taught to read and write by the popular education teams. All this was a substantial contribution to strengthening the patriotic Viet Minh Front and the alliance between the working class and the peasantry.

Of great importance, too, for the growth of the sense of national identity of the Vietnamese were the universal, direct and free elections to the National Assembly, the first of their kind in Vietnamese history. The results of the election, held on January 6, 1946, and not only in areas controlled by the people's power but also illegally in areas under French occupation, showed that the overwhelming majority of the electorate voted for the Viet Minh candidates. The key posts in the state apparatus that emerged as a result of this election went to Viet Minh people although there were also representatives of the right-wing forces, who orientated themselves on the Chiang Kaishek troops, both in the National Assembly and in the government.

Another event of major importance for the establishment of an independent Vietnamese state was the inauguration on November 9, 1946 of the first constitution of the DRV which put a formal seal on the democratic rights and freedoms won by the people of Vietnam at the end of a long revolutionary struggle.

The consolidation of the nation's progressive forces, the development of a united front remained the main road for the Vietnamese revolution in its advance. An important milestone was the formation in May 1946 of another mass organization—the Lien Viet Front which was a broadbased alliance of patriotic organizations, political parties, and individual groups and citizens. Lien Viet also incorporated organizations of the Viet Minh Front which played the leading role in the new front while retaining their structure. With the formation of the Lien Viet Front all of Vietnam's internal forces had been consolidated on a national basis to carry on the struggle against the intrigues of the imperialists seeking to drag Vietnam back into colonial bondage.

Mobilizing the popular masses for armed resistance to the colonialists in the South and strengthening national unity, the Communist Party was at the same time exploiting the rival interests of different imperialist groupings scrambling to lay their hands on Vietnam. The Party was doing so to keep the country independent. The General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Le Duan, described the Party's policy in 1945-1946 in these terms: "To defend revolutionary gains, and ensure the survival of people's power which was only a few months old at the time our Party, firmly relying on national unity, was seeking a temporary armistice with Chiang Kaishek in order to free its hands for a fight against the French colonialists. At other times the Party sought a temporary accommodation with France in order to expel Chiang Kaishek's hordes as soon as possible, to shake off the oppression of their reactionary lackeys and to use the time thus gained to strengthen its forces in preparation for a nation-wide war of Resistance against the French. The Party was fully aware that it was impossible in the circumstances to avoid this policy."¹

The provocative accord reached by Chiang Kaishek and the French authorities on February 28, 1946 put the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in an extremely delicate position. The Communist Party, as it considered the alignment of forces at the time, saw the only way out of the situation in reasonable compromise, in making sensible concessions in order to gain time to prepare for a decisive struggle against the colonialists. The enlarged meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam held on March 5, 1946 decided to achieve peace with France, to get ready forces and isolate the enemy. On March 6, 1946 a preliminary agreement was signed between Vietnam and France in the presence of British, American and Chinese (Kuomintang) observers, along with a protocol annexed to it. The agreement stated that "the government of France recognizes the Republic of Vietnam as a free state with its own parliament, its own army and its own finances". At the same time the DRV was compelled to enter "an Indochina Federation

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1965-1970)*, Moscow, 1971, p. 177 (in Russian).

and the French Union". On the future of South Vietnam the agreement stated that "the government of France undertakes to endorse the decision made by the population in a referendum".

The DRV agreed to the temporary presence of French troops in North Vietnam to replace the Chinese forces there. The protocol annexed to the agreement specified that the Chinese troops would be replaced by mixed Franco-Vietnamese contingents (10,000 men from the DRV and 15,000 men from France) under a supreme French command with the participation of Vietnamese representatives. The French garrisons would be gradually replaced by Vietnamese ones.¹

The agreement took effect immediately and the following day, on March 7, 1946 the French landed their first troops in Haiphong.

The preliminary agreement of March 6, 1946 was the product of a political compromise. Evaluating it Vo Nguyen Giap the then Minister of the Interior of the DRV, addressing a public rally in Hanoi a few days after the agreement's signature pointed out that the concessions made by the Vietnamese side had been compelled by a pressing necessity, specifically by the fact that "the USA and Britain have sided with France . . . and the French would have invaded anyway. China had concluded a treaty with France allowing French troops to replace the Chinese forces in Vietnam."

However, the main point, Vo Nguyen Giap emphasized, was the fact that "France recognizes the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a free state. Freedom is not autonomy, it is more than autonomy but it is not yet independence. Having won freedom we shall work for independence, complete independence".²

The attitude of the DRV government to the preliminary agreement was made public on March 13, 1946 by President Ho Chi Minh in his appeal to the people of Vietnam and to the governments and peoples of the world. Ho Chi Minh stressed that his government was "determined to abide by the agreement. But in order to come to friendly terms between both peoples, the French Gov-

¹ See: Ph. Devillers, *Histoire du Viet-Nam de 1940 à 1952*, Paris, 1952, pp. 225-226.

² Ph. Devillers, *op. cit.*, pp. 228, 229.

ernment must also abide by it". The appeal said that the French side was violating the commitments it had undertaken, was attacking Vietnamese troops and, worst of all, was procrastinating the opening of official negotiations in Paris as provided for by the preliminary agreement. "I earnestly call on the peoples and Governments the world over, the French people, in particular, to support our just cause so that the French side should correctly implement the preliminary Agreement in order to reach a mutual good feeling between the two peoples, and safeguard world peace,"¹ wrote Ho Chi Minh in conclusion.

The insistent demand of the DRV government that France abide by the preliminary agreement and stop dragging her feet over the opening of official negotiations which were to confirm Vietnam's independence, the support for this demand on the part of the progressive world public threatened to foil imperialist designs to enslave Vietnam. It was in this situation that the colonialists resorted to maneuvering and carried out a series of political and military moves which they hoped would enable them to give a semblance of legality to the re-establishment of their actual domination of Indochina.

While continuing to evade an answer to the question when France would be ready to open official negotiations with the DRV, the French ruling circles were making active preparations for overthrowing the people's power in Vietnam. The DRV government learnt about the following order issued by the commander-in-chief of the French Expeditionary Corps, General Leclerc, in the spring of 1946 (the authenticity of this document was subsequently confirmed by an official representative of the French government): "This directive is designed to inform the garrisons of French troops about measures they should never lose sight of... The commander of each garrison shall work out a security plan and above all an action plan ensuring freedom of movement in the city... This plan shall be immediately backed up by measures increasingly converting the theater of military operations into an arena for a coup d'etat. . . It is essential to collect complete information about the local leaders of the

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, pp. 59, 61.

Annamite organizations and about their habits (where they spend the night etc.)... Special working groups should be set up for secret work (like in Cochin China) whose duty it would be to neutralize secretly the leaders of these organizations. . ."¹

At the same time the French authorities sought to set up in the occupied part of South Vietnam a government which would serve as a political base for the restoration of the old order in Vietnam.

In the spring of 1946 the feudal-comprador elements in the French-occupied part of South Vietnam formed a provisional government of the separate Republic of Cochin China. This move constituted the political result of the export of counter-revolution by the imperialists. At the same time a series of measures were taken to put military pressure on the DRV and to dismember Vietnam further. Units of the French Expeditionary Corps seized the Thai Ngyuen plateau in Central Vietnam. It was promptly announced that an autonomous Moi state had been formed—the Moi were a national minority inhabiting the Central Highlands. In the north-west of the country moves were stepped up to form yet another separatist state—an autonomous Thai state. The colonialists captured the town of Dong Dang on the Chinese border and placed under their full control the main railway line running across North Vietnam. Later they occupied the coastal plains of North Vietnam.

The people's government thus found itself encircled. The people of Vietnam now had to fight not only for their independence but also to restore the country's unity and territorial integrity. Representatives of the DRV government conducted a diplomatic battle from these positions at the Franco-Vietnamese negotiations which opened on April 17, 1946 in Dalat, in line with the preliminary agreement of March 6, 1946. The Vietnamese delegates proposed to discuss the question of Cochin China (South Vietnam). The French side evaded that. The diametrically opposite attitudes of the two governments to the key issue of the negotiations became apparent. To the French the status of the DRV as a free state was little more than a form of colonial autonomy while the Indo-

¹ Fritz Jensen. *Erlebtes Vietnam*, Vienna, 1955, p. 95.

china Federation was to them the same general-governorship it had been for decades. The Vietnamese delegation rejected this approach, showing the fair and just character of its demands for freedom and independence. The negotiations were dead-locked with the two sides agreeing to resume them in Paris after the formation of a new French cabinet.

President Ho Chi Minh before his departure for Paris for negotiations with the French government in May 1946 spoke in these unequivocal terms about the unity of Vietnam: "Our compatriots in South Vietnam are part of the Vietnamese people. Rivers may run dry and mountains may crumble but this truth will remain unshakable. I call upon you to come together in unity. A human hand has five fingers, some are longer than others but all of them belong to the same hand, they are a single family. Among the several million people of our country there are different people but all of us are descendants of our common ancestors."¹ This position of the Vietnamese remained unchanged for three decades of struggle until the full restoration of the country's unity in 1976.

On July 6, 1946 negotiations between the DRV and France resumed in Fontainebleau. The Vietnamese delegates, basing themselves on the preliminary agreement of March 6, 1946 which was signed by official French representatives, pressed for a recognition of Vietnam's independence and the restoration of its unity within the French Union, of its sovereignty in all domestic and foreign policy matters. The Vietnamese delegation looked upon the Indochina Federation as a vehicle for coordinating the interests and economic and cultural cooperation between Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It attached special importance to a just settlement of the South Vietnam question in the interests of the Vietnamese. Having underlined that the outcome of the negotiations would depend on whether Vietnam's unity would be restored or not, the chief DRV delegate, Dung Bach Mai, stated at the plenary session on July 26: "As long as Cochin China remains separated from Vietnam in one form or another there can be no agreement between France and Vietnam.

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Articles and Speeches*, Moscow, 1959, p. 208 (in Russian)

Everything hinges on the Cochin China question: Franco-Vietnamese friendship, peace in Vietnam, and the future of our relations. It is essential to settle this problem as soon as possible."

The French side insisted on conditions which, if accepted, would result in a dismemberment of Vietnam and in its losing sovereignty in the fields of finance, armed forces and foreign policy, in other words, in Vietnam's giving up its independence and its conversion into a colony of a new type of which the Autonomous Republic of Cochin China in South Vietnam was the prototype. The puppet government in the South was directed by the French Admiral D'Argenlieu and its Consultative Assembly was composed of 28 Vietnamese and 14 French representatives.

As the talks continued it was increasingly clear that the French representatives had no interest in a fair settlement of the problem. While refusing to respond to the reasonable proposals made by the DRV, they were seeking to spread their control over the whole of Vietnam. Well before the Fontainebleau talks the French Expeditionary Corps in Vietnam had received a secret order to prepare for occupying the whole of North Vietnam. To bring pressure to bear on the DRV and demonstrate the presence in Indochina of forces willing to accept the terms offered by the imperialists a conference was convened in Dalat on August the 1st attended by representatives of the puppet forces of Laos, Cambodia, the Autonomous Republic of Cochin China and the Autonomous Moi state to discuss the proposed Indochina Federation. It was only after a vigorous protest by the chief Vietnamese negotiator at Fontainebleau against this political provocation which made any continuation of the Franco-Vietnamese talks senseless, that the conference was abandoned.

In an effort to forestall the development of events unfavorable to the people of Vietnam the Vietnamese negotiators at Fontainebleau proposed postponing the adoption of key decisions and signing an interim instrument that would be acceptable to both sides. On September 14, 1946 President Ho Chi Minh and French Minister for Overseas Territories M. Moutet signed a temporary convention (Modus Vivendi) which took effect on October 30, 1946. The Modus Vivendi provided for a resumption of the talks "as soon as possible and not later than Janu-

ary 1947" and for the maintenance of status quo in Vietnam in the meantime. Both governments undertook to release prisoners-of-war and political prisoners, "to cease hostile actions on a reciprocal basis in Cochin China and in the South of Annama", to guarantee strict adherence to the convention. France agreed to the establishment of the DRV's consulates in neighboring countries.¹

The Modus Vivendi contained general remarks on the holding of a referendum in South Vietnam on the future status of this part of the country without specifying any terms or timetable for the referendum. The French colonialists were reluctant to allow a referendum whose outcome would surely spell disaster for them and for the "government" of the Autonomous Republic of Cochin China. Indeed when the armistice was arranged it turned out that three-quarters of South Vietnam was still controlled by the patriotic forces and the DRV maintained its local government structure in more than a thousand villages out of a total of 1,250.

Upon his return to Vietnam President Ho Chi Minh reported on his four-month stay in France. Assessing the outcome of the Fontainebleau talks he stated that "due to the present situation in France" the problems of Vietnam's independence and unity "have not yet been settled. We have to wait."²

At the same time he said that his trip to Paris had been worthwhile since "we drew greater attention from the French government and people and made them understand the question of Viet Nam better than before. We also drew the attention of the world and made it understand the question of Viet Nam better than before."³

The DRV government had never entertained any illusions about what the French imperialists were up to. At the same time, always giving the highest priority to upholding the people's revolutionary gains and doing everything in its power to create favorable conditions for strengthening the people's regime, the government gained time in an effort to stave off the outbreak of war. Describing the DRV government's policy in the first sixteen months of independence, Ho Chi Minh stated this in his

¹ See: *The Recent History of Vietnam (1917-1965)*, p. 232.

² Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, p. 72.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

political report to the Second National Congress of the Vietnam Workers' Party on February 11, 1951: "We needed peace to build our country, and therefore we made concessions to maintain peace. Although the French colonialists broke their word and unleashed war, nearly one year of temporary peace gave us time to build up our basic forces."¹

From the Fighting in Hanoi to the Victory in Viet Bac

The autumn of 1946 saw constant military provocations by the French Expeditionary Corps in North Vietnam in contravention of the Modus Vivendi. Violence reached its ugliest form on November 23, 1946 when units of the Expeditionary Corps after a savage bombardment of Haiphong, which took a toll of twenty thousand civilian lives, captured North Vietnam's second largest city. Thus the French took the first step towards implementing Admiral D'Argenlieu's plan to settle the Vietnam problem militarily. Similar provocations were staged in Lang Son and Nam Dinh.

A month later on December 19, 1946 French troops attacked the Hanoi power station and a number of government buildings on the pretext that shots had allegedly been fired from them and in an illegal move proceeded to disarm Vietnamese self-defense units.

President Ho Chi Minh in his appeal to the nation to rise to a war of resistance on December 20, 1946 said in part: "As we desired peace we made concessions. But the more we made concessions, the further the French colonialists went because they are resolved to invade our country once again.

No! We would sooner sacrifice all than lose our country. We are determined not to be enslaved.

Compatriots! Rise up!"²

And so the war of Resistance against the French colonialists began.

Recalling the first weeks of the war General Vo Nguyen Giap wrote later: "Ill equipped and lacking combat experience our people's armed forces in cooperation with

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, p. 249.

² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

civilian volunteers in towns repelled enemy attacks in unequal engagements with grim determination and self-sacrifice, thereby wearing the enemy troops down, paralyzing them and inflicting heavy losses on them."

The spirited resistance offered by the armed detachments of workers and other inhabitants of Hanoi and other cities enabled the defenders to win time in order to evacuate to the jungle everything that could be dismantled and taken out of the cities and into the resistance centers set up in mountainous and thickly-forested areas. When the order to retreat from Hanoi was issued in March 1947 the city's workers who formed the core of its defenders transported to the jungle thousands of tons of assorted cargos: machinery, tools, and raw materials. Most of these they carried on their own backs. They organized strike units which made their way into French-occupied towns by night to collect machines and spare parts which had survived the bombing of factories and spirited them across to the jungle. In the coastal areas of Central Vietnam workers removed engines, generators and other useful components from Japanese ships sunk during World War II. All this eventually landed in the jungle at the end of an incredibly difficult journey, at the price of much human sacrifice and loss of life. Workshops were set up deep in the jungle to produce weapons and goods vital to the maintenance of normal economic activity in the liberated areas.

In the summer of 1945 the first hand-grenade plant was set up in the mountainous areas of North Vietnam. When the government took to the jungle arms factories were set up in each of the fourteen military zones into which the country had been divided in the opening weeks of the war of Resistance.

While the battle for the cities raged on the government bodies of the DRV were restructured to fit wartime conditions. The administrative bodies were merged with Resistance committees to form military-executive councils which operated up and down the country and even, underground, in French-occupied areas. The central organs of power were headquartered in the depths of the jungle and dispersed: ministries were located twenty to fifty kilometers apart. At the end of March 1947 a decision was taken to form a regular army to defend the home-

land to be backed up by auxiliary armed forces composed of guerrilla and local-defense units which participated in production as well as in the fighting.

It was then, in the first few weeks of the war of Resistance, that the colonialists' design to destroy the people's power of Vietnam at one stroke was frustrated. And although by mid-1947 the invaders had gained control of the strategically important zones of North Vietnam (the strip stretching along the Chinese border, the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong, Nam Dinh and other major centers, as well as a number of sizable areas in South and Central Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam lived on and continued to offer a stout resistance.

By 1947 its armed forces were 106,000 officers and men. The auxiliary and self-defense units numbered several hundred thousand men. Perhaps the most graphic evidence of the Vietnamese people's faith in their ultimate victory in those difficult first months of the Resistance and the best index of the growing prestige and authority of their vanguard, the Communist Party of Indochina, was its rapidly growing membership. From twenty thousand members in 1946 it jumped to fifty thousand the following year.¹

As well as rousing the people to a war of resistance against the colonialists the DRV government at the same time explored the possibility of settling the troubled Franco-Vietnamese relations by political means. This policy was clearly formulated by Ho Chi Minh in the Message to the Vietnamese People, the French People and the Peoples of the Allied Nations on December 21, 1946.

The DRV President emphasized that the Vietnamese people had this war thrown upon them by the French colonialists. In the circumstances the Vietnamese would fight on until their homeland was free again; they had no other option. At the same time Ho Chi Minh addressing himself to the French people was careful to emphasize that the Vietnamese "have affection for you and sincerely want to co-operate with you within the framework of the French Union". In an appeal to the peoples of the allied nations Ho Chi Minh urged them "to intervene and help to end the war in Vietnam".²

¹ See: *The Recent History of Vietnam (1917-1965)*, p. 238.

² Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, pp. 84-85.

The DRV President called upon the French government to cease hostilities, appoint an armistice commission, release all POWs and political prisoners without delay, not to send fresh contingents to Vietnam and to arrange a meeting between Minister Moutet and himself to hammer out a detailed plan based on the preliminary agreement of March 6, 1946, for an eventual accord between the two countries.¹

Paris made no response to Ho Chi Minh's appeal. A few months later, in the spring of 1947, Ho Chi Minh in a conversation with newsmen said that between December 19, 1946 and early March 1947 he approached the French authorities on eight occasions in a bid to stop the war.

The attitude of the French authorities to the DRV proposals was summed up well in the following "terms" for an armistice the French government representative Paul Mus put to President Ho Chi Minh at the start of 1947:

- disarmament of the Vietnamese Army;
- freedom of movement for French units all over Vietnam;
- the extradition of all French and foreign soldiers who have defected to the Resistance;
- the release of French nationals and Vietnamese collaborationists in DRV captivity.

Needless to say, the DRV government rejected this ultimatum.

By sabotaging the DRV's constructive proposals for an armistice and the resumption of talks the colonialists hoped to use various bourgeois and feudal nationalist groupings in their political struggle against the Republic. Forces hostile to the DRV set up in Hanoi a "Provisional Administrative Committee". Its formation "coincided" with the arrival of the French High Commissioner Bollaert in North Vietnam. In Trung Bo, Central Vietnam, the former courtiers of Emperor Bao Dai, who was deposed in 1945, joined in the political struggle against the Republic by setting up "the Provisional Administrative Committee of Annam". In the South the "separatists" and "autonomists" stepped up their efforts to hammer together an "autonomous Cochin China". The formation of yet another in a long series of puppet gov-

¹ Ibid., pp. 87-89.

ernments of Cochin China was announced amid noisy publicity on October 1, 1947.

The colonialists pinned rather special hopes on Bao Dai seeing him as a convenient figurehead who could serve as a rallying point for a wide spectrum of rival nationalist and pro-Western groupings among the Vietnamese bourgeoisie and landowners against the Ho Chi Minh government. The French High Commissioner Bollaert declared his readiness to negotiate with Bao Dai emphasizing the need to maintain the French military presence in Indochina.

Parallel with efforts to set up a political base for a neo-colonialist order the colonialists escalated the hostilities in Vietnam. The command of the French Expeditionary Corps planned to destroy the principal resistance bases of the Vietnamese in the jungle and mountains of Viet Bac in the North. The French command committed twelve thousand of its ground troops plus three airborne units which were dropped on October 7, 1947 near Bac Kan and the villages of Cho Don and Che Moi. At first the DRV Army was pushed back by the attacking French troops. But then they counter-attacked. General Vo Nguyen Giap, one of the architects of that victorious battle, recalled later: "As a result of the combat operations mounted by our regular army and the limited local engagements by our regional forces, guerrilla and volunteer units they forced on the enemy wherever he was moving, in close cooperation with the other fronts the people of Viet Bac and their regular armed forces frustrated the French offensive."¹ The collapse of the offensive in Viet Bac meant the collapse of the imperialist plans for a blitzkrieg in Vietnam. The DRV and its army demonstrated their ability to successfully repel offensive enemy operations using for the purpose both regular troops and guerrilla warfare behind the lines of the attacking French Expeditionary Corps. This compelled the French command to give up active operations against the Resistance bases in the central areas. As Vo Nguyen Giap recalled later, after the battle of Viet Bac, "military fortunes gradually

¹ Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Arming of the Revolutionary Masses and the Building of a People's Army*, Hanoi, 1975, pp. 124-22 (in Russian).

began to favor us. The enemy was forced to give up his plans of a lightning capture of territory and instead had to prepare for a long war, to strengthen his logistics in North, Central and South Vietnam" trying at the same time "to fight the Vietnamese using Vietnamese as a cat's paw".¹

While adopting the tactic of setting up strongholds in the strategically important populated centers and mounting punitive expeditions in "trouble" areas the French authorities kept up their attempts to neutralize the DRV government politically, to "erode" the popular support it commanded throughout the country. While carrying on with their policy of dismembering Vietnam the colonialists announced in March 1948 the formation of a Thai state in the mountains of North Vietnam and later in May of the same year, the formation of a Nung state. The French special services succeeded in splitting the Vietnamese believers, especially the Catholics, having antagonized the more backward of them against the people's power.

In May 1948 "a provisional central government" was formed in Saigon under General Nguyen Van Xuan. The colonialists carried on with their attempts of 1947 to form a state in Vietnam headed by the deposed Emperor Bao Dai. However, the political game of Paris's emissaries with Bao Dai was complicated by the interference of the USA which sought to have "its own man" in Vietnam. Washington assured Bao Dai of its support advising him to "show firmness" in his negotiations with the French. For his part, Bao Dai in an attempt to win over the bourgeois-nationalist forces insisted on Paris recognizing the independence of Vietnam at least verbally.

The men in Paris had every reason to fear that an independent Vietnam would open the door to US influence in Indochina. That is why, the bargaining with Bao Dai lasted as long as it did, two years. Finally, in March 1949 an agreement was signed between Bao Dai and President Vincent Auriol of France recognizing "Vietnam's independence within the French Union". The independence granted by the mother country remained an independ-

¹ Ibid., p. 122.

ence on paper since Vietnam had no right to conduct a foreign policy of its own.

France on the other hand had the right to build military bases and station garrisons in Vietnam. The French military had full freedom of movement all over Bao Dai's "state". Bao Dai was allowed to have a "national army", i. e. armed units which as the colonialists planned were supposed to fight to preserve the interests of French capital in Indochina, on the one hand, and to demonstrate the anti-Communism of the "ordinary Vietnamese", on the other. The formation of such an army was Bao Dai's main task and the main concern of the French colonialists. By the end of 1949 the "national army" was 25 thousand strong. Most of its officers were French. The agreement between Bao Dai and Auriol converted Vietnam into a new-style French colony.

Characterizing the actions of the French imperialists in Vietnam at the start of the war of Resistance President Ho Chi Minh wrote: "They have spent for military expenses scores of millions of piastres daily. They hoped that with the use of their overwhelming forces and lightning strategy they could within two or three months occupy our country. Moreover, they hired a clique of stooges aimed at undermining our resistance and dividing our compatriots. But both their military and political plots were brought to utter failure."¹

After the victory in Viet Bac the DRV government decided to step up guerrilla warfare in the enemy-occupied areas in order to foil the military plans of the French colonialists and forestall the consolidation of the reactionary bourgeois-nationalist forces. In preparing the army and the people for a prolonged war of Resistance the Party pointed out that this orientation would enable the DRV to deploy its forces, gain experience and wear the enemy down by country-wide guerrilla warfare before mounting a general counter-offensive.²

During 1948 the DRV government and mass public organizations mobilized the army and the people for a patriotic emulation drive in every area of the country's military, economic, political, social and cultural life

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, p. 419.

² *Ibid.*, p. 420.

in order to get on with the job of peaceful construction in the liberated areas simultaneous with combat operations against the colonialists. In 1948-1949 the Resistance forces won a series of victories over the troops of occupation. In particular, they foiled the offensive of the French Expeditionary Corps to gain full control over the strategic triangle Hanoi-Son tai-Hoa Binh. They struck at the enemy's strongholds in the suburbs of Hanoi, at Thai Nguyen, Nam Dinh and elsewhere. Between 1949 and early 1950 the French Expeditionary Corps lost over ten thousand in killed. More than two hundred enemy outposts were destroyed and over 42.5 thousand square kilometers of territory in the mountainous regions were liberated.¹

The Vietnamese Communists have always regarded their struggle for their country's independence as a component part of the world revolutionary process. President Ho Chi Minh repeatedly emphasized that the success of the August revolution was connected with the victories of the Soviet Army which defeated nazi Germany and militarist Japan. An ardent patriot and a loyal son of his people, Ho Chi Minh educated the Communists and all working people of Vietnam in the spirit of proletarian internationalism and solidarity with the fighters for the freedom and happiness of peoples everywhere. He taught the Party and all Vietnamese revolutionaries to maintain close contacts between their struggle and the international working class, and national liberation movements, and the common cause of all progressive peace-loving forces the world over.

The struggle for a durable peace which got under way in the postwar period thanks to the efforts of the USSR and the newly-emerged countries of people's democracy created conditions favorable for a political settlement of the Vietnam problem. For their part, the people of Vietnam, and the government of the DRV in opposing the attempts of the French monopolies to stage a new colonial blood bath and in fighting for independence, contributed actively to the incipient movement in all continents of broad popular masses for peace, for stepping up

¹ *Pages d'histoire (1945-1954)*, Hanoi, 1965, p. 13.

the decolonialization process which developed vigorously after the end of World War II.

An important international factor which strengthened Vietnam's position in its struggle was the genuinely class-oriented, internationalist policy followed by the CPSU and other Communist and Workers' parties, which opposed consistently and without compromise the imperialist policies of aggression and war. The Soviet people hailed the victorious revolution in Vietnam thereby giving considerable moral support to the people of Vietnam at the start of a new period of their history.

When in 1945 the imperialists began maneuvering around the decisions of the Potsdam Conference by "delegating" the job of disarming the surrendered Japanese forces in Indochina to Chiang Kaishek and "covering" the invasion of Vietnam by the French Expeditionary Corps, the Soviet Union strongly opposed these moves and emphasized that the people of Vietnam were fighting for their freedom and independence, that this right had been recognized by the Teheran, Yalta and San Francisco conferences and that the troops of occupation which had been moved into Indochina for a specific purpose had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of the countries in this part of the world.¹ This was the Soviet Union's concrete contribution to the political struggle of the young people's state in Vietnam, and this contribution was highly appreciated in the DRV.

In stepping up armed struggle on all the fronts, in organizing normal economic, political and social life in liberated areas the Vietnamese Communists took advantage of the favorable changes that had occurred in the international situation for intensifying the national liberation movement everywhere, including Indochina. By the early 1950s the USSR and other socialist countries had scored decisive success in the postwar rehabilitation and economic development at a time when the capitalist world was experiencing signs of an imminent economic crisis. The national liberation movement was spreading across South-East Asia and Africa in wide waves. In close proximity of Vietnam the People's Libera-

¹ See: M. P. Isayev, A. S. Chernyshev, *Soviet-Vietnamese Relations*, Moscow, 1975, p. 83 (in Russian).

tion Army of China was mopping up Chiang Kaishek's forces and the patriotic organizations of Laos and Cambodia were gaining strength.

France was passing through a period of domestic and foreign policy difficulties. Its working people were associating their struggle for better living standards with an active pressure for ending the war in Indochina. The French Communists were telling the people of France the truth about Vietnam and the ideals the Vietnamese patriots were fighting for. The attitude of the ordinary workers of Paris and Lyons, Marseilles and Bordeaux on the Vietnam question was clearly set out in the message of greetings Jacques Duclos sent to President Ho Chi Minh on the occasion of the first anniversary of the founding of the DRV. On behalf of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party Duclos wrote: "The people of France, who have been struggling against foreign occupation fully share and support the struggle of the Vietnamese people for their freedom and independence. They are protesting against the continuing criminal war against the people of Vietnam, a war for aims which contradict the interests of France... We are certain that the common struggle of our two peoples will put an end to this criminal war and impose a peace settlement and assure the independence of Vietnam and the establishment of friendly political, economic and cultural relations between France and Vietnam corresponding to the interests of our two peoples."¹

The French communist deputies and communist ministers consistently pressed for meeting the national interests and aspirations of the Vietnamese. At the very start of the colonial war on January 14, 1947, Marcel Cachin, the eldest member of the National Assembly, opening the year's first session called for a peaceful settlement of the Indochina conflict. The sharp opposition of the communist ministers to the colonial gamble was one of the reasons for their removal from the Cabinet under the pretext of "violating ministerial solidarity" in May, 1947. After this the struggle against the war in Indochina was carried on by communist deputies of the National Assembly.

¹ *Cahiers du communisme*, 1952, No. 4, p. 435.

In August 1949 the dockers of Dunkirk appealed to all port workers in France to stop loading ships carrying arms for the war in Indochina. The French railwaymen struck in protest against the dirty war. The workers of arms and ammunition factories refused to produce weapons, equipment and war supplies for the war their country was waging in the jungle of a far-off land. The anti-war sentiments began to percolate through to the rank and file of the French army. More and more fresh recruits in the Expeditionary Corps refused to go to Indochina.

Despite the fact that by the end of 1949 all the major centers in North, Central and South Vietnam remained in French hands, and that the Bao Dai's puppet Vietnam state had managed by 1950 to put together an army 122 thousand strong, which represented half the armed strength under the French command in Indochina, the armed forces of the DRV demonstrated that they were capable of dealing telling blows at the combined forces of foreign troops of occupation and local counter-revolutionaries, capable of launching active offensive operations in areas of their choice. Gradually the operational and tactical initiative was passing to the Resistance forces.

Between 1948 and 1950 the DRV succeeded in overcoming serious difficulties both in the military and economic fields. Step by step economic activity in liberated areas stabilized. The government encouraged the working people to use every internal resource to keep the army in the field supplied with everything necessary, above all with food. A movement was started and quickly spread for every peasant family to save rice for the army (the movement that came to be known as "a bowl of rice for the front"). On the whole the production of unhulled rice in North Vietnam reached in 1950 the annual average level of 1940-1944.¹

From 1947 on in a number of liberated areas the first groups of labor mutual assistance began to be set up. These were the forerunners of the cooperative movement among the Vietnamese peasantry. By the start of 1950

¹ Pages d'histoire (1945-1954), p. 13.

there were 27.2 thousand groups of labour mutual assistance and 1,562 agricultural cooperatives.¹

The factories operating in the jungle produced weapons, agricultural equipment and essential consumer goods. Iron and steel were smelted from ore supplied from state-owned mines and from scrap metal. The engines removed from US, French and Japanese-made trucks and ships were used to provide mechanical drive. Vietnamese scientists and technicians developed new ways of producing necessary products from local raw materials which replaced those that had been formerly imported. It was in these years of struggle that the names of the engineer Chang Dai Nghi, one of the leading managers of the republic's incipient war industry, surgeons Pham Ngoc Thach and Ho Dac Di who performed difficult operations in their jungle hospitals and the names of many other talented inventors, doctors, etc. became known to every Vietnamese. They were devoting their talents and intelligence to the sacred cause of their homeland's liberation.

In the early 1950s the DRV was producing its own textiles, sugar, paper, medical supplies, glassware and even fountain pens. In 1950 there were 36 state-owned enterprises with a total work force over 4 thousand.

One of the greatest achievements of the Communist Party and the people's power in Vietnam was the education of a new man, an ardent patriot totally committed to the cause of his homeland's liberation. The legendary years of the Resistance war were marked by thousands of exploits performed by heroes whose efforts on the battle fronts and in the rear provided an example to follow for the rest of the people in selfless service for the achievement of the supreme objective—freedom and independence.

The Road to the Victory at Dien Bien Phu

The early 1950s were marked by intensified international support for the struggle of Vietnamese people and by increased prestige of the Ho Chi

¹ See: *The Recent History of Vietnam (1917-1965)*, pp. 249-251.

Minh government on the world scene. *Pravda* wrote at the time: "The moral support of the democratic forces throughout the world for the Vietnamese people inspires them to further struggle against foreign invaders, for the freedom and independence of their homeland."¹

The powerful voice of protest against the war in Vietnam was heard at the World Congress for Peace in Paris and Prague, at the Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions and at the World Peace Conference in Moscow in 1949 and at International Youth Festivals.

At the start of 1950 in response to the DRV President's appeal to open diplomatic relations with all countries on the basis of equality and mutual respect the Soviet Union and other socialist countries decided to establish such relations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and DRV, apart from the tremendous moral and political impact on the development of the massive international movement in support of Vietnam, had a considerable practical significance as it enhanced the prestige of the DRV government and increased the isolation of Bao Dai's state of Vietnam which relying on imperialist support was leaning over backwards to speak for the people of Vietnam. As *Pravda* wrote in those days, "the puppet government of Bao Dai is nothing but representing no one except a handful of reactionaries."²

Summing up in 1950 the achievements of Democratic Vietnam over five years of its existence President Ho Chi Minh emphasized the importance of this foreign policy development: "As far as we are concerned, the war of resistance waged these last few years has won Viet Nam the greatest victory in her history: the two biggest nations in the world, the Soviet Union and People's China, and the new democracies, have recognised the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam as a country standing on an equal footing in the great family of democratic countries of the world. This means to say that we stand definitely on the side of the democratic camp and the eight hundred million people fighting against imperialism.

¹ *Pravda*, September 7, 1949.

² *Pravda*, January 31, 1950.

Surely, these political successes will pave the way for future military victories."¹

Relying on the successes achieved in 1948-1949 on the fronts of armed and political struggle the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Indochina adopted in September 1950 a decision to step up combat operations in the area along the Chinese border in order to break the ring of blockade and reach the border with the People's Republic of China.

In the night of September 16, 1950 units of the Vietnam People's Army launched their attack on the strongholds of the French Expeditionary Corps. After six weeks of fierce fighting the French troops had to retreat from the border areas having lost 8,000 of their men in prisoners alone. All fortifications the French colonialists had built along the Vietnam-China border were captured by the Vietnam People's Army. The border areas were cleared of enemy troops, the encirclement was broken, Gao Bang, Lang Son, Lao Kay, Thai Nguyen, Hoa Binh and other important populated centers in other parts of the country were now under the control of the people's power. The liberated areas expanded by another 4,500 square kilometers with a population of 350,000 as a result of this victory.²

Evaluating the significance of the victory on the Vietnam-China border General Giap wrote later: "The war of Resistance developed from a *guerrilla-type* war into a *big war*".

At this point we should note one major strategic weakness of the French Expeditionary Corps which was revealed in 1950 as a result of the offensive operation by the Vietnam People's Army. The 120 thousand French troops and foreign mercenaries together with 130 thousand men of the puppet army had to man garrisons in 50 towns and cities, hold 28 military sectors, 102 sub-sectors and 1,480 strongholds: 500 in the north, 380 in the center and 600 in the south of the country. Diffused and scattered in this way the troops of occupation were quite incapable of meaningful offensive operations. In order to launch such operations the French command

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, p. 213.

² *Pages d'histoire (1945-1954)*, p. 213.

had to concentrate forces in the desired sectors. But then it lost control over areas it once held and guerrillas or People's Army regulars just moved in without opposition.

Changes in the international situation and within the country insistently demanded a further strengthening of the Party leadership in every area of the Republic's life to step up the war of Resistance to bring it to a victorious conclusion as soon as possible.

The Second Congress of the Party held in February 1951 discussed the tasks of the Vietnamese revolution and the war of Resistance. The Congress developed and endorsed the general line of the revolution. The political report made by Ho Chi Minh as well as the report "On the Vietnamese Revolution" made by Truong Tinh analyzed the situation in the country and on the world scene, described the character of the forces opposing the liberation movement of the Vietnamese, emphasized the significance of the Party leadership in the national popular-democratic revolution whose immediate object was to defeat the aggression of French imperialists and internal feudal forces, those puppets of imperialism. The report "On the Vietnamese Revolution" made the fundamental conclusion on the future trend of the revolutionary process in Vietnam and on the transition from the popular-democratic revolution to socialist revolution. "Under the leadership of the working class this revolution of which the working people are the principal force will not only resolve anti-imperialist and anti-feudal tasks but will also promote the vigorous development of the popular democratic system, will sow the seeds of socialism and create conditions for an advance to it. *This revolution after completing bourgeois democratic tasks will mature into a socialist revolution...*"¹

The Congress adopted important decisions on the building and expansion of Party membership, on strengthening the organs of power, on building up the army, strengthening the national unity front. It also adopted major decisions on economic and financial matters. The Party programme adopted by the Congress set the tasks of ex-

¹ *Documents of the Second Party Congress*, Hanoi, 1965, p. 101 (in Vietnamese).

PELLING imperialist aggressors from the country, achieving genuine national unity, eliminating feudal and semi-feudal survivals, and turning the land over to those who tilled it, i.e. land reform.

The Congress gave an all-round assessment of the potentialities of the Vietnamese people for expelling the foreign invaders from the country. The political report to the Congress gave a thorough analysis of the long-term war of Resistance and its consecutive stages, and order of priorities. This was a timely move since the successes scored by the People's Army on the battlefield in 1950 stimulated mistaken ideas among a section of the Party cadres and the rank and file and bred a measure of misunderstanding of the general policy line advanced by the Central Committee aimed at preparations for the general counter-offensive. Warning the Party and people against undue haste and outracing developments Ho Chi Minh said: "We have been preparing to switch over to the general counter-offensive which is not yet actually being carried out.... Once the preparations are complete we will launch the general counter-offensive. The more complete the preparations, the quicker will come the hour for launching the general counter-offensive and the more favourable will it be.

We should avoid precipitation, rashness and impatience."¹

The Congress decided to rename the Communist Party of Indochina to the Vietnam Workers' Party. After the Second Congress the Party once again began to operate officially and openly as the acknowledged leader of the Vietnamese people, having led for five years the underground activity in the country, which it had been compelled to carry on following the decision to disband adopted in November 1945 in order to bring together the national forces and preserve its ranks.

In fulfillment of the "most urgent task of bringing the Resistance war to victory" set by the Congress the Vietnam People's Army launched a series of offensive and counter-offensive operations on every front, especially in the north of the country during 1951-1952. Guerrilla warfare was being stepped up everywhere. In the enemy-

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, p. 253.

occupied zone the population intensified their resistance. The peasants and townspeople meted out revolutionary justice to collaborationists, destroyed enemy garrisons or blockaded them in strongholds.

In 1952-1953 the People's Army mounted a large-scale offensive which resulted in the liberation of a zone of 28 thousand square kilometers with a population of 250,000 in north-west Vietnam. The liberated area in North Vietnam now extended up to the Vietnam-Laos border.

The consolidation of progressive forces continued. In March 1951 at the all-Vietnam Congress of People's Representatives the Viet Minh and Lien Viet fronts merged to form a single organization—the Lien Viet Front with a membership of over ten million. The formation of a single national front on the basis of two public organizations was an unequivocal demonstration of the unity of the people of Vietnam around the DRV government and showed the failure of the colonialist plans to disunite the people of Vietnam and isolate the Communists and the DRV government from the broad popular masses.

Inspired by the example of the heroic August revolution of 1945 in Vietnam and by the dedicated struggle of the Vietnamese the peoples of Laos and Cambodia stepped up their liberation movement.

In April 1950 the Front of National Unity—Nekum Khmer Issarak and the Central Committee of Liberation which was later transformed into the Government of National Resistance were set up in Cambodia on the basis of the patriotic organization Khmer Issarak. In Laos in August 1950 the National United Front, Neo Lao It-sala, and the Resistance Government were formed. In Laos by 1950 patriotic forces had gained control over large areas of the country where they set up organs of people's power and liquidated the feudal order. In the spring of 1952 a major operation was carried out in upper Laos by local patriotic forces in close cooperation with Vietnamese volunteer units. The operation resulted in the provinces of Sam Neua, Xieng Khouang, and Phong Saly being brought under the control of the people's power. As a result the liberated areas of Laos adjoined those of North Vietnam.

A salient feature of the liberation movement in Laos

and Cambodia was the fact that the patriotic forces of these two countries pressed for a close alliance with the Vietnamese people. The First Congress of People's Representatives of Laos held in 1950 adopted a programme which emphasized the need for an alliance between the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia for a joint struggle against the common enemy—French imperialism.

A conference of patriotic mass organizations of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos was held in March, 1951 which formalized a combat alliance of the peoples of the three countries in the United Front of the Peoples of Indochina. The patriotic forces of the three embattled countries of Indochina countered the imperialist policy of conquest by their combat unity and political cooperation relying on the identity of ideals they were fighting for. A practical embodiment of this unity was the participation of Vietnamese volunteers in the fighting alongside the patriotic forces of Laos and Cambodia.

The strengthening political unity of the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, the successes they scored on the battle fronts caused serious concern not only in Paris but in Washington as well. It was becoming increasingly plain that the colonial gamble of the French imperialists was heading for a collapse. And the more humiliating and severe were the French defeats the more insistent was the penetration of US imperialists into Vietnam. The year 1950 was marked by the start of direct US interference in the Indochina war waged by the French colonialists.

The men in Washington quite rightly feared that the victory of Vietnam have caused irreparable damage to the strategy of "containing Communism". In this situation the US stepped up its military aid to the French forces which were performing functions in Indochina which fitted in with the US global strategy. At the same time the US was establishing direct contacts with the puppet regimes installed by the French and stimulating their nationalist and anti-communist character in order when the opportunity presented itself to use them in implementing their neo-colonialist plans.

As early as 1950 Washington took serious steps to provide aid to the anti-communist forces in Vietnam. In February 1950 the USA and Britain recognized Bao Dai's

government. Soon afterwards the USA held the conference of its military and political representatives accredited to the countries of the Far East and South-East Asia. The conference which met in Bangkok concentrated, among other things, on an analysis of the situation in Indochina Peninsula.

In May 1950 the Truman Administration took what the Pentagon secret papers qualified as "the first critical decision concerning US military interference in Indochina": it allocated ten million dollars for assistance to the French colonialists in Indochina which was tantamount to "direct" participation of the USA in the events in Vietnam and "set the tone of US policy".¹

A few days after this decision was taken US Secretary of State Dean Acheson declared that US assistance would go not only to France but direct to the "associated states" of Indochina: the Bao Dai regime in Vietnam and the Royal governments of Laos and Cambodia. A month later in June, 1950 President Truman announcing the dispatch of US forces to Korea also ordered to step up military assistance to the armed forces of France and the associated states of Indochina and to send a military mission there to establish working contact with those forces. In September of the same year the USA signed a treaty with France and the associated states on US participation in the defense of Indochina. In December the USA signed an agreement for mutual defense assistance in Indochina under which "France and associated states undertook to receive personnel arriving from the USA necessary for implementing this agreement and to create all the necessary conditions enabling them to fulfill their mission."² The US undertook to arm a 200 thousand strong mercenary army within 18 months.

Under these agreements the USA was able to provide direct "assistance" to Bao Dai Vietnam and the Royal governments of Laos and Cambodia bypassing French intermediaries. Needless to say, this move weakened France's positions and enhanced Washington's prestige among the feudal-bureaucratic and comprador quarters of

¹ See: *The Stages of War and Deception*, Moscow, 1971, p. 24 (in Russian).

² See: *US Neo-Colonialism. Collection of Articles*, Issue No. 2, Hanoi, 1974, p. 13 (in Russian).

the three countries of Indochina. The results of this military and diplomatic tour de force were not slow in making themselves felt.

Within a short space of time two US-sponsored organizations were set up in Saigon in the early 1950s: the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), and the Special Technical and Economic Mission (STEM), which was later renamed to US Operations Mission (USOM).

On the strength of the agreements signed with France and the associated states in 1950 the US sharply stepped up supplies of arms, ammunition, military equipment to the French Expeditionary Corps which was sinking ever deeper in the morass of the dirty war. President Ho Chi Minh told journalists on July 25, 1950: "The U.S. imperialists have of late openly interfered in Indo-China's affairs. It is with their money and weapons and their instructions that the French colonialists have been waging war in Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos."¹ In 1950-1951 the US airlifted into Vietnam a total of 73,000 tons of military supplies and 126 combat aircraft.²

In the early 1950s Washington worked out and approved a series of documents pertaining to US policy vis-à-vis South-East Asia. The keynote of these documents which represented for all intents and purposes the programme of action for successive US presidents was the assertion that the loss of Vietnam would mean the loss of Indochina while the loss of Indochina would imply the collapse of US plans in South-East Asia.

This is what one of the documents stated with respect to Indochina: "...The United States should:

a) Continue to promote international support for the three Associated States.

b) Continue to assure the French that the U. S. regards the French effort in Indochina as one of great strategic importance in the general international interest rather than in the purely French interest, and as essential to the security of the free world, not only in the Far East but in the Middle East and Europe as well.

c) Continue to assure the French that we are cognizant of the sacrifices entailed for France in carrying out her

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, p. 208.

² See: *US Neo-Colonialism Collection of Articles*, Issue No. 2, pp. 13-14.

effort in Indochina and that without overlooking the principle that France has the primary responsibility in Indochina, we will recommend to the Congress appropriate military, economic and financial aid to France and the Associated States.”¹

This document so critical for understanding US intentions (to remain on the sidelines and still exploit the situation to its advantage) also called for measures to prevent France’s withdrawal from China or “delegation of responsibility” for the war to the USA up to and including consultations with the British and the French on the matter. In effect, what was involved was a possibility of internationalizing the war by dragging other capitalist countries into it.

In their attempts to turn Indochina to a bastion of struggle against the forces of socialism and national independence in South East Asia the US imperialists were not losing sight of the prospect of deriving economic advantages from this part of the world. As the *New York Times* assured its readers in 1950 that Indochina is a prize worth a big game.... Even during World War II Indochina was bringing in roughly three hundred million dollars in profits per annum. This opinion was confirmed and shared three years later by the man who shouldered full responsibility for US foreign policy—President Eisenhower who declared at a gubernatorial convention in August 1953 that the loss of Indochina would cut off the supplies of tin and tungsten badly needed by the US. He therefore urged them to support the Administration’s request for 400 million dollars for the war in Indochina. Urging the monopolists to put up finance for the war to avoid a defeat for imperialism in Indochina President Eisenhower persuaded them to exploit Indochina as a major overseas market.

He did not have to persuade them too hard. US capital moved quickly. Whereas after 1948 the profits of French companies investing in the industry, agriculture and commerce of the French-occupied areas of Indochina grew to reach eleven thousand million francs by late 1951, between 1952 and 1953 these profits began to decline.

¹ *The Pentagon Papers*, Toronto, New York, London, 1971, pp. 29-30.

At the same time US capital which had moved in on the act in a big way showed a high level of activity. Whereas between 1946 and 1950 US exports to Indochina (the bulk of which went into the French-occupied part of Vietnam) averaged 348.6 million piastres a year, between 1951 and 1954 they doubled to reach 876.7 million piastres. US rubber and coal exports from Vietnam grew even faster. Between 1951 and 1954 the US took 65 per cent of Vietnam's total coal exports. Whereas in 1951 the US exported some 30 per cent of Vietnam's raw rubber output, between 1953 and 1954 the figure was 70 per cent.¹

After the adoption of the above-mentioned documents on US policy and objectives in South-East Asia the USA stepped up its military aid to France to augment her war effort in Indochina. In 1950-51 US aid was worth 177 million dollars which represented 13 per cent of France's total military spending. In 1952-53 US credits to France reached 314 million dollars going up to over 1,000 million dollars in 1953-54 which represented 78 per cent of France's total outlay on the war in Indochina.²

All told, the US allocations for the dirty war in Vietnam totalled 2.6 thousand million dollars. During the war years the French Expeditionary Corps in Vietnam received from US monopolists 340 aircraft, 1,400 tanks and armored personnel carriers, 350 landing craft, large quantities of heavy and light weapons and small arms, and thousands of tons of ammunition.

In May 1953 General Navarre, former Chief of Staff of NATO Land Forces in Central Europe, was appointed the French Supreme Commander in Indochina. Before going to Indochina the general made a visit to Washington to confer with US generals on the plans of mobile warfare in Vietnam relying on the mounting US material and technical aid. At the end of these discussions with the active participation of US advisors General Navarre worked out a plan of eliminating the DRV armed forces in three stages over eighteen months to achieve "the complete pacification of the country".

¹ See: I. M. Schedrov, *South Vietnam Today*, Moscow, 1962, p. 58 (in Russian).

² See: I. Aleksandrov, *The Escalation of Shame*, Moscow, 1972, p. 11 (in Russian).

Relying on the growing US military aid General Navarre set about reorganizing Bao Dai's national army which was 320 thousand strong in 1954. At the same time the French Expeditionary Corps was 250 thousand strong backed up by 26 artillery battalions, 528 aircraft and 390 vessels of various types.¹

This impressive mass of manpower and military hardware was moved against the liberated areas of Vietnam. The Expeditionary Corps subjected these areas to saturation bombing raids and artillery bombardment, mounted punitive operations involving scores of battalions.

The Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party set the People's Army the task of conducting a series of operations in the autumn-winter of 1953 to foil the realization of the Navarre Plan. The high command of the People's Army decided to attack in the north-west in the direction of Middle Laos as well as in Central Vietnam in order to break through to the Thai Nguyen plateau. Local army units and guerrillas operating in enemy-occupied zones were to support the offensive of the regular forces by every means available to them.

In December 1953 the People's Army attacked Lai Chau, an important populated center of north-western Vietnam, and captured it thereby liberating an area of 10 thousand square kilometers with 160 thousand inhabitants. The French troops retreated from Lai Chau into Dien Bien Phu.

The Dien Bien Phu area lies strategically on important roads linking North Vietnam and North Laos. The French troops of occupation could attack out of this area into north-eastern Vietnam where the vital bases of the People's Army were at the time. General Navarre bore this in mind when working on his plan. He therefore ordered the eleven battalions surrounded in Dien Bien Phu to hold out at all costs to keep control over this vital valley. The beleaguered battalions were supplied with ammunition, equipment and re-enforcements by air. The Dien Bien Phu fortified area was repeatedly inspected by US generals Trappnell, and O'Daniel. At the same time in exchange for the considerable military aid given to France, including aid to enable her to implement the Navarre

¹ *Pages d'histoire (1945-1954)*, p. 22.

Plan, the US secured France's agreement to direct involvement of US military personnel in the training and equipping of the puppet army. From 1954 onwards general O'Daniel took charge of the recruitment and training of its personnel.

The offensive operations carried out by the People's Army in the winter 1953-1954 compelled general Navarre to disperse his forces concentrated in the Red River delta to "guard territory" in different parts of the country, to man outposts and strongholds which he hoped would be able to forestall attacks by Vietnamese regulars and guerrillas.

January 1954 saw the start of phase two of the Navarre Plan. The French forces launched an offensive in Central Vietnam. After evading a head-on clash with the advancing enemy group units of the People's Army counter-attacked in a different area, liberated Kontum, surrounded Pleiku and expelled French troops from the Thai Nguyen plateau. The liberated zones of Central Vietnam were now extended up to the border with Laos and Cambodia. This offensive maneuver actually foiled the implementation of phase two of the Navarre Plan.

By March 1954 almost all the mobile units of the French Expeditionary Corps had been moved out of the Red River delta into different areas up and down the country in an effort to check the offensive operations mounted by People's Army regulars, local militia and guerrilla units. The pacification of Vietnam envisaged by the Navarre Plan was not anywhere in sight. The plan was heading for a total collapse.

