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THE POSITIONS OF HANOI, PEKING, AND MOSCOW ON THE ISSUE OF VIETNAM NEGOTIATIONS: 1962 to 1966
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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Research Staff

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THE POSITIONS OF HANOI, PEKING, AND MOSCOW ON THE ISSUE OF VIETNAM NEGOTIATIONS: 1962 to 1966

This working paper of the DDI/Research Staff sets forth the various positions taken by Hanoi, Peking, and Moscow on the matter of negotiating a settlement of the Vietnam war and analyzes the differences on this issue which have emerged between the three Communist states in the period between 1962 and 1966. The North Vietnamese and Chinese leaders have been significantly more intransigent than the present Soviet leaders, but Hanoi's acceptance of talks in principle (provided that Washington at least cease airstrikes and declare publicly a commitment to withdraw American forces) has raised some concern in Peking that Ho Chi Minh and his lieutenants might, at some future stage in the fighting, agree to negotiate. The Chinese have pressed Ho to remain permanently intransigent (rejecting talks under any conditions prior to a total American withdrawal) and the Soviets, on the other hand, have decided to take no negotiations initiative without Hanoi's consent.

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SUMMARY

The North Vietnamese made it clear in 1962 that they did not intend to make concessions either to set up negotiations on Vietnam or in the course of any negotiations. In their concept, only the U.S. would make concessions: the U.S. would first agree to withdraw from the South, and in the subsequent negotiations the nature and timing of the U.S. withdrawal would be worked out. The North Vietnamese apparently calculated that real negotiations on the real issue--namely, the end of the Communist effort against the South--would create international pressure on them to make a concession corresponding to the one they demanded of Washington. They were, therefore, careful to insist that negotiations on "reunification"--that is, the Communist military-political effort against the South--could not be a subject of a Geneva-type conference or DRV-U.S. bilateral negotiations. They argued that "reunification" was strictly an "internal" matter of the Vietnamese themselves, and in this way tried to convince international opinion that Washington had no right to intervene.

The immediate occasion of Hanoi's appeal for international negotiations in 1962 was American "interference" in the form of the Military Advisory Command in Vietnam (MACV), and the bogus concept of a "neutral" South was advanced by Hanoi at the time to support its drive to create pressure on Washington to dismantle its military advisory command. The Chinese agreed with the North Vietnamese that the MACV's presence should be attacked and eliminated. Khrushchev, however, was unwilling to push hard on the matter and preferred to provide Hanoi with only perfunctory support, in the form of backing Hanoi's call for a conference to denounce the U.S. role in the South. He not only refused to work actively for Hanoi (and Peking), but went so far as to rebuff the North Vietnamese, at the cost of exposing his policy of non-support to Chinese criticism. North Vietnamese militants (indirectly) and the Chinese (directly) rebuked Khrushchev for standing aside, and by mid-1963, Moscow-Hanoi

cooperation broke down significantly as Khrushchev took reprisals by withdrawing the small amount of political support he had given previously as a routine matter and, more importantly, by continuing to withhold valuable military aid. Therefore, in the absence of Soviet influence on Hanoi during Khrushchev's period of leadership, there was no real prospect for an international conference on Vietnam.

Prior to the fall of Khrushchev in October 1964, the North Vietnamese and Chinese leaders apparently had agreed on the need to continue the military effort in the South and provided important aid to Hanoi; they saw no real prospect for a Geneva-type conference. They apparently held in reserve their differences on whether to permit the U.S. to make a face-saving withdrawal (as Ho preferred or was willing to accept) or to subject the U.S. to a complete military disgrace (as Mao preferred, in order to prove his point about the efficacy of small wars against the U.S. military capability). The North Vietnamese were aware that some defeats had been imposed on French forces in 1953 and 1954 before those defeats and domestic political pressure impelled Paris to withdraw; they apparently viewed the precedent as being of some relevance to the current situation, the implication being that a total American military defeat would not be necessary to gain their basic objective. But Mao, with greater personal requirements and pretensions to international Communist leadership than Ho, demanded that the U.S. be forced out militarily. At the same time, he and his lieutenants were careful not to provoke a U.S. attack on China.

As the new, post-Khrushchev leadership began to rebuild the bridge between Moscow and Hanoi which Khrushchev had virtually destroyed, Soviet political influence with the North Vietnamese increased; and by February 1965, Ho was willing temporarily to acquiesce in Soviet maneuvers to convene an international conference on Vietnam. Mao and Chou En-lai tried to make any conference an impossibility by demanding, in January 1965, that an actual American withdrawal--not just an agreement to withdraw--be made before negotiations; but the

North Vietnamese did not raise this precondition. At first (February 1965), Ho did not try to sabotage the Soviet effort to attain a conference at which Washington could be pressed to agree to withdraw American forces. But in March 1965, he shifted and opposed the Soviet maneuvering because he recognized that (1) the U.S. was unwilling to agree to depart and (2) the Soviet effort was creating international pressure for Hanoi to be less adamant. Further, he was under considerable pressure from the Chinese, who were anxious to sabotage the Soviet effort by persuading Ho openly to attack the idea of a conference. Following Ho's shift, the Soviet leaders were reduced to demanding an end to the airstrikes as necessary for creating the proper atmosphere for a conference, while avoiding any real negotiating initiatives without the clear consent of the North Vietnamese.

The cessations of bombing in May 1965 and in December-January 1966 failed to budge the North Vietnamese from their adamant opposition to negotiations, because the U.S. had not yielded to their basic demand: that Washington make a unilateral public pledge--prior to negotiations--to withdraw from the South and also (a theme introduced in summer 1965) provide some proof that it would do so. An important political consideration in Hanoi's advancement of this line was the need for deception--that is, the need to commit Washington to a declaration of surrender while pretending that the demand for such a declaration was reasonable. Euphemistic language was used to conceal the fact that the demand was simply for surrender. The North Vietnamese did not, therefore, demand a "surrender" expressly, but rather called on Washington to "recognize" or "accept" the four points (as set forth on 8 April 1965). Following American military inputs in July 1965, Hanoi became even more unreasonable, and even more frequently demanded that the U.S. "carry out" or show by "actual deeds" that it recognized these points and would abide by them. Further, toward the end of the second suspension of bombing, Ho went beyond the demand for proof of U.S. acceptance of the four points to the demand that Washington negotiate with the Liberation Front and stop bombing forever and "unconditionally." In this way, Ho tried to deflect the

appeals of Western and neutral leaders for the commencement of negotiations, and to neutralize the effects of the important American political weapon (the cessation of bombing) which had revealed Hanoi as the real recalcitrant opposed to negotiations. In short, Hanoi's position since January 1966 has been more adamantly opposed to negotiations than it had seemed to be previously.

As for the North Vietnamese estimate (in 1964) or later hope that they could win a military victory at some future date, Hanoi, following the significant American involvement in July 1965, began to talk more about an eventual political defeat of the U.S. than defeat by force of arms. Beginning in an important way in the fall of 1965, they have been stating privately that American public opinion would force the Administration in Washington to decide on withdrawal, and they have also stated that if this Administration would not so decide, some future one will. At the same time, they have insisted that they and the Viet Cong will fight on, despite U.S. airstrikes, until that day.

I. SINO-VIETNAMESE AGREEMENT ON NATURE AND TIMING OF INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS AS KHRUSHCHEV STANDS ASIDE (February 1962 to October 1964)

A. The MACV: Target of International Negotiations (February to July 1962)

Hanoi and Peking urgently advanced the idea of international negotiations on Vietnam only after the establishment of the Military Advisory Command in Vietnam (MACV) in February 1962. Prior to that time, the Communist appeal for negotiations was centered on an appeal for North-South contacts. The ten-point program of the Liberation Front, as set forth on its founding day (20 December 1960), held "peaceful reunification by stages on the basis of negotiations" to be a matter between the two zones, that is, an internal matter for Vietnamese alone. Even these negotiations were viewed by Hanoi and Peking as a highly unlikely development, and the very idea of talks was in fact used as a cover under which the Viet Cong continued military and subversive operations. Pacifists and anti-Diemists in the South were the elements that Hanoi hoped to influence with negotiations appeals --appeals which strongly implied clandestine contacts between the Communists and those men willing to have a role in undercutting the stability of the Saigon government.

Following the establishment of the MACV, however, the North Vietnamese, while retaining their basic position on North-South negotiations, added the demand for the convening of a 14-nation international conference on Vietnam. They had no intention of negotiating an end to the fighting--that is, they implicitly rejected the Western powers' concept of international talks as the means for settling disputes--and revealed their real goal: to use the conference as the forum for increasing pressure on Washington to dissolve the military command. Thus they made it clear that the only permissible subject for the conference was to find an "effective" way to compel the U.S. to end its presence in the South. A cease-fire was said to be an "internal" matter, which the Vietnamese would decide for themselves.

The Chinese had their own reasons for advancing the idea of an international conference. In mid-May 1962 they were deeply concerned about the hypothetical prospect of a Chinese Nationalist invasion of mainland coastal areas--an invasion which they mistakenly believed to be in the final planning stages. They also felt that Washington, having directed the landing of marines in Thailand, might send troops to Laos "to link the war in South Vietnam with that in Laos." (Peking People's Daily editorial of 19 May) They were anxious to prevent further American moves on or near China's southern borders. Chou En-lai on 6 June forcefully told the Cambodian elder statesman, Penn Nouth, who was in Peking, that he wanted Sihanouk to make a public proposal for an international conference "to regulate peacefully the question of South Vietnam,"

The Chinese leaders also viewed a multi-national conference on Vietnam as the way to bring pressure on the U.S. to withdraw from Vietnam. In February 1962 they were even more explicit in demanding it than were the North Vietnamese. This difference in explicitness stemmed primarily from Hanoi's reluctance to adopt the Maoist attitude of unmitigated hostility to Khrushchev. The North Vietnamese were determined to be more tactful than the Chinese in urging the Soviet leader to press Washington for a conference. Moreover, they did not want to appear unwilling to accept Soviet advice, or at least to hear the Soviet position.

But the Chinese leaders were restrained by no such considerations of near-neutrality, and they moved to maneuver Khrushchev into a diplomatic box. They confronted him with the choice of either

(1) actively agitating for a conference, thereby injuring Soviet-American relations by championing the Hanoi-Liberation Front cause aggressively rather than perfunctorily, or

(2) avoiding moves toward a conference on Vietnam, thus damaging his relations with Hanoi by failing to put pressure on Washington.

Khrushchev acted on (2).* The Chinese leaders were thus in a position to reinforce Hanoi's own awareness that the Soviet leader was not effectively supporting their Vietnam enterprise, and the North Vietnamese became increasingly pessimistic about their ability to use him. They were aware that he desired an Asian Communist ally against Mao, but they were gradually brought to recognize that he preferred to have his own way with Soviet-American relations and would not pay the price for an ally in Hanoi--namely, all-out support for the North Vietnamese diplomatic game and the Viet Cong military effort. In mid-March, following the departure of the Ponomarev delegation to Hanoi, the North Vietnamese urged Moscow (as well as London, the other Geneva co-chairman) to "proceed with consultations" with countries concerned so as to find effective steps for defending peace in the Indochina area. (DRV Foreign Ministry note of 15 March 1962)

Khrushchev, however, handled the matter in a cursory way within the confines of diplomatic propriety. He merely noted in his speech of 16 March the fact of American "interference" in the South. Furthermore, a Soviet Foreign Ministry note of 17 March stated merely that an end to the American presence was necessary in order to normalize the situation--a pro forma and uninspired reiteration of what was at the time an urgent North Vietnamese demand.

Although, on the one hand, Khrushchev had refused to apply pressure on Washington to convene a conference on Vietnam, on the other hand, he apparently had not pressed Ho to consider a cease-fire or an end to Hanoi's effort to take over the South by military force. It is

*In the spring of 1962, he was already engaged in his major effort to deceive Washington about the Soviet intention to put strategic missiles in Cuba and he was careful not to alarm the U.S. by taking a hard line on Vietnam, which was at the time an area of only marginal importance to him.

important to note that on the matter of "reunification"--that is, Vietnamese Communist action against Saigon's forces--the three Communist capitols agreed that it was purely an "internal" matter and, therefore, inadmissible as a subject for international talks. Ho Chi Minh made the definitive statement when he declared in March that reunification "is an internal affair of the Vietnamese people," that "they will decide whether South Vietnam is to have a neutral regime or any other regime," and that "no other country has a right to interfere." (Interview with the London Daily Express, broadcast from Hanoi on 27 March 1962) By implication, the only permissible subject for international talks was the international matter of American "interference." Hanoi's position on Geneva negotiations was, therefore, not a basis for discussing a ceasefire. In fact, it was not a position for any "negotiations"--that is, for talks which might be undertaken to arrive at a compromise and agreement. It was a demand for an American retreat: mutual concessions were ruled out. Even the concept of a "neutral" South was actually aimed at MACV. In late May 1962, Ho informed Sihanouk--using the pro-Soviet journalist Wilfred Burchett--that the creation of a "neutral" South would lead to the formation of a bloc of neutrals, namely, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Burma "with the ultimate result of forcing the closure of U.S. bases and the evacuation of U.S. forces from Southeast Asia."

Ho's duplicitous concept of a bloc of neutrals was later inserted into the Liberation Front's proposals of 17 July: "South Vietnam is ready to form with Cambodia and Laos a neutral zone in which each country enjoys full sovereignty." But negotiation was explicitly declared to be an "internal matter," and first on the list of neutralization proposals (which included a cease-fire and formation of a coalition government) was the demand that the MACV be dissolved and all American troops withdrawn from the South.

During the summer of 1962, the North Vietnamese felt the need to work more actively to enlist Khrushchev's support for an anti-U.S. conference. Pham Van Dong on 5 June demanded that the Geneva co-chairmen "draw serious

conclusions regarding the American policy of military aggression in South Vietnam. On that basis, they should hold consultations with the countries concerned so as to find effective measures to put an immediato end to the U.S. Imperialist policy of aggression." (emphasis supplied, indicating Hanoi's awareness of Khrushchev's foot-dragging) The North Vietnamese premier was openly critical of Great Britain, which "has not lived up to its position and obligations." The charge cut in the direction of Khrushchev. The North Vietnamese at the time were feeling the pinch of stepped up operations against the Viet Cong and hoped to influence the Soviet leader to reverse his desire to stand clear. Ho may have tried to press Khrushchev for an initiative on an international meeting. Reuters reported him in Moscow on 22 June; on 28 June, the North Vietnamese ambassador in Peking was dispatched to Moscow, apparently to participate in top level Soviet-DRV talks.

