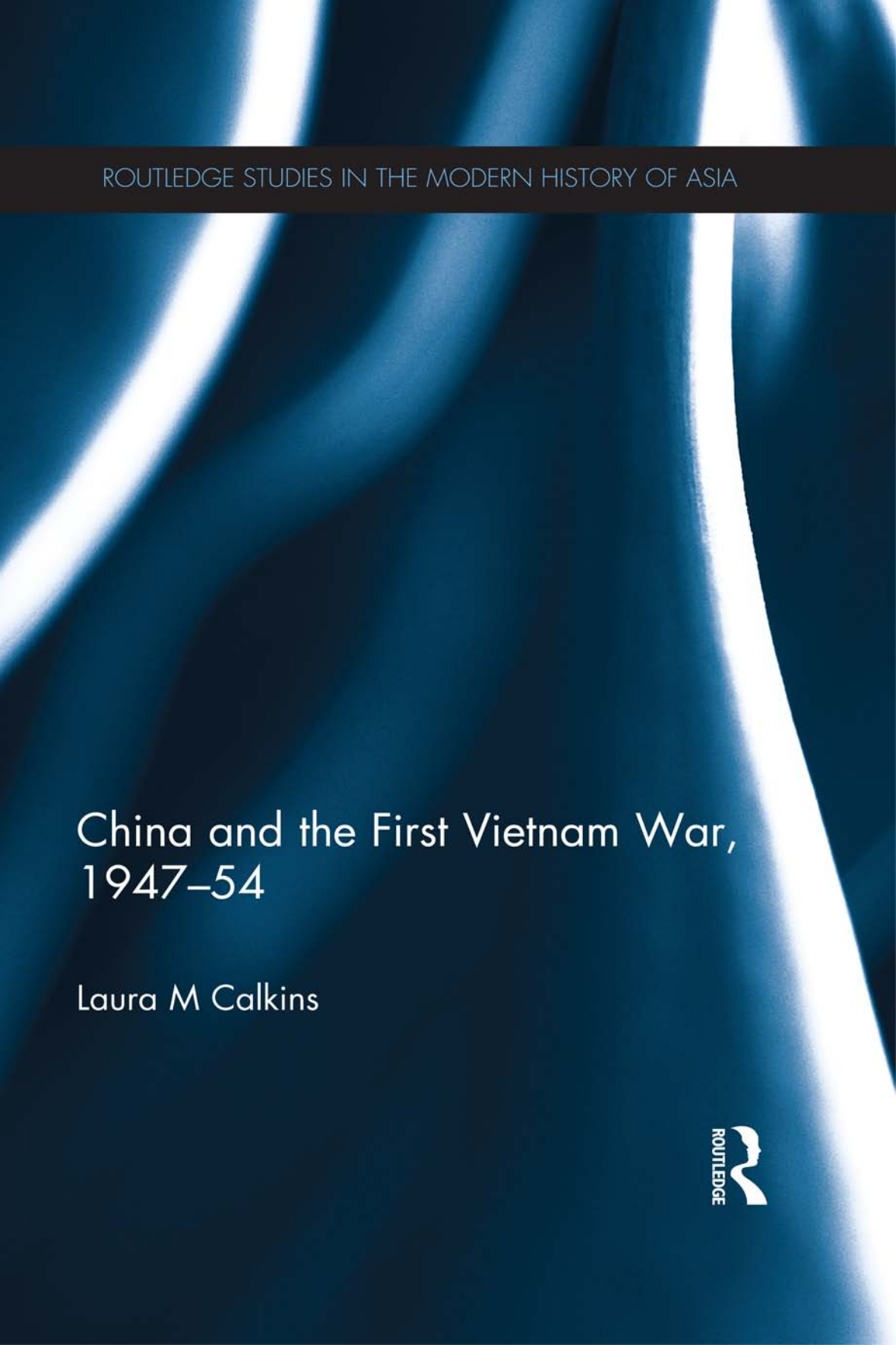
ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN THE MODERN HISTORY OF ASIA
China and the First Vietnam War, 1947–54
Laura M Calkins
ROUTLEDGE

China and the First Vietnam War, 1947–54

This book charts the development of the First Vietnam War – the war between the Vietnamese Communists (the Viet Minh) and the French colonial power – considering especially how relations between the Viet Minh and the Chinese Communists had a profound impact on the course of the war. It shows how the Chinese provided finance, training, and weapons to the Viet Minh, but how differences about strategy emerged, particularly when China became involved in the Korean War and the subsequent peace negotiations, when the need to placate the United States and to prevent US military involvement in Southeast Asia became a key concern for the Chinese. The book shows how the Viet Minh strategy of all-out war in the North and limited guerrilla warfare in the South developed from this situation, and how the war then unfolded.

Laura M Calkins is an Assistant Professor of History at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, USA.

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I am entirely responsible for any errors that appear in these pages.

Note on usage

In the main, Chinese names are given in pinyin Romanization. Exceptions have been made in the case of proper names for which the Chinese characters are unavailable, and in the case of quotations and citations from source materials which use other Romanization systems; in these instances the form appearing in the source documents has been used.

For Vietnamese names the standard Romanized script (quoc-ngu) has been used, but diacritical marks have been omitted. In general the form used in the source material has been reproduced, except where there was an obvious misspelling or when the source document employed the Sinicized form of a Vietnamese name (e.g. "Wu Yuan-chia" for Vo Nguyen Giap).