In March 1954 the biggest operation carried out by the Vietnam People's Army in the war of Resistance began in Dien Bien Phu. The 16 thousand French garrison was encircled. Simultaneously with the start of fighting in Dien Bien Phu the People's Army regulars and guerrillas stepped up their operations elsewhere.

The People's Army whose men were described in official French report as "insurgents" were supposed by French and US generals to be fighting using primitive weapons. Modern weapons were believed to be out of their reach, and the privilege of foreigners. Indeed the People's Army of Vietnam began the war of Resistance using obsolete rifles while those who could not even have

them used hoes and sticks. However, when the People's Army attacked Dien Bien Phu its artillery batteries were bombarding the French fortifications using 105 mm guns and French aviation could not act effectively because of the dense anti-aircraft fire from guns and machine-guns. The young soldiers of the People's Army had proved to be quick learners and mastered the modern military equipment supplied by socialist countries.

As the fighting went on the men of the People's Army kept moving their trenches ever closer to the French fortifications reducing the distance for the final assault. In the end these trenches were quite close to the French weapon emplacements and surrounding like clutches each French dug-out and weapon emplacement making it impossible for them to maintain contact, receive ammunition and food. This tactic enabled the People's Army to keep its losses to a minimum during attacks on enemy strongholds; the average of killed and wounded per weapon emplacement captured dropped first to twenty and then to four.

It is important to note that at a time when the DRV was scoring successes on the battle-field in the struggle against the colonialists its government came forward with peace initiatives aimed at ending the bloodshed on terms that would accord both with the interests of the Vietnamese and those of France. In November 1953 replying to the questions put to him by a Swedish correspondent president Ho Chi Minh wrote: ". . . If the French Government has drawn a lesson from the war they have been waging these last years and want to negotiate an armistice in Viet Nam and to solve the Viet Nam problem by peaceful means, the people and Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam are ready to meet this desire." The sole conditions for this were cessation by the French colonialists of their war in Vietnam and "the French Government's sincere respect for the genuine independence of Viet Nam".¹

The position of the DRV government was supported by progressives in France and in the rest of the world.

The interference of the US imperialists in the "dirty war" in Vietnam in an attempt to drag out the bloodshed

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, pp. 408, 409.

for which Vietnamese and French men paid with their lives gave a new impulse to the anti-war movement by the working people of France. The French Communist Party emphasized in its propaganda and agitation against the war that the "dirty war" in Indochina was an element of the global imperialist policy aimed against the forces of peace, democracy and social progress. The Party declared that it was the duty of every honest Frenchman to oppose the war in no uncertain terms. The Communists explained to the masses the truth about the "dirty war" in Vietnam and pointed out the connection between the need to fight for ending the war and the solution of social problems within France. The anti-war feeling of working man's France in those years was symbolized by Henri Martin, a French navyman who refused to take part in the "dirty war" and who was sentenced to five years of hard labor in 1951. The storm of public protest that the sentence triggered off compelled the government to release Henri Martin.

Prominent political leaders including Herriot and Daladier spoke out against the war. Professor Lavergne wrote in the *Tribune des Nations* weekly that the war in Indochina was revolting carnage on orders from the Americans. Professor Lavergne was right. More and more Frenchmen were asking themselves why things were shaping out in such a way that they were actually selling the lives and suffering of their lads for 300-400 million dollars a year. According to *Nhan Dan* of December 22, 1954 between 1946 and 1954 the French colonialists lost in Vietnam a total of 446,172 officers and men. The credits and loans granted by the US to the French government to finance the war in Vietnam were proving to be an increasingly onerous burden for the working people of France.

In November 1953 a national conference was held in Paris attended by supporters of a negotiated settlement of the Indochina conflict. The conference brought together people representing the cross-section of the country's population. A month earlier 250 deputies of the National Assembly during a debate on the Indochina problem which began at the insistence of the Communist deputies called for an immediate peace. Joseph Laniel, who headed the government of war, admitted in March 1954 that whereas

until 1953 some people pressed for negotiations to settle the conflict, while others insisted on a military solution, in 1954 all people supported a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

The Vietnam Workers' Party appraised highly the contribution of the French Communists and the people of France to the effort aimed at bringing peace to Indochina. After the signing of the Geneva Agreements President Ho Chi Minh emphasized that the people of France "valiantly struggled to end the war and to restore peace in Indo-China".¹

The anti-war pressure movement of the French people joined the common stream of the struggle by the DRV, the USSR, other socialist countries and all progressive forces to restore peace in Indochina on terms according with the interests of the peoples of the area.

In January-February 1954 the foreign ministers of the USSR, the USA, Britain and France met in Berlin to examine a number of pressing international problems. On the initiative of the Soviet delegation the Berlin Conference discussed the possibility of convening a new foreign ministers' conference of five powers, including the People's Republic of China. This conference would work out measures to reduce international tension. In particular this conference would discuss the possibility of a peace settlement in Korea and the ending of the war in Indochina. The Soviet Government had instructed its delegation to the conference to work towards ensuring that the conference "would contribute . . . to curbing the aggressive aspirations of the imperialist camp and in this way advance the cause of peace".²

France which was suffering heavy defeats in Vietnam hoped to get out of her predicament with the help of the conference. By deciding to attend the conference the French government actually admitted the failure of its policy of colonial diktat, a failure which was the result of the growing strength of the socialist community of nations which were extending a mounting support to the fighting people of Vietnam, the result of the anti-war pres-

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. IV, Hanoi, 1962, p. 47.

² See: *The History of USSR Foreign Policy (1945-1975)*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1976, p. 210 (in Russian).

sure of the French people and peace supporters throughout the world against the "dirty war".

At the same time Britain's attitude to the conflict was influenced by India, Pakistan and Ceylon, all of them members of the British Commonwealth, which pressed for an end to the fighting in Indochina.

Speaking in support of the decisions adopted by the Berlin Conference and seeing the projected conference of the foreign ministers of five powers as an important contribution to the settlement of the Indochina problem, to the strengthening of peace and security in the Far East and throughout the world, the newspaper *Nhan Dan*, the organ of the CC of the Vietnam Workers' Party, wrote that the peoples of Vietnam, Khmer and Patet-Lao welcome the Geneva Conference and would fight resolutely to ensure its success.¹

The United States was against the conference in Geneva planned for the end of April 1954. The military and political leaders of the USA made feverish efforts to keep Vietnam within the orbit of imperialist influence at all costs. The domino theory formulated in 1951 with regard to Indochina was back in circulation. On April 7, 1954 President Eisenhower spelled out the essence of the theory in these terms: "You have a row of dominoes set up, and you knock over the first one . . . and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you have the beginning of a disintegration that would have most profound influences." If the Communists were to capture Indochina, Eisenhower claimed, "the next to collapse might be Burma, Thailand, Malaya and Indonesia . . . the falling dominoes could topple into America's island defense chain of Japan, Formosa, the Philippines and then on southward, threatening Australia and New-Zealand."²

Vice-President Richard Nixon coming back from his visit to Vietnam in early 1954 pointed out that: "If France stops fighting in Indo-China and the situation demands it, . . . the United States will have to send troops to prevent the Communists from taking over this gateway

¹ See: *Pravda*, April 9, 1954.

² Robert J. Donovan, *Eisenhower. The Inside Story*, New York, 1956, p. 261.

to Southeast Asia.”¹ The US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles also stated publicly that the USA did not exclude the possibility of direct interference in Indochina and those were not idle threats. The US went on ahead to suit the action to the word.

An idea of the readiness of the US ruling circles to stake all in Vietnam can be gauged from the secret Pentagon Papers which were made public in 1971. In July of that year the *Washington Evening Star* printing some of them wrote that the National Security Council at its meeting on April 5, 1954 discussed a Pentagon memorandum which stated that seven US divisions or their equivalent with appropriate naval or air support would be required for a victory in Indochina if the French were compelled to pull out. The paper emphasized that the Pentagon Papers showed that the planning at the top government level extended far beyond air strikes and provided for a long-term US intervention in Indochina. The planners did not rule out the possibility of nuclear weapons being used. Atom bomb-carrying aircraft of the US Navy were based in proximity of North Vietnam. Also worked out was operation Vautour under which 60 B-29 bombers were to strike at Vietnam from the US airbase near Manila. A landing of US troops in North Vietnam was planned. Apart from that provision was made for some sort of collective military action which, Washington hoped, would turn the tide of war in Vietnam in favor of the imperialists and would torpedo the new conference of foreign ministers in Geneva.

Exposing the diplomatic demarches and militaristic threats emanating from Washington the newspaper *Pravda* wrote shortly before the Second Geneva Conference: “The desire of the US aggressive circles to worsen the international climate on the eve of the Geneva Conference and in this way create favorable conditions for wrecking the settlement of key international disputes is so obvious and undisguised that it generates the resolute and justified resistance on the part of those who would like to see a lessening of world tension.”²

In view of the international situation that had developed London and Paris refused to take part in the collec-

¹ *The New York Times*, April 18, 1954.

² *Pravda*, April 21, 1954.

tive military action in Vietnam Washington insisted upon. The British government opposed US military interference in Vietnam on the eve of the Geneva Conference prevailing upon Washington to act by more flexible methods. The US attempts to torpedo the Geneva Conference failed.

Imperialism was thus forced to beat a retreat before the pressure of the forces of peace and socialism which insisted on a political negotiated settlement of the military conflict in Indochina. President Ho Chi Minh wrote at the time: "As a consequence of the wise and correct external policy of the Soviet Union, the imperialists—and in particular the American imperialists—have been forced to take part in the Berlin and Geneva conferences."¹

The Geneva Conference opened on April 26, 1954 by taking up the Korean question. The opening of the Conference coincided with the second and third offensives by the Vietnam People's Army on the French Expeditionary Corps in the Dien Bien Phu valley.

On May 7, after 55 days of non-stop fighting during which the People's Army launched three assaults on the Dien Bien Phu fortifications this largest enemy defensive complex fell. Christian de Castries who had just been promoted to general surrendered with his entire staff and eight thousand soldiers complete with their weapons and ammunition, jeeps and MGs, tanks and artillery pieces. His surrender was accepted by a twenty-three-year-old soldier of the People's Army, infantryman Vinh who was the first to burst into the command post of the garrison to announce that the People's Army had taken Dien Bien Phu.

The shattering blow struck by the armed forces of People's Vietnam at the French in Dien Bien Phu foiled imperialist plans to drag out the "dirty war" in Indochina. Le Duan wrote: "This brilliant success which completed the nine years of the war of Resistance against the French colonialists went down in the annals of world history of the twentieth century as a brilliant victory which broke the chain of imperialist domination of the system of colonial enslavement."²

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Articles and Speeches, 1920-1967*, London, 1969, p. 80.

² Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1965-1970)*, p. 178.

At the Conference Table

Photographs of the vanquished fortifications of the former French stronghold showing the red banner with the golden star in the middle fluttering over them, the flag of victory, were flashed all around the world. They were also printed by the Geneva newspaper on May 8, the day the Conference began discussing the Indochina question.

The Conference was attended by delegations from the DRV, the USSR, the PRC, France, Britain, the USA, the Royal Governments of Laos and Cambodia and by representatives of Bao Dai. Because of the opposition of the Western powers representatives of the patriotic forces of Laos and Cambodia were unable to attend the Conference.

On the opening day of the Conference the French foreign minister tabled his proposals for a settlement in Indochina which showed that the Laniel-Bidault cabinet would not recognize the realities of the situation in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and on the world scene as a whole. The French foreign minister spoke in terms as if the Navarre Plan had not failed, as if there had been no French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, as if there had been no pressure by the French and world public to stop the "dirty war". Bidault's proposals boiled down to a temporary cease-fire, to the delimitation of zones for the deployment of regular forces at both sides, something that would give the French Expeditionary Corps a respite and a chance to regroup. Bidault also proposed to disarm the guerrilla units operating in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and to exchange prisoners of war. The French proposals did not touch in any way the political side of the Indochina settlement and were aimed at emasculating its essence and provided no constructive basis for a fair settlement.

The chief Vietnamese delegate, Deputy Prime Minister Pham Van Dong set out the aims and attitude of the peoples of Indochina on his arrival in Geneva. He said: "The peoples of Indochina wish an immediate halt to the fighting and restoration of peace in Indochina and they intend to achieve their national rights through

negotiations.”¹ The DRV delegation also declared itself ready to pool its efforts with those of the delegations of other countries at the Conference to ensure its success.

Guided by these principles the DRV delegation tabled proposals aimed at a peace settlement which would correspond to the military and political situation that arose in Indochina following the Vietnamese victory at Dien Bien Phu and take into account the situation in the world as a whole. These proposals included recognition by France of the sovereignty and independence of the whole of Vietnam, as well as the independence of Cambodia and Laos, an agreement on the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and on the dislocation of French forces pending their withdrawal from Indochina on condition of non-interference in the internal affairs of the countries of Indochina. The proposals also provided for the holding of general and free elections in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. At the same time the DRV government declared its readiness to examine the possibility of the DRV joining the French Union on the basis of free choice. The DRV proposals also pointed out that the resolution of political problems should be preceded by the settlement of military questions, including a cease-fire, etc.

Implementation of these specific proposals, Pham Van Dong stated in his address to the Conference, would end the war and restore peace. It would restore peace on the basis of recognition of the national rights of the peoples of Indochina and would help establish friendly relations between the countries of Indochina and France.²

The DRV proposals which accorded with the interests of not only the Vietnamese people but with the national aspirations of the peoples of Laos and Cambodia were welcomed by the world public. Addressing the Geneva Conference on May 14, 1954 the Soviet foreign minister pointed out that the historical processes taking place in Indochina were natural and that it was futile for outside forces to attempt to impose their will on the peoples of the area and install pro-Western regimes which

¹ *Pravda*, May 9, 1954.

² See: *Pravda*, May 11, 1954.

represented no one. The head of the Soviet delegation emphasized that: "The example of the national liberation struggle of the peoples of Indochina is of historic significance. It shows that where popular masses formerly under the colonial yoke rise to uphold their national rights and freedom it is impossible to make the people go back to the old way of life, impossible to suppress the national movement by force of arms or by other methods of coercion."¹

Together with the DRV the USSR was working to ensure that the armistice in Indochina would develop into a lasting peace rather than a temporary respite. Proceeding from the principle of Vietnam's territorial and national unity the Soviet delegation insisted on a definite target date for the holding of general elections to reunite the country. The Soviet delegation worked closely with the DRV representatives to ensure that the settlement of the Indochina problem would cover both political and military aspects and demanded that no fresh troops, military personnel, equipment and supplies should be shipped to Indochina after the cessation of hostilities there.

The delegations of the Western powers and those of the "associated states" had nothing with which to counter the clear-cut and constructive proposals tabled by people's Vietnam. Evading a discussion of substantive issues they resorted to dilatory tactics and a diplomatic game over procedural technicalities, etc. The US delegates were the pace setters. As Philippe Devillers, the French historian, aptly put it, John Foster Dulles and his advisers had arrived in Geneva with the idea that the collapse of the Conference was not only a foregone conclusion but actually desirable since at the time the West was not in a position to dictate its terms for a peace settlement.

As for the Indochina question as such and the attitude of the DRV to it, its participation in the Conference was tantamount to the actual recognition of Democratic Vietnam by the Western powers. The attitude of the US government was indicated by the pointed departure from Geneva of the US chief delegate Dulles

¹ *Pravda*, May 15, 1954.

on May 3, 1954 soon after the forthcoming arrival of the DRV delegates had been announced. This was followed by a series of diplomatic "broadsides" fired by Washington in an effort to torpedo the Conference cost what it might. On May 7 Washington announced that the USA did not rule out its direct participation in the Indochina war. On May 15 the US administration informed the French government that in the event of the Geneva Conference collapsing the USA would be prepared to intervene in the war in response to a request from France and the "associated states" and provided France would be responsible for all combat operations on the ground and together with the USA would train a Vietnamese "national army".

The Laniel-Bidault government agreed to consider Washington's offer while at the same time carrying on the political and diplomatic game in Geneva.

The opening days of the Conference were marked by the Soviet delegation's opposition to the obstructionist tactics by the US and French delegates. Exposing the US intention to wreck the Conference the Soviet delegate in Geneva declared that: "Only resolute opposition to these designs is in accordance with the tasks of the Geneva Conference which remain to be the restoration of peace in Indochina." ¹

The policy of the Laniel-Bidault government which clearly showed its reluctance to respond to the reasonable proposals advanced by the DRV set off a new anti-war movement in France. Public feeling against the "dirty war" was so strong that the National Assembly could not afford to ignore it. Bidault came under intense fire in parliament and his maneuvering and subterfuges exemplified in his claim that "it would be a national disaster" to replace the Laniel government with any other at a time when the Geneva Conference had allegedly moved into "the decisive stage" were unavailing. On June 9, 1954 for the third time within a month Laniel faced a hostile National Assembly which passed a vote of no confidence in his government. On June 17 Mendès-France in a public statement promised that he would achieve peace in Indochina within a month.

¹ *Pravda*, May 15, 1954.

Thus, as a result of the concerted and determined diplomatic offensive mounted by the delegations of socialist countries at the Geneva Conference, which exposed the colonialist attitudes of the Laniel-Bidault government, as a result of the active struggle of the working people of France for peace in Indochina the stage was set for a successful conclusion to the Geneva Conference. The Polish historian Manfred Lachs wrote later that the discussions in Geneva on Korea and Indochina could be divided into two stages: the first from April 26 to June 12 and the second from June 18 to July 20 which culminated in the conclusion of the Geneva Agreements on Indochina. The borderline between these two stages in time and substance was the fall of the Laniel-Bidault government.¹

The forced withdrawal from the Geneva Conference of Bidault who acted hand in glove with the American diplomats undermined the positions of the US delegates who stayed in Geneva after Dulles had left. On June 25 the first direct talks were held between the DRV and French delegations.

The consistent and flexible tactics employed by the socialist delegations in Geneva prevented the imperialists from deadlocking the Geneva Conference. After successfully negotiating all obstacles and avoiding the underwater rocks set up by American diplomats the Conference went ahead with its work and closed on July 21, 1954 after reaching agreement on a number of key issues.

The agreements of 1954 incorporated a wide range of closely coordinated legal documents which in their totality represented a package of measures to settle the Indochina conflict. These included three bilateral agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, an agreement covering economic and cultural relations between the DRV and France, seven separate statements made by the participants in the Conference and a multilateral Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference.

The agreements on the cessation of war, that part of them which covered Vietnam, provided for the fol-

¹ See: Manfred Lachs, *Układy Indochińskie. Geneva 1954*, Warsaw, 1955, p. 47.

lowing: a temporary military demarcation line was to be drawn roughly along the 17th parallel. To the north of this line units of the Vietnam People's Army were to be deployed in the course of 300 days and to the south of it—units of the French Expeditionary Corps, over the same period. This line being temporary, Article 6 of the Final Declaration pointed out that it cannot be construed as being in any way a political or territorial frontier.

From the moment the Geneva Agreements were signed no troop reinforcements and military personnel could be moved into Vietnam, no foreign military bases could be built there and no additional arms, ammunition and military supplies could be brought in. Neither zone might enter into any military alliances.

Under the cessation of hostilities agreement the parties undertook not to resort to any repressions or discrimination against persons or organizations for their activities during the war.

International commissions composed of representatives of India, Poland and Canada were charged with exercising supervision and control over the fulfillment of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

An element of fundamental importance which was formalized in the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference was the reference to the fact that the settlement of political problems in Vietnam on the basis of respect for the country's independence, unity and territorial integrity should be preceded by general and free elections under the control of an international commission. The election was scheduled for July 1956. Starting on June 20, 1955 authorized representatives of both zones were to hold consultations on the subject of the projected general and free election.

The Geneva Agreements represented a great victory for the people of Vietnam and the patriots of Laos and Cambodia, as well as for the socialist countries and progressive forces all over the world. As the Soviet government statement of July 23, 1954 pointed out, they meant a serious defeat for the forces of war, international recognition of the national-liberation struggle and the great heroism displayed by the people of Indo-

china in the course of their valiant fight. The Geneva Agreements constituted a major contribution to the lessening of international tension and prepared the ground for settling other major international issues not only in Asia but in Europe as well.¹

The Geneva Conference dealt a blow at the strategic plans of the imperialists who tried to turn Indochina, above all Vietnam, into a staging base for aggression in South-East Asia. The Geneva Agreements which in the words of Le Duan reflected the real alignment of forces in Indochina and on the world scene in that period,² represented a major step forward on the road towards the goal for the attainment of which the people of Vietnam had been fighting—the independence and unity of the whole of Vietnam. The Agreements strengthened the regime of people's power in Vietnam, opened the way to peaceful socialist construction in the North and prepared the ground for tackling the tasks of a national popular-democratic revolution in the South and the reunification of the country. The victory won by the Vietnamese people on the battle-field and the success their representatives achieved at the conference table in Geneva, a success formalized in the Geneva Agreements, demonstrated that the days of imperialist diktat vis-à-vis countries and peoples which were embarked on the road to freedom and independence and relied on the support of the USSR and other socialist countries, on the backing of the forces of peace and progress throughout the world, were over for good and all. President Ho Chi Minh wrote: "The policy of the USSR of defending peace throughout the world, its efforts at the Geneva Conference helped the people of Vietnam to win peace based on respect for Vietnam's independence, unity and territorial integrity."³

The French government in a statement at the Conference declared that in future it would proceed from respect for the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It also undertook to withdraw its forces from the three

¹ See: *Pravda*, July 23, 1954.

² See: Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1965-1970)*, p. 35.

³ Ho Chi Minh, *On Lenin, Leninism and Indestructable Soviet-Vietnamese Friendship*, Moscow, 1970, p. 56 (in Russian).

countries in response to a request from the interested governments and on a time-table to be fixed by consultation with them.

On the final day of the Conference the US delegation made a statement which indicated the attitude of the US government to its outcome. The statement pointed out that "The Government of the United States, being resolved to devote its efforts to the strengthening of peace in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations, takes note of the agreements concluded at Geneva on July 20 and 21, 1954 ... and of paragraphs 1 to 12 inclusive of the declaration presented to the Geneva Conference on July 21, 1954, declares that it will refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them..." What is more, Washington pledged that "...it would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."¹ However, on the same day the US delegation presented this Declaration President Eisenhower declared that "the United States has not itself been party to or bound by the decisions taken by the Conference... The Agreement contains features which we do not like, but a great deal depends on how they work in practice."²

The USA began looking for new forms of penetrating Indochina as well as attempting to undermine the Geneva Agreements, which were the main obstacle in the way of the imperialists' expansionist aspirations in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

In the first half of August 1954 a cease-fire came into force throughout Vietnam and the redeployment of forces got underway. This marked the end of the war in Vietnam. Fully liberated, North Vietnam was entering upon a new stage of its history—a period of the socialist revolution which as President Ho Chi Minh emphasized "was the most crucial turning point of the Vietnam Revolution".³

¹ *Documents on American Foreign Relations 1954*, New York, 1955, p. 316.

² *Ibid.*, p. 317.

³ *The Third Congress of the Vietnam Workers' Party (Hanoi, September 5-12 1960)*, Moscow, 1961, p. 5 (in Russian).

On the Road of Socialist Construction and the Struggle for the Peaceful Reunification of Vietnam (1954-1960)

The Building of Socialism in North Vietnam

*Vietnam must be united. All compatriots
will live as one family.*

Ho Chi Minh

As the Geneva Conference was moving into its final state President Ho Chi Minh declared: "In the new contingencies the old slogan of 'Resistance to the end' must be replaced with 'Peace, national unity, independence, democracy'." ¹ A new phase of the Vietnam Revolution began whose characteristic feature, according to Ho Chi Minh was "transition from war to peace, the shifting of the center of gravity from the countryside to the city, the transition from dispersion to centralization."²

Later, at the Fourth Congress of the Vietnam Workers' Party, Le Duan, General Secretary of the Party's Central Committee characterized the special features of the work of Vietnamese Communists in this period as follows: "The existence of a single party exercising leadership throughout the country temporarily divided into two parts, the simultaneous fulfillment of two different strategic tasks constituted the salient feature of the development of our revolution between July 1954 and

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Articles and Speeches 1960-1967*, p. 85.

² *Nhan Dan*, June 25-27, 1954.

May 1975.”¹ By applying Marxism-Leninism to the Vietnamese situation the Party mapped out a policy aimed at carrying out simultaneously a national popular-democratic revolution in the South and a socialist revolution in the North.

Mobilizing the working people of North Vietnam for a concerted effort to eliminate the traces of nearly a century of colonial rule, to stamp out feudal survivals and carry out social and economic changes the Party was at the same time working consistently for a reunification of both parts of Vietnam.

By the summer of 1956 the land reform which began in the war years had been completed in the plains and foot-hills of North Vietnam. The land reform eliminated feudal landowners as a class. A total of 810 thousand hectares of land formerly in their possession were distributed among 2,104 thousand peasant households.² The Party's slogan “The land to those who till it” had been fully translated into effect. At the end of 1956 North Vietnam had a total of 190 thousand peasant mutual assistance teams.

By late 1957 the rehabilitation of the DRV's economy had been complete. Between 1955 and 1957 some 50 new industrial units, including several power stations and a number of factories producing consumer goods, were put into service. By 1957 Vietnam's industrial output represented roughly 76 per cent of the 1939 level while in some sectors the pre-war level had been exceeded.³

The successful rehabilitation of the country's economy and the progress of land reform coupled with the strengthening alliance between the working class and the peasantry resulting from social and economic measures put through between 1954 and 1957 combined to prepare the ground for laying the foundations of a socialist society and for accelerating the country's economic development. The chief task of this period was formulated by the 14th plenary session of the CC of the Vietnam Workers' Party held in November 1958. The Par-

¹ *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hanoi, December 14-20, 1976, Moscow, 1977, p. 17 (in Russian).*

² See: *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party*, p. 85.

³ See: *The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Moscow, 1975, p. 35 (in Russian).*

ty's attention was focused on accelerating the socialist transformation of the private property of peasants and handicraftsmen, on accelerating the socialization of the capitalist sector of the economy backed up by the simultaneous expansion of the public sector as the leading force of the country's national economy. In practical terms, this policy resulted in the collectivization of agriculture and the conversion of privately-owned enterprises into mixed ones. The DRV also began a socialist industrialization drive under a three-year national economic and cultural development plan covering 1958 to 1960.

By late 1960 over 85 per cent of peasant households owning 68 per cent of the total of agricultural land had joined farming cooperatives. Of these almost 12 per cent joined the socialist-type cooperatives, the rest cooperatives of the rudimentary type whose members worked together using their own implements.¹

By 1960 almost 100 per cent of privately-owned capitalist enterprises, over 260 thousand handicraftsmen and artisans, 87.9 per cent of the total, had been transformed with the latter joining cooperatives. In addition over 150 thousand small traders, 45.1 per cent of the total, had been persuaded to join cooperatives.² The socialist transformation of the private sector ran a peaceful course since after the victory of the revolution the majority of the national bourgeoisie accepted the leading role of the working class and were active in contributing to the common effort under the leadership of the united national front.

The number of state-owned industrial enterprises grew from 27 in 1955 to 300 in 1959.³ Between 1958 and 1960 the gross output of the country's industry and handicrafts went up by 76.4 per cent with an annual increase of 20.8 per cent. The share of industry of the combined output of industry and agriculture grew over the three years from 31.4 to 42 per cent. Already in 1959 the DRV moved into first place in South-East

¹ See: *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party*, pp. 92-93.

² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³ See: *The Democratic Republic of Vietnam*, Moscow, 1963, p. 67.

Asia for per capita output of food crops—367.2 kilograms.¹

The profound social and economic changes carried out under the leadership of the Party, the enthusiasm displayed by the working people during the three-year economic development plan combined to change the face of North Vietnam where exploitation of man by man was basically abolished and whose once plural economy was increasingly becoming a homogeneous socialist-type economy. Socialist relations of production were gaining in strength.

An important factor which contributed to the socialist transformation of the DRV and to its strengthening in every way as the base for a struggle to reunify both Vietnams was the DRV's cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

Between 1955 and 1960 the socialist countries made available to the DRV, as free assistance, a total of 337.5 million rubles' worth of goods and over 112.5 million rubles' worth of long-term credits. The socialist countries supplied the DRV with a wide range of machinery and equipment, consumer goods, raw materials, etc. Between 1955 and 1960 fraternal socialist countries helped the DRV to build enterprises which formed the bed-rock of the country's heavy industry: power stations, engineering plants, fertilizer and building materials factories, power transmission lines, textile mills, etc. North Vietnam received a good deal of help from the sister socialist nations in its campaign to control TB, malaria and skin diseases.

Apart from giving material aid to the DRV the fraternal socialist countries trained thousands of Vietnamese students and postgraduates using the facilities of their educational establishments, sent hundreds of qualified specialists to Vietnam to help with the building of industrial enterprises and other projects, to train on the job Vietnamese engineers, technicians and workers in more advanced methods and skills and to introduce them to progressive, socialist organization of labor.

Ho Chi Minh wrote in April 1960: "Socialist construction in our country and our membership in the great

¹ See: *The Democratic Republic of Vietnam*, Moscow, 1975, p. 41.

world socialist community are a realization of the Leninist thesis on the feasibility of a country's advance to socialism bypassing the stage of capitalist development. The successes of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in all fields are ensured, on the one hand, by the self-sacrifice, heroism and creative activity of its people, who are executing Lenin's instructions on industrialization and collectivization, and, on the other hand, by disinterested, fraternal assistance from the Soviet-led socialist camp." ¹

While carrying out profound social and economic changes and mobilizing the working people for an effort to tackle the tasks of socialist construction the Vietnam Workers' Party attached great importance to the further consolidation of the national forces. A major event in this context was the creation in September 1955, a few months after the liberation of North Vietnam, of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, a successor to the Lien Viet Front. The Fatherland Front set itself the task of uniting on a broad democratic basis all political, religious, public and patriotic organizations, all nationalities and sections of the population as well as Vietnamese nationals resident abroad in order

— to strengthen peace, achieve national unity, implement throughout the country the principles of independence and democracy, to create a peaceful, united, independent, democratic and prosperous Vietnam; to contribute to the maintenance of peace in Indochina, in South-East Asia and throughout the world;

— to frustrate the designs of US imperialists and their lackeys who are out to disrupt peace, unity, independence and democracy in Vietnam" ²

The idea of a united Vietnam was reflected in the new constitution of the DRV adopted on December 31, 1959, which contains a clause on Vietnam as a single country.

The DRV's foreign policy was geared to the effort to build socialism and work for the reunification of the two Vietnams.

Addressing the National Assembly of the DRV in March 1955 Prime Minister Pham Van Dong said: "The

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *On Lenin and Leninism. Selected Speeches and Articles*, Moscow, 1971, p. 194.

² *The Democratic Republic of Vietnam*, Moscow, 1963, p. 51.

foreign policy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is aimed at establishing good relations with all countries on the basis of full equality, mutual respect, sovereignty and mutual benefit which is fully in line with the tasks of the just struggle of the Vietnamese people and of the peoples of other countries for peace, democracy, unity and independence of their homeland.”¹

Between 1955 and 1960 relations between the Democratic Vietnam and the USSR and other socialist countries were considerably strengthened and became more diversified.

Questions of expanded cooperation between the DRV and the USSR and other socialist countries were discussed during visits made by President Ho Chi Minh to the USSR and other socialist countries in 1955 and 1957. Between 1957 and 1959 the DRV signed agreements on scientific and technical cooperation with every socialist country.

The economic relations between the DRV and other socialist countries provided yet another example of international relations of the new type, based on equality, friendly support and fraternal mutual assistance.

In its relations with socialist countries which were central to the DRV's foreign policy activities after the restoration of peace in Vietnam “the Democratic Republic of Vietnam,” Prime Minister Pham Van Dong pointed out, “attaches special importance to proletarian internationalism which is playing the crucial role in these relations and should manifest itself in solidarity and cooperation between countries working to attain the common ideal of building socialism and Communism.”²

The DRV government followed the policy of strengthening the unity of the Indochina countries, a policy which originated during the war of Resistance, taking into account the situation that had arisen in Laos and Cambodia after the cessation of war in Indochina. Relations with Cambodia and the Kingdom of Laos were strengthened and formalized in appropriate diplomatic acts. The DRV strongly criticized US attempts to use reactionaries in Laos in order to install a neo-colonialist

¹ Ibid., pp. 120-21.

² *15 Years of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam*, Moscow, 1960, p. 101 (in Russian).

regime in that country. The patriotic forces of Laos which had fought side by side with Vietnamese volunteers against the French colonialists and which were concentrated in the provinces of Sam Neua and Phongsaly after the Geneva Conference, enjoyed the moral and political support of Democratic Vietnam in their struggle for the restoration of concord and tranquility in Laos.

The DRV established diplomatic relations with a number of countries in Asia and Africa. In the space of five years after the Geneva Conference over thirty government delegations from as many countries visited the DRV. In return many DRV delegations visited other countries. In this period a total of 204 public delegations from the DRV made visits to other countries and about 90 foreign groups visited North Vietnam.

The Struggle of the Vietnamese People for a Strict Observance of the Geneva Agreements

The attitude of the DRV government to Geneva Agreements was clearly formulated by President Ho Chi Minh who wrote: "We are resolved to abide by the agreements entered into with the French Government... We must endeavour to struggle for the holding of free general elections throughout the country to reunify our territory."¹

To this end the DRV government declared itself ready to contact representatives of the South to discuss the holding of general elections and, specifically, to discuss with them in a spirit of mutual understanding a series of measures which in line with the Geneva Agreements and taking into account the situation prevailing in each zone, would step by step create a favorable atmosphere for the elections. In February 1955 the DRV proposed to establish commercial, cultural and sporting relations between the North and the South, to allow mutual migration across the demarcation line separating the two Vietnams, to organize postal communications, etc. The

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. IV, p. 49.

Saigon authorities rejected these constructive proposals which were fully in the spirit of the Geneva Agreements.

On June 6, 1955 the DRV government declared itself ready to initiate consultations with South Vietnam on the holding of general elections. On July 19, 1955 the DRV government sent to the appropriate authorities of South Vietnam a note containing a proposal to appoint representatives who on July 20, 1955 in accordance with the terms of the Geneva Agreements could open discussions on the reunification of Vietnam through general free elections throughout the country.¹

A feature of this diplomatic struggle for the observance of the Geneva Agreements was the fact that the DRV always enjoyed international support and tried to use the machinery set up by the Geneva Conference to monitor the implementation of the documents it adopted. Apart from its repeated approaches to the South Vietnamese authorities in the summer of 1955 the DRV government sent to the foreign ministers of the USSR and Britain, the co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, a message requesting them to do everything in their power to facilitate a political settlement in Vietnam and, more specifically, to help in initiating without delay consultations on preparations for the proposed general elections.

Having adopted a policy aimed at a strict and consistent implementation of the Geneva Agreements as a whole and of each of their provisions, in particular, the DRV government and the Vietnamese Communists at the same time did not conceal from the people that international imperialism and internal reactionaries who had made their nest in the South would do their worst to prevent the victory of the forces of democracy and progress throughout Vietnam. Therefore, they emphasized the need for every Vietnamese both in the South and in the North to contribute his or her share to the strengthening of North Vietnam as the base for the reunification of the country.

The political and diplomatic moves by the DRV government, their determined efforts to ensure the strict observance of the Geneva Agreements had a mobilizing

¹ See: *The Democratic Republic of Vietnam*, Moscow, 1963, p. 107

effect on the people of South Vietnam. In 1954-1955 hundreds of thousands of letters from the population were sent to the International Control Commission and South Vietnamese authorities demanding immediate negotiations with the DRV. These letters were backed up by mass demonstrations in towns and cities to protest against the reign of terror instituted by the Saigon authorities in the South.

In rural areas this struggle was combined with the movement against the confiscation of the land turned over by the people's power to the peasants during the war of Resistance. In the western part of South Vietnam over half a million people took part in this movement in the summer of 1955.

The struggle of the DRV and the entire people of Vietnam for the observance of the Geneva Agreements developed amid serious difficulties as a result of increasing US interference in the affairs of South Vietnam.

Addressing the 4th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam Le Duan said: "After the French had suffered a total defeat at Dien Bien Phu, the US imperialists came rushing into South Vietnam, ousting the French and turning our country into a proving ground to test their strategic and technical concepts. In so doing they hoped to destroy the Vietnamese revolution and gain experience for subsequent struggle against the world revolutionary movement."¹ Washington's attitude to the reunification of Vietnam on the timetable established by the Geneva Conference sprang from the conclusion made by the National Security Council in August 1954 that the Geneva Agreements represented . . . a catastrophe for the USA which might lead to the irretrievable loss of South-East Asia. President Eisenhower later confessed that the White House had reason to suppose that "...had elections been held as of the time of the fighting, possibly 80 per cent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh".²

¹ *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hanoi, December 14-20, 1976*, p. 11.

² Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years. Mandate for Change 1953-1956*, London, 1963, p. 372.

Aware of this and following the global strategy of "containing Communism" the US took a series of measures to perpetuate the partition of Vietnam. In the summer of 1954 the USA carried out "operations" aimed at "preserving a friendly non-communist South Vietnam" and "preventing a communist victory through all-Vietnam elections" and at the same time at ousting the French completely from this part of the world. At US instigation Bao Dai appointed Ngo Dinh Diem, a dyed-in-the-wool comprador reactionary with pro-American leanings, as prime minister of his "government".

Washington assigned a suitable role to South Vietnam in its design to counteract Communism in South-East Asia, centering on the SEATO bloc which was set up following the Manila Conference in September 1954. The US delegates to the conference pressed for including Cambodia, South Vietnam and Laos in the SEATO framework. In fact this proposal was formalized in a special protocol annexed to the text of the treaty. This move was in flagrant violation of the Geneva Agreements which explicitly debarred Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia from entering into military alliances.

The Soviet Union reacted strongly against this move by international imperialism to undermine the peace and security of nations. The statement made by the USSR Foreign Ministry on September 15, 1954 exposed the aggressive essence of the SEATO bloc and proposed a concrete programme for setting up a collective security system in this part of the world. The statement emphasized that "just as the security of Europe, genuine security of the peoples of South-East Asia can only be guaranteed through joint efforts by all countries in the area irrespective of their social system and without outside interference and diktat".¹

Its aid to Saigon became the main lever used by the US to strengthen the reactionary regime in South Vietnam which was becoming a vehicle for US neo-colonialist policy. American military and economic aid to the Ngo Dinh Diem government between 1955 and 1961 was estimated at 2,118 million dollars, of which 571.3

¹ *Pravda*, September 15, 1954.

million dollars represented direct US military assistance.¹

The Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) originally set up to monitor the use made of US assistance during the war in Indochina between 1945 and 1954 had by the start of the 1960s degenerated into a major military organization maintaining all manner of military, technical and political services. This transformation was in crying violation of the Geneva Agreements which explicitly banned any introduction of foreign armed forces and military personnel into Vietnam. In June 1961 MAAG had a staff of 3,000 and had penetrated every echelon of the puppet army's command structure, and controlled the training, technical, tactical and strategic guidance of the South Vietnam's regular and para-military armed forces.

Between 1955 and 1961 an average of 15 US ships carrying arms and military hardware arrived in South Vietnam every month. Between 1956 and 1961 an average of one US cargo plane carrying military supplies and personnel landed in Saigon daily.

The economic aid given by the USA to South Vietnam in this period was designed to overcome the French influence in the country and at the same time to give a public relations boost to the puppet regime. The US thus complemented military aid with economic assistance which was coordinated by the Pentagon.

The bulk of this assistance went into developing South Vietnam's infrastructure, the building of roads and port facilities, etc. Aware that it would be impossible to suppress the struggle of the people of South Vietnam for the independence and unity of their homeland by terror and repressions alone and in an effort to secure some sort of social base for the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, specifically among the peasantry in the South, the US also allocated funds for setting up farming communities, for carrying out a land reform, establishing consumer cooperatives in rural areas and agricultural credit institutions as well as "re-education centers".

During his US visit in the spring of 1957 the South Vietnamese dictator Ngo Dinh Diem in a transparent

¹ See: *The Recent History of Vietnam (1917-1965)*, p. 347.

effort to demonstrate his loyalty and commitment to the US "grand design" of opposing the national liberation movement in South-East Asia declared that "the US borders extend to the 17th parallel in South Vietnam". In a sense, the Saigon puppet was right. Having refused to abide by the Geneva Agreements the US imperialists installed an anti-popular regime in South Vietnam whose policies from the very first ran counter to the national interests of Vietnam. Anti-Communism was placed at the service of the US neo-colonialist aims in South Vietnam. Its practical expression was the strenuous efforts made by the puppet authorities and their imperialist backers to sow the seeds of hatred and distrust among the people of South Vietnam towards Communist and Workers' parties, towards the socialist countries, above all, towards the DRV and the very idea of socialism and Communism.

Within weeks of its installation, the Ngo Dinh Diem government assisted by US politicians worked out a programme of action which unequivocally suggested that the Saigon authorities did not accept the idea of general elections in South Vietnam in 1956.

In October 1955 in violation of the Geneva Agreements a referendum was demonstratively held in the South at the end of which Ngo Dinh Diem announced the creation of the Republic of Vietnam and himself its president. The newly-baked republic was instantly recognized by the USA and Britain. Somewhat later they were joined by France.

The diplomatic support for the separatist aspirations of the reactionaries in South Vietnam on the part of those powers which only yesterday posed as champions of peace in Indochina was a graphic illustration of the sort of peace they wanted. The political meaning of this support backed up by US material aid was to encourage the Ngo Dinh Diem regime to refuse openly to fulfill its commitments under the Geneva Agreements. Justifying his opposition to the idea of general elections in Vietnam by ludicrous claims that there was no democracy in the North, the Saigon dictator at the same time declared that since neither he nor any of his cabinet ministers had signed the Geneva Agreements they could not consider themselves bound by them. True. Ngo Dinh

Diem had no part in the Geneva Conference. But even so his lame excuse was nothing more but a diplomatic trick and a falsification of the facts since Article 27 of the Geneva Agreements contained an explicit reference to the fact that not only France but her successors would be bound by the Agreements and inasmuch as the Saigon puppet government took over functions formerly performed by the French administration they were also bound by the Agreements.

The refusal by the USA and the South Vietnamese reactionaries to abide by the Geneva Agreements showed itself not only in the creation of a separate state in South Vietnam and in the wrecking of the proposed general elections. These violations of the Geneva Agreements were made worse by a series of political moves against the democratic and peace-loving forces of South Vietnam made by the Ngo Dinh Diem regime. A year after he proclaimed himself president Diem organized elections for a national assembly. The French newspaper *Combat* wrote at the time that the voting procedure imposed by the head of government presented the voter with a choice: either to vote for candidates put up by Diem or not to vote at all for the sake of his own safety.

The National Assembly constituted as a result of such elections approved a constitution which was permeated by anti-democratic and anti-communist ideas. In particular, Article 7 of the constitution stated: "All acts either directly or indirectly promoting Communism and all activities aimed at advancing communism run counter to the principles underlying this constitution."

In amplification of this article two ordinances were brought in: Ordinance No. 6 of November 11, 1955 on the deportation of patriots without trial to concentration camps and Ordinance No. 13 of February 20, 1956 which severely restricted the freedom of the press.

Between July 1955 and May 1956 as a result of the "exposing of Communists" campaign a total of 108,835 people were shot or imprisoned.¹

The next step in turning terror into government pol-

¹ See: *US Neo-Colonialism. Collection of Articles*, Issue No. 2, p. 262.

icy and a method for solving domestic problems and perpetuating the domination of the ruling clique was Decree No. 10-59 of May 6, 1959 which under the pretext of "combating sabotage and encroachments on state security" legalized the creation of special court martials which handed down only two kinds of sentence: death or hard labor for life which was tantamount to a slow death. Never before in their age-old history had the Vietnamese people experienced a darker period than the years of the puppet regime.

Actually, even the economic changes introduced by the Saigon authorities were police actions designed to "pacify" the rural areas of South Vietnam and, above all, former liberated zones. Under a variety of pretexts the families of those who had taken part in the war of Resistance were deprived of land and property. The number of "resettlement centers" grew from 45 in 1958 to 84 in 1959. The Ngo Dinh Diem regime made no secret of the fact that the resettlement centers were strategic outposts controlling sparsely populated areas. What it meant in practical terms, was that, firstly, former Resistance fighters and members of their families were isolated in remote, predominantly mountainous and thickly forested areas, and secondly, the creation of military-police outposts in these zones with the aid of which it would be possible to keep at gunpoint the "sparsely populated areas" which offered favorable conditions for underground guerrilla warfare against the fascist-style puppet regime in Saigon.

This regime which was kept afloat by US aid fought against the people of Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam they had willed into the existence. It was not a matter of chance that simultaneously with campaigns of persecution and physical extermination of those who championed peace and the unity of both Vietnams the Ngo Dinh Diem regime called for a "crusade" against the North, for open war against the DRV, the outpost of socialism in South-East Asia. These moves by Saigon were fully in accord with the policy formulated by the US President in 1958, namely, in conditions of secrecy to eliminate communist control in Hanoi and reunite the two Vietnams under a pro-American government.

The people of Vietnam led by the Vietnam Workers' Party countered these sinister plans of the US imperialists and South Vietnamese reactionaries by a determined and highly principled struggle for the reunification of the country on the basis of the Geneva Agreements. President Ho Chi Minh in a letter to the Vietnamese people throughout the country of July 6, 1956 stated that the DRV was scrupulously abiding by the Geneva Agreements having repeatedly proposed to hold consultations to prepare for elections "but the U.S. imperialists and the pro-American authorities in South Viet Nam are scheming to divide our country permanently, and preventing the holding of free general elections at the time prescribed by the Geneva Agreement. They are acting against the interests of our Fatherland and our people's wishes".¹

President Ho Chi Minh went on to say that "faced with this situation, our sacred duty is: to continue to struggle with determination for the implementation of the Geneva Agreement and the reunification of our country by peaceful means, on the basis of independence and democracy, for the completion of the glorious task of national liberation".² President Ho Chi Minh called for closer cohesion among all the sections of the Vietnamese people in the Fatherland Front. On behalf of the DRV government he expressed readiness to restore normal relations and freedom of movement between the North and the South, to create conditions for maintaining contact between various political, economic, cultural and public organizations of both Vietnams; to open consultations by representatives of both sides to discuss the holding of general elections with the object of reunifying the country on the basis of the Geneva Agreements.³

The DRV stand was fully backed by the Soviet Union which approached the British government, the other co-chairman of the Geneva Conference, with the suggestion that it should demand that the South Vietnamese

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Vol. IV, p. 463.

² *Ibid.*

³ See: Ho Chi Minh, *Works (1920-1969)*, Hanoi, 1971, pp. 204-205 (in Russian).

authorities name a date for opening consultations. However, the Soviet initiative failed to meet with understanding on the part of the British government.

In 1957-1958 the DRV government repeatedly urged the South Vietnamese authorities to take concrete steps to achieve a settlement in the interests of the people of both Vietnams. As always, these DRV initiatives were constructive and proceeded from the realities of the situation in Vietnam and in the world at large. They called for a peaceful settlement of existing domestic political problems facing Vietnam on the basis of the Geneva Agreements.

These initiatives were exemplified by the appeal of Prime Minister Pham Van Dong to the South Vietnamese authorities on March 7, 1958 for authorized representatives of both zones to meet to exchange opinions on reciprocal armed forces cuts and to explore possibilities for trade between the North and the South.

These proposals which failed to draw a response from Saigon were developed in the DRV Prime Minister's further letter to Saigon of December 22, 1958, which contained a proposal to carry out a series of measures which, if adopted, would facilitate the creation of a climate of trust between the two sides as a preliminary to the peaceful reunification of Vietnam. These measures included:

- in the military field—not to enter into any military blocs, not to use foreign military personnel, not to expand existing and not to create new military bases, to cut armed strength and military budgets;

- in the economic field—to initiate trade in home-produced commodities;

- in the propaganda field—to ban propaganda of war and the division of the country, to step up propaganda for peace, national unity and reunification of the homeland;

- on the freedom of movement between the two zones—to allow the exchange of cultural, scientific, economic and sports delegations to share experience, to allow women and children to visit relatives in the other zone and to allow the exchange of correspondence.

The DRV government underscored that all matters pertaining to the relations between and the future of

both Vietnams should be settled by the Vietnamese themselves without any outside interference.

In an effort to amplify this initiative the ministries of transport and communications, culture, trade and the National Bank of the DRV repeatedly approached their counterparts in South Vietnam offering to open cultural, trade and postal relations between the two zones. However, these initiatives by the DRV government and other organizations of North Vietnam were ignored by Saigon.

The public organizations of the DRV united in the Fatherland Front were most active in calling for the observance of the Geneva Agreements. These organizations launched mass campaigns to protest against the crimes committed by the pro-American Diem regime in South Vietnam, drew the attention of the world public to them and mobilized the world public for support of the DRV's just demands.

Early in December 1958 the Diem regime committed an ugly atrocity by putting to death the inmates of the Phu Loi concentration camp. They were given poisoned food which killed thousands and seriously affected the health of thousands of others. Those who managed to climb on the roofs of their barracks to call for help were shot in cold blood. A few days later the Saigon authorities had the camp surrounded by soldiers to prevent the local population from coming to the rescue of the surviving victims. Orders were issued to douse several barracks with petrol and set them on fire. They were. This led to more victims.¹ This description of the atrocity in Phu Loi was contained in the letter of General Giap, Commander-in-Chief of the Vietnam People's Army, to the chairman of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam of January 18, 1959.

In January 1959 millions of people in North Vietnam took part in meetings and demonstrations to protest the crime committed by the South Vietnamese authorities at the Phu Loi concentration camp. On January 25, 1959 an estimated 300,000 demonstrators in Hanoi demanded that the Saigon authorities dismantle all

¹ See: *The Murder at Phu Loi*, Moscow, 1961, p. 84 (in Russian).

concentration camps immediately. Within one week the headquarters of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam was visited by no fewer than 500 deputations presenting petitions strongly condemning the dastardly murder of South Vietnamese patriots.

The Central Committee of Protest Struggle Against the Mass Murder at Phu Loi formed in Hanoi exposed this crime to the outside world and organized collections among the population of North Vietnam to help the families of the dead and surviving victims at Phu Loi. By the beginning of February contributions to the fund amounted to 15 million dong in addition to 10 tons of assorted medical supplies.

In response to an appeal issued by the mass organizations of North Vietnam the people of many different provinces of the North began to treat individual provinces in South Vietnam as twin provinces. This patriotic movement not only contributed to strengthening the unity of spirit between the people of both Vietnams but also invigorated socialist construction in the North since those enterprises, cooperatives, districts and towns which joined the movement undertook to overfulfil their production programmes to cover the needs of their compatriots in the provinces of South Vietnam for which they made themselves responsible.

The determined struggle of the DRV for the observance of the Geneva Agreements, its repeated protests against the fascist-style reign of terror instituted by the Saigon puppets, those stooges of neo-colonialism, formed the principal political front on which the people of Vietnam repulsed imperialist attempts to perpetuate the partition of Vietnam by "peaceful means".

After the conclusion of the Geneva Agreements and the complete liberation of the North the struggle of the patriotic forces in the South against the anti-popular policies pursued by US imperialism and the puppets in Saigon developed in a very complicated situation. As Le Duan put it, "the heroic sons of our homeland in South Vietnam who had once been in the van were compelled to take a step back",¹ i.e., to carry on their struggle to

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1965-1970)*, p. 178.

complete the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal revolution in the South in a situation where the puppet regime did its worst to eliminate the gains of the people of the South they achieved during the war of Resistance between 1945 and 1954.

In 1957-1958 the Saigon authorities carried out large-scale punitive expeditions throughout South Vietnam. But the dictatorial regime failed to suppress the national liberation movement. What is more, opposition to the reign of terror it instituted took a variety of forms including the assassination of the more reactionary local officials. Cases of workers in urban areas backing the demands of peasants were becoming more frequent and the national minorities in the mountainous areas stiffened their hostility to the Saigon regime. According to some sources during the first six months of 1958 a total of 359 major actions by working people against the Saigon regime occurred in South Vietnam. On 152 occasions such actions involved workers, on 95—other sections of the urban population, on 30—students, and on 82—peasants.

