

The 1954 Geneva Accords Revisited

I

IN 1941, while Indochina¹ was under Japanese domination, Vietnamese nationalist movements rapidly grew in strength. Non-Communist and Communist groups all played a part in developing underground opposition to the Japanese.

Gradually, however, the resistance movement came to be dominated by the Viet Minh,² a nominally nationalist coalition of different parties formed in southern China under the auspices of the Vietnamese Communists on May 19, 1941. From the first the Viet Minh was dominated and controlled by its Communist membership³

after 1945, succeeded in usurping the nationalist revolution against French colonialism in the furtherance of its own pursuit of power. By 1945 the Communist-led Viet Minh became the dominant and best organized native political force in Vietnam.⁴

Immediately following Japan's precipitate surrender in August, 1945, the Viet Minh proclaimed the independent "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" under the presidency of Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi and assumed power as the provisional government of all Vietnam. In 1946, when the returning French colonial power refused to recognize the Viet Minh as the legitimate government, Ho led the revolt that became the Franco-Viet Minh War.⁵

In the following years the Viet Minh skillfully fought a guerrilla war, a war of attrition, in which by ambushes and small-scale attacks they harassed the French

1. "Indochina" is the term the French applied to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

2. The term "Viet Minh" is a contraction of the phrase "Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi," which means "Revolutionary League for Vietnamese Independence." For the Viet Minh movement see George Modelski, "The Viet Minh Complex" in Cyril E. Black and Thomas P. Thornton, eds., *Communism and Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 185-214.

3. The Vietnamese Communist Party was established by Ho Chi Minh in 1930. For the historical origins and development of the Vietnamese Communist movement see I. Milton Sacks, "Marxism in Vietnam" in Frank N. Trager, ed., *Marxism in Southeast Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 102-170.

4. The Viet Minh received considerable assistance from the Nationalist Chinese authorities and the Allies during World War II and was able to develop a military and political machine.

5. This war started on December 19, 1946. On the Franco-Viet Minh War see Bernard B. Fall, *The Viet Minh Regime* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1956), pp. 1-196; George R. Tanham, *Communist Revolutionary Warfare: The Viet Minh in Indochina* (New York: Praeger, 1961), pp. 1-166; and Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 1-445.

Dr. An is associate professor of political science and director of the international studies program at Washington College (Chestertown, Md.).

Union forces.⁶ The Communist ascendancy to power on the Chinese mainland in 1949 led to an increasing flow of aid to the Viet Minh, especially after the cessation of hostilities in Korea in 1953.⁷ In 1953 and 1954 France suffered heavy casualties, culminating in the fall of her fortress of Dien Bien Phu on May 7, 1954.⁸ The defeat of Dien Bien Phu was a grievous blow to the French forces—but it was not an overall defeat.⁹

6. The French Union forces included many anti-Viet Minh and non-Communist Vietnamese nationalist forces.

7. Without Chinese Communist aid the Viet Minh might never have brought their long and bitter struggle to a successful conclusion. As it is today, the Soviet Union was an unfaithful ally of the Vietnamese Communists during the Franco-Viet Minh War. Soviet military and economic assistance reached the Viet Minh only at the end of the war and was smaller than what they received from Communist China.

8. For a detailed account of the 56-day battle of Dien Bien Phu see Bernard B. Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1967), pp. 1-466; and Jules Roy, *The Battle of Dienbienphu* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 1-344.

9. By the end of 1945 the Viet Minh had established a stronghold in the territory north of the 16th parallel. During the war, therefore, the northern part of Vietnam constituted the principal theatre of military operations between the French and the Viet Minh forces. In the South the French colonial authorities succeeded considerably in establishing themselves, although even there the French forces faced increasing Viet Minh attacks. Furthermore, the Viet Minh guerrilla movement in the South was virtually split into two mutually hostile camps because of a major and violent split in its leadership between Le Duan, now First Secretary of the Lao Dong (Communist) Party in Hanoi, and Le Duc Tho, the present head of the Lao Dong Party's Organizational Bureau. The two led the Viet Minh military operations in the South, but had a violent and bitter quarrel over tactics. In 1951 Le Duan was recalled to Tonkin (North Vietnam) and Le Duc Tho stayed behind to direct the Viet Minh guerrilla forces. Today Le Duan and Le Duc Tho are members of the Lao Dong Party's Politburo, but there is little doubt that the personal enmity between them still exists.

After the fall of Dien Bien Phu, an increasing sector of French opinion favored a negotiated peace in Indochina. To the French people, the war in Indochina had little meaning and little prospect of success. At the same time, international concern with the danger of wider hostilities in Indochina grew and pressure for a negotiated settlement mounted.¹⁰

The Geneva Accords of 1954 were designed to bring to an end nearly eight years of war in Indochina and to provide the basis for a political settlement in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

When French military operations reached a catastrophic stage in the spring of 1954, the question of United States and British military assistance to France was discussed in Paris, London, and Washington. The Eisenhower administration initially assumed a position calculated to convince the Communist bloc that full-fledged American intervention with a large ground force was possible but, in reality, the administration was reluctant, so soon after the Korean War, to become entangled again in an Asian conflict—this time in support of a colonial power. Great Britain was not inclined to engage in the fight, not wanting to jeopardize the chances of a "thaw" in the Cold War over what it considered France's lost cause in Indochina. The French government was badly divided on the issue.

IN 1954, in short, the Western powers in general were badly divided about Indochina. France lacked both means and will to carry on the war much longer, especially after the defeat of Dien Bien Phu. France's continuation of the war depended upon

10. At the time of the battle of Dien Bien Phu, the French government appealed for direct United States military intervention in the form of an air strike. In 1954 the United States considered intervening militarily to try to save the French garrison in Dien Bien Phu and reached the point of planning an air strike code-named "Operation Vulture." But Washington refused the French request later when Great Britain urged that a peaceful solution be sought at the Geneva conference of the great powers. See Bernard B. Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place*, pp. 293-326.

intervention by her allies, particularly the United States, but Washington in the spring of 1954 was unwilling to enter the war without at least British support, and London in turn was unwilling to take any action while the Geneva negotiations were pending.

If the war continued, therefore, the situation of France was almost hopeless. French domestic politics were highly unstable. The Laniel cabinet fell, and a new government was taken over by Pierre Mendès-France, who announced his intention of resigning if he should fail to conclude an honorable peace in Indochina by July 20, 1954.¹¹ It was possible that by continuing the war a large territory would fall to the Viet Minh and that Laos and Cambodia might be overrun. In other words, a complete victory of the Viet Minh forces in Indochina was believed possible, even probable. But in 1954 both the Soviet Union and Communist China put heavy pressure on Ho Chi Minh and his Viet Minh forces to negotiate with France at Geneva and, as will be seen later, to accept far less territory than they had occupied by force of arms.

Moscow and Peking apparently feared that the United States would enter the war directly. They were reluctant to face a direct military confrontation with Washington in Indochina, and wished to avoid this. Also, they apparently concluded that the Viet Minh could afford to agree to partition of Vietnam temporarily, confident that the decadent Bao Dai regime in the south¹² would collapse internally soon after the Geneva settlement. In that case, Ho Chi Minh and his Communist colleagues could unify their country bloodlessly by political means. Consequently, they bent their efforts to obtain a workable compro-



Ho Chi Minh

11. The Laniel cabinet was overthrown on June 12, 1954. On June 17, 1954, the Mendès-France government was formally invested by a large majority of the French National Assembly.