Vietnamese terminology for the three regions of Vietnam has sometimes been used, as follows:

North (Tonkin):	Bacbo
Centre (Annam):	Trungbo
South (Cochinchina):	Nambo

The term "Viet Minh" refers to the "Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi" ("Independence League of Vietnam"), created by the Indochinese Communist Party following its eighth plenum, held in Cao Bang province in northern Vietnam between May 10 and 19, 1941. The organization itself, dominated by the Communist Party apparatus, used the term "Viet Minh," which also entered popular usage. The Viet Minh was a front organization composed of various peasants', workers,' and soldiers' groups, and operated under Communist Party direction. In early March 1951 the Viet Minh was officially "merged" with the more broadly based "Lien Viet" ("League for the National Union of Vietnam"), which had been created in 1946 to extend Communist Party control within a range of political parties and associations seeking an end to French rule; the new group formed by the merger, "Mat Tran Lien Hiep Quoc Dan Viet Nam" ("United National Front of Vietnam"), was also referred to as the "Lien Viet" by its leaders. However, for the period before mid-1954 it remains standard practice to continue to refer to the Party-dominated front organization, including the military organization, as the "Viet Minh."

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Introduction

Scholarly and popular treatments of the Vietnam wars continue to appear in greater numbers, many of them focusing either on the participation of the United States in the conflict or on the experiences of individual US units or even soldiers in actual combat. A few recent studies have examined the period before the entry of US combat forces into the conflict, but these studies have generally been oriented around a search for the "origins" of US involvement in the war.[1] Instead of focusing on the Western Powers in Indochina, this work examines the political and military relationship between the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist regimes, particularly in relation to the Franco-Viet Minh conflict. By examining the evidence of contacts between the Vietnamese and Chinese Communist organizations and the evolution of their bilateral political relationship both before and after the establishment of Communist control over both sides of the China–Indochina border in 1949–50, this study explores the cooperation and the tensions which arose as the two regimes simultaneously pursued the not always complementary goals of security and revolution.

Some scholars have turned their attention to the study of Communist decision-making in the Far East during the early "Cold War."[2] Among the works which have focused in whole or in part on Sino-Vietnamese relations in this period, several merit particular mention. K.C. Chen's *Vietnam and China, 1938–1954* (1969) made use of internal documents produced by agencies of the Nationalist Chinese government to present a picture of the points of contact between various Chinese and Vietnamese political organizations, including but not limited to the Communist Parties in each country.[3] More recently, Lockhart's *Nation in Arms* (1989) has examined the origins and institutional history of the Communist-led People's Army of Vietnam, including the question of Chinese military support and, more broadly, of Sino-Viet Minh military relations in the early 1950s.[4] Lockhart employed a range of Vietnamese-language materials, including official and semi-official publications and research articles published during the period and subsequently, as well as a limited selection of documents from French military archives. The remarkable contributions of Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (2000) and Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (2001), especially have illuminated new areas of Sino-Vietnamese relations using Chinese publications and documents. Mari Olsen's work (2006) focuses on the view of Chinese foreign policy toward Vietnam taken by the USSR, making use of Soviet-era archives.

Systematic and comprehensive use of all the possible source materials lies beyond the scope of any single monograph. Any individual study of relations between the Chinese and Vietnamese Communists must therefore attempt to make fairly exhaustive use of certain categories of research materials, and to relate the information available in them to the results of previous research. The present study seeks to contribute to this literature on Sino-Viet Minh relations by utilizing two categories of primary research material not hitherto employed for the study of the subject. First, and of particular importance in this study, are the publicly available collections of "open intelligence" information contained in monitored radio broadcasts by Communist radio stations, which include information on the Chinese and Vietnamese regimes not currently available in any other form. Following an agreement between the British and US governments in 1947, responsibility for monitoring foreign radio transmissions and for producing summaries and full translations of these broadcasts was divided between the two governments. The US Central Intelligence Agency and later, the US Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) took charge of a monitoring program covering East and Southeast Asia.[5] The output from this program was shared with the British, and two versions of the monitored broadcast material were published: the US FBIS issued a *Daily Report* from 1942 (under a succession of titles), while the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) published the *Summary of World Broadcasts* from 1947.[6]

The exceptional utility of these monitored radio broadcasts for the study of the Chinese and Vietnamese Communists' policies lies chiefly in two features of the published output. Both the US and BBC series often reproduced full translations of broadcast articles (in addition to the more numerous article summaries), thus providing researchers with vital clues which can only be identified within the phraseology (in this case in translation to English, of course) employed by the Communist editorialists and "reporters." Second, the record of daily radio broadcasts provides an invaluable picture of the day-to-day development of political positions, or "lines," and of domestic and foreign policies. This degree of detail is particularly important for the analysis of periods of crisis when rapidly changing perceptions and positions were reflected in the radio broadcasts authorized by the regime.

Furthermore, the study of open radio transmissions is important because this medium was used by the Viet Minh leadership to reach isolated revolutionary and potentially revolutionary constituencies who did not have access to the Party daily newspaper *Nhan Dan*, the military daily newspaper *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, or even monthly organs such as *Su That* [Truth]. Official broadcasts consisted of the highest-priority items that set forward the "line" that all who participated in the Vietnamese Communist-led anti-French struggle needed to know, regardless of their physical location. There were several different regional Viet Minh broadcast stations being monitored by Western intelligence agencies, and these different stations, as we shall see, often emphasized different issues, at least until the Viet Minh's consolidation of radio media output in 1952.