Prior to the meeting, Khrushchev had been reminded that the USSR is "a country having the initiative to convene the 1954 Geneva conference." (Nhan Dan editorial of 19 March 1962) But he continued to avoid requesting such a conference of the British, recognizing that the Western powers would resist such a request. Unlike his successors, he was willing to rebuff the North Vietnamese on matters pertaining to real political and military assistance for the Vietnam war. Unlike his successors, he was accorded increasing antipathy from men who had shown him less hostility than had the Chinese leaders and who had been willing to worsen their relations with the Chinese to gain Soviet support. Thus by summer 1962, the North Vietnamese saw the handwriting on the wall--namely, Soviet as well as Western and neutral opposition to a Geneva conference on Vietnam. Following the Soviet-DRV meeting in Moscow in late June, Ho and Pham Van Dong told Bernard Fall (on 13 July) that they agreed with the idea of a 14-nation conference, but that it would be "for later." They had failed in their effort to budge the Soviet leader at a time when he was needed to generate international pressure on Washington to dissolve MACV.

As for North-South negotiations, the North Vietnamese revealed the actual meaning of the concept to be

a process in which the Communists would talk with those elements in the South who agreed to surrender. Ho and Dong told Fall that "the situation is not ripe for negotiations....We want to negotiate with the South, but only with people who agree to sit down at a table and want to talk." That is, Diem was not prepared to talk about what he would give Ho even if Ho were on the way to taking it. Ho's conclusion was to continue taking it.

B. Laos-Type "Neutralization" Infeasible for Vietnam (August to October 1962)

The North Vietnamese viewed the Laos agreement of July 1962 as a deterrent to American involvement in the Laos fighting, but they were anxious to reject it as analogous to the situation in Vietnam. In Vietnam, they were determined to attain a military victory and were aware that Diem had refused negotiations, insisting on a military victory himself. Unlike Laos, there was no powerful neutralist figure in Vietnam who had the forces to make negotiations a real consideration. The Vietnamese Communists' real appraisal of the relevance of the Laos-type "neutralization" for the situation in South Vietnam was that it would become feasible only after military successes had smashed Saigon's ability and will to fight on. The Laos-type settlement was discussed in a Viet Cong document which evaluated strategy in the South, positing two possible developments which might lead to an American withdrawal:

> (1) negotiations forced on the enemy, resulting in "a situation like that of Laos," or
>
> (2) "the enemy may be obliged to recognize our sovereignty and independence, as happened in Algeria," and completely retreat. (Document dated 25 September 1962)

But the central point of the document was that armed struggle must be intensified, and the prospect of negotiating a

settlement (or a "temporary compromise") was viewed as feasible only when, and if, the US-ARVN military effort were to bog down. Another Viet Cong document pointed out:

> ...we should not overlook the possibility of peaceful developments that will gradually improve the revolutionary position. This possibility is at present very small, but the party must exert itself and develop it. Nevertheless, because the U.S.-Diem clique will never willingly step down, our party must get ready to bring them down by force. (Document of early October 1962)

Both documents stressed the protracted and arduous nature of the military effort ahead.

The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong seemed to believe that the prospects for negotiating a U.S. withdrawal would be good only when the enemy was hard pressed. By contrast, they seemed to be more reluctant to consider negotiations when their own forces were hard pressed. Thus the two above-mentioned documents discussed the prospects of a political settlement in the event of Viet Cong military successes; they did not discuss a settlement when the Viet Cong were bogged down militarily. They did not envisage a military defeat in the South. As some American forces were moved into the South in late 1962 and new airstrike action was taken against the Viet Cong, Hanoi matched the American effort by increasing its infiltration into the South. That is, the North Vietnamese rejected the alternative: reducing the size of the Communist forces (or standing pat with what was already in the field) and allowing the fighting to recede to a low boil.

C. DRV Militants Implicitly Rebuke Khrushchev (March - October 1963)

Khrushchev's policy of refusing to provide the North Vietnamese with military assistance and real

political support deprived him of leverage on Hanoi. His foot-dragging was reflected in the performance of CPSU secretary Andropov in North Vietnam. In his speech of 16 January 1963, Andropov verbally supported Hanoi's demand "for an end to interference and the withdrawal of all U.S. troops" from the South, but he indicated that Soviet aid was intended for the DRV's "economy," and he did not refer to strengthening its military defenses. His effort to gain Hanoi's support in the Sino-Soviet dispute was not successful--Nhan Dan on 20 January declared North Vietnamese support only for measures "aimed at strengthening solidarity within the international Communist movement and preventing a new world war." Khrushchev's attacks against the CCP by proxy at a series of Soviet bloc party congresses clearly had further antagonized the militants among the North Vietnamese leaders, who were angered by his non-support.

Le Duan led the militant attack. In his speech of 13 March 1963 at the Nguyen Ai Quoc Party School, he implicitly rejected Khrushchev's emphasis on "economic and ideological struggles" by insisting that they "must serve the cause of the political struggle." He declared revolutionary "violence" to be the "only way" to seize national power and criticized the "Yugoslav revisionists" for advocating a "road of class compromise," concluding with the demand that these revisionists should be "thoroughly exposed."

Some North Vietnamese leaders apparently tried to stand clear of the proliferating Sino-Soviet polemic and the swing to the left within the Lao Dong Party. Pham Van Dong, a moderate, did not criticize Khrushchev by implication and merely repeated the platitude that various Communist parties have "different opinions on certain questions." (Report to the DRV National Assembly of 29 April) This difference in treatment of Khrushchev reflected differences among the leaders in Hanoi. There is some evidence that tensions were high. Nhan Dan on 11 February 1963 had alluded to an inner-party dispute: differences "may arise not only between Communist and workers parties, but also right among comrades within the same party." Party first secretary Le Duan had also

hinted that an argument had taken place, the issue apparently being whether "to persevere" or "to retreat" in the South at a time when U.S. and ARVN forces had increased their military capability. (Speech of 13 March)*

Le Duan's hard-line course for continued military struggle apparently was the view that prevailed, and it was the guideline for future policy. Liu Shao-chi later indicated his satisfaction with Le Duan's hard-line when he stated in Hanoi on 12 May 1963 that emphasis on "sharp class struggle...was well said by Comrade Le Duan."

This move closer to the Chinese position did not mean that the North Vietnamese leadership had been penetrated by CCP agents or that it had become the doctrinal captive of Liu Shao-chi and the hard-line leaders of the CCP. (Liu, at the time, had come to Hanoi in May 1963 to try to move the North Vietnamese still closer to his and Mao's policy of non-compromise with Khrushchev.) Even the men usually depicted by foreign observers as pro-Chinese were independent of outside control, as witness the militant, Truong Chinh. Truong Chinh personally praised Liu Shao-chi in a speech in Hanoi on 15 May, but made it clear that he would not accept Liu's position on the need to reject "a middle course" between the CPSU and the CCP. He insisted that North Vietnam's progress is "inseparable" from the support of all other Communist parties, "particularly the CPSU and the CCP." (Truong Chinh is also reported to have commented to a foreign diplomat in May that North Vietnam would build socialism in line with its "own" position and national interests.) Ho Chi Minh himself strongly suggested to Liu that the North Vietnamese would not accept the entire CCP position in the dispute. He stated publicly in Liu's presence on

*For a detailed analysis of the inner-party dispute, see the DD/I Staff Study, "The North Vietnamese Party and the 'New Situation' in South Vietnam," (ESAU XXII-63), of July 1963.

10 May that "The Vietnamese Workers Party highly appreciates all the efforts made by the fraternal parties, first of all the CPSU and the CCP." Ho also told a Japanese trade union official in early May that he would not permit North Vietnam to become a victim of Chinese imperialism as in the past.

Although the North Vietnamese refused to adopt the CCP position that CCP and CPSU relations could not be returned to a state of cooperation, they were further angered by Khrushchev's move toward a degree of cooperation with Washington--signing of the tripartite partial test ban treaty in July. They used the party journal (Hoc Tap, issue of July 1963) to attack the Soviet leader--using the surrogate, "Tito"--for raising the unlikely prospect of a "world war with nuclear weapons" to conceal the real American plan to wage special wars and local wars; in this way, he hoped to avoid any "active" support for Communist-led small wars. They insisted (using Hoc Tap) that negotiations with Western leaders must not be used to "foresake the revolutionary interests of nations" and that armed struggle is "the main way" to seize power. On 15 July, a DRV Foreign Ministry statement implied that Khrushchev was not doing all he could. It called on all governments to severely condemn the U.S. openly and to demand a withdrawal of American troops. The statement requested the Geneva co-chairmen to "take every effective step to end the war." The militants' irritation with Khrushchev was also suggested when, on 2 September, Soviet deputy foreign minister Lapin, with some show of embarrassment, asked the British ambassador in Moscow if he had received a DRV declaration of late August. The clear implication was that the North Vietnamese had not provided Moscow with the usual prior knowledge of the content of a DRV declaration to the Geneva co-chairmen.

This was only one of several indications of the breakdown in Hanoi-Moscow cooperation. The North Vietnamese also pointed up the irrelevance of the partial test ban treaty to the Communist effort in South Vietnam. When the American delegation "came smilingly with an appearance of friendliness to Moscow," President Kennedy

stated in the U.S. that America "will continue to give aid to Diem...and is determined to stay in South Vietnam." (Hoc Tap, August 1963) The North Vietnamese were also impelled to attack the UN inspection team to investigate the Buddhist problem in the South in early October, clearly angered by the failure of the Soviet UN delegation to raise any objection to its formation. Khrushchev --"Tito"--was also criticized for depicting the South and the North as "two countries" in his "scheme to perpetuate the division of Vietnam." (Nhan Dan article of 10 October 1963)

In short, Hanoi's militants attacked Khrushchev's thinly veiled preference to avoid provoking Washington by real support of Hanoi. In reprisal, Khrushchev took punitive action against the North Vietnamese by withdrawing the type of political support which previously he had given as a routine matter. Polish members of ICC teams were directed--ultimately from Moscow, no doubt--to avoid defending the North Vietnamese against charges of violating the Geneva agreements.

Parallel with their implicit criticism of Khrushchev, the North Vietnamese sustained their distinction between internal talks and external pressure on the U.S. Negotiations was strictly an internal matter between "genuine representatives of the two zones," while the external matter pertained to the need for U.S. capitulation:

> Only by defeating U.S. aggression and forming a national coalition government in South Vietnam, as advocated in the Liberation Front program, can there be conditions to achieve peaceful reunification of the country. (Pham Van Dong speech to the DRV National Assembly of 29 April 1963)

The order of priorities was clearly U.S. withdrawal first and internal negotiations later. This order was set forward by the Liberation Front in a statement of 18 July 1963:

> We hold that the South Vietnamese problem cannot be settled without carrying out the Liberation Front program--that is, the US government must end its armed intervention and aggression in the South, dismantle the US military command in Saigon /MACV/, and withdraw all troops, weapons, and war materiel of the US and its satellites from the South. Then the parties concerned in South Vietnam must stop fighting with each other so as to restore peace and security, with the understanding that the South Vietnamese people will settle their own internal affairs, and a national, democratic, peaceful, and neutralist coalition government will be formed in South Vietnam. (emphasis supplied)

By avoiding the issue of negotiations with the U.S. about a cease-fire, the Communists side-stepped demands, primarily from neutrals, that both sides should make concessions. They worked at the same time to create an impression of reasonableness and to characterize the U.S. as intransigent on the matter of "neutralization"--a concept they knew De Gaulle would accept as the pretext for inducing an American withdrawal.

D. "Neutralization": A Finesse For Expelling the U.S. (June 1963 to March 1964)

Pham Van Dong used the ambiguous concept of neutralization on 29 June 1963 in his talk with the French Delegate General, who was leaving Hanoi and was a convenient channel for conveying Hanoi's line to Paris. De la Boissiere described the concept as the "Soviet solution"--which it had been at times in 1962 and 1963--but at the time, Pham Van Dong was clearly aware that it was the French solution, too. The departing Delegate General told American officials in Saigon that the DRV premier had insisted on some sort of arrangement to neutralize the country

as the only way the South could eject the Americans. Hanoi apparently hoped that De Gaulle would publicize this logic. They were irritated, therefore, when De Gaulle on 29 August 1963 went beyond Hanoi's concept by implying that the North as well as the South should be neutralized. They apparently viewed the French leader as having been deceptive with their own deceptive idea of a neutral South. In November 1963, they told the head of the Polish ICC mission in Laos that a final settlement could include neutralization, but went on to insist that any solution must include departure of American forces from the South.

Regarding negotiations, the North Vietnamese depicted it as still a matter between the North and the South (rather than between the Communists and the Americans). Even in the six "urgent demands" set forth by the Liberation Front on 8 November 1963 in an effort to erode the post-Diem authorities' will to resist, withdrawal was a key stipulation. (Negotiations for a cease-fire was an internal matter, and the formation of a neutral zone with Cambodia and Laos was the justification for demanding the ouster of American forces.)* It was clear, however, that neutralization would not be applied to the North.

The North Vietnamese privately indicated their view that the prospects for international negotiations for a U.S. withdrawal were dim. Pham Van Dong in November said just that to a non-Communist official, and went on to point to the main effort as being Viet Cong operations directed toward speeding up the process of disillusionment in the U.S. Having expressed Hanoi's essential intransigence, he ended his remarks by hinting that the Communists

*The North Vietnamese leaders at the time did not, and today do not, commit themselves to stopping the fighting if the U.S. were to withdraw. In effect, their position on this matter is: to fight or to cease fighting after an American departure is an "internal" matter.

would permit the Americans to retreat when they wanted to retreat: when the time was "ripe," he said, Hanoi would be as flexible as it was now rigid. At the time, in late 1963, the North Vietnamese acted to supply the Viet Cong, who were attacking in larger units, with more sophisticated weapons.