12. In March, 1949, France established a nationalist government under ex-Emperor Bao Dai which joined the French Union as an "Associated State." This was a French move to attempt a political counter to the Vietnamese Communist leadership of the independence movement.

mise between France and the Viet Minh at Geneva.¹³

The Soviet Union had its own particular reason to put heavy pressure on the Viet Minh to conclude a negotiated peace. At the time of the 1954 Geneva Conference, Soviet foreign policy was more preoccupied with Europe than with Asia. Moscow was well aware that Mendès-France was an uncompromising opponent of the proposed European military alliance (European Defense Community) which was much hated also by the Kremlin. If the Soviets wanted to sabotage ratification of the Paris Treaty on the European Defense Community by France, it was imperative for them to keep Mendès-France in power, at least until the European Defense Community was destroyed. To accomplish this, a quick and compromised truce in Indochina was required even at the expense of the Viet Minh. Moscow apparently inferred that France under Premier Mendès-France would be prepared to trade French adherence to the European Defense Community for Soviet assistance in securing an armistice in Indochina on acceptable terms. Anyway, the proposed European Defense Community was rejected by the French National Assembly on August 30, 1954.¹⁴

Communist China also had its own compelling reasons to favor a negotiated settlement in Indochina in 1954. The Korean War had been costly, and its strains on the Chinese economy were severe. Therefore, Peking was quite reluctant, right after the Korean War, to become embroiled again with the United States in another part of Asia. The Chinese Communist leaders launched their ambitious first Five-Year Plan in 1953, and this decision to push ahead with ambitious economic goals inevi-

tably forced the Peking regime to adopt a more cautious foreign policy. In 1954, by and large, a relaxation of international tensions with the slogan "peaceful co-existence" was an indispensable condition for Peking's economic progress.¹⁵

In fact, Communist China in 1953 began a partial retreat from its previous rigid and militant revolutionary line and emphasized generally the promotion of "peaceful co-existence" and "good neighbor policy" in dealing with most of the "nonaligned" as well as non-Communist underdeveloped countries in Asia, while still maintaining



sustained hostility toward the West. This was a first step in Peking's bid for leadership in Asia on a broader and less doctrinaire basis. Peking perhaps wanted to win new prestige as a world power through its friendly and reasonable behavior at Geneva.

13. According to Anthony Eden, British representative at the 1954 Geneva Conference, Molotov, his Soviet counterpart, "often came forward with some helpful suggestion or concession which enabled the work of the conference to move forward," and even Chou En-lai, the Chinese Communist delegate, persuaded the Viet Minh to drop their claims on Laos and Cambodia. See Anthony Eden, *Full Circle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961), pp. 136, 145.

14. See Raymond Aron and David Lerner, eds., *France Defeats EDC* (New York: Praeger, 1956).

15. The Asian and Pacific Peace Conference was held in Peking in October 1952 under the auspices of Communist China. The conference sent to the United Nations messages which called, among other things, for measures to "end the fighting in Vietnam, Malaya, and other countries and bring about just and reasonable settlement through negotiations." It also declared that "countries with differing social systems and ways of life can co-exist peacefully." See *People's China*, Peking, No. 20 (October 16, 1952), supplement; and *Daily News Release* (by Hsinhua News Agency in Peking), October 12, 1952, pp. 136-144.

By and large, it was the Soviet and Chinese Communist delegations that were most eager to reach a solution at the 1954 Geneva Conference that would be acceptable to the other side. As will be seen later, the Conference resulted in an armistice on terms which were unexpectedly favorable to France.

II

ON May 8, 1954, the Indochina phase of the Geneva Conference opened.¹⁶ Premier Mendès-France met his July 20 deadline, and a cease-fire accord was signed on the early morning of July 21, 1954.¹⁷

The Indochina phase of the Geneva Conference produced a set of four inter-related documents known collectively as the "Geneva Accords."¹⁸ Three were cease-fire agreements (one each for Laos, Cambodia,¹⁹ and Vietnam²⁰) and the fourth an

unsigned "Final Declaration." It is important to emphasize that the 1954 Geneva Accords were essentially military cease-fire agreements, though negotiated at the highest political and diplomatic level.

Under the Geneva Cease-Fire Agreement of 1954 France recognized the sovereignty of Vietnam, but the Vietnamese territory was "provisionally" partitioned in the vicinity of the 17th parallel into two zones: the northern, known as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the southern, which until 1955 was known as the State of Vietnam and subsequently as the Republic of Vietnam.²¹ The French Union forces, which included both French and non-Communist Vietnamese nationalist forces, were to be withdrawn from the "Zone in the North" and the Viet Minh forces from the "Zone in the South" within 300 days.²² During that period civilians residing in either zone were to be freely permitted to migrate to the other.²³ A demilitarized zone was to be established on either side of the demarcation line, to the width of not more than five kilometers from it.²⁴

Pending the general elections which would bring about the unification of Vietnam, it was agreed, the conduct of civil administration in each regrouping zone would be in the hands of whose forces were to be regrouped there in virtue of the Cease-Fire Agreement.²⁵ Each party undertook to refrain from any reprisals or discrimination against persons or organizations on account of their activities during the hostilities and to guarantee democratic liberties.²⁶

The two parties undertook not to introduce into Vietnam additional military personnel, arms, munitions, or other war materials.²⁷ The establishment of new military bases and of any military base under foreign control was prohibited, as well as adherence to any military alliance or the use of the territory of either zone for the resump-

21. Article I of the Cease-Fire Agreement.

22. Article 2.

23. Article 14(d).

24. Article 1.

25. Article 14(a).

26. Article 14(c).

27. Articles 16, 17, 18, and 19.

16. The 1954 Geneva Conference actually consisted of two separate parleys, one on Korea, the other on Indochina. The Korean phase of the conference, which started on April 26, 1954, soon quagmired into stalemate. In the Indochina phase, which lasted from May 8 to June 21, nine powers participated, namely, the United States, Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, Communist China, Laos, Cambodia, the Associate State of Vietnam (South Vietnam), and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam).

17. According to Bernard B. Fall, the French Union forces suffered a total of 172,000 casualties during the war. The Viet Minh's casualties were estimated about three times as high. About 250,000 Vietnamese civilians were also killed during the war. See Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams* (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 127.

18. For the full text of the 1954 Geneva Accords on Indochina, see United States Department of State, *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents*, Vol. 1, Washington, D.C., July, 1957, pp. 750-788.

19. Separate agreements on Laos and Cambodia were also worked out at Geneva in 1954. The discussion of these agreements is outside the scope of this article.

20. The 1954 Geneva document related to Vietnam is known officially as the "Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam," covering 47 articles and a brief annex on the geographical delineation of the regroupment.

tion of hostilities. The supervision of the armistice was entrusted to an International Commission for Supervision and Control comprising representatives from India, Canada, and Poland, with the Indian member of the Commission acting as chairman.²⁸

The Commission was to establish fixed and mobile teams to supervise the execution of the cease-fire provisions.²⁹ Its decisions on procedural matters were to be decided by majority vote but all decisions dealing with substantial violations had to be taken unanimously.

THE 1954 Geneva Conference also issued a "Final Declaration," distinct from the Cease-Fire Agreement. The Final Declaration envisaged that unification would take place as a result of free elections to be held in July, 1956 under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the member states of the International Commission for Supervision and Control.³⁰ Consultations would be held on general elections between "the competent representative authorities of the two zones" from July 20, 1955 onwards.³¹ The Declaration further stated that the settlement of political problems should "permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot."³²

There is no question as to the clarity of the language of the Final Declaration on general elections. But the legal force of the Declaration is questionable because this document was not signed by all Conference participants. It was orally approved and accepted by all nine powers attending the Conference except the United States and the State of Vietnam (the legal predecessor of the present Republic of Vietnam), each of whom made unilateral declarations

of their own.³³ Both the United States and the State of Vietnam refused to join in the Final Declaration issued by the 1954 Geneva Conference. Accordingly, the unification-through-elections provision of the unsigned Declaration can be considered not as a formal commitment but as essentially a statement of policy of one or all of the Conference participants on the major political questions relating to the Cease-Fire Agreement. It must be noted that Article 14(a) of the Cease-Fire Agreement made a passing reference to "general elections,"³⁴ and it clearly indicates that the Cease-Fire Agreement was in no way dependent upon the holding of general elections in July, 1956.