Students of other aspects of international Communist history have made some use of monitored radio broadcasts as a source of information, but radio monitoring reports have not been used for a comprehensive study of Sino-Viet Minh relations

in the period under examination here. The present work relies on a reading of both the US and BBC monitoring series, and includes reference not only to broadcasts by Chinese and Vietnamese Communist stations, but also to Soviet radio transmissions and to the output of other Southeast Asian stations, such as the French and Bao Dai governments' radio based in Vietnam.

The output of the Communist media requires special treatment and analysis. One semi-official US analyst of mass movements in China during the Korean War declared that "it is recognized" that even "heavily-biased" official propaganda can provide useful information.[7] A careful reading of broadcast and printed material from this period uncovers not only what may be seen as propaganda, or more precisely "the literature of political persuasion," but also a wealth of detailed information about Communist decisions and programs.[8] In this respect the reports generated by the Viet Minh broadcast media have been especially fruitful for this study.

As many students of Communist history have noted, it is often not only the content but also the form of public pronouncements, commentaries, and articles which can be of importance. For example, there is a pattern of publicizing major decisions some time after they are taken, typically when the "line" or policy endorsed at the earlier stage has been clarified or validated in one way or another by subsequent decisions or events. One well-known example of the Vietnamese Communists leadership's use of this practice came in 1959. The 15th plenum of the Vietnam Workers' Party Central Committee was held in January 1959, but its conclusions were not publicized until May 13, 1959; the decision to reveal the plenum's outcome coincided with several developments in South Vietnam and Laos which lent justification to the plenum's decision to allow an increase in the "level of violence" by Party networks in the South.[9] The present study takes account of such signals about Communist decision-making. Some dates have special significance, and the publication of commentaries or directives on those dates is therefore imbued with particular political references and importance.[10]

The second category of material used in this study is the records of the US and British governments. The former include, particularly, the confidential central files of the US State Department.[11] The United States devoted considerable resources to observing Communist policies and programmes in Asia, and for its own strategic and commercial reasons it maintained an intelligence-gathering effort that produced often detailed reporting on both the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist regimes. Likewise, because of its position in Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore, Britain was vitally concerned with developments in China and Indochina. Relevant British archives therefore include the records of the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, and the War Office. In addition to their own intelligence sources, both the US and British governments maintained cooperative intelligence-sharing relationships with the French.[12] Much French intelligence material has become available through the declassification of US and British government archives, and has been employed in this study. A small selection of individual documents, culled from the archives of the Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre (Vincennes) and of the Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, was made available to me by the late Professor R.B. Smith, of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

It is clear that in evaluating the intelligence information generated by Western agencies, historians must be aware of potential problems involving the selectivity and accuracy of the materials. There were, for example, obstacles to the free flow of information among Western governments. British and US officials feared that their own intelligence data, if passed to the French, could "leak" to the USSR and its allies; the "Revers-Mast affair" in 1949, in which a top-secret French defense policy paper on Indochina was obtained and later broadcast by the Viet Minh, served to reinforce such apprehensions.[13] French agencies, for their part, established categories of intelligence information which could not be shared with certain allies.[14]

For obvious reasons, however, the French seem to have been less reticent about providing their allies with details on the Communists than they were about informing the US and British about their own policies in Indochina. Intelligence coverage was not always even, of course. The French information-gathering network in northern Tonkin was deeply damaged by the military defeats suffered by French forces there in the autumn of 1950.[15]

Special care must be exercised in the use of information generated by Nationalist Chinese agencies, since it was known that the Nationalist regime had an interest in fueling Western animosities toward the Chinese Communists.[16] Some Nationalist radio accounts appear to have been based on intelligence reports, but often seem to have exaggerated actual intelligence information; this has been taken into account here. However, as K.C. Chen has demonstrated, the formidable intelligence-gathering apparatus developed by the Kuomintang was able to monitor many developments inside the Chinese Communist regime and about the Communists' foreign relations. Nationalist intelligence reports were regularly provided to the US government, and in selected instances these reports have been used cautiously in this study.

In addition to the secret intelligence reports produced by government agencies, two other components of the material available in Western archives illustrate the usefulness of the archives themselves for the study of Sino-Vietnamese relations, and therefore deserve mention. First, the archival collections contain a number of "captured documents," internal policy papers and directives issued by various echelons of the Communists' political and military organizations. Most of these documents were never intended for public distribution. Some, although not all, were obtained by the French during field operations in Indochina; others, like the series of documents seized by the Special Branch of the Hong Kong Police in December 1948 and April 1949, were obtained during raids on the premises of Communist activists.[17] Particular care must be exercised in the use of "captured documents" because there is the possibility that, for the purposes of misleading allies, justifying particular policies, or for other reasons, the "documents" have been altered or entirely fabricated by their "captors." In this study, attention has been given to these possibilities, and the background of particular reports has been given in the text or in the notes where it seemed appropriate or useful to the reader to do so.