In 1959-1960 the situation in the rural areas of South Vietnam became so explosive that landowners in many areas had to flee to the town while local officials of the puppet administration offered their resignations. Political actions by the population were increasingly superseded by political struggle combined with armed resistance. More and more frequently the slogan demanding that the authorities abide by the Geneva Agreements was replaced by the slogan "Down with Ngo Dinh Diem!"

Le Duan wrote: "In late 1959 and early 1960 the dominant regime in South Vietnam entered a period of deep crisis. And although in towns the enemy remained relatively strong, in large areas of the countryside it was unable to rule the people by the old methods. The puppet administration machine had been largely eroded and lost much of its power. At the same time the popular masses, particularly the peasants, were experiencing a revolutionary uplift and were fully determined and prepared to engage the enemy in mortal combat. This clearly indicated that conditions were ripe for mobilizing the mass of the peasantry for a *gradual un-*

*folding of an uprising to strike at the weakest link in the enemy's administration chain."*¹

A secret conference of the leaders of the revolutionary movement was held in the South at the start of 1959. The conference stated that the reactionary Ngo Dinh Diem regime was an obedient tool of aggression and enslavement in the hands of the US imperialists. The conference declared that "the thrust and tasks of the revolution in South Vietnam cannot fail to be in harmony with the overall trends of the Vietnamese revolution which *makes use of revolutionary violence to counter counter-revolutionary violence and an uprising to seize power for the people*".²

Proceeding from this assessment of the situation in the South and relying on the successful progress of socialist construction in the North, the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party at its 15th plenary session held in May 1959 mapped out a new policy in the struggle for the reunification of the country. The documents adopted by the plenary session emphasized the intimate connection between the socialist construction in the North as a reliable foundation for subsequent reunification, and the struggle to eliminate the pro-American Diem regime as an essential condition for *peaceful* reunification of the country.

Following its strategy aimed at reunification the Vietnam Workers' Party proceeded from the recognition that the support of all progressive forces throughout the world together with which the DRV was in the forefront of the struggle for peace and social progress, was a crucial factor in the ultimate success of the Vietnamese people's just cause.

The wave of support by the world public for the struggle of the Vietnamese people kept rising as the US imperialists and their Saigon puppets went ever further along the road of violations of the Geneva Agreements. The International Solidarity Front with the People of Vietnam was gaining strength.

The Soviet Union kept up its active efforts in support of the independence and unity of Vietnam. The

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1965-1970)*, pp. 226-227.

² *An Outline History of Vietnam Workers' Party*, pp. 111-112.

joint communique at the end of the 1955 visit to the USSR by President Ho Chi Minh stated that the two sides reiterated their determination to secure the strict adherence to the Geneva Agreements. Peace in Indochina, it was their conviction, would only be strengthened following the reunification of Vietnam on the basis of respect for its sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.¹

The Soviet Union's support for the Vietnamese people's determination to settle their pressing national problems was clearly articulated by K. E. Voroshilov, Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, during his visit to the DRV in May 1957.

The Soviet Union provided massive assistance to the DRV in its capacity as a co-chairman of the Geneva Conference. The Soviet co-chairman repeatedly discussed with his British counterpart specific matters relating to the implementation of the Geneva Agreements in their entirety and of their individual provisions. A salient feature of Soviet diplomatic efforts for the settlement of the Indochina problem was their emphasis on dealing with specific matters quickly and efficiently, consistent with a careful analysis of every aspect of the Indochina situation in intimate connection with other major events and developments in the rest of the world and the basic trends of world development. In a situation where US propaganda was trying to hide from the American people and other nations the truth about US policy in Indochina, the foreign policy activities of the USSR apart from their direct object of giving every assistance to the Vietnamese people's just cause were a major factor contributing to the exposure of imperialist policy before the world public and mobilizing it for active support of the Geneva Agreements.

In a note to the British government on March 30, 1956 concerning the unsatisfactory implementation of the Geneva Agreements the Soviet Foreign Ministry stated: "The present alarming situation in South Vietnam would not have occurred had it not been for the interference on the part of a certain power which partic-

¹ M. P. Isayev, A. S. Chernyshev, *Soviet-Vietnamese Relations*, p. 121.

ipated in the Geneva Conference but did not sign the Geneva Agreements on Vietnam and which, instead confined itself to undertaking not only to refrain from violating the Geneva Agreements but to treat any violation of the aforesaid agreements as constituting a serious threat to international peace and security. Support is openly given to the actions of the South Vietnamese authorities aimed at torpedoing the idea of general elections in July 1956 in South Vietnam. Arms and military equipment are being supplied and military personnel is being trained for the so-called "crusade to the North" in order to unleash a new war in Indochina. Every encouragement is being given to such actions by the South Vietnamese authorities which are aimed at perpetuating the partition of the country such as separate unilateral elections for a constituent assembly held by the South Vietnamese authorities in March, etc." ¹

At the beginning of March 1957 at the 11th session of the UN General Assembly USA attempted to get South Vietnam admitted into the World Body. The Soviet delegate at the Security Council resorted to his right of veto to foil Washington's diplomatic maneuver and pointed out that the admission of South Vietnam to the UN would have contradicted the letter and spirit of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 which recognized the unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam.

The firm and consistent stand taken by the USSR and other socialist countries against the neo-colonialist policy of imperialism, for a just settlement of the Vietnam problem invigorated the struggle of progressive forces the world over for the observance of the Geneva Agreements.

The World Peace Assembly held in Helsinki in 1955 and the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference that met in Cairo in 1957-1958 declared its unqualified support for the just stand of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and demanded the unswerving adherence to the Geneva Agreements on Vietnam and respect for Vietnam's unity and independence. The people of Vietnam were proud of the prize confirmed by the World Council of Peace on the peace movement by the people of the

¹ *Izvestia*, April 6, 1956.

Saigon-Cho Lon area. Many international democratic organizations on repeated occasions exposed the aggressive neo-colonialist policy pursued by the USA in South Vietnam. A flood of protest statements, telegrams and letters of protest descended on the puppets in Saigon from many different international democratic organizations which expressed their indignation over the bloody massacre of former Resistance fighters and against the bestial murder of the inmates of the Phu Loi.

Drawing the attention of the UN Secretary-General to the violations of human rights in South Vietnam the World Federation of Trade Unions urged him to take measures to guarantee democratic rights and freedoms to the people of South Vietnam in accordance with the UN Charter and the Geneva Agreements.

The International Association of Democratic Lawyers after carefully analyzing the "witch hunt" conducted by the Diem regime on the strength of its anti-communist legislation came to the conclusion that Law No. 10-59 adopted in 1959 and directed against former Resistance fighters and patriots constituted a serious violation of the Geneva Agreements and of basic human rights enshrined in the UN Declaration.

The protest campaign launched by the progressive world public against the repressive Ngo Dinh Diem authorities and their policies of wrecking the Geneva Agreements compelled the governments and political parties of Western powers to criticize the South Vietnamese dictator. Thus in May 1957 the DRV was visited by a group of British Labor MPs who had also visited South Vietnam. The British MPs later declared that the DRV was strictly abiding by the Geneva Agreements and noted the "artificial nature" of the Saigon regime.

By the late 1950s the movement of the international public in support of Vietnam had significantly expanded and involved all democratic organizations the world over as well as countries embarked on the road of independent development and national liberation movements. The struggle for a settlement of the Vietnam problem in the spirit of the basic national aspirations of the people of Vietnam became an important component of the world-wide movement for peace and relaxation of international tensions.

Against the "Special" War of US Imperialism in Vietnam (1961-1964)

Until US imperialism is expelled from South Vietnam, until the people of South Vietnam are free from the cruel domination of the US imperialists and the Diem clique, our people cannot rest. Therefore, the struggle for peace, for the unification of the country must not be separated from the struggle against the US imperialists.

Ho Chi Minh

The Third Congress of the Vietnam Workers' Party and the New Revolutionary Tasks

In 1960 the people of Vietnam and their friends in the rest of the world marked the 15th anniversary of the first state of workers and peasants in South-East Asia. The 15 years were packed with grim trials of war, tough diplomatic struggle, victory over war damage and economic dislocation and the transition to socialist construction. The people of Vietnam and their Marxist-Leninist party had every reason to be proud of their record. The decision adopted by the 14th plenary session of the CC of the Vietnam Workers' Party (November 1958) was being put into effect successfully. That decision emphasized the need "to carry out socialist revolution with determination and, above all, to put through socialist changes in the field of petty commodity farming, the cottage industry and the private capitalist sector and at the same time bend every effort to advance the public sector, the leading force of the national economy."¹ The year 1960 saw

¹ *Nhan Dan*, November 12, 1958.

the completion of the three-year plan for the economic and cultural development of the DRV—the first such plan in Vietnamese history.

During the celebrations to mark the 15th anniversary of the DRV the Third Congress of the Vietnam Workers' Party met in Hanoi, the capital. Opening the Party forum Ho Chi Minh said: "The Second Congress was the congress of the War of Resistance. *The present congress is the congress of socialist construction in North Vietnam and of the struggle for our country's peaceful unification.*"¹

The resolution adopted by the Congress formulated two strategic goals of Vietnamese revolution: socialist revolution in North Vietnam; the liberation of South Vietnam from the domination of US imperialists and their henchmen, reunification of the country and the establishment of independence and democracy throughout the country. On the question of the relationship between these two tasks the resolution of the Congress stated: "*...the carrying out of socialist revolution in North Vietnam is of decisive importance for the development of the revolution throughout the country, for its unification. The socialist revolution in North Vietnam is being carried out at a time when it is necessary to bring together and consolidate all national and democratic forces in the South, to expand and strengthen the solidarity of the entire people, to isolate the US imperialists and their henchmen and step up the fight to strengthen peace and reunify the homeland.*"²

The working people of North Vietnam gave their willing cooperation for the effort to fulfil the tasks set by the Third Congress in the first five-year development plan covering 1961 to 1965 which was aimed at socialist industrialization of North Vietnam. Building on the successes scored in the previous years in economic development and implementing socialist changes, relying on the help and experience of sister socialist nations, the working class, collectivized peasants and working intelligentsia of North Vietnam were building socialism

¹ *The Third Congress of the Vietnam Workers' Party Hanoi, September 5-12, 1960, p. 7.*

² *Ibid., p. 272.*

while learning socialism. The road was not easy and by no means free from mistakes and miscalculations. The main point about it was, however, that the Party always managed to put things right in time and combined ideological and educational work among the masses with intensive organizing and directing activities.

By the end of the five-year plan period as a result of the industrialization policy notable structural changes had occurred in North Vietnam's national economy. The contribution of industry to the total volume of industrial and agricultural output reached 53.7 per cent.¹ Within the industrial production the share of the capital goods industry was 41 per cent.² In 1965 North Vietnam had over 1,000 industrial enterprises including more than 200 major ones.

The contribution of the socialist sector to the gross industrial output reached 95 per cent, in agriculture—85 per cent, in retail trade—also 85 per cent. By the end of the five-year period 80 per cent of North Vietnam's agricultural cooperatives had become socialist-type agricultural enterprises.³ In 1965 they had a tractor fleet of 2,000 units.

Between 1961 and 1964 capital investment in the national economy grew 4.5-fold compared with the period 1955-1957. By 1964 North Vietnam had become virtually self-sufficient in food, produced about 90 per cent of the consumer goods it needed and began creating domestic sources of accumulation.⁴

These statistics illustrate the titanic effort made by millions of Vietnamese working at factories, on cooperative fields and lumber camps in the mountainous areas as they translated into effect the Party's call to turn North Vietnam into a reliable base for the struggle to reunify the two Vietnams, to make North Vietnam an outpost of socialism in South-East Asia.

While working to fulfil the first five-year development plan the people of Vietnam received the assistance and

¹ See: *The Recent History of Vietnam (1917-1965)*, p. 331.

² See: *Nhan Dan*, April 29, 1966.

³ See: *The Democratic Republic of Vietnam*, Moscow, 1975, p. 52.

⁴ See: *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hanoi, December 14-20, 1976*, p. 22.

support of sister socialist nations. By late 1964 the USSR helped the DRV to modernize and build over 90 industrial units out of the 146 covered by agreements. Among the industrial enterprises already operational was a major mechanical engineering plant in Hanoi producing precision milling, turning and drilling machine tools, and spare parts. A superphosphate plant was built in Lam Thao, North Vietnam's first and the biggest of its kind in South-East Asia. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of this plant Ngoc Ket, a Lam Thao worker, said: "The Ukraine, Leningrad, Kiev, the Donbass area and chemical plants in Konstantinovka and Vinnitsa and other Soviet cities sent many of their specialists and workers to help us with the building of this plant. They have contributed greatly to Soviet-Vietnamese friendship."

Under the Banner of the United Front

As the political report of the CC of the Vietnam Workers' Party to the Fourth Party Congress pointed out: "Having overcome the difficult period 1954 to 1959, the revolutionary movement in South Vietnam fulfilling the resolutions adopted by the 15th plenary session of the Party's Central Committee (May 1959) and the Third Party Congress have gone over to the tactics of storing up strength for a future offensive."¹

The popular masses of South Vietnam took the decisive step towards offensive actions on the night of January 17, 1960 in Ben Tre province. A wave of insurrection rolled on from village to village, from hamlet to hamlet. The patriots were destroying enemy outposts and barracks, capturing weapons and forming themselves into fighting groups and self-defense units. The insurrection in Ben Tre province quickly spread to other provinces of South and Central Vietnam and the Thai Nguyen plateau.

The spreading wave of insurrection that swept across the rural areas of South Vietnam had a galvanizing

¹ *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hanoi, December 14-20, 1976, p. 12.*

effect on the anti-government actions of urban dwellers. In 1960 a total of one and a half thousand actions by workers occurred in different towns and cities with the workers putting forward economic demands under the slogans of freedom and democracy.

In November 1960 at the initiative of underground party organizations of the South an organizing committee was formed to prepare a congress of patriotic forces of South Vietnam. The Congress opened on December 19, 1960 in one of the liberated areas of Ben Tre province. It was attended by delegates representing a wide spectrum of political and public organizations and groups. On December 20 the Congress adopted the decision to form the South Vietnam National Liberation Front (SVNLF) which "took upon itself the historic responsibility for liberating . . . the people from the yoke of slavery".

The Front's aim was to unite all the sections of the population and all the classes of South Vietnam's society, all nationalities and ethnic groups, all political parties, organizations and religious communities, all patriots irrespective of their political affiliations and convictions, for a common struggle "to overthrow the domination of US imperialists and Ngo Dinh Diem's clique of lackeys, to win independence, democracy, peace, neutrality and to start a peaceful reunification of the homeland." ¹

The Congress of the SVNLF adopted a political programme which emphasized matters relating to the reunification of the homeland apart from provisions of a general democratic nature which determined the policy of completing the national popular-democratic revolution. The programme stated in particular: "The peaceful reunification of the homeland is the irrepressible aspiration of the whole of our people. The *South Vietnam National Liberation Front* is working for the country's reunification by peaceful means through negotiation and joint discussion of forms and means of reunification for the benefit of the nation and the Fatherland."

¹ *The South Vietnam National Liberation Front. Documents*, South Vietnam, 1969, pp. 12-13 (in Russian).

This process was planned to begin *after the overthrow of the Saigon puppet regime and following the ending of the South's dependence on US imperialism*. The National Liberation Front saw this as an essential and decisive condition for a successful reunification of the country.

The Front supported unequivocally the Geneva Agreements as the basis for settling the Vietnam problem: "The people of Vietnam have been abiding by the Agreements unswervingly and fighting to ensure the observance of these Agreements in a way which would be in harmony with their letter and spirit...".

The salient feature of the Front's programme was the fact that it linked the struggle of the people of South Vietnam for their national aspirations with the world revolutionary process, the peace movement and the national liberation movement. The successes scored by the peoples on this road were seen by the Front as creating favorable conditions for the victory of the just cause of South Vietnamese patriots. For its part the Front saw one of its main tasks in opposing wars of aggression and all forms of enslavement of peoples by imperialists, in supporting the struggle of the nations of the world for peace, national liberation, democracy and social progress.

The process of organizational formalization of the Front lasted until its first Congress which met between February 16 and March 3, 1962. During 1961 alone the Front was joined by over twenty political organizations of which ten were mass organizations including: the Trade-Union Association for Freedom, the Peasants' Union for Liberation, the Youth League for Liberation, the South Vietnam Liberation Women's Association, the Students' and Schoolchildren's Union for Liberation, the Writers' and Cultural Workers' Union for Liberation, the Patriotic Journalists' Association, the Industrialists' and Traders' Association, the Resistance Veterans' Association, and the Association of Patriotic Soldiers of the Puppet Army. Also active in the Front were the Bourgeois-Democratic Party and the Radical Socialist Party whose members were for the most part intellectuals.

Apart from these parties, organizations and groups, the Front was joined by the South Vietnam Afro-Asian

Solidarity Committee, the South Vietnam Peace Committee, the South Vietnam Democratic Jurists' Association, etc.

The formation of the National Liberation Front was approved and supported by many members of the Cao-Dai religious sect. The formation of the Front had a mobilizing effect on the workers of Saigon and other cities in the South.

The Vietnam Workers' Party whose organizations became the "tested headquarters of a great front" was the directing and guiding force of the Front. This role was acknowledged by Le Duan at the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam.¹

The formation of the Front and the publication of its programme gave a fresh impetus to mass actions and demonstrations in the South. In February 1961 all self-defense detachments, the militia and local regular troops were brought together under a single command to form the regular People's Liberation Armed Forces.

In the course of the unification of guerrilla units and the creation of People's Liberation Armed Forces battle-field tactics were further perfected and ever more painful blows were struck at the puppet forces. In 1960-1961 combat operations were limited to the destruction of small fortified strongholds, thwarting small-scale punitive expeditions, i.e. to operations which enabled the insurgents to obtain weapons with minimal losses to themselves and to liberate villages and hamlets. The organizational period provided a good opportunity for preparing and planning bolder and larger operations which were to inflict appreciable damage on the enemy in the years that followed.

General Giap wrote: "...The development of the South Vietnamese Revolution in 1960-1961 took the form of a transition from political struggle to armed struggle, from armed uprisings to a war of liberation, from guerrilla warfare to combat operations—using heavy concentrations of forces and closely combining these forms and methods of struggle."²

¹ *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hanoi, December 14-20, 1976*, p. 18.

² Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Arming of the Revolutionary Masses and the Building of a People's Army*, p. 156.

The formation of the National Liberation Front completed the development of a unified and organized patriotic front of the people of the North and of the South to oppose the block of imperialists and South Vietnamese reactionaries. This Front rested on the identity of aims and goals in a common struggle to liberate the homeland. It was directed and guided by a single political party, a party of Communists. The carrying out by the populations of the North and South of specific tasks arising from local conditions was geared to the achievement of the over-riding goal—the country's reunification.

“Hang on to South Vietnam at All Costs”

The formation in South Vietnam of a mass political organization which provided guidance to the popular masses in their struggle against US imperialists and their Saigon puppets marked the collapse of US attempts to suppress the liberation movement in South Vietnam using the puppet regime as a cat's paw and showed up the extremely rickety position of the puppet government in Saigon which sat on US bayonets.

When John F. Kennedy took office in January 1961 he was shown dispatches from the US embassy in Saigon which indicated that Diem was in danger of being toppled because of his repressive policies and tolerant attitude towards corruption in the higher echelons in his government. In March 1961 the CIA warned that the “Viet Cong” (the US propaganda media's lingo for the patriotic forces of South Vietnam, including the National Liberation Front.—*Auth.*) was gaining ground and influence over an expanding area of South Vietnam. The CIA concluded that Diem's position was becoming increasingly precarious.

As he took office on January 20, 1961 John F. Kennedy, a Democrat, was immediately thrown on the horns of a dilemma in Indochina affairs. The new Chief Executive was under pressure both from the doves and the hawks among the ruling circles in Washington. Senator Mansfield, a dove, advised “caution” in Indochina policy and took the view that the local war in Vietnam should not be allowed to turn into a predominantly

American war which should be paid for largely by American lives. Senator Dodd, a hawk, demanded an unlimited war when he said: "We must not and cannot restrict the struggle for freedom to the jungle terrain of remote places in Laos and South Vietnam . . . we must beat them by carrying the offensive to North Vietnam, and wherever else it may become necessary." ¹

But, of course, neither the doves nor let alone, the hawks, thought in terms of giving up the strategic goal of the US in Indochina which was to establish an unchallenged domination of US capital in the area. The debates on the Capitol Hill and in the US press were not about a US withdrawal but merely about the methods to be adopted in settling the problem in the area in the interests of strengthening US positions there.

The policy worked out by President Kennedy on the Vietnam problem was middle of the road, a resultant between the demands of different camps of monopolists. However, at the stage of practical implementation the "resultant" immediately began to gravitate to the right, to the pressure of the hawks. These "deviations" which enabled the Pentagon war machine to gather momentum, created a situation a few years later where the foreign policy barometer in Washington began to point to an imminent military storm in Vietnam.

The "new frontiers" policy proclaimed by President Kennedy called for a new approach to the forms of US penetration of South Vietnam, which was based, as before, on an unchanged neo-colonialist policy. The ideological basis of US policy in Indochina remained the same—anti-Communism. US ruling circles worked out a programme of "pacification" of South Vietnam in 1960-1961. The programme provided for, firstly, more and larger punitive operations against the national liberation forces, secondly, for a proclamation of what was called "a revolution of rising hopes", i.e. a promise to carry out a number of social and economic reforms.

This plan was approved by President Kennedy at the start of 1961. The Pentagon, the State Department, the CIA and the giant US propaganda machine went into action to implement it.

¹ *Congressional Record. Proceedings and Debates of the 87th Congress, First Session, Vol. 107, Part 7, Washington, 1961, p. 9179.*

In March 1961 the USA supplied Saigon with yet another massive quantity of food. Half the income (in local currency) from the sale on the home market of imported goods went to meet the expenditures of the US embassy in Saigon, the other half was supposed to finance the purchases by the puppet administration of military equipment and materials, to pay for various services under the programme of "joint defense" of the USA and South Vietnam.

In an effort to demonstrate "equality" in US-South Vietnamese relations the "new frontiers" diplomats staged the formal signing on April 3, 1961 in Saigon of the Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations between the USA and South Vietnam which declared in part:

US nationals and firms in South Vietnam shall enjoy the same rights and economic privileges available to the citizens and firms of South Vietnam, namely, the freedom of enterprise "without having to register or contribute to the social welfare fund;

their formally recognized property and interests are protected by the state and shall carry compensation in the event of their nationalization or confiscation;

they shall enjoy "most-favored-nation treatment" in commercial and industrial activities, and specifically as regards taxation, customs duties and internal charges, etc.;

US vessels docking at South Vietnamese ports shall enjoy the same privileges and conditions available to those of South Vietnam.

What Ngo Dinh Diem bombastically declared in the 1950s in a fit of a slave's ecstasy about the US borders passing along the 17th parallel found concrete embodiment in the treaty of April 3, 1961. South Vietnam's independence remained intact only in the name of the Saigon dictator's residence "the Palace of Independence". Fronting under this shopsign US big business was bossing the show in South Vietnam setting up mining operations, enterprises to produce consumer goods, opening assembly plants and commercial and banking institutions. The export of profits was not controlled and that hampered the creation of financial reserves essential for stimulating South Vietnam's economy. As a result "general industrialization of the country becomes impos-

sible as the young industry of South Vietnam cannot withstand the pressure of the giant industrial might of the USA, Japan and West Germany, unless it is suitably protected.”¹

The signing of the treaty of April 3, 1961 completed the round of civilian measures adopted by Washington and Saigon within the framework of the “pacification programme” and left the South Vietnamese puppet regime bound fast to the US military-industrial complex.

In March 1961 President Kennedy approved a plan submitted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff which for all practical purposes gave the go-ahead to direct military interference in Vietnam. At the beginning of May 1961 Secretary of State Dean Rusk told a Washington press conference: “...The President has authorized an increase in the amount of military assistance and a number of other measures have been determined upon. ...The details of that... I should leave aside for the moment...”²

On May 11, 1961 Vice-President Johnson went to Saigon to “advise” Ngo Dinh Diem to ask Washington for more military assistance. The USA was ready not only to subsidize an expansion of the Saigon army and personnel training, but also offered to send to Vietnam, apart from “advisors”, engineer elements of the US army “to rebuild existing and construct new communication lines and landing strips”.

At the end of their Saigon talks Johnson and Ngo Dinh Diem signed a joint declaration. As expected, the South Vietnamese president asked the White House for military assistance. Johnson and Diem agreed that a special commission would be set up to study the situation and submit its recommendations to both governments for a long-term programme covering every aspect of the development of South Vietnam.

The USA undertook to give assistance to Ngo Dinh Diem to increase the combat efficiency of his regular army (in 1961 alone a total of 65 million dollars was authorized for the purpose)³, to equip the para-mili-

¹ *US Neo-Colonialism, Collection of Articles*, Issue No. 2, pp. 125, 126.

² *The New York Times*, May 5, 1961.

³ See: V. F. Lee, *The Strategy and Policy of US Neo-Colonialism*, Moscow, 1971, p. 51 (in Russian).

tary "civil guard", to take new steps to organize anti-guerrilla operations in rural areas, to work out a financial and economic plan for a more effective use of South Vietnam's potential for anti-communist warfare. Washington agreed to make US military experts available to the puppet administration in every sphere of its activities.

Thus the foundations were laid in May 1961 for the subsequent "special" warfare conducted by the USA in South Vietnam, i.e. for a camouflaged aggression by US imperialism against the people of Vietnam.

Shortly after Vice-President Johnson's visit to Saigon a mixed military-economic mission arrived headed by Eugene Staley, a professor at the Stanford Research Institute. The mission had to develop concrete measures to ensure the implementation of the Johnson-Diem declaration. After completing its work the mission sent a secret report to President Kennedy containing important suggestions on the directions of the US government's activities in South Vietnam. Professor Staley and his colleagues recommended to strengthen US positions in South Vietnam in three basic stages: first—"pacification" of South Vietnam within eighteen months and the development of "bases" in North Vietnam; second—the economic resurgence of South Vietnam, strengthening of the puppet army and stepping up sabotage and wrecking operations in the North; third—the economic development of South Vietnam as a prelude to its crusade against the North.

Staley considered the first stage as the most important one. For success at this stage he proposed to bring up the strength of the Diem regime's regular army to 170 thousand and increase the strength of the "civil guard" from 68 thousand to 100 thousand and make it part of the regular forces; to expand the police force from 45 to 90 thousand and re-enforce the "rural self-defense" units as might be required by the situation.

A major military and social measure recommended by Staley was the setting up of what was called "zones of prosperity", areas to be settled by peasants under police supervision, the establishment of "dead zones", areas along the 17th parallel and the borders of South Vietnam with Laos and Cambodia from which the inhabitants

would be evicted, the building of a network of strategic hamlets in the Mekong delta to resettle millions of peasants in them. To carry out these and other measures Staley proposed to increase US assistance to the Diem regime to 400 million dollars by the end of 1961.¹

During the summer of 1961 the USA began supplying South Vietnam with a wide range of weapons and military hardware, including some of the latest models, chemical warfare agents, and even specially trained police dogs for seeking out guerrillas hiding in underground tunnels and hideouts. Between June and November 1961 1,000 US military advisors arrived in South Vietnam.

For his part Diem also took a series of measures to "militarize" life in the areas controlled by the puppet regime: compared with 1961 the military budget for 1962 was increased by 9 thousand million piastres to reach 23 thousand million. South Vietnam was split into three war zones. Training centers were set up to train "Green Berets"—commando troops. Step by step, South Vietnam was being converted into a huge military camp. US officers from the MAAG directed numerous punitive expeditions, notably in the Mekong delta, some of which involved up to 14 battalions of puppet troops. US planes began spraying poisonous chemicals over thickly forested areas particularly along the borders of South Vietnam with Laos and Cambodia as part of the "dead zones" programme.

Subversion against the DRV was stepped up. Ngo Trong Hieu, one of Diem's ministers, told an Associated Press correspondent on September 11, 1961: "Infiltration of North Vietnam is also a good tactic. Wait a bit and things will start happening!"

On October 18, 1961 General Maxwell Taylor, one of the architects of the "flexible response" strategy, arrived in Saigon at the head of a new group of US specialists on a fact-finding mission to prepare recommendations for intensifying US-led military operations to the point of direct military intervention in South Vietnam.

Upon his return to Washington General Taylor submitted his considerations designed to complement measures envisaged by the Staley plan. On November 15,

¹ In 1953, at the height of the Indochina war the US assistance to the French Expeditionary Corps amounted to 323 million dollars.

1961 the National Security Council examined and endorsed the Taylor recommendations which called for more US military advisors to be sent to South Vietnam, a restructuring of the high command of the puppet army to enable US generals to take charge of operations directly rather than through the Diem government as previously, increasing the mobility and combat efficiency of the puppet army through supplying it with new weapons and equipment, and non-stop punitive operations to drive the peasants into "strategic hamlets".

General Taylor also called for sending troops of the SEATO member countries and of Japan and Taiwan to South Vietnam to augment the US effort there.

As a result of the trips by military-economic and military US missions to South Vietnam in 1961 the notorious Staley-Taylor plan was put together to "pacify" South Vietnam before 1962 was out. The plan was a programme of "special warfare" to be waged by the Saigon army under US advisors and with special US forces taking part in combat operations. As the book *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party* stressed, this war was designed to "beat the Vietnamese by Vietnamese".¹

In its "special war" Washington assigned the role of the striking force to the Saigon puppet regime. At the same time from the autumn of 1961 the number of US military personnel in South Vietnam grew rapidly and their equipment and weapons increased accordingly. By mid-1962 the US had 6.5 thousand servicemen in South Vietnam. By the end of 1963—18 thousand. By the beginning of 1964 the USA moved to South Vietnam 700 aircraft, 20 warships, 500 smaller craft, hundreds of amphibious vehicles, thousands of armored personnel carriers and tanks and built 110 airfields.² To improve and ease the direction of this impressive military machine the Pentagon reorganized the MAAG into the US Military Assistance Command (MAC) under General Harkins, Deputy Commander of the US Army in the Pacific.

General Harkins admitted that South Vietnam was being turned by the US army into a training center and a proving ground for counter-guerrilla warfare and that

¹ *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party*, p. 113.

² See: I. Aleksandrov, *The Escalation of Shame*, p. 31.

this experimental war was quite unlike anything the United States had experienced before. While taking an active part in suppressing the national liberation movement in South Vietnam and carrying out subversion against the DRV the Pentagon was developing a wide range of techniques for the conduct of a "new-style war" to use them in other parts of the world, against other peoples fighting for freedom and independence. In Pentagon parlance "special warfare" meant a war using a flexible strategy at the right time and in a variety of forms: attacking, quietly occupying areas without noisy combat operations to avoid a reaction of public opinion in the USA and in the rest of the world, especially in the socialist countries. As Nguyen Phu Cuong, who has studied the history of "special warfare" well, put it: "In a situation where there is a powerful socialist camp, and a rising tide of national liberation the imperialists thought twice about launching a war of aggression. In their global strategy 'special warfare' represented the lowest stage as compared with local and total wars."¹

The Face of "Special Warfare"

A shocked world was to learn about the tragedy of Son My later. The US imperialists committed their crime in this until then obscure South Vietnamese village in 1968 and the atrocity immediately put this village in the same sorrowful rank with Lidice, Khatyn and Oradour. But they started on the road that led them to Son My in the autumn of 1961 when the training of NCOs in "special warfare" techniques for use in Vietnam got underway at Fort Bragg. It was then that the first squadrons of T-28 aircraft and the first batch of "flying bananas", helicopters capable of airlifting troops, strafing villages from the air and spraying poisonous chemicals, appeared at airbases outside Saigon and Danang. It was in 1961 that "the advance command post" of one of the USAF formations in the Pacific was transferred to Danang and the first entries about patrol cruising along

¹ "Sud Vietnam: données et perspectives". In: *Etudes Vietnamiennes*, No. 18-19, Hanoi, 1968, p. 169.

the Vietnam coastline were made in the logs of warships of the US 7th Fleet. It was at that time that the terms "combing", "strategic hamlets" and "scorched earth tactics" became part of the established vocabulary of official Pentagon Papers.

The backbone of the Staley-Taylor plan was the creation of *strategic hamlets*. Bui Van Luong, the Minister of the Interior in the Diem government addressing a ceremony inaugurating one such hamlet in Cu Chi said: "This is a bold and final programme which will either lead us to total victory or total defeat."

Now, what were the aims of this programme which was borrowed from the experience of the colonial war in Malaya and adapted to South Vietnam's conditions?

From the *military* standpoint the aim was to turn South Vietnam's villages and hamlets into strongholds which would not only straightjacket the Peoples' Liberation Armed Forces but also to help the Saigon regime to stamp out guerrilla warfare. Addressing the same ceremony in Cu Chi Ngo Dinh Nhu, Ngo Dinh Diem's brother declared: "From the military standpoint strategic hamlets isolate the enemy, separate him from the people and force him to fight in conditions favorable to us and hopeless for him." Together with the system of fortified outposts along major roads the strategic hamlets were to form part of a network, a cobweb covering liberated zones and ensuring the safety of towns and major military and economic centers of the Diem regime.

From the *political* standpoint the "strategic hamlets" were designed to serve as a basis for setting up and strengthening the administrative machinery of the puppet regime in rural areas and as a suitable environment for infiltrating secret police agents and members of other security bodies called upon to keep the people in submission, in order to strangle the mass movement and to isolate the revolutionary bases.

From the *economic* standpoint the "strategic hamlets" were called upon to help in concentrating manpower and material resources to cover the expenses of the puppet regime on increasing the military and political power of the "Republic of South Vietnam", to eliminate supply sources for guerrilla units as well as to provide the authorities with economic leverage for pressurizing the peo-

ple since only government-owned warehouses handled the distribution of food in "strategic hamlets".

From the *social* standpoint the "strategic hamlets" idea called for a set of "reforms" designed to win the mass of the peasantry over to the government's side, to restore the property rights of landowners and bolster up the authority of village elders, secret service agents, etc.

The Staley-Taylor plan called for the setting up of 16,330 "strategic hamlets" in place of the 17,000 villages and hamlets in South Vietnam by the end of 1962.

The plan worked out by the Central Special Strategic Hamlet Committee specified that to begin with "strategic hamlets" should be set up in zones controlled by the Saigon regime, later—in disputed areas and eventually they would spread "like an oil slick" to liberated areas.

Each "strategic hamlet" was an isolated settlement the entry into and exit out of which was rigorously controlled not only for outsiders but also for its inhabitants. A typical village would be surrounded with a bamboo hedge or a stockade 2-2.5 m high. In addition, there would be a barbed wire perimeter. Between these two fences there would be a "dead zone" thickly studded with metal spikes and mines. Beyond the barbed wire perimeter was a moat three meters wide and a meter and a half deep, also full of spikes and surrounded with barbed-wire entanglements. The moat would be followed by an earth parapet a meter and half high with concrete weapon emplacements set up on it at regular intervals. At the center of a typical "strategic village" was the administrative building, usually with underground shelters, communication tunnels, etc. The inhabitants of "strategic hamlets" were issued with special passes complete with the bearer's photograph and fingerprints. In Diadinh province, each male above ten years of age had to have even two passes: a yellow one for movement within his "strategic hamlet", and a green one for travel outside it.

In 1962 the US sank forty million dollars into the "strategic hamlet" programme. US allies also gave the Saigon regime substantial help by supplying it with barbed wire and other materials. In April 1963 Washington and Saigon concluded an agreement under which the USA undertook to supply in 1963 alone cement and barbed

wire for use in the construction of "strategic hamlets", and weapons to the tune of 55 million dollars.¹

While implementing the "strategic hamlet" programme the Pentagon moved in the following two basic military directions.

Long-term combing involving regular forces of up to division in strength, operating in close cooperation with local para-military and police forces during three to six months, roving about in a specified area to paralyze and destroy Resistance forces, eliminate revolutionary strongholds and herd the local inhabitants into the "strategic hamlets".

In 1962, the year of "strategic hamlets", twenty such "combing operations" were carried out.

Mopping-up operations involving small commando groups from two to three companies to a battalion which were mainly airlifted by helicopters. There were lightning operations lasting from several hours to a day. In some areas "mopping-up operations" were conducted by larger forces, several battalions strong, drawn from different arms. Those operations could last for days and even weeks.

Whereas "long-term combing" operations were primarily directed against civilians (destruction of villages and hamlets, driving peasants into "strategic hamlets"), "mopping-up operations" were directed against guerrilla forces and the command structure of the Resistance movement.

The *New York Times* of March 29, 1962 carried a description of a typical "mopping-up operation" with the subsequent resettlement of peasants in "strategic villages": "In this region 1,200 families are to be moved voluntarily or forcibly from the forests controlled by the Viet Cong and resettled in new strategic villages. The abandoned villages will be burned... Some families had been allowed to carry away beds, tables and benches before their homes were burned. Others had almost nothing but the clothes on their backs."² In Ben Tre province in March 1962 alone 74 punitive expeditions were carried out which took the lives of 195 people,

¹ See: N. G. Fedulova, *US Policy in South-East Asia*, Moscow, 1975, p. 51 (in Russian).

² *The New York Times*, March 29, 1962.

wounded 56 and arrested 278. As Major Duong Thai Dong, military commander of Phuc Yen province reported to his chief, the punitive expedition code-named "Hai Yen" cost the people of the province 326 in killed, 24 wounded, 340 arrested. A total of 318 homes were burnt and 12,189 people were forcibly moved to "strategic villages".

As early as 1961 while carrying out punitive operations and resettling local peasants in "strategic villages" US and Saigon troops made wide use of poisonous chemicals. A special committee was set up in Saigon under General Delcore to direct such operations. *Newsweek* wrote on November 27, 1961: "...special warfare men were showing Vietnamese fliers how to spray Communist-held areas with a chemical that turns the rice fields yellow, killing any crop being grown in rebel strongholds".¹ During 1961 eleven spraying operations were carried out in six provinces of South Vietnam as a result of which 182 people suffered serious illness and 120 head of cattle were badly affected. In 1962 the number of such operations went up to forty and the number of provinces to twenty. As a result 1,220 people suffered, and the productivity of 448 head of cattle and 11,000 hectares of farm land were seriously impaired. In 1963 these dreadful statistics increased even more. In 1965, towards the end of the "special warfare" period, the US troops of occupation burnt 700,000 hectares of crops in 26 provinces and seriously impaired the health of over 146,000 people. According to Orville Schell and Barry Weisberg in 1962 defoliants became the principal weapon of the US global strategy for chemical and bacteriological warfare throughout South-East Asia.

Summing up the results of the implementation of the Staley-Taylor plan General Harkins admitted that in 1962 US and Diem troops had killed 30,000 Vietnamese.

In *The New Legions*, "Green Berets" hero Donald Duncan quotes a US military advisor: "...Teach'em a damned good lesson. They are all VC or at least helping them—same difference. You can't convert them, only kill them. Don't lose any sleep over those dead children—they grow up to be commies, too."

¹ *Newsweek*, November 27, 1961, p. 36.

"This is our war in Vietnam," wrote bitterly Benjamin Spock, the world famous children's doctor who was one of the most vocal protestors against the US aggression in Vietnam. His book *Doctor Spock on Vietnam* written in cooperation with Mitchell Zimmerman contains the above quotation which summed up well the essence of the US-sponsored and led "special war" which later developed into a "local war", and which exposes its ugly Gestapo face.¹

"The Granite Wall of Homeland"

As the US and Diem authorities stepped up the "special warfare" in South Vietnam the peoples' resistance to it stiffened in proportion. One indication of this was a step-up in the mass actions against specific measures taken by the Saigon authorities. Another was the strengthening of the organizational structure of the national liberation movement and the expansion of the social base supporting the National Liberation Front.

An important role in this regard was played by the First Congress of the SVNLF which met between February 16 and March 3, 1962. The Congress formally adopted the Front's programme, approved the work of the temporary Central Committee and elected a new Central Committee. The 52-man Central Committee had 21 vacant seats, including three vice-president posts, specially reserved for representatives of those organizations which would wish to join the Front later.² The documents adopted by the Congress, based on the Manifesto and Program adopted in 1960, emphasized the anti-imperialist tasks facing the Front and the need to strengthen the alliance between the working class and the peasantry. The Congress reiterated that the common goal of the Front was consolidation of the whole of the people for a determined struggle against the US aggressors and warmongers, to topple the ruling clique of Ngo Dinh Diem,

¹ Dr. Benjamin Spock and Mitchell Zimmerman, *Dr. Spock on Vietnam*, New York, 1968, p. 86.

² See: *The First Congress of the SVNLF*, Hanoi, 1962, pp. 9, 62 (in Vietnamese).

that contemptible servitor of US imperialism, to bring a broad-based national-democratic coalition into power in South Vietnam, to win national independence, freedom and democracy, to improve the lot of the people, to maintain peace, to pursue the policy of neutrality, to begin the peaceful reunification of the country and to contribute actively to the maintenance of peace in Indochina, in South-East Asia and throughout the world.

Responding to the appeal of the National Liberation Front the people of South Vietnam launched a movement to destroy the "strategic hamlets". As a result of their actions the Diem authorities were compelled to reduce the programme to a third of its original size: while a total of 16,330 strategic villages were originally planned for late 1962 in the middle of that year that number was trimmed to just 6,000.

In the second half of 1962 there were 300 "strategic hamlets" which were so badly battered as to be beyond repair while 100 "strategic hamlets" had been converted into "combat hamlets", i.e. centers of popular resistance. Not surprisingly, by late 1962 officials in Saigon and Washington admitted that the "Viet Cong" were freely infiltrating "strategic villages" before the very eyes of the authorities.

By the end of 1963 some 80 per cent of the strategic villages including those lying around the larger towns and along major roads and railways had been eliminated: 3,900 of them becoming "combat villages" while those which were still regarded by the Saigon regime as "reliable" had active underground patriotic organizations.

The Second Congress of the SVNLF pointed out that "this was the most painful blow dealt at the policy of aggression and disunity pursued by the enemies".

In 1962 the eighteen months the White House had earmarked for the "pacification" of South Vietnam were up but there was no sign of any pacification. President Kennedy admitted at a news conference on December 12, 1962: "There is a great difficulty, however, in fighting a guerrilla war.... So, we don't see the end of the tunnel..."¹ Indeed, the oil-slick tactics which envisaged the spread of the "strategic hamlet" network to liberated areas re-

¹ *The New York Times*, December 13, 1962.

mained the figment of the wishful thinking of US and Diem armchair-strategists it was from the beginning. Out of more than 17,000 villages and hamlets of South Vietnam 8,188 had been placed under NLF control by the end of 1961, in 3,610 of them government administration had been done away with completely. At the beginning of 1963 the Front controlled 9,082 settlements with people's self-government firmly established in 4,441 of them.¹

Liberated areas did not present a solid pattern of territory. They were scattered up and down South Vietnam which earned them the informal appellation "the leopard's skin".

As far as possible democratic changes were carried out in the liberated zones in accordance with the SVNLF programme, notably, in the field of land reform. As a result of the confiscation of the land from the more reactionary landowners and top-ranking officials of the puppet administration by the end of 1963 a total of 1.5 million hectares of arable land had been turned over to the peasants free. Some 700,000 hectares of land allotments given to peasants during the war of Resistance and later taken away from them by the Diem authorities had been restored to the former owners. The land rent in liberated areas was 40-80 per cent lower than in 1959 and amounted to 8-20 per cent of the crop taken in. Peasants' debts to money-lenders and arrears on agricultural credit had been abolished. The first mutual labor assistance teams began to be set up in many liberated areas. Free school education and rudimentary public health services were introduced.

The propaganda and agitation work conducted by the National Front with reliance on its organizational and economic activities in liberated areas met with the understanding of the peasantry in the Saigon zone and in disputed areas. This SVNLF propaganda campaign was based on the wealth of experience gained in the preceding years of the Vietnamese revolution.

Nguyen Huu Tho, Chairman of the SVNLF CC, addressing a ceremony marking the third anniversary of the Front in December 1963 said: "The liberated regions

² See: *The Recent History of Vietnam (1917-1965)*, p. 367.

have become an effective citadel of resistance by the entire people, the foundation of a new society in South Vietnam. They are the embryo of an independent, democratic, peaceful and neutral South Vietnam.”¹

The Pentagon saw the collapse of the Staley-Taylor plan as signalling the need for a fresh effort to shore up the puppet army. Large quantities of modern weapons and equipment were rushed to South Vietnam including a large number of the latest helicopters, eight warships, ten river launches, M-114 armored personnel carriers (more advanced than the M-113s adopted by the Saigon army). The US military personnel presence was increased from 12 to 15 thousand and the puppet armed forces, regular and para-military, were increased from 360 to 400 thousand (not counting the “self-defense units” and “combat youth groups” in “strategic hamlets”).

General Harkins claimed that the government army would win a victory in so short a time that no one was willing to predict precisely when it would happen. The commander of the US marines in South Vietnam was willing to predict when he said that the Saigon army “would grab Viet Cong by the throat by the beginning of February 1963”.

However, on January 2, 1963 heavy fighting broke out in and around Ap Bac, a mere sixty kilometers from Saigon. That was the first major offensive operation carried out by regular units of People’s Liberation Armed Forces. During the fourteen-hour battle units of People’s Liberation Armed Forces supported by the peasants of the “fighting village” of Ap Bac knocked out of action 450 enemy soldiers, including 13 Americans, shot down six helicopters, sank two launches and burnt three M-113 amphibious armored personnel carriers. The battle of Ap Bac was an important development which showed that isolated peasant uprisings in different parts of the country and operations by patriotic regular armed forces had merged together into a revolutionary war against the US imperialists and their puppets. The victory at Ap Bac, as the book *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers’ Party* points out, “showed that the people and

¹ “L’échec de la ‘guerre spéciale’, 1961-1965”. In: *Études Vietnamiennes*, No. 11, Hanoi, 1966, p. 177.

army of South Vietnam can *win militarily* in the 'special war' waged by the USA".¹

In the first six months of 1963, the US-Diem command carried out as many as 10,470 "mopping-up" and "combing" operations, 800 of which were conducted by an above-battalion force (a monthly average of 1,500 to 2,000 operations, not counting routine bombing raids and artillery bombardment of "unreliable zones"). These operations resulted in heavy manpower losses for the puppet army, 33,370 in killed and wounded including 392 Americans. A total of 1,740 officers and men had been taken prisoner. General Harkins made a reluctant admission that the government army's losses had increased by 33 per cent in the first six months of 1963 compared with the same period of 1962 whereas "Viet Cong losses" had declined by 30 per cent; the puppet army had lost 30 per cent more weapons and equipment, the "Viet Cong"—25 per cent less than in the first six months of 1962. The much publicized "Operation Love-Wave" conducted in Ca Mau where Reuters News Agency said "one of the Viet Cong's strongest and long-standing bases" was and where the guerrillas controlled two-thirds of the charcoal-burning furnaces and almost the whole of the fishing operations, failed dismally. Other major operations conducted in the spring of 1963 also fizzled out: "Duc Thang", "Meteor-1", "Meteor-2", "Sweep", "Dan Thang" and "Lam Son 719".

A salient feature of this period was the fact that regular units of the People's Liberation Armed Forces and guerrilla units not only successfully repelled enemy attacks during punitive expeditions but themselves counter-attacked and launched large-scale offensive operations.

These began in the second half of 1963 and reached their climax in October when the patriots of South Vietnam using the full power of their political and armed forces launched a massive offensive against the enemy backing it up with a propaganda and agitation campaign in all three strategic regions of the country, in the plains, in the foot-hills and in the mountains. In 1963 neither in Saigon nor in Washington did they want to recall the

¹ *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party*, p. 117.

time when US military leaders glibly promised "to grab the Viet Cong by the throat". Other words and phraseology began to be used in dispatches coming from Vietnam and newspapers and news magazines offered other conclusions to their readers. The USA had been compelled to admit that the liberation forces of South Vietnam had enjoyed such a powerful ground swell of popular support that it seemed incredible that any leader would succeed in shaking them.

Relying on the military and political successes it had scored inside the country the National Liberation Front launched a dynamic political offensive on the US neo-colonialists. The programme of action adopted by the First Congress of the SVNLF emphasized, apart from domestic political tasks, the pressing need to end the "special war" along with the anti-popular policy of the Saigon puppets. In particular, the programme stressed that it was important "to honor the Geneva Agreements, to force the US imperialists to discontinue all acts of aggression, withdraw all American weapons, military advisers and troops from South Vietnam and to scrap the Staley-Taylor plan."

In a special statement devoted to the eight anniversary of the Geneva Agreements on Indochina the Presidium of the CC of the SVNLF again declared on July 1962, that the US government should wind up its armed aggression in South Vietnam. Abiding by the letter and spirit of the Geneva Agreements the NLF proposed to the parties concerned in South Vietnam to end strife, restore peace and guarantee security throughout the country to enable the people of South Vietnam to settle their domestic problems amicably, without outside interference. The Front emphasized that after the formation of a broadly-based, democratic coalition government South Vietnam would follow a foreign policy of peace and neutrality; it would establish friendly relations with all countries, would refrain from entering into military blocs and would not allow foreign military bases on its soil.

Explaining its foreign policy and main tasks in the context of South Vietnam's future and emphasizing the humane and peace-loving aspirations as well as the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist thrust of its ultimate

objectives, the NLF won ever more supporters for the just cause of the Vietnamese people in the rest of the world thereby enhancing its prestige and authority on the international scene.

Of considerable importance, among other things for influencing public opinion in the rest of the world was the NLF's Statement on neutrality and independence issued on August 10, 1962.

The NLF declared in unequivocal terms that it was linking the struggle for South Vietnam's independence with the struggle for peace in South-East Asia. It declared itself ready "to form a neutral zone in South-East Asia together with the Kingdom of Cambodia and Laos with each of the three countries retaining its sovereignty" and also "to actively seek an alliance with all countries and organizations which were working for peace and friendship among nations. South Vietnam," the Statement continued, "would make its contribution to the efforts to achieve general and complete disarmament, to the destruction of nuclear weapons, the banning of nuclear tests and the dismantling of military blocs."

The SVNLF's consistent policy aimed at settling the South Vietnam problem in the interests of the Vietnamese, in the interests of peace throughout the world, the correspondence of this policy to the spirit and the letter of the Geneva Agreements were emphasized by the Statement of August 10, 1962 in the following terms: "South Vietnam's neutrality should be guaranteed by an international agreement subscribed to by countries of South-East Asia, of the Pacific area and representatives of the two systems in the world. Such an agreement would rely on the new features of the current situation in South Vietnam and on the Geneva Agreements. All parties concerned in South Vietnam including the NLF will sign this agreement."

The political moves made by the NLF were fully supported by the DRV whose government had repeatedly called upon Washington to end the "special war", stop interfering in the internal affairs of South Vietnam and let the Vietnamese sort out their affairs themselves. While declaring their determination to end the war the DRV government and the SVNLF invariably emphasized that the patriots of Vietnam were fully determined

to fight on for their just cause until final victory should the imperialists refuse to listen to the voice of reason and should they ignore the basic national aspirations of the people of Vietnam.

While calling for armed struggle against the US imperialists the Vietnam Workers' Party always emphasized that the plans of the US military-industrial complex for Indochina ran counter to the interests of the American people who were protesting against Washington's aggression in Vietnam. Prime Minister Pham Van Dong of the DRV addressing the National Assembly in April, 1963 declared: "In the common struggle against the US imperialist aggressors the Vietnamese people distinguish between the US imperialists who are their enemies, and the American people who are their friends on the other side of the Pacific. The people of Vietnam pledge themselves to fight side by side with the American people against this war of aggression waged by the US imperialists, for friendship among nations, for universal peace."

President Ho Chi Minh's address to the Sixth Session of the DRV's National Assembly (second convocation) on May 8, 1963 expressed the deep faith of the Vietnamese in the ultimate triumph of their just cause and in the collapse of US imperialist policy in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh pointed to the futility of the US-led "special war" and build-up of US armed forces in South Vietnam. Addressing himself to President Kennedy he said: ". . . Prominent US public leaders in their message to you on March 1, 1963 voiced the just demand of the American people to halt the US military intervention in South Vietnam and call an international conference to find a peaceful solution to the problem. Are you ready, Mr. President, to honor this just demand of your own people? Mr. President, you must try and understand history. History has already proved that when a nation united as one fights for its independence and freedom as your ancestors in America once did and as the people of South Vietnam are doing today that nation will inevitably win." ¹

That was, in effect, North Vietnam's offer to Washing-

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Works (1920-1969)*, pp. 289-290.

ton, as the chief culprit of the Vietnam tragedy, to initiate a search for a political settlement of the problem.