On the doctrinal level, the North Vietnamese militant line against international negotiations--that is, against talks between any Communist country and the U.S.--prevailed. They probably viewed Khrushchev's 31 December 1963 letter to heads of state on settling border conflicts through negotiations as cutting partly in their direction. They attacked his preference for political talks along the lines of the overall Chinese polemical offensive. They did not rule out international discussions, but insisted, in a general doctrinal formulation, that such talks must not deprive Communists of their revolutionary goals:

> Unprincipled negotiations and compromise, which do not proceed from the interests of revolution and do not rely on mass struggle, can only endanger revolution and world peace. In such cases, the greater good will we demonstrate for negotiations, the harder the imperialists will press us. The more concessions we make, the more they will demand. (Hoc Tap article of January 1964)

In short, they insisted that international negotiations must not stand in the way of a revolutionary seizure of power.*

*In mid-February 1964, the Chinese implicitly criticized Khrushchev for trying "to strike disgraceful bargains" with the U.S. at the "expense" of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. (Budapest speech of Chinese student delegate broadcast on 17 February)

However, the North Vietnamese continued to advocate national negotiations with anti-Saigon forces in the South as a possible way to induce the U.S. to withdraw. They were even willing to softpedal publicity for armed struggle as the only possible way to obtain an American pullout; they had the Liberation Front breathe new life into the idea of talks among Vietnamese. When, on 3 February 1964--following the coup in Saigon on 30 January--the Liberation Front issued its statement proposing a "reasonable negotiated settlement," the Front made it clear that the negotiators would be anti-Saigon elements in the South. The role of Washington was not that of negotiator. The Front's minimum program called for

> 1. The US imperialists to stop their war and withdraw all troops, weapons, and war materiel from South Vietnam.
>
> 2. The parties and forces in South Vietnam to negotiate with one another to seek a reasonable measure for the country on the basis of peace, independence, and neutrality in South Vietnam, and on the principle that the South Vietnamese people solve their internal affairs in the spirit of placing national interests above all. (emphasis supplied)

Demand (1) implied that withdrawal was a precondition for settlement, but did not state this explicitly. Demand (2) confined talks to the sphere of internal discussions.

The North Vietnamese again tried to use the bogus idea of neutrality to serve as the pretext for a U.S. withdrawal. They were angered by the implication of De Gaulle's position, namely, that neutralization was applicable to the North. They complained: why had "President Johnson" (read, "De Gaulle") raised "the question of neutralizing both zones of Vietnam, although he knows too well that our people will never accept the neutralization of North Vietnam?" (Nhan Dan article of 11 February 1964) Privately, they were not so delicate. In early February, Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong complained to the French parliamentary delegation about France's failure as a signatory

to carry out the Geneva agreements. Ho then repeated the demand that American troops withdraw to permit the Vietnamese "to settle their own problems." In March, the Indian ICC representative, back from a trip to Hanoi, reported that Pham Van Dong professed to see Senator Mansfield's comments on neutralization as the true position of the Administration, and stated that when the Administration takes this position publicly, Hanoi will do "everything possible" to permit "a dignified withdrawal by the U.S. from South Vietnam." This apparently differed from the Chinese view which reflected Mao's desire to inflict a disastrous and clear-cut military defeat on all American forces in the South and a face-losing withdrawal.

E. Hanoi Says Military Successes Must Precede Talks (April - May 1964)

But before withdrawal could become a lively possibility, the North Vietnamese calculated that some defeats would have to be imposed on U.S. forces. Some defeats had been imposed on French forces in 1953 and 1954 before Paris agreed to withdraw, and the analogy was viewed as being relevant to the current situation in the South.

Hanoi's rejection of any international talks before attaining a series of military successes in the South was strongly suggested in remarks made in April and May 1964. Writing in the theoretical journal Hoc Tap in April, Major General Hoang Van Thai stated that the 1954 and 1962 Geneva conferences were convened "only after" important military defeats had been administered to the enemy. That is, negotiations could not be held when the enemy was still confident regarding his over-all military position. General Giap made the definitive North Vietnamese statement on the situation which should prevail before talks with the U.S. could begin. Giap declared on 13 April:

> We know that Dien Bien Phu opened the way for the conclusion of the 1954

> Geneva agreements which established peace in Indochina...All negotiations with the imperialists must be backed up by a resolute struggle under all forms against their perfidious designs. Only when the people's forces have grown in their struggle are the imperialists compelled to renounce their privileges and interests and recognize our legitimate rights. (Interview with Wilfred Burchett, released on 9 May 1964) (emphasis supplied)

Giap indicated that this position was that of Ho Chi Minh. Giap claimed that "Washington is now looking for a way out," the implication having been that the U.S. was probing Hanoi's attitude toward talks. "But the only possible way out, the only solution, our President Ho Chi Minh told you this morning."

Giap's version of Ho's position as well as that of the Liberation Front contained the unusual formulation that "The prerequisite /for a settlement/ must be the complete withdrawal" of American forces and equipment. "Prerequisite" had not appeared in Hanoi's vocabulary because it created the impression of unreasonable demands originating with the North Vietnamese. Further, it was anathema to the Soviet leaders, who preferred the usual Hanoi locutions which avoided any talk of prerequisites, preconditions, or prior pledges.* Ho's main message to Washington and the West in the spring of 1964 was that even in the face of probable escalation of the war, Hanoi would not end its military effort in the South.

*Soviet sensitivity to Vietnamese Communist usage was indicated in the spring of 1963. After TASS had reported that in an important article on Vietnam the chairman of the Liberation Front had declared that "The US must give a solemn undertaking to withdraw its armed forces...," in Pravda's purported version (7 May 1963) this demand for a prior pledge was deleted.

Ho also tried to indicate that the North Vietnamese were not completely helpless and, in the event of air-strikes against targets in the North, Vietnamese "both North and South" would fight together and fight harder. (Although Giap warned that an American attack "would be quite dangerous" for the U.S., he did not cite Chinese or Soviet support as a deterrent.) To what degree were Khrushchev and Mao willing to support Hanoi's effort in the South?

F. Mao Increases Support for DRV as Khrushchev Stands Aside (January 1964 to August 1964)

Hanoi's militants, while taking a hard line with Khrushchev, returned to the abandoned effort to move him toward real support in January 1964. The Soviet leader was invited to end his footdragging at a time when a major Soviet deterrent statement was needed to warn the U.S. against beginning airstrikes over the North. "We continue to call for ever more practical and vigorous support." (Nguyen Van Vinh article in Hoc Tap of January 1964) At the same time, Le Duan's trip to Moscow to gain Soviet aid apparently was a failure; the North Vietnamese continued to demand "practical" aid. (Nhan Dan editorial of 15 February) This editorial referred to a Soviet statement of support and went on to raise a plea: "We clearly see that, transformed into practical deeds, this statement will be valuable." But Khrushchev's apparent decision at the time was to persist in his policy of non-involvement.

By contrast, Mao became increasingly involved, particularly following American actions to bolster Laotian and ARVN forces after the Communist offensive of mid-May

1964.* Mao apparently decided to review the Indochina military situation in the context of the clear demonstration of U.S. determination. In mid-June 1964, he and other Chinese leaders met at the "work conference" of the CCP Central Committee and apparently decided, among other things, to increase logistic support for Hanoi. The North Vietnamese were contacted directly [redacted] Secret talks with the Chinese apparently began on the 20th, continuing on various levels thereafter in Peking, Kunming, and probably Hanoi until early July. The completion of the DRV's major tactical airfield at Phuc Yen took place during the series of Chinese-Vietnamese military meetings.**

*Chinese military experts apparently met with North Vietnamese officers at a conference in Mengtzu in February, probably to discuss Chinese logistic aid and possibly to begin planning for joint air defense arrangements. Stiffened by signs of Chinese support, a North Vietnamese official, reflecting Hanoi's thinking, told [redacted] in mid-February that if the U.S. were to introduce more forces and equipment into the South, the Communists would match such increases. He also said that Hanoi was ready to deal with any U.S. airstrikes against the North; air defense preparations were noted by Westerners in North Vietnam in February.

**Despite increasing involvement, the Chinese all along were careful to avoid identifying Peking in any direct military sense with Hanoi's defense effort. They also were careful to avoid open commitments to defend North Vietnamese territory. For example, when Lt. General Nguyen Van Vinh discussed a hypothetical "invasion" of the North by U.S. ground forces and then referred to the consequences--viz., that the U.S. "would have to cope not only with North Vietnam, but also with China" (Hoc Tap article of January 1964)--the Chinese deleted this key passage in their reprint.

For a detailed analysis of Peking's caution see the DD/I Staff Study, "The Sino-Vietnamese Effort to Limit American Actions in The Vietnam War," (POLO XX), of June 1965, RSS No. 0008/65.

Despite their concern, which increased in the first half of 1964, the North Vietnamese neither backed off from their military-support role of the Viet Cong nor softened their position that negotiations was a matter for Vietnamese alone. U.S. troops must be "completely withdrawn from the South, and the people of the South must themselves decide their own affairs." (DRV Foreign Ministry statement of 11 February 1964)* Repeating their line of October 1963, they stated their intention to persevere in "a long and hard struggle." (Le Duc Tho article in Nhan Dan of 3 February and Ho Chi Minh interview of 29 February) At the same time, they implied that Khrushchev should desist from his policy of denying Hanoi valuable military equipment: "We must strengthen the national defense forces of all socialist countries, and not only that of one particular country." (Pham Hung article in Hoc Tap of May 1964) Nevertheless, Khrushchev held back and refused to supply the North Vietnamese with any important military aid.

During the CCP Central Committee "work conference" in June, Khrushchev may have tried to warn Mao and the North Vietnamese that the USSR would not necessarily support them in the event of an enlarged war. Pravda on 21 June carried an article which warned that China could not count on Soviet support. The Chinese stated, through a Hong Kong channel, that this Soviet position encouraged rather than deterred Washington:

> ...such an indication /that the Sino-Soviet treaty was a dead letter/ by the CPSU leaders at a time when the U.S. is rattling its sabre is tantamount to telling the U.S., 'You can go ahead in Indochina

*The Chinese reiterated their will to support Hanoi: "to relax tension in Asia, it is necessary for US imperialism to get out of Asia and not for China to refrain from supporting the peoples in their struggle." (People's Daily article of 19 February 1964)

....You don't have to worry about Soviet assistance to the people of Laos, South Vietnam, and China.' (Hong Kong Wen Wei Pao commentary of 23 June)

The Hong Kong channel also stated that

Khrushchev...even indicated an intention not to fulfill the responsibilities of the Sino-Soviet alliance so as to encourage American war threats against the people of Indochina and China and to force China not to resist American aggression....Khrushchev has degenerated into a conspirator of U.S. aggression. (commentary of 14 July)

Khrushchev's non-support made it easy for the Chinese to disgrace him further in the view of the North Vietnamese by declaring that China always maintained that "it is an unshirkable proletarian internationalist duty to safeguard the peace and security of the entire socialist camp, to protect all its members from imperialist aggression." (People's Daily editorial of 9 July)

The North Vietnamese militants sustained their attack against Khrushchev. An article by Le Chuong in the July 1964 issue of Hoc Tap stated that the policy of making concessions to the U.S. is not the road to peace "nor is it the road to drive back aggression and enslavement by the U.S. imperialists in South Vietnam....The liberation of South Vietnam can be settled only by force." This hard-line criticism of Khrushchev's policy--or what the militants projected as being his policy--was similar to that of Le Duan, whose report to the Lao Dong Party Central Committee of December 1963 was published in February 1964 with implicit anti-Khrushchev thrusts.

Khrushchev's "betrayal" (non-support) of Hanoi was made even clearer immediately following the 5 August U.S. airstrikes against targets in the North during the Gulf of Tonkin incident. The failure of the Soviet United Nations delegation to refute the American account of the

North Vietnamese naval attack was criticized by Peking on 6 August, and Khrushchev was attacked by name by the Chinese on the 11th for delaying his response and for non-support. , the Chinese complained that Khrushchev had kept in step with the U.S. and had not even consulted Hanoi about raising the matter in the United Nations. They charged that "this acceptance of the U.S. taking the Indochina question to the United Nations is an even bigger betrayal....What does all this show except that Khrushchev had given an assurance that he would not intervene in Southeast Asia, but would keep aloof from that region?"

When this pressure impelled Khrushchev--who seemed to accept the U.S. version of the Gulf incident--to demonstrate at least verbal support for Hanoi, he suggested collective rather than Soviet concern: "The DRV is a member of the mighty socialist camp, and all socialist countries will rise in its defense." (Speech in Prague of 29 August)

The Chinese were somewhat less ambiguous, but they acted with caution. Privately, they were anxious to convey to Washington an impression of restraint, almost certainly to deter the U.S. from moving the target of its strikes to the mainland.* In mid-August, Vice Premier

*Shortly before the airstrikes, Chen Yi tried to convey to the U.S. the impression that Khrushchev should be bound by the Sino-Soviet treaty to help China in the event of airstrikes against the mainland. In an early August interview with a Pakistani newsman, he insisted that Peking "faithfully stood by the Sino-Soviet treaty" and that it was still binding on Moscow. The treaty "cannot be torn up at will. Otherwise, what sense is there to conclude a treaty?" He was following the Maoist tactic of citing the validity of the treaty when a Soviet deterrent was needed--the other side of the Chinese practice of disparaging its validity when such a deterrent was not needed.

Li Hsien-nien told a Pakistani official that Peking intended to "recoup the losses by acting on the diplomatic front." Although warning that Chinese public threats should be taken seriously by Washington, he emphasized Peking's "patient and moderate" response to the 5 August airstrikes. That is, they wanted the U.S. to be deterred by Chinese verbal involvement. Privately, they acted to keep their real involvement limited. They apparently consulted with the North Vietnamese at a high level to reappraise American intentions and determine Hanoi's air defense needs.

More than 30 jet fighters deployed to Phuc Yen airfield on 6 and 7 August--a contingency move probably prepared earlier in Chinese-Vietnamese meetings in late June. Chinese officials, however, were careful to point out the distinction between who would engage in the real fighting and who would play a supporting role. Liao Cheng-chih said that if the U.S. were to escalate the war, "the Vietnamese people" would annihilate American forces (speech of 9 August), and Chen Yi committed only the Vietnamese--not the Chinese--to administer "a resolute rebuff" to the U.S. in the event of resumed airstrikes (statement of 7 September).