There also exist within Western government archives translations of individual articles published by the Vietnamese and Chinese Communist media which were thought by Western diplomats to be of significance in revealing some aspect of

Communist thinking or policy.[18] Readers familiar with the published resources on Chinese and Vietnamese Communist history will be aware that such articles in the Western archives complement a large body of information of similar kinds already available.[19] The special importance of the items found in the archives is that they have lain in closed collections for years, inaccessible to researchers until relatively recently when the files to which they were consigned were declassified. Thus many of the items consulted for the present work are being employed in historical study for the first time.

In September 1949, as the Chinese Communists' armies advanced toward the border with Indochina, the British Joint Intelligence Committee set out the basic issue which it believed would determine the outcome of the war in Indochina:

> The crucial question in this Indo-China situation is the problem of collaboration between the Viet Minh and the Chinese Communists, the extent to which arrangements already exist for collaboration, and the end which this collaboration is intended to achieve. … It seems safe to assume that the Viet Minh will be able to call upon sufficient manpower to launch a full-scale offensive against the French if the Chinese Communists are prepared to cooperate to that end.[20]

In exploring this "crucial question" of China's willingness and ability to support the Viet Minh, it is equally necessary to assess the Viet Minh's own political and military policies in relation to the question of external assistance and "collaboration." The project at hand thus requires not only close scrutiny of Chinese assistance policies but also of the Viet Minh's evolving strategies for the anti-French resistance. It will become clear that as the military conflict came to dominate the Viet Minh's agenda of resistance activity, the role of external diplomatic and military support became increasingly important; at the same time, by instituting an assistance program to bolster the Viet Minh military organization during 1950, the Chinese Communists gave active support to the policy of armed struggle and to the militarization of the anti-French resistance as a whole. We must take care in evaluating claims made subsequently by both sides about their assistance to each other, particularly information on Chinese aid to the Vietnamese, details of which have been released in the recent period of tension between the two regimes. We shall see, for example, that a fundamental dynamic of tension was introduced into this pattern of relations when the internationalization of the Korean War led China to restructure its strategic priorities in such a way that the objectives of the Vietnamese Communists in Indochina were subordinated to China's own immediate security concerns in Northeast Asia.

Within the constraints imposed by the available time, funds, and source materials, this work examines the inter-relationship of the political, military, and economic components of China's support for the Viet Minh and the complexities associated with the Viet Minh's receipt of this aid. The Vietnamese leadership recognized the dangers of dependence upon external assistance, but it was also evident at an early stage that some degree of outside support would be essential to the success of the Vietnamese independence movement. For its part, the Chinese

Communist leadership was committed to aiding "national liberation movements." However, with its own domestic concerns, its other military commitments (particularly in Korea from October 1950), and above all its desire to avoid provoking direct US military intervention on its southern flank, the Chinese leadership chose to limit its substantive assistance to the Viet Minh.

Another area which became a mainstay of the later debates surrounding the conflict in Vietnam was discussion of the degree to which the Communist leaders in northern Vietnam "controlled" anti-government activists and insurgent forces in southern Vietnam. Historians have now accepted that in the 1960s and 1970s there were effective political links between Hanoi and the National Liberation Front and the military forces of the People's Liberation Armed Forces. More perceptive analyses have also drawn attention to the elements of tension between northern and southern Communists, and indeed historians have demonstrated that the cultural and political contrasts between northern and southern Vietnam have found expression within Communist organizations since the late 1920s.

In his crucial study of the development of early Vietnamese communism, for example, Huynh Kim Khanh found that there was a "profound schism in the Vietnamese Communist movement" between members whose early politicization was influenced by developments in China and whose chief objective was the liberation of Vietnam from French rule, and a younger generation which looked to Moscow and to the European Communist movements and which sought social revolution under the leadership of the Communist Party as the vanguard of the proletariat.[21]

These tensions were aggravated by elements of divergence within the Party along North–South lines, as for example in late 1940 when "without the Central Committee's instructions" southern Party leaders "who had complied closely with whatever line Moscow espoused" launched the disastrous Nam Ky (or South Vietnam) insurrection; its defeat and the widespread arrests and repression which followed "changed the course of Vietnamese communism," not only in doctrinal terms but also in terms of the North–South distribution of power at the highest levels of the Party.[22] The remaining Party cadres in the South were cut off from provincial and regional leaders, who in turn were isolated from the central leadership throughout the Japanese occupation. The Moscow-trained head of the Party's southern bureau during World War II, Tran Van Giau, has confirmed in conversation with scholar David Marr that the "southern branch of the ICP [Indochinese Communist Party] remained entirely out of touch with the Central Committee."[23] The events of the August Revolution in 1945, and the subsequent dismissal of Tran Van Giau and other southern leaders by representatives from the central leadership in the North, confirmed the fundamental shift of authority to the Party leaders in Tonkin.[24]

The present study also takes up the question of North–South tensions. During the period under consideration, substantial political difficulties arose from a challenge to the central authorities' prescriptions for the pace of the military struggle in southern Vietnam. This issue is relevant for the study of Sino-Viet Minh relations because, as we shall see, North–South tensions within the Viet Minh not only interfered with the northern-based leadership's plans for the development of the

resistance as a whole, but also introduced complications into the leadership's external relations with the Chinese Communists.