The Death Throes of the "Special War"

The heroic struggle of the South Vietnamese patriots, the collapse of numerous "mopping-up" and "combing" operations, the steady expansion of the liberated areas, the elimination of most of the "strategic hamlets" combined to undermine the puppet regime installed by the US in South Vietnam. Corruption was rife among the ruling elite. Saigon ministers, senators and generals had fat salaries of up to 30,000 piastres a month and pocketed tidy sums from the US assistance. This contrasted with just 200 piastres a month that an average South Vietnamese peasant could earn a month and with 2,000 to 3,000 piastres a year that a South Vietnamese worker could make, one fifteenth of the wage of an average American worker. The in-fighting and squabbling within the puppet camp intensified. Dissatisfaction with Diem grew particularly in the army, the mainstay of his regime. In February 1962, a South Vietnamese air force pilot Nguyen Van Cu made an attempt on Diem's life by bombing his residence. Whereas in 1961 some 17,000 men deserted from the puppet army, by the end of 1962 the number of Saigon soldiers, who had defected to the People's Liberation Armed Forces or simply returned home having refused to fight, reached 30,000.

Another indication of the deep crisis of the Diem regime was the massive Buddhist movement which was joined in large numbers in the summer of 1963 by teachers, students and members of the liberal professions. The discrimination against Buddhists pursued by the Ngo Catholic clan was the immediate cause of the Buddhists' angry reaction. It all began on May 8, 1963 in Hué with a demand that the government allow them to observe Buddha's birthday and hoist the religious banner. The authorities moved armed police and troops against the 10,000 Buddhist demonstrators in Hué. A Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc burned himself to death at a

busy crossroad in Saigon in protest against the campaign of repressions against Buddhists. Shortly afterwards another six Buddhist monks committed self-immolation in sympathy.

Buddhists' protests in Hué and Saigon triggered off a chain reaction and a strong public response not only in areas of South Vietnam controlled by the Diem regime but in the rest of the world. The participation in the Buddhist movement of students and members of other sections of South Vietnam's society introduced into it an element of political protest against US interference in South Vietnam's domestic affairs.

The victories scored by the People's Liberation Armed Forces in 1963 had a galvanizing effect on the struggle of the urban population of South Vietnam as well as on the anti-American attitudes of those sections of South Vietnamese society which, Washington believed, were indifferent to "Communism", i.e., towards ideas of independence and unity. That jeopardized the implementation of US neo-colonialist plans in Vietnam and caused serious concern in Washington. In September 1963 the US press was full of reports that the US policy in South Vietnam was facing a dilemma, either to suspend US assistance until a military junta toppled Diem or, alternatively, to reform his regime and keep him afloat.

On August 24, 1963 the US Ambassador to Saigon Henry Cabot Lodge received a telegram from Washington which said that the US government could not tolerate a situation where power was in the hands of Nhu (Diem's influential brother—*Auth.*) and that Ngo Dinh Diem should be allowed to get rid of Nhu and his men himself replacing them with his own military and political figures... . If Diem refused to do so the possibility should be considered of Diem himself becoming expendable. The US Ambassador and his staff were to lose no time in studying all suitable candidates for Diem's potential replacement and work out a detailed plan for the latter eventuality should it arise.

Lodge managed to put together an action group to deal with Diem. On November 1, 1963 the group assassinated Diem and his brother Nhu and took over power. A military junta led by General Duong Van Minh, the "Big Minh", was installed in Saigon.

The military take-over signalled the political collapse of the "special war". The Diem regime on which the Pentagon and the State Department had pinned their hopes suffered a complete fiasco. The US imperialists had failed to do away with the SVNLF as a political force. On the contrary, despite US efforts, the Front's prestige and authority as the only authentic representative of the South Vietnamese kept growing. The ideas of independence and democratic freedoms which the Front had been standing for continued to percolate through to the mass of the people of South Vietnam, notably, to the inhabitants of areas controlled by the Saigon regime.

The generals who had done away with Diem and taken over power declared themselves to be enemies of both "dictatorship" and "democratic freedoms". Their anti-Communism was just as intense as that of Diem whom they had toppled. Like the assassinated dictator they saw their prime task in suppressing the national liberation movement in the South. To this end, they took a series of measures to streamline the command structure of their forces, ordered the dismantling of 400 isolated military outposts to be replaced with large mobile units capable of fighting on the main sectors of the Front against the People's Liberation Armed Forces. However, these measures failed to produce the desired effect. The concentration of troops contracted the area controlled by the puppet authorities. A UPI correspondent reported on December 14, 1963 that the "Viet Cong" had stepped up their attacks up and down South Vietnam to an unprecedented level and were inflicting the most painful defeats on government troops thus far that year.

US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara had to admit the futility of the Pentagon's efforts in a new "global" document on the US strategy in South Vietnam which he signed on March 17, 1964. This document which came to be known as the Johnson-McNamara plan had in effect annulled the Staley-Taylor plan and meant that Washington was obliquely admitting the collapse of the "special war" strategy.

The gist of the Johnson-McNamara plan was as follows. The US would set up an "inter-ministerial committee" that would take charge of combat operations and the continuation of the war. The US Command in Vietnam

would be withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the US Command in the Pacific and placed under the Pentagon's direct control. There would be a combined US-Saigon command while US advisors would be sent not only to regiments and battalions but also to companies of the puppet troops. The Saigon army would be supplied with more and better weapons, and would expand its air force, river flotillas and mobile forces.

The Saigon "militia" would be elevated to the status of a regular force and its strength would be brought up to 200,000-300,000 men. The para-military units together with the pro-American "Combat Youth" organization would be 250,000 strong.

The Johnson-McNamara plan was designed to step up psychological warfare. To this end the soldiers' pay was increased by 20 per cent and the local militia were to be made responsible for the upkeep of regular government troops in order to "boost their morale and cut down desertion". On the other hand, centralized funds would be used to promote a policy that would help win over to its side the wavering and the disaffected in the zones immediately around Saigon and controlled by the government. Special attention was to be given to the "strategic hamlet" programme which were to be styled "new life villages". The plan also called for boosting morale in the Saigon government and the puppet army by stepping up provocations, acts of sabotage and aggression against North Vietnam. Thus, the Johnson-McNamara plan set the stage for a military and political policy that eventually led to the "Tonkin Gulf incident" in August 1964 and to the undeclared US air war against North Vietnam.

The "pacification" programme was sharply curtailed. Whereas Staley and Taylor had intended to "put the house in order" throughout South Vietnam in a matter of 18 months, two years later Johnson and McNamara limited their ambitions to "pacifying" only the "key" areas within the Mekong delta by concentrating the main effort on Long Thanh province, the critical strategic area covering Saigon from the South.

McNamara theorized that the "pacification" of Long Thanh province, which began in December 1963 would be completed in 12 months.

Exactly a year later, in December 1964, the French

weekly *La Tribune des Nations* reported reluctant admissions by US officials that the areas immediately around Saigon were controlled by patriotic armed forces. A UPI correspondent reported that government control in the rural communities was practically non-existent, that out of 1,100,000 inhabitants in Long Thanh and Dien Truong provinces 80 per cent, practically the whole of the population, excluding 14 district centers and two towns, lived in "Viet Cong"-controlled areas.

Nor did attempts to buoy the morale of the puppet army produced the desired effect. True, the increased pay for soldiers produced a small increase in the army's strength but at the same time it stimulated speculation, profiteering, corruption among the officers and eroded moral standards, never high, among the officers and men. The majority of puppet soldiers would not fight. US newspapers wrote that government troops did not even have a will to fight let alone a will to win. Despite the massive US assistance, despite energetic economic and social measures the government troops simply refused to be mobilized against the insurgents who had a clear advantage in that they knew exactly what they were fighting for and why.

During 1964 the People's Liberation Armed Forces fought 40,000 engagements, big and small, during which they knocked out of action a total of 135,000 enemy officers and men, including 2,110 Americans, shot down or crippled 542 aircraft and helicopters, destroyed or damaged 992 vehicles, sank or crippled 292 river and naval vessels, demolished 139 fortified outposts and military training centers and captured 17,500 units of weapons and materiel.

Employing the "hit them from three directions" tactics, i.e. armed struggle, political actions and propaganda and agitation work among the officers and men of the puppet army the SVNLF during 1964 stepped up its offensive operations in different parts of the country including the immediate vicinity of Saigon. Not just fortified military outposts but major installations of the puppet forces maintained by the US troops of occupation now became the target of attacks of the patriotic armed forces. In the night of October 31, 1964 patriotic armed forces attacked Bien Hoa air base, one of the three big-

gest US air bases, 30 km from Saigon. This impressive piece of military engineering surrounded by an intricate and dense system of barbed-wire entanglements and mine fields was guarded by an armored company backed up by an artillery battery and two paratroop battalions. In addition, a ranger battalion regularly "combed" the surrounding forests within a 10-km radius from the base. Despite tight security arrangements and elaborate precautions People's Liberation Armed Forces' soldiers managed to slip through the base's perimeter and proceeded to destroy 59 aircraft, blew up two aviation fuel depots and put out of action 293 US troops in the process.

A series of major operations carried out by the People's Liberation Armed Forces in 1964 compelled the Americans to speak of the war in Vietnam in different terms. No longer were they inclined to dismiss the SVNLF lightly, to many Americans it was no cat and mouse affair but increasingly a matter of a tiger and a lion fighting it out. The biggest operation of the "special war" took place in Binh Ga, 60 km from Saigon. The operation which lasted from December 4, 1964 to January 3, 1965 involved a series of offensive engagements launched by the People's Armed Forces employing a variety of tactics, as a result of which the enemy lost 2,000 officers and men in killed, wounded and prisoners; 24 aircraft and helicopters were burnt, 13 aircraft and helicopters were crippled and 3 armored personnel carrier platoons were knocked out. The Binh Ga fighting demonstrated the combat skill and proficiency of the People's Liberation Armed Forces in handling modern weapons and their ability to defeat puppet forces in a major operation.

According to NLF sources between 1961 and June 1964 its forces put out of action a total of 323,000 enemy officers and men including 2,281 Americans. The patriotic forces shot down and crippled 1,363 planes and helicopters and captured over 35,000 units of weapons. In the summer of 1964 the Front effectively controlled more than two-thirds of South Vietnam's territory inhabited by over 7 million people.

The defeats inflicted on the combined US and puppet forces on the battle-field increasingly destabilized the Saigon regime. The assassination of Diem followed by a military take-over, the US attempts to implement the

Johnson-McNamara plan to bolster up the Saigon government's authority failed to produce the political stability Washington had sought in South Vietnam. During 1964 and in early 1965 another 13 take-overs and counter-take-overs occurred in quick succession in Saigon, nine cabinets rose and fell and four major revisions of the constitution were effected.

Under Diem Washington had acted in collusion with South Vietnamese landowners, comprador bourgeoisie and the reactionary Catholic clergy. After the fall of the Diem regime the generals who crowded Saigon's corridors of power integrated themselves with the compradors to become their loyal and committed protectors. They had close connections with all manner of entrepreneurs of dubious reputation, with night club owners and profiteers. They represented the "social base" supporting the Saigon regime, they were the "vehicle" of anti-Communism the United States cooperated with in South Vietnam.

US officials in Saigon did everything in their power to encourage the puppet regime to go ahead with their intentions to strengthen the regime on the fascist pattern. While general Duong Van Minh after ousting Diem made vague promises of "democratic reforms" within the framework of struggle against Communism General Nguyen Khanh who in turn ousted Minh issued on the morning following his seizure of power Ordinance No. 93 which outlawed not only Communists but also all those who advocated nothing more than neutrality for South Vietnam. A few days later the inhabitants of the zones controlled by Saigon were "familiarized" with Ordinance No. 10-64 which severely restricted the freedom of the press and expression of public opinion. The logical finale of this series of laws was the introduction of martial law throughout South Vietnam with all the consequences that implied.

Later one of the more odious members of the Saigon military ruling pyramid general Nguyen Cao Ky declared for all the world to hear that his favorite hero was Hitler. Ky's predecessors made no such pronouncements but in the 1960s they did in South Vietnam what the nazis had done in the 1930s.

The Saigon puppets and their US handlers would have been happy to see a society of indifferent apolitical people

in South Vietnam. They were working hard towards developing such a society using different slogans and different tactics, sinking millions of dollars into the effort to play one section of the Vietnamese population off against another long before the former inauguration of the notorious Nixon doctrine. However, they failed in their attempt despite the total cooperation of Ngo Dinh Diem, Nguyen Khanh, Nguyen Cao Ky and their kind among the military and civilian puppets in Saigon.

The people of the areas controlled by the Saigon regime kept up a hard fight without a let up for a single day.

...February 9-16, 1964, an attack on Ten Son Nhut Airport and the Kinh Do cinema in Saigon: 120 Americans killed.

...August 25, 1964, an attack on the Caravelle Hotel in Saigon: 100 American officers killed and wounded.

...December 24, 1964, an attack on the Brink hotel in Saigon: 155 US officers killed....

Saigon, My Tho, Danang ... The patriots in the zones controlled by the Saigon puppets launched hundreds of attacks, big and small, in dozens of South Vietnamese towns and cities. In this period a young man Nguyen Van Troi, of Saigon, performed his exploit. He was arrested while attempting to assassinate the US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara as the latter was making tour of inspection in South Vietnam. The 24-year-old electrician, a member of the Revolutionary Youth League, was tortured but did not break down and refused to betray his comrades-in-arms.

On October 15, 1964 the puppet authorities staged a public execution of Nguyen Van Troi. About a hundred of journalists have been invited to attend the execution. Facing a firing squad the patriot called upon the people to stand firm and carry on the fight. His last words were: "Long live Vietnam! Long live Ho Chi Minh!" Nguyen Van Troi's exploit sparked off a tremendous public reaction throughout Vietnam and thousands of youths and girls of South Vietnam, many of them not members of the NLF, inhabitants of areas controlled by the puppet regime, pledged themselves to follow Troi's example. His name became synonymous with the loyalty and commitment of the youth of South Vietnam to the ideals of independence, unity and freedom of their homeland.

When in August 1964 general Nguen Khanh staged yet another, third, take-over at the end of which he installed himself as "president of the Republic," "chairman of the Military Council", "prime-minister", "commander-in-chief of the army". Thousands of students, believers and representatives of urban communities defied his authority openly.

On August 17, 1964 when Khanh attempted to form a "war cabinet" the students of Hué, old imperial capital, held a demonstration demanding his dismissal from power. On August 19 students in Saigon held a similar demonstration with the same demands which was joined by Buddhists on August 20 the following day.

Joint demonstrations by students and Buddhists in Saigon and Hué were supported by the people of Can Tho, Thui Hue, Qui Nhon and Danang. Protest demonstrations against the Khanh regime reached their climax on August 25 when 400,000 people took part in the demonstration in Saigon. The same day a general protest strike was held in Danang against the US troops who had fired on a demonstration in that city.

Each law issued by Khanh brought a "fitting" reaction from the working people of South Vietnam. Thus after the inauguration of Law 10-64 the workers of the Vimytex textile company in Saigon walked out demanding the lifting of the ban on strikes and public gatherings it brought in as well as democratic freedoms and jobs for the jobless. On September 21, 1964 an estimated 100,000 workers and others in Saigon, Cho Lon and Diadong walked out in support of the Vimytex strikers. As a result life in Saigon was paralysed.

Attempts by the US imperialists to install a civilian government in Saigon in August 1964 despite the strenuous efforts of US Ambassador Taylor to bring the warring factions of the Saigon generals, politicians who represented no one but themselves and the rival factions of right-wing Buddhists and Catholics to some sort of reconciliation failed. The people of Saigon responded to the petty-squabbling and leap-frogging among the puppets with fresh demonstrations by students, intellectuals and Buddhists.

As the People's Liberation Armed Forces stepped up their combat operations the authority and prestige of

the National Liberation Front inside the country and on the international scene grew steadily. One indication of the mounting political influence of the NLF in South Vietnam was its Second Congress held between January 1 and 8, 1964. The Congress outlined the new objectives in the three-pronged offensive against the enemy on the military, political and diplomatic fronts. The Congress recognized it necessary to widen the unity and cooperation of all segments of the patriotic forces, "to direct all efforts at destroying the enemy's manpower, to isolate him within the country and on the international scene, to win the support of the world's governments and peoples, to act in concert with the peace-loving nations, to impede the US war of aggression in South Vietnam ... to vigorously mobilize all available forces to bring to a victorious conclusion years of successful resistance to the American imperialist aggressors and their agents on the way to ever more brilliant victories in the future."

The prestige of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front on the international scene grew markedly. Whereas at its inception in December 1960 the Front established relations with several socialist and developing countries, by 1965 dozens of countries, international and national organizations declared their support for the Front's activities and program documents.

More and more delegations and public groups representing the SVNLF went to other countries. The Front opened its permanent missions in Cuba in 1962, in Algeria, Czechoslovakia, and Indonesia in 1963, in the GDR in 1964, etc.

Stepping up the armed and political struggle against the US imperialists and their puppets and augmenting their prestige in the world the patriotic forces of South Vietnam derived much of their power and confidence from the support and assistance of the great logistical base—North Vietnam which was building socialism. President Ho Chi Minh said: "The people of North Vietnam, linked with their brothers in the South by relations of blood, do not forget for a minute the heroic South Vietnam and its struggle for a reunification of the country."¹

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Works (1920-1969)*, p. 293.

The Vietnamese Communists who led the patriotic forces in their struggle against the imperialist aggression had always looked upon the Vietnamese as one people and on Vietnam as one country. At the same time always faithful to the doctrine of scientific communism they had never advocated an export of revolution. In the South the people fighting the US imperialists and their Saigon puppets saw themselves as an inalienable part of the Vietnamese nation. Socialist North Vietnam was giving them every support and assistance and worked side by side with the authentic representatives of the South Vietnamese on the international scene in the diplomatic struggle against the imperialist aggressors.

In a situation dominated by the increasing interference of US imperialism in the domestic affairs of South Vietnam which was exemplified in the "special war", the government, Party and public leaders of North Vietnam repeatedly appealed to the world public urging them to act to end the camouflaged US intervention in South Vietnam so that its people were allowed to settle their domestic problems themselves and decide their future without outside interference. In late 1961 the National Assembly of North Vietnam appealed to 103 parliaments of the world urging them to denounce the US aggression in South Vietnam and prevail upon the US government to abide by the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and stop violating them.

In June 1962 the International Commission of Control and Supervision over the fulfilment of the Geneva Agreements published its routine report. The DRV government responded to its publication with a policy statement which said in part: "Discharging our duty to our compatriots in the South and to the Homeland, the people and the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam once again demand that the South Vietnam government should cease their traitorous actions and abide by the Geneva Agreements. We demand that the US government should end its dangerous intervention in South Vietnam and honor its commitments under the Geneva Agreements of 1954."¹

The DRV's principled stand on the Vietnam issue was

¹ *Nhan Dan*, June 6, 1962.

set out in its government's statement marking the tenth anniversary of the struggle for the observance of the Geneva Agreements and peaceful unification of Vietnam. This document which was made public on July 15, 1964 at a time when the "special war" was in its death throes, once again demonstrated the desire of the Vietnamese people to settle the problem peacefully. This statement was a clear expression of the opinion of an embattled nation which was aware and confident of its power and determined to end the war the imperialists had thrown upon it.

The DRV government pointed out that the US neo-colonialists would fail in their designs despite their military build-up in South Vietnam, despite their attempts to drag their NATO and SEATO allies into the Vietnam quagmire, and despite their political blackmail against the DRV. The US neo-colonialists would not be able to evade ultimate defeat or avoid isolation in the world. The people of South Vietnam "are carrying on their sacred war of Resistance and are bound to win a final victory and liberate South Vietnam." The DRV government declared that "the only correct solution to the South Vietnam problem . . . can be assured by doing the following three basic things:

1. The US government and the governments of the countries which attended the Geneva Conference of 1954 on Indochina should abide unswervingly by the Geneva Agreements: respect sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam, not to interfere in Vietnam's internal affairs. Just as the DRV government the South Vietnam authorities should strictly observe the military provisions of the Geneva Agreements of first importance, namely, not to enter into military alliances with other countries, not to allow foreign military bases to be set up on their territory and not to allow the introduction of foreign military personnel into it.

2. The US government shall immediately discontinue its war of aggression in South Vietnam, withdraw its troops and weapons and let the people of South Vietnam settle their domestic affairs in accordance with the program of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front which covers all the basic political demands concerning national rights, democracy, every aspect of life

in South Vietnam as well as a policy of peace and neutrality.

3. The peaceful unification of Vietnam is a strictly domestic affair of the Vietnamese people. This question will be solved in accordance with the spirit of the programme of the Vietnam Fatherland Front and the programme of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front.”¹

This DRV government's statement made two weeks before the US provocation in the Gulf of Tonkin which marked the start of the US undeclared air war against the DRV was evidence that the Vietnamese people, after defeating the imperialists in the “special war” they had unleashed, continued along the strategic course outlined by the Vietnam Workers' Party back in 1954, evidence that they were working for a peaceful settlement of the problem on the basis of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 in the light of the realities of the Vietnam situation as they emerged by 1964.

The heroic struggle of the South Vietnamese patriots, the efforts of the DRV on the international scene which were aimed at settling the South Vietnam conflict were meeting with the growing support and backing of the USSR and other sister socialist nations.

The TASS statement published in *Pravda* on February 26, 1964 entitled “The People of Vietnam Should Be Allowed to Decide Their Destiny Themselves” stated that the entire responsibility for the situation that has arisen in South Vietnam rested squarely with the United States in the first instance, which after cynically disregarding its own commitments under the Geneva Agreements of 1954 sent troops into South Vietnam and unleashed a war of aggression against the South Vietnamese. The coup d'états in Saigon have been engineered with the expressed aim of escalating this war by the United States. “A refusal to settle the South Vietnam problem peacefully, the continuing US intervention, and escalation of its war of aggression in South Vietnam are bound to complicate the situation in that country and in South-East Asia still further. The Soviet people,” the TASS statement went on, “cannot stand idly by and watch this turn of

¹ *Nhan Dan*, July 15, 1964.

events. Always faithful to a policy of solidarity with peoples fighting for their freedom and independence they are following with profound sympathy the just national liberation struggle waged by the people of South Vietnam and shall give it the necessary support and assistance."

As one of the co-chairmen of the Geneva Agreements, the USSR had been steadfastly opposing the wrecking moves made by the Saigon puppet authorities and US imperialists to undermine the Geneva Agreements and qualifying US actions as an undeclared war against the patriotic forces of South Vietnam. The Soviet Foreign Ministry was active in organizing opposition to the US-Saigon subversion of the Geneva Agreements on the diplomatic front. Promptly responding to the slightest twist and change in the political situation in South Vietnam the Soviet Foreign Ministry on repeated occasions drew the attention of Britain, the other co-chairman of the Geneva Conference, to the need to adopt concrete measures to end the slaughter in South Vietnam engineered by the US imperialists and their henchmen in Saigon. Nguyen Van Kinh, the DRV Ambassador to the USSR, appeared on the national television network in Moscow on July 20, 1964 and stated: "The Soviet government has repeatedly protested against violations by the US imperialists on the Geneva Agreements on Vietnam, against their war of aggression in South Vietnam and demanded that the US government withdraw all its forces and weapons from South Vietnam so as to allow the people of South Vietnam to settle their domestic affairs themselves."

In practical terms the Soviet Union's support for the struggle of the Vietnamese for independence and unity of their country took the form of establishing in the early 1960s direct friendly relations between the USSR and the patriotic forces of South Vietnam. The Soviet people hailed the formation of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front. The USSR gave unqualified support to every political and diplomatic move made by the SVNLF. Soviet representatives at different international forums actively advocated the formation of international organizations for solidarity with the embattled patriots of South Vietnam.

The first NLF delegation made a visit to the USSR in the early 1960s. The visit of the NLF delegation to Moscow in December 1963 provided a graphic demonstration of Soviet-Vietnamese friendship.

The Soviet people's concern for the destiny of the national liberation movement in South Vietnam showed itself in material assistance to the NLF. Between 1962 and 1964 the NLF received from the Soviet Union's Red Cross and Red Crescent Society and the All-Union Central Council of the Trade Unions large quantities of medical supplies, medical instruments, food, clothing, footwear, etc.

During the years of the Vietnamese people's resistance to the US-led "special war" in South Vietnam the support for the just demands of the DRV and the NLF on the part of the USSR and other socialist countries took a variety of forms ranging from the diplomatic struggle at the UN and other international organizations to solidarity campaigns, meetings of protest and humanitarian assistance to the patriots of South Vietnam. The USSR and other socialist countries insisted on a strict and unswerving adherence to the Geneva Agreements and actively opposed the US military intervention in South Vietnam.

In the 1950s and early 1960s the Peking leadership also made statements in support of the struggle of the South Vietnamese patriots, demanded a strict observance of the Geneva Agreements and backed the DRV government's demands in this regard. However, even at that early stage the Peking leadership hatched very special plans for Vietnam and for subsequent exploitation of the national liberation movement, including the struggle of the South Vietnamese patriots, for their great-power ends.

An Outline of History of Modern China published in 1954 contained a map of Chinese territory seized by the imperialists which included partly or wholly the territories of all South-East Asian countries bordering on China including Vietnam. Commenting on this piece of Chinese political propaganda the newspaper *Nhan Dan*, organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam wrote on September 21, 1978: "Who was it in Peking who starting from 1954 sanctioned the com-

pilation and distribution of maps of China whose territory included Vietnam, Laos, Campuchea, Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Korea, Mongolia, parts of Japan, the USSR and India and used it as an instrument of psychological brain-washing of the Chinese people, above all the youth of China, to educate in the spirit of arrogant aspirations and schemes of great-Han expansionism and hegemony? Is this not proof enough that these gentlemen had borrowed from the emperors of ancient China the dream of world hegemony!"

The true designs of the Peking leadership came to light revealing the full extent of their perfidious nature in subsequent years. In particular, the attitude of the Chinese leaders to the struggle of the people of Vietnam against the imperialist aggression was most revealing.

Vietnam Fights Back (1965-1968)

Our struggle against the US aggression for the salvation of our homeland is a just cause. The peoples of the world strongly condemn the US imperialists and are sincerely supporting us.

Ho Chi Minh

On the Road of Escalation

In December 1963 the US Defense Secretary McNamara in a memo to the President wrote that the situation in Vietnam was cause for great concern. If the present trends continued in two or three months they would lead at best to the neutralization of South Vietnam but most probably to a communist take-over there. In a sense, McNamara had admitted the failure of the "special war" strategy.

The US ruling circles were confronted with the problem of how to handle the Vietnam situation further. There were indications at the time that no one in Washington ever thought that the only sensible and realistic solution to the problem would be to follow France's example and give up further attempts to impose their will on the people of Vietnam. Several years would pass, US imperialists would have to suffer painful defeats in Indochina and the other parts of the world before the men in Washington would begin to realize that their attempts were futile and fraught with dangerous consequences for the United States in the first instance. At the turn of 1964, when the US policy-makers were confronted with the real danger of a total collapse of the puppet regime they had installed in South Vietnam, the White House, the President's

inner circle and numerous military and civilian departments, which worked out the strategy and tactics of US foreign policy, were dominated by the concept of force in world policy, by a blind and arrogant belief in the capacity of the US to be the world's policeman keeping in line peoples fighting for their freedom and independence. The military and political doctrine that guided the Johnson Administration which succeeded the Kennedy Administration in 1963 prescribed not only a continuation but in fact increased repression of the national liberation, democratic and progressive movements up to and including direct military interference in "local conflicts" between peoples and their reactionary rulers in countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In this situation the US ruling circles saw a sharp escalation of US military efforts in Vietnam in order to crush the liberation movement there and save the Saigon regime as the only alternative to the thoroughly bankrupt strategy of this "special war". Washington was bent on replacing the "special war" strategy with a concept of "local war". The important element of the latter was carrying war to the North, a strategy which had been developed by the Pentagon and endorsed by the White House in 1964 and early 1965.

The US ruling circles hoped that by striking at North Vietnam they would be able in a short time to knock out the patriotic forces of the South, eliminate their base and break their will and determination to resist in both parts of Vietnam. Walt Rostow, one of the architects of US policy at the time, claimed that the mere threat of bombing North Vietnam's industry out of existence, industry which Hanoi had built up from the ruins of the Indochina war against the French with such difficulty, would be enough to frighten Hanoi's leaders and make them order "Viet Cong" to stop its operations in the South.

Countering the threats coming from Washington and Saigon President Ho Chi Minh warned as early as March 1964: "The US military and the clique of their new lackeys are now clamoring for a 'crusade to the North'. They must realize that they will suffer a shameful defeat should they venture to encroach on North Vietnam because the entire people of our country will rally to give them a determined and fitting rebuff since all the socialist

countries and progressive peoples throughout the world will give us every support and since the peoples of the United States and its allied countries will also rise in protest against their aggression.”¹

The implications of Ho Chi Minh's warning were lost on the US leaders. Their overweening confidence in the superiority of American power, underestimation of the sheer determination and resilience of the Vietnamese to withstand military pressure and give it a fitting rebuff relying on the support and assistance of the sister socialist nations and progressive forces throughout the world, encouraged Washington to adopt adventurist decisions for which the US ruling circles and the American people eventually paid a high price.

The US air force struck at North Vietnam for the first time on August 5, 1964. US planes taking off from the aircraft carriers of the US 7th Fleet bombed Hon Gay, an administrative center on the coast of North Vietnam. To cover up and justify this open act of air piracy the notorious Tonkin Gulf incident was engineered, one of the biggest and most shameful pieces of military and political provocation ever staged by imperialists. This is how this provocation was planned and stage-managed.

At the end of July 1964 at a time when commandos of the Saigon puppet army were raiding a number of off-shore islands in North Vietnam's territorial waters the US destroyer *Maddox* was on a reconnaissance patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin. At the beginning of August President Johnson ordered the dispatch of the destroyer *Turner Joy* to join the *Maddox* on the patrol. The aircraft carrier *Constellation* had been ordered to join the aircraft carrier *Ticonderoga* cruising in the south of the gulf.

The following day it was announced that the *Maddox* and the *Turner Joy* had allegedly been attacked by North Vietnamese PT boats. Admiral Sharp, the US Supreme Commander in the Pacific, telephoned Washington from Honolulu suggesting to strike at North Vietnam's PT-boat bases. A short ten minutes later Robert McNamara called in the Joint Chiefs of Staff for an urgent conference which was also attended by Secretary of State Dean Rusk

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Works (1920-1969)*, pp. 301-302.

and one of President Johnson's top aides McGeorge Bundy. By midday August 4 details of a "retaliatory strike" code-named "Flaming Dart" had been thrashed out. Hours later US Navy fighter-bombers took off from the *Ticonderoga* and headed for the coal mining Hon Gay district, where according to a Pentagon analysis North Vietnam's PT-boat bases were situated.

Two days later, on August 7, 1964, a joint session of the House of Representatives and the Senate passed a decision which later came to be known as the Tonkin Gulf resolution which empowered the President, as commander-in-chief, "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States" and "to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (i.e. SEATO—*Auth.*) requesting assistance."¹ Thus the Congress gave the Administration the go-ahead for an open aggression against North Vietnam.

The secret Pentagon Papers relating to the US Indo-China policy, published in 1971, indicated that the Tonkin Gulf resolution which was portrayed as a legitimate reaction to an incident in the Gulf of Tonkin had been worked out long before the US Navy destroyers had been allegedly attacked by North Vietnam's PT boats. As early as 1968 the Western press carried materials showing that the "attack" was a pure invention and that the *Maddox* and *Turner Joy* had not been attacked at all in August 1964 in the Gulf of Tonkin. That was the conclusion drawn in February 1968 by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee which had looked into the Tonkin Gulf incident.

Responding to the piratic strike by the US air force at the DRV the Vietnam News Agency in a statement on August 5, 1964 said, "The Pentagon claims that last night DRV torpedo boats attacked two US warships in international waters. The agency has been authorized to state that this claim is a pure invention by the US imperialists in an attempt to cover up their illegal acts which flag-

¹ *Congressional Record. Proceedings and Debates of the 88th Congress, Second Session*, Vol. 110, Washington, 1964, p. 17885.

rantly violate the DRV's security and complicate the situation in South-East Asia still further." ¹

The US armed provocation against the DRV caused a storm of indignation in the world. The USSR promptly took the side of North Vietnam, a socialist country that had become the victim of an unprovoked attack. The TASS statement on August 6, 1964 said in part: "The Soviet authoritative circles strongly condemn the US acts of aggression in the Gulf of Tonkin which bring the already tense situation in South-East Asia to a dangerous pitch. Such actions and any further rash steps and provocations in the area may trigger off a chain of events which may escalate the incidents that have taken place into a wider military conflict with all the dangerous consequences that might involve. The responsibility for these consequences will naturally rest with the United States of America." ²

The men in Washington ignored the warning. The Tonkin Gulf provocation was treated by the White House as the first step on its chosen road of escalating the war against the people of Vietnam, and a precedent for further strikes at North Vietnam. After a brief pause, largely brought about by the presidential elections in November 1964 the US Administration gave the go-ahead for an air war against North Vietnam. On February 7-8, 1965 the US Air Force bombed the town of Dong Hoi and other populated centers in the North destroying many houses, a hospital and other civilian targets. There were many civilian casualties.

On March 2, 1965 several squadrons of USAF fighter-bombers dropped their lethal cargoes on different targets in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. On March 14 and 15 US bombing raids were intensified. Subsequently the US Air Force steadily stepped up its strikes at North Vietnam. That was the start of the notorious escalation of the air war designed to put the military screw on the DRV in an attempt to break the will of the Vietnamese to fight and save the Saigon puppet regime.

Simultaneously with the air war against North Vietnam the US embarked on a direct participation in combat

¹ *Izvestia*, August 5, 1964.

² *Pravda*, August 6, 1964.

operations in the South. As early as September 1964 the Pentagon proposed, as a measure aimed at forestalling a further deterioration of the position of the Saigon army and government, to considerably expand the US role in the "pacification" programme within South Vietnam parallel to the bombing of North Vietnam. This recommendation was followed by a long string of others whose authors with one voice called for committing large regular US forces to the ground fighting in South Vietnam.

In early 1965 the US government decided to use US combat troops in offensive operations against the patriotic forces of South Vietnam. On March 8, 1965 3,500 US marines were landed at Danang. On April 1 and 2, 1965 the White House sanctioned the sending of another 18,000 to 20,000 combat troops to take part in offensive operations against the People's Liberation Armed Forces.

On April 20, 1965 top military and civilian officials at a meeting in Honolulu concluded that to break the will of North Vietnam and the People's Liberation Armed Forces in the South a massive US ground troops build-up in South Vietnam was necessary. The escalation strategy was thus extended to South Vietnam.

In accordance with the escalation concept in June 1965 General Westmoreland, the US Supreme Commander in South Vietnam, appealing to "difficulties in confronting the increased Viet Cong power" demanded a further build-up of US ground troops and of third countries' troops, up to 44 battalions. President Johnson satisfied this demand. After the air lift of 44 first-line battalions the total US ground strength in Vietnam stood at 184,000. By late 1965 the figure reached 200,000. As a result, in the space of a few months the US went over from "committing regular US army units to ground operations" to a major war in South Vietnam involving US forces of strategic caliber.

In an attempt to portray its armed intervention in South Vietnam as an "international effort" Washington tried to persuade its allies in military-political blocs to join it by sending in their troops. However, these attempts were largely unsuccessful. Because of the unpopularity of America's Vietnam gamble its European and Asian allies, with the exception of South Korea and some SEATO countries (Australia, New Zealand, Thailand

and the Philippines) which agreed to a limited role in the US-led war against the patriots of South Vietnam, refused to have any part in the Vietnam conflict.

The "local" war against the people of Vietnam which was waged by the US Air Force and the US expeditionary corps operating in South Vietnam developed into the biggest armed conflict unleashed by the imperialists since the war in Korea and before long surpassed that war in scale. The US aggressors used every type of military technology available to them short of nuclear weapons. Thousands of aircraft and helicopters, tanks and armored personnel carriers, every type of artillery including heavy artillery, were used to destroy the People's Liberation Armed Forces and break the resistance of the people of South Vietnam. Having committed itself to a major military intervention the USA did not stop short of employing biological, chemical and other weapons of mass annihilation. In its destructive air war against North Vietnam the Pentagon used hundreds of the latest combat aircraft, air-to-surface missiles, aerial bombs with laser and magnetic guidance, napalm and white phosphorus. The US 7th Fleet operated in the Gulf of Tonkin using its formidable fire power against North Vietnam and the patriotic forces in the South.

The "local" war of the US against the people of Vietnam which had as its immediate objective to preserve and consolidate US domination in South Vietnam was at the same time an attempt to achieve far-reaching "global strategy" goals by force of arms. As the 1969 International Meeting of Representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties pointed out: "By undertaking armed intervention in Vietnam the imperialist forces of the USA made an attempt to destroy one of the outposts of socialism in Asia, bar the road of the peoples of Indochina to peace, freedom and progress, strike a blow at the revolutionary national liberation movement in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and test the solidarity of the socialist countries and all anti-imperialist forces." ¹

The US ruling circles' Indochina gamble turned the area into a most dangerous hotbed of war in the world.

¹ *International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, Moscow, 1969, Prague, 1969, p. 43.*

In an attempt to cover up its illegal actions Washington launched a massive propaganda campaign in 1965 designed to convince the American and world public that the US direct military intervention in Vietnam had allegedly been necessitated by the need to "protect" South Vietnam from aggression from the North, to assist the puppet government in Saigon and "restore durable peace" in Indochina. In actual fact, however, the "local" war unleashed by the United States constituted a flagrant violation of every standard of international law, being an act of overt imperialist aggression. The USA continued along the disgraceful road of trampling upon the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indochina which explicitly recognized the inalienable right of the people of Vietnam to independence, unity and territorial integrity. The United States grossly flouted the UN Charter which emphatically banned the threat or use of force in international relations.

In a bid to mislead public opinion and at the same time to probe the strength and endurance of the DRV and South Vietnamese patriotic forces the Johnson Administration already in the opening months of its undeclared war against North Vietnam and full-scale intervention in the South resorted to a series of propaganda and diplomatic ruses disguised as a "search for peace" in Vietnam.

In his speech at John Hopkins University in Baltimore on April 7, 1965 Lyndon Johnson offered to open talks for a political settlement in the South Vietnam without any preconditions. The falsity of this offer was obvious. In reality Washington offered to negotiate on its terms, namely, that the DRV should first surrender and the patriots of South Vietnam should first lay down their arms.

Further, the White House offered to negotiate for peace without the participation of the SVNLF and that at a time when the US had over 30,000 of its ground troops in South Vietnam and the US Air Force was savagely bombing North Vietnam. What is more, Johnson declared his intention to continue acts of aggression against the North and carry on with the US intervention in the South. Any unprejudiced and unbiased observer saw clearly that peace negotiations on the terms offered by Washington would result in consolidating the US grip on the South and in

the continued domination of the Saigon puppet regime and keeping Vietnam divided.

The world progressive public read President Johnson's peace offer for what it was. The Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin in a statement on April 19, 1965 said, "There has been of late talk in Washington about a 'peace settlement', about talks without any preconditions. Washington hastened to portray it as a new and realistic approach to the situation that has arisen. In fact, however, nothing can be further from the truth. What price are these promises in the eyes of the peoples if the USA is at the same time keeping up its air war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, if its words about a peace settlement are accompanied by statements about its intention to carry on the war until victory? What is the worth of such professions of a desire for peace if the US ruling circles intend to continue their intervention in South Vietnam. The maneuvering resorted to by the US ruling circles will mislead no one. This is no way towards a proper settlement of the Vietnam problem and no road to ending this disgraceful war. Vague promises and conflicting statements will not solve the problem." ¹

In May 1965 Washington announced a "pause" in the bombing of North Vietnam and accompanied it by a fresh wave of propaganda about its "peaceful intentions". However, a week after the bombing pause the US Air Force resumed intensified raids against North Vietnam on the pretext of a "lack of response" from Hanoi. As the DRV Foreign Ministry pointed out in its statement of May 18, 1965 Washington had apparently hoped for a "response" to "its arrogant and impudent demand that the people of South Vietnam should give up their just struggle as a precondition for the US halting its bombing and naval bombardment of North Vietnam". Neither President Johnson's Baltimore speech, nor the bombing pause in May 1965 did anything to bring nearer a just political settlement of the Vietnam problem since these two moves were designed to achieve nothing of the kind. Subsequent events demonstrated and the publication in 1971 of the secret Pentagon Papers supplied documentary proof that periodic halts in the US bombing of North Vietnam were all

¹ *Pravda*, April 20, 1965.

elements of a carefully planned strategy of escalating the war of aggression. The statements coming from Washington about its alleged intention to open negotiations for peace were designed to help the US Administration to mislead and lull into inaction world public opinion and at the same time to find out whether North Vietnam and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front might not be inclined to beat a retreat in the face of superior force and give up the fight. Each bombing pause was followed by a "punishment" and each successive round of bombing was more savage and merciless than the last.

Total Mobilization to Repel Enemy Attacks

At a time when the peaceful towns and villages of North Vietnam were subjected to saturation raids by the US Air Force, when US divisions armed to the teeth landed in South Vietnam in quick succession the people of Vietnam, the Vietnam Workers' Party, the DRV government and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front were considering the critical question of the nation's future, the future of the gains of the August Revolution and socialist transformation of the North, and the prospects of the national popular-democratic revolution in the South. The world's mightiest imperialist power openly challenged a nation who in terms of size, economic development and available military potential could not possibly match it. The menace this military challenge represented was clear to everyone. The rest of the world followed with bated breath the reaction of the DRV government and the SVNLF to the piratical actions of the US military in Vietnam.

The 11th (March 1965) and 12th (December 1965) plenary sessions of the CC of the Vietnam Workers' Party carefully analyzed every aspect of the new situation that had arisen as a result of the escalation of the US-led war in the South and American aggression against the North. The plenary sessions worked out policy guidelines and a strategy for further struggle. They adopted a series of crucial decisions on organizational arrangements in the light of the new tasks arising from the changed situation.

In the face of an open US aggression the Vietnamese position was made known to the US government and the world public by the Central Committee of the SVNLF in the statement of March 22 and by North Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Van Dong in the statement of April 6, 1965. These documents which came to be known as "the five points of the SVNLF" and "the four points of the DRV government," stated that the Vietnam problem should be settled on the basis of the Geneva Agreements of 1954, recognition of the basic national rights of the people of Vietnam including the right to peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. The US government should withdraw its troops from South Vietnam, dismantle military bases and discontinue its intervention in the South and cease all acts of war against North Vietnam. Until the peaceful reunification of Vietnam while the country remains temporarily divided into two zones they, in accordance with the Geneva Agreements, should refrain from entering into military alliances with foreign countries and should have no foreign military bases, foreign troops or military personnel.

The people of South Vietnam themselves should be allowed to settle their domestic problems in accordance with the NLF programme. The question of the peaceful reunification of Vietnam should be resolved by the Vietnamese inhabiting both zones without any outside interference.

This declared position, Pham Van Dong in his statement of April 8, 1965 emphasized, would furnish a basis for a durable political settlement in Vietnam. The statement continued: "If this basis is accepted, favorable conditions will arise for a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem and a possibility will be created to consider the convening of a new international conference on the pattern of the Geneva Conference of 1954 on Vietnam." At the same time North Vietnam's Prime Minister stated that "any approach inconsistent with the position outlined above, is unacceptable. Any approach with the aim of sanctioning continued US interference in Vietnamese affairs is unacceptable either as it would contradict the Geneva Agreements of 1954 on Vietnam."¹

¹ *Nhan Dan*, April 8, 1965.

Basing itself on this principled position in a situation where the US government was escalating the war and showed no sign of readiness to reckon with the legitimate demands and interests of the Vietnamese people the CC of the Vietnam Workers' Party passed a decision on mobilizing the forces of the Party, people and the army in order, "in any situation, to inflict a decisive defeat on the US imperialist aggressors, to defend North Vietnam, free South Vietnam and complete the national popular-democratic revolution throughout the country and begin peaceful reunification of the homeland."¹

In adopting that decision the CC of the Vietnam Workers' Party proceeded from the realization that the people of Vietnam had everything they needed for a successful continuation of the struggle. The domestic and international factors, in the judgement of the Vietnamese Communists, in their totality, despite the enemy's overwhelming superiority in troop strength and military technology, would eventually enable the people of Vietnam not only to hold their ground and meet the challenge of aggression successfully but also to defeat the aggressor. The Central Committee stated that the US imperialists would not be able to increase their troop strength in the South Vietnam indefinitely in view of the difficulties and problems they were encountering on every front in South Vietnam, on the international scene and within the United States itself.

The confidence of the Vietnam Workers' Party in the ultimate triumph of the Vietnamese people's just cause was based on the strength of the South Vietnamese patriots united in the National Liberation Front, on the high morale and combat efficiency of People's Liberation Armed Forces, on the readiness of the people of North Vietnam to do their duty to their compatriots in the South "to carry on the war of Resistance against the US aggressors, for the salvation of the homeland shoulder to shoulder with their compatriots in the South". The Party proceeded from the realization that as a result of the socialist transformation and socialist construction over the course of more than 10 years North Vietnam with its expanding national economy and strong defenses had be-

¹ *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party*, p. 128.

come a reliable logistical base for the revolution sweeping the whole of Vietnam.

In adopting the decision on the total mobilization of the nation's entire resources to repel the enemy in the new situation the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party proceeded from its confidence in the strength and indestructibility of the bonds of solidarity which linked the embattled people of Vietnam with the progressive forces throughout the world, above all with the socialist countries, and from the realization that the just struggle of the Vietnamese would always enjoy their powerful and active support.

The Central Committee clearly defined the tasks facing the Party and the people in both parts of the country. Addressing a conference of Party cadres at the Secretariat of the CC of the VWP held between July 2 and 8, 1965 Le Duan said: "...our people should be able to beat the Americans both in the North and in the South. The joint struggle of the people and army of both parts of the country should be closely coordinated, with the South playing the role of the big front and the North, the role of the big logistical base, in order to destroy any military gamble by the enemy and frustrate his aggressive designs."¹ North Vietnam thus had while repelling enemy air raids to carry on with the construction of socialism, to retain and add to its economic and defense potential and keep the front in the South supplied with food, weapons and equipment, ammunition and manpower.

In an attempt to destroy the logistical base of the country-wide liberation struggle in Vietnam, to undermine the DRV's economic potential the US command directed the main air strikes against North Vietnam's industry and power stations. In the first months of the US aggression against the DRV the US Air Force severely damaged the Haiphong cement works, a textile complex in Nam Dinh, a power station in Vinh, a steam and power station in Wong-Bi. A major objective of the US Air Force was to destroy North Vietnam's railways and motor roads so as to paralyze its economic life and stop supplies coming from the North to the patriotic forces in South Vietnam.

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1965-1970)*, p. 3.

The Vietnam Workers' Party launched a massive campaign to mobilize the country's resources for an effort to repel enemy attacks and strengthen the Republic's defense capability. Le Duan wrote: "North Vietnam must gear its entire resources to the war effort in order to tighten up its defenses and give a fitting rebuff to all enemy attacks by air and by sea... . It is necessary to develop a powerful land army... and at the same time form efficient self-defense and militia units, well-trained politically and militarily and more or less well-armed."¹

In response to the Party's appeal a mass grass roots movement developed to form self-defense units. The entire population of North Vietnam capable of carrying arms joined these units. Each factory and plant, each agricultural cooperative became a combat unit apart from being a production unit. Workers in industry and the peasants on the rice paddies, youth, women, old people and even children came together to repel US Air Force raids and US 7th Fleet attacks side by side with the men of the People's Army.

The strategists of the US air war against North Vietnam soon had their first bitter disappointments when they saw that raids against North Vietnam had failed to frighten its defenders, failed to break their will, on the contrary, the raids boosted the population's morale and stiffened their determination to carry on the fight through thick and thin.

During the first months of US saturation bombing the DRV carried out a series of measures to preserve and strengthen its economic potential. North Vietnam was split into several zones which were self-sufficient in every essential in war time. A far-flung network of local production units was set up to keep the population supplied with essential goods and services and instruments of production.

The evacuation and dispersion of industrial enterprises, coupled with the self-sacrifice and heroism of the working class who continued to work with dedication despite the mounting intensity of US air strikes enabled North Vietnam's industry to preserve its productive potential and keep on supplying basic goods critical for

¹ Ibid., p. 3-4.

keeping the production going, to supply the population in the North and the liberated areas in the South with everything necessary for their life and struggle.

Washington failed in another objective it set itself when launching intensive air attacks on the DRV, namely, to destroy agricultural production and cause starvation. In the teeth of incredible difficulties as a result of the US Air Force raids, despite the fact that part of the male population had been drafted into the army and road building and maintenance teams, agricultural co-operatives kept on supplying the army and civilian population with rice and other food crops.

The US aggression in Vietnam provoked a strong reaction from the socialist countries. Condemning the reckless actions of the US imperialists the USSR and other socialist countries took a firm stand in support of the Vietnamese people's just struggle. On November 6, 1964 addressing a celebratory meeting in the Moscow Kremlin to mark the 47th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution Leonid Brezhnev on behalf of the Soviet Communists and the people of the USSR declared: "We are strongly condemning the provocations against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. We hail the courageous people of South Vietnam who are heroically fighting a war of liberation against a corrupt anti-popular regime and the armed intervention of US imperialism, for the reunification of their homeland on a democratic basis." ¹

Addressing a meeting in honor of Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship held in Moscow on December 3, 1964 Leonid Brezhnev issued a warning to the US aggressors who were launching new armed provocations against North Vietnam, when he said: "...The USSR cannot stand idly by or be indifferent to the future of a sister socialist nation and is ready to give her all necessary assistance. The imperialists will do well to show caution in playing with fire! It is a dangerous game!" ²

As the USA ignored this warning and continued to expand its intervention in South Vietnam and carried on

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course. Speeches and Articles*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1973, pp. 28-29 (in Russian).

² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

with its acts of aggression against the socialist North the USSR took necessary measures to help the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

In February 1965 when the US Air Force carried out saturation raids over North Vietnam a Soviet government delegation headed by Prime Minister Kosygin visited Hanoi for talks with the DRV leaders. The talks examined in detail the situation that had risen as a result of open acts of aggression by the USA against Vietnam. The joint statement issued at the end of the talks on February 10, 1965 emphasized that the US bombing of North Vietnam constituted "a provocation to the entire socialist camp, and all mankind dedicated to peace, freedom and justice". The Soviet government reiterated that following the principles of socialist internationalism it would not stand idly by but would give the DRV all necessary help and support to ensure the security of a sister socialist nation. The governments of both countries reached agreement on measures to be taken to strengthen the DRV's defense capacity and on regular consultations on this matter.¹

Two months later during the return visit to the USSR of a DRV Party and government delegation led by Le Duan, the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Soviet government, on the one hand, and the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party and the DRV government, on the other, agreed on further steps to be taken to protect the security and sovereignty of the DRV, the victim of US imperialist aggression, and agreed appropriate measures to this end. The Soviet-North Vietnam talks in 1965 resulted in a number of agreements on Soviet military and economic aid to the DRV.

Subsequently, Soviet and Vietnamese leaders met regularly to discuss in detail the situation in Vietnam that had developed as a result of US aggression, and effective ways and means of repelling the aggressor, as well as joint political measures to be taken by the two parties and countries. These talks resulted in agreements on the granting of Soviet credits and aid to the DRV.

¹ See: *Combat Solidarity, Fraternal Assistance (Collection of Key Documents on the USSR's Policy on the Vietnam Question)*, Moscow, 1970, p. 35 (in Russian).

Similar agreements began to be concluded between the DRV and other socialist countries.

The fraternal assistance rendered by the USSR and other countries of the socialist community enabled North Vietnam to give more muscle to its army and develop additional and highly effective arms and services—anti-aircraft units equipped with up-to-date technology and an air force. These played the decisive role in North Vietnam's successful response to the US piratical air raids. Soviet military experts who were sent to North Vietnam helped its army gain complete proficiency in the handling of modern weapons and equipment.

Within the first few months of its bombing campaign against North Vietnam the US Air Force lost dozens of its planes. All told, in 1965, according to Pentagon figures, rather understated, the US Air Force lost 171 war planes over North Vietnam.

In extending necessary assistance to a sister socialist country to strengthen her defense capacity and to preserve and build up her military and economic potential the USSR and other socialist countries actively supported the just stand of the DRV government and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front on the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem and worked closely with them to end the military conflict that had been provoked by the imperialists.