G. Mao Insists on Forcing U.S. to Withdraw (September 1964)

Peking's controlled involvement reflected Mao's determination--in fact, Mao's preference--to administer by proxy a major military defeat on U.S. forces in the Far East. The intensified Sino-Soviet dispute led him to a doctrinal compulsion to prove the efficacy of small wars against the U.S. military capability. His rejection of a political settlement is strongly suggested by remarks he made on 11 September.

In response to the question regarding "a solution" to the crisis in Indochina, Mao stated:

> There will be no speedy solution...We must wait for the day when the US will be forced to withdraw.

He went on to say that the U.S. was not willing to pull out, that the U.S. had "not yet" learned from the French precedent in the area, and that Washington would not accept Paris' advice ("listen to your words"). When asked again if a "peaceful solution" were possible, Mao conceded that it was a possibility, but clearly emphasized a military solution: "We must fight until the Americans no longer want to fight." He said nothing, one way or the other, about making a U.S. withdrawal a precondition for an international conference on Vietnam, noting only that the U.S. was not prepared to surrender because it opposed the convening of a conference. He implied British and Soviet support for this American attitude, inasmuch as neither government was "actively for it." Mao made this statement one month before Khrushchev fell and was replaced by leaders who were anxious for a conference. This new Soviet attitude was an important factor in hardening him against a conference in 1965-66.

II. SINO-VIETNAMESE DISAGREEMENT ON NEGOTIATIONS AS KHRUSHCHEV IS REPLACED (October 1964 to April 1965)

A. Peking Departs from Hanoi's View on Timing of International Negotiations (October 1964 to January 1965)

When, in mid-October 1964, Khrushchev was brought down by a heterogeneous group, the majority of whom were more ideologically oriented than their predecessor, his policy of working for "normal"--i.e., doctrinally untainted--relations with the U.S. (at the expense of Soviet influence in Hanoi) was reappraised. The new leaders apparently concluded, roughly at the time Pham Van Dong discussed the war with them in Moscow in November 1964, that the primary defect of Khrushchev's policy of non-support was: it had exposed the CPSU to effective political attacks from the CCP. And when, in December and January, they probed U.S. intentions to determine the degree of escalation which Washington considered feasible and safe, they seem to have concluded that direct Soviet military involvement with U.S. forces was unlikely and, at the worst, a risk which could be controlled. Moreover, they apparently believed that the U.S. wanted a way out. They felt secure, therefore, in trying to increase their influence (and reduce Chinese influence) with Ho by beginning a program of military and political support.

Nevertheless, they retained the former basic Soviet preference--viz., to have Ho end the war. Thus they were enmeshed in a dilemma between increasing aid, which sustained Ho's desire and ability to keep fighting, and working for international negotiations, which undercut that desire. They apparently believed that a marginal chance existed for resolving the dilemma by convincing Ho to negotiate an American withdrawal.

All along, Peking and Hanoi apparently had agreed on the desirability of continuing the military effort and on the timing of international negotiations. They apparently held in reserve their differences on whether

to subject the U.S. to a total military disgrace (as Mao preferred) or to permit the U.S. to make a face-saving withdrawal (as Ho preferred or was willing to accept). When, however, the new Soviet leadership raised the possibility of negotiating an American pullout, Peking acted to make this an impossibility. So long as Khrushchev was in power and continued to avoid involvement in Vietnam, refusing to pressure Washington to withdraw, the Chinese were not worried about the prospects of any international negotiations on Vietnam taking place. But when Khrushchev's successors, starting in November 1964, began to rebuild the Moscow-Hanoi relationship which Khrushchev had almost completely destroyed, the Chinese began to reveal considerable sensitivity to the issue of negotiations.* They feared that Moscow's basic preference for talks would now be pressed upon Hanoi with a better chance of success, and began to fight a new holding battle. Their suspicion of Ho's intentions increased as they detected traces of flexibility in Hanoi's view of international negotiations.

In the most extensive public discussion of preconditions for negotiations up to that time (December 1964), the North Vietnamese indicated that they were in a strong military and political position and stated that they would talk when the Americans were ready to withdraw. They were looking for indications that the Americans were ready.**

*Following discussions with Pham Van Dong in Moscow in November 1964, the Soviets delivered self-propelled anti-aircraft guns, which arrived by cargo ship in Haiphong on 22 December. This sign and other signs--such as Hanoi's drastic reduction of anti-Soviet criticism beginning in November--alerted the Chinese to the new influence the Russians were attaining with the North Vietnamese. (For a discussion of Soviet military aid to North Vietnam see the DD/I Intelligence Study, "The 1965 Sino-Soviet-Vietnamese Controversy over Soviet Military Aid to Hanoi," ESAU XXIX, RSS No. 0012/65, 20 December 1965)

**They were looking for an indication that Washington had changed, or would be willing to change, the position set forth by Ambassador Lodge in his public statement in Paris on 18 August 1964: the "first and absolute prerequisite condition" for a conference would be the cessation of Vietnamese Communist intrusions into the South.

They stated that the U.S. "is not willing to enter into negotiations because it is in a losing position." (Nhan Dan article of 5 December 1964) The issue of American conditions for talks was openly and fully discussed for the first time in the Nhan Dan editorial of 19 December. Noting that Dien Bien Phu had "forced the enemy to accept defeat," this important editorial complained that

> Though heavily defeated, they obdurately ask that their opponent should negotiate on the basis of their conditions. As vanquished, they insist on being defeated with honor. We must continue to fight. We are determined to oppose aggression, but are not intransigent....
>
> When the aggressor gives up his aggressive scheme and respects our independence and sovereignty, we are ready to talk peace with him. (emphasis supplied)

The North Vietnamese leaders indicated their view that the precedent of the 1954 French withdrawal could point the way to an eventual American pullout. As the 19 December editorial put it:

> We carried out a protracted war against the French...and even when we won great victory at Dien Bien Phu, we were prepared to hold peaceful negotiations with the French at the Geneva conference. But we also realized that unless the Dien Bien Phu victory was won, the French would not have gone to Geneva for peaceful negotiations with us. As for the U.S. aggressors, although they have been burnt to the eyebrows, they stubbornly maintain that their situation is critical but has not yet come a cropper. Talks by means of weapons must be continued more vigorously.

The implications of this passage are:

(1) the U.S. must be forced to consider withdrawal, and

(2) when Washington is prepared to do so, a total defeat of all American forces is not necessary; the withdrawal could be negotiated to save face for Washington.

But the Chinese leaders moved to make (2) an impossibility by raising conditions which would prevent Washington from ever moving toward talks. First, aware of the Washington-Saigon position against holding talks with representatives of the Liberation Front, the Chinese in late December 1964 greatly intensified the North Vietnamese effort to depict the Front as the only legitimate representative of the South Vietnamese. Second, aware that Washington would not agree to withdraw American forces prior to receiving adequate guarantees from the Communist side, the Chinese made an actual American withdrawal a precondition for an international conference on Vietnam. The following discussion will examine the two-pronged Chinese spoiling effort and will then turn to Moscow's political maneuvers to improve the prospects for negotiations.

B. Peking Helps to Upgrade the Role of the Liberation Front (December 1964)

In late December, when Hanoi was celebrating three anniversaries with about equal publicity for each, the Chinese downplayed two and emphasized the importance of the third--i.e., the founding of the Liberation Front in December 1960.* Both in the nature and in the number of

*By contrast with their treatment of (1) the Liberation Front's anniversary, the Chinese downplayed (2) the beginning of the Viet Minh resistance war and (3) the founding of the PAVN anniversaries.
(footnote continued on page 28)

their comments, the Chinese exceeded the North Vietnamese in praise for the Front as the leader of the Southerners. Chen Yi made the strongest Peking statement of support for the Front up to that time. Chen declared that the Front

> has now become the genuine representative of the 14 million South Vietnamese people, and the South Vietnam question can only be settled through negotiations without outside interference and in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front and the desire of the South Vietnamese people. There is no other way out. (Speech of 19 December 1964) (emphasis supplied)

Hanoi's VNA account of Chen's speech omitted this entire passage, which had upgraded the Front. The North Vietnamese, anxious to maintain the fiction of the Front's autonomy, were careful to create the impression that they had played no directing role in upgrading the Front's status. Moreover, they apparently hoped to sustain their pose of flexibility. But the Chinese had no such requirements and they extensively publicized, with exaggeration, the political status of the Front.

(footnote continued from page 27)

As for the PAVN anniversary, they went so far as to indicate their annoyance with Hanoi for claiming, in the fall and winter of 1964, that North Vietnamese had originated the strategy and tactics of "people's war." Implicitly rebuking General Giap, a Peking Red Flag article of 22 December, published precisely on the PAVN anniversary date, made no mention of the PAVN and insisted that Mao, "and no one else," was the originator of the concept of annihilation guerrilla war. (For a fuller discussion, see the DD/I Intelligence Memorandum, "Peiping-Hanoi Differences over Doctrine and Strategy for the Viet Cong," RSS No. 0006/65, 2 April 1965.)

Interposing the Front as a major force and therefore as the legitimate negotiator for the Communist side in international talks was welcomed by the Chinese as a way to make such talks impossible. In December 1964, they apparently welcomed any move from Hanoi to thrust the Front forward as a major political force. An NCNA report of the 19 December reception in Peking described the Front as the "organizer and leader of victorious revolutionary struggle of the South Vietnamese" and then quoted the acting head of the Front's Peking office as claiming that the Front was expanding daily and had formed "basic level units" in the countryside and the cities. However, Hanoi's VNA version omitted both statements. Only in the following months did Hanoi, in statements attributed to North Vietnamese, exaggerate the role of the Front publicly as Peking had started to do in December. It was important, in the view of the Chinese leaders, to publicize the Front as a negotiator at a time when the post-Khrushchev leadership was moving to influence Hanoi, if possible, to consider the possibility of negotiations with the U.S. and to probe Washington to determine its view on talks.

C. Peking Opposes Vietnam Negotiations Until After an American Withdrawal (January 1965)

In addition to greatly increasing publicity for the Front, the Chinese leaders acted to spoil any real prospects for negotiations by introducing a precondition which Washington could not accept. This precondition was the demand that the U.S. withdraw its forces before talks could take place. They were aware that the U.S. would reject a procedure in which the key matter to be negotiated had already been resolved before talks started.

The Chinese leaders shifted to this tactic when Edgar Snow, using an apparently pre-arranged question, asked Mao on 9 January 1965: "Is it your policy now to insist upon the withdrawal of US forces before participating in a Geneva conference to discuss the international position of a unified Vietnam?" Neither in private

discussions or published materials had the Chinese previously mentioned the tactic of withdrawal before holding an international conference. It was a new ploy, almost certainly directed against Moscow and Hanoi: the Soviet and the North Vietnamese did not refer to this Maoist position in private or public statements. Their position was that there could be no final settlement without a U.S. withdrawal, but the start of negotiations would not require prior withdrawal.

In his reply, Mao is quoted by Snow as having raised several possibilities. By talking around the point, Mao partially concealed the new Chinese position among a range of four possibilities in order to avoid the appearance of increased intransigence. (Furthermore, by raising four possibilities, Mao was ensuring his infallibility, inasmuch as he could hardly be proven wrong on all four.)

> Several possibilities should be mentioned. First, a conference might be held and US withdrawal would follow. Second, the conference might be deferred until after a withdrawal. Third, a conference might be held but US troops might stay around Saigon, as in the case of Korea. Finally, the South Vietnamese Front might drive out the Americans without any conference or international agreement. (emphasis supplied)

It will be clear from the December 1964 upgrading of the Front and the Maoist downplaying of negotiations, that Mao really preferred that the final possibility would be attained. But he was speaking in the context of a question on talks before or after a U.S. withdrawal. That, faced with consideration of a conference, he preferred the position underscored in the passage above was later indicated by the chief NCNA official in Paris. He stated [redacted] on 18 February 1965 that Mao had raised four possible developments of the Vietnam war, but the Chinese "greatly prefer" the possibility of a U.S. "retreat first, followed by negotiations." By contrast, Soviet and North Vietnamese demands for an American withdrawal did not indicate when this was to take place.

This interpretation--namely, that Mao had introduced a precondition which hardened the Chinese position--is supported by two versions of Chou En-lai's January 1965 statement to Edgar Snow. According to one version, Chou told Snow that

> The only precondition for an international conference is, as Chairman Mao Tse-tung has stated, the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam. (Tokyo Ashai version of 27 February 1965, evening edition)

According to a later version of Chou's remark, the Chinese desired a conference to be held "immediately" on Laos and Cambodia, but not on Vietnam. Regarding Vietnam, the "prerequisite question," Chou said, was withdrawal, not a conference:

> The present state of South Vietnam is not such as demands the immediate holding of an international conference. The biggest and most prerequisite question is the withdrawal of American forces. (Tokyo Ashai version, 7 March 1965, Weekly Issue)

This second version in effect made withdrawal of American forces a precondition for holding any international negotiations on Vietnam. It is close to the position "retreat first, followed by negotiations." Although the Chinese leaders told President Ayub in Peking on 7 March that they might agree to participate in an international conference without preconditions, they insisted that if negotiations were mentioned in the Sino-Pakistan communique, the statement must include withdrawal of U.S. forces as a condition for talks. As a result, no direct reference was made to Vietnam.

Taken together, the positions of Mao and Chou apparently were intended to undercut any Soviet move to use a Geneva conference on Laos as the venue for beginning talks on South Vietnam at a time when Hanoi had begun to discuss more extensively than ever before Washington's attitude toward Vietnam negotiations.