The central problem for the Vietnamese revolution in the period under study here was that of organizing the maximum degree of foreign and domestic support for the purpose of eliminating French power and establishing a new administration controlled by the Communist Party apparatus, without provoking a militarily decisive intervention by the United States in support of France. Communist leaders were thus constantly having to evaluate both internal and international situations and to relate developments on the one plane to those on the other. In this process, debates arose not only within the Vietnamese Communist organization but also between it and other Parties, including the Chinese Communists. Leaving aside popular misconceptions of an international Communist monolithism in the post-World War II decade, historians have explored many of the political and strategic divergences amongst Communist leaderships in Asia, especially in relation to the Korean conflict.[25] The Sino-Vietnamese relationship, which became uniquely important for both the internal and international considerations of the Vietnamese Communists, also exhibited tensions as well as cooperation, and one of the objectives of the present study is to demonstrate that both features were present in bilateral relations in the 1947–54 period.

1 The changing strategies of struggle, 1947–49

An anonymous reporter for *The Times* of London, writing for his newspaper in 1946 during the Fontainebleau talks between the governments of France and the Communist-led Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), noted that if the DRV remained, as it was then, chiefly based in northern Tonkin, it would never emerge as a dominant force within the French scheme for the "Associated States of Indochina."[1] Without incorporating the rice-producing delta lands of southern Vietnam, where the French had just created a new stand-alone state, the Republic of Cochin-China, even a wholly controlled Communist state with a capital at Hanoi would be relatively insignificant, in economic and probably political terms. The French certainly realized this, and created Cochin-China out of the most Francophile part of the former Vietnamese empire. Ho Chi Minh and his compatriots in the Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), then an underground institution but an active and thriving one nonetheless, also realized this. In August 1946 Ho Chi Minh himself suspended the Fontainebleau negotiations, which aimed to permit the DRV's entrance into the French Union, because the French were taking new actions to consolidate the separate Vietnamese state in the south. In 1946, Ho Chi Minh decided that the incorporation of the South into the already recognized Communist-led North was an issue of such central significance that it was worth embarking upon a potentially prolonged and certainly costly military confrontation with France.

Ho's decision was a calculated gamble, but a highly risky gamble nonetheless. Within his own organization of political cadre, armed units, and auxiliary support personnel, the overwhelming strength in both manpower and reliable political organization lay in the north. The French had succeeded in crushing the Communist movement in the south following a series of uprisings, demonstrations, and arrests in the south in the 1930s. Ho now decided to lay claim to that part of Vietnam where his own organization was weakest, and to make French capitulation on the issue of controlling the South the lynchpin of Vietnam's nationalist and Communist revolutions. With British and French forces fully in control of the South in early 1946, it would be an uphill slog to recreate a functional revolutionary organization in the South and to control its actions, all the while contesting French plans for Paris-dominated governments in Laos and Cambodia as well. Yet this is the task that Ho Chi Minh and his Central Committee allies endorsed

in 1946: the unification of northern and southern Vietnam under Communist authority.

This plan would be articulated through many themes and would employ many tools: anti-colonialism, nationalism, propaganda, terrorism, guerrilla warfare, and pitched battles. It would also develop against the background of a global Cold War that pitched Western empires and anti-Communist containment strategies against revolutionary international solidarity and Moscow-style Sovietism. While resting in his sumptuous quarters at the palace of Fontainebleau, Ho was surely well aware of this emerging divide in global politics. Yet even he probably did not foresee the 30 years' war that would ensue from his strategic decision to incorporate the south in the new Communist government, of which he was President. Unveiled publicly in Hanoi just one year earlier, the DRV was as yet more a paper tiger than a fully articulated government. While Japanese troops still controlled Indochina and Allied troops were yet to arrive to accept their surrender, Ho Chi Minh had traveled *incognito* to Hanoi, and on September 2, 1945 had announced the formation of a new government for all of Vietnam. Even then, his relatively small Viet Minh front organization, through which cadre, fighters, and farmers were drafted into the Communists' plan, was almost exclusively an organization of the north. Circumstances had not changed substantially in the year that followed. Ho and the rest of the Vietnamese Communist leadership had watched French determination to reoccupy all of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia become French policy. Paris had reasserted much of its prewar political, military, and economic authority over its profitable possessions in Indochina. French troops had peacefully displaced those of its Allies, the British in the south and the Nationalist Chinese in the north. French warships occupied Vietnam's natural ports and international trading centers, the principal ones being Saigon in the south, Tourane (Nha Trang) in central Annam near the imperial capital city at Hue, and Haiphong in the north. French forces were also back in position in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital, and in Luang Prabang and Vientiane, the key political cities in Laos. With the Viet Minh organization most numerous and well-armed in the northern reaches of Tonkin and some areas in the Red River Delta of the north that lay between Hanoi and Haiphong, Ho's vision of a united Vietnam – north and south – under the control of his Communist-led organization was a remote goal, and one upon which he was prepared to negotiate, delay, and compromise, but not abandon.

His personal political skill and determination, and that of his comrades, followers, and fighters, put Indochina at the center of the Great Powers' concerns, both in their regional policies for Southeast and South Asia, and in their greater global strategic program. The connections between Ho's organization and the neighboring Chinese Communist movement were central to the Western Powers' calculus, and they form the essential concern of this book. How did the Viet Minh's lopsided military and political organization in northern Vietnam cultivate and control revolutionists in the South? How did the Chinese Communists, whose own revolution brought them to the very edge of Indochina, respond to developments there? Amongst the cataract of nationalist, anti-colonial, and Communist-led revolutionary movements of the postwar period, how did Vietnam's revolution emerge as the *primus inter pares*?