In February 1965 appearing on a nation-wide TV network Prime Minister Kosygin said: "The peace-loving countries are calling for a strict observance of the Geneva Agreements in order to prevent the conflict in South-East Asia from spreading and find the way towards a negotiated settlement of the Indochina problem. Cessation of US acts of aggression against Democratic Vietnam is what is required above all for creating favorable conditions for a search of ways to normalize the Indochina situation."¹

The Soviet government, the USSR Supreme Soviet and Soviet public organizations actively supported the NLF's "five points" and the "four points" of the DRV government which set out the position of the Vietnamese side on a peaceful settlement in Vietnam.

¹ *Pravda*, February 27, 1965.

The all-round and effective assistance they gave to it showed the Vietnamese people in tangible terms within the first days of US open aggression against North Vietnam the solid support from outside, that they were not alone, that they had reliable and powerful allies. This knowledge coupled with the help and assistance of socialist countries in multiplying several-fold North Vietnam's material resources geared to the war effort helped the Vietnamese to repel US imperialist attacks.

The Vietnamese Communists and the rest of the people of Vietnam fully appreciated the help and assistance they were getting and responded to this expression of international solidarity with a readiness to strengthen friendship and develop cooperation with other socialist countries. In an interview to a *Pravda* correspondent in June 1965 President Ho Chi Minh said: "The Party, government and people of Vietnam expressed their profound gratitude to the party, the government and the people of the USSR for their solidarity, support and valuable assistance to our struggle against aggressive American imperialism. We shall do our best to strengthen the bonds of fraternal friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance linking Vietnam and the Soviet Union being fully aware that these efforts are a crucial factor on the road leading to the victory for our revolutionary cause."¹

Alongside firm support and effective assistance of the socialist countries the further strengthening of the combat alliance between the Vietnamese people and the patriotic forces of Laos and Cambodia was of no small importance for the successful repelling of the US aggression against the North and its intervention in the South.

The USA at the same time as it was intervening in South Vietnam and launching an air war against the DRV stepped up its direct interference in Laos. The Americans actively assisted the overthrow by right-wing forces of Laos's national unity government and subjected to savage bombing raids areas controlled by the Patriotic Front of Laos. At the same time the US intensified its campaign of subversion against Cambodia and increased its support of forces which opposed the government's policy of neutrality.

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *On Lenin, Leninism and Indestructible Soviet-Vietnamese Friendship*, pp. 287-288.

In March 1965, representatives of the DRV, the SVNLF, of neutral Cambodia and Laotian patriotic forces held a conference of the peoples of Indochina in Phnom-Penh to discuss the situation that had arisen as a result of the US aggression and adopted a number of decisions to pool the efforts of the Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian patriots. These decisions subsequently contributed to frustrating Washington's plans to isolate and destroy the liberation forces of South Vietnam and at the same time in strengthening the patriotic forces of Laos and Cambodia in the struggle for the independence and sovereignty of their respective countries. One tangible political result of the Phnom-Penh conference was the rupture by the neutral Cambodia of its diplomatic relations with the USA in May 1965.

The Pentagon's Vietnam Dead End

The situation in South Vietnam despite the commitment of the US expeditionary force continued to slip out of control of the US aggressors and Saigon regime.

By the end of 1965 the total troop strength taking part in suppressing the South Vietnamese liberation movement reached 800,000 officers and men, including US troops, the Saigon army, and the troops sent in by the US allies, plus the personnel of the US 7th Fleet and of US military bases in Thailand.

This formidable force equipped with the latest in weapons and hardware, gave the US and Saigon overwhelming preponderance in fire power, mobility and strength over the patriotic forces. However, the latter, overcoming every difficulty caused by the massive commitment of US ground troops, succeeded in withstanding the enemy's pressure and dealt telling blows to them. In August 1965 the People's Liberation Armed Forces staged their first trial of strength and endurance with the US troops at Van Tuong. The units of People's Liberation Armed Forces operating in close cooperation with the guerrillas successfully fought off a major punitive operation involving 8,000 American troops supported by aircraft and the US 7th Fleet. The victory won by the patriotic forces at

Van Tuong indicated that they were capable of beating the aggressors in a "local" war and in this sense the victory had great moral and political significance.

In November 1965 the US command mounted its first general counter-offensive in South Vietnam. The objective was to knock out the People's Liberation Armed Forces' regular units, destroy their control over much of the liberated area and drive the patriotic forces back into the mountainous regions. The counter-offensive was launched from five different points in the southern and central provinces of South Vietnam and involved about a hundred battalions of US and Saigon troops.

At the height of the operation the Johnson Administration made another attempt to probe the resolve and nerve of the DRV and the SVNLF. To this end on December 24, 1965 President Johnson announced a second "pause" in the US bombing of North Vietnam. On January 7, 1966 the Johnson Administration unveiled its 14-point programme for a settlement in Vietnam on the basis of which the US sought to impose on the people of Vietnam a solution favorable to the US and Saigon. While paying lip service to the Geneva Agreements of 1954 as a basis for negotiations and while professing readiness to negotiate for peace "without any preconditions", Washington at the same time refused to stop the bombing of North Vietnam until it became clear "what will follow". The USA, in effect, demanded a "reward" for halting its aggression against the DRV. While proposing "free elections" in South Vietnam the Johnson Administration made no mention of its readiness to withdraw US forces which meant that the proposed elections would have to be conducted amid foreign occupation and that, needless to say, would prejudice their outcome in favor of the Saigon puppets.

At the end of January 1966 President Ho Chi Minh sent a message to the heads of state and government of a number of countries which pointed out that if the US government indeed sought a peaceful settlement it should recognize the DRV government's "four points" position and act accordingly: it should once and for all halt the bombing of North Vietnam without any preconditions and cease all other acts of war against the DRV.

On January 31, 1966 the White House ordered a resumption of US bombing raids on North Vietnam. The Soviet

government responded with a statement which pointed out that the resumption of US bombing raids on North Vietnam two days after President No Chi Minh came forward with a new constructive initiative was proof that the US did not intend to seek an end to the war in Vietnam while its so-called peace initiative was a diplomatic move designed to mislead world public opinion and prepare the ground for a further escalation of its aggression against the Vietnamese people.

After the second bombing pause the US Air Force stepped up its raids on North Vietnam. However, it did not help the US invading army and the Saigon puppets in any way. The first "counter-offensive" in the winter and spring of 1966 failed to produce any tangible results for the combined US-Saigon forces. In April 1966 the US Command ordered its troops to begin a withdrawal thereby admitting that the main objectives of the operation had not been accomplished.

The failure of the offensive operations conducted by the US expeditionary force and Saigon troops in South Vietnam in the winter and spring of 1965-1966 was the first indication that the "local war" strategy was failing to produce the victory the US had been coveting so much.

Addressing the 23rd Congress of the CPSU in Moscow on March 30, 1966 Le Duan said: "...even if the Americans send in scores of thousands of additional troops our compatriots in South Vietnam backed by North Vietnam and the socialist camp would carry on their uncompromising struggle and would eventually win.... The whole of the Vietnamese people are prepared to make any sacrifices to uphold the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of their homeland and fulfil their duty to defend the outpost of the socialist camp in South-East Asia".¹

From the rostrum of the 23rd Congress of the CPSU Le Duan appealed to the socialist countries, to the fraternal parties and the working class of all countries, to the peoples fighting for independence, to all forces of peace and progress throughout the world to give Viet-

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1965-1970)*, pp. 36, 37-38.

nam every assistance in its struggle against the US imperialists.

The 23rd Congress of the CPSU gave full backing to the embattled Vietnamese people having formulated its principled position in face of the US open aggression against Vietnam. In a special statement the Congress declared: "On behalf of the whole Party, of all Soviet people, the 23rd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union firmly demands that the US aggression against Vietnam be stopped and all interventionist troops be withdrawn from that country.... The Congress resolutely declares: in 'escalating' the disgraceful war against the people of Vietnam, the aggressors will meet with increasing support of Vietnam by the Soviet Union and other fraternal socialist countries."¹

The statement of the 23rd Congress of the CPSU on the Vietnam question provided a programme of action for the Soviet Communists and all Soviet people. A mass solidarity movement with Vietnam developed across the USSR. The emphasis in this movement was on dedicated work by Soviet people in industry, agriculture, and transport aimed at filling the orders placed with the USSR by the embattled people of Vietnam strictly on schedule. The Soviet Union kept up an uninterrupted and mounting flow of essential supplies to Vietnam to enable it to repel the US aggression and get on with the job of socialist construction. The USSR was supplying North Vietnam with large quantities of military equipment including combat aircraft, missiles, tanks, artillery pieces and small arms. The civilian part of Soviet supplies to Vietnam covered a wide range and included industrial plant and equipment, fuels, food and medical supplies, etc.

The men of the Soviet merchant marine operating from the ports of Vladivostok, Odessa, Nakhodka and Novorossiisk displayed a high sense of their internationalist duty in getting essential shipments across the seas to Vietnam. During the war years an average of 40 Soviet ships docked in the ports of Haiphong and Kam Pha for a month. An estimated two-thirds of North Vietnam's entire turnover of shipments were handled by the Soviet merchant marine. Often Soviet merchant ships had to

¹ 23rd Congress of the CPSU, Moscow, 1966, p. 427.

operate in difficult conditions as they became the target of US armed provocations. On June 2, 1967 the M/S *Turkestan* lying at anchor off Kam Pha was strafed by US Air Force planes. Nikolai Rybachuk, an electrician, was killed while in the course of duty.

Several thousand Soviet specialists in a variety of fields arrived in North Vietnam to help their Vietnamese counterparts to strengthen its economy and defense potential. The USSR provided comprehensive technical assistance in the construction of industrial and other projects, in repairing the industrial enterprises damaged by US bombing raids.

The USSR trained officers for all the arms and services of the Vietnamese People's Army as well as thousands of specialists and highly skilled workers.

Another expression of the Soviet people's solidarity with their Vietnamese brothers was the massive campaign in support of Vietnam that was launched in the Soviet Union by its public organizations. They held thousands of public meetings and rallies, Vietnam solidarity weeks and months to express whole-hearted support for the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese and strongly condemned the piratical acts of aggression committed by the US imperialists on Vietnamese soil. Country-wide collections for a fund to help Vietnam were taken on repeated occasions.

The USSR apart from standing up for a fraternal socialist country, the victim of imperialist aggression, called for developing a broad front of international solidarity with the people of Vietnam. Addressing a meeting in Warsaw on April 8, 1965 Leonid Brezhnev said "...the gamble of the new-style colonialists will be frustrated the sooner the stronger is the unity and cohesion of all forces of peace, progress and freedom throughout the world in opposing their criminal actions. The people of Vietnam need the effective support of these forces."¹

The Soviet government and public organizations maintained a dedicated effort in many different areas and at all levels to mobilize world public opinion to support the embattled people of Vietnam.

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course. Speeches and Articles*, Vol. 1, p. 110.

In December 1965 the USSR Supreme Soviet in a statement on the US aggression in Vietnam, after endorsing the Soviet government's policy and actions in support of the just struggle of the fraternal people of Vietnam, called upon the parliaments and governments of the world to make the necessary efforts to force the US to terminate its war of aggression against Vietnam and let the people of that country settle their domestic affairs without outside interference.

Soviet diplomats in the course of numerous contacts and negotiations with government leaders of other countries, at a variety of international forums and conferences, including the United Nations explained and supported the position of the DRV and the SVNLF and persuaded them to put more pressure on the US Administration to make it stop the aggression in Vietnam.

Soviet trade unions, women's, youth and other public organizations launched an extensive activity on the international scene in support of Vietnam taking the initiative in organizing many different actions and campaigns of solidarity with the people of Vietnam.

The governments and public organizations of other socialist countries maintained a similar programme of measures in their respective countries and on the international scene. An important role in mobilizing the world public to condemn the US aggressors was played by the collective actions and campaigns launched by socialist countries, Communist and Workers' parties in support of the just struggle of the Vietnamese. The first actions of this kind took the form of joint statements on the Vietnam situation adopted by the Consultative Meeting of Representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow in March 1965 and the Bucharest Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Member-States held in July 1966.

In supporting Vietnam the USSR and other socialist countries and their Communist parties exposed the US aggressors in the eyes of the world public and frustrated US propaganda attempts to deflect the fire of condemnation and criticism of its illegal actions in Indochina away from the United States. In 1965-1966 a protest movement against the US war in Vietnam began to gain momentum in many countries including the US itself. The anti-war

movement involved representatives of different shades of political opinion ranging from Communists to bourgeois liberal pacifists.

Gradually the solidarity movement with the people of Vietnam, the victims of aggression, spilled across national frontiers having developed into a world-wide movement. This transformation had been greatly assisted by the activities of progressive international organizations including the World Federation of Trade Unions, the World Federation of Democratic Youth, and the World Federation of Democratic Women. Of special importance in developing the campaign to condemn the US aggression in Vietnam were the initiatives taken by the World Peace Council, notably, the decision the Council adopted at the special session of its Presidium in Stockholm in 1965 to hold an international week of solidarity with the Vietnamese people.

In working for greater unity and cohesion of all peace-loving and progressive forces to oppose the US aggression against the people of Vietnam the USSR repeatedly urged the People's Republic of China to coordinate actions in support of the fighting people of Vietnam. However, China ignored all such appeals. The Chinese government turned down the Soviet Union's proposal to hold a summit meeting of government leaders of the USSR, China and the DRV to discuss measures in support of the people of Vietnam at a time when the US was stepping up its air war against North Vietnam.

The position of the Chinese leadership in the face of escalating US aggression in Vietnam indicated that the men in Peking looked at the Indochina conflict in the context of accomplishing the Maoists' hegemonistic aspirations in South-East Asia and even beyond it. This attitude was tantamount to a betrayal of the people of Vietnam, camouflaged by assurances of full support.

In the hope of exploiting the just and valiant struggle of the Vietnamese patriots against imperialist aggression for its ambitious goals, not least for strengthening China's bargaining position in a future haggling with the US over Taiwan and other issues, and at the same time striving to weaken North Vietnam's positions in South-East Asia and undermine Soviet-Vietnamese friendship Peking did everything to drag out the war in Vietnam,

notably, by preventing the USSR from getting military and civilian supplies to Vietnam quickly across Chinese territory. Peking dodged this way and that to avoid committing itself to any action that could be seen by the US as indicating China's readiness to act with resolve and determination in support of a neighboring socialist country that had become the victim of aggression. Peking used various methods to signal to Washington that despite the escalating US bombing of North Vietnam and the stepped-up ground operations against the patriots of South Vietnam China would continue to display restraint and would not provoke a war with the US.

At one point US military and political leaders were concerned about Peking's reaction to the projected US bombing of Haiphong and Hanoi. Soon after the bombing began, however, they could see their concern was exaggerated. Peking's response to the US bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong was a carefully worded statement which convinced the US government that China was not going to intervene in the Vietnam war directly.

Pursuing their unseemly ends the Maoists categorically rejected any possibility of a political settlement of the Indochina conflict and persistently imposed on Vietnam their own recipe: a war "to the end". The hypocrisy of the Peking leaders was unbelievable: while urging the people of Vietnam to fight on "to the end" they at the same time kept telling the world that the Vietnamese hardly needed any support and backing from their friends and brothers in the outside world and were quite capable, relying on their own resources, of defeating the US aggressors. Such statements ran counter to the policy of the Vietnamese Communists aimed at setting up a broad international solidarity front with Vietnam.

The desire of Mao Zedong and his inner circle to remain on the sidelines while watching the Indochina conflagration, their actions aimed at isolating the Vietnamese patriots from the USSR and other socialist countries and to make the eventual solution of the Vietnam problem and indeed the very future of Vietnam dependent on the will and wishes of the Peking hegemonists were obvious. As for China's support for Vietnam, Senator Thurmond, by no means a dove in matters of US foreign policy,

said it was clear to the White House that this support was predominantly that of "a long tongue".

As a result by 1966 when it became perfectly plain that China had no intention of doing anything practical to help repel the US aggression and that China, the only socialist country with a common border with Vietnam, would not allow other socialist countries to give their joint support and help to the DRV, the USA proceeded to rapidly build up its expeditionary force in South Vietnam and to step up bombing raids on North Vietnam ignoring so-called warnings emanating from Peking.¹ As the Cuban newspaper *Granma* wrote on June 1, 1978, by their policy of undermining the unity of revolutionary forces "the Chinese leaders have done an invaluable service to the imperialists in their criminal war of aggression against the heroic people of Vietnam."

* * *

After analyzing the disappointing results of the dry season fighting in 1965-1966 the US Command complacently concluded that the whole problem was that it did not have enough ground strength and military hardware in South Vietnam to win the war. The Johnson Administration in an attempt to rectify the situation decided to send in fresh divisions. By the end of 1966 the USA had 380,000 officers and men in South Vietnam which total rose to 440,000 by the start of 1967. The combined strength of the US, Saigon and US allies' forces in South Vietnam was in excess of 1 million officers and men. In addition, the US had 4,500 combat aircraft and helicopters, about 3,000 artillery pieces and 3,500 armored personnel carriers and tanks.

As the Pentagon continued to build up US forces in the South it escalated its air war against North Vietnam. US bombing raids over the DRV were becoming ever more savage. Whereas in 1965 the US Air Force made 55,000 sorties against North Vietnam, in 1966 the total was 148,000 sorties. In 1965 US planes dropped 33,000 tons of bomb load, in 1966—128,000 tons.

¹ *Foreign Policy and International Relations of the People's Republic of China, 1963-1973*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1974, p. 43.

Starting from the summer of 1966 the US air war against North Vietnam spread throughout the Republic's territory. The US Air Force saturation raids against the densely populated areas of North Vietnam were claiming more and more civilian lives. Despite the repeated assurances of US government officials that US planes bombed only military targets in North Vietnam in actual fact they bombed and strafed rural communities and residential quarters of towns and cities, schools, hospitals, temples, concentrations of fishing boats and groups of peasants out in the rice paddies. According to statistics published by the North Vietnamese press as of December 31, 1966 the US Air Force had bombed 92 medical institutions in North Vietnam killing and wounding hundreds of patients and medical staff, destroyed some 150 temples and pagodas killing two priests and six monks....

In stepping up its air war against North Vietnam Washington was hoping not only to disrupt economic life in the North and stop the flow of supplies from North to South Vietnam but also to terrorize and demoralize the civilian population and break the will of North Vietnam leaders to continue resistance to the US aggression.

But each round in the escalation of the US air war encountered a calm and unshakeable courage, cohesion and will to win displayed by the Vietnamese. North Vietnam fought on successfully discharging its duty as a reliable logistical base for the liberation struggle in the South. Factories and plants which have been dispersed throughout the jungle and concealed in deep caves in the mountains kept on supplying everything necessary to the front and the country's economy. In between US air raids the peasants of North Vietnam carried on with sowing and harvesting work. North Vietnam's schools and colleges evacuated from the towns and cities to remote jungle areas kept up their normal activities. More and more ships bringing essential supplies from the USSR, the GDR,² Bulgaria, Hungary, Cuba and other socialist countries docked at North Vietnam's sea ports.

Having gained complete proficiency in the handling of advanced weapons and fighting equipment supplied by fraternal socialist countries and displaying skill and heroism on the battle-field the crews of anti-aircraft gun and missile batteries, North Vietnam's air force

pilots and members of the people's militia fought off US air raids with indomitable courage. The heaviest fighting was going on in the south of North Vietnam where it was essential to preserve vital transport communications. In an attempt to cut at all costs the steady flow of supplies from North Vietnam to the South the US command kept sending armada after armada of its war planes to destroy the roads, bridges and ferry crossings in an area just to the North of the 17th parallel. The US Air Force was dropping steadily increasing amounts of bombs and air-to-surface missiles, suffering mounting losses in manpower and equipment and was still failing to accomplish its mission. The transport arteries of North Vietnam, including the critical Highway No. 1 running from North to South Vietnam, were still functioning.

The expansion of the US air war to cover targets throughout North Vietnam produced steadily rising losses for the US Air Force but not the desired effect. By the end of 1966 according to Pentagon statistics the US Air Force had lost about 500 combat aircraft over North Vietnam.

In South Vietnam after analyzing the lessons of the preceding "counter-offensive" the US command lowered its sights in planning offensive operations for the winter and spring of 1966-1967. It confined itself to delivering a major strike at the area where to the best of its information, the principal NLF base was situated—Tay Ninh province, northwest of Saigon. Between October 1966 and April 1967 combined US and Saigon forces launched three major operations in this province including the operation code-named "Junction City" which involved some 45,000 US officers and men backed by 800 tanks and armored personnel carriers and hundreds of war planes and helicopters.

Just as it did in the preceding dry season, during the second "counter-offensive" in South Vietnam the US Administration again resorted to diplomatic maneuvering by announcing yet another pause in the US bombing raids of North Vietnam (February 8 to 12, 1967). The "pause" was again accompanied by widely publicized assurances of readiness to open negotiations with the DRV. On February 13 the US Air Force resumed its raids against North Vietnam on the pretext that Hanoi had allegedly

failed to respond to an offer of negotiations for a political settlement of the Vietnam problem. The cheap propaganda character of Washington's claim was obvious. In actual fact, the DRV government in an attempt to compel the USA to de-escalate the war and using for this purpose political and diplomatic means apart from a military response to the US aggression, even before the second bombing pause took an important initiative towards achieving a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam conflict. In an interview granted to the Australian correspondent Wilfred Burchett on January 28, 1967 North Vietnam's Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, who was also a Deputy Prime Minister, said that the US should stop the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV unconditionally following which US-Vietnamese negotiations could start. On February 8 Nguyen Duy Trinh added that negotiations with the US would begin as soon as the US government proved that it had, indeed, ceased without any preconditions the bombing and other acts of war against the DRV. These negotiations, he went on, would be about settling the Vietnam problem on the basis of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam. North Vietnam was prepared to discuss other questions that the US side might raise.

The reasonable position adopted by the DRV government met with the solid support of the USSR and other fraternal socialist countries. It was endorsed by the peace-loving forces throughout the world.

Addressing a news conference in London on February 9, 1967 the Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, referring to the interview Nguyen Duy Trinh granted to Wilfred Burchett, said, "We fully share the ideas contained in the statement made by the DRV foreign minister and believe that the US will do well to respond to it positively. It is a very sound and constructive proposal.... We fully support it."¹

However, Washington demonstrated once again its intention to force the people of Vietnam to submit to its imperialist diktat by putting more military pressure on the DRV and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front.

¹ *Pravda*, February 11, 1967.

The Peking leaders were in effect acting hand in glove with the US imperialists at the time. Chinese propaganda from the very first qualified the legitimate demands of the DRV government and the world public for a halt to the US bombing of North Vietnam as... "a collusion between the USSR and the US imperialists in an attempt to strangle the Vietnamese revolution".¹ Not surprisingly, therefore, that the DRV government's proposal of January 28, 1967 drew a cool response from Peking. To quote *Renmin ribao*, "Is it really true that the crux of the Vietnam problem is some kind of a halt to the bombing of the North? Absolutely not!" The Peking leaders were still trying to prove that it was in the interests of the Vietnamese people to wage a protracted war. *Renmin ribao* claimed on March 27, 1967: "The Vietnamese people are quite capable of fighting the enemy on their native soil for generations."

Later in a *New York Times* interview in October 1978 Nguyen Co Thath, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, recalled the joke that was current among Western newsmen at the height of the Vietnam war: "The Chinese are ready to fight on to the last Vietnamese." The American newsmen who liked the joke so much, Nguyen Co Thath remarked, could not even imagine just how close to the truth they were. The men in Washington read this attitude of the Chinese leadership quite correctly as indicating that China had no intention of preventing the US aggressors from doing their black deeds in Vietnam.

In February 1967 General Westmoreland, US Commander-in-Chief in South Vietnam, was granted "carte blanche" in the area lying between the 17th and 20th parallels in North Vietnam. From then on he was free to take military actions in this zone at his discretion without first coordinating his plans with either the White House or the Pentagon. Actually, General Westmoreland was given "carte blanche" to wage an unlimited war of annihilation on everything living in an area stretching for 500 km from north to south. It was then that the US press began writing about a "lunar landscape", which like "escalation" was another coinage of the Pentagon: the US

¹ *Renmin ribao*, October 23, 1966.

military threatened to bomb the provinces and towns of North Vietnam lying between the 17th and 20th parallels back to the stone age. Hundreds of US war planes subjected to daily savage bombing raids dozens of targets in this zone. The US 7th Fleet in a supporting action kept up an interrupted bombardment of the same zone.

However, the intensification of US bombing raids on North Vietnam failed to help the US command in the South.

By the spring of 1967 the superiority of the strategy and tactics employed by the patriotic forces and the people of South Vietnam over the US strategy and tactics of "local" war had become apparent.

In sending its expeditionary force into South Vietnam the US command hoped to crush the patriots in a lightning war relying on the overwhelming superiority in armed strength, fire power and mobility, to destroy or at least disperse regular units of People's Liberation Armed Forces over a wide area and give the Saigon army relying on US massive military backing a chance to stamp out guerrilla warfare in the South.

The Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party, the command of the People's Liberation Armed Forces set the task of frustrating the enemy's plan for a quick victory, gain time in which to build up their own troop strength, bridge the gap in terms of military technology by equipping their forces with advanced weaponry and give the long-term factors of armed resistance to the aggressors a chance to have their full effect. Among these was the fact that in the first place the US expeditionary force was operating in an environment dominated by a hostile population, and had to rely only on the Saigon regime and its army which had neither the strength nor the morale or "reliability" to furnish a solid logistical base for the US troops of occupation. Aware of this, the Vietnam Workers' Party placed special emphasis on the popular character of the war of Resistance against the US aggressors and on mobilizing the widest possible sections of the North Vietnamese population for a total war effort against the enemy.

Under the leadership of Party organizations in the South which relied on the NLF, the population of South

Vietnam waged a determined struggle against the US interventionists and their Saigon stooges.

The population of liberated areas furnished a reliable base for the patriotic forces providing an inexhaustible source of fresh reinforcements for the army in the field. It supplied the People's Liberation Armed Forces with food, helped build field-works, provided transport apart from participating directly in combat operations as part of guerrilla units and local self-defense detachments.

The population of areas controlled by the US troops of intervention and the Saigon regime were following with great sympathy the combat operations of patriotic forces and gave them every assistance whenever and wherever they could do so. At the same time they were carrying on a political struggle against the US troops of occupation and puppet authorities in a variety of ways: by holding rallies, demonstrations and strikes to demand democratic freedoms, to defend the economic interests of the working people and safeguard national independence. A wide-spread form of political struggle were marches by thousands of peasants to provincial and district centers to protest against the "pacification" and "combing" operations conducted by combined US-Saigon forces in rural areas.

Leaning on the support and active participation of the population the Vietnam Workers' Party and the NLF kept up a massive propaganda and agitation campaign among the men of the Saigon army as a result of which the morale of the puppet army, never high at the best of times, continued to decline while the desertion rate kept climbing. Cases of insubordination and open defiance of orders increased as did cases of individual servicemen and whole units defecting to the patriotic forces. The strategy of Resistance war with which the Vietnam Workers' Party countered the Pentagon's strategy determined the tactics employed by the People's Liberation Armed Forces on the battle-field. Avoiding in the initial period head-on clashes with sizeable enemy units whose equipment and tactics were basically adapted for classic warfare the patriotic forces imposed on the US army of invasion a "war everywhere" without clearly designated battle-lines, without clearly defined directions and targets for attack. Quickly regrouping and dispersing, em-

ploying "hit-and-run" tactics, massive strikes at the enemy alternating with ambushes, launching simultaneous frontal strikes, strikes at the flanks and at the back of enemy forces the highly mobile units of People's Liberation Armed Forces compelled the enemy to deconcentrate thereby depriving him of his main advantage—superior fire power. Striking at enemy march columns, hitting enemy troops alighting from helicopters and transport planes, striking at enemy logistical bases, airfields and fortified base camps the patriotic forces inflicted tangible losses on the enemy in manpower and equipment. Constant strikes delivered by the patriotic forces at the communication and supply lines of US-Saigon troops severely hampered operations planned and executed by the US command. An important role in these spoiling strikes was assigned to guerrilla units and small units of regular People's Liberation Armed Forces including commando-type detachments.

As a result, by the end of the 1966-1967 dry season the Pentagon faced the collapse of its main strategic design in South Vietnam: the US command far from succeeding in "breaking the Viet Cong backbone", or knocking out the bulk of Liberation forces and driving them back into the mountainous areas, difficult of access, was as far from accomplishing its goal as it was at the start of its offensive operations. The second "counter-offensive" in South Vietnam just as the first one failed to produce the desired effect. Having failed to attain its objectives in Tay Ninh province the US command was compelled to put off indefinitely the execution of its plan to capture the Mekong delta. In the meantime regular units of the People's Liberation Armed Forces continued to gain combat experience and build up their strength. They were constantly getting more and better weapons and equipment either by capturing them from the enemy or through a steady flow of arms supplies from fraternal socialist countries. Gaining complete proficiency in the handling of ever more advanced weapons and equipment including automatic small arms, anti-tank rifles, portable rocket launchers and recoilless guns, the patriotic forces were able to take on ever larger units of the US expeditionary force and beat them.

Starting from early 1967 the People's Liberation Armed

Forces took the offensive in a number of important areas including those around Saigon and some of the major US military bases. They also attacked many district and provincial centers. The US aggressors had to change their strategy and tactics in a hurry and were increasingly forced on the defensive and had to pay more attention to the protection of their base camps and supply lines. As they tried to adapt their tactics to the conditions of a people's war against them the US command attempted to destroy the logistical bases of the Liberation forces. To this end alongside "search and destroy" operations against the regular units of patriotic forces the US expeditionary force was increasingly committed to operations aimed at "pacifying" rural communities, something that in the past was the responsibility of the puppet army.

The "pacification" operations which were aimed at destroying the massive support base for the Resistance, at stamping out guerrilla warfare and destroying the organs of people's power in NLF-controlled areas revealed in every ugly detail the criminal and barbarous nature of the war waged by the US expeditionary force and the Saigon regime. In effect, this "other war" as it was dubbed by US generals, was conducted against the South Vietnamese population as a whole, or at any rate against that part of it which lived in rural areas. In an attempt to "defang" the "Viet Cong" and its sympathizers the US aggressors resorted to savage aerial bombing and bombardment of rural communities using white phosphorous and napalm bombs and shells, anti-personnel fragmentation and pellet bombs of enhanced deleterious effect, poisonous chemicals and gas, torture and mass shootings of civilians including women, children and old people. The news of the tragic massacre of the inhabitants of the South Vietnamese village of Son My in March 1968 was flashed round the world only in 1970 when it came to light. The Son My tragedy was by no means an isolated incident, but one of the long series of atrocities perpetrated by the US troops of intervention and the Saigon puppet army.

The US-led "pacification" programme in South Vietnam also included the notorious "saturation" and "carpet" bombing raids carried out by strategic B-52s, the destruction of rice paddies by fire and herbicides to deny the

NLF food, the denuding of forests by means of defoliants for easier detection of enemy concentrations and movement. These and other methods of warfare resulted in tremendous material damage and took a heavy toll of life among the civilian population of South Vietnam.

In 1967 the US resumed large-scale forcible resettlement of the inhabitants of South Vietnamese villages and hamlets to "refugee camps" and "new life communities". This operation was designed to turn rural areas controlled by the NLF or the "no man's land", into a depopulated wilderness where patriotic forces would not be able to find food, support or refuge.

In an attempt to turn the tide of war the Pentagon kept building up its numerical strength in South Vietnam. During 1967 the US expeditionary force was increased by another 100,000 men and by the end of the year totalled 480,000. At the start of 1968 the half a million mark was passed. Together with the puppet army and the troops of US allies in the Vietnam war the combined US-Saigon command had at its disposal an estimated 1,200,000 officers and men.

The air war against North Vietnam was being escalated further. From August 1967 on the US Air Force wreaked an orgy of practically non-stop bombing against Hanoi and Haiphong as well as the still functioning industrial units and transport communications all over North Vietnam. However, neither the savage bombing of North Vietnam nor the further build-up of numerical strength in South Vietnam could prevent the progressive deterioration of the battle-field situation for the US and Saigon.

The People's Liberation Armed Forces were firmly holding the initiative on all the battle fronts. From October 1967 on, the patriotic forces struck blows at enemy base camps and outposts to the north-west of Saigon and on the Thai Nguyen plateau on a regular basis. The guerrillas stepped up their operations in the Mekong delta. By contrast the US command unlike the case in previous years was unable to launch any significant offensive operations in the 1967-1968 dry season and confined itself to defensive actions.

All the signs were that Washington's adventure in South Vietnam was running up a blind alley. The US

ruling circles faced the prospect of a prolonged and costly war in Indochina which was more than they had bargained for in the first place.

The Tet Offensive of 1968

In August 1967 a special National Liberation Front congress met in one of the liberated areas of South Vietnam. The Congress summed up the results of successful combat operations by the People's Liberation Armed Forces against the combined US-Saigon troops, the progress of work on the construction and fortification of the liberated zone and the strengthening of SVNLF's political positions inside the country and on the international scene. The results were quite impressive. In many areas of South Vietnam the Front had carried out a series of far-reaching socio-economic reforms including the distribution among the peasantry of the land taken away from landowners. Organs of people's power had been set up in many areas. The NLF enjoyed wide and growing international support, its contacts with friendly countries and progressive public organizations throughout the world had grown stronger. In addition, the NLF opened permanent missions in many countries including the USSR, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Mongolia and Cuba. NLF delegation made visits to dozens of countries, its representatives had attended many different international congresses and conferences.

The extraordinary NLF congress adopted a new political programme which provided for the further intensification of the war effort against the imperialist aggressors and their Saigon puppets. The programme emphasized that it was the task of the NLF "to unite the entire people in order to defeat the US imperialists in their aggressive war, to topple the puppet government and its lackeys, to form a broad-based national democratic coalition government and to start building an independent, democratic, peaceful, neutral and prosperous South Vietnam for a subsequent passage to the peaceful reunification of the homeland."

The SVNLF political programme which together with the documents previously adopted by the Front and the

DRV government formed an equitable basis for settling the Vietnam problem in conformity with the letter and spirit of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 received the full backing and approval of the DRV government. Its adoption was hailed by the socialist countries and progressive forces throughout the world.

The programme also received a response from the United States, a response with a difference. President Johnson demanded "reciprocal de-escalation" as the price for the termination of the US bombing of North Vietnam.

Exposing the hypocrisy of Washington's position the DRV government declared with every justification that it was not the DRV but the US imperialists that were committing aggression in Vietnam and that the DRV had nothing to de-escalate since the people of Vietnam were fighting to defend their homeland.

On November 3, 1967 addressing a public ceremony in Moscow marking the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Le Duan declared: "The US aggressors have bogged down in the quagmire of the dirty war in Vietnam up to their ears but are still refusing to acknowledge defeat. On the contrary in a fit of frenzy they are escalating the war still further while at the same time resorting to high-sounding rhetoric about a spurious peace. Vietnam's position is clear-cut: the sole basis for settling the Vietnam question is the four-point offer of the DRV and the political programme of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front. While the US aggressors obstinately continue the war the people of Vietnam will fight on until final victory. The people of Vietnam are striving for peace with all their hearts but a genuine peace is inseparable from genuine independence. If the US government who have unleashed the war of aggression want a meaningful parley with the DRV government they should first terminate the bombing of North Vietnam and other acts of war against it immediately and without preconditions".¹

The extraordinary NLF congress held in August 1967 and the political programme it adopted marked a new and important stage in the liberation struggle in South Vietnam. The Congress oriented the revolutionary move-

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1965-1970)*, p. 84.

ment of the people of South Vietnam towards final victory. After the Congress a "strategic policy of *opening a new front in the towns and cities* by means of a general offensive by armed forces coordinated with a country-wide uprising of the urban population in order to seize power" was worked out and adopted.¹

While making preparations for the projected general offensive the party organizations in the South working closely with the NLF stepped up propaganda and agitation among the population of South Vietnamese towns explaining to them the goals and tasks of the NLF political programme and rallying ever wider sections of the population under their banner to implement the programme.

In a counter-move Washington was attempting to consolidate and expand the social base of the Saigon regime, in an effort to enhance the latter's prestige on the international scene and to lend the puppet government a semblance of a representative and democratic character. To this end in September and October 1967 elections were held in Saigon and other South Vietnamese towns for a puppet president and parliament of the "Republic of Vietnam". These elections held as they were amid US occupation and police arbitrary interference, undisguised pressure on the electorate and crude rigging of election returns were a patent farce and no one, either in South Vietnam or beyond it, took seriously their outcome. The elected puppet president General Nguyen Van Thieu ruled by the same dictatorial methods his predecessors had used, relying on the army and police force and, principally, on US patronage and protection.

The rickety nature of the Saigon regime and its unpopularity among the population were graphically illustrated by the dramatic events that occurred in South Vietnam at the beginning of 1968.

In the last days of January 1968 on the eve of the Vietnamese lunar new year—the Tet Festival—the People's Liberation Armed Forces launched a country-wide offensive from Cape Ca Mau on the southern tip of South Vietnam to the 17th parallel in the north. The offensive was backed up by uprisings of the local population in parts

¹ *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party*, p. 145.

of South Vietnam. The patriotic forces launched simultaneous attacks on some 60 towns and cities, district centers and enemy bases.

On the night of January 31 the liberation forces struck at Saigon, the capital city of the puppet regime and the central base of US troops of occupation. The patriotic forces' commando units after infiltrating into the city burst into the US embassy building capturing five out of its seven floors and attacked the Presidential Palace. They also captured the main headquarters of the puppet army and blew up the Saigon radio station. What is more, they attacked with rockets Tan Son Nhut Airport in the suburbs of Saigon destroying many US war planes and airport facilities. A number of other military installations in and around Saigon were captured or blown up. Regular units of the liberation forces backed by self-defense units formed by the local population attacked the Central Police Headquarters, many police stations, abolished puppet administration bodies and for several days retained total control of five out of Saigon's nine boroughs setting up their own people's government committees.

At the same time People's Liberation Armed Forces supported by the local population struck at military bases and outposts of the US and Saigon troops on the approaches to Saigon. The patriotic forces wrested control over most of the rural areas around Saigon from the enemy and cut all communications leading into the city.

On January 31 units of Liberation forces and guerrilla detachments attacked the old imperial capital of Hué. They captured the city's fortress and for four weeks retained it displaying great courage and staunchness in beating off fierce counter-attacks by combined US-Saigon troops. Shaken and enraged by this audacious attack the US command called its Air Force into action which proceeded to subject the city to savage bombing levelling many residential quarters.

The suddenness of the offensive literally paralyzed the US command for the first few days. The US generals were stunned by the sheer scale and heroism displayed by the patriotic troops, Communists operating underground and local population who joined them. The Tet offensive made a tremendous impact not only inside South Vietnam and in the United States but throughout the world. People

in many different countries were following with bated breath reports on the progress of the offensive coming out of South Vietnam. In an attempt to minimize the significance of the Tet offensive the US media were peddling the myth about the "staggering losses sustained by the Viet Cong" which had allegedly failed to attain its objectives and to retain control of any of the cities it had originally captured.

In actual fact, however, the Tet offensive of 1968 represented an impressive victory for the patriotic forces of South Vietnam, as it forced the US and Saigon troops on the defensive in a rather humiliating way. To the south of the 17th parallel the Liberation forces succeeded in surrounding and blockading a major military base at Khe Sanh with its garrison of over 6,000 US marines. It was not until July 9, 170 days after the start of the siege that the US command managed to evacuate the base having abandoned attempts to keep it. For weeks afterwards despite the massive commitment of the Air Force and armor the US command failed to break the encirclement of Saigon.

The Tet offensive rocked the Saigon regime severely. In a number of places the puppet administration disintegrated with many officials and policemen going into hiding, and many others having been destroyed by the attacking patriotic troops and insurgents among the civilians. The Saigon army's morale plummeted, disaffection among the rank and file was widespread. During the Tet offensive in January-February 1968 a total of 169 garrisons of outposts of the puppet army defected to the Liberation forces and the civilian insurgents. Within just one week of the offensive more soldiers of the puppet army deserted than during the whole of 1966.

The Tet offensive was the first of a series of major offensive operations carried out by the patriotic forces in 1968. In May, August and September of that year they resumed their attacks on a number of major US military bases, and the rural areas and towns controlled by the US troops of occupation. As a result of these operations the patriotic forces liberated extensive areas with a combined population of 1.5 million.

The success of the People's Liberation Armed Forces' general offensive backed by uprisings of the civilian

population in 1968 had extremely important implications for the further progress of the liberation struggle in Vietnam. The offensive demonstrated once again the sheer power and scale of the liberation movement in South Vietnam, and the massive popular support for the goals and tasks of the NLF political programme and the depth of hostility and hatred on the part of the people of South Vietnam towards the US troops of occupation and their Saigon lackeys.

The Tet offensive launched at a time when the numerical strength of the US expeditionary force in South Vietnam had passed the half million mark and when the bombing of North Vietnam had reached its peak, demonstrated the capacity of the Liberation forces to wage successful combat operations throughout South Vietnam and beat the enemy despite the maximum escalation of the US aggression. The Tet offensive dealt a crippling blow at the US-sponsored "pacification" programme and at the Pentagon entire strategy in South Vietnam. It showed the futility and unrealistic nature of US war aims in South Vietnam despite the massive and escalating US military intervention there. At the same time the United States continued to pay a dear price for its gamble. According to US statistics between 1965 and 1967 the US spent some 26 billion dollars on the war in Vietnam. By late 1968 the US expeditionary force had lost over 30,000 of its officers and men on the battle fronts of South Vietnam.

The Tet offensive demonstrated the futility of US attempts to undermine the combat efficiency of the Liberation forces, or to break the will of the Vietnamese people as a whole by escalating the war of aggression against North Vietnam.

In three years of its air war against the North the US Air Force had made scores of thousands of raids on North Vietnam dropping hundreds of thousands of tons of bomb loads on targets in the North. The prime targets of these raids were the Republic's largest cities—Hanoi, Haiphong, Nam Dinh, Thai Nguyen, Viet Tri, Vinh, in addition to 25 out of the 30 provincial centers. Six of them Dong Hoi, Ninh Binh, Phu Ly, Bac Quang, Yen Bay and Son La were practically razed to the ground as were many district centers.

For all the deadly impact of the US bombing of North

Vietnam it failed to influence the progress of the fighting in South Vietnam. While failing to attain its prime objectives the US Air Force was suffering mounting losses. According to statistics supplied by the DRV government as of November 1, 1968 a total of over 3,200 war planes including six strategic B-52s and two variable geometry F-111As, the most advanced combat aircraft in service with the US Air Force at the time, had been shot down over North Vietnam. Thousands of US pilots perished or were taken prisoner. So it was that just as its intervention in South Vietnam the air war of the US against the DRV was running up a blind alley. In the meantime the international situation was developing in a most unfavorable fashion for the aggressors.

The Soviet Union was keeping up its active opposition to the US aggression in Vietnam. While maintaining a steady and growing flow of military and economic aid to Vietnam the USSR kept up its energetic efforts to force the US to terminate its aggression and called upon the governments and peoples of Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America to bring pressure to bear on the US government to end its interference in the affairs of Vietnam and of Indochina as a whole.

All fraternal socialist countries and Communist parties of the world were working hard to make Washington terminate its military gamble in Indochina.

The conference of the Communist and Workers' parties of Europe meeting at Carlovy Vary in April 1967 issued an appeal which stated, "Thousands of kilometers from America half a million soldiers on orders from the US government are killing Vietnamese men, women and children in an attempt to force down to their knees a heroic people who want to live in peace, build their homeland without outside interference and who for this reason are valiently fighting for their freedom, to expell foreign invaders from their land.... The US government shoulders a heavy burden of responsibility for the war in Vietnam. Its refusal to accept the DRV's proposal for an unconditional, final cessation of the bombing and other acts of war against the DRV—something that would open up the possibility of negotiations—is evidence of its adventuresome determination to solve the Vietnam problem by force of arms, cost what it may, and to increase US mili-

tary and political influence in South-East Asia.”¹ After reiterating their determination to give still greater support and assistance to the heroic Vietnamese people the participants in the Carlovy Vary conference urged the working people, all European nations, political parties and anti-war forces to redouble their efforts in their joint campaign to end the US war in Vietnam and in this way contribute to the strengthening of international peace and preventing the Vietnam conflict from developing into a world war.

In February 1968 representatives of 67 Communist and Workers' parties meeting in Budapest for a consultative conference sent warm greetings to the patriots of South Vietnam congratulating them on their victories and calling upon the nations of the world to maintain vigilance and act without delay to avert the great menace to peace posed by the continuing US escalation in Vietnam and US threats to use nuclear weapons to forestall defeat in Vietnam.

In March 1968 the Warsaw Treaty member-countries attending the Political Consultative Committee meeting in Sofia—Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the USSR—again discussed the situation produced by the escalating US aggression in Vietnam. The participants in the conference pointed out that the escalation of the US aggression against the Vietnamese people posed a serious threat to world peace. They reiterated their firm support for the joint position of the DRV government and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front and demanded that the US terminate its bombing and other acts of war against the DRV forthwith and without any preconditions, stop its armed intervention in South Vietnam, withdraw its forces and those of its allies and satellites from South Vietnam and respect the right of the Vietnamese people to settle their domestic affairs themselves. They appealed to the states, governments and all peace-loving forces of the world to keep up the pressure on the US in order to force it to wind up its aggression in Vietnam in all its forms and manifestations

¹ *The Carlovy Vary Conference of European Communist and Workers' Parties on Security in Europe, 24-26 April, 1967, Moscow, 1967, p. 283 (in Russian).*

and work for a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem without any preconditions.

The rising tide of support for Vietnam on the part of the socialist community and Communist and Workers' parties of the world was instrumental in the further mobilization of world public opinion for a campaign to end the US war in Vietnam. National and international progressive public organizations, pacifist groups and upright people throughout the world joined in a broad-based solidarity campaign in support of the heroic people of Vietnam. They held thousands of meetings and demonstrations to protest against the crimes committed by the US military in Vietnam, arranged Vietnam solidarity weeks and days, held collections for an international fund to help the embattled patriots of South Vietnam. This world-wide movement towards unity in the struggle for common goals brought into being a number of international organizations and movements in support of Vietnam, the most massive and influential of which was the Stockholm Movement started in 1967 by anti-war international organizations ranging from the World Council of Peace to the Catholic pacifist "Pax Christi". In July 1967 the movement held its first world conference in Stockholm. Representatives of 22 international and 60 national organizations as well as DRV and SVNLF delegations attended the conference and with one voice condemned the US aggression in Vietnam demanding its immediate cessation.

The formation and consolidation of a single anti-imperialist front to counter the US aggression in Vietnam was a major factor in the increasing isolation of the US ruling circles on the international scene. More and more government leaders and statesmen spoke out strongly against Washington's Vietnam policy. In January 1967 President De Gaulle of France in a public statement condemned the war which "the US has unleashed and is cruelly stepping up in Vietnam". The UN Secretary-General U Thant said that "The invariable intensity and cruelty of this war pain and disgust the world."

The imminent collapse of the "local" war strategy coupled with the rising storm of condemnation throughout the world and an increasing isolation in world affairs, such was the sad result of its Vietnam policy that was

staring the US government in the face in 1968. Under the unnerving impact of the Tet offensive in South Vietnam the US press began to run articles whose authors complained that Washington's Asia policy and the very idea whereby the US using its military power can determine the order of things on the continent of Asia was crumbling. This was just the first of a long series of public statements and articles in the US press expressing disappointment and, indeed, dissatisfaction with the Johnson Administration's Vietnam policy. The sense of the unjust nature of the war the US had unleashed against the people of Vietnam, which had been gradually percolating to the US public was now joined by a sense of futility and senselessness of the US gamble in Vietnam. More and more Americans including public leaders and prominent politicians, representatives of the ruling circles spoke out sharply against the Johnson Administration's handling of the Vietnam war. The US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara who as early as 1967 had been disappointed at the way the war was going and privately confided to President Johnson his doubts about achieving victory through escalation, resigned his post.

George Kennan writing in *U.S. News and World Report* in June 1968 voiced the opinion shared by many representatives of US monopoly capital and those who were closely connected with the Wall Street circles: "Of course, it is little short of fantastic that a country facing such domestic problems as we now face, and one that stands virtually on the brink of a major international financial humiliation, should be continuing to pour its substance, to the tune of a full fourth of its budget and more than a half million of its young men, into a military adventure on the other side of the world, in an area to which its vital interests are only remotely related." ¹

A massive anti-war movement of the US youth developed which subsequently became one of the principal elements of the deep internal crisis that swept the United States. American young people would not serve in the army, refused to turn up at draft stations and in an open act of defiance burned their draft cards. They would not

¹ *U.S. News and World Report*, June 17, 1968, p. 68.

go to Vietnam. The US press reported that altogether over 106,000 young people dodged draft in protest against the war in Vietnam. The desertion of US servicemen in Vietnam assumed mass proportions as more and more servicemen refused to have any part in the slaughter in Vietnam. The protest movement against the US criminal war in Indochina swept universities and colleges across the nation. It was joined by progressive US trade unions.

The humiliating defeats suffered by the Pentagon coupled with the rising wave of criticism inside the US and abroad bred increasing differences of opinion among the US ruling circles on the further strategy of the war against the liberation movement in Vietnam. Representatives of the US military-industrial complex pressed for further escalation of war. General Westmoreland, the US Commander-in-Chief in Vietnam, and a spokesman for the hawks, claiming that the rural areas of South Vietnam became "undefended" and the "pacification" programme had been foiled by the People's Liberation Armed Forces' offensive, demanded that the US expeditionary force in South Vietnam be brought up to 730,000 men by the end of 1968.

However, the clamor of the hawks for further escalation came up against the increasing opposition and public sentiment against escalation which were widespread, especially in the civilian branches of the government in Washington. They were increasingly coming to realize the need for a search for other, less costly methods of keeping the Saigon administration in power. One sign of this growing pressure was that the US Congress voted down the dispatch of an additional 200,000 GIs to South Vietnam as requested by Westmoreland.

The subsequent moves of the Johnson Administration on the Vietnam problem showed that the US policy makers were increasingly unable to ignore the realities of the situation in Vietnam, inside the United States and on the international scene and were compelled to modify their strategy and tactics in the war to achieve US imperialist goals in Indochina. These changes were accelerated by the political situation in the United States in connection with the start of the presidential campaign of 1968. In this context the offensive launched by the patriotic forces at the start of 1968 was notable for its perfect

timing. The Democratic Party's campaign strategy in the light of the presidential elections aimed at directing the fire of criticism away from themselves and towards their Republican rivals thereby depriving the Republican candidates of their trump card into which they turned the failures of the Democratic Administration in Vietnam prompted the Democrats to implement measures designed to calm public opinion. General Westmoreland was recalled back to the USA. The new US Supreme Commander in South Vietnam General Abrams was told to concentrate on the defense of major cities, above all Saigon, and military bases and abandon "search and destroy" operations against regular units of the People's Liberation Armed Forces. The US ground effort in South Vietnam began to be scaled down to keep US casualties low which were the biggest single cause of the angry public outcry in the US and which fueled the anti-war movement.

The White House could no longer afford to ignore the pressure for a halt to the barbarous bombing of North Vietnam and negotiations with the DRV and the SVNLF. The collapse of the escalation strategy prompted the US Administration to turn to diplomacy in an effort to help the generals who had failed, so that together they could try and do something that the Pentagon was so clearly incapable of doing on its own—break the will and determination of the Vietnamese people to fight on and win.

On March 31, 1968 President Johnson announced a halt to the US bombing of North Vietnam to the north of the 20th parallel as well as his agreement to negotiate with Hanoi. At the same time in a move calculated to signal the sincerity of the Democrats in the matter of changing US policy in Vietnam and avoid an electoral defeat Johnson declared that he had no intention to run again.

The contraction of the bombing zone in North Vietnam was by no means an act of good will showing Washington's dedication to peace. Washington continued its imperialist aggression in Vietnam with the same fierce doggedness but in a somewhat modified form. In an effort to check the offensive of the patriotic forces and offset the scaling down of the US ground effort in South Vietnam the US command assigned a considerably increased role to US Air Force, notably to strategic B-52s, in their operations against the Liberation forces. At the same time the US

Air Force stepped up its raids on the southern areas of North Vietnam. The narrow strip sandwiched between the mountains and the sea coast from the town of Vinh to the 17th parallel where the main supply routes to the South passed was subjected to air strikes and naval bombardment of unprecedented severity.