D. Moscow Suggests a "Way Out" For the U.S. (February 1965)

Fragmentary reports suggest that Kosygin proposed to Chou and Chen Yi on 5 February that the matter of negotiations should be considered as the means for permitting Washington to withdraw with face.* Chinese officials told [redacted] in late February that Kosygin had tried to help the U.S. extricate itself from a "losing" situation in such a way as to permit the Americans to salvage a measure of international respect. Chen Yi's own eliptical version of Kosygin's 5 February proposal was that China had been asked "to persuade North Vietnam to agree to negotiate peace...At that time, I answered that the North Vietnamese people's struggle had been going on even before the Chinese revolution, and that if China did as it was asked to, China would be laughed at for its cowardice." (Interview with Japanese parliamentarians, Tokyo Shimbun, 2 June 1965) That is, Chen rejected the negotiations proposal and the suggestion that Peking apply pressure to Hanoi. Yet another Chinese Communist version did not mention the matter of Kosygin's alleged request for applying pressure on Hanoi, but described his negotiations proposal:

> In the course of the exchange of opinions between China and the Soviet Union, Comrade Kosygin emphasized the necessity to help the

*Chou also met with Kosygin on 10 February in Peking after the latter's visit to Hanoi, but it is not known whether the matter of negotiations on Vietnam was discussed. Kosygin stated on 11 February (in a discussion with Mao) that he had discussed the matter of "what help to give" Hanoi with Chou as well as with the North Vietnamese, and when Mao said Soviet aid was "small," Kosygin suggested that Peking "could help with aviation." Mao rejected the suggestion.

U.S. "find a way out of Vietnam." In complete earnest we pointed out at that time that since the American imperialists were stepping up their aggression against Vietnam, this was no time to negotiate with the American aggressors, but rather to take up arms with a view to resisting them. We hoped that you would not seek a way out for the U.S., nor make any settlement with them concerning the Vietnamese question. At that time, Comrade Kosygin expressed agreement with our views and declared that the new Soviet leadership "would not bargain with others over this question." (CCP letter to CPSU of 14 July 1965)

The Chinese rebuff did not prevent Kosygin and the Soviet leadership from pressing on to explore the possibilities of a conference on Vietnam.

In Hanoi, Kosygin probably broached the matter of an international conference with the North Vietnamese leaders. On 7 February, he agreed with the "DRV Government" that a conference on Laos should be held, but went beyond this to state the position of the "Soviet Union" in support of the resolution of the Cairo nonaligned nations conference for the convocation of "a new international conference on Indochina with a view to the peaceful settlement of the questions which have arisen there." This careful distinction between Hanoi's desire for a conference on Laos and Moscow's support for a conference on "Indochina" (read "Vietnam") suggests that the North Vietnamese were reluctant to commit themselves to international negotiations on the war in the South. However, unlike the Chinese, they had not rejected it publicly.

Hanoi's public position in February was noncommittal. The new Soviet leadership was neither attacked nor directly supported in its effort to continue exploring the possibilities for convening a conference on Vietnam. The North Vietnamese attitude at the time seemed to be one of tacit acquiescence in the Soviet maneuvering.

That Kosygin did not gain a clear-cut agreement to advocate an international conference is suggested by two statements he made in Hanoi following the 7 February attack on Pleiku. (1) He stated publicly that the Indochinese people's right to self-determination was "a basis...to normalize the situation in Southeast Asia," but did not declare that a conference would be the road to normalization. (speech of 8 February) (2) He also stated publicly that unanimity of views had been reached with the North Vietnamese only on measures for strengthening "the defense potential of the DRV," while "frank talks" had taken place on many international problems. (farewell speech of 10 February) Failure to gain Hanoi's clear-cut concurrence is also suggested by the absence of any North Vietnamese comment, during his visit, on the convening of a conference on Vietnam. Further, deputy foreign ministers Zorin and Lapin, between 11 and 17 February, avoided replying to questions regarding Soviet support for a conference when asked by the French and British ambassadors.

On the other hand, that Kosygin had not been given a clear-cut rejection is suggested by Hanoi's subsequent public treatment of appeals for convening an international meeting. Hanoi noted the French government statement of 10 February which was paraphrased as declaring that "an international agreement must be signed" to eliminate interference in Indochina,* Canadian Premier Pearson's statement of 10 February approving "the convening of an international conference to peacefully solve the Indochina problem,"

*On 10 February, TASS promptly reported the French appeal and Indira Ghandi's call for a "14-nation conference on Indochina;" on 16 February, Pravda publicized WPC President Bernal's call for a conference; and on the 17th, a Pravda commentator noted French, Canadian, and Burmese proposals as well as the favorable attitude toward a political solution by certain "far-sighted" officials in Washington.

and the U Thant and Burmese statements declaring that the U.S. "must find a way other than the military one in South Vietnam." (Nhan Dan article of 14 February)

This treatment suggests that at least some of the North Vietnamese leaders (i.e., the moderates) were willing to publicize the appeals of other governments for a conference following Kosygin's private proposal--certainly to Peking and probably to Hanoi--that there was a need to "find a way out of Vietnam" for the U.S. That at least some of the North Vietnamese leaders acquiesced in Moscow's probes in a period of initial exploration is also suggested by the strong attack leveled at the British for opposing a conference. Prime Minister Wilson was attacked because

> He was rash enough to say that the attacks against the DRV are unavoidable and the present moment is not yet convenient for the convening of a Geneva conference on Indochina. (Nhan Dan article of 14 February)

In short, the French, Canadian, and Burmese proposals for a conference were implicitly favored while the British rejection was disparaged, Hanoi's apparent intention being to sustain a degree of flexibility.

By tolerating the probes of other governments, the North Vietnamese retained for themselves a degree of flexibility either to move toward an international conference (if the Russians could ever stimulate one) or away from a conference (if the Russians failed). In either case, they would not appear anxious for negotiations at a time of increased American pressure--namely, the airstrikes against the North on 7, 8, and 11 February. The North Vietnamese tactic of maintaining an ambiguous position probably was also designed to deflect Chinese Communist criticism, inasmuch as they could later argue that they had not explicitly agreed to Kosygin's proposal. That the Chinese in mid-February 1965 were uncertain and even distrustful of Hanoi's ambiguity is suggested by the statement of the Chinese Communist editor of the Hong Kong Ta Kung Pao. When asked on 15 February by an American correspondent what Peking's attitude toward

negotiations on Vietnam might be, he replied that Hanoi might be willing to engage in talks, but even if it were to do so, it could not speak for the Viet Cong.

Hanoi's tacit acquiescence at the time apparently encouraged the Soviet leaders to propose, to Peking and Hanoi simultaneously, that a joint public appeal for an international conference should be made. The Chinese later complained that following Kosygin's return to Moscow, the Soviet leaders "behind the backs of Vietnam and China, actively engaged in international maneuvering for 'peace negotiations.'" The Chinese did not support their charge that these machinations were undertaken without Hanoi's knowledge, and it is unlikely that the Soviet leaders would have continued to probe if Kosygin had been given a clear-cut "no" in Hanoi. The Chinese complained that

> The most striking of all was the fact that on 16 February, the day after Comrade Kosygin's return to Moscow, the Soviet Government officially proposed to Vietnam and China to call for a new conference on Indochina, which in effect was tantamount to defending "unconditional negotiations" on the Vietnamese question. (CCP letter to CPSU of 14 July 1965)

Upon Kosygin's return, the Soviet leaders may have decided to try to demonstrate to the North Vietnamese the detrimental aspect of Chinese inflexibility on a matter requiring diplomatic maneuvering to help limit the degree of Washington's involvement in Vietnam. They apparently believed that, at the very least, the whole matter of negotiations could create Peking-Hanoi tensions. [redacted] a senior NCNA official complained [redacted] in mid-March that "America" may try to "separate Peking from Hanoi with talk about conferences." He went on to say that the North Vietnamese would "in principle," always be interested in an international conference, but that it would be unrealistic to convene one as desired by the Soviets, Indians, and Yugoslavs.

This is the first known suggestion from a Chinese Communist source that the subject of an international conference could create Sino-Vietnamese differences.

In the wake of American airstrikes (beginning on 7 February), the Soviet leaders' room for political maneuvering was drastically reduced. They were impelled to criticize Washington for air attacks on a bloc country while, at the same time, they were seeking some means for stimulating a desire among foreign governments for negotiations. The two actions were incompatible. Their statements reflected their anger and frustration at being unable to move forward politically. Regarding their anger over the retarding effect which the airstrikes had had on the Soviet moves to explore the possibilities for holding a conference, on 15 February deputy foreign minister Zorin told a Western diplomat that (a) Washington regularly had rejected any hint of a conference and (b) the Soviet Union would only help the North Vietnamese: "there is no other policy to be expected from us." At the same time, the Soviets almost in desperation continued to seek some sign of support from the French. They directed Ambassador Vinogradov in Paris to submit a document on international talks to De Gaulle. the document which Vinogradov left with the French president on 23 February did not use the word "conference," suggesting that Moscow recognized that a precondition must be set forth if Hanoi were ever to be persuaded to talk. It opened with a statement of Soviet concern regarding the Vietnam situation and went on to say that the time is now ripe for negotiations, the only precondition now being that Washington must not take armed action against North Vietnam. The suspension of American airstrikes, the Soviet leaders apparently believed, was absolutely necessary if they were to have any chance of budging the North Vietnamese leaders to consider negotiations and they had no assurance that such a suspension would be sufficient cause for Hanoi to agree to talk.

the Soviet leaders were under considerable

pressure from the Chinese to take a strong line against the U.S., to refrain from pressing for a Vietnam conference, and to stress the demand for an American withdrawal. the Soviet leaders had stated with regard to India's note of 8 February--that if the U.S. ceased actions against the North and if the North Vietnamese were willing, Moscow would have no objection to going to a conference. The Soviets also indicated that they would not object to having hints to the North Vietnamese about what kind of settlement might be acceptable to the West.

Hanoi's apparent equivocation probably reflected the North Vietnamese tactic of trying to secure a cessation of U.S. airstrikes against the North by implying that the first precondition for any conference--which Hanoi did not rule out as a prospective development--must be an end to bombing. The North Vietnamese apparently found no reason to discourage Moscow's efforts to press Washington to stop the airstrikes; they acquiesced, therefore, in Soviet maneuvers. In the period between the time of the Soviet proposal to Hanoi and Peking that an appeal should be made for convening a conference on Vietnam (16 February) and the time when the Chinese claim to have rejected the Soviet suggestion (27 February), Hanoi did not attack the concept of an international conference or negotiations.

The Chinese seem to have distorted the North Vietnamese policy of equivocation, of avoiding a flat "no" to Soviet efforts to eliminate airstrike cessation as a bargaining issue and to suggest that the airstrikes must be ended. Although the Chinese later claimed that Hanoi had rejected the Soviet appeal of 16 February for a

conference, several anomalies suggest that "rejection" was a stronger word than the facts warranted.* The anomalies are:

(1) the Chinese delayed their own rejection until 27 February; that is, they lagged behind the North Vietnamese, who were said to have rejected Moscow's bid prior to the 23rd. Why had the Chinese waited? Apparently they were engaged in pressuring the North Vietnamese to rebuff Moscow unequivocally. The necessity of CCP pressure at the time is suggested in a private briefing which the CCP's Foreign Bureau held for pro-Chinese West European leftists in Peking in October 1965. According to the CCP briefers, Moscow's proposal of 16 February "was rejected by the Premier of North Vietnam." However, the briefers went on to construct a locution, designed to conceal apparent pressure on Hanoi: "China's reaction was not immediate because the authorities wished to discuss the matter with the Vietnamese." The briefers did not explain why there had been any need for "discussing" the matter with Hanoi if the North Vietnamese had in fact rejected Moscow unequivocally. (At the same time, the Chinese were angered by Hanoi's willingness to join with Moscow in proposing a joint Soviet-Vietnamese-Chinese statement

*The CCP letter to the CPSU of 14 July 1965 claimed that "On 23 February, ignoring the Vietnamese Government's rejection of this proposal and without waiting for an answer from the Chinese Government, you discussed with the French President--through the Soviet Ambassador in France--the question of convening an international conference without stipulating prior conditions." (emphasis supplied)

of warning to Washington, which the North Vietnamese proceeded to draft on 22 February.)

(2) the North Vietnamese in late February and early March did not attack the idea of an international conference openly although the Chinese pressed them to do just that.

E. Peking Sustains Pressure on Hanoi Openly to Reject Negotiations (March 1966)

Aware that the North Vietnamese accepted the idea of a conference in principle and concerned that the U.S. and USSR might move Hanoi to negotiate, the Chinese tried to impel Ho publicly to renounce negotiations.* But Hanoi's equivocation had left the Soviets some (not much) leeway to try to deter the U.S. from resuming the airstrikes against the North in late February. When, on 26 February, he tried to stimulate further initiatives by other governments toward talks, Kosygin had spoken of a desire to solve the Indochina question "at a conference table" and went on to set forth a major precondition--e.g., "An end to U.S. aggressive actions against the DRV is needed, first and foremost, to create conditions for the exploration of avenues leading to the normalization of the situation in Vietnam." (An end to U.S. airstrikes against the North alone, rather than "first and foremost," became the basic and only Soviet precondition for negotiations.) Immunity from further U.S. strikes was precisely what Hanoi desired at the time, and the Chinese were alert

*Chinese concern was sustained by Secretary Rusk's statement that "political channels are open" and that "things could begin to move" if Viet Cong attacks were halted (25 February 1965) and Kosygin's reference to a "normalization" of the situation (26 February 1965).

to the Soviet effort simultaneously to end an embarrassment for Moscow and to ensure the sanctuary previously enjoyed by "socialist" North Vietnam.

The Chinese rejection of the Soviet conference proposal on the 27th was followed by public (and probably private) hints to Hanoi that it should more directly, openly, and unequivocally attack the proposal and other negotiations bids. The U.S. is trying "to gain at the negotiating table what it is unable to gain on the battlefield." (Red Flag article of 27 February, broadcast in Vietnamese--and only in Vietnamese--six times on 2 March) "We shall never succumb to the U.S. imperialists' bellicose blackmail. No socialist country should." (People's Daily editorial of 1 March) These and subsequent Chinese statements strongly suggested Chinese concern with Hanoi's position. They point to the probability that the CCP claim of a North Vietnamese "rejection" of the Soviet conference proposal was a distortion.