Why, then, did the Vietnamese Communists accept a document whose legal force was so questionable? The most convincing hypothesis holds as follows. Although the Vietnamese Communists obtained at Geneva only half of what they had sought through the test of arms, they considered it virtually inevitable that the rest of the country would be theirs in the elections which the Final Declaration envisaged, firmly believing that the State of Vietnam under the Bao Dai rule would soon collapse internally. They knew that Ho Chi Minh's Communist regime in Hanoi had enjoyed greater popularity and prestige than the decadent regime of Bao Dai, a playboy living on the Riviera, who had collaborated with the Japanese during World War II. Faced with the alternative of Bao Dai or Ho Chi Minh, the majority of the Vietnamese obviously would choose the latter. Most of the Conference's partic-

28. Articles 29, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39.

29. Article 35.

30. Articles 6 and 7 of the Final Declaration.

31. Article 7 of the Final Declaration.

32. *Ibid.*

33. See *Further Documents Relating to the Discussion on Indochina at the Geneva Conference* (Miscellaneous No. 20, 1954, Command Paper, 9239), London: Great Britain Parliamentary Sessional Papers, XXXI (1953-54), 5-9. Therefore, there is nothing to suggest in the public record that the State of Vietnam agreed at Geneva in 1954 to hold elections in July 1956, still less to hold elections on Communist terms. This is why it is incorrect to contend that the Diem regime of South Vietnam violated or wrecked the 1954 Geneva Agreements by its failure to agree to hold general elections in July 1956.

34. See footnote 25.

ipants felt likewise, so the two year provision of the Declaration for general elections was simply a face-saving device for the West.³⁵

On July 21, 1954, the Geneva Cease-Fire Agreements covering the territories of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia respectively were signed by Brigadier General Henri Delteil, representing the French Army High Command in Indochina, and Brigadier General Ta Quang Bui, Vice Minister for National Defense of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, on behalf of the Viet Minh.

The other seven conference participants did not sign the Geneva Armistice Agreements of 1954. But the Soviet Union, Great Britain, Communist China, Cambodia and Laos were clearly satisfied with the results of the 1954 Geneva Conference. The foreign minister for the Bao Dai regime in the South, Dr. Tran Van Do, had criticized France for its concessions at Geneva and protested accordingly. Thus his country, the State of Vietnam, was not a party to the Cease-Fire Agreement nor did it join in the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference.³⁶

The United States did not wish to be associated with the 1954 Geneva Accords in fear that to do so would be interpreted as a sign of American approval of an agreement that formally sanctioned a territorial expansion of Communist influence by force of arms. At the concluding plenary session of the Geneva Conference, July 21, 1954, Mr. Walter Bedell Smith, United States Ambassador at Geneva, declared:

As I stated on July 18, my Government is not prepared to join in a declaration by the Conference such as is submitted. However, the United States makes this unilateral declaration of its position. . . . It will refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them [the 1954 Geneva Accords]; . . . it would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid [Geneva] agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security. . . . In connection with the statement in the Declaration concerning free elections in Vietnam, my Government wishes to make clear its position which it has expressed in a Declaration made in Washington on June 29, 1954, as follows: "In the case of nations now divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections, supervised by the United Nations to ensure that they are conducted fairly." With respect to the statement made by the Representative of the State of Vietnam, the United States reiterates its traditional position that peoples are entitled to determine their own future and that it will not join in an arrangement which would hinder this."*

On July 21, 1954, President Eisenhower issued a statement which, in effect, was the formal American position on the Geneva Accords. His statement said in part:

The United States has not been a belligerent in the [French-Viet Minh] war. The principal responsibility for the settlement in Indochina rested with those nations which participated in the fighting. Our role at Geneva has been at all times to try to be helpful where desired and to aid . . . to obtain a just and honorable settlement which will take into account the needs of the interested people. Accordingly, the United States has not itself been party to or bound by the decisions taken by the Conference, but it is our hope that it will lead to the establishment of peace consistent with the rights and the needs of the countries concerned. The arrangement contains features which we do not like, but a

35. Professor P. J. Honey, a leading British authority on Vietnam, disagrees with this hypothesis. According to him, the two-year provision of the Declaration for general elections was a face-saving device for, or a worthless concession made to, the Vietnamese Communists for their surrender, under heavy Sino-Soviet pressure, of vast tracts of territory south of the 17th parallel. He contends that the Vietnamese Communists knew well that the general elections would never take place in July, 1956. See P. J. Honey, *Communism in Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1963), pp. 5-6.

36. See footnote 33.

* Declaration by President of the United States (Eisenhower) and the Prime Minister of Great Britain (Churchill), (Potomac Charter), July 29, 1954. See Department of State Bulletin, July 12, 1954, pp. 49-50.

37. Department of State Bulletin, August 2, 1954, pp. 162-163.

great deal depends on how they work in practice.

The United States is issuing at Geneva a statement to the effect that it is not prepared to join in the Conference declaration, but . . . we also say that . . . the United States will not use force to disturb the settlement. We also say that any renewal of Communist aggression would be reviewed by us as a matter of grave concern.

By and large, France was able to extricate herself from her unpopular Indochinese entanglement gracefully, thanks to Sino-Soviet pressure on the Viet Minh in



**Ngo Dinh Diem
(1901-1963)**

1954. It must be remembered again that the Vietnamese Communists came to Geneva reluctantly under Moscow-Peking prodding. Some of Ho Chi Minh's close lieutenants and many Viet Minh guerrillas in the South (the present Viet Cong)³⁹—who believed they had total victory in their grasp in 1954—felt that the 1954 Geneva settlement, i.e., relinquishment of the territory

the Viet Minh held in the southern part of Vietnam, had cheated them of the full fruits of their military victory.⁴⁰ But on the whole the Vietnamese Communists had no

40. Le Duan, First Secretary of the Lao Dong (Communist) Party in Hanoi and a former powerful guerrilla leader in South Vietnam, reportedly opposed peace talks with France at Geneva. Basing his argument on the disunity of the Western powers about Indochina in 1954, he advocated relentless revolutionary struggle against the French until the Viet Minh could control the whole territory of Vietnam.

In 1954 many Viet Minh guerrillas in the South (actually South Vietnamese, Communists and the present Viet Cong) were highly critical of Ho Chi Minh's decision to join the Geneva negotiations with France. Like Le Duan, they pleaded for a total military victory against the French Union forces. But Ho accepted at Geneva the "temporary" partition of Vietnam at the 17th parallel and left them in the lurch. He also pledged that he would unify the country by political means—general elections—in the hope that South Vietnam would disintegrate internally soon after the Geneva settlement and fall into Hanoi's hands. To everyone's surprise, however, the Saigon regime did not collapse, and general elections were never held. For the South Vietnamese Communist guerrillas, in short, Ho's acceptance of the 1954 Geneva settlement was a tactical blunder which has necessitated the present bloody and expensive Vietnam war. They deeply resented and still resent Hanoi's sell-out at Geneva in 1954 and, of course, would not permit their northern comrades to sell out their interests again at the conference table—this time to the United States. Today they vigorously oppose a negotiated settlement of the present Vietnam war unless the United States accepts their National Liberation Front—the political arm of the Viet Cong guerrillas—as the "sole genuine representatives" of South Vietnam and also guarantees their share in the post-war coalition government in Saigon. See this writer's article, "The Lao Dong's Politburo: Hanoi's Internal Struggle," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sunday editorial section, May 7, 1967, p. 1. Incidentally, the September, 1966 issue of *Hoc Tap*, the Hanoi Party's leading ideological journal, moved closer to a public acknowledgement that the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam was an instrument of the Lao Dong Party in Hanoi.