Even in this situation in a move designed to show its good will and sincere desire to achieve a just settlement of the Vietnam problem by diplomatic means on April 3, 1968 the DRV government declared its readiness "to appoint a delegate to contact a US representative for a discussion of the question of unconditional cessation of US bombing raids and all other acts of war against the DRV as a preliminary to negotiations."

The Soviet government in its statement on April 6, 1968 supported this move by the DRV and emphasized that the DRV offer pointed to the only realistic way of ending the war in Vietnam, the way to a political settlement in the interests of the Vietnamese and in the interests of restoring the situation in the whole of South-East Asia back to normal. The statement went on: "Further developments depend on what the USA proposes to do next: whether it stops completely and unconditionally the bombing and other acts of war against North Vietnam and whether it responds positively to the known proposals put forward by the DRV government and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front for a settlement of the Vietnam problem."

The first contact between DRV and US delegates took place on May 13, 1968 in Paris. The DRV government demanded a complete and unconditional halt to the bombing and other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The US side tried to use the talks to weaken the resistance of the Vietnamese to the US aggression, to bolster up the Saigon regime and to perpetuate the division of Vietnam. To this end the US demanded "de-escalation on both sides" in a spirit of "reciprocity" and thus made the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam conditional on the DRV accepting this US demand. However, the DRV delegation rebuffed the US move firmly and proceeded to press its own principled demand.

This crucial moment for the further course of events

in Vietnam saw tangible evidence of the effective internationalist support and assistance the socialist countries gave to the people of Vietnam in their just struggle. The Soviet government together with the governments of other fraternal socialist countries brought diplomatic pressure to bear on the US Administration to stop the bombing and all other acts of war against North Vietnam and shift the entire problems of Vietnam into the domain of a political settlement. The Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin sent a series of messages to President Johnson spelling out the Soviet stand.

The Chinese leadership took a different attitude to the methods of settling the Vietnam problem. *Renmin ribao* of April 6, 1968 continued to call for a military solution to the Vietnam problem which ran counter to the interests of the Vietnamese people and the DRV government's position.

The success of the Liberation forces' offensive operations in 1968, the active and substantial support for Vietnam from the Soviet Union, other socialist countries, peace-loving and progressive forces around the world, coupled with the pressure of the US public, compelled the Johnson Administration to comply with the basic demand made by the DRV government. In late October 1968 agreement was reached by the US and DRV negotiators in Paris on cessation by the USA of all air raids, naval and artillery bombardment, and all other acts of war against North Vietnam as of November 1, 1968. At the same time agreement was reached to call a conference to be attended by the DRV, the SVNLF, the Saigon administration and the US to look for a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam conflict.

The termination of bombing and Washington's acceptance of the idea of peace negotiations with NLF participation was proof of the collapse of the US strategy of "local" war. The hopes of the US ruling circles for settling the Vietnam problem in their favor by launching a frontal assault on the people of Vietnam, by making free use of America's formidable military might to crush the DRV and stamp out the liberation movement in South Vietnam were dashed.

The DRV government welcomed the agreement between the US and its negotiators in Paris seeing it as a victory

of crucial importance for the struggle of the Vietnamese people against the US aggression. Speaking of the origins of this victory President Ho Chi Minh in his appeal to compatriots on November 3, 1968 emphasized: "...this is a victory for the correct revolutionary line followed by our Party, a victory for the ardent patriotism which mobilized the entire people for a determined struggle. This is a victory for the whole of our nation in both parts of our country and for their armed forces. At the same time this is a victory for the peoples of fraternal countries and for all our friends throughout the world." ¹

The victory scored by the people of Vietnam in their struggle to defeat the US aggression demonstrated the vitality and effectiveness of the principle of bringing together for a common effort all anti-imperialist forces, a principle that had been consistently followed by the CPSU and other fraternal parties. Addressing the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow on June 7, 1969 Leonid Brezhnev said: "An extremely important form of the struggle against the threat of imperialism starting another world war is to organize a collective rebuff to the actions of the aggressors whenever they launch military adventures in any part of the world. The most striking example of this is the rebuff which US aggression has received in Vietnam. The heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people against the interventionists has merged with the determined and effective military and economic assistance of the USSR and other socialist countries, and with the broad popular movement of solidarity with the victims of aggression which has started in almost all countries of the world, including the USA. The result of all this is that the aggressors are failing to achieve their aims and the war started by them is turning into a demonstration of their bankruptcy." ²

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Works (1920-1969)*, p. 366.

² L. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course*, Moscow, 1972, p. 162.

The Final Collapse of the US Imperialist Policy in Indochina (1969-1975)

The heroism and selfless dedication of the Vietnamese people, together with unremitting support from the socialist countries and the world's progressives, proved stronger than the armies of interventionists and their henchmen. The cause of freedom and independence triumphed.

Leonid Brezhnev

"New" Methods to Achieve Old Objectives

After the November presidential elections of 1968 Richard Nixon, the winning Republican candidate, promised the American people to end the war in Vietnam. In many of his campaign speeches Nixon emphasized that if the war was to continue into January the following year, 1969, the new Administration would be best equipped to end it as it would have no commitment to defend past mistakes and would have no connection with the activities of the old Administration. Upon taking office, however, Nixon was not in a hurry to suit the action to the word.

Acting on the agreement the Johnson Administration reached with the DRV government the Nixon Administration sent its representative to Paris for a quadrilateral conference on Vietnam. The conference opened on January 25, 1969 at the International Conference Center in Avenue Kleber. Parallel to the official negotiations involving the DRV, the SVNLF, the USA and the Saigon Administration it was agreed that the US delegates would also hold closed door conversations with the Vietnam delegates without Saigon participation.

Having been compelled by the pressure of circumstances to attend peace talks the US from the very first adopted a stance which indicated a lack of serious intention to look for a mutually acceptable formula for settling the Vietnam problem. While the DRV and the SVNLF delegates pointed out with every justification that an acceptable solution to the Vietnam problem should accord with the national rights of the Vietnamese which were recognized by the Geneva Agreements of 1954, the US chief delegate Henry Cabot Lodge laid conditions whose acceptance would have perpetuated the US neo-colonialist domination of South Vietnam and would mean a surrender of the patriotic forces. The US delegate once again demanded a "mutual withdrawal of military and subversive forces from South Vietnam".

The US delegate spoke long and rhetorically about the need "to assure the right of the people of South Vietnam to determine their future". However, any unbiased observer had no difficulty in seeing that Washington's real aim was to retain its military presence in Vietnam until at least such a time that the Saigon government gained enough strength to stay in power. Neither Nixon nor his National Security adviser Henry Kissinger genuinely wanted a complete termination of hostilities when the Paris talks began. The behavior of the US delegates at the Paris talks confirmed Washington's intention to continue the war in South Vietnam.

Despite the lack of good will on the part of the US the DRV and the NLF delegates in Paris continued to show a serious attitude to the talks. On May 8, 1969 the delegates of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front tabled detailed proposals for a settlement which later came to be known as the 10 Points of the NLF.

Proceeding from the need to assure respect for the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people formally recognized in the Geneva Agreements of 1954—*independence, sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity*—the NLF demanded that the US government should completely and without any preconditions withdraw its troops, arms and equipment from South Vietnam, dismantle US military bases there and stop all acts prejudicial to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of South Vietnam and the DRV. The right of the Vietnamese

people to fight to defend their homeland, the NLF 10 points stressed, is a sacred inalienable right to legitimate self-defense that all peoples have. The question of the Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam should be settled by the Vietnamese parties involved.

The proposals tabled by the NLF delegates provided for an opportunity to be given the people of South Vietnam to settle their internal affairs and decide on a political system in South Vietnam through general, free and democratic elections without any outside interference. In the period between the restoration of peace and the holding of general elections negotiations would be held between representatives of the political forces in the South which worked for peace, national independence and neutrality, to form a provisional coalition government on the basis of equality, democracy and mutual respect.

The reunification of Vietnam, the NLF 10 points emphasized, would be achieved gradually by peaceful means through a series of discussions and agreements between both zones, without foreign interference. As part of measures to eliminate the traces of war the parties would open negotiations on the release of POWs. The NLF underscored that the US government should bear full responsibility for the damage and destruction its troops had inflicted on the people of Vietnam in both zones.

The NLF 10 points were backed by the DRV delegates to the Paris talks. They were welcomed by the USSR and other socialist countries, by the Communist and Workers' parties and progressive forces throughout the world which commented unanimously that the NLF proposals for a settlement of the South Vietnam problem were fully in harmony with the national rights of the Vietnamese and were in the interests of world peace.

Compelled to respond to the NLF initiative the US Administration publicly stated its position on the settlement of the Vietnam problem. President Nixon went on nation-wide television on April 14, 1969 to announce the US 8 points which again reiterated the old US demand for a withdrawal from South Vietnam of "non-South Vietnamese forces". While demanding this the US insisted that the evacuation of its troops and those of its allies should be completed "after the pull-out of DRV forces".

Thus the US Administration not only tried again to lump together the aggressor and the victim of aggression, the Vietnamese people who were exercising their right to legitimate self-defense, but actually demanded for itself advantages denied the victim of its aggression. The US proposed to settle the political problems in South Vietnam by holding sham elections controlled by the Saigon puppet authorities. Needless to say, the Vietnam delegates rejected the US 8 points.

On November 3, 1969 President Nixon again spoke on the Vietnam problem but actually reiterated the US position made public on May 14. After acknowledging that there was considerable public pressure in the US for an immediate withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam Nixon, however, again rejected the legitimate proposals of the DRV and the NLF.

In 1970 in a move calculated to indicate a lack of interest in the Paris talks the Nixon Administration recalled Lodge from Paris and for several months did not appoint a new chief delegate. When, at long last, David Bruce was picked to replace Lodge he arrived in Paris, as the US papers put it, "with an empty bag".

The reasons for Washington's reluctance to use diplomatic channels in looking for a way to peace in Vietnam became clear soon after the resumption of the Paris talks. Using talk about the need to end the Vietnam war as a cloak the US ruling circles developed and began implementing a new strategy for suppressing the liberation movement in South Vietnam to replace the bankrupt "local" war strategy which had collapsed. Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's National Security Advisor, was one of the chief architects of the new strategy. In fact, Kissinger was fast becoming a secretary of state apart from being the chief architect of US foreign policy.

Since the late 1950s Kissinger had been engaged in developing and publicizing the concept of "limited wars" against national liberation movements which called for a step-by-step graduated crushing of the enemy. The concept provided for the alternation of military strikes of growing intensity and "breathing spaces for political contact", during which the enemy was confronted with US terms for a settlement. Actually this concept was applied during the "special" war in South Vietnam and the

notorious escalation of aggression against the DRV. In 1969 Washington decided to use it again as a basic strategic concept in its struggle against the liberation forces of Vietnam and in the rest of Indochina by adjusting it to the new conditions that had arisen in the US and in the world as a whole.

Instead of sporadic political contact with the enemy which the US agreed to when it was to its advantage to do so, in the period of "special" and "local" wars in Vietnam, the Paris talks were now to be used to put diplomatic pressure on the DRV and the SVNLF. As for the "mounting military pressure" which Washington continued to regard as the chief instrument for "crushing" the Vietnamese patriots the US strategists had to lower their sights as their possibilities in 1969 were far more modest than in the years past.

When Richard Nixon, a Republican, took office developments in South Vietnam and the reaction to them in the US itself and in the rest of the world had clearly demonstrated that further escalation of the war either in the form of bombing raids against the DRV or by building up the numerical strength of the US expeditionary force in the South which now numbered as many as 550,000 officers and men was pointless and even dangerous for the US ruling circles. Having failed to accomplish any of its prime objectives in the fight against the patriotic forces and faced with the risk of suffering new military setbacks the US Army sustained tangible losses in the Vietnam war and was pouring resources into it on a scale which was fast becoming unacceptable to the US public. Indeed, annual spending on the war in Indochina had reached 30 billion dollars and this at a time when many social problems facing the US remained unresolved because of a shortage of budgetary allocations. The movement against the Vietnam adventure and for disengagement from the war continued to mount and spread throughout the USA. Washington's isolation in the world increased. The termination of the bombing of North Vietnam and the agreement to negotiate with DRV and NLF representatives could not of themselves reverse these trends, so unfavorable for the US ruling circles, while the half a million strong US expeditionary force remained in Vietnam.

In this situation the Nixon Administration had to think not only of scaling down the US ground effort in South Vietnam which the Johnson Administration had begun, but of more decisive steps in this direction, of starting a withdrawal of the US expeditionary force.

Kissinger took the view, shared by other US policy makers, that the way out of the situation was conversion of the Saigon army into the main striking force in the ground war against the Liberation forces. By saddling Saigon and its army with the main burden of conducting the war, the men in Washington hoped, it would be possible to pool out US forces in a phased withdrawal from South Vietnam while at the same time keeping up the pressure on the DRV and the NLF to wrest concessions from them and force them to give up the fight thereby securing the survival of the Saigon regime. The new version of the war in Indochina came to be known as "de-Americanization" or "Vietnamization". This, Washington hoped, would make the war in Vietnam look more acceptable in the eyes of the US public and help the Nixon Administration to avoid the fire of criticism on the international scene.

"To continue the war until victory while at the same time reducing the US losses and spending on the war to a level the American people could accept while keeping up the attempt to impose on the Vietnam people US terms for a settlement—this is the tough problem President Nixon hoped to solve by 'Vietnamization'".¹

Soon after Nixon took office, in March 1969, his Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird went to South Vietnam to study the situation on the spot and prepare specific recommendations on the implementation of the "Vietnamization programme". Laird came back, presented his recommendations, and the men in Washington set to work. Conscription was introduced in all Saigon-controlled areas of South Vietnam. The US poured large quantities of arms, transport and communications equipment into the Saigon army. On June 8, 1969 President Nixon announced the withdrawal of the first batch of 25,000 US servicemen from South Vietnam.

Simultaneously with the unveiling of the "Vietnamization programme" Washington announced a basic review of

¹ *US Neo-Colonialism. Collection of Articles*, Issue No. 2, p. 41.

the whole of US military and political strategy in Asia. New principles of US Asia policy were outlined by President Nixon at a news conference held at a US Air Force base in the Pacific island of Guam on July 25, 1969.

The substance of Nixon's Guam doctrine was that the US while intending to continue to "participate in the defense and development" of its allies and guaranteeing, as before, military and economic support for the reactionary regimes in Asia refused, however, to "work out by itself all programmes, carry out all decisions and take upon itself the burden of defending" the countries concerned. One of the basic provisions of the doctrine stated that a "nation directly threatened must itself supply manpower for its own defense". In other words from now on the US imperialist policy of suppressing national liberation and progressive movements in Asia was to be implemented by Asian hands, for now the Asians themselves rather than "American lads" would have to fight and die for the interests of US monopolies in the continent of Asia.

The Guam doctrine was the first open admission by Washington of the futility and groundlessness of its aspirations to the role of a "world policeman". This forced abandonment of attempts to attain the objectives of US imperialism's global expansionist and anti-communist policy of suppressing liberation movements all over the world by using its own military power was to prepare the ground for a more realistic appraisal by some of the US political leaders of the world situation. Apart from the Guam doctrine Nixon and Kissinger began speaking of a "new era" in international relations, one marked by the transition from confrontation to negotiations.

The setbacks in Vietnam were not the only and not even the primary reason for the revision by the US ruling circles of their Asian policy. The inauguration of the Guam doctrine was the consequence of the failure of a foreign policy and diplomacy "from positions of strength" that the US had followed for two decades after the end of World War II. The Guam doctrine was an admission of the collapse of US plans of "containing Communism", destroying the socialist system, saving colonial empires from disintegration and establishing US domination in the world. The refusal by the US to aspire to the role of a "world policeman" reflected the forced acknowledge-

ment by US ruling circles of major changes that had occurred in the world, notably, the strengthening positions and growing influence of the world socialist system and the gains made by the national liberation movement.

At the same time the collapse of the Pentagon's military adventure in Vietnam quite logically was behind the new Asian policy proclaimed by the US in 1969. Events in Vietnam epitomized all the basic conflicts and contradictions then at work in international affairs. In Vietnam the US imperialists attempted to smash one of the socialist outposts in Asia, to deliver a sledge-hammer blow at the revolutionary national liberation movement and to test the strength of the solidarity of socialist countries and all anti-imperialist forces in the process. It was in Vietnam that, in the words of the statement issued by the 1969 International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow, "With massive support from socialist countries, primarily from the Soviet Union, as well as from all peace-loving peoples in the world, the Vietnamese people have demonstrated to the USA, the most powerful force of imperialism, that its might is not limitless."¹

The implementation of the "Vietnamization programme" was the first and main attempt by the US to apply the Guam doctrine to its war against the patriotic forces in Indochina. While embarking on this attempt Washington took into account, to no small degree, the double-dealing policy followed by the Peking leadership towards the struggle of the Vietnamese and the patriots of Laos and Cambodia. For "Vietnamization" to succeed Washington needed at least China's "tacit agreement", and it got it. Peking continued to act in the spirit of the famous interview Mao Zedong granted to Edgar Snow in which, "the great helmsman" assured the US that "...China's armies would not go beyond her borders to fight. ...Only if the United States attacked China would the Chinese fight..."²

By launching an intensive re-equipment of the Saigon army with modern weapons and crash training of its

¹ *International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, Moscow, 1969*, p. 43.

² *The New Republic*, February 27, 1965, p. 22.

officers the US command tried to get the Saigon puppet forces to expand their autonomous operations as early as 1969. For a start they were assigned the task of resuming "the pacification of rural areas" of South Vietnam, of pushing NLF forces out of the areas they captured during the offensive operations of 1968 and of destroying the "Viet Cong infrastructure" there. Within the first year of "Vietnamization" the puppet forces devoted 80 per cent of their activities to the "pacification" programme. The operations involved 800 units with a combined strength of 44,000 puppet troops led by their US advisors. By terrorizing the villagers and herding them together in "strategic hamlets", by seeking out and destroying NLF cadres the US-led Saigon forces once again attempted to isolate the patriotic armed forces and revolutionary bases from the mass of population and to stamp out people's guerrilla warfare.

Needless to say, the US staff officers did not for one moment entertain the illusion that the Saigon troops would be able to cope with the task they were assigned under the new war strategy against the patriots without massive US military support. For all the feigned optimism of press reports and statements by official US spokesmen in Washington and Saigon about the allegedly successful progress of "Vietnamization" it was common knowledge that the Saigon army had neither the skill nor the will to fight, that its morale and fighting efficiency were nose-diving. Therefore, the military pressure on the patriotic forces during the "Vietnamization" and the phased withdrawal of US ground forces from South Vietnam included a continuation of US participation in the war and in a sense even its intensification primarily by stepping up the US Air Force operations against the patriots backed up by increased US air and artillery support for the puppet troops. When the "Vietnamization" programme got under way the US Air Force and the 7th Fleet were stepping up their non-stop bombing and bombardment of the liberated areas of South Vietnam. In 1969 the US Air Force dropped on South Vietnam and on neighboring Laos 1,389,000 tons of bomb load, considerably more than in 1968.

During the period when Washington launched its "Vietnamization programme" the political struggle in South

Vietnam was marked by a series of new important victories for the patriotic forces.

Combining armed struggle and political work was regarded by the Vietnam Workers' Party and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front as a key element of the people's war strategy against the American aggressors. Le Duan wrote at the time, "*The main form of revolutionary violence in South Vietnam is a close blending of armed struggle and political struggle.* This is the most suitable form of struggle in a revolution directed against neo-colonialism."¹ The operations of the People's Liberation Armed Forces were followed and reinforced by non-stop political work conducted by Party organizations and the NLF bodies among the masses to expand and consolidate patriotic organizations and to prepare and lead large-scale popular uprisings behind enemy lines including in major cities and towns.

The Vietnam Workers' Party and the NLF gave a convincing demonstration of the effectiveness of their political work in enemy-occupied areas in the course of the offensive operations against towns and enemy bases in 1968 whose success had been largely guaranteed by thorough preparations well in advance locally and by the massive support and active participation of the mass of the urban population.

"A major integral component of NLF political work was the strengthening and further development of the democratic bodies of people's self-government established in NLF-controlled areas which together covered the bulk of the rural part of South Vietnam. In 1968 as a result of the successful offensive operations in the cities and towns of South Vietnam and immediately around them these areas became involved in the process of laying the foundations of people's democratic regime in South Vietnam.

In line with the slogan advanced by the NLF leadership to eliminate the enemy administration and capture power for the people during the offensive of 1968, elections were held in much of South Vietnam for people's revolutionary councils of all levels ranging from local to provincial and city councils. Wherever the situation made the holding of democratic elections impossible as, for in-

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1965-1970)*, p. 111.

stance, in Saigon and some other major cities, provisional revolutionary administration committees were set up. Apart from NLF representatives people's government bodies included members of the Union of National Democratic and Peace-Loving Forces, the organization which brought together patriotically-minded members of South Vietnam's intellectual community and national bourgeoisie who also worked to topple the Saigon administration in support of the aims and goals of the NLF.

Describing the new political situation which was taking shape in South Vietnam the French *Le Monde* wrote on December 19, 1968: "Everybody is talking about the revolutionary committees, about alliances and fronts and elections at the level of hamlets, villages, districts, provinces, small and large cities.... Nobody is denying the great scale of this movement.... The movement has assumed such massive proportions that even those who are called upon to impede it are showing signs of confusion."

The Presidium of the CC of the SVNLF at its enlarged session in December 1968 set the task of enhancing the role of the organs of people's revolutionary power in the struggle against the US aggressors. A landmark event in the chronicle of efforts aimed at accomplishing this objective was the Congress of People's Representatives of South Vietnam which met in June 1969. The Congress was attended by delegates representing the entire spectrum of South Vietnam's population and fulfilling its will proclaimed the establishment of the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of the Republic of South Vietnam. Apart from prominent NLF leaders important posts in the PRG went to representatives of other mass patriotic organizations, national minorities and religious communities of South Vietnam. The Congress conferred on the PRG powers to implement domestic and foreign policy and instructed it to work for a settlement of the Vietnam problem on the basis of the NLF 10 points its delegates had tabled at the Paris talks.

The formation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government completed the process of setting up a people's revolutionary power structure in South Vietnam which began in 1960 with the emergence of the first people's self-government committees. It enhanced the prestige

and authority of the patriotic forces of South Vietnam and further eroded the positions of the Saigon regime both inside South Vietnam and internationally. Soon after its formation the PRG was recognized by many countries. Diplomatic relations were established between the PRG and the USSR and other socialist countries. Many international and national democratic organizations, prominent politicians and public leaders in many countries voiced their support for the PRG of the Republic of South Vietnam. The military, political and diplomatic struggle to liberate South Vietnam from the US troops of intervention and their Saigon puppets was given a new impetus and had a more solid basis to rest upon.

Aware of the threat which the successful political activities of the Vietnam Workers' Party and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front posed to its henchmen in Saigon, the Nixon Administration for its part tried to consolidate the Saigon regime not only militarily but politically as well.

To this end Washington in 1969 and in subsequent years attempted to make its Saigon puppets start maneuvering in the social and political fields in order to win over to their side the mass of the population including the peasantry. On Washington's advice the Saigon administration was to carry out limited land reforms, to streamline and strengthen its administrative machine and lend to it a semblance of democratic nature by holding "elections" for local, provincial and central organs of power, to expand and consolidate its own social base by setting up a "mass" pro-government political party.

An important role in implementing the "Vietnamization programme" was assigned to efforts to split the ranks of South Vietnam's working class. By relying on the right-wing leadership of the legal trade-unions, above all the Vietnam Confederation of Labor which had close connections with the leadership of the AFL-CIO, by exploiting religious and ethnic distinctions among the workers and by launching unbridled anti-communist propaganda the USA and Saigon tried to undermine the militancy of South Vietnam's proletariat, to prevent an alliance between it and the peasantry, to make it give up its struggle.

The Collapse of the "Vietnamization Programme"

From the very first, Washington's attempts to apply a new strategy to the Indochina situation based on the Guam doctrine and "Vietnamize" the war ran into serious trouble. The Pentagon's measures to strengthen the Saigon army were being proceeded with as planned. In July 1971 Drew Middleton of the *New York Times* reported from Saigon with optimism that the strength of the field units of the Saigon army had reached 427,500 officers and men and would soon reach 450,000; the regional and militia forces would be brought up to half a million; of the 50 air force squadrons planned 37 squadrons were operational and a total of 34,000 pilots had been trained. The air force would have 1,200 combat aircraft. The Saigon navy would have 1,600 vessels manned by 40,000 officers and ratings. The US had already handed over to Saigon more than 1,400 vessels. The Saigon government with US assistance had set up various training centers ranging from military colleges to dog-handler's schools which had already graduated a total of 108,000 cadets.

Lulling itself into a false sense of security the Nixon Administration proceeded with the phased withdrawal of US ground forces from South Vietnam. During 1969-1970 the US expeditionary force was cut by roughly 150,000 men. The US pull-out from South Vietnam was accompanied by a noisy propaganda campaign about "US dedication to peace and a US withdrawal from the Vietnam war".

The impressive statistics which indicated the rapid numerical growth of the Saigon army and its equipment concealed the bitter truth about its real quality and combat efficiency which the Pentagon generals knew only too well. The reluctance of Saigon soldiers to fight for the interests of an overseas power hostile to the Vietnamese nation, their refusal to die for the interests of foreign troops of intervention and a handful of corrupt Saigon generals often took the form of open disobedience and high rate of desertion. In one of his reports from Saigon Drew Middleton reported that the desertion rate from the

army in the field was so high that no South Vietnamese officer would want to even estimate it. The quality of Saigon commanders was judged to be poor even by American journalists.

Anti-American sentiments made themselves felt more frequently and more openly among the men of the Saigon army. In July 1971 the French *L'Express* reported: "Not a single day passes without a clash between GIs who are now in the minority and angered South Vietnamese. Last week a group of South Vietnamese soldiers loaded their rifles and took aim because an American convoy refused to give them priority in using the road leading to Dalat... Eight days earlier after a veritable battle in the streets of Danang GIs were banned from walking the streets in uniform."¹

Having drawn proper conclusions from the actions of the Nixon Administration which clearly indicated that despite the talks in Paris and the partial withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam the US had not yet given up the hope of achieving military victory, the Vietnam Workers' Party, the DRV government and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front stepped up the war effort against the US aggressors and their Saigon puppets. In 1969-1970 all attempts by US and Saigon forces to regain control over the rural areas of South Vietnam failed. The patriotic forces continued to defend their positions with confidence inflicting heavy losses on the enemy in manpower and equipment.

Nor were Washington's plans to shore up the internal and international positions of the Saigon government through a series of social and political half-hearted reforms any more successful. The attempt to "cure political cancer by cosmetics", as the US press described Washington's moves at the time, was doomed to failure.

The Saigon ruling clique was a narrow circle utterly isolated from the working masses and hostile to them. They were mainly a handful of reactionary-minded top officers who had been trained by the Americans to officer the puppet army and who got their hands on all military, political and financial levers of administration in Saigon-controlled zones. A typical representative of these offi-

¹ *L'Express*, July 12-18, 1971, p. 20.

cers was the puppet president Nguen Van Thieu. As a young man he served as a paratrooper in the French Expeditionary Corps and later, when the Americans moved in, he served the new masters with equal zeal and devotion. Thieu together with his wife and closest relatives ran the financial life of South Vietnam pocketing huge sums. As the authors of a major study *US Neo-Colonialism* wrote later: "This caste of generals, politicians and profiteers fostered by the Americans form a veritable ruling class which cannot be classified as belonging either to the bourgeoisie or to the local feudal lords. They are a purely American creation along with the huge military-political apparatus in South Vietnam, the progeny of the US dollar and the US policy of systematic destruction and extermination which left thousands upon thousands of ordinary South Vietnamese no other option but to serve in the puppet army."¹

Hatred and contempt for the puppet generals had been building up for years among the mass of the people of South Vietnam and were reaching a new pitch of intensity as the fratricidal war and the US occupation of their country continued. The "Vietnamization programme" could not reverse this trend. On the contrary in many respects it exacerbated the conflict between the ruling clique in Saigon and the majority of population.

The build-up of the numerical strength of the puppet army and the modernization of its equipment under the "Vietnamization programme" sharply increased Saigon's military budget. In 1970 military spending accounted for as much as 66 per cent of all budgetary allocations made by the puppet government. This in turn sent the prices of food and consumer goods soaring. Within the first six months of 1970 the cost of living index in Saigon-controlled zones went up by 22 per cent. To find additional sources of finance for the "Vietnamization programme" the puppet authorities introduced ever new taxes and devalued the piaster.

The neo-colonialist character of South Vietnam's economy was becoming ever more pronounced. In a situation dominated by the massive influx of US, Japanese and

¹ *US Neo-Colonialism. Collection of Articles, Issue No. 2, pp. 52-53.*

other foreign capital, the sell-out of South Vietnam's natural resources to foreign monopolies, the importation of consumer goods under "aid" programmes, the diversion of manpower into the puppet army, there could be no question of any meaningful development of domestic industry in South Vietnam. Only a handful of compradors and profiteers waxed fat cashing in on the war and the US occupation. This, together with other factors fueled the growing discontent and disaffection of South Vietnam's national bourgeoisie.

Years of war which had been imposed on South Vietnam by the imperialists, the US occupation and the domination of a reactionary military-bureaucratic clique left a deep tragic imprint on many aspects of life in Saigon and affected the mentality of many of its inhabitants. The situation was similar in other cities of South Vietnam controlled by the puppet administration. Corruption, profiteering, gangsterism and prostitution were rife. The French weekly *L'Express* in an article significantly entitled "Saigon's Crazy Feast" wrote: "Saigon is an immense open market on rickety ground. Everybody is trying to sell something or to sell himself or herself.... How could it have been otherwise? After the fall of Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963 wages and salaries have doubled while the prices have multiplied eight-fold. It is now impossible to live on the salary of a government employee. That is why people are looking for a way out: teachers are trying to give as many private lessons as they can, a chief post-office inspector moonlights as a night receptionist at a hotel, a ministerial department chief serves as a waiter in a French restaurant.... And of course, those who hold responsible posts in the administration are only too willing to sell their services. Nobody is even denying the existence of this corruption, which has become institutionalized, you might say. This tornado of corruption is sweeping away all traditional values."¹

Among all honest and thinking people in South Vietnam, including the inhabitants of Saigon, this appalling state of affairs could not but cause alarm for the future of national culture and traditions, for the very survival of the Vietnamese nation in the areas controlled by the pup-

¹ *L'Express*, August 30-September 5, 1971, p. 28.

pet authorities. The desire to find a way out of the deep political and moral crisis which had resulted from years of domination by foreign interventionists and their stooges stimulated anti-government and anti-American sentiments among the intellectual community and the national bourgeoisie. More and more people in these sections of the population were coming to realize that the only way out of the situation was to topple the Saigon regime, end the US intervention and restore peace, democracy and national unity.

When the "Vietnamization programme" began the protest movement among the mass of the urban population of South Vietnam against the policy of the Saigon government far from losing any of its momentum, on the contrary, assumed massive proportions and sharper forms than at any time before. The working class protested against their steadily deteriorating material conditions and the anti-popular social and economic policies of the Saigon government by stepping up industrial actions. Despite the attempts made by the authorities and pro-government "yellow" trade unions to split it, the proletariat of Saigon and other cities continued to be a reliable base for the liberation movement in South Vietnam.

The deteriorating standards of living and the forcible recruitment of young people into the puppet army combined to spark off a series of student disturbances that swept South Vietnam's cities in late 1969. In February 1970 war veterans staged anti-government demonstrations to demand increased pensions and allowances. These demonstrations as well as student riots often involved clashes between demonstrators and police.

The half-hearted agrarian legislation the Saigon regime had enacted in 1970 failed to help it to win the peasantry over to its side. The limited concessions to the peasants that the legislation granted were never implemented because of the opposition put up by the landowners and their lobby. The land reform proclaimed by the puppet regime could not compare either in depth or scale with the land reforms carried out by the NLF in the areas it controlled. The NLF continued to command the enthusiastic support to the bulk of South Vietnam's peasantry. Le Duan wrote: "One reason why the revolution is invincible in South Vietnam is that its people including over ten

million peasants, enjoy real national democratic rights they have received from it.”¹

One manifestation of the growing discontent among the popular masses and the national bourgeoisie was the ever frequent occurrence of protests staged by representatives of political and parliamentary circles and the frequent openly anti-government articles carried by Saigon newspapers. These signalled the start of the formation of what was described as “the third political force”—an assorted assemblage of opposition groups which while speaking out against the Thieu regime did not join the NLF.

In this situation the attempts to consolidate the Saigon regime by holding “elections” for local and provincial government bodies, elections tightly controlled by the military amid terror and ballot rigging, ended in a dismal failure. The elections of the Saigon president held in October 1971 were even more of a farce. The legislation introduced under the pressure of the military to guarantee Thieu’s re-election as president turned the elections into an undisguised farce, the cynical nature of which was so obvious that it set off a storm of public protest involving broad masses of the population. The results of the elections were not even taken seriously by the governments and press of many Western countries, to speak nothing of the international democratic public.

Yet another “project” attempted by the Saigon government suffered a complete fiasco. We refer to the attempted formation of a mass pro-government political party. The idea failed because practically all political organizations and public groups of any size refused to send their representatives. Nor were the moves of the puppet authorities designed to secure support for the government on the part of the influential Buddhist organizations any more successful. Despite the persistent attempts by the authorities to split their ranks, to strengthen the anti-communist minority and undermine the influence of the anti-government faction (so-called “An Quang pagoda group”) the Buddhist church which rallied around itself a considerable proportion of the petty-bourgeois section of the urban population was stepping up its opposition to the ruling clique in Saigon and pressing for the restoration

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1965-1970)*, p. 200.

of peace and formation of a genuinely national government in South Vietnam.

The Saigon authorities responded to the mass movement of the working people against them and to the opposition of the intellectual community and the national bourgeoisie by intensifying repression and reprisals. Police swoops accompanied by searches, arrests and kidnappings of undesirable persons were a common occurrence in towns and villages in the Saigon regime-controlled areas. Within the first ten months of 1970 police and troops carried out over 6 thousand such operations in Saigon alone.

Scores of thousands of people including teachers and students, journalists and Buddhist priests were arrested on charges of engaging in anti-government activities and collaboration with the NLF. Many of them were tortured. All told, according to the Commission for the Investigation of American War Crimes in Vietnam at the beginning of 1972 more than one thousand official and secret prisons maintained by the Saigon regime held a total of 300,000 patriots and other civilians who were systematically maltreated and tortured.

However, the more cruel was the repression of the Saigon regime against dissidents the lower its own prestige plummeted in the eyes of the South Vietnamese population and international public. Washington's hopes that the fascist-style clique of generals in Saigon could be "embellished" and passed off for a democratic government had been dashed. In a situation marked by the continuing consolidation of the internal and international positions of the PRG of South Vietnam it was becoming apparent that the USA was losing the political round of the struggle within the framework of "Vietnamization".

Parallel with the "Vietnamization programme" Washington was stepping up its military operations in Indochina.

According to US press reports the men in Washington considered four possible methods of breaking the will of the DRV and the NLF to make them accept US terms for a settlement. The four courses of action were: resumption of unlimited bombing raids against the North, air raids against "communist sanctuaries" in Cambodia and Laos, the mining of Haiphong harbor and, finally, an invasion of North Vietnam.

As the survey published by the Liberation News Agency of South Vietnam in October 1971 put it: "Apart from giving prime attention to ... measures securing the success of Vietnamization the US aggressors are doing their utmost to disrupt the communications and the flow of aid from the great logistical base to the great front in order to surround, isolate and weaken the forces of resistance in the South."

The implementation of this adventurist design began with an attempted strike at the patriotic forces operating in Laos using the forces of the right-wing Vientiane grouping, which was in line with the spirit of the Guam doctrine. In August 1969 50 battalions of Vientiane troops led by US advisors attacked the Valley of the Jars—Xiang Khouang controlled by the Lao Patriotic Front. After fierce fighting which lasted into February 1970 the Lao Patriotic Forces repelled the enemy and proceeded to drive him out of the liberated areas.

The more dubious were the results of "Vietnamization" in the military and political fields the more inclined was the US Administration to pin its hopes on expanding its aggression in Indochina. In early 1970 Washington launched a new and far bigger military and political provocation, this time against Cambodia.

On March 18, 1970 a coup d'etat prepared with direct participation of the CIA was engineered in Cambodia. The coup removed from power Prince Narodom Sihanouk and a pro-American group of right-wing leaders headed by Lon Nol and Sirik Matak siezed power. The US Administration hoped that the coup would help it gain control of Cambodia and eliminate the patriotic forces in that country. At the same time they hoped that under the new government Cambodia which until then had followed a policy of friendly neutrality towards the Liberation forces of Vietnam would serve as a staging base for operations against these forces and would make her territory and troops available for joint operations with the Saigon army against the patriotic forces of South Vietnam.

Developments, however, very soon demonstrated the futility of the US strategists' hopes that by eliminating Cambodia's neutrality and installing a right-wing government there they would be able to pressurize the patriotic forces in South Vietnam and take some of the pressure

off the Saigon government. The fact was that the coup in Cambodia was counter-productive as it stimulated the rise of a mass patriotic movement inside Cambodia. Already in March 1970 Cambodia's patriotic forces came together in the National United Front of Cambodia (NUFC) and in May formed the Royal Government of National Unity. Responding to an appeal issued by the Front the people of Cambodia, especially the rural dwellers, began an armed struggle against the Phnom Penh administration and were supported by the Liberation forces of South Vietnam.

An identity of goals and objectives led to a still more closer union and cooperation between the patriotic forces of Cambodia, South Vietnam and Laos. In April 1970 representatives of the patriotic forces met for a conference of the peoples of Indochina to develop a programme of joint action against the US aggressors and their lackeys.

To suppress the armed resistance of the patriotic forces and to save the Phnom Penh administration from defeat US and the Saigon forces invaded Cambodia. US planes bombed areas controlled by the NUFC. The invasion of Cambodia triggered a wave of angry protests throughout the world. The USSR strongly condemned this new act of imperialist aggression. The Soviet government in its statement of May 4, 1970 declared: "The US military invasion of Cambodia has incensed all peace-loving forces throughout the world. The Soviet Union has always respected the neutrality and independence of Cambodia, her sovereignty, territorial integrity, and it respects her frontiers. That is why we strongly condemn the American intervention in Cambodia. Whatever far-fetched pretexts the US may use to cover it up, one thing is certain and that is that its cynical disregard for the inalienable right of the peoples of Indochina to be masters in their own home and a crude diktat remain the basis of US foreign policy in this part of the world, while plots, military intervention and aggression remain its instruments."¹

Some American military and political leaders were apprehensive of a possible response by China to the US-Saigon invasion of Cambodia, all the more so since while this operation was on Mao Zedong made a public state-

¹ *Pravda*, May 5 1970.

ment in Peking on May 20, 1970 which Chinese propagandists trumpeted as "the most powerful support" for the peoples of Indochina and other peoples of the world. The men in Washington correctly assessed the Chinese reaction as "a fire-cracker going off against a paper tiger". Replying to those who had predicted China's intervention in response to the US invasion in Cambodia Nixon at a news conference in March 1971 noted with satisfaction that nothing of the kind had, in fact, happened.

Under the pressure of the world public the Nixon Administration was compelled to pull back its ground troops from Cambodia by July 1, 1970. The burden of punitive operations against the patriotic forces of Cambodia was to be shouldered by the Saigon troops which remained inside Cambodia and the Phnom Penh regime's own forces which had massive air support provided by the US Air Force. Washington continued to pour in arms and money to bolster the Lon Nol government whose position was fast becoming precarious. In this situation there could be no question of the Lon Nol regime lending a hand to its Saigon counterpart in suppressing the liberation movement in South Vietnam.

As the military and political positions of the Saigon regime continued to be eroded and Washington's military adventure in Laos and Cambodia had failed, the US negotiators in Paris did not have a single bargaining chip with which to force the DRV and the PRG of South Vietnam to accept settlement terms favorable to the US and Saigon. On the contrary, the DRV and the PRG of South Vietnam were stepping up their offensive on the diplomatic front, with growing confidence.

In September 1970 the PRG took a new initiative for a settlement of the Vietnam problem by adjusting an earlier programme tabled by the National Liberation Front. The eight points of the PRG called for a withdrawal of all US forces and those of its allies from South Vietnam by June 30, 1971. If the US was prepared to effect such a withdrawal, the PRG guaranteed free passage and security for all evacuating foreign forces. Spelling out the clause on the formation of a provisional coalition government for South Vietnam, the PRG stated that it was prepared to include apart from its own representatives, those of other political forces working for peace and

democracy, as well as members of a reorganized Saigon administration but without the ring-leaders of the dictatorial regime: President Thieu, Vice-President Nguyen Cao Ky and Prime Minister Tran Khien Khiem. The PRG said it was ready to discuss with the US government the question about prisoners of war provided the US first agreed to pull out of South Vietnam by June 30, 1971.

Forced to reply publicly to the PRG's diplomatic initiative Washington unveiled its own proposals in early October 1970. As even the US press admitted, they signalled no change in the previous US stance. The US reiterated its demand that before agreement was reached on the basic settlement issues, a cease-fire in place should be arranged all over Indochina. At the same time the US refused to offer a precise timetable for the withdrawal of the US forces from South Vietnam. Thus, what Washington actually demanded was that the patriotic forces of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia stop their resistance to the aggressor and give up their struggle in a situation where foreign troops would still remain on their soil.

Still pinning its hopes on the use of force the US again resorted to intimidation and pressure. David Bruce, the chief US negotiator in Paris, threatened that if no substantive talks began soon (read: if the DRV and the PRG of South Vietnam refused to submit to US diktat) the USA would find an alternative solution to the conflict.

The first attempt to carry out this threat was made in the winter and spring of 1970-1971 when the Pentagon committed to the battle-fields of South Vietnam and Laos up to 70 per cent of the Saigon regime's regular forces backed up by the 350,000 GIs still in Indochina. These were the biggest combat operations launched by the US-Saigon command since the start of "Vietnamization". In launching them according to the patriotic forces, Washington hoped to accomplish the following objectives:

- to destroy the logistical bases and strongholds of the regular units of the People's Liberation Armed Forces, to wear them down and cut them off from areas where the "pacification" programme was being implemented;

- to secure the success of the "pacification" programme and guarantee at least two years of stability for the

Saigon government so that the US could concentrate its efforts on helping its stooges in Laos and Cambodia who were pressed hard by the patriotic forces.

Successful fulfilment of these objectives would ensure the success of the US experiment involving the use of puppet forces as the main striking force in the war against the patriots throughout Indochina and would demonstrate the effectiveness of the "Vietnamization" strategy and the validity of the Guam doctrine. Washington needed such a demonstration all the more so since the Republican Party would then be able to pose before the electorate during the forthcoming presidential elections of 1972 as the victor in Vietnam.

As the survey issued by the Liberation News Agency of South Vietnam on October 20, 1971, pointed out: "There is every reason to conclude that the most important experiment involving the "Vietnamization" strategy was planned for 1970-1971, that it promised to be a crucial test for the people of South Vietnam and their armed forces and involved the most decisive confrontation between the regular Liberation forces and the Saigon regular army which have ever been committed since the 'Vietnamization' programme began, to be supported by the US Air Force, artillery and logistics."

The Pentagon chose the area of Highway 9 and Southern Laos as the main strategic lines of advance for offensive operations. The idea was to cut the famous Ho-Chi-Minh Trail, i.e. the system of roads which carried vital supplies for the patriotic forces. In February 1971 elite units drawn from the strategic reserve of the Saigon army numbering 30,000 invaded Laos moving towards Highway 9. They were supported by 16,000 GIs operating from logistical bases inside South Vietnam, 2,000 US combat planes and helicopters, including strategic B-52s. The Saigon troops were ferried by helicopters to the string of hills along Highway 9, while an armored column was moving up the road towards Che Pon, a vital road junction.

The Saigon forces ran into the stout resistance of the patriotic forces. Hundreds of helicopters carrying troops and equipment were brought down by ground fire. The patriots' artillery subjected the enemy positions on hill-tops along the highway to an intense bombardment. The column of tanks and armored personnel carriers mov-

ing towards Che Pon was ambushed and completely wiped out. The fierce fighting which lasted until March 22, 1971 ended with an almost total rout of the Saigon forces which had invaded Laos. According to the headquarters of the People's Liberation Army of Laos during the 43 days of bitter fighting between February and May 1971 along Highway 9 the enemy lost over 15,000 officers and men in killed and wounded, including 200 Americans.

The victory scored by the patriotic forces in the battle of Highway 9, one of the biggest engagements in Indochina since 1945, had a major influence on the subsequent course of events and on the political and military situation in Indochina as a whole. The stampede of Saigon troops from the battle-field at the end of most clashes between them and the liberation forces was a convincing proof of the poor fighting quality of the one million-strong Saigon army, all its latest US-made weapons and material notwithstanding.

Simultaneously with the incursion into Laos the US command attempted an offensive operation in north-eastern Cambodia code-named "Total Victory I/71". However, far from winning anything like a total victory the hapless Saigon troops suffered heavy losses as a result of the retaliatory strikes by the patriotic forces.

Inside South Vietnam the Liberation forces inflicted heavy losses on the enemy in fierce fighting in the area Highway 9—Khe Sanh, in Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces and in a number of areas in the Mekong Delta. By these operations they forced the enemy to curtail his offensive operations in areas lying at the juncture of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The Liberation forces succeeded in considerably weakening the US-Saigon control over large areas of South Vietnam, strengthened their own positions and largely frustrated the "pacification" programme in rural areas.

Thus in 1970-1971 the "Vietnamization" strategy suffered new and severe setbacks. Attempts to use the Saigon infantry backed by US air support and artillery as the main fighting force on the battle fronts of Indochina failed dismally. On the other hand, the revolutionary forces of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were at the peak of their fighting efficiency. The "dry season" of 1970-1971 showed that they were quite capable of beating

large units of regular enemy troops. The fighting during that season also showed that they were strong enough to destroy the bulk of the Saigon army and thus thwart the US "Vietnamization" strategy before too long.

At a time when the puppet regime in South Vietnam was going through its deepest crisis, when the "Vietnamization" programme was crumbling while the liberation movement was spreading and gaining strength, North Vietnam was carrying on socialist construction, discharging its duty of the "great logistical base" for the nationwide struggle for independence, freedom and national unity.

The cessation of the US bombing of North Vietnam in the autumn of 1968 enabled the Party and people in the North to give closer attention to economic rehabilitation and stabilizing industrial and agricultural production. As a result of the tremendous efforts made by the people of North Vietnam overall food production increased in 1970 by 30 per cent compared with the previous year. The coal mines of Hon Gay were going back to full production as were the cement works in Haiphong crippled by US bombing raids and the mechanical engineering works and other enterprises in Hanoi. Major power stations, completely or partially repaired, went back into service.

However, the breathing space in the North was short-lived. In line with its plan to "pile up pressure on the enemy" the Nixon Administration after the abortive incursion into Cambodia in the spring of 1970 sanctioned a partial resumption of bombing raids against North Vietnam. At the White House news conference on December 10, 1970 President Nixon announced that he would order the US Air Force to bomb military targets in North Vietnam and the mountain passes through which roads from North to South Vietnam ran, as well as military complexes and communications, if he drew a conclusion that there was a threat of hostile attack against the remaining US forces in South Vietnam.

The people and the army of North Vietnam stood firm in the face of new threats coming from the White House. The Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party and the DRV government called upon their compatriots and the men of the People's Army and militia to maintain a high level of vigilance and combat preparedness, to

redouble their efforts in socialist construction and step up their armed struggle to expell the US armed forces and the Saigon puppets from South Vietnam and frustrate the "Vietnamization programme".

In the autumn of 1971 the US military committed a new crime. Violating its own commitment to stop the bombing of North Vietnam completely the US resumed savage saturation raids against the Republic. Once again peaceful towns and villages were subjected to barbarous bombing.

While repelling the resumed US bombing raids with great courage and staunchness the army and the people of North Vietnam continued to give effective assistance to their compatriots in the South who were striking blow after blow at the Saigon puppet regime thus playing havoc with "Vietnamization programme".

An important factor influencing the progress of the fighting in Vietnam was, as before, a world-wide solidarity campaign in support of the people of Vietnam.

In the new situation that arose in November 1968 the USSR continued to give massive support to the Vietnamese to help them carry on with socialist construction in the North and fight off the imperialist aggressors. Soviet-Vietnamese cooperation continued to expand and strengthen. In 1969-1970 the USSR was visited by several Vietnamese delegations headed by DRV leaders as well as by the leaders of the NLF and the PRG of South Vietnam. In October 1969 a top-level Party and government delegation headed by Prime Minister Phan Van Dong paid an official visit to the USSR. The joint communique issued at the end of the visit pointed out that the Soviet and DRV leaders were confident that the expansion and deepening of relations between the two countries on the basis of principles of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism were in accord with the vital interests of the Soviet and Vietnamese peoples as well as in the interests of the struggle by the peoples of the world against imperialism, for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism.

In April 1970 a delegation of the Vietnam Workers' Party led by Le Duan took part in the celebrations in the USSR marking the centenary of Lenin's birth.

The talks between Soviet and Vietnamese leaders that

took place in Moscow in 1969-1970 examined every aspect of the situation in Vietnam and Indochina as a whole as a result of the US switching to the policy of "Vietnamization" and discussed the tasks facing the two fraternal countries in maintaining joint opposition to imperialist aggression in the changed situation. Soviet and Vietnamese leaders signed a number of new agreements covering Soviet economic and military aid to North Vietnam. Under these agreements the USSR would continue to supply North Vietnam with oil products and vehicles, industrial machinery and metals, cotton and textiles, food and medical supplies, arms and ammunition, as well as other equipment and materials essential for strengthening North Vietnam's defense potential and rehabilitating and developing its war-ravaged economy. The Soviet Union's disinterested economic and military aid to North Vietnam in this period, as its leaders repeatedly emphasized, played a crucial role in the further mobilization of the people of North and South Vietnam for a still more effective resistance to imperialist aggression in its new form, to frustrate the "Vietnamization" strategy.

The USSR continued to support the efforts of the DRV and PRG of South Vietnam aimed at achieving a just and equitable settlement of the Vietnam problem. The CPSU, the Soviet government and Soviet public organizations demanded a total and unconditional withdrawal of the US forces and those of its allies from South Vietnam so that its people were allowed to determine their destiny themselves. Using diplomatic channels the Soviet government put pressure on the US Administration enjoining it to show realism and a constructive approach to the proposals put forward by the Vietnamese side at the Paris talks.

Together with the USSR other socialist countries continued to give North Vietnam all-round assistance and support.

In June 1969, just when Washington was putting into effect its "Vietnamization programme", representatives of 75 Communist and Workers' Parties attending the International Conference in Moscow were analyzing in-depth the situation in Vietnam. The meeting drew the conclusion that "The heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people against US aggression is a key component of the world-

wide battle between socialism and imperialism, between the forces of progress and those of reaction.”¹ The meeting emphasized that all-round support and assistance to Vietnam was the top priority task of all the anti-imperialist forces in their struggle against their common enemy—imperialism.

The meeting's appeal to step up the struggle to make the US aggressors stop their intervention in Vietnam drew a world-wide response from the progressives everywhere and gave an added impetus to the international solidarity movement in support of the Vietnamese people.

In June 1969 the World Peace Assembly meeting in Berlin on behalf of the many millions of peace supporters in all countries expressed full support for the Vietnamese people's just struggle. In August of the same year the Solidarity with Vietnam Meeting of Youth and Students took place in Helsinki. Envoys of the youth of the world strongly condemned the US government's actions in Indochina and demanded that it stop its criminal aggression there. The World Federation of Trade Unions, the International Federation of Democratic Women and other international and national public organizations continued to work energetically to organize various campaigns to provide moral and material support to the embattled people of Vietnam.

The second World Conference on Vietnam held in Stockholm in March 1970 was a landmark event in the chronicle of world-wide efforts to further develop the solidarity movement in support of the Vietnamese people. The Conference which was attended by delegates from 62 countries and over 30 international democratic organizations decided to hold a world-wide campaign to collect signatures for a petition demanding an immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the US forces and those of its allies from South Vietnam. The Conference passed a resolution calling for the setting up of special international commissions to investigate the war crimes of US imperialism in Vietnam and to organize material assistance to the DRV and South Vietnam.

¹ *International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, Moscow, 1969*, p. 43.