Two separate positions taken by Soviet-influenced Liberation Front officials, on the one hand, and a Chinese-influenced Liberation Front official, on the other hand, in early March point up Peking's distrust of North Vietnamese equivocation. According to [redacted] the Chinese delegation at a preparatory meeting of the Soviet-oriented World Peace Council (WPC) held in Berlin in early March, insisted that a WPC proposal declare that the U.S. must withdraw before negotiations could take place. A marked difference was reported between the Chinese and Liberation Front delegates: when the Chinese circulated a document attacking those who sought an accommodation with the U.S., the Front delegates did not support it. Unlike the Chinese, the Front delegates reportedly did not rule out the possibility of negotiations on some formula short of a complete prior U.S. withdrawal. In Peking, however, the Chinese-influenced acting chief of the Front's permanent office, Nguyen Minh Phoung, directly attacked the idea of negotiations. The Chinese insistence that the North Vietnamese openly attack the idea of international talks on Vietnam was suggested by different Peking and Hanoi treatment of the acting chief's press conference of 8 March. While NCNA (on 9 March) reported his

statement that by advocating peaceful negotiations the U.S. was trying to "extricate" itself from failure in the South, VNA (also on the 9th) deleted this attack on negotiations from its version. It is important to note that Peking, not Hanoi, took the initiative in making a statement on behalf of the Front, that it used the acting chief (in the absence of the chief of the permanent delegation to China), that it inaccurately depicted him as a South Vietnamese "leader," and that it publicized an attack on talks two days in advance of a formal Liberation Front central committee statement which avoided any reference to negotiations. Peking's initiative at a time when the Front's central committee apparently was meeting (somewhere in Vietnam) strongly suggests CCP interference in the affairs of the Hanoi-controlled front.*

The North Vietnamese had tried to avoid an open and categorical rejection of international negotiations and, simultaneously, suggest to the Chinese that they would not be forced to negotiate or be misled by Moscow and Washington. In their first substantive comment on the 2 March airstrikes against the North, they stated that Vietnamese "will not be deceived" by President Johnson's alleged reference to talks and that the U.S. was wrong if it believed the strikes would lead to a "negotiated settlement." (Nhan Dan editorial of 3 March) They followed up this comment, which was partly intended to reassure Peking, by saying that "Nobody will be duped by the fallacious U.S. allegations" about a "measured expansion" and "trying to reach a negotiated settlement."

* told U.S. officials the Chinese were making an effort to establish "a special relationship" with the Liberation Front. Although the Chinese had not formally extended recognition to the Front, they nevertheless were treating the Front representative in Peking as if he were a duly accredited diplomat and, on ceremonial occasions, were ranking him for protocol purposes as an ambassador.

(Nhan Dan editorial of 4 March) Soviet articles continued to advocate handling the Vietnam situation at "a conference table" (New Times editorial of 4 March) and by "negotiations" (Pravda article of 5 March) and insisted--after the 2 March airstrikes--that the way out for the U.S. was the "immediate end to aggressive actions against the DRV" prior to negotiations. (Red Star article of 5 March)

Following the 14-15 March airstrikes, the North Vietnamese took a more explicit line on negotiations, going beyond the early March reassurances to Peking that they would not be duped. For the first time in many months, they attacked "Tito" for his 2 March letter to President Johnson calling for negotiations without preconditions and then declared:

> There can be no question of negotiations with the U.S. imperialists when they openly declare and brazenly step up the aggressive war in South Vietnam and extend this war to North Vietnam. (Nhan Dan article of 18 March) (emphasis supplied)

In attacking "Tito," the North Vietnamese were also implicitly rebuking the heads of state of the 17 non-aligned nations for their appeal of 15 March calling for negotiations without preconditions.* This North Vietnamese

*During his short-notice visit to Algeria from 30 March to 1 April, Chou En-lai reportedly took an uncompromisingly hard position on Vietnam with Ben Bella and described the appeal as harmful. He also demanded that the U.S. negotiate with the Liberation Front, using this opening to make the further point that there was no need for U Thant to travel to Peking or Hanoi or for a 5-nation conference to be held. As a result of Chou's protestations, Ben Bella reportedly directed the Algerian ambassador in Peking to withdraw from a group of diplomats who were scheduled to present a message from the 17 non-aligned powers to the CPR.

formulation was remarkably ambivalent. On the one hand, it differed from Soviet statements because it did not state that a halt to U.S. airstrikes was necessary to create conditions for negotiations.* By failing to state precisely what was required before talks could begin, Hanoi avoided making a commitment to negotiate if airstrikes were to be suspended. On the other hand, it did not reject future negotiations and did not insist that a prior U.S. withdrawal was a precondition for talks. The Chinese apparently detected this ambivalence: the entire formulation was omitted from Peking's version of the article as broadcast in Vietnamese on 20 March.

In the wake of the 14-15 March airstrikes against the North, the Soviet leaders' loss of all room for maneuvering was reflected in their actions and statements. On 15 March, they formally rejected London's proposal of 20 February that Geneva conference countries be canvassed for their views on conditions for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam, and on the 16th, Gromyko, in London, declared that the first step for the Geneva co-chairmen must be to denounce "U.S. aggression against Vietnam"--a clear indication that by mid-March, Hanoi as well as Peking had rejected the British proposal.

[redacted] the North Vietnamese ambassador had expressed opposition to Yugoslav and Soviet initiatives for a Vietnam settlement and declared that the only duty of Belgrade and Moscow was not to call a conference, but to demand application of the Geneva agreements and a U.S. withdrawal. This strongly suggests that by mid-March,

* [redacted] the Soviets maintained that the basic condition for beginning to calm conditions and thereby seek the desired settlement was for the Americans to stop their military operations against North Vietnam."

the North Vietnamese had directly rebuffed the Russians on the matter of negotiations, in contrast with their equivocation throughout February.

F. Liberation Front Insists on Withdrawal Before Negotiations (22 March 1965)

By late March, the position taken by the Liberation Front on negotiations was even harder than Hanoi's toughened public stand. The reaction of the Front to the U.S. airstrikes was the most dramatic of all Communist responses; it was formalized on 22 March by Front chairman Nguyen Huu Tho in a "five-point statement on the intensification and enlargement by the U.S." of the war in the South. The five points were, in brief, a declaration of the Viet Cong's determination to prosecute the war without interruption and for a long time. They contained (1) a distorted review of U.S. policies toward Vietnam since 1954, (2) a reiteration of Viet Cong determination to fight on, the claim that the Viet Cong had taken three-fourths of the territory and controlled one-half of the population, the new hard position on negotiations, and the requirement--surfaced in December 1964--that the Front's "decisive voice" must be recognized before talks could take place, (3) a commitment to "liberate" the South and unify the country, (4) a claim that the Front has the right to acquire outside aid, including weapons and, if necessary, foreign volunteers and southerners who had been regrouped in the North, and (5) an appeal to all southerners to unite and fight to win on all battlefields.*

Point 2 reflected the intransigent Chinese position on negotiations:

*The five "points" are reprinted in the annex of this paper.

> At present, all negotiations are useless as long as the US imperialists do not withdraw all the troops, weapons, and means of war of the US and its satellites from South Vietnam and destroy their military bases in South Vietnam; as long as the sacred rights of the South Vietnamese people--rights to independence and democracy--are still sold by the Vietnamese traitors to the US imperialists, and as long as the Liberation Front--the true and only representative of 14 million South Vietnamese people--does not have the decisive voice. (emphasis supplied)

This position went well beyond Hanoi's 18 March statement that negotiations were out of the question while the U.S. intensified the war in the South and against the North, inasmuch as it declared talks useless without (1) a prior U.S. withdrawal and (2) a decisive voice for the Front. It was strikingly similar to positions Peking had taken publicly and privately since December 1964. In particular, it was similar to Liao Cheng-chih's 24 March statement that "negotiations" were impossible without a prior withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The Chinese, more than the North Vietnamese, acted quickly to exploit the Front's 22 March "five point" statement, stressing and quoting in its entirety the hard passage on negotiations. (People's Daily editorial of 25 March). Following President Johnson's 25 March statement, the Chinese again took the initiative and declared that "only" in the event of a withdrawal of U.S. troops could there be "any talk about a revival of the Geneva agreements and about a 'political settlement' on the basis of the agreements."* (People's Daily editorial of 29

*The Chinese were saying, in effect, that a ceasefire, agreed to at Geneva, was impossible prior to the departure of U.S. forces.

March) By contrast, although Hanoi rebroadcast the Front statement on the 23rd, it did not initiate its own comment on it until 28 March, at which time a Nhan Dan editorial praised it but avoided taking a stand for or against negotiations.

The question arises: why was the Front statement significantly harder and more explicit on the matter of negotiations than the Nhan Dan editorial of 28 March? The reason may be Hanoi's desire to sustain the fiction of Front autonomy and to appear flexible in its own public stand. This tactic permitted Hanoi to continue its game of convincing certain Western leaders and neutrals that Washington was the real recalcitrant on the matter of international negotiations.

Regarding the political status of the Front, Hanoi privately adopted the hard line of Peking and Front leaders, agreeing to interpose the Front as a negotiator. On 24 March, a North Vietnamese liaison official told a Western diplomat in Hanoi that if there were to be any negotiations or a settlement of the war, it would have to be between the Liberation Front and the U.S. as the "parties directly involved." By late March and early April, therefore, the North Vietnamese moved to upgrade the role of the Front as a legitimate negotiator in any future international talks on Vietnam.

In effect, this move made negotiations even more remote, inasmuch as Hanoi was clearly aware that Washington would not accept the Front as the representative of the South. The Chinese leaders worked actively to continue to make negotiations a purely hypothetical matter by interposing the Front. When, on 30 March, Chou En-lai responded to U Thant's request--which was passed from Ben Bella to the Chinese ambassador in Algiers on 14 March--about Peking's conditions for beginning negotiations, he did so by flying on short notice from Bucharest to Algiers to tell Ben Bella that the U.S. could not negotiate with Peking or Hanoi, but only with the Front.

III. HANOI FORMULATES VERBALLY ELASTIC POSITION BETWEEN THAT OF PEKING AND MOSCOW (April 1965 to September 1966)

A. Hanoi Manipulates the Concept of Preconditions For Negotiations (April 1965)

Responding to international pressure for negotiations, the North Vietnamese moved to formalize their position, fixing it in a mold of preconditions, which key leaders euphemistically called "points." Ho Chi Minh personally set the mold in response to a question about "minimum conditions" for a solution:

> To settle the South Vietnam question, first of all the U.S. must withdraw from South Vietnam, let the South Vietnamese people decide their own affairs themselves, and stop their provocative attacks against the DRV. The carrying out of these basic points will bring about favorable conditions for a conference along the pattern of the 1954 Geneva conference. (emphasis supplied) (Interview with Tokyo Akahata reporter, Takano, on 5 April 1965)

Clearly, this set forth a precondition, namely, that the U.S. must withdraw before an international conference could be considered. Acting Foreign Minister Thien told the [redacted] in early April that "Until the 'American aggression' left, there was nothing to settle or discuss." This was similar to the hard position set forth by Mao in January 1965 and reflected the stiffening which the North Vietnamese position had acquired since that time.

But this formulation made Ho and his regime appear intransigent at a time when he was working to attract widespread international support for his effort against

the South and the U.S. stand there. The North Vietnamese apparently decided to introduce an element of flexibility, inasmuch as they believed it would be diplomatically stupid to insist on preconditions explicitly after the 17 neutral nations (in early April) and President Johnson (on 7 April) had called for unconditional negotiations. Loosening the mold, Pham Van Dong, in his speech of 8 April, replying to President Johnson's address of 7 April, begged the entire question of explicit preconditions. That is, he was deliberately vague on the important matter of how and when negotiations could begin. He declared that if the stand expounded in the four "points" is "recognized" as the basis for a solution, "favorable conditions will be created for peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese problem and it will be possible to consider reconvening an international conference on Vietnam."* This language was more tortured than Ho's and for good reason, as it was intended to conceal a contradiction. It was intended to provide the North Vietnamese with a pretext for arguing that, on the one hand, they had not established a U.S. withdrawal in fact as a precondition, while insisting that, on the other hand, before a conference (or bilaterals) the U.S. must state publicly its pledge to withdraw (the time and procedure of withdrawal being a matter for the negotiations).

After U.S. airstrikes against the North became a more permanent policy in April, the North Vietnamese had new evidence that Washington would not make a public statement, prior to a conference, agreeing to an eventual military departure. They made it clear that they would engage in no talks before gaining such a U.S. public statement of surrender. The exercise in flexibility, therefore, was primarily intended to shift the blame for opposing unconditional negotiations from Hanoi (the real recalcitrant) to Washington (the alleged recalcitrant) in the eyes of Western and neutral leaders. Pham Van Dong

*The four "points" are reprinted in the annex of this paper.

personally tried to create the impression of sobriety and flexibility in talking to men whose goodwill was politically important. For example, in mid-April, he told Sihanouk's leftist French press advisor that the cessation of airstrikes against the North was the only precondition for negotiations. Meyer, the press advisor, insisted to others that Dong had not mentioned withdrawal of U.S. troops as a negotiations precondition.

The Chinese preferred Ho's formulation of 5 April --namely, that the U.S. must "carry out" a withdrawal-- to Dong's formulation of 8 April--namely, that the U.S. must publicly "recognize" the need to withdraw--prior to the possible convening of a conference on Vietnam. Ho's formulation was similar to the Liberation Front's demand of 22 March calling for a U.S. pull-out prior to negotiations. Speaking to the ambassador of a neutral nation in Peking in mid-April, Chou En-lai mentioned only the Front's demand and Ho's formulation of the 5th in speaking of the "positions set forth recently" by the Vietnamese and did not refer to Dong's formulation. The Chinese leaders were aware that although Hanoi did not, at that time, envisage a conference, the DRV position was to maintain a willingness to attend a conference in the future— that is, to accept the principle of a conference provided that the U.S. would publicly agree to retire (as the French had in 1954). Accordingly, Chinese commentaries in April omitted, on occasion but not always, the references which both Ho and Dong had made to the possibility of a future conference on Vietnam, the implication being that Peking desired a total U.S. military defeat rather than a negotiated withdrawal at some stage prior to such a defeat. Chou En-lai's choice of words on several occasions reflected his disagreement with Dong's formulation.