The origins of Sino-Viet Minh military cooperation

Franco-Viet Minh military hostilities began in earnest in November/December 1946 in the cities of Haiphong and Hanoi.[2] The Viet Minh armed forces, officially constituted as a "people's army" in December 1944, remained relatively small, disorganized, poorly equipped, and dispersed, and by mid-1947 French military operations had rendered the Viet Minh forces in Tonkin vulnerable to military defeat.[3] The French, on the other hand, were able to place around 110,000 well-trained and relatively well-equipped troops in Indochina by mid-1947.[4] Guerrilla attacks by small Viet Minh units could harass French military and economic installations, in the hope of eroding the political resolve of the French authorities, but such attacks could not displace thousands of metropolitan troops from well-defended redoubts or from key urban areas. By contrast, the military forces led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in north-central China were in mid-1947 making the transition from guerrilla conflict to major main-force engagements, and the Chinese Nationalists' offensive in the spring of 1947 proved to be their last large military initiative of the Chinese civil war. As Pepper has observed, the commanders of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) had begun to "transform their anti-Japanese guerrilla experience into campaigns of mobile warfare."[5]

The utility of force amalgamation and of more sophisticated tactics, particularly for the "liberation" of territory, was not lost upon the Viet Minh leadership. Already by the autumn of 1947 Truong Chinh, Secretary-General of the Marxist Studies Association (the front organization for the officially "dissolved" ICP) had formulated an outline for the development of Viet Minh forces and tactics, one modeled closely upon Mao Zedong's military writings and theories of the progressive development of revolutionary warfare.[6] The Viet Minh military forces had, however, suffered major battle defeats in the first half of 1947. Truong Chinh was writing against the background of new efforts to develop local and regional guerrilla and militia forces, which were being recognized as necessary force structures for a successful transition to main-force mobile warfare, or, in Truong Chinh's analysis, the higher stages of the revolutionary armed struggle.[7]

As the Chinese Communist leadership prepared for and then, in 1949, launched the advance of the PLA south of the Yangzi River, the Viet Minh made their own preparations for a reorganization and improvement of their military forces. Regional and guerrilla forces were strengthened, and in 1949 plans were implemented to transform some elements of the Viet Minh forces into larger, more sophisticated units capable of both mobile and sustained engagements against the French. Before either the Chinese advance to the south or the redevelopment of the Viet Minh's force structure took place, however, both the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist leaderships recognized the potential importance of military cooperation between their guerrilla forces in the China–Indochina border area.

After the outbreak of Franco-Vietnamese hostilities in December 1946, the Viet Minh's covert arms supply routes from Bangkok were severely disrupted. Viet Minh units in northern Vietnam began to look to maritime links with Macao and Hong Kong and to cross-border trading with pro-Communist elements inside China for

new sources of supply.[8] First reports of substantive military cooperation between Viet Minh and Chinese Communist guerrilla forces date from September 1947, when Nationalist Chinese, or Kuomintang (KMT), reports indicate that pro-Communist Chinese sold a quantity of arms worth 12 million piasters to the Viet Minh.[9] By December 1947, only a few months later, the French authorities reported the CCP's emerging policy of improving links with the Viet Minh. During January 1948, for example, the French commander at Lang Son in northeastern Tonkin reported increased collaboration between local Viet Minh forces and pro-CCP guerrillas inside Guangxi province, and there were also reports that a regularized trans-border arms traffic had been established.[10] New impetus for greater cooperation may have been given to both sides after January 1948, when a secret Franco-Nationalist Chinese border control agreement was reportedly concluded.[11] If the French expected that the agreement would stem the illegal flow of arms from China into Tonkin, they were – at least in Lang Son – disappointed: the KMT officers who arrived there in April 1948 to liaise with the French were themselves promptly arrested for selling arms to the Viet Minh.[12]

These developments, together with Ho Chi Minh's denunciation of the new pro-French Bao Dai government and the CCP's decision to "step up" the level of Communist activity in southern China, formed the background to the emergence of a new stage in Sino-Viet Minh relations beginning in June 1948. Small-scale cross-border cooperation had taken place since 1946.[13]

However, intelligence reports in the British and US official archives indicate that an agreement on military cooperation between the Chinese Communists and the Viet Minh was concluded in June 1948.[14] These reports variously describe the agreement as including a combination of mutual defense, personnel exchange, and liaison clauses. French authorities privately acknowledged that to some extent Nationalist Chinese reports on the agreement had been fabricated by KMT agents, who no doubt also wished to bolster French resolve, but it was nonetheless believed that the KMT accounts were exaggerations of actual, if "purely local," arrangements between Chinese Communist groups and Viet Minh networks in northern Tonkin.[15] The French later confidentially informed US officials that no Sino-Viet Minh treaty document *per se* had been "uncovered," but they maintained the belief – perhaps also calculated to elicit greater US support – that a bilateral Communist military agreement of some kind had been concluded in June 1948.[16]