The 24th Congress of the CPSU played an exceptionally important role in exposing the cunning maneuvering of US imperialism in connection with the Vietnamization programme and in mobilizing the international public for further efforts to secure the final triumph of the just cause of the Vietnamese people.

The Congress exposed for all to see the aggressive essence of the "Vietnamization" policy and its futility. Leonid Brezhnev delivering the main report of the CC CPSU Congress stated: "Anyone capable of taking a realistic view of things must realise that neither direct armed intervention, nor torpedoing of negotiations, nor even the ever wider use of mercenaries will break down the Vietnamese people's determination to become master of its own country.

"The so-called Vietnamisation of the war, that is, the plan to have Vietnamese kill Vietnamese in Washington's interests, and the extension of the aggression to Cambodia and Laos—none of this will get the USA out of the bog of its dirty war in Indochina or wash away the shame heaped on that country by those who started and are continuing the aggression. There is only one way of solving the Vietnamese problem. It is clearly indicated in the proposals of the DRV Government and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam, proposals which we firmly back." ¹

Elimination of the hotbed of war in South-East Asia and the achievement of a political settlement in this region were among the chief pressing tasks within the framework of the Programme of Peace which was adopted by the 24th Congress of the CPSU. In its appeal entitled "Freedom and Peace for the Peoples of Indochina!" the supreme forum of Soviet Communists called upon all those who held freedom, peace and progress dear, to lift their voices in protest against the bloody aggression of US imperialism in Indochina, to expose with resolve and courage the crimes committed by the US military, to support the heroic peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, to expand the world-wide movement for an end to the imperialist aggression in Indochina, for a withdrawal of US forces and those of its allies from the area and to

¹ *24th Congress of the CPSU, Moscow, 1971, p. 30.*

secure the legitimate right of the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to be masters in their own home.¹

Representatives of Communist, Workers', National-Democratic and left-wing Socialist parties of the world attending the 24th Congress of the CPSU fully supported its conclusions concerning the situation in Indochina and the tasks, as formulated by the Congress, facing the peace-loving forces throughout the world in the effort to end imperialist aggression in the region.

The world-wide movement in support of the embattled people of Vietnam, the patriotic forces of Laos and Cambodia was spreading and gaining momentum thanks to the able leadership and guidance provided by the Communist Parties, progressive and democratic organizations. The Vietnamization programme ran into the vociferous opposition of the world public just as the escalation of the US war in Vietnam had done before it. Washington failed to mislead world public opinion by a crude ploy designed to convince it that the phased withdrawal of US ground forces from South Vietnam and the conversion of the Saigon army into the main striking force in the war against the patriotic forces meant the end of the US imperialist aggression in Indochina.

In the United States itself the Vietnamization programme failed to meet with broad public support and did not help the Nixon Administration escape the fire of criticism for the continuing US involvement in the Vietnam conflict. The military forays into Laos and Cambodia which spread the war to the rest of Indochina and which lent Washington's Vietnam policy of 1970-1971 a particularly adventurous and dangerous dimension caused increasing discontent and concern across a wide spectrum of the US public. Averell Harriman, a prominent veteran US diplomat, wrote in November 1970 that the "Vietnamization" of the war was immoral and that America had no right to perpetuate hostilities in Vietnam, that its political aims in that country could not be attained by military means. Harriman was echoed by many other prominent Americans including Senator A. Cranston, a Democrat, who said that the Nixon Administration was still seeking to solve the problem militarily through Vietnamization

¹ Ibid, pp. 326-327.

which was bound to fail both militarily and politically. He concluded that the Vietnam problem simply defied a military solution.

In the early 1970s the anti-war movement in the USA assumed massive proportions involving millions of Americans representing every shade of US public opinion. Mammoth demonstrations, rallies, the flood of letters and telegrams to Congressmen coupled with other forms of protest against the war in Vietnam were the outward signs of the deepening crisis that hit America.

The adverse effects of the war in Vietnam on the US economy were increasingly making themselves felt. An unprecedented run-away inflation, the increasing imbalances in production fueled the discontent of the US business community and stimulated open criticism of the Nixon Administration's Vietnam policy. The organization "Business Men for Peace in Vietnam" set up back in 1967 was growing more active. In 1971 a number of prominent representatives of big business demanded a stop to the war in Vietnam.

In 1970-1971 the Nixon Administration encountered serious opposition to its Indochina policy on the Capitol Hill. Numerous resolutions, bills, amendments to bills designed to restrict the Executive Branch's freedom of action in the prosecution of the war in Vietnam and to end the war were receiving ever wider support both in the Senate and in the House of Representatives. The key demand of congressmen and the whole of the US public was that the Administration should announce a fixed and compact time-table for completing the withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam. In June 1971 the Senate passed the famous Mansfield resolution which laid down a 9-month time-table for the withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam on certain conditions. Among those who voted for the resolution were not only Democrats but also a number of prominent Republican senators.

The deep divisions among the US ruling circles and public leaders on the Administration's Vietnam policy were reflected in the attitude of the more influential newspapers which began to criticize openly the Administration's handling of the Indochina war and its procrastination in ending it under the pretext of "Vietnamization". One of the more graphic manifestations of this

opposition was the sensational publication in the summer of 1971 of classified documents relating to the Vietnam war by the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Max Frankel of the *New York Times* wrote that the Pentagon Papers, the story of how the US came to go to war in Indochina, apparently marked the end of an era in US foreign policy—a quarter of a century of virtually unchallenged presidential rule and manipulation with weapons of war and diplomacy associated with the war. However, Max Frankel went on, the Papers could only serve as an initial push to reflection on this era and its climax—the agonizing, frustrating and still continuing US involvement in Vietnamese affairs.

The authors of the book *Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia 1969-1970* published in Hanoi in 1970 stressed with every justification that: "Nixon's Indochina policy can only succeed on the supposition that the armies of Thieu-Ky, Lon Nol—Sirik Matak and Vientiane succeed in shouldering their tasks, that the puppet administrations stand firm on their legs, that the Vietnamese, Khmer and Lao peoples, intimidated by US technical means of destruction, resign themselves to servitude, and that US and world public opinion be deceived by the men in Washington." ¹

Already in 1971 it became clear that none of these conditions was being fulfilled or was likely to be fulfilled. The so-called new strategy of struggle against the liberation movement could not help the US find a way out of the blind alley where it had got itself thanks to the short-sighted policy of successive US administrations.

The Americans Leave Vietnam

The situation which was taking shape in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, in the rest of the world and inside the US itself, was favorable for the Vietnamese patriotic forces to step up their offensive operations on all fronts, to inflict a final defeat on the "Vietnamization" strategy. Seeking an early end to the war and a just settlement of the Vietnam problem the DRV

¹ *Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia 1969-1970*. In: "Vietnamese Studies", Hanoi, 1970, No. 28, p. 22.

government and PRG of South Vietnam were stepping up their activities, above all, on the diplomatic front.

The Vietnamese negotiators in Paris displaying a high skill of revolutionary diplomacy, combined firmness and uncompromising adherence to principle with a flexible and constructive approach. They repeatedly tabled proposals which added up to a comprehensive, reasonable and concrete package for a settlement in Vietnam which apart from meeting the vital national interests of the Vietnamese even accommodated the United States on some issues making it easier for it to disengage itself from Vietnam without "losing face". The Vietnamese negotiators made these proposals in an effort to help the world public get a better understanding of the thoroughly just nature of the struggle of the Vietnamese and thus secure still greater international support for the cause of the Vietnamese patriots and further isolate the aggressor in the eyes of the world.

In the course of informal conversations with the US chief negotiator on June 26, 1971 Le Duc Tho, North Vietnam's delegate to the Paris talks, put forward a proposal whereby all servicemen and civilians taken prisoner during the war would be released provided the US agreed to withdraw its forces from Vietnam before 1971 was out. It also insisted that the US end all support for the Thieu-Ky-Khiem regime thereby creating conditions for the formation of a new administration in Saigon which would work for peace, independence, neutrality and democracy. The PRG of South Vietnam was prepared to negotiate with the new administration so that together they would find acceptable solutions to South Vietnam's internal problems in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord. The DRV also insisted on the US paying reparations for the damage its forces had inflicted on the people of Vietnam. The DRV expected the US to observe the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indochina and the 1962 Agreements on Laos, end its aggression and interference in Indochina letting the peoples of the area settle their domestic affairs themselves and sort out existing problems among them on the basis of mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs. Upon the conclusion of agreements on the above-mentioned questions all the parties

concerned would cease fire under international supervision.

The 7-point programme of the PRG of South Vietnam which was unveiled by its Foreign Minister Nguyen Thi Binh at the Paris talks on July 1, 1971 met with wide support throughout the world.

Spelling out the new elements the 7-point programme contained in amplification of the proposals tabled by Le Duc Tho, Xuan Thuy, the North Vietnam's chief negotiator in Paris, emphasized in an interview with the French weekly *La Vie Ouvrière* on July 21, 1971: "The United States being the aggressor must naturally withdraw all its troops, but the 7-point proposals state that if the US agrees to pull out all its forces in 1971 the PRG guarantees the necessary conditions for the withdrawal of all forces from South Vietnam in conditions of security.... One other example concerning the Saigon administration.... It is quite natural to demand the removal of all members of the present administration who collaborated with the Americans. But the 7-point proposals insist only on the removal of a handful of bellicose people who are now heading the Nguyen Van Thieu administration, in order to form a government of national concord. These proposals permit the USA to leave South Vietnam in conditions of security and without 'loss of face'. The big question now is whether President Nixon responds positively and seriously to the 7-point proposals of the PRG. If he does, we feel certain that a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem could be achieved quickly."

However, the United States was still trying to avoid responding to the just demands of the Vietnamese negotiators hoping to shove up the Saigon administration and implement the "Vietnamization programme" at all costs. This attitude was confirmed by the new US proposals.

On October 11, 1971 Henry Kissinger unveiled the Nixon Administration's plan for the restoration of peace in Vietnam which provided no precise fixed time-table for the withdrawal of all US forces but instead contained a demand to retain the "only legitimate" government of Thieu in Saigon. Needless to say, the plan was rejected by the Vietnamese side.

The "8-point peace plan" put forward by Washington in January 1972, was also designed to ensure the surviv-

al of the puppet government in Saigon and retain a US presence in South Vietnam. The US promised to withdraw all its armed forces from South Vietnam but not before "free democratic presidential elections" were held under the control of the Saigon administration and with a continuing US presence. The US reiterated its demand in a camouflaged form for "a withdrawal of all external forces" from South Vietnam.

In a bid to force the DRV and the PRG of South Vietnam to accept its terms the US in the latter half of 1971 attempted to execute a maneuver designed, on the one hand, to stage yet another "show of force" to intimidate the population of North Vietnam and the patriotic forces of South Vietnam, and, on the other, to put diplomatic pressure on them.

In the autumn of 1971 the US resumed the bombing of North Vietnam. At the same time the Pentagon once again tried to step up military operations in the South by launching a "pacification" operation by combined US-Saigon forces in the Uminh area in the Western part of the Mekong delta. Combat operations were intensified against patriotic forces in Cambodia and Laos where the United States used Thailand mercenary troops as well as the forces of the right-wing Vientiane grouping.

At the same time Washington tried to draw in China in an attempt to achieve a settlement of the Vietnam problem on its terms. The mutual diplomatic overtures between Washington and Peking began in 1971 with Washington hoping that by "wooing" Peking it would find it easier to extricate itself from the "Vietnam mess" and cope with the consequences of the all-out offensive by the Vietnamese patriotic forces on the military, diplomatic and political fronts. One other hope was that China might become useful to Washington in implementing the Nixon Administration's new Asian policy stemming from the Guam Doctrine.

The people of Vietnam and their leaders were quick to see through this maneuver by Washington. The newspaper *Nhan Dan* of July 19, 1971 stated editorially: "Nixon has lost his way. The way out is open but he is heading for a dead end keeping his head down. The days when the great powers decided what to do with small countries at their own discretion are over never to return." However,

the men in Washington were still hoping that they would be able to play the "Peking card" against the DRV and the PRG of South Vietnam.

Some Western observers thought that Nixon's visit to Peking in February 1972 had been planned and arranged to help Washington among other things, in neutralizing the impact made on the US and world public by the proposals of the Vietnamese negotiators in Paris, and in this way avoid responding to them.

US newspapers quoting "informed government spokesmen" wrote that during Nixon's Peking visit the Americans tried to bargain with the Chinese leadership behind the backs of the peoples of Indochina. The US offered to get out of Taiwan in exchange for the Chinese helping the US to persuade Hanoi to accept US terms for a settlement, in other words, to talk Hanoi into surrendering. In an interview with the *New York Times* in October 1978 Nguyen Co Thach, Deputy Foreign Minister of the DRV, revealed that in 1972 the Chinese insistently advised the Vietnamese leaders to accept a peace settlement whereby the US troops would pull out of Vietnam leaving the Nguyen Van Thieu administration in the South, which of course would have kept Vietnam divided. Needless to say, this advice was turned down.

Washington's and Peking's attempts to impose US terms for a settlement on the DRV and PRG of South Vietnam by force of arms and cunning were countered by the Vietnamese patriots by stepping up the fight on the military, political and diplomatic fronts. The patriotic forces were still getting all-round material, moral, political and diplomatic support and assistance given by the USSR and other fraternal socialist countries.

An important act of support for the struggle of the Vietnamese people in this period was the official visit to the DRV of a Soviet Party and government delegation in October 1971. The DRV-USSR talks which were held in an atmosphere of fraternal friendship, full identity of views and mutual understanding on all questions discussed resulted in the signing of new agreements covering the Soviet Union's grant aid to the DRV, Soviet credits and trade between the two countries in 1972-1973. The joint Soviet-Vietnamese statement issued at the end of the talks underscored that "The USSR will continue to

give the people of Vietnam support and assistance in their struggle against the USA until complete victory for the salvation of the homeland on three fronts: military, political, diplomatic".¹

In January 1972 Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the USSR at a meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Member-Countries declared that they would continue to give every assistance and support to the DRV and the patriotic forces of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in repelling the encroachments of the aggressors.

The exchange of top-level delegations, notably, the visits to the DRV of Soviet Military delegations led by Marshal P. F. Batitsky and of a delegation of the USSR Ministry of Merchant Marine led by Minister T. B. Guzhenko contributed to the further development of USSR-DRV cooperation.

The progressive international public was giving unqualified moral and political support to the patriotic forces of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In February 1972 a world assembly for peace and independence of the peoples of Indochina met in Paris. The assembly's work and its documents including the message sent to its participants by Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CC CPSU, were enthusiastically welcomed in Vietnam.

In early February 1972 the DRV government and the PRG of South Vietnam striving for an early restoration of peace in Vietnam came forward with a new initiative at the Paris talks. Explaining in greater detail the two basic questions contained in the 7-point programme tabled earlier the PRG of South Vietnam declared on February 2 that the deadline for the withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam would be the date for the release of all servicemen and civilians taken prisoner during the war including downed US Air Force pilots captured in North Vietnam. On the solution of South Vietnam's political problems the PRG emphasized that the immediate resignation of the puppet president Thieu, coupled with the renunciation by the Saigon administration of its war-like policy, the abolition of the secret police and the entire machinery of violence and coercion and the imme-

¹ *Pravda*, October 9, 1971.

diate halt to the "pacification" programme would open the way to a genuinely free and democratic process in South Vietnam and, above all, to a discussion between the PRG and the Saigon administration of the formation of a government of national concord.

In its statement of February 6, 1972 the DRV government reiterated its support for the 7-point plan and gave its approval to the explanation of the two key items of the plan given by the PRG of South Vietnam and emphasized the full agreement between the proposals of the PRG and the plan for a peace settlement of the Vietnam problem put forward by the DRV negotiators in the course of confidential contacts with their US counterparts in Paris in the summer of 1971.

The position of the PRG and the DRV government on the question of a peaceful settlement in Vietnam was fully supported throughout the world. The Soviet government in a statement of February 12, 1972 described the 7-point proposals coupled with the explanations provided by the PRG on February 2, as "a realistic and constructive basis for a settlement of the Vietnam problem".¹

In a situation when the US government was still trying to evade any substantive discussion let alone acceptance of the proposals put forward by the DRV and PRG and was, in fact, seeking to impose its will on them, the patriotic forces in South Vietnam had no option but to launch a new offensive on a broad front at the end of March 1972. As the authors of *US Neo-Colonialism* point out the armed confrontation of 1972 was to be the decisive show-down. It was to supply the answer to the following key military questions the leaders of the patriotic forces were asking themselves:

—Are People's Liberation Armed Forces capable of demolishing the defenses of the US-Saigon forces?

—Are they capable of routing the elite units of the Saigon army?

—How can they neutralize the fire power of the US Air Force and Navy?

—How can the troops be best supplied in the event of a prolonged offensive?"²

¹ *Pravda*, February 12, 1972.

² *US Neo-Colonialism. Collection of Articles*, Issue No. 2, pp. 53-54.

The offensive launched by the patriotic forces was crowned with a number of important victories. Within the first months of fierce fighting as a result of the heavy artillery bombardment, tank and infantry assaults by the People's Liberation Armed Forces the enemy defensive lines in the northern part of South Vietnam were breached and the patriotic forces completely cleared Quang Tri province and the area to the northwest of Saigon. In addition, they destroyed a number of major US-Saigon bases and seriously threatened the "perimeter defense" around many towns and cities as well as the logistical bases of the Saigon regime in the so-called "pacified" areas of South Vietnam. South Vietnamese guerrilla units stepped up their operations playing havoc with the local government structure of the Saigon administration.

The offensive of the Liberation forces in the spring of 1972 completely dispelled the myth about the feasibility of the "Vietnamization programme". Washington had to appreciably "re-Americanize" the Vietnam war in a hurry. Large US air and naval reinforcements were rushed in. The tactical combat aircraft in Indochina were brought up to 1,300 including some of the latest modifications, while the B-52 force was increased to 200 bombers. The US Air Force and the US 7th Fleet continued to provide powerful fire support for the Saigon troops. Thus, during the fighting for control of the town of Quang Tri the 7th Fleet rained 22,000 to 30,000 artillery rounds on the patriotic forces while the US Air Force made 200 to 300 sorties daily.

In a desperate effort to save the "Vietnamization programme" from imminent collapse and to impose on the Vietnamese negotiators in Paris its terms for a settlement the Nixon Administration launched a new escalation of hostilities against North Vietnam. On April 16, 1972 B-52s bombed the densely populated quarters of Haiphong, North Vietnam's main sea port and second largest city. After that the US Air Force mounted a "carpet" bombing campaign against North Vietnam's urban and rural areas to terrorize the population and to sow panic and at the same time delivered precision bombing strikes at selected targets such as factories, bridges, etc. using the most up-to-date weapons including laser and magnetic-guidance bombs.

The barbarous US bombing raids destroyed many towns, industrial complexes, agricultural cooperatives, communications and water-engineering schemes in North Vietnam.

In a bid to make the bombing more effective and deny North Vietnam vital supplies from the outside the US Administration in May 1972 ordered the mining of North Vietnam's ports and inland waterways. Thus, Washington resorted to the most drastic and extreme form of pressure on North Vietnam and the patriotic forces in the South.

At this time of trial for North Vietnam and the patriotic forces of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, the Soviet Union took a firm stand against the new round of military blackmail by Washington. On April 12, 1972 at a reception in honor of the DRV ambassador in the USSR Leonid Brezhnev stated that the CPSU and the Soviet people were invariably honoring their commitments being loyal to their policy of internationalist solidarity with the embattled people of Vietnam and the patriotic forces elsewhere in Indochina and would continue to give them every support and assistance. Leonid Brezhnev reiterated the Soviet people's strong condemnation of the US aggression in Indochina and the Soviet Union's demand for an immediate halt to the US bombing of North Vietnam.¹

On May 12 the Soviet government in a strongly-worded statement condemned the new escalation of hostilities by the US in Vietnam and demanded its immediate termination. The statement said in part: "It is impossible to solve the problem of Indochina by a fresh escalation of acts of aggression, it is impossible by this means to break the will of the Vietnamese people fighting for their freedom and independence.... The only realistic solution to the Vietnam problem is to respect the right of the Vietnamese people to determine their own destiny without any outside interference and pressure".²

The Soviet Union took energetic steps through diplomatic channels to get the Nixon Administration to put

¹ See: *Pravda*, April 13, 1972.

² *Pravda*, May 12, 1972.

an end to acts of aggression in whatever form in Indochina and accept the reasonable proposals made by the DRV government and the PRG of South Vietnam. The joint Soviet-American communique issued at the end of the USSR-US summit talks in Moscow in May 1972 pointed out that "the Soviet side underscored its solidarity with the just struggle of the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia for freedom, independence and social progress. In firmly supporting the proposals of the DRV and the Republic of South Vietnam which furnish a realistic and constructive basis for settling the Vietnam problem, the Soviet Union insists on an end to the bombing of the DRV, on a complete and unconditional withdrawal of the US forces and those of its allies from South Vietnam, to enable the peoples of Indochina to determine their destinies themselves without any outside interference."¹

An important act of political support for the people of Vietnam was the visit to Hanoi by the Soviet government delegation in June 1972. The Soviet-Vietnamese talks on that occasion discussed measures to further strengthen friendship, combat cooperation and solidarity between the USSR and the DRV as well as measures to be taken in view of the continuing US military intervention in Vietnam and the new escalation of acts of war against North Vietnam by the US.

The people and the armed forces of the DRV once again gave a fitting rebuff to the US aggressors. North Vietnam's air defense units shot down more and more invading US aircraft. Between April and October 1972 a total of 554 US planes were brought down over North Vietnam. An uninterrupted flow of supplies was maintained all over North Vietnam while the population continued to keep their poise, displaying a calm confidence and determination to fight on.

In South Vietnam despite the desperate efforts made by the Saigon forces the town of Quang Tri was still in the hands of Liberation forces. The massive US military intervention on that occasion saved the Saigon regime from total defeat but Washington failed to prevent the further deterioration of the position of the puppet government in Saigon.

¹ *Pravda*, May 31, 1972.

The 1972 presidential elections in the US were drawing near while the Nixon Administration could point to no military victory in Vietnam and failed to convince the electorate of its capacity to restore peace in Vietnam on American terms. Nor was it able to demonstrate the effectiveness of its handling of the Indochina war.

On September 11, 1972 the PRG of South Vietnam, displaying flexibility and good will, tabled new proposals for settlements of the Vietnam problem. These called for a total withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam, an end to the "Vietnamization programme" and the termination of the US bombing, mining and blockading of North Vietnam. They also called for the withdrawal of US support for the puppet government of Nguyen Van Thieu, the formation of a provisional government of national concord in the South made up of representatives of the PRG of South Vietnam, the Saigon administration and other political forces of South Vietnam which would steer the country through the transitional period before the holding of truly free and democratic general elections. The PRG stated that the proposed provisional government of national concord would not be dominated by any of the three sides.

The Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in an address to the 27th session of the UN General Assembly stated: "All those who respect the rights of peoples, all those who are still capable of facing up to the realities of the situation cannot fail to acknowledge the thoroughly just nature, reasonableness and unassailable logic of these proposals which express the good will of the people of Vietnam. If the USA really wants the Paris talks to lead to the restoration of peace, it should make a positive response to the statement of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam of September 11 of this year."¹

Together with the Soviet Union the progressive world public supported the new peace initiative taken by the authentic representatives of the people of Vietnam. The US public, too, demanded that the Nixon Administration should accept the PRG proposals in order to end the US long-drawn involvement in the Vietnam war.

¹ *Pravda*, September 27, 1972.

In the circumstances the Nixon Administration had to agree to a new round of the Paris talks. This time the US negotiators made significant concessions to the Vietnamese side. With the elections upon him President Nixon faced the option either to present himself to the US electorate as a president who had settled the Vietnam problem as he had promised to do or to become reconciled and face inevitable defeat at the elections.

By mid-October 1972 the DRV and US negotiators had made considerable progress. They agreed that on October 22 they would initial an agreement in Hanoi which would be formally signed by the foreign ministers of the two countries on October 30, in Paris.

However, having achieved the desired result in the context of making a favorable impression on the US electorate on the eve of the presidential elections the Nixon Administration on October 23 demanded a review of the already drafted agreement and a rescheduling of its formal signature appealing to the objections raised by the Saigon puppets. Among other things, the US demanded a revision of the basic provisions of that agreement which affected the vital national rights of the Vietnamese people (the US proposed a total of 126 amendments to the drafted agreement).¹

North Vietnam rejected the arbitrary US demand to revise the mutually worked out draft agreement. It was then that the Republican Administration having emerged victorious from the 1972 presidential elections decided that it could get away with trying again to act from positions of strength. President Nixon ordered a resumption of bombing raids against North Vietnam. Between December 18 and 30, 1972 hundreds of tactical aircraft and about 150 strategic B-52s subjected to savage daily bombing raids the populated centers of North Vietnam including Hanoi and many industrial installations. However, the recourse to force in an attempt to break the will of the Vietnamese misfired again. Despite the terrible destruction wreaked by the US Air Force on the towns and villages of North Vietnam, despite the heavy civilian casualties North Vietnam stood firm repelling the US bombing raids in a fitting fashion. North

¹ *US Neo-Colonialism. Collection of Articles, Issue No. 2, p. 58.*

Vietnam's air defense units met the invading US aircraft with ground fire of unprecedented density. Between December 18 and 30 the US Air Force lost more than 81 planes including 34 strategic B-52s and more than 100 of its best pilots.

The White House paid a dear price for its new gamble in Vietnam in terms of tarnished image on the international scene. The barbarous bombing of North Vietnam sparked off a storm of protests among the world's progressive public. The Soviet Union once again declared for all to hear its continued support for Vietnam and its just demands. Soviet Party and government leaders made public statements emphasizing the heavy burden of responsibility the US Administration was taking upon itself in committing new crime in Vietnam. The General Secretary of the CC CPSU Leonid Brezhnev addressing a public ceremony in Moscow marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of the USSR said that despite the senseless atrocities committed by the US neo-colonialists in Vietnam imperialism was no longer able to decide the destinies of peoples with impunity. "We have always regarded it as a cardinal objective of the Soviet Union's foreign policy to seek to eliminate the seat of war in Indochina," Brezhnev stated. "This is why we give our Vietnamese friends active assistance in their efforts for a just peace settlement." ¹

The failure to sow panic among the population of North Vietnam in an attempt to force its leaders to be more "pliable" coupled with the heavy losses suffered by the US Air Force in manpower and equipment and the angry protests of the world public made it plain to the Nixon Administration that any further stalling on the signing of the drafted agreement on a Vietnam settlement was a dangerous course of action which threatened to lead to a new, and this time final, defeat for the army of the Saigon puppet regime. The only way out of the situation for the Nixon Administration was to make important concessions to the DRV and the PRG of South Vietnam if it was to avoid the complete collapse of its Indochina policy.

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course*, Moscow, 1975, pp. 82-83.

In the early January 1973 the USA stopped the bombing of North Vietnam and returned to the conference table. On January 27, 1973 the US and Vietnamese negotiators in Paris formally signed the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam.

Article 1 of the Paris Agreement stated: "The United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Viet Nam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Viet Nam."¹ The United States undertook to cease all military operations against North Vietnam, to withdraw its forces and advisors from South Vietnam and to dismantle its military bases there.

The parties to the Paris Agreement including the Saigon administration undertook "to maintain the ceasefire and to ensure a lasting and stable peace."²

The Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam also provided for an exchange of POWs. It stated that "the question of the return of the Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained in South Viet Nam will be resolved by the two South Vietnamese parties... The two South Vietnamese parties will do so in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord, with a view to ending hatred and enmity, in order to ease suffering and to reunite families."³

Article 3 of the Paris Agreement stated that "the armed forces of the two South Vietnamese parties shall remain in-place. The Two-Party Joint Military Commission . . . shall determine the areas controlled by each party and the modalities of stationing."⁴ Thus, the parties to the Agreement, including the US, recognized the existence in South Vietnam of two zones controlled by two administrations—the PRG of South Vietnam and the Saigon administration.

On the subject of the political future of South Vietnam the Paris Agreement stated that it would be decided by the population of South Vietnam by means of free and democratic general elections under international supervision.

¹ *The Paris Agreement on Vietnam*, Hanoi, 1973, p. 297.

² *Ibid.*, p. 298.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 300-301.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

The Agreement also provided for the establishment in South Vietnam of democratic freedoms with a view to normalizing the country's public life.

The two South Vietnamese parties under the terms of the Paris Agreements would "immediately after the cease-fire . . . hold consultations in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord, mutual respect, and mutual non-elimination to set up a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord of three equal segments" ¹ (including the third political force in South Vietnam which supported neither Saigon nor the PRG of South Vietnam) and acting on the principle of unanimity. Article 12 of the Paris Agreements stated: "...The two South Vietnamese parties shall sign an agreement on the internal matters of South Viet Nam as soon as possible and do their utmost to accomplish this within ninety days after the cease-fire comes into effect, in keeping with the South Vietnamese people's aspirations for peace, independence and democracy." ²

The National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord would work to ensure strict adherence to the Paris Agreement by the two South Vietnamese parties, to reach national reconciliation, concord and safeguard democratic freedoms, to organize free and democratic general elections and determine the procedure and conditions of their holding.

An important part of the Paris Agreement was recognition that Vietnam should be united. Article 15 of the Agreement stated: "The reunification of Viet Nam shall be carried out step by step through peaceful means on the basis of discussions and agreements between North and South Viet Nam, without coercion or annexation by either party, and without foreign interference. The time for reunification will be agreed upon by North and South Viet Nam." ³

Thus, the political articles of the Paris Agreement formulated principles whose implementation would constitute a major step towards the realization of long-cherished aspirations for which the Vietnamese patriots fought arms in hand for many long years, a major step

¹ *The Paris Agreement on Vietnam*, p. 302.

² *Ibid.*, p. 302.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

on the road towards the completion of the national popular-democratic revolution in the South, towards a peaceful reunification of the country.

The concluding articles of the Paris Agreement contained a special provision expressing the desire of the United States to see the Agreement as the beginning of an era of reconciliation with the DRV and all the peoples of Indochina. Article 21 stated: "The United States will contribute to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and throughout Indochina."¹

To ensure the implementation of the Paris Agreement in accordance with its articles, a four-sided joint military commission and a two-party joint military commission made up of representatives of the two South Vietnamese sides were set up along with the International Commission for Supervision and Control composed of representatives of Hungary, Poland, Indonesia and Canada (in August 1973 Canada was replaced by Iran).

At the beginning of March 1973 at the International Conference on Vietnam meeting in Paris representatives of the USSR, Canada, China, the USA, France, the PRG of South Vietnam, Hungary, Indonesia, Poland, the DRV, Britain and the Republic of Vietnam (Saigon) signed the Act of the International Conference on Vietnam which confirmed the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people and recognized in international law the existence of two zones in South Vietnam controlled by two administrations.

The Appeal of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party and the DRV government pointed out that "With the signing of the Agreement, the resistance of our people against US aggression, for national salvation, has won a very glorious victory."² Stressing the importance of the Paris Agreement for the destiny of Vietnam the Central Committee of the VWP and the DRV government stated that "The signed Agreement is the political and legal basis guaranteeing the fundamental national rights of our people and the sacred right of our compatriots in the South to self-determination."³

¹ *The Paris Agreement on Vietnam*, p. 311.

² *Ibid.*, p. 368.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

The signing of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam was welcomed by the progressive world public as a great victory for the Vietnamese, for all peace-loving forces, a victory which opened up new opportunities for Vietnam's development along the road of peace, independence, unity and progress.

This victory which put the people of Vietnam on the road to a total triumph of its just cause was added proof of the staunchness, courage and the unbending will of the patriots of North and South Vietnam. It demonstrated the validity of the strategy with which the Vietnam Workers' Party countered the US plan for the "Vietnamization" of the war. The skilful combination of armed struggle and political work in South Vietnam, which resulted in the progressive erosion of the Saigon regime on every front, backed up by the able conduct of diplomatic negotiations in Paris enabled the Vietnam Workers' Party, the DRV government and the PRG of South Vietnam to repulse all enemy military forays, to frustrate the enemy's political and diplomatic subterfuges aimed at imposing on the people of South Vietnam the domination of the puppet authorities, and to force the United States to withdraw from direct involvement in ground combat operations against the patriotic forces.

The signing of the Paris Agreement became possible thanks to the determined support of the Vietnamese people by the USSR, by all socialist countries, Communist and Workers' parties, and by all anti-imperialist forces. Their all-round and massive assistance to the embattled people of Vietnam coupled with their energetic efforts to repel the US imperialist aggression in Indochina proved one of the decisive factors in frustrating Washington's attempts to impose their will on other countries and peoples by force of arms.

The signing of the Paris Agreement dealt a blow at the plans of the Peking leaders to exploit the struggle of the Vietnamese people for their own selfish ends and exposed the futility and absurdity of Chinese rhetoric over many years to the effect that international disputes including the one in Vietnam could only be settled by military means. We have already mentioned that after the US and the DRV had reached agreement to negotiate in Paris the Chinese leadership maintained a strange

silence on the diplomatic struggle waged by the Vietnamese patriots. Needless to say, the men in Peking had too much political experience for them to criticize the diplomatic activities of the DRV and the PRG of South Vietnam on the international scene. However, Peking did try to impede both the diplomatic and military moves by the Vietnamese patriots shortly before the Paris Agreement was signed. Thus, during the US blockade of North Vietnam's ports in 1972 the Chinese leaders did their worst to prevent the rushing of vital cargos from the USSR and other socialist countries to Vietnam.

Describing the position of the Chinese leaders in the years preceding the signing of the Paris Agreement the Cuban newspaper *Granma* wrote on June 2, 1978: "The day will come when the world will learn about the scheming of the Chinese leadership against the people of Vietnam in every shameful detail."

On the Road to Total Victory

The signing of the Paris Agreement created a favorable situation for a far more rapid advance of the Vietnamese people under the leadership of the Vietnam Workers' Party towards the fulfillment of the two basic strategic tasks set by its third congress.

As in the previous stages of the Vietnamese revolution these two tasks continued to be closely interrelated. Addressing the 3rd Congress of Vietnamese Trade Unions on February 12, 1974 Le Duan declared: "The Vietnamese revolution has entered upon a new and extremely favorable stage. But the struggle for the achievement of full independence and freedom for the whole of our country promises to be complicated and hard. This awareness demands that North Vietnam should strengthen itself and develop in every field and rapidly. To this end it is essential for our country to move forward more energetically along the road of socialism."¹ The Vietnam Workers' Party geared to this effort the entire creative potential of the working class, the peasantry and the

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1970-1975)*, Moscow, 1975, p. 167 (in Russian).

people's intelligentsia in order to overcome the consequences of many years of war, to rehabilitate the country's economy and prepare the ground for large-scale socialist construction.

The working people of North Vietnam faced challenging tasks. Describing the country's economic situation at the time Le Duan admitted: "The war has set back our weak economy which was just beginning to get into its stride by more than 10 years. Apart from the terrible material damage estimated at many billions of dongs the war has caused other dire consequences which it will take a fairly long time for us to overcome."¹

The people of North Vietnam, responding to the appeal of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party and the DRV government, set to work to heal the wounds of war as soon as possible.

Within the first year after the signing of the Paris Agreement all the major roads and railways in North Vietnam were restored and re-opened for traffic, all the main bridges were rebuilt and the approaches to North Vietnam's ports were cleared of mines. All the thermal power stations destroyed during the war went back into service including the Thac Ba hydroelectric power station, the largest of its kind in Indochina, which was built with Soviet help. North Vietnam's electricity output exceeded the record pre-war level of 1965 by the beginning of 1974.

Work on rehabilitating the war-ravaged economy went parallel with measures to improve living standards. Within the first few months of peace a considerable proportion of North Vietnam's housing stock was rebuilt and work began on the construction of new permanent housing as well as make-shift accomodation.

The economic successes of 1973 were of crucial importance for the subsequent economic progress of North Vietnam. Le Duan stated at the time: "Although only initial these successes demonstrate once more the great vitality and resilience of our system and reflect the indomitable will of the working class and all working people of North Vietnam as they enter a new stage of the

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches (1970-1975)*, p. 175.

revolution. They also prove that our Party has been following the right course." ¹

After analyzing the results of economic activity and the country's needs in 1973 the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party at its 22nd plenary session held at the end of 1973 and early 1974 outlined concrete tasks and basic guidelines for economic development in the period ahead.

The decisions adopted by the plenary session stated: "At the new stage North Vietnam's overall task is to strengthen the unity of the people, to fight for the maintenance of stable peace, to implement the programme of socialist industrialization in every way, to speed up carrying out the three revolutions, while building a new North Vietnam moving rapidly towards socialism at a confident step; to combine economic development with strengthening its defense potential, to maintain vigilance of a high level to be able to frustrate the schemes of US imperialism and its puppets; to discharge its duty to the revolutionary struggle for final establishment of independence and democracy in South Vietnam, and to achieve the peaceful reunification of the Homeland and to do its internationalist duty to the revolutionary movement in Laos and Cambodia to the full." ²

Guided by the decisions of the 22nd plenary session of the CC of the Vietnam Workers' Party the DRV National Assembly at its session in February 1974 endorsed a plan for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the national economy covering 1974-1975 which became a concrete programme of action for the people of North Vietnam.

Within two years North Vietnam was to increase output in every industry to the highest level of 1965 or 1971 and to exceed it, if possible. North Vietnam was to strengthen and develop further socialist relations of production both in the public and in the cooperative sector, to improve management activities and to adjust economic management both in the central areas and on the periphery.

The fulfillment of the tasks set by the 22nd plenary session of the CC of the VWP which were spelled out in

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches, (1970-1975)*, p. 172.

² *Nhan Dan*, February 22, 1974.

specific detail in the state plan for 1974-1975 was to be the first step in the process of socialist industrialization preparing the ground for the further construction of socialism in North Vietnam. At the same time it was to contribute to strengthening the revolutionary forces throughout the country and create a solid logistical base supporting the struggle for independence and democracy in South Vietnam.

Thanks to the tremendous organizational work by the Party and the country's economic management bodies and the dedicated work of the entire population the 1974 plan was fulfilled. In 1975 the people of North Vietnam continued to work with dedication on the economic rehabilitation programme. At the same time the Party and the people in the North did not for a minute forget about the as yet unfulfilled tasks in the national popular-democratic revolution in the South nor about their duty to their compatriots in South Vietnam.

The signing of the Paris Agreement brought about a series of important positive changes in South Vietnam. The international prestige and authority of the PRG had grown considerably. Within two years of the signing of the Paris Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam the PRG was formally recognized by and established diplomatic relations with over 40 countries. Its authority and prestige in the eyes of the population of South Vietnam including that part of it which lived in Saigon-controlled areas had grown.

Leaning on the support and assistance of the DRV, other socialist countries and the progressive forces throughout the world, the PRG carried on with its efforts to consolidate its control in the areas liberated from the Saigon administration. The population of the liberated areas led by local Party organizations set to work to rehabilitate the war-ravaged national economy: in two years' time significant progress was made in rehabilitating and developing agricultural and industrial production, resuming normal transport operations, and developing cultural institutions and health services.

The PRG of South Vietnam just like the DRV government was abiding by the Paris Agreement in its entirety. In accordance with the Appeal of the PRG and the order issued by the command of the People's Liberation Armed

Forces of South Vietnam the population and armed forces in the zones controlled by patriots observed the cease-fire on all fronts. In the PRG-controlled areas a policy was being implemented to achieve national concord, to safeguard all democratic freedoms in keeping with the letter and spirit of the Paris Agreement.

Fulfilling the relevant articles of the Agreement the PRG of South Vietnam within the first two months of the Agreement's signature released and handed over to the US government 128 US servicemen and civilians and over 5,400 of the captured puppet army personnel to the government of South Vietnam (Saigon).

The DRV and the PRG insisted on the observance of the Paris Agreement in its entirety by the other two signatories—the US and the Saigon administration. The PRG actively supported by the DRV government repeatedly made concrete proposals whose acceptance would have guaranteed an effective cease-fire and the restoration of the democratic freedoms throughout South Vietnam and the creation of favorable conditions there for the formation of a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord and for subsequent elections.

The attitude of the Saigon and US governments to the Paris Agreement was different. Having been forced by the pressure of the US and world public which demanded an end to the war in Vietnam to sign the Paris Agreement after the collapse of the "Vietnamization programme" Washington and Saigon began violating important provisions of the Paris Agreement right after its signature. The Saigon government openly opposed those articles of the Paris Agreement which contained de facto recognition of the PRG of South Vietnam and the "third political force" there. The puppet authorities proclaimed themselves to be the sole constitutional government of South Vietnam thereby denying that in reality there were two administrations, two armies and three political forces. In this way the Saigon puppets shut the door on the achievement of national reconciliation and concord and ruled out the possibility of a political settlement in South Vietnam as provided for by the Paris Agreement.

Ignoring their commitments under the terms of the Paris Agreement the Saigon authorities did not cease

for a single day their open hostility against the PRG, and maintained military operations against the People's Liberation Armed Forces and the liberated areas of South Vietnam. The Saigon air force repeatedly bombed the PRG-controlled areas.

The puppet regime developed and tried to implement a three-year (1973-1975) "pacification plan" aimed at knocking out the People's Liberation Armed Forces and revolutionary organizations in rural and urban areas. The Saigon puppets also planned to impose an economic blockade on liberated areas gaining control step by step over those of them which adjoined areas already under Saigon control and then to eliminate the liberated zone completely along with the Liberation forces and revolutionary authorities throughout South Vietnam.¹

The Saigon authorities violated the provision of the Paris Agreement relating to the restoration of democratic freedoms in South Vietnam and continued to suppress all opposition in the areas they controlled. The government decree of 1973 permitted the authorities to throw into concentration camps without trial all those who supported peace and national concord or were suspected of disloyalty to the Saigon regime. In contravention of the explicit provisions of the Paris Agreement the Saigon authorities held hundreds of thousands of patriots in prison.

The Saigon rulers led by Nguyen Van Thieu saw the continuation of the war and police terror, sabotaging of measures to restore peace and national concord in South Vietnam as the only way to stay in power, to impede the consolidation of the PRG and wipe out the gains of the patriotic forces as formalized in the Paris Agreement.

Saigon's policy was fully approved and supported by Washington. The United States was forced to terminate its direct involvement in the Vietnam conflict, to cease all military operations in the South and in the North and to withdraw its remaining forces from South Vietnam. The last GI left Vietnam by March 29, 1973. Le

¹ See: Van Chien Dung, *The Spring of the Great Victory*, Hanoi, 1976, pp. 13-15 (in Vietnamese).

Duan wrote: "This ended the 115-year long presence of foreign troops on Vietnamese soil."¹

Although it had honored its commitments under the Paris Agreement as regards direct participation in combat operations the US continued its interference in South Vietnam's internal affairs. Washington strongly supported the claim of the Saigon regime to being the "sole legitimate government of South Vietnam" and continued to give it extensive military aid. In violation of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam the US did not take out of South Vietnam the weapons and equipment of its troops nor did it dismantle its military bases there having illegally turned them over to Saigon. In contravention of Article 7 of the Paris Agreement the US continued to pour weapons and military hardware into South Vietnam. Between early 1973 and mid-1974 the US sent to South Vietnam over 1 million tons of ammunition, 1,100 tanks and armored personnel carriers, 800 artillery pieces, 700 planes and helicopters, and over 200 naval vessels. All told, between 1973 and 1975 the US gave Saigon military assistance to the tune of 3.98 billion dollars.

The Pentagon left behind over 10,000 US servicemen disguised as civilians who continued to guide the operations of Saigon troops against the patriotic forces.

Having signed the Paris Agreement Washington did not give up its attempts to suppress the national liberation movement in South Vietnam and perpetuate the country's division. The US ruling circles together with the Saigon generals "were still harboring illusions that in 1976 they would be able to calmly begin building and consolidating a neo-colonialist regime US-style in South Vietnam..."²

As a result of the Saigon government's wrecking of the Paris Agreement with Washington's full support and approval, the situation in South Vietnam began to deteriorate rapidly. The hopes of the South Vietnamese population, of the entire people of Vietnam and of the international public for the restoration of peace, democracy and genuine freedom in war-torn South Vietnam,

¹ Le Duan, *Selected Articles and Speeches, (1970-1975)*, p. 153.

² *Nhan Dan*, June 30, 1976.

hopes that were raised by the Paris Agreement, failed to materialize.

In the circumstances the Vietnam Workers' Party, the DRV government and the PRG of South Vietnam had no option but to develop a new strategy and tactics for completing the liberation of the South and reunifying the homeland.

After analyzing the actions and intentions of the Saigon administration and the US at the new stage of the situation of South Vietnam the 21st plenary session of the CC of the Vietnam Workers' Party held in July-October 1973, developed a new strategy aimed at keeping up the struggle on the military, political and diplomatic fronts and made the following important conclusion. "The revolution in South Vietnam is developing along the road of revolutionary violence. In any situation we should be able to use opportunities as they present themselves while keeping unswervingly to the strategic offensive policy and providing constant guidance to the revolution in the South which is the chief and most pressing task at the new stage."¹

While continuing to demand the observance of the Paris Agreement by Saigon and the USA the Vietnamese people once again took up arms to defend their gains in South Vietnam. On October 15, 1973 the regular forces, militia and guerrilla units in the South were ordered into action to give a fitting rebuff to the continuing provocations of the Saigon puppets and defend liberated areas. At the end of 1973 the People's Liberation Armed Forces after resuming full-scale combat operations began to inflict ever more humiliating defeats on the enemy. As before, the Vietnamese patriots leaned on the support of the local population and the progressive public the world over.

The policy of sabotaging the Paris Agreement, of dragging out the war and suppressing democratic freedoms followed by the Thieu administration resulted in the Saigon regime undercutting its own positions both inside South Vietnam and internationally.

Economic activity in the areas controlled by the puppet government was stagnating. The reduction in the

¹ Van Chien Dung, *The Spring of the Great Victory*, pp. 15-16.

dollar influx after the departure of US troops from South Vietnam, the dwindling raw material and fuel supplies forced many commercial, industrial and cottage industry enterprises into closure. By the start of 1975 there were some 3.5 million jobless in South Vietnam. There was a food shortage. The Thieu government continued to funnel the bulk of budgetary allocations into the war thereby increasing the rate of inflation and sending prices sky-high.

Despite the draconian measures against the opposition the population of cities and areas controlled by the Saigon administration openly showed their defiance and indignation at Thieu's dictatorial government and his entourage who were responsible for the fact that the prospects of peace that loomed so near following the signing of the Paris Agreement failed to materialize. The anti-government movement was being joined by ever wider sections of the urban population including members of the intelligentsia, students, businessmen, religious leaders, journalists and even members of the puppet parliament. In 1974 mass demonstrations were held in Saigon, Hué, Danang and other cities with the demonstrators demanding better living standards, safeguards for democratic freedoms, restoration of peace and the observance of the Paris Agreement by the Saigon authorities. Numerous committees sprouted to combat corruption among Saigon government officials, to ensure the freedom of the press, to organize relief for the hungry, to insist on the observance of the Paris Agreement, etc. A Reuter correspondent reported from Saigon on October 20, 1974 that anti-government organizations were sprouting up in South Vietnamese cities like mushrooms after a good rain.

Even those political forces which once formed their reliable mainstay, including South Vietnam's catholic clergy, withdrew their support from the Saigon dictator and members of his inner circle. The "Indictment of Ngyuen Van Thieu" published by a group of catholics in 1974 described the puppet president as "a corrupt and bellicose dictator" who was sabotaging peace and national reconciliation in the interest of the US.

The disgust at the war in South Vietnam which was continuing through the Thieu clique's fault was

widespread even among the personnel of the Saigon army as its morale continued to drop. Anti-government sentiments were in evidence in the civil service and the police force, both in the provinces and in Saigon.

The Thieu government's extremely reactionary and war-like policy, the universal condemnation of its activities inside South Vietnam completely tarnished the image of the Saigon puppets on the international scene. In the United States itself the idea of continued support for the rotten regime in Saigon in whatever form was becoming increasingly unpopular. The consequences of the deep division within American society caused by the Vietnam war continued to influence the internal political scene and were one of the main factors behind the "credibility gap" developing between the White House and the American people which, among other things, forced Nixon to resign in August 1974. Nixon's successor Gerald Ford and the State Department still headed by Henry Kissinger encountered mounting difficulties in their efforts to carry on with "Vietnamization" and in getting congressional sanction for aid to Saigon. As early as August 1973 Congress passed a resolution banning the Administration to undertake any military action in Indochina involving US armed forces personnel. This resolution forced the Pentagon to stop the bombing of Cambodia. The following year Congress told the Ford Administration to halve their appropriations request for 1975 to support the Saigon regime.

In the new situation that arose in Vietnam after the signing of the Paris Agreement the USSR and other socialist countries gave the fraternal people of Vietnam extensive aid and assistance to help them heal the wounds of war in the North and backed it up with moral, political and diplomatic support for their efforts to ensure the observance of the Paris Agreement.

The official visit to the USSR of a DRV Party and government delegation headed by Le Duan and Pham Van Dong in July 1973 provided a graphic demonstration of the close cooperation between the Communist parties and the peoples of the USSR and Vietnam. The Soviet-Vietnamese top level talks on that occasion stated the expanding and fruitful development of relations

between the two countries in the political, economic, ideological and defense fields.

Always guided by their invariable internationalist policy of assisting the people of Vietnam in every way the CC CPSU and the Soviet government decided to treat the Soviet credits made available to the DRV in the preceding period to help its economic development as grant aid. This decision, as Le Duan declared in his speech at a meeting at Moscow's Likhachev automobile plant on July 12, 1973, generated still greater enthusiasm among the Vietnamese people and would increase their feeling of gratitude to the CPSU, the Soviet government and the fraternal Soviet people.¹

In the war years many industrial enterprises in the DRV built with Soviet help were destroyed by US bombing raids. During the Soviet-Vietnamese talks in Moscow the Soviet side said it would rebuild those factories and plants. The Soviet side also said it was ready to help the DRV to build new industrial enterprises essential to North Vietnam's socialist industrialization.

In 1973 and subsequently the USSR continued to supply the DRV with industrial plant and equipment, agricultural machinery, fuels, vehicles and transport equipment, consumer goods and food necessary to meet the needs of the population and to rehabilitate North Vietnam's national economy.

Other socialist countries, notably Hungary, the GDR, Cuba, Czechoslovakia and Poland also gave the people of Vietnam disinterested aid to assist their effort to rebuild the country's war-ravaged economy.

The socialist community countries continued to give firm backing and assistance to the DRV and the PRG of South Vietnam aimed at ensuring the strict observance of the Paris Agreement by all the signatories. They strongly condemned the Saigon puppet regime and the external imperialist forces supporting it for numerous violations of the Agreement.

The principled position of the socialist countries on the Vietnam problem in the new situation was confirmed by the Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee

¹ *Izvestia*, July 12, 1973

of the Warsaw Treaty Member-Countries held in Warsaw in April, 1974. The Meeting expressed its confidence that by leaning on the support of the fraternal socialist countries and all progressive forces the Vietnamese people would succeed in building socialism in the North, in resolving the internal political problems of the South and in building a peaceful, unified, independent and democratic Vietnam.

The progressive public in many countries continued to express their support for the just cause of the Vietnamese people. An important act of political solidarity with the patriotic forces of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia was the special statement on Indochina issued by the World Congress of Peace Forces held in Moscow in October, 1973. The Congress delegates formulated the tasks facing the progressive forces throughout the world in the matter of expanding the solidarity movement with the patriots of Vietnam and other countries of Indochina. They emphasized in particular the need to insist on the strict and unswerving observance of the Paris Agreement by all the signatories to work for a complete termination of combat operations against the areas of South Vietnam controlled by the PRG, for the release of all political prisoners held by the Saigon regime.

Having imposed on the patriotic forces a continuation of hostilities the Saigon regime had to pay a high price in the shape of increasingly painful defeats on the battle-fields. From late 1973 onwards the situation on South Vietnam's battle fronts was steadily changing in favor of the People's Liberation Armed Forces. In fulfillment of the specific instruction issued by the Military Committee of the CC of the Vietnam Workers' Party "to counter-attack and attack" the Liberation forces in 1974 succeeded not only in frustrating all enemy plans for "pacification" while retaining liberated areas and bases but also in expanding the zone controlled by the PRG and in wresting the initiative on the battle-field from the Saigon forces. The fighting demonstrated the clear superiority of the Liberation forces over the puppet Saigon army. The General Staff of the Vietnam People's Army reported to the Central Committee of the VWP that the fighting in the South was entering upon the final stage and that

the balance of power was clearly tilting in favor of the patriotic forces.¹

In the first week of January 1975, regular units of People's Liberation Armed Forces in close cooperation with the local militia and guerrilla units liberated Phuoc Long province, the first to be completely cleared of puppet troops.