Furthermore, in his speech in the Indonesian capital on 25 April, although Chou endorsed Pham Van Dong's formulation of four "points," he omitted, significantly, Dong's statement that American recognition of these as a basis could open the door to negotiations. By contrast, the North

Vietnamese continued to go beyond the four "points" part of Dong's formulation to the "recognition" part of it (Nhan Dan editorial of 20 April and Pham Van Dong interview with the Hungarian news agency, carried by VNA on the 20th).

B. Chinese Sabotage Prospective Conference on Cambodia (April 1965)

Chou's attacks on the idea of negotiations prior to withdrawal had capped a month of Chinese Communist maneuvering to sabotage any prospects for holding an international conference on Cambodia, at which a Vietnam settlement could be initially discussed. The Chinese wrecking effort was important because the Soviet-inspired idea of such a conference was not attacked by Hanoi. On 3 April, Moscow had proposed a Cambodian conference and by 10 April Gromyko had stated that Moscow's proposal was a serious one. Shortly afterward, Gromyko told the French ambassador that it was "now" desirable for Moscow and Paris to discuss "a meeting or meetings on Cambodia and perhaps Laos." At the same time such a conference would provide the opportunity for talks on Vietnam. More importantly, on 17 April, during his four-day visit to Moscow, Le Duan agreed to the following wording in the joint USSR-DRV communique: "it would be useful to convene the relevant international conferences" to solve the problems of Laos and Cambodia. In a private conversation with American newsmen on 22 April in Washington, Ambassador Dobrynin stated that the proposed conference on Cambodia was the "only possibility now available for any sort of talks" and went on to suggest that such a conference might provide the opportunity for "corridor talks" about Vietnam.

r in Peking had told as a result of the USSR-DRV discussions, the North Vietnamese had adopted a more flexible position on negotiations. He stated that Hanoi would forego stipulating the evacuation of American forces as

a precondition and would agree to begin talks on the basis of the "application of the Geneva agreements and after the cessation of American bombing of the DRV." On 26 April, Soviet deputy foreign minister Zimyanin told the British ambassador that he recognized the need for early action on a co-chairmen message regarding the Cambodian conference.

But Soviet enthusiasm began to wane in late April. In his talks with the French, Gromyko indicated that Moscow continued to look favorably on a Cambodian conference, but he did not offer any further elaboration and insisted that a cessation of American airstrikes was a precondition for a conference on Vietnam. The joint Soviet-French communique of 29 April merely noted the agreement of Washington and London to hold a conference on Cambodia and stated that Moscow and Paris had earlier advocated such a conference, but the only way to solve the problems of Indochina was said to be a return to the Geneva agreements of 1954 and 1962, which specified the "impermissibility of foreign interference" in the domestic affairs of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

The Chinese had played a major role in wrecking the prospects for a conference. In mid-April, Chou had told Sihanouk that such a conference would be pointless and that Peking would not agree to negotiate without preconditions on Vietnam. His justification for Peking's hard line was: the U.S. shows political (not military) weakness, particularly regarding pressure from Western countries to end the war, and this weakness must be exploited to the maximum by maintaining an intransigent position in upholding DRV conditions for a settlement. On 20 April, Chinese officials were indicating [redacted] that Peking objected to the idea of a conference to facilitate talks on Vietnam. On 22 April, the Cambodians indicated to t[redacted] that Cambodia would now insist that a Geneva conference should discuss only Cambodian matters. Finally, Sihanouk's speech of 24 April reflected the intensive efforts of Chou En-lai and Chen Yi to sabotage the whole idea by convincing the Cambodian leader that negotiations were unnecessary.

[redacted]

the Chinese leaders had told Sihanouk that in another two years the situation in South Vietnam would permit the Viet Cong to bring about a settlement on their "own" terms. It was a triumphant and cynical Chou who declared publicly on 29 April that Sihanouk's statements of the 23rd and 24th--namely, that a Cambodian conference could not be used to discuss the Vietnam issue--were fully supported by the Chinese government. And to make the prospects for an international conference even more remote, Chou stated publicly on 29 April what he had already declared privately to Sihanouk in mid-April: "The Chinese Government holds that at any international conference on the Indochina question, only the Liberation Front can represent the South Vietnamese people, not the Saigon puppet regime by any means." This was in accord with a statement made by a North Vietnamese liaison official to Western diplomats in Hanoi on 24 March 1965, namely, that any negotiations would have to be between the Liberation Front and the U.S. as the "parties directly involved." North Vietnamese ambassadors in April began to disseminate this line, stating that no favorable answer to American peace initiatives would be forthcoming until Washington agreed to accept the Front as an equal "partner" in negotiations. Finally, on 5 May, Hanoi made its first comment since the 17 April Soviet-Vietnamese communique on a Cambodian conference and in effect ruled out discussion on Vietnam at the conference. By late May 1965, the Soviets were reported as being completely disenchanted with the prospects of using the Cambodians as a vehicle for organizing a conference on Vietnam,

Obviously, the people who objected were the North Vietnamese (until Washington made a public pledge to withdraw) and the Chinese (until U.S. forces were defeated in the field and were forced to withdraw).

C. Moscow Reduced to Waiting for Initiative from Hanoi During May 1965 and January 1966 Air-Strike Suspensions

1. May 1965*

Confronted by the hard Hanoi position and the even harder Peking position, the Soviets were unwilling to press the North Vietnamese to moderate their stand, aware that if they did so they would be exposing themselves to an attack from the Chinese along the lines of "phoney" Soviet support. The North Vietnamese did not discourage the Soviets in their line that cessation of airstrikes against the North was a precondition for negotiations and they apparently acquiesced in the Soviet effort to create the impression that Hanoi might negotiate following a suspension. However, the North Vietnamese did not commit themselves, nor did the Russians commit them, to the proposition that cessation was the only precondition.

Despite the remote prospect for negotiations if a suspension were to take place, the Chinese suspected that the Soviets had had tacit approval from the North Vietnamese to press for suspension and indirectly criticized Hanoi for allowing Moscow leeway to press forward along this line. Peking indirectly warned Hanoi and criticized Moscow as follows: "To agree to enter into negotiations for a settlement of the Vietnam issue on the condition that the U.S. stops bombing North Vietnam is tantamount to admitting that the piratical bombing of the North is perfectly justified and that the people in North Vietnam are totally wrong in supporting their fellow countrymen in the South...Would anyone with national self-respect, would any sovereign state...ever think of accepting

*The May 1965 suspension was maintained from the 12th through the 18th.

such monstrously humiliating conditions?" (People's Daily commentary of 12 May) Hanoi implicitly (on 16 May) and explicitly (on 18 May) called the cessation a trick to deceive international opinion, and the Foreign Ministry statement on the 18th repeated that the four "points" were the basis for a settlement. But privately, on 18 May, the DRV representative in Paris acted with speed to impress the French with Hanoi's flexibility. He stated that recognition of the four "points" would "open" the possibility for convening a Geneva conference and that if there were agreement on the points, the "ways and means" of applying the principles of Hanoi's position would be found, and in a peaceful manner. In short, Hanoi had instructed its representative to sustain the image of reasonableness with the French.

Despite hints that a suspension of airstrikes against the North might open the way for negotiations with Hanoi, the Soviet leaders, following the suspension of airstrikes in mid-May 1965, privately complained that their hands were tied. That is, they were unwilling to argue with the North Vietnamese about the need for beginning discussions. For example, just before the suspension started on 12 May 1965, politburo member Shelepin told several Western diplomats in Moscow that negotiations were impossible as long as U.S. airstrikes continued. But after Peking first and then Hanoi had denounced the suspension, the Soviet leaders indicated that they would not take the step of pressing for a favorable response from Hanoi at the cost of losing influence with the North Vietnamese.* On 28 May, a Soviet United Nations official

*But the Chinese leaders kept up the pressure on the Russians for having implied that an airstrike suspension might lead to negotiations. For example, the Peking Foreign Ministry statement of 21 May denounced "some people" who "do not demand" an American withdrawal but merely ask the U.S. "to stop bombing the DRV." The Soviet-Indian communique of 19 May, which called for an end to the bombing of the North, had exposed the Soviet flank to such Chinese criticism, which forced the Russians to retreat.

stated that a suspension of airstrikes for "just a few days" was insufficient for starting negotiations, and Premier Kosygin in late June responded with considerable pique to the suggestion of Italian officials that Washington was willing to negotiate, declaring that the Soviets would not negotiate and that they had no mandate from the North Vietnamese to do so. Kosygin argued that Moscow supported Hanoi's four "points" and that the U.S., therefore, should withdraw, as there was nothing to negotiate. In early August, Yugoslav officials stated privately that during Tito's visit to Moscow, they were told by the Soviets that the USSR was not in a position to influence the DRV on the matter of negotiations. At about the same time, [redacted] stated that Moscow was impelled to wait for Peking or Hanoi to make the first move toward negotiations and that even if another country were to recommend a Geneva conference, the USSR would not support it until the Chinese and North Vietnamese indicated a willingness to participate. Kosygin, in a conversation [redacted] in mid-October, insisted that the U.S. must withdraw and went on to hint at the North Vietnamese position: "if this takes place through negotiations, that is dependent only upon the Government of North Vietnam." (emphasis supplied) The Soviets continued to indicate that they would not budge and, indeed, could not, budge the North Vietnamese from their position that a suspension of airstrikes was not the only precondition for negotiations, inasmuch as the main one was the demand that Washington publicly declare a decision to withdraw.* They insisted that they had no initiative.

*The North Vietnamese indicated the crucial importance they assigned to an American pledge to withdraw. "In order to strike back at the U.S. Government's words and actions, the Government of the DRV has already put forward its well-known four-point stand. Of these, the first two are the most important. The first /withdrawal/ is a decisive point, but the second is also very important. The U.S. imperialists think that only by carrying out the second point (making air raids against the North) they will be able to curb the revolutionary movement in the South..." (Hoc Tap article of September 1965) (emphasis supplied)

Thus in late November, Gromyko told Senator Mansfield that the Russians "have not been authorized to negotiate on this question" and in early December, he was reported to have reiterated this position to Foreign Secretary Stewart in Moscow.

During and after the mid-May 1965 suspension of airstrikes, Hanoi continued to manipulate the concept of preconditions for negotiations to sustain an impression of reasonableness and, at the same time, demand a U.S. public pledge to withdraw. As noted above, on 18 May the DRV representative in Paris had called for recognition by Washington of the principles embodied in the four "points" apparently to counter the impression created by the suspension that the North Vietnamese were the real recalcitrants on the issue and to leave open the door to negotiations. He had avoided using the word "precondition"--a practice which marked Hanoi's treatment of its position. In late May, the DRV Foreign Minister refused to specify [redacted] whether the four "points" were preconditions or ultimate goals for a final settlement after negotiations had started; in late July, [redacted] was reported to have told [redacted] that Washington was misinterpreting one of Hanoi's conditions for negotiations because Hanoi was not making withdrawal a "precondition" for negotiations, but rather a "commitment" for a pullout; in early September the Liberation Front representaive in Cambodia told pro-Soviet journalist Burchett that Front leaders were prepared to discuss the modalities of a military withdrawal with representatives of the U.S. Government. A more detailed presentation of Hanoi's position was made in early September [redacted] In principle, [redacted] the North Vietnamese were willing to negotiate, but they were adamant that American troops would have to leave Vietnam although they were not insisting on a definite time-table for withdrawal, which could be effected during or after negotiations. He maintained positively that the North would not negotiate unless they could be sure of a final American withdrawal. He maintained that the "4 point programme" must be accepted in principle as a basis for negotiations, and claimed that Pham Van Dong

himself had told him that the Vietnamese would accept "as a basis" as the operative phase, and not the acceptance of the 4 points as preconditions. (The Liberation Front would have to be represented at a conference.)* In early December the DRV representative in Paris told a French official that Dong's four "points" were not preconditions, but merely the "basis" for discussions.

A major consideration in Hanoi's effort to advance this line was to commit Washington to a statement of surrender without explicitly saying that such a statement in fact was tantamount to surrender. Euphemistic language was used; the North Vietnamese demanded a "surrender" not in words, but in fact. They called for Washington to "recognize" or "accept" the four "points" and, following the American inputs in July 1965, they more frequently than ever before demanded that Washington "carry out" or show by "actual deeds" that it recognizes these points." For example, Ho himself sidestepped a reporters' request to name the "prerequisites" for negotiations, replying that the "most correct solution" lay in implementation of the Geneva agreements and the "carrying out" by the U.S. of the four "points" and the five-point program of the Liberation Front. (VNA's 2 September 1965 version of Ho's interview with Neues Deutschland correspondent) A Japanese reporter was told in early October by Pham Van Dong that the U.S. government "must solemnly declare its acceptance" of the four "points" before a political settlement could be considered. Locked into this position of demanding a declaration of surrender, the North Vietnamese sustained their adamancy into December 1965, when

*In line with Hanoi's private statements that the timing of an American withdrawal could be the primary matter left for negotiations, the DRV Foreign Ministry's memorandum of its position (released on 23 September 1965) did not depict withdrawal as an immediate prerequisite. (It did insist, however, that there cannot be "any negotiations" on the South Vietnam issue without the Liberation Front "having its decisive say.")

a new and longer suspension of airstrikes indicated that Washington was determined to increase pressure on Hanoi to make a concession--i.e., to agree to negotiate. Hanoi was again provided with an opportunity to gain a permanent suspension and to demonstrate that complete conquest of the South was a goal that could be set aside and replaced by acceptance of a half-way station--i.e., consolidation of the North alone.

2. December 1965 to January 1966*

The Soviet leaders continued to state privately that a suspension of airstrikes was necessary for any international negotiations, but were still not in a position to guarantee a positive response from the North Vietnamese. When, in mid-December 1965, Ambassador Dobrynin spoke with Harriman, he stated that Moscow believed the cessation of bombing for a long enough (not defined) period might lead to negotiations and implied that the Soviets would encourage the North Vietnamese. Significantly, he avoided being specific about the precise action the Soviets would take and what made them believe that Hanoi would respond constructively. Higher-level Soviet officials privately indicated that their hands were tied again--that is, (just as in May 1965) that they would not apply pressure for negotiations on the North Vietnamese. Thus on 1 January 1966, Soviet deputy foreign minister Firyubin made it clear to certain Asian diplomats in Moscow that the Soviet government would do nothing. He said that Moscow had not been authorized by Hanoi to carry on any negotiations with the U.S. and that the Soviet government would not do anything without the consent, agreement, and instructions of Hanoi. He took a hard line on Washington's 14-point proposal,** saying that it was an

*The second airstrike suspension was maintained from 24 December 1965 to 31 January 1966.