38. Department of State, *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents*, (Washington, D.C., December, 1957), II, 2397.

39. For an excellent study of the Viet Cong see Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong* (Cambridge, Mass.: M. I. T. Press, 1966), pp. 1-474.

reason to be dissatisfied with the results of the 1954 Geneva Conference. To them the 1954 Geneva Accords meant that after eight years of the bloody anti-French war, the uninterrupted struggle for control over all of Vietnam would be transferred to the political plane, where they felt certain of easy victory.

III

THE Geneva Accords of 1954 brought the bloody and bitter Franco-Viet Minh War to a close and marked the demise of French colonialism in Indochina, but did not solve the political problem of Vietnam in the context of the cold war conflict. After 1954, the intensive cold war pressure focused on the tragic land of Vietnam.

The 1954 Cease-Fire Agreement on Vietnam was not executed in good faith by both the North and the South. Both sides overtly and covertly violated the terms of the Agreement, and the evidence suggests that North Vietnam violated the Agreement first.

In accordance with the provisions on free movement of peoples and regrouping, some 190,000 Franco-Vietnamese troops moved south of the 17th parallel within the prescribed 300 days. Some 50,000 Viet Minh troops moved to the North along with 25,000-odd Viet Minh adherents and supporters (civilians). But the Hanoi regime was careful enough to leave in the rural areas of South Vietnam a network of hard-core guerrillas (about 5,000 to 6,000) with an eye to possible future needs for political and terrorist operations in the south.⁴¹ It also left behind a large number of weapon caches.

41. According to French report, the Vietnamese Communists at the end of the Franco-Viet Minh War controlled 60 to 90 per cent of the villages in the south, except for those areas under the control of the three politico-military sects: the religion-based Cao Dai and Hoa Hao and the secular Binh Xuyen. Cited in Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina Continues* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1955), p. 36.

Those who went north were southerners by birth and Communist by conviction, and included many thousands of younger men who were later given by the Communist regime in Hanoi conventional and guerrilla training against the day when they might be needed in the south.⁴² (Today they constitute the backbone of the Viet Cong insurgency in South Vietnam.)

The number of North-bound refugees was estimated at about 100,000. Despite occasional Communist harassment and intimidation of refugees who wished to go south, about 900,000 Vietnamese—more than 500,000 of them Catholics—fled from the North to the South. About 400,000 more are believed to have desired to migrate, but were not permitted by the Hanoi regime.⁴³

After 1954, both Hanoi and Saigon openly violated the armament (military) provision of the Cease-Fire Agreement.⁴⁴ The International Commission for Supervision

42. Because of the strong Oriental family system prevailing in Vietnam, they would have the advantage of being protected by their families and relatives when they infiltrated back to their local areas in the south.

43. See George A. Carver, Jr., "The Faceless Viet Cong," *Foreign Affairs*, XLIV (April, 1966), 358. The Hanoi regime obstructed the efforts of the International Commission for Supervision and Control to supervise the free movement of refugees between two zones. Robert Scigliano, *South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), p. 133.

44. As will be seen later in this article, the Special Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control under the date of June 2, 1962, found that South Vietnam had violated the Cease-Fire Agreement by receiving increased military aid from the United States and by establishing a "factual military alliance" with it, but saw these violations in the light of North Vietnam's military aggression against South Vietnam. See *Special Report to the Co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference on Indochina* (Vietnam No. 1 [1962], Command Paper 1755). London: Great Britain Parliamentary Sessional Papers, XXXIX (1961/62), pp. 21-22.

and Control⁴⁵ encountered numerous instances of non-cooperation and difficulties both in North and South Vietnam in discharging its responsibilities to supervise the execution of the Armistice Agreement.⁴⁶ By the end of 1960, the Commission was in a state of near-total breakdown in its effectiveness and functions as a keeper of the peace in Vietnam.⁴⁷

With respect to unification elections, the Saigon government under President Ngo Dinh Diem⁴⁸ stressed in 1955 and

1956 that South Vietnam neither signed the 1954 Geneva Cease-Fire Agreement nor accepted the Final Declaration and hence could not consider itself bound by them. It also said that the conditions for genuine free elections must first be evidenced in North Vietnam. Accordingly, the Diem regime refused to participate in the consultative conference for general elections which was formally requested by the Hanoi regime in 1955.

The July, 1956 deadline passed without national elections, and Hanoi, Moscow and Peking made strong protests against Diem's refusal to hold the elections. The stand taken by the Diem regime concerning general elections was not a violation of the 1954 Geneva agreements,⁴⁹ but it dealt a severe blow to Hanoi's hopes of gaining the South by peaceful means. After the election deadline passed, Hanoi was prepared to take more decisive action to subjugate South Vietnam to its control, and the only alternative to peaceful takeover was unification by force.

45. The Commission was originally expected to dissolve in July, 1956, when the national elections for Vietnamese unification were to be held. At the request of the Co-Chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Conference, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, however, the Commission has continued to operate until now.

46. See Robert Scigliano, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-156. Another major responsibility of the Commission was to ensure persons from reprisals or discrimination by either government for their activities during the Franco-Viet Minh War. Hanoi and Saigon also interfered with the work of the Commission to discharge this aspect of responsibility.

47. Some of the Commission's difficulties have stemmed from its own internal weaknesses: 1) the *troika* arrangement in organization and decision-making; 2) the lack of police power to enforce peace; 3) its inability to deal effectively with indirect aggression (i.e., guerrilla depredations) distinct from direct aggression; and 4) its deterioration of financial condition. The *troika* arrangement was the most serious weakness, and because of it the Commission has been slow, even cumbersome, in operation. If it has been quick to pass judgment on the actions of the Saigon government and its supporters, which have been frankly acknowledged and conducted in the open, it has been less prompt to recognize the full extent of North Vietnam's unacknowledged and clandestine violations of the 1954 Geneva Cease-Fire Agreement.

48. A new set of agreements was signed between France and the State of Vietnam on June 4, 1954, providing the basis for genuine independence of the latter, and on June 16, 1954 Bao Dai appointed Ngo Dinh Diem as Premier. Diem disposed of Bao Dai by a national plebiscite held on October 23, 1955, and the Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed on October 26, 1955, with Diem as its first President.

49. See footnote 33. It cannot be denied that the Diem regime feared the outcome of possible unfair elections. Diem was afraid that the *troika* arrangement envisaged in the Geneva Accords on Vietnam for the supervision of elections would have prevented the International Commission for Supervision and Control from maintaining strict supervision over the voting and would have favored the Communists. Even if the Commission were able to maintain strict supervision over the voting, the Communist regime in Hanoi possessed certain decisive advantages. First, its population (16 millions) outnumbered the South Vietnam's 14 millions. Second, North Vietnam's efficient totalitarian dictatorship and its underground network of Communist agents in the South which infiltrated into the army, governmental administration and civic organizations were much better able to influence the election results in favor of the Communists than the new, young regime of Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam. Diem's fear was quite justified.