Developments along the China–Indochina border during July 1948 bear out the likelihood of closer cooperative arrangements amongst the Communists, with the Viet Minh taking the lead. On July 15, following an unsuccessful raid on Funing in extreme southeastern Yunnan, the principal Chinese Communist guerrilla commander in Yunnan province, "Chu Chia-pi," took 1000 of his pro-CCP guerrilla forces across the Indochina border into Ha Giang province in north-central Tonkin.[17] "Chu" was the leader of the pro-CCP "Democratic United Army," a guerrilla organization then active chiefly in Yunnan. He had reportedly been trained at the CCP stronghold of Yan'an between 1939 and 1943, and had entered Tonkin in 1945, presumably with the KMT forces who occupied northern Indochina under Allied agreements at the end of the World War II. He had been arrested in Hanoi, but was released after the personal

intervention of the principal commander of the KMT's occupation forces in Indochina, Gen. Lu Han.[18] US diplomats reported that "Chu" was acquainted with Ho Chi Minh during the period of KMT occupation in late 1945 and early 1946.[19] After entering Ha Giang province in July 1948, "Chu" and his forces remained in a Viet Minh base area during the rainy season of 1948, receiving both arms (captured from the French) and military training from his Viet Minh hosts. Together with some Viet Minh units, "Chu" and his forces reportedly participated in "several attacks" on French military posts. After the Chinese force crossed back into Yunnan, probably in November, selected pro-CCP guerrillas from Yunnan were reported to be arriving back in Ha Giang province at the Viet Minh base area to attend "training and indoctrination courses."[20]

Meanwhile, in southern China itself, both sides in the civil war were making preparations for a possible change of power. KMT authorities reportedly created an "underground organization" in southern China that could continue to operate in the event of a Communist conquest.[21]

Contemporaneous efforts were made by the Chinese Communists who, using Hong Kong as the central base for coordinating their activities, prepared their own local Party cells and guerrilla networks in the southern provinces for increased political agitation and military activity. Evidence of the CCP's broadened activities came to light in September, as the result of a series of raids and arrests by KMT authorities in Kunming, Yunnan's provincial capital. On September 4 the KMT arrested "Tuan Ying," commander of the "Western Yunnan Column" of "Chu's" "Democratic United Army." "Tuan," who had reportedly joined the CCP in 1927, and who at one time commanded some 3000 pro-CCP guerrillas in Yunnan, was a member of a Hong Kong-based organization, the "China Democratic League."[22] At around the same time, pro-CCP leader "Ho Cheng-ping" was also arrested by the KMT in Yunnan. He was believed to have been sent to eastern Yunnan "to direct [Communist] military operations" in the Yunnan–Guizhou–Guangxi border region, in preparation for the advance of the PLA into the south.[23] In mid-September, the Kunming police uncovered a "military liaison station" sent by the Democratic League in Hong Kong to "maintain contact" with pro-CCP guerrilla groups in Yunnan.[24]

These links substantiate reports by British Colonial Office officials describing the Colony as the principal "liaison centre between the CCP in the North and the Communists in the South."[25] By late September 1948, according to Colonial Office papers, three members of the CCP Central Committee had already been in Hong Kong for three months, and a meeting reportedly held on August 14 by senior CCP members in the Colony drafted a manifesto designed to "strengthen confidence" for the struggle ahead.[26] Another British report, written in early November 1948, observed that:

> It is believed that the local Communists [in Hong Kong] are stepping up the tempo of their underground organization and building up and increasing the network whose main activities are directed towards South China. There are also signs that armed "Communist-bandit" activities over the [Hong Kong]

> border may increase shortly, as part of the general Communist plan to spread disorder in South China, concurrently with the increased Communist activities all over South East Asia.[27]

The British appreciation must be seen within the broader context of military developments in China, where November 1948 was a critical turning point in the Chinese civil war. The PLA's remarkable victories in Manchuria prompted the Communist leadership to re-evaluate the likely pace of progress in the war. Mao Zedong wrote in November that "the war would be much shorter than he originally estimated, and would probably be over in another year or so."[28] This revised timetable was influenced by the PLA's battlefield successes in the northeast, and it indicated that CCP leaders were looking forward to full Communist authority in China's southern provinces. British military intelligence indicated that by November 1948, Mao could have considerable confidence in the capacity of pro-CCP guerrilla forces in the South to render meaningful assistance in an expedited final Communist military victory on the mainland. Guangdong and Guangxi provinces were believed to have especially strong Communist Party cells and some 30,000 "formal Communist guerrillas" active in Guangdong alone, with 10–20,000 more elsewhere in the southern provinces.[29] The coordination between these local units and the main-force troops of the PLA would of course be crucial for a quick Communist victory. British observers noted in early November 1948 that some of the Communist armed units in the south were "already closely associated with the organized Chinese Communist forces" north of the Yangzi River.[30] Furthermore, according to the British War Office's Directorate of Military Intelligence, a growing number of "military commanders of considerable skill have been sent from North China to coordinate the scattered cells" of armed pro-CCP guerrillas in the south.[31]

One corollary of the CCP's accelerating preparations for a military advance into southern China was a refinement of the leadership's strategic planning in relation to Indochina. The expected rapid completion of the war against the Nationalists gave the Franco-Viet Minh conflict greater significance for the CCP leadership. Again using Hong Kong as its base, the CCP reportedly convened a meeting of Southeast Asian Communists on December 19, 1948, the second anniversary of Franco-Viet Minh hostilities. According to a French summary of this conference, strategy for the Viet Minh's armed struggle in Indochina was the principal topic at the meeting.[32] One report delivered at the meeting set out the standard Chinese Communist view of the anti-French struggle in Vietnam. It declared that the Viet Minh military forces were not strong enough to attack the French in a general counteroffensive "everywhere at the same time;" this approach, the report maintained, produced only limited results and would cost the Viet Minh huge losses in men and materiel. The meeting urged instead that a new pattern of struggle be adopted by the Viet Minh, one based on the application of military power against the French "in each sector separately." Specifically, the report prescribed that the Viet Minh develop its military campaigns against the French from north to south, indicating that resources be concentrated on achieving victory in Tonkin first and on the other "*secteurs de guerre*" afterward. This approach, the report maintained, stood a good

chance of success, not least because assistance would be provided to the Viet Minh by the "Q[uartier] G[enerale] Communist du Sud Est Asie," a cover name for a Chinese-run assistance network which may have been one of the groups formed under CCP oversight in 1947.[33]