**The 14-point position of the U.S. is printed in the annex of this paper.

"ultimatum." Finally, he declared that "we have not received any response, reaction, or instructions from Vietnam yet." Kosygin took an equally noncommittal line in Tashkent on 5 January and tried to indicate that Moscow had no desire to press the North Vietnamese, leaving that to Washington. He stated that Hanoi had to be satisfied that the U.S. genuinely desired peace and that for this to be accomplished, "the American authorities" should establish a direct line of communications with Hanoi. That is, Kosygin had no real initiative in the matter, nor did his Soviet colleagues. TASS indirectly revealed this publicly when, in its 21 January account of Japanese Foreign Minister Shiina's press conference, it noted that Shiina quoted Kosygin as having said that "the Soviet side naturally cannot 'mediate' in any way in this conflict."

The North Vietnamese responded to the suspension and the American 14-point proposal by raising a new and more precise stipulation on airstrikes and a new public emphasis that Washington negotiate with the Liberation Front. That is, they responded with greater admancy than in May 1965.

Ho personally hardened the North Vietnamese position to a new degree of intransigence by demanding not only that Washington "recognize" the four "points" and "really prove it by concrete deeds," but, in addition, "completely end its bombings and all acts of war against the DRV." This was the first sign that the North Vietnamese leaders' were working out a harder position by adding a new detail and a new emphasis to Point One: "The US government must completely and unconditionally end its bombings and all acts of war against the DRV." (underlining indicates new phrase) As the North Vietnamese leaders deliberated during the bombing pause, they decided on yet another stipulation--namely, that the U.S. must negotiate with the Liberation Front. The complete revised and hardened position was set forth in Ho's letter to heads of state of 24 January 1966:

> If the U.S. really wants peace, it must recognize the Liberation Front as the sole genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam and engage in negotiations with it....If the U.S. government really wants a peaceful settlement, it must accept the four-point stand of the DRV government and prove this by actual deeds; it must end unconditionally and forever all bombing raids and other war acts against the DRV. (emphasis supplied)

This became the new basis, beyond the 8 April 1965 four points, for a final settlement. However, it did not rule out the start of negotiations if the U.S. were to make a public declaration to withdraw and actually begin one phase of that withdrawal process.

By insisting on an "unconditional" suspension of airstrikes, the North Vietnamese clearly intended to extricate themselves from deep political embarrassment incurred during the December-January suspension and to neutralize this effective American political weapon by frantically insisting that bombing-cessation was not a bargaining counter. The North Vietnamese took this position [redacted] when [redacted] in early June 1966, the DRV ambassador (and his Chinese colleague) stated that if the U.S. stopped bombing the North, it would not be enough to bring about negotiations. Only Washington's acceptance of the four

[redacted]

"points" could lead to international discussion. And publicly, a commentary in Quan Doi Nhan Dan of 19 July 1966 stated that Hanoi would make no "concessions" as the price for ending the airstrikes.

While the North Vietnamese kept the door of negotiations open in the event that Washington at some future date would declare a willingness to withdraw, the Chinese tried to close the door and prevent such a future development. The Chinese were clearly pleased with Ho's letter to heads of state of 24 January 1966 indicating Hanoi's rejection of negotiations in the wake of the bombing suspension. But they were alert to the fact that the North Vietnamese had not made actual withdrawal of U.S. forces a precondition for the beginning of negotiations and that the Soviets would welcome an international conference. That a Geneva conference of the Geneva-agreement countries was always a political possibility was a fact that constantly troubled the Chinese and when, on 7 July 1966, Prime Minister Ghandi proposed that the conference be reconvened, the Chinese again stressed troop withdrawal as a precondition. Chou En-lai moved quickly to state that Mrs. Ghandi's proposal is designed to "sap the fighting will of the Vietnamese people," adding that "unless American troops are withdrawn, the reconvening of the Geneva conference is entirely out of the question." (Speech at the Afro-Asian writers meeting on 9 July 1966) And when, on 16 July, the Soviet and Indian leaders declared in their joint communique in Moscow that airstrikes must be ended and that a solution could be found "only within the framework of the Geneva agreements," the Chinese strongly emphasized their line on the invalidity of these agreements. They "were long ago torn to shreds" by the U.S. (People's Daily article of 18 July).

The Chinese blocking effort--that is, the move to close the door on any future negotiations regarding Vietnam--was rationalized publicly as follows:

> The /16 July Soviet-Indian/ communique states that the bombing of the DRV should be stopped immediately and that the solution of the problem of Vietnam can only

be found within the framework of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Indochina. As everyone knows, the core of the Vietnam question at present is absolutely not a matter of merely stopping the bombing of the DRV. To lay onesided stress on the stopping of bombing is precisely to cater to the needs of the US imperialist policy of blackmail. The purpose of the American bombing of northern Vietnam is to make people beg it to show mercy, beg it to stop the bombing, and accept its terms for surrender. One is trying to "force peace talks through bombing," while the other is saying that peace talks can be held once bombing is stopped. This is a public performance of a duet with U.S. imperialism....

It must be pointed out that U.S. imperialism long ago tore the Geneva agreements to shreds....In bombing northern Vietnam, moreover, the U.S. had completely broken the line of demarcation between southern and northern Vietnam. Now the US bombing of the DRV capital spells the final burial of the Geneva agreements and the total liquidation of all the restrictions and limitations laid down in the Geneva agreements. In these circumstances, whoever still attempts to use the Geneva agreements to tie the hands of the Vietnamese people, the Chinese people, and the revolutionary people of the world will never succeed. (Tao Chu speech of 22 July)

That a future conference was the bone that stuck in the throat of the Chinese leaders was strongly suggested by the following statement: "The Chinese people have always held that a conference table can never bring the oppressed nations a new world of independence and freedom." (People's Daily editorial of 24 July) (emphasis supplied) By contrast, the North Vietnamese continued to describe the

Geneva agreements as still valid and operative, leaving room for maneuvering toward a possible conference in the future.* Ho's stress (letter to heads of state on 24 January 1966) on the end of airstrikes was not duplicated by the Chinese leaders, who, again by contrast, concentrated more on the matter of immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces. For example, in a 19 May interview with a Reuters reporter, Chen Yi stated that China would never take the initiative to sponsor negotiations for a settlement unless two conditions were fulfilled: the "complete withdrawal" of American forces from the South and U.S. recognition of the Front as the sole southern representative. In this way, the Chinese leaders went beyond Hanoi's demand for a U.S. declaration on withdrawal to demand a "complete" pullout before negotiations--a difference which reflected further Chinese suspicion of Hanoi's attitude.**

*The contrast between Hanoi's flexiblity on the question of when negotiations can be begun and Peking's inflexibility on this point emerges from private statements as well as public formulations. The North Vietnamese ambassador in Algeria stated [redacted] in early February 1966 that "When the Americans decide to go, there will be many ways for them to depart--before, after, or during negotiations. That is not the problem." However, when a Chinese embassy official in Prague was reminded in mid-March 1966 that the French negotiated with the Algerians while their forces remained in Algeria, he dismissed the idea as "ridiculous."

**The pro-Chinese Belgian Communist, Jacques Grippa, who reportedly talked with Mao on 31 August 1966 in Peking, commented on the Chinese attitude in terms which support the view that Mao and his lieutenants have real fears that at some stage of the war Ho might agree to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Grippa stated privately that the Chinese leaders had warned the Vietnamese against revisionists and "the tendency toward peace."

D. Hanoi Downgrades Prospect of Military, and Upgrades Prospect of Political, Victory (Fall 1965 to September 1966)

The B-52 missions begun in mid-June 1965 and the U.S. inputs and participation in the fighting begun significantly in July 1965 apparently impelled the North Vietnamese to revise their contention (probably a genuine estimate) that they could win a military victory in the South. In the fall of 1965, they began to speak more and more of political success. told Pham Van Dong had seemed obsessed with the idea that American lassitude toward the war would ultimately create conditions in America similar to those prevailing in France in 1954, and that this would force Washington to accept Dong's four "points." The emphasis on American political opinion was referred to again by the DRV Consul General in Rangoon who, in mid-May 1966, stated that he believed public opinion in the U.S. would not continue to support the effort in Vietnam and that, accordingly, Hanoi believed it could ultimately win. The Polish ICC representative, returning from the North in early June 1966, made the following summation of the North Vietnamese attitude:

> He stated that Hanoi has no interest in negotiations. It plans no peace feelers now or in the future. It is determined to go on fighting for two or three more years, at least under present conditions in South Vietnam, plus accelerated bombing of the North. Hanoi is absolutely convinced that the American public will grow tired of the war in a year or so and force Washington to withdraw on North Vietnamese terms.

This attitude also extended to their view of what might happen with a change in the American Administration. Ho and other top North Vietnamese officials told a European

Communist in mid-summer 1966 that "The only question to discuss is when the Americans will go. It could take a man's age. We have time. The 'Europeans' have less time. There, governments shift and leaders come and go. In the end, there will come a man in Washington who will say there is no sense in staying, and they will leave. We are sure of this."

ANNEX

1. The Liberation Front's Five Points

The following are extracts from a statement issued by the Central Committee of the NFLSV on March 22, 1965:

Facing the present situation of utmost gravity the NFLSV deems it necessary to reaffirm once again its iron-like and unswerving stand to carry through the war of resistance against the US imperialists.

1. The US imperialists are the saboteurs of the Geneva Agreements, the most brazen warmonger and aggressor and the sworn enemy of the Vietnamese people.

2. The heroic South Vietnamese people are resolved to drive out the US imperialists in order to liberate South Vietnam, achieve an independent, democratic, peaceful and neutral South Vietnam, with a view to national reunification.

(At present all negotiations are useless as long as the US imperialists do not withdraw all the troops, weapons and means of war of the US and its satellites from South Vietnam and destroy their military bases in South Vietnam; as long as the sacred rights of the South Vietnamese people--rights to independence and democracy--are still being sold by the Vietnamese traitors to the US imperialists; and as long as the NFLSV--true and only representative of 14 million South Vietnamese people--does not have the decisive voice.)

3. The valiant South Vietnamese people and the South Vietnam Liberation army are resolved to accomplish to the full their sacred duty to drive out the US imperialists so as to liberate South Vietnam and defend North Vietnam.

4. The South Vietnamese people express their profound gratitude for the whole-hearted support of the people of the world who cherish peace and justice and declare their readiness to receive all assistance including weapons and all other war materiels from their friends in the five continents.

5. To unite the whole people, to arm the whole people, continue to march forward heroically and be resolved to fight and defeat the US aggressors and the Vietnamese traitors.

2. North Vietnam's Four Points

The following points were put forward by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong on April 8, 1965:

It is the unswerving policy of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) to strictly respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements of Vietnam, and to correctly implement their basic provisions as embodied in the following points:

1. Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people: peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. According to the Geneva Agreements, the US Government must withdraw from South Vietnam all US troops, military personnel and weapons of all kinds, dismantle all US military bases there, cancel its "military alliance" with South Vietnam. It must end its policy of intervention and aggression in South Vietnam. According to the Geneva Agreements, the US Government must stop its acts

of war against North Vietnam, completely cease all encroachments on the territory and sovereignty of the DRV.

2. Pending the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, while Vietnam is still temporarily divided into two zones, the military provisions for the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam must be strictly respected: the two zones must refrain from joining any military alliance with foreign countries, there must be no foreign military bases, troops and military personnel in their respective territory.

3. The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves, in accordance with the programme of the NFLSV, without any foreign interference.

4. The peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference.

This stand unquestionably enjoys the approval and support of all peace and justice-loving governments and peoples in the world. The Government of the DRV is of the view that the above-expounded stand is the basis for the soundest political settlement of the Vietnam problem. If this basis is recognized, favourable 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. The Government of the DRV declares that any approach contrary to the above stand is inappropriate; any approach tending to secure a UN intervention in the Vietnam situation is also inappropriate because such approaches are basically at variance with the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam.

3. United States' 14 Points

The following points, made by Vice-President Humphrey in the White House on January 3, 1966, were released by the State Department on January 7:

The following statements are on the public record about elements which the US believes can go into peace in South East-Asia.

1. The Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 are an adequate basis for peace in South-East Asia;

2. We would welcome a conference on South-East Asia or on any part thereof;

3. We would welcome "negotiations without preconditions" as the 17 non-aligned nations put it;

4. We would welcome unconditional discussions as President Johnson put it;

5. A cessation of hostilities could be the first order of business at a conference or could be the subject of preliminary discussions.

6. Hanoi's Four Points could be discussed along with other points which others might wish to propose;

7. We want no US bases in South-East Asia;

8. We do not desire to retain US troops in South Vietnam after peace is assured;

9. We support free elections in South Vietnam to give the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice;

10. The question of reunification of Vietnam should be determined by the Vietnamese through their own free decision;

11. The countries of South-East Asia can be non-aligned or neutral if that be their option;

12. We would much prefer to use our resources for the economic reconstruction of South-East Asia than in war. If there is peace, North Vietnam could participate in a regional effort to which we would be prepared to contribute at least one billion dollars;

13. The President has said "The Vietcong would not have difficulty being represented and having their views represented if for a moment Hanoi decided she wanted to cease aggression. I don't think that would be an insurmountable problem."

14. We have said publicly and privately that we could stop the bombing of North Vietnam as a step toward peace although there has not been the slightest hint or suggestion from the other side as to what they would do if the bombing stopped.

In other words, we have put everything into the basket of peace except the surrender of South Vietnam.

4. Ho Chi Minh's Letter of 24 January 1966 to Heads of States (Excerpt)

If the United States really wants peace, it must recognize the NFLSV as the sole genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam

and engage in negotiations with it.... So long as the U.S. army of aggression still remains on our soil, our people will resolutely fight against it. If the U.S. government really wants a peaceful settlement, it must accept the four-point stand of the DRV government and prove this by actual deeds; it must end unconditionally and for good all bombing raids and other war acts against the DRV. Only in this way can a political solution to the Vietnam problem be envisaged.