In 1956 President Diem, contrary to all expectations, was overcoming many of the difficulties besetting his government⁵⁰ and presenting a picture of political stability and incipient economic progress, while North Vietnam suffered a grave setback in its radical agrarian reform campaign.⁵¹

After July, 1956, Hanoi began to launch its campaign to overthrow the Ngo Dinh Diem regime by force. Instructions were transmitted to the Communist underground apparatus left behind in the south directing its cadres to reactivate military strength and initiate terrorist campaigns. Armed incidents against the South Vietnamese government, particularly acts of terror and assassination, became more numerous in

1956 and 1957.⁵² In 1958 the Communist leaders in Hanoi began to refer to "the pursuance of the revolution as the most urgent need" and the army as "a firm base for the struggle for national unification." The formal decision to initiate a campaign to take over the South by force appears to have been made at the May 1959 meeting of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong (Communist) Party in Hanoi. The Lao Dong party newspaper *Nhan Dan* called on May 14, 1959, for "all necessary forms and measures" to be used to "achieve the goal of the revolution." Guerrilla activity, following the same tactics that the Viet Minh had used earlier, intensified in late 1959 and throughout 1960. When full-scale guerrilla warfare, supported and directed from North Vietnam, was launched against South Vietnam some five years after the Geneva settlement, the 1954 Geneva Cease-Fire Agreement on Vietnam became a dead treaty.

50. For the near-chaotic situation in South Vietnam after the 1954 Geneva Conference see Robert Shaplan, *The Lost Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 100-139; Wesley Fishel, "Free Vietnam Since Geneva," *Yale Review*, XLIX (Spring, 1959), 68-79; and William Henderson, "South Vietnam Finds Itself," *Foreign Affairs*, XXXV (January, 1957), 283-294.

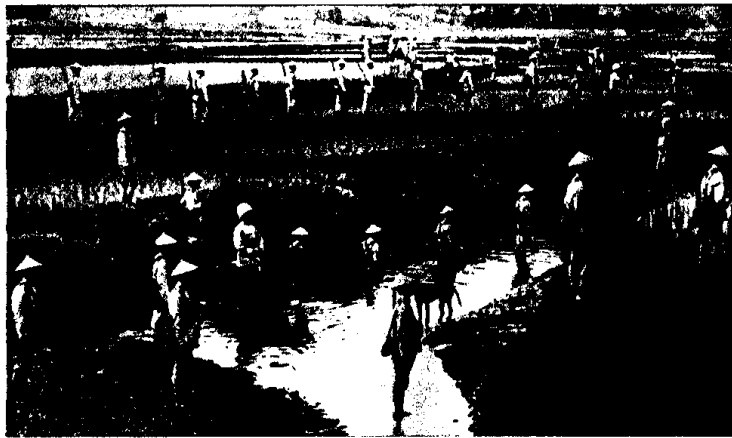
51. In the midst of the disastrous failure of the radical agrarian reform campaign which followed the Chinese Communist model, the Hanoi regime confronted a severe internal crisis in the summer and fall of 1956, i.e., peasant uprisings in Ho Chi Minh's native province, Nghe-An, which were crushed ruthlessly by the 325th Division of the North Vietnamese Army (The 325th Division is North Vietnam's crack army and is now in South Vietnam supporting the Viet Cong insurgents). Bernard B. Fall says that "probably close to 50,000 North Vietnamese were executed in connection with the land reform and that at least twice as many were arrested and sent to forced labor camps." See Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams*, p. 156. In October, 1956, North Vietnam's Defense Minister Nguyen Vo Giap stated publicly that "we [the Vietnamese Communists] executed too many honest people. We attacked on too large a front and, seeing enemies everywhere, resorted to terror, which became far too widespread." See *Nhan Dan* (People's Daily), Hanoi, October 31, 1956.

The American military build-up in South Vietnam got underway in December, 1961, and Washington's direct entry into the present Vietnam war to help South Vietnam followed thereafter.⁵³

There is little question but that an armed aggression by North Vietnam against South Vietnam is a fundamental violation of the 1954 Geneva Cease-Fire Agreement on Vietnam. This serious violation of the Agreement by the Vietnamese Communists is, among other evidence, documented by the 1962 findings of the International

52. The acts of politically selected terrorism were directed against the civilian population, including village officials, school teachers and ordinary farmers. According to Professor Bernard B. Fall, for example, 452 village chiefs in South Vietnam were killed by Viet Cong guerrillas in 1957-58. "By January, 1960, they were being lost at the rate of fifteen a week." See Bernard B. Fall, "The Viet Cong—The Unseen Enemy in Viet-Nam," in Marcus G. Raskin and Bernard B. Fall, ed., *The Viet-Nam Reader* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 257.

53. For the United States' deepening military involvement in the present Vietnam conflict since the early 1950's, see *U.S. News and World Report*, LIX (September 13, 1965), 56-62.



French officers hold troop maneuvers in the rice paddies of Viet Nam, 1939

Commission for Supervision and Control, which said in part:

The Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam proceeds on the principle of the complete cessation of all hostilities in Vietnam, respect by either Party of the Zone assigned to the other, and the inescapable responsibility of the Parties for the fulfilment of the obligations resulting therefrom.

Article 10 of the Agreement states expressly the obligation of the two Parties to order and enforce the complete cessation of all hostilities in Vietnam.

Article 19 of the Agreement casts the obligation on the two Parties to ensure that the Zones assigned to them are not used for the resumption of hostilities or to further an aggressive policy.

Article 24 of the Agreement proceeds on the principle of the inviolability of the Demilitarized Zone and the territories assigned to the two Parties and states expressly that the armed forces of each Party shall respect the territory under the military control of the other Party and shall commit no act and undertake no operation against the other Party.

Article 27 of the Agreement affirms expressly the responsibility of the Commanders of the Forces of the two Parties of ensuring full compliance with all the provisions of the Agreement by all elements and military personnel under their command.

It follows that the using of one Zone for the organization or the carrying out of any hostile activities in the other Zone, violations by members of the Armed Forces of one Party of the territory of the other Party, or the commission by any element under the control of one Party of any act directed against the other Party, would be contrary to the fundamental provisions of the Agreement which enjoin mutual respect for the territories assigned to the two Parties. . . .

The Commission accepts the conclusions reached by the Legal Committee that there is sufficient evidence to show beyond reasonable doubt that the P.A.V.N. [the army of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam or North Vietnam] has violated Articles 10, 19, 24 and 27 in specific instances.⁵⁴

The Polish delegation to the Commission dissented from the above conclusions dutifully.⁵⁵

After the conclusions on North Vietnam's aggression against South Vietnam were reached, the International Commission went on to deal with allegations made that South Vietnam had concluded a bilateral alliance

⁵⁴ Emphasis added. *Special Report to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference on Indochina* (Vietnam No. 1 [1962] Command Paper 1755). London: Great Britain Parliamentary Sessional Papers, XXXIX (1961/62), pp. 6-7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

and had accepted military personnel and equipment. The Commission concluded:

Taking all the facts into consideration, and basing itself on its own observations and authorized statements made in the United States of America and the Republic of Vietnam, the Commission concludes that the Republic of Vietnam has violated Articles 16 and 17 of the Geneva Agreement in receiving the increased military aid from the United States of America in the absence of any established credit in its favor. The Commission is also of the view that, though there may not be an formal military alliance between the Governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Vietnam, the establishment of a U.S. Military Assistance Command in South Vietnam, as well as the introduction of a large number of U.S. military personnel beyond the stated strength of the M.A.A.G. (Military Assistance Advisory Group), amounts to a factual military alliance, which is prohibited under Article 19 of the Geneva Agreement.⁵⁶

It is clear from a reading of the above-mentioned June 1962 findings of the International Commission as well as their order of discussion that the Commission saw South Vietnam's violations of the Geneva Cease-Fire Agreement in the light of North Vietnam's military aggression against the South. In other words, the Commission seemed to imply in 1962 that Hanoi had committed violations of the Agreement by launching aggression against South Vietnam and Saigon had violated that Agreement by receiving United States military assistance for its own defense.