After analyzing the military and political situation in the South as well as the international situation and possible US actions in helping the Saigon regime the Central Committee of the VWP in January 1975 decided to deliver a major strategic strike at the Saigon army both in rural areas and in the cities. The decision adopted stated in part: "There shall be total mobilization of the Party, the army and the entire people in both parts of the country in order to step up the fight on the military and political fronts in 1975-1976 combining it with the fight on the diplomatic front so as to achieve a quick and total change in the alignment of forces on the battle fronts in South Vietnam, to complete quickly all preparations for launching a general offensive and uprisings, to finally destroy the puppet army and puppet administration, to hand over power to the population, to liberate the South and to achieve a reunification of the country..."²

To put this decision of the Central Committee into effect the People's Liberation Armed Forces in the South mounted a general offensive against the enemy in early March 1975. The main blow was aimed at the strategically important area of Thai Nguyen, northwest of Saigon. Van Chien Dung, the Chief of Staff of the Vietnam People's Army was sent to the Thai Nguyen plateau to take charge of the operation. Van Chien Dung had gained a wealth of experience in directing the combat operations of the patriotic forces in the South. During the operation he maintained constant contact with the command of the Vietnam People's Army and received instructions straight from the Politbureau of the CC of the VWP.

From the very start of the spring offensive of 1975 it became clear that the 1,350,000-strong puppet army

¹ See: Van Chien Dung, *The Spring of the Great Victory*, p. 18.

² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

was powerless to withstand the pressure of the Liberation forces made greater by the carefully planned and skillfully executed combat operations. The first to fall was the defensive system on the Thai Nguyen plateau. After the liberation of Ban Me Thuot, the principal city of the Thai Nguyen provinces, on March 11, the Saigon command in an effort to avoid the complete rout of its forces in the area decided to evacuate two other provinces, Kontum and Dialai, to "preserve strength". The Saigon generals decided to retreat in order to retain the coastal plains in central South Vietnam and to concentrate the mobile units of the Saigon army in preparation for a counter-offensive into Thai Nguyen. However, the powerful attacks of the patriotic forces involving tanks, armored personnel carriers and other heavy equipment turned the retreating puppet troops' withdrawal into a stampede. By March 24, the Saigon troops in Thai Nguyen had been practically wiped out and a huge area with over 600,000 inhabitants liberated.

The victory on the Thai Nguyen plateau marked a radical turning point in the military and political situation in South Vietnam. The entire strategic defensive system of the Saigon forces was now in jeopardy. The patriotic forces relying on the support of the population exploited their initial success and were advancing in all directions liberating province after province and driving the enemy from towns, cities and major military bases. On March 26 the old imperial capital of Hué was liberated. On March 29 Saigon forces abandoned Danang, South Vietnam's second largest city. The morale of the puppet army was in shambles and the troops simply abandoned their positions and scattered in panic looking for places to hide. They were not alone in their stampede. The Saigon administration's local officials, landowners, all those who had taken part in implementing neo-colonialist policies and in suppressing the national liberation movement were fleeing along with the puppet troops. The almost 1.5 million-strong army and the Saigon administrative machine were crumbling down like a house of cards.

A month after the Liberation forces offensive started the Saigon government was down to less than half of the original army strength. The major part of South Vietnam

was under the firm control of the patriotic forces. The patriots had overwhelming military, political and moral superiority over their enemy. The USA which had been trying to help the Saigon puppets to evacuate by sea and to organize the defense of the areas still under Saigon control was quite powerless to do anything more. As Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller admitted, it was too late to do anything to change the situation for the better and all Washington could do now was to watch from the sidelines the rapid collapse of the military-political organism whose maintenance and consolidation had taken two decades, hundreds of billions of dollars, thousands of American lives with nothing to show for it in the end. More, the USA had to pay a high price in terms of its damaged image and political prestige in the world.

Having analyzed the situation carefully the CC of the Vietnam Workers' Party together with the political and military leaders of the patriotic forces in the South came to the following important conclusion: "The situation is ripe for our army and our people to launch a powerful general offensive and uprising, to start the decisive historic battle and smash the last remaining lair of the enemy in Saigon, to completely wipe out the puppet army, topple the puppet regime and win total victory."

At the end of March the People's Liberation Armed Forces launched their attack on Saigon. Some of the most authoritative and experienced Party leaders with a wealth of experience of work in the South were entrusted with overall supervision and direction of the operation. They included members of the Politbureau of the CC of the VWP Le Duc Tho, Pham Hung, Van Chien Dung and General Tran Va Tra. This operation code-named after President Ho Chi Minh was to be the final and decisive operation of the long and hard but glorious struggle of the Vietnamese people to liberate South Vietnam from the domination of the Saigon puppet regime and foreign interventionists.

Within a short period the patriotic forces' command carried out a major redeployment of its forces during which a number of units and formations within days executed forced marches thousands of kilometers long

using their mechanized equipment and transport. Day and night an uninterrupted flow of men, arms, ammunition and food supplies was maintained from the North to the South. This vast logistical operation in support of the patriotic forces attacking Saigon was directed by the Council to Assist the Front set up by the CC of the VWP at the end of March and headed by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong. As a result of carefully planned and skillfully carried out measures a powerful attacking group was put together comprising five army corps of several scores of thousands men each.

Regular divisions equipped with modern weapons and backed by air support attacked in close cooperation with local militia, guerrilla and self-defense units in the Saigon-Diadinh area. A large number of special mobile units and commando groups operated inside Saigon and in the surrounding area captured control of bridges, crossing points and enemy strongholds.

In this final stage of the liberation struggle just as was the case throughout the liberation war guerrillas, armed groups and underground communist organizations in Saigon and in other enemy-held cities and areas displayed great courage, self-sacrifice and total devotion to the cause of the revolution. Hundreds of audacious sabotage operations were carried out in the very lair of the enemy during the long years of the rule of Saigon generals and US troops of occupation. The biggest hotels in Saigon, the Caravelle, the Victoria and the Metropol where the Americans stayed were the target of bombing incidents. Sabotage attacks were launched against the police headquarters and the US embassy. Saigon's largest Tan Son Nhut airfield and the Presidential Palace were repeatedly hit by rockets launched from mobile ramps. In April 1975 together with the People's Liberation Armed Forces' special units, the guerrillas and the underground groups in Saigon were making preparations for the final assault on the enemy.

...In the morning of April 8, 1975 an officer in the puppet air force piloting a F-5E bombed the Presidential Palace in Saigon and later landed at the Phuoc Long airfield inside liberated territory. The world public saw this bold feat as indicating the imminent and inevitable end of the Saigon dictator and his entourage. The pilot

was Lieutenant Nguyen Thanh Trung, a member of the Vietnam Workers' Party who had been an officer in the Saigon puppet air force for some years carrying out a special assignment from the Party and the Homeland. Several days after that bombing attack on the Presidential Palace he was in liberated Danang where he trained his fellow pilots from the People's Army in flying captured US combat aircraft.

In a desperate attempt to avoid the final and total rout the Saigon command helped by their American advisors set up a defense cordon on the approaches to Saigon mustering up all the remaining forces. The Ford Administration ordered massive arms airlift into Saigon via Thailand. But the puppet army or rather what was left of it was no longer a credible force. After a few weeks of heavy fighting around Saigon the patriotic forces wiped out and scattered the remnants of the Saigon army and gained control of almost the whole of the perimeter defense around the city. They were inexorably tightening the ring around the capital of the "Republic of Vietnam".

Stunned by what was happening the US Administration made a belated attempt to reshuffle the Saigon government to make it look more liberal. On April 21 the puppet president Nguyen Van Thieu, whose name became synonymous with cruelty and betrayal of the interests of the Vietnamese, resigned and fled the country. A series of feverish reshuffles within the Saigon administration followed and ridiculous last minute attempts were made to open negotiations with the PRG.

Meanwhile in neighboring Cambodia on April 17 the patriotic forces took Phnom Penh after completing the offensive against the US-backed Lon Nol government which began in January 1975. The victory of the patriotic forces in Cambodia added to the confusion in Washington.

On April 26, 1975 the PRG of South Vietnam issued a statement which said: "The Saigon administration, that tool of US neo-colonialism must be done away with. The present military machine and the apparatus for coercing and suppressing the people of South Vietnam must be liquidated. While this administration, this military machine and this machinery of coercion and suppression exist under whatever name the people of South Viet-

nam will continue to suffer poverty and humiliation.... The Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam calls upon all sections of the population in the Saigon-Cho Lon area, in Diadinh and other areas still controlled by the Saigon administration to become masters of their own destiny, to rise up in order together with the powerful People's Liberation Armed Forces to crush this military machine and this machinery of coercion and suppression set up by the Saigon puppet administration and thus exercise their sacred right to self-determination." ¹

Faced with the prospect of an inevitable collapse of the puppet government the USA had to evacuate in a hurry the remaining US civilian and military personnel—several scores of thousands headed by US Ambassador Martin. With few exceptions all high-ranking officials and generals of the Saigon regime fled together with them. That was the inglorious end to the Washington's Vietnam adventure which had lasted many years and which suffered a total fiasco marking the final collapse of the US interference in the affairs of Vietnam.

On April 29, 1975 the attacking Liberation forces struck out into Saigon from several directions. The remainder of the enemy troops still offering resistance were quickly surrounded and wiped out. The attacking forces captured the High Command headquarters of the puppet army, and Tan Son Nhut Airbase. The Saigon government announced its full and unconditional surrender.

At 11:30 a.m. on April 30, 1975 soldiers of the Liberation army burst into Saigon riding Soviet-made tanks and before long hoisted the flag of the PRG of South Vietnam over the Presidential Palace in the heart of the city. That was the victorious finale to Operation Ho Chi Minh.

In the days that followed the Liberation forces supported by the population crushed the remaining puppet army units all over South Vietnam including off-shore islands. All weapons, ammunition, military supplies, stores, airfields, seaports, warehouses, and all other property formerly belonging to the puppet administration passed into the hands of the revolutionary authorities. The

¹ *Nhan Dan*, April 27, 1975.

fifty-five-day general offensive backed up by the general uprising of the masses in the spring of 1975 swept away the thoroughly rotten anti-popular regime in Saigon which was a tool of US neo-colonialist policy. With the liberation of South Vietnam the long awaited peace and genuine independence came to Vietnam.

...May 1975 was a time of rejoicing and general jubilation throughout Vietnam, free and peaceful at last. The people up and down the country from Cape Ca Mau in the South to the Northern border with China celebrated the great victory. On May 15, a celebratory rally was held at Hanoi's Hang Dai stadium followed by a sports parade and a carnival procession. Le Duan addressed the rally to congratulate his compatriots on the complete liberation of the South. He emphasized: "We are proud to have fulfilled the sacred behest of President Ho Chi Minh." Le Duan pointed out that the Vietnamese nation had enough determination and energy, sufficient power and talent to turn Vietnam from a poor backward country into a civilized powerful and prosperous land.

The celebrations in Saigon renamed Ho Chi Minh City involved over a million people. Addressing a mammoth rally in the city Nguyen Huu Tho, Chairman of the Presidium of the CC of the NLF and Chairman of the Consultative Council of the PRG of South Vietnam, stressed the great significance for the Vietnamese nation of the complete liberation of the South and called upon the population of South Vietnam to strengthen their cohesion, to achieve national reconciliation and concord and to be active in the building of the new life that arrived.

Together with the Vietnamese people millions upon millions of their friends throughout the world celebrated their glorious victory. In the USSR the liberation of South Vietnam was marked on a large scale.

For over twenty years the US imperialists using the puppet regime they had installed tried to establish themselves in South Vietnam and throughout Indochina to turn it into a bridgehead for fighting socialism and national liberation movements in Asia. To achieve this goal the US imperialists have tried out all manner of strategic concepts and tactics ranging from the notorious "special war" to "Vietnamization." The US imperialists did not stop at making free use of their formidable mili-

tary machine to suppress the liberation movement in Vietnam. Indeed, at the height of the US military involvement in Vietnam the US committed 68 per cent of its infantry, 60 per cent of its Marine Corps, 32 per cent of its tactical air force and as much as 50 per cent of its strategic bomber force.

During the war the US dropped a total of 7,850,000 tons of bomb load on Vietnam and spent an astronomical 352 billion dollars on the war. The US took advantage of the latest discoveries in science and engineering to commit a long catalogue of atrocities against the Vietnamese patriots.

Le Duan, addressing the Fourth Congress of the Vietnam Communist Party in December 1976, said: "Today as we look back upon the past war, reflecting on its nature and scale, the forces and resources the enemy hurled against us, on the schemes which our enemy of yesterday hatched and now admitted, as we recall the extremely complex and risky waters through which the ship of our revolution had to navigate we can see clearly the full meaning and greatness of our people's struggle against the USA, to save the homeland."¹

In the spring of 1975 despite all its attempts to enslave South Vietnam with the help of the Saigon puppet regime and to perpetuate the division of Vietnam the scheme of the US imperialists finally collapsed. The departure of the US expeditionary force which left some 57,000 of its dead on the battle-fields of Vietnam, was followed by the total rout of the Saigon puppet army which had been fostered, equipped and trained by the US. Washington lost its last stake in bid to retain a foothold in Vietnam by playing some Vietnamese off against the rest. The USA had to get out of Vietnam for good. The attempts of US imperialism to retain its positions in Cambodia and Laos failed dismally. In Laos in the spring of 1975 the patriotic forces led by the People's Revolutionary Party ousted the remaining counterrevolutionary elements from the coalition government which was formed after the conclusion of the 1973 Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Laos.

¹ *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hanoi, December 14-20, 1976, p. 16.*

Speaking of the great victory of the people of Vietnam at Kremlin luncheon for a visiting Vietnamese Party and government delegation on October 28, 1975 Leonid Brezhnev said: "After many long years of tough struggle against foreign invaders and their henchmen the Vietnamese people scored a truly historic victory. Vietnam's exploit is a major contribution to the common cause of the anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples for liberation... . The lessons of Vietnam's epic fight carry a profound message. They attest to the all-conquering power of Marxist-Leninist ideas, to the tremendous importance of the consistently internationalist policy of the ruling Communist party, to the invincibility of a people fighting for a just cause.

At the same time Vietnam's epic struggle is living evidence of the effectiveness of solidarity actions by fraternal socialist states. In this sense it has provided an important and impressive proof that it is possible in today's world to check the imperialist policy of aggression and arbitrary rule." ¹

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course. Speeches and Articles*, Vol. 5, Moscow, 1976, pp. 383, 384 (in Russian).

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Our homeland is now completely independent and united and embarked on the road to socialism. The compatriots of the South and the North have come together to live as one family.

Le Duan

Vietnam — a United State

Within days of the liberation of Saigon the entire Vietnamese people set about completing the popular-democratic revolution in the South while at the same time carrying on with socialist construction in the North.

The long years of domination by the Saigon puppets and US imperialists in parts of South Vietnam had played havoc with its socio-economic structure and cultural life. The deformed, lop-sided development of South Vietnam's economy which was geared to catering for the needs of the US troops of occupation, the puppet army and the comprador-militarist upper crust of the regime, its heavy dependence on the import of finished and semi-finished goods and raw materials, rampant inflation and mass unemployment, overcrowding in the towns and the virtual depopulation and neglect of rural areas whose inhabitants for decades were forcibly moved from one area to another as the "pacification" programme dictated, thousands of declassed elements, those wretches who had been spiritually impoverished and corrupted in the years of the domination of the rotten Saigon elite, the harmful influence on Vietnamese of the cultural values of an alien "Western way of life" and anti-

communist propaganda—that was the onerous legacy the collapsed Saigon regime “bequeathed” to the people of South Vietnam.

The elimination of this legacy to establish a genuinely democratic system, to develop an independent national economy, to revive spiritual and cultural life in the South were the top priority tasks on which the Vietnam Workers' Party focused the attention and efforts of all Communists, of all the patriots of South Vietnam and of millions of working people in both parts of the country. Leaning on the all-round help of the socialist North and under the direct guidance of Party organizations the provisional organs of people's power which were formed within days of the liberation of South Vietnam set to work to transform life in areas formerly controlled by the puppet regime. Most of the population of Saigon, renamed Ho Chi Minh City shortly afterwards, and the people of other South Vietnamese towns and villages joined in the effort. Speaking at a session of the DRV National Assembly on June 5, 1975 Prime Minister Pham Van Dong said: “Whereas only yesterday the areas controlled by the enemy were a scene of disarray and something rotten and uncouth today these areas present scenes of joy and enthusiasm. The masses are much excited by what the revolution has brought them.... The working people, all patriotic sections of the population are eager to contribute their share to the common effort to stabilize the situation quickly and to return to normal life.”¹

Important measures to ensure public order and security were taken in Ho Chi Minh City, in other towns and cities, all recently liberated areas. In line with the humane and at the same time firm policy of the new authorities in dealing with those who in the past had fought against the people, registration of such persons was introduced and the former employees of the puppet administration and personnel of the puppet army following re-education were involved in work for the common good. Effective measures were taken to prevent counter-revolutionary activity, to eliminate the remaining pockets of armed resistance and underground organizations,

¹ *Nhan Dan*, June 6, 1975.

as well as to combat hooliganism, banditry and other violations of public order and tranquillity.

The establishment and consistent enforcement of revolutionary order and legality made it possible to carry out effective measures to resume economic activity. Within weeks of Saigon's liberation despite resistance and in some cases open sabotage on the part of the exploiting classes, above all the comprador bourgeoisie, the revolutionary administration succeeded in stabilizing prices of essential goods, in providing enough food for the population and in getting many industrial and trading establishments and transport and communication services back to normal.

Profound changes began to be carried out in the spiritual and cultural sphere, notably, in the field of ideology and culture. The propaganda and the mass misinformation media of the puppet regime were all abolished. The press of the Liberation forces and radio and TV centers taken over by the people, artistic groups and exhibitions organized by the new revolutionary authorities joined forces to conduct a daily re-education campaign for the benefit of the population in a spirit of national, democratic and progressive ideals and to stamp out the influence of reactionary, imperialist propaganda. The successes scored by the Vietnamese people in the first few months after the liberation of the South in consolidating and expanding the revolutionary gains, in restarting production and stabilizing the standard of living prepared the ground for the final reunification of the North and the South.

The 24th plenary session of the CC of the VWP, held in autumn 1975, summed up the work carried out in the South since its complete liberation. After analyzing the various tasks facing the Party and the people and after weighing the difficulties and problems in the way of socialist construction amid significant differences in the socio-economic structures of the North and the South, the Central Committee made a fundamental conclusion about the top priority importance of uniting the two parts of the country into a single state. The Political Consultative Conference of Representatives of the DRV and the Republic of South Vietnam, held in Ho Chi Minh City in November 1975, in an atmosphere of full

unanimity drew up and endorsed a specific programme of measures to reunite both parts of Vietnam into a single state.

In accordance with the decisions passed by the Conference general elections were held throughout Vietnam on April 25, 1976. In the course of voting for candidates for National Assembly deputies the people endorsed the VWP policy aimed at uniting the North and the South into a single socialist state.

The very fact that general elections were held the following year after the liberation of South Vietnam was a convincing demonstration of the consolidation of the people's government in all areas of South Vietnam including those which had been controlled by the puppet regime for a long time. An estimated 98.7 per cent of all citizens eligible to vote cast their ballots for 492 deputies to the country's National Assembly representing the 50 million people of Vietnam. People's government gave the vote to the former servicemen of the puppet army and officials of the former Saigon regime who had gone through a period of political re-education at the end of which they had their civil rights fully restored. By election time 95 per cent of all those who had undergone political re-education had been given the right to vote.

On July 2, 1976 the National Assembly proclaimed the formation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. This completed the long and hard journey travelled by the people of Vietnam to the reunification of the homeland. Speaking at the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam Le Duan emphasized: "The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is the product of a long and hard revolutionary struggle, of almost half a century of determined, tough and victorious fight by our people. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a Vietnam with a glorious history, a strong foundation, an impressive potential and a bright future to look forward to. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is an impregnable outpost of the world socialist system, a major factor for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress in South-East Asia and throughout the world." ¹

¹ *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Hanoi, December 14-20, p. 32.*

The Fourth Party Congress and a New Stage in the Vietnamese Revolution

The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam which was held in Hanoi in December 14-20, 1976 summed up the political results of an important stage in the Vietnamese people's revolutionary struggle over the past few decades.

Speaking of the outstanding importance of the Fourth Congress in the nation's history, Le Duan stated: "The Fourth Party Congress is a congress of truly historic significance.

"This is a congress marking the total victory of the cause of national liberation.

"This is a congress marking the reunification of the homeland.

"This is a congress symbolizing the country's advance to socialism."¹

The Congress brought together 1,008 delegates representing over 1,550,000 Vietnamese Communists.

The Central Committee's political report to the Congress pointed out that "having won a complete and final victory in the war of resistance to US aggression, for the salvation of the homeland, *the Vietnamese revolution has entered upon a new stage, when an independent and united Vietnam is tackling the following single strategic task: carry out a socialist revolution quickly and energetically and advance to socialism with a firm step.*"²

The Congress stressed the great complexity and challenge of this goal. Indeed, socialist construction in North Vietnam had a short seven years of peace (from 1958 to the end of 1964) in which to be at all possible. The North's economy was still in the initial stage of transition to large-scale production, while the South, recently liberated from a neo-colonialist regime, was still dominated by small-scale production. The exploiting classes and the social consequences of the neo-colonialist era were yet to be eliminated to the full in the South. Reactionaries remained opposed to the people's government,

¹ *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hanoi, December 14-20, 1976, p. 10.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

the market was still subject to anarchy and instability, etc. In his address to the Congress Le Duan pointed out: *"It is evident that our country is still in the middle of the transition from a society with an economy still dominated by petty-commodity production to socialism bypassing the capitalist stage of development. This is the most salient single feature of the Vietnam situation today which reveals the essence of the socialist revolution in our country and determines the substance of this process."*¹

Taking a thoroughly realistic view of the difficulties obstructing the country's advance to socialism the Communist Party of Vietnam believed that substantial favorable conditions were available for overcoming them. These included, above all, the able leadership of the Marxist-Leninist party which commanded the full confidence of the people, the country's impressive natural and manpower resources, the socialist North with its wealth of experience in socialist construction and a considerable material and spiritual potential.

The socialist revolution in Vietnam, the Fourth Congress pointed out, was developing in a situation marked by the steadily growing might of the world socialist system at a time when the struggle of the peoples for national and social emancipation was assuming ever greater scope and when the working class of capitalist countries was stepping up the struggle for its rights.

Proceeding from a realistic assessment of the domestic and international situation the Fourth Congress mapped out the general course of the Vietnamese socialist revolution at the new stage: *"To stand firm on the positions of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to develop the right of the working people to be a collective master of the country and carry out three simultaneous revolutions—one in the sphere of production relations, another in the field of science and technology, and a third one in the field of ideology and culture, with the scientific and technological revolution getting top priority; to accelerate socialist industrialization as the central task of the entire transitional period on the road to socialism; to introduce socialist collective economic management; to develop large-scale socialist produc-*

¹ *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hanoi, December 14-20, 1976, p. 34.*

*tion and a new culture; to mould a new, socialist man; to do away with exploitation of man by man, to overcome poverty and backwardness; to keep vigilance at progressively higher level and tighten up the country's defenses, to maintain political security and public order; to build a peaceful, independent and united socialist homeland; to contribute actively to the struggle of the peoples of the world for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism."*¹

Vietnam's transition from small-scale production to large-scale socialist production was planned by the Congress to be completed over a period of 20 years. A major role in this effort was to be played by the second five-year plan (1976-1980). In his report to the Congress on the "Basic Guidelines and Objectives of the Second Five-Year National Economic Development Plan" Prime Minister Pham Van Dong defined the plan's basic tasks.

The Party set the goal of concentrating the country's efforts during the five-year period on boosting agricultural production, on developing forestry and fisheries in every way, on advancing the light and food industries to meet the country's food requirements and, in large part, its needs in essential consumer goods in order to improve the people's material and cultural standards and build up adequate financial resources for investment in socialist industrialization. It was also planned to expand existing capacities and build new plants and complexes for heavy industry, for its engineering sector in particular.

The Congress also planned to redeploy the country's manpower in order to initiate economic development in the outlying and mountainous regions. The Party called upon all Communists, all working people to make good use of available manpower, to turn the country into one great construction site, to launch a mass movement to increase labor productivity and to give of their best in advancing the great cause of socialism whose paramount goal is the happiness of man and his well-being.

In setting ambitious tasks for the country's socialist transformation the Party was careful to provide ade-

¹ *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hanoi, December 14-20, 1976, p. 49.*

quate linkage between them and the consistent introduction of socialist democracy, and guide day-to-day work on moulding a new man, an active participant in the building of a new life, and master of his homeland.

A major factor in Vietnam's steady advance along the socialist path is the leadership and guidance provided by its Marxist-Leninist party, the acknowledged and authoritative leader of the Vietnamese. Le Duan declared at the Congress: "Our Party has no other aim but to serve the interests of the working class, the interests of all working people, and all our nation. The Party is ever mindful of and translates into effect the behest of Uncle Ho to keep the party pure, to be a worthy leader and the most devoted and loyal servant of the people."¹

To make the Party's name better expressive of its aims and essence and to stimulate a higher sense of responsibility among its membership the Central Committee proposed to rename the Vietnam Workers' Party to the Communist Party of Vietnam. The Congress delegates and the people of Vietnam welcomed the proposal. The Congress also approved a new set of rules of the Party and the reintroduction of the post of General Secretary. Le Duan was elected to the Party's top post unanimously.

The Fourth Congress appealed to all Vietnamese Communists and working people to redouble their efforts to fulfil the socialist construction plan. The Party saw total mobilization of the country's manpower and material resources, and an increase in productivity and efficient use of all available production facilities as the main area of concentration in efforts to advance socialist construction more effectively.

While working to concentrate the nation's entire spiritual and physical powers on carrying out internal transformations to build socialism, the Communist Party and the government of Vietnam would continue to conduct an active foreign policy. The Congress clearly defined socialist Vietnam's foreign policy goals. Vietnam would take advantage of a favorable international situation to heal the wounds of war as soon as possible, to accelerate economic development, advance culture, science and en-

¹ *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hanoi, December 14-20, 1976, p. 398.*

gineering, to strengthen its national defense, to build the material and technical basis of socialism and together with the fraternal socialist countries and the peoples of the world would work for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism against the forces of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism.

As a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat and a full-fledged member of the family of socialist nations Vietnam gives priority importance to the strengthening of solidarity and cooperation in every area with the fraternal socialist countries in the field of foreign policy. The existence of a powerful community of socialist nations whose positions in world affairs are becoming stronger is the chief factor of the international situation favorable to the building of the new society in Vietnam.

An important stage in the development of this cooperation was reached when a Vietnamese government and Party delegation headed by Le Duan paid official visits to the USSR and other socialist countries in the autumn of 1975. During the visits talks were held between the Vietnamese leaders and their counterparts in the respective socialist countries at the end of which a number of important documents were signed. The Soviet-Vietnamese declaration was signed on October 30, 1975.

The fraternal cooperation between the CPSU and the Communist Party of Vietnam and between the USSR and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam received a potent impetus in November 1977 when a top-level Vietnamese Party and government delegation arrived in Moscow to attend celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. On November 4, 1977 Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CC CPSU and Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, had a friendly meeting with Le Duan.

Fresh evidence of the further strengthening of unity between the Soviet and Vietnamese peoples was the official friendly visit to the USSR in November 1978 by a Vietnamese Party and government delegation headed by Le Duan, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, and Pham Van Dong, a member of the Politbureau of the Vietnam Communist Party and the Republic's Prime Minister. During the visit the two sides exchanged information on the progress of work to put into

effect the decisions adopted by the 25th Congress of the CPSU and the Fourth Congress of the CPV and discussed important matters relating to the further development of traditional relations between the two parties and countries. They also discussed major international problems. The talks demonstrated a complete identity of views on all the questions discussed.

The signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation Between the USSR and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on November 3, 1978 was an event of historic importance. The Treaty marked a new stage in Soviet-Vietnamese relations and was to promote the constructive efforts of the peoples of both countries, socialist and communist construction in the USSR and Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The Treaty opened up new broad prospects for cementing the indestructible friendship and promoting all-round cooperation between the CPSU and the CPV, between the USSR and Vietnam.

The two countries once again reiterated their dedication to the basic principles of their foreign policies aimed at strengthening peace in Asia and throughout the world, at establishing just and equitable relations between nations. The signing of the Treaty was followed by the conclusion of new agreements on economic and scientific and technical cooperation.

Vietnam's cooperation with the fraternal socialist countries in the economic, scientific and technological fields finds expression in the continuing assistance by the USSR and other socialist countries to Vietnam in tackling large-scale tasks of national economic development. The USSR which by January 1, 1977 had helped Vietnam to complete over 170 major economic projects, is making credits and loans available to Vietnam apart from providing technical assistance in the construction of a wide range of industrial projects. These include the hydroelectric power station under construction on the river Da, the largest in South-East Asia, which when completed will be generating some 7.5 billion kwh annually, the Hetam coal mine with a capacity of 2.4 million tons a year, and the 640 mw thermal station at Phalai. The completion of these and other projects will be a substantial contribution to the implementation of Vietnam's socialist construction programme. The USSR is assisting Vietnam

in prospecting for minerals, including oil and gas. The USSR is stepping up its technical assistance to Vietnam to help it increase the output of basic agricultural products, including vegetables, fruits, cytrus and industrial crops. The USSR is supplying Vietnam on a credit basis with large quantities of industrial equipment and raw materials for heavy and light industries in addition to supplying food and other goods.

Economic, scientific and technical cooperation between Vietnam and socialist countries is also expanding. Thus, Bulgaria is helping Vietnam to develop and exploit copper deposits and to build two hydroelectric power stations on the river Dum which will have Bulgarian-made turbines. Hungary is helping Vietnam to launch the production of some new industrial products, including communications equipment and refrigerators. Hungary is also helping in geological prospecting for minerals. The GDR, Czechoslovakia and other socialist countries are giving a good deal of assistance to Vietnam in a variety of fields.

Cooperation is expanding between Vietnam and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The CMEA member-countries were instrumental in rebuilding and reopening for traffic in December 1976 the Unity railway line linking Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. In 1978 Vietnam formally joined the CMEA.

For its part the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is increasingly contributing to the division of labor between the socialist countries, to add to the socialist community's economic might. To this end Vietnam is stepping up its exports to the USSR and other fraternal socialist countries.

Cooperation between Socialist Vietnam and fraternal socialist countries on the international scene is developing apace as part of their collective efforts to achieve their common goal—a lasting world peace, the right of peoples to independent national development, the triumph of democracy and socialism.

Since the restoration of peace in Vietnam and its reunification the country has repeatedly provided convincing proof of its desire to contribute actively to the strengthening of peace and security in the world generally, and in South-East Asia, in particular. Vietnam has

been expanding close fraternal relations with the People's Democratic Republic of Laos and the People's Republic of Kampuchea. The government of Vietnam has taken a series of important diplomatic initiatives to establish friendship and cooperation with all countries of South-East Asia.

Together with the fraternal socialist countries and the progressive forces the world over Vietnam identifies itself with the struggling peoples of Chile, South Africa and Palestine.

As an active member of the non-alignment movement the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is contributing to strengthening the movement's anti-imperialist solidarity, to cooperation between non-aligned and socialist countries and other progressive forces and to stepping up the struggle against the diktat of multinational monopolies. Together with the delegations of Cuba and other countries the Vietnamese delegation at the Fifth Conference of Heads of State and Government of Non-Aligned Countries held in Colombo in August 1976 insisted on the adoption of decisions which would really contribute to stepping up the struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and all forms of racial oppression and in so doing made its contribution to the success of the conference. The election of Vietnam as a member of the coordinating bureau of the non-aligned movement was acknowledgement of the Republic's prestige and recognition of its role in the movement.

Acting from the positions of proletarian internationalism, in solidarity with the champions of the interests of working people, democracy and social progress throughout the world the Communists and people of Vietnam are supporting the just struggle of the working class and other sections of society in capitalist countries and are strengthening their relations with their Communist parties and progressive organizations. At the same time as the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam reiterated once again, Vietnam seeks to develop economic, cultural, scientific, technical and other relations with all countries, including capitalist ones, on the basis of respect for independence and sovereignty, on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.

The consistent implementation of these principles by

Vietnam in its foreign policy activities and the steady increase in its prestige on the international scene have prompted the majority of the world's countries to establish normal inter-state relations and business cooperation with Socialist Vietnam.

The establishment of economic cooperation and normal inter-state relations between Vietnam and capitalist countries is one of the major political consequences of the elimination of the hotbed of war in South-East Asia, and a reflection of the trend towards a more favorable climate in international affairs as a result of detente, it is also a factor contributing to making this process more universal and irreversible.

The people of Vietnam are now firmly embarked on the path of peaceful construction. They are guided on this path by the decisions of the Fourth Congress of the CPV which, as Leonid Brezhnev emphasized in his telegram to Le Duan, "points to the right road leading to the realization of Marxist-Leninist ideas and the behests of Ho Chi Minh on the soil of Vietnam..."¹

* * *

The successes scored by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in peaceful construction, the Republic's growing prestige and standing in the world are hailed by all upright people and progressives everywhere. Only the most reactionary circles of imperialist countries, those implacable enemies of peace, of international detente and progress are keeping up their hostility to Vietnam, slandering its good name and scheming against it. The Peking leaders are now very much to the fore in this anti-Vietnam campaign.

For years China's policy towards the people of Vietnam and their valiant struggle for independence had been geared to the selfish great-Han designs of the Maoist leadership. Hell-bent on establishing China's hegemony in Indochina and throughout South-East Asia the Peking leaders feared a strong Vietnam and did not particularly relish the prospect of the Vietnamese people's victory

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course. Speeches and Articles*, Vol. 6, Moscow, 1978, p. 251.

over the imperialist aggressors and their Saigon puppets. After the signing of the 1973 Paris Agreement on Vietnam the Peking leadership made little or no effort to conceal that they would much prefer the perpetuation of the reactionary puppet regime in South Vietnam.

The Vietnamese people's historic victory in 1975 which culminated in the reunification of Vietnam opened up before it the prospect of becoming a prosperous socialist state. This dealt a blow at the long-range plans of the Chinese leadership. Vietnam's independent, firm, and high-principled foreign policy, its expanding cooperation with the socialist community, with developing and other countries, torpedoed Peking's designs of turning Vietnam into its satellite. The reunited Socialist Vietnam became one of the chief obstacles in the way of the Chinese leaders' great-power policy.

That is why right after the proclamation of the SRV in 1975 the Chinese leadership embarked on a policy of open hostility vis-à-vis Vietnam. All the negative elements that marked the Maoists' actions towards Vietnam in the years of its heroic struggle for freedom, independence, reunification and socialism came out into the open after the restoration of peace in Indochina. As the SRV government's note to the Chinese government on June 17, 1978 put it: "Soon after the people of Vietnam had won a total victory China embarked on a policy contrary to the traditions of friendship and solidarity between the peoples of our two countries."¹

The Chinese leadership stirred up and encouraged hostility towards Vietnam on the part of the anti-popular clique of Pol Poth and Jeng Sary, the now deposed brutal rulers of Kampuchea. As early as 1975 the clique, which was dealing with unspeakable cruelty with their own people began to make raids across the Vietnamese border. As the result of numerous Kampuchean incursions and forays into Vietnam thousands of Vietnamese nationals were killed or wounded, numerous hamlets and villages were destroyed and considerable damage inflicted on the Vietnamese economy. At the end of 1977 the Kampuchean authorities launched full-scale military operations against Vietnam. Needless to say, without

¹ *Pravda*, June 18, 1978.

Peking's encouragement and backing the Phnom Penh regime would never had dared embark on such a gamble. The Peking leadership not only organized massive supplies of weapons and equipment to Kampuchea but sent thousands of Chinese military advisers to Phnom Penh and launched a campaign of slander against Vietnam in a bid to prevent a peaceful settlement of the border conflict to antagonize the people of Kampuchea and, with luck, the people of other countries of South-East Asia against Vietnam.

In the spring of 1978 Peking took its campaign of arrogant pressurizing of Vietnam a stage further by unceremoniously interfering in Vietnam's domestic affairs under the pretext of the alleged "plight" of Chinese nationals resident in Vietnam (the so-called *huachiao*). Seizing upon the quite legitimate nationalization by the SRV government of large-scale private trade in South Vietnam which was concentrated largely in the hands of the Chinese bourgeoisie, Peking leaders launched a campaign of crude slander and abuse against the Communist Party of Vietnam and its government. At the same time Peking agents slipped across the border to stir up unrest and disaffection among the Chinese nationals in Vietnam, to force by a combination of fraud and threats many of them to abandon their jobs in industry, agricultural cooperatives and government institutions, where they enjoyed full rights on a par with all other citizens of Vietnam, and go to China.

The Chinese leaders also tried to undermine Vietnam's economy. As early as the end of 1975 China cut off free aid to Vietnam at a time when that country was passing through the difficult period of post-war rehabilitation. In 1977 China stopped all credits to Vietnam. Chinese technicians who had been assisting with the construction of a variety of industrial projects in Vietnam began to create difficulties and deliberately delayed their commissioning. In May 1978 the Chinese government ordered all shipments of industrial plant equipment to Vietnam stopped and later recalled all Chinese experts and technicians having unilaterally abrogated the relevant economic agreements signed between the two countries.

At the same time the Chinese leaders began to whip up tension on the common border between the two

countries by launching all manner of provocations, and sending agents across the border to carry out sabotage and stir up hostility among the Chinese nationals towards the SRV government. The Peking news media and official government spokesmen launched a vociferous anti-Vietnam campaign which reached a particularly virulent and strident pitch after the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation Between the USSR and the SRV which contributed to the further strengthening of Vietnam's positions in the world. Slanderously accusing Vietnam of "mini-hegemonism" and of harboring hostile intentions vis-à-vis neighboring countries the Peking leadership hoped to divert public attention in South-East Asia and other countries away from its own great-Han designs, to hide behind the smokescreen of anti-Vietnam and anti-Soviet lies the real threat to the sovereign states of South-East Asia emanating from Peking's lust for hegemony.

By launching a campaign of open hostility against Vietnam the Peking leaders hoped to disrupt the progress of peaceful construction in that country, to weaken Vietnam and isolate it on the international scene. Peking's actions against a country whose very name had come to symbolize courage and heroism in the struggle for independence and freedom, against a country which had suffered innumerable victims and untold suffering in this struggle, triggered off a storm of protest among the progressive forces of the world. As before, in this difficult hour for **it** Vietnam was not alone. Its closest friends, above all the USSR and other socialist countries, stood beside it.

Resolutely rebuffing all attempts by Peking and other external forces hostile to it to interfere in its domestic affairs and even put pressure on it, Vietnam, relying on the inexhaustible strength of its people, backed by the fraternal aid and support of the socialist community countries, of all the friends and champions of its just cause, carried on with calm confidence with its programme of peaceful construction which was outlined by the Fourth Congress of its Communist Party. As the note of the SRV government to the government of China put it: "Carrying aloft the banner of national independence and socialism, unswervingly following the policy of independence, sovereignty and international solidarity, developing-

the spirit of self-reliance and drawing on the assistance of their friends in the rest of the world, the people of Vietnam will, without doubt, be able to defend and successfully build a peaceful, independent, united and socialist Vietnam. In so doing they will make their worthy contribution to the struggle of the peoples of the world for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress." ¹

In January 1979 the Peking hegemonists suffered another setback in their attempts to penetrate Indochina. The revolutionary, patriotic forces of Kampuchea rallied round the United Front of National Salvation which was set up in December 1977 toppled the pro-Peking regime of Pol Poth and Jeng Sary and proclaimed the formation of the People's Republic of Kampuchea. The overthrow of the anti-popular regime which ruled Kampuchea with a rod of iron between 1975 and January 1979 deprived China of a major weapon in its effort to weaken Vietnam, of a convenient jumping-off ground for placing the whole of South-East Asia under Peking's control. Faced with this situation the Chinese leadership decided to resort to the force of arms thereby unmasking completely their hegemonistic designs.

On February 17, 1979 Chinese troops, supported by armor and artillery, swarmed across the entire length of the Vietnam border leaving death and wholesale destruction in their path.

In planning their bandit attack on Vietnam the Peking militarists took care to secure the tacit approval and support of the ruling circles of some of the Western powers, above all those of the USA. Significantly, the Chinese attack on Vietnam followed Teng Hsiaoping's visit to the USA during which he issued open threats against Vietnam. His Washington hosts on that occasion for all intents and purposes gave their tacit O.K. to Peking's aggressive plans having failed to condemn Teng's inflammatory pronouncements in any definitive way. Nor was the American reaction unexpected. Like the rest of Peking's policy, its anti-Vietnam course had always been geared to making common cause with the imperialists, and thus was calculated to win their sup-

¹ *Pravda*, June 18, 1978.

port and approval. From the talks between Chinese leaders and Nixon in 1972 when the USA and China tried jointly to impose on the patriots of Vietnam nothing short of surrender to the US aggressors to Teng Hsiaoping's official visit to the USA in January 1979 when a mutual understanding was apparently reached on China's military strike at Vietnam—such is the shameful record of collusion between the Chinese leadership and the leaders of the capitalist world in order to weaken and eliminate socialist Vietnam, the outpost of socialism in South-East Asia.

After launching their military gamble against a neighboring country the Peking leaders and Chinese propaganda sought to portray it as a "local" limited operation designed to "punish" Vietnam for alleged violations of the Chinese border. These lies were exposed by the SRV government in its statement of February 17, 1979 and by the Soviet government in a statement on the following day. The Soviet statement emphasized: "Peking's aggression against Socialist Vietnam is the direct result of the policy of blackmail and pressure the Chinese authorities have been following over the past two years vis-à-vis South-East Asia in general and towards Vietnam in particular."¹

The Peking leaders sought to justify their acts of banditry vis-à-vis a neighboring sovereign country by references to Vietnam's alleged intention to "subjugate" Laos and Kampuchea. But as the newspaper *Nhan Dan* noted on September 24, 1978, slanderously accusing Vietnam of "regional hegemonism", of intending to create an "Indochinese federation" the Peking leaders "are imputing to others the intentions they themselves harbor". While Vietnam unswervingly remained loyal to the spirit of internationalist solidarity and for the three decades of revolutionary struggle waged by the peoples of Indochina for independence and sovereignty of their respective countries, fought against the common enemy side by side with peoples of Laos and Kampuchea, China "remained on the sidelines confining itself to professions of 'solidarity and support,' and in fact kept up its behind-the-scenes activities to drive the wedge between

¹ *Pravda*, February 19, 1979.

the three peoples of Indochina". Explaining the question of the so-called "Indochinese federation" which the Peking leaders and circles in the West still hostile towards Vietnam are trying to distort and exploit for their selfish ends, the newspaper *Nhan Dan*, the organ of the CC of the CPV wrote that the slogan "to turn Indochina into a zone of independence and to work for an eventual Indochinese federation" was, indeed, put forward by the Communist Party of Indochina back in 1930 and was based on the free exercise of the right to national self-determination. This slogan had relevance in the situation that prevailed in the 1930s and the 1940s, and was in accord with the interests of the struggle the peoples of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were waging at that time. In view of the changed situation in Indochina and the world at large, the Communist Party of Indochina at its Second Congress in February 1951 at the initiative of the Vietnamese Communists supported by their Laotian and Cambodia comrades took the decision to disband itself. The Communist Party of Indochina having fully accomplished its historical mission the Indochinese federation slogan became a thing of the past along with the Party.

The background to the Chinese aggression against Vietnam helps one to see clearly its object and character and leaves no room for any attempts at falsifying or embellishing the Chinese aggressor's intentions. As an extension of Peking's attempts over many years to place Vietnam and other countries of Indochina and South-East Asia for that matter under its control, the Chinese attack on Vietnam, far from being a limited operation, had ambitious hegemonistic aims. It was designed to weaken Vietnam's economic and military potential, to disrupt stability inside Vietnam, to intimidate the Vietnamese, break their spirit, and force them to submit to Peking's diktat. The aggressors hoped by force of arms to penetrate Indochina and proceed to turn it and subsequently the whole of South-East Asia into a sphere of Chinese political control.

Well, these plans fizzled out. Peking's aggression against Vietnam ended in a failure. Having encountered the spirited resistance and courage of the Vietnamese army and nation, the strongly worded statements made by

the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in support of Vietnam, having incurred the angry protests of peace-loving people throughout the world the Chinese aggressors beat a retreat having accomplished none of the aims they had set out to achieve. The sharp and cruel thirty-day war unleashed by the Chinese leaders against Vietnam left deep scars on that country's long-tormented body before it was over. However, the lessons of the Maoists' bloody gamble have not been lost on anyone.

The Peking aggression against Vietnam exposed for the whole world to see the extremely dangerous face of the great-Han, hegemonistic policy followed by the Chinese leadership. As Leonid Brezhnev put it in his address at a meeting of the electorate of Moscow's Bauman constituency on March 3, 1979, "now everybody can see that this policy is a most serious threat to world peace. Today more clearly than ever before everyone can see just how dangerous it is to encourage this policy in any way."

China's attack on Vietnam has demonstrated the criminal light-mindedness with which the Chinese leaders are prepared to go to war to accomplish their hegemonistic ends, the arrogant disdain they display towards the rights of sovereign states ignoring the consequences their actions may have for the future of world peace. No country in the world can feel safe as long as the ruling clique of a 900-million-strong country continue to follow such an irresponsible and adventurous policy. This concerns, in the first instance, the countries of South-East Asia where over 20 million *huachiao* are resident and which are regarded by Peking as the "exclusive sphere of its special interest", as the province of Chinese political influence. As the Communist Party of Indonesia rightly observed in its statement on the Chinese aggression against Vietnam: "It is a serious lesson and warning to all peoples of Asia, notably to the peoples of South-East Asia, and a sinister reminder of the threat emanating from Peking to our security and sovereignty."¹

¹ *Pravda*, March 3, 1979.

Conclusion

The emergence in 1976 of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam completed a long historical period of struggle by the Vietnamese people, a struggle which reflected some of the basic characteristics and distinguishing features of our time.

The great victory which has taken the Vietnamese people to a new and important stage of their history would have been impossible if the struggle of the Vietnamese patriots had not been directed by the Communist Party of Vietnam founded and brought to maturity by the outstanding internationalist and ardent patriot Ho Chi Minh, a party relying on the invincible Marxist-Leninist teaching. No other political force would have been able to equip a people in struggle with such a clear sense of purpose, with such a clear understanding of the aims of their struggle, no other party but a Marxist-Leninist party would have been able to inspire the people of Vietnam to feats of mass heroism. The prestige and authority of the Communist Party of Vietnam have grown immeasurably as has the prestige of its Central Committee which has taken a flexible and creative approach to the organization of resistance to foreign aggressors on the military, political and diplomatic fronts while at the same time skilfully directing socialist construction. Having carried out a total mobilization of the people's material and spiritual forces, having concentrated their efforts in a single national front, cemented together by ideas of national liberation and socialism the Vietnamese Communists have been able to lead the working people of their country to victory.

No other social system but the socialist one could have given the struggle of the Vietnamese for liberation such a great scope, such a high level of organization, efficiency, persistence and sense of undeflectible purpose in working towards the achievement of a set goal. The victory in Vietnam, as Le Duan pointed out, "is a victory for the socialist system in the North, a totally new system in Vietnamese history which thanks to the development of the right of working people to be the collective master of the country, thanks to the superiority of

the new social relations brought into play such an immense and powerful force which has made it possible for the northern part of Vietnam simultaneously to build socialism, maintain reliable defenses and mobilize ever growing manpower and material resources for intensifying the struggle in the South against US aggression, for the salvation of the Homeland.”¹

The massive and comprehensive assistance given by the socialist community countries, by Communist and Workers' parties and all anti-imperialist forces to the heroic people of Vietnam throughout the three decades of their epic struggle was one of the decisive factors in the ultimate triumph of their just cause. Solidarity with the Vietnamese people in their firm stand against imperialist aggression in whatever form was the militant programme of action for all Communists and genuine internationalists throughout that period. The CPSU, the Soviet state and the entire Soviet people, always loyal to Lenin's behests have always stood next to the Vietnamese people in the years of war and in time of peace.

The effective solidarity displayed by the CPSU, the USSR, other fraternal parties and socialist countries has been greatly appreciated by the Vietnamese people. As Le Duan put it: "...The Soviet people have always stood side by side with the people of Vietnam as infinitely close friends who have endured together with the Vietnamese all sorrows and hardships and who have shared with the Vietnamese their joy... This attitude was clearly reflected in the decisions adopted by the 23rd and 24th Congresses of the CPSU on the Vietnam question. These decisions have been embodied in the noble actions by millions of Soviet people who have been driven by their dedication to proletarian internationalism, by the feelings of friendship and affection for their Vietnamese brothers in class. The tremendous, comprehensive and effective assistance the Soviet Union has given Vietnam has been the source of great inspiration for the Vietnamese and has promoted the mobilization of a massive international movement to step up assistance to Vietnam.”²

¹ *The Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Hanoi, December 14-20, 1976, p. 7.*

² *The Visit of the Party and Government Delegation of the DRV to the USSR. October 27-31, 1975, Moscow, 1975, p. 13 (in Russian).*

The victory scored by the Vietnamese people has been a major contribution to the common anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples for liberation. This historic victory has dealt yet another blow at the global strategy of imperialism which has attempted not only to strengthen the positions of neo-colonialism in Indochina but also to use it as a proving ground for trying out doctrines, methods and techniques for suppressing the struggle of peoples for national and social emancipation. Vietnam's victory has demonstrated that imperialism is no longer able to block the people's road to national independence and social progress. Leonid Brezhnev put it well in his address at a public ceremony in the Moscow Kremlin marking the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, when he said: "It is no longer a simple matter for them to decide on direct armed intervention in the affairs of countries that have freed themselves. The last major act of this kind—the US war against the people of Vietnam—ended in a defeat that was too crushing and ignominious to encourage a repetition of such gambles."¹

Vietnam's victory and the emergence of a single Vietnamese state firmly embarked on the road of socialist construction have added to the strength of world socialism. Today Vietnam symbolizes not only courage having emerged victorious from a protracted military confrontation with the mightiest imperialist power and having won a convincing victory relying on a support by a massive international solidarity movement. Vietnam today is the third most populous country in the socialist part of the world with impressive natural and manpower resources, with a solid foundation of socialist economy, with reliable defenses and developed external political relations. Today it is a country enjoying great prestige and authority on the international scene. Vietnam's influence on the course of events in the world in general and in Asia in particular is making itself felt more and more. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam in common with fraternal socialist countries is working

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, *The Great October Revolution and Mankind's Progress*, Moscow, 1977, p. 23.

for peace, social progress, for the freedom and independence of peoples.

The people of Vietnam won their victory in a situation marked by international detente which has been brought about largely thanks to the indefatigable efforts made by the USSR and other countries of the socialist community which are working with dedication to establish principles of peaceful coexistence, for a durable peace and for lessening and eventually removing the threat of a new world war.

The elimination of a major hotbed of menace to world peace which persisted in Indochina for years, the radical change in the situation in the area brought about by the victory of the Vietnamese people, and the patriotic forces of Laos and Kampuchea over imperialist aggressors and their henchmen in turn became an important factor promoting the amelioration of the political atmosphere and the laying down of the foundation of a durable peace in South-East Asia and throughout the continent of Asia.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam marks the start of a new chapter in the history of the Vietnamese nation. The record of experience gained by people of Vietnam during their long struggle for peace, freedom and independence under the leadership of a Marxist-Leninist party shoulder to shoulder with the peoples of fraternal socialist countries, marching in the same formation with all other champions of the cause of peace, progress and happiness of peoples indicates that the hard but glorious march executed by a free and united Vietnam down the road to socialism will culminate in as great a success as the glorious victory of the Vietnamese patriots over the imperialist aggressors—one of the landmark events of world history in the latter third of the 20th century—has been.

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The authors of this book trace the basic stages of the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people under the leadership of their Communist Party for freedom, independence, unity and socialism and against imperialists and their puppets. The book also tells us the story of the solidarity and support given the people of Vietnam by the USSR and other fraternal socialist countries. The authors analyze the key factors behind the historic victory scored by the people of Vietnam and the formation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.



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