The Chinese Communist leadership's preference for a Tonkin-first strategy for the conduct of the war against the French would become fully apparent in subsequent years, notably in 1954 at the Geneva Conference on Indochina, in which the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Zhou Enlai, agreed with Russian, French, and British (and to a lesser extent US) officials to divide Vietnam into a Communist-run northern sector and a pro-Western southern sector. In the intervening years, China's cross-border aid deliveries would bolster the Viet Minh's military strength in Tonkin not only *vis-à-vis* that of the French, but also *vis-à-vis* that of the Viet Minh armed networks in southern Vietnam. During much of 1948, as we have seen, such cross-border cooperation as there was actually saw the Viet Minh render aid to the relatively underpowered pro-CCP guerrillas in China's Yunnan province. With the advance of the main PLA toward the border with Indochina, however, the balance of the scales was about to change.

Evidence of this change emerged immediately. The British believed that during December a Viet Minh "delegate" at Dulong in southern Yunnan went to Nanning, the capital of Guangxi province, with the task of arranging for the purchase of rifles, uniforms, ammunition, and communications equipment. Pro-CCP agents shipped the supplies from Guangxi to Dulong, from where it may be supposed, the materiel was removed across the frontier into a Viet Minh base area.[34] The important role played by the CCP organization in Hong Kong in the arrangement of such supply deliveries was underscored by another report from British sources indicating that a CCP operative, working as a "special correspondent" of the CCP's Xinhua news agency branch in Hong Kong, traveled to Tonkin in "late 1948" to negotiate with the Vietnamese to supply arms to the Viet Minh military on behalf of a firm in Fujian province.[35]

With these developments in mind, it is striking that Ho Chi Minh made his own public pronouncement on the armed struggle anniversary on December 19, 1948.[36] In his evaluation of the development of the Vietnamese armed struggle, Ho noted that the coming year "will be the year for achieving the first successes," and illustrated his observations of the changing balance of advantage in the anti-French war by saying "the enemy forces are decreasing and weakening. The enemy's situation is like the setting sun. Our forces are increasing and strengthening. They are like streams which gather together to become an ocean."[37]

Ho's optimism may in part have reflected his knowledge of the improving cross-border cooperation with the Chinese Communists, about which more will be said later. But there was at least one area of tension between Chinese and Vietnamese Communist leaders in late 1948. According to French intelligence information, as early as the beginning of 1946 several armed groups from Guangdong and Guangxi, which "called themselves Communists," were driven over the border into Tonkin.[38] Some of these groups gathered together in the coastal region near Mong Cai where their activities "provoked" an attack upon them by the Viet Minh's 156th Division

sometime around November 1946, when Franco-Viet Minh tensions in Tonkin were also becoming acute. In 1947 pro-Communist ethnic Chinese from the commercial sectors in Haiphong, together with remnants of earlier refugee groups, formed an armed unit known as the "Doc Lap," or "Independence" Regiment, which took up local activities also in northeastern Tonkin.[39] The Doc Lap Regiment was nominally under Viet Minh control, but its leaders were reportedly pro-CCP ethnic Chinese who, without authorization from the Vietnamese Communists, conducted "intense political activity" in Hai Ninh province in the northeast. The Regiment was said to have spread Chinese Communist, rather than Viet Minh, propaganda amongst the large Nung ethnic minority population there; many Nungs were enrolled by the Regiment's operatives in pro-CCP organizations originally created by small CCP cells to enlist the overseas ethnic Chinese living in northern Tonkin. The Doc Lap Regiment also collected taxes and controlled transit through Hai Ninh province without reference to the local Viet Minh apparatus. In late 1948, as Sino-Viet Minh collaboration in other spheres gathered pace, local Viet Minh leaders became concerned about the expansion of Chinese Communist power in Hai Ninh; measures were taken to curb its growth. Viet Minh propagandists, including politically reliable pro-Viet Minh Nungs, were dispatched to the province to counter the Doc Lap Regiment's influence, and a directive ordering the regiment's removal to another zone was issued.[40] As we shall see, it later became clear that the problems caused by the Doc Lap Regiment, like those created by Sino-Viet Minh cooperation in other areas, were not resolved easily.

The "second phase" of the Viet Minh armed struggle and the growth of Sino-Viet Minh collaboration

The improved arrangements for transferring weapons from southern China to the Viet Minh in Tonkin in December 1948 were followed by indications of a new degree of operational collaboration between the Communist-led armed forces on both sides of the international border. First, according to French intelligence, from January 1949 "steps were taken [by the Communists] … to form a combined Viet Minh, Chinese frontier force to operate against the Kuomintang in China and the French in Indochina."[41] More precise details on these arrangements have not emerged, but it is known that at this time the Chinese