IV

IT is very difficult for anyone to predict how much longer the present Vietnam war is likely to continue. As of this writing, there is no sign of any basic change in Hanoi's hard-line approach to the war or peace talks with the United States, despite President Johnson's repeated offers of "unconditional" peace negotiations.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

If, however, there is to be an end to the Vietnam war in the future, it seems, it must be on the basis of the 1954 Geneva Cease-Fire Agreement. Indications are that Washington, Moscow and Hanoi agree on this score.⁵⁷

The Soviet Union apparently does not believe that the Vietnamese Communists can defeat the United States in Vietnam⁵⁸ and hence favors a negotiated settlement through a reconvening of the Geneva Conference. Such a solution—opposed strongly by Communist China—would represent a major triumph of the Soviet line of "peaceful co-existence" over the Maoist strategy of "national liberation wars," and also greatly enhance Moscow's image as a "peace-loving" nuclear power capable of acting with great restraint in the midst of an international crisis.⁵⁹ Moscow does not yet exercise strong leverage over North

⁵⁷ It must be said that many other countries, such as Great Britain and Canada, share the same view.

⁵⁸ This impression was conveyed to the West recently by an editorial of the Finnish Communist newspaper, *Kansan Uutiset*, which has excellent connections with the Soviet Communist Party. In early May, 1967, the editorial criticized the tactics of the Viet Cong and said: "... the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam demands the repatriation of American troops as an absolute condition of armistice negotiations, and pride in return prevents the United States from accepting terms dictated by a small nation. The deadlock is thus complete. It is true that the Americans have no right to be in Vietnam, but diplomatic flexibility might improve the position of the National Liberation Front." Cited in the *Washington Post*, May 4, 1967, p. 15.

⁵⁹ For a study of the Sino-Soviet conflict over Vietnam see this writer's article "The Sino-Soviet Dispute and Vietnam," *Orbis*, IX (Summer, 1965), 426-436; and Kurt London, "Vietnam: A Sino-Soviet Dilemma," *The Russian Review*, XXVI (January, 1967), 26-37.

Vietnamese action, despite its increasing military aid to Hanoi in recent years.⁶⁰

President Johnson has cited the 1954 Geneva agreements as the basis for ending the Vietnam conflict within the framework of "unconditional discussions." In March, 1965, he said:

We [Americans] have said many times—to those who are interested in our principles for honorable negotiation in Vietnam that we seek no more than a return to the essentials of the [Geneva] agreements of 1954—a reliable arrangement to guarantee the independence and security of all in Southeast Asia.⁶¹

In his speech at Baltimore on April 7, 1965, he reiterated that the United States would seek no more than a return to what he called "the essentials of the (Geneva) Agreements of 1954" for a durable peace in Vietnam. He said in part:

There are those who wonder why we [Americans] have a responsibility there [Vietnam]. . . . Our objective is the independence of South Vietnam and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves—only that the people of South Vietnam be allowed to guide their country in their own way. . . . We will do everything necessary to reach that objective and we will do only

what is absolutely necessary. . . . Such peace demands an independent South Vietnam securely guaranteed and able to shape its own relationships to all others free from outside interference, tied to no alliance, a military base for no other country. These are the essentials of any final settlement [in Vietnam].⁶²

Although Peking is still giving active support to Hanoi for the Vietnam war,⁶³ the two Asian Communist countries lately have shown marked differences in their views toward peace negotiations. Communist China has declared the 1954 Geneva Agreements to be dead as grounds for the settlement of the Vietnam war.⁶⁴ Peking put heavy pressure on Ho Chi Minh to negotiate at Geneva in 1954, but is now

62. Department of State *Bulletin*, April 26, 1965, pp. 607-608.

63. Chinese Communist military assistance to North Vietnam came to nearly \$200 millions in 1966. The Chinese Communists are furnishing almost 80% of infantry weapons, mostly rifles and mortars, to the Vietnamese Communists. Peking is providing most of the small arms (about 750,000), ammunition, anti-aircraft artillery (more than 5,000 anti-aircraft guns in the 14.5mm, 37mm, 57mm, 85mm and 100mm calibers), some heavy weapons, jet fighters (about 20 made-in-China MIG 19 jet fighters) and some trucks to Hanoi. Communist China's economic aid to North Vietnam during the period between 1955 and 1966 reached about \$600 millions, and Peking has shipped as much as 500,000 tons of rice to Hanoi in 1967. According to the latest estimates, there are up to 10,000 Chinese Communist military men (called "a technical army") in North Vietnam serving as anti-aircraft instructors, supply handlers and engineers for repair of decks, railroads, bridges and other similar facilities destroyed and damaged by United States air attacks. There are also about 40,000 Chinese coolie laborers in North Vietnam who are building strategic supply roads from Communist China into the North Vietnamese territory and also helping the Vietnamese in construction and rehabilitation works. See the *New York Times*, August 12, 1966, p. 4; and *Washington Post*, July 8, 1967, p. 13.

60. It is estimated that Soviet military aid to North Vietnam totaled close to \$1.5 billions from 1955 through 1966. Moscow's economic assistance reached about \$750 millions in this period. The Soviets have recently supplied Hanoi with some 60 MIG jet fighters, nearly 140 other military aircrafts, more than 10,000 artillery pieces, mortars and other heavy weapons. The Kremlin is also sending Hanoi most of its radar and surface-to-air missiles. Virtually all petroleum supplies come to Hanoi from Moscow. See the *Washington Post*, February 6, 1967, p. 8; and July 8, 1967, p. 13. For a detailed account of Soviet aid to North Vietnam see Jan S. Prybyla, "Soviet and Chinese Aid to North Vietnam," *The China Quarterly*, No. 27 (July-September, 1966), pp. 84-100; and Albert Parry, "Soviet Aid to Vietnam," *The Reporter*, XXVI (January 12, 1967), 28-32.

61. White House Release dated March 25, 1965, reprinted in Department of State *Bulletin*, April 12, 1965, p. 528.

64. See *Peking Review*, July 8, 1966; and *Jen-min Jih-pao* (People's Daily), July 24, 1966.

putting its pressure on the Vietnamese Communists in the opposite direction.

At the present time, the Peking regime under the control of the Mao-Lin faction shows not the slightest inclination to agree to a negotiated peace in Vietnam. The validity and prestige of the Maoist revolutionary doctrine of "national liberation war" are at stake in the outcome of the Vietnam war, so negotiations by North Vietnam would deal a vital blow to the Maoist strategic doctrine and also seriously undermine Peking's claim to lead "revolutionary forces" in the underdeveloped world.

It should be noted that there is currently an unprecedented campaign in the Chinese mainland to deify Chairman Mao and immortalize his thought, in connection with Peking's "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." Accordingly, a negotiated peace in Vietnam would certainly have a tremendous repercussion upon the current power struggle between the Maoist and anti-Maoist factions.

Peking has recently deplored Hanoi's decision in late 1964 and early 1965 to move to the third and final phase of Communist guerrilla warfare (i.e., the use of large units of regular troops) in South Vietnam. At the same time, it urged the Vietnamese Communists to pull back to phase two, that is to say, to carry on their fight against overwhelming American military odds by waging protracted small-scale (hit and run) guerrilla warfare.⁶⁵ Communist China considers the Vietnam conflict as a model "people's war," to be won by protracted combat rather than settled by compromise.

In contrast to Peking, Hanoi still publicly emphasizes that the 1954 Geneva accords, implemented to its taste and liking, could provide the basis for peace in Vietnam.⁶⁶ On April 8, 1965, Pham Van Dong, Premier of North Vietnam, said that it was "the unswerving policy of the govern-

ment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to strictly respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam and to correctly implement their basic provisions" in accordance with the following four points:

- (1) Withdrawal of United States and allied troops from the soil of Vietnam;
- (2) Respect for the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva accords, pending the peaceful unification of Vietnam;
- (3) Settlement of South Vietnam's internal affairs in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front;
- (4) Reunification of North and South Vietnam without foreign interference.⁶⁷

And he went on to say:

If this basis is recognized [by the United States], favorable conditions will be created for the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem, and it will be possible to consider the reconvening of an international conference along the pattern of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Vietnam.⁶⁸

The above statement shows that Hanoi and Washington remain far apart in their final objectives of a diplomatic settlement on Vietnam.

In short, the violated 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam could be a useful frame of reference or basis for the cessation of the present Vietnam war until acceptable terms for an armistice are worked out between the major contestants at the conference table, if peace negotiations start in the future.

If an undeclared war in South Vietnam is to be terminated with an undeclared peace, owing to North Vietnam's decision to end the fighting but not to come to the formal conference table, the condition of "neither war nor peace" would then be likely to prevail in the soil of South Vietnam. If this is the case, the Vietnamese Communists would undoubtedly appeal to the upholding of the basic provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements, one of which was the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Vietnam. It would also rely on worldwide "peace movements" and other pressures to force the United States to withdraw its military forces from Vietnam as well as other parts of Southeast Asia.

67. The full text of Premier Pham Van Dong's statement on April 8, 1965 is reprinted in the *New York Times*, April 14, 1965, p. 13.

68. *Ibid.*

65. Lin Piao, "Long Live the Victory of the People's War," *Hung Chi* (Red Flag), September 3, 1965; *Chieh-fang-jhin Pao* (Liberation Army Daily), April 12, 1967; *Jen-min Jih-pao*, February 20, 1967; and July 22, 1967.

66. *Nhan Dan*, July 24, 1966.

Academic Speculation: Neither War Nor Peace in Vietnam

THIS writer speculated in a previous article that the Vietnamese Communists are likely to abandon the war as a lost gamble rather than come to the conference table for peace negotiations.¹ In other words, it seems likely that, should they recognize in the future that they are on the losing end of their military adventure, they might decide grudgingly to cut their losses and retreat under some face-saving devices. And the least painful face-saving device for them would seem, in speculative analysis, to be Trotsky's formula of "neither war nor peace"—to stop the fighting without coming to the formal conference table, as the Communist guerrillas in Greece and Malaya did in the past.

In the same article, this writer mentioned two main reasons for the above hypothesis: (a) continuing predominance of "hawks" over "doves" in the inner power circle of the Lao Dong (Communist) Party in Hanoi; and (b) Communist China's intransigence on the Vietnam problem.

Today, hawks comprise a controlling majority in Hanoi's Party Politburo. They do not believe that the Vietnamese Communists can overwhelm the military power of the United States, but are firmly convinced that the Johnson Administration will eventually lose the political and psychological means to fight a protracted guerrilla war in South Vietnam. The sudden and mysterious death of General Nguyen Chi Thanh, one of the pro-Chinese and pro-war members of the Lao Dong Party's Politburo, on July 7, 1967, had little if any effect on the war as well as on the pre-

dominant position of hawks in Hanoi's ruling power circle.² The pro-war position of the Politburo hawks has been strongly supported by the Viet Cong guerrillas (actually the South Vietnamese Communists).³ As long as hawks remain predominant in the Lao Dong Politburo, the prospects for a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam war would appear to be as dim as ever.⁴

2. According to Radio Hanoi, General Thanh died on July 7, 1967, of a heart attack. General Thanh, a stocky, dour, pro-Chinese Annamese, received his military and political training in Mao Tse-tung's military academy in Yenan from 1941 to 1943, then fought with the Chinese Communists until 1945. From 1950 to 1961 he was the head of the powerful Political Department of the North Vietnamese armed forces. In 1965 he was sent to South Vietnam, where he had since directed all Vietnamese Communist efforts against the United States by acting as Hanoi's Politburo resident.

3. See footnote 40 of the article.

4. On February 3, 1966, Le Duc Tho, a member of the pro-Chinese faction, who is director of the Organization Bureau of the Lao Dong Party, accused a "pacifist" (meaning pro-Soviet) minority in the Lao Dong Politburo of favoring peace negotiations with the United States, or at least of taking seriously the American offer of "unconditional discussions." In an article in the February 3, 1966 issue of *Nhan Dan*, he said: "Faced with great changes in the situation and with the revolutionary tasks, a small number of comrades have developed erroneous thoughts and views. Concerning the combat task, they have made an incorrect assessment of the balance of power between the enemy and us. . . . They entertain pacifism, slacken their vigilance and fail to get ideologically ready for combat. They see only difficulties and do not see opportunities, fail to realize clearly the deceptive peace negotiations plot of the enemy; and rely on outside [Soviet] aid."

1. See Thomas S. An, "The Lao Dong's Politburo: Hanoi's Internal Struggle," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sunday editorial section, May 7, 1967, p. 1.

In recent years, the United States has been imposing severe attrition upon the Vietnamese Communists, both in the North and South. The situation is growing more and more desperate for them,⁵ and it will not be too long until they finally succumb to attrition's cumulative effects. Accordingly, a strong case exists for arguing that in the not distant future (either before or after the 1968 presidential elections in the United States) the pro-war majority of the Party Politburo will come to the "agonizing reappraisal" that the Vietnamese Communist cause is definitely lost. Such appraisal of the hopeless war was already stated obliquely by North Vietnam's Defense Minister in the January 6, 1966 issue of *Nhan Dan*, where he said: "We [Vietnamese Communists] do not underestimate the enemy [the United States] They [Americans] are extremely obdurate and at the same time know how to draw lessons quickly from experience to contrive even fiercer and ever more ruthless fighting methods."

If the above prediction proves correct, the Politburo hawks may have little choice but to decide to stop the fighting. They have staked their prestige and political career on an unequivocal Communist victory in South Vietnam. Moreover, their hitherto fanatic and rigid commitment to the "inevitable" and final victory against the United States deprives them of any political flexibility and has reached a point where any kind of peace settlement, short of a clear-cut victory, would represent in their eyes a shameful surrender and betrayal of the cause they stand for. Under the circumstances, the least painful face-saving device available for the Politburo hawks would seem to be simply to terminate an undeclared war in South Vietnam with an undeclared peace rather than come to the conference table for humiliating peace terms.

What is more important, Hanoi will not be able to make a move toward peace negotiations with the United States without the approval of Communist China, its rev-

olutionary mentor and powerful northern neighbor. In addition to the factor of geography, Peking holds a number of trump cards to compel the Hanoi regime to heed the Chinese Communist viewpoint.

There is today a strong pro-Chinese radical faction within the Lao Dong (Communist) Party in Hanoi. As soon as Communist China detects Hanoi's readiness to talk peace or if Ho Chi Minh moves to negotiate a peace, Peking would direct pro-Chinese "hawks" within both the Party and the government to oppose a compromise, even to subvert the Hanoi regime. If this tactic does not work, Communist China might suddenly pour Chinese Communist "volunteers" into North Vietnam in secret collusion with the pro-Chinese elements in Hanoi, in order to shift the balance toward the war. (Such an action would give the Mao-Lin faction in Peking the fringe benefits of (a) isolating its so-called "revisionist" opponents and turning them into traitors and (b) of unifying the Chinese masses and their country behind it in the name of national unity against the outside enemy.) Or both the Chinese Communists and the pro-Chinese elements in North Vietnam would help the Viet Cong guerrillas in South Vietnam sabotage any peace agreement that Hanoi might subscribe to at the guerrillas' expense.

The presence in North Vietnam of about 50,000 Chinese "technical" and labor troops gives Communist China considerable leverage. One of their main missions seems to be to stiffen Hanoi's resistance against anything that Peking would regard as a retreat. The fact that North Vietnam's supply routes still function well after two years of American air attacks is at least partly due to the efforts of Chinese technical and labor units on North Vietnamese soil who repair roads, bridges, railroads and other lines of communication often within hours of an American raid.

Communist China is North Vietnam's main supplier of foodstuffs, particularly rice. The populations of a few of North Vietnam's cities today subsist entirely on Chinese rice, partly as a result of a bad rice harvest last May following a severe drought. Without rice from Communist China, the food situation in North Vietnam would be even more desperate than it is. In fact,

5. *Hoc Tap*, the leading theoretical journal of the Hanoi regime, frankly acknowledged in the July 1967 issue that North Vietnam is feeling the strain of manpower shortages for its war and civilian needs.

Peking's shipment of 500,000 tons of rice to Hanoi in 1967 constitutes about 10 per cent of North Vietnam's food consumption. It would be disastrous to Hanoi if the Chinese Communists were to halt their agricultural shipments to it as part of reprisals against Ho Chi Minh's peace negotiations with the United States. It would not be easy for Moscow to replace Peking as a supplier of rice.

In addition to considerable economic aid, Communist China supplies to North Vietnam all the light, mobile weapons required in everyday jungle warfare. The practical use of Chinese Communist military assistance is certainly equal to that of the sophisticated rockets and heavy weapons from the Soviet Union. It is believed that three—and possibly five—bases in Communist China are being used as sanctuaries by 50 to 55 North Vietnamese MIG's.⁶

It must be remembered that most of the Soviet military and economic supplies to the Vietnamese Communists are shipped to North Vietnam through the Chinese route. If Hanoi enters peace negotiations, it could expect the Chinese route to be cut, plus the halting of the Chinese Communist military and economic aids. Such retaliatory measures would be fatal unless the Hanoi regime were able to reach a negotiated settlement with the United States quickly or within a reasonable period of time. The fighting will continue during any peace negotiations (as it happened during the Korean War) until acceptable terms for an armistice are worked out between the major combatants and, in these circumstances, a prolonged negotiation could easily work to Hanoi's decisive disadvantage. If peace negotiations were to fail, the Ho Chi Minh regime would find it very difficult to renew the war against the United States with its previous military capabilities, owing to Peking's deadly retaliation.

For these reasons, it would be very difficult for Hanoi to take the initiative in entering negotiations against Chinese Communist opposition.

The Vietnamese Communists certainly will realize that a nation-state can seldom win at the conference table what it cannot win on the battlefield, so there is nothing to negotiate about. Hanoi would gain a variety of advantages through the Trotskyite formula of "neither war nor peace." The Trotskyite formula would save the Vietnamese Communists from (a) accepting humiliating peace terms at the negotiation table; (b) admitting publicly the fiasco of their military adventure; (c) coming to the peace talks in the role of the international outlaw who is turning in his weapons to the American sheriff and promising good behavior; (d) renouncing formally their long-range hopes of conquest of South Vietnam; (e) selling out the South Vietnamese Communist (Viet Cong) interests again as happened in the 1954 Geneva Conference; (f) destroying the myth of the "infallibility" of the Lao Dong Party; and (g) undermining the morale and discipline of the secret Communist political apparatus ("shadow government") which permeates every aspect of South Vietnamese life. In short, the Vietnamese Communists would concede nothing by simply refusing to join peace negotiations, and end the war without compromising the struggle in the South.

The Hanoi regime repeatedly has scorned the idea of meeting the Saigon (military) representatives at the peace conference table.⁷ If North Vietnam comes to the formal negotiation table, it would amount to its acknowledgement of the South Vietnamese government which Hanoi spurns as a "United States puppet" and also wants to destroy.

IF and when the Vietnamese Communists decide to accept the Trotskyite formula of "neither war nor peace," large-scale bloody combat would be brought to end and the North Vietnamese regular troops stationed in South Vietnam would withdraw to the North quietly. The Viet Cong guerrillas would retreat to their strong-

6. See the *New York Times*, August 27, 1967, p. 1, and August 29, 1967, p. 11.

7. On September 5, 1967, North Vietnam indicated that it would reject a new United States peace offensive via South Vietnam's newly elected President Lt. Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu, and its Vice President, Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky. *New York Times*, September 6, 1967, p. 3.

holds in the highlands of South Vietnam and fall back primarily upon a clandestine political and military existence there. Many of them might retreat to the North for "reeducation," retraining and rest, as happened to the Viet-Minh guerrillas right after the 1954 Geneva Conference. The Viet Cong guerrillas would undoubtedly switch to the tactics of political subversion, agitation and propaganda in the rural as well as urban areas, and this political struggle would take the form of a broad united front of a nationalist character. The weakness of the Saigon government and the political instability of South Vietnam would give comfort and hope to them.⁸

Hanoi would find no severe doctrinal difficulties, as it seeks ways to justify its *de facto* total military deescalation in South Vietnam. It will undoubtedly defend or justify its neither-war-nor-peace policy in the South in terms of Lenin's formula of "one step backward, two steps forward."

Communist China would or may go along grudgingly with North Vietnam's neither-war-nor-peace policy in South Vietnam as a regrettable but better alternative than conceding publicly the fiasco of the Maoist strategy of "people's war" at the peace negotiation table. The Hanoi regime can easily quote, and Communist China certainly remember, the following statement made by Chairman Mao Tse-tung during the darkest hours of his protracted struggle against the Chinese Nationalists (The book entitled *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-tung* is today the best seller not only in Communist China but in the world). "Marxism-Leninism does not allow concessions to be regarded as something purely negative. . . . Our [Communists'] concession, withdrawal, turning to the defensive or suspending action, *without formally admitting any defeat*, should always be regarded as an indispensable link in the revolutionary line."⁹

8. One cannot rule out a possibility that the Vietnamese Communists might employ sporadic small-scale terrorist tactics.

9. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1955), II, 263-264. (Emphasis added.)

Despite their continuing vituperative outcries against "American imperialism" and American escalation of the Vietnam war, the Chinese Communists apparently do not want to become involved in direct military confrontation with the United States in support of the Vietnamese Communists, unless South Vietnamese or U. S. troops cross the 17th parallel. This has become more obvious in the light of the current political turmoil in the Chinese mainland. It must be remembered that Peking has recently advised Hanoi to become more cautious so as not to risk the destruction of North Vietnam's main military forces by superior American forces.¹⁰

If and when the Vietnamese Communists cease the bloody fighting in South Vietnam, a reciprocal deescalation of the Vietnam war is sure to materialize. In his 1966 State of the Union message, President Johnson said that "we [Americans] will work for a cease-fire now or once discussions have begun. We will respond if others reduce their use of force." It is clearly intimated here that the United States is interested in ending the Vietnam war by means other than negotiations. It is more than probable that the American bombing of North Vietnam will stop permanently as soon as the Hanoi regime gives clear-cut signals directly (through direct but unpublicized contacts with the United States) or indirectly (through such third parties as Canada or Great Britain) that it is ending its military insurrection in South Vietnam. Prisoners of war would be exchanged through the International Red Cross or third party mediation.

The Soviet Bolsheviks dealt with Imperial Germany from a position of weakness at Brest-Litvsk in 1918. Trotsky's formula of "neither war nor peace" was not effective there and did not serve Bolshevik Communist interests. Since then, it has been cursed and condemned publicly as "ultra-leftist" tactics. It would be ironic, indeed, if 48 years after Brest-Litvsk, the Trotskyite formula might yet serve the interests of the radical Chinese and Vietnamese Communists who have condemned, and will continue to condemn, Trotsky and his followers with unabated Stalinist vigor.

10. See footnote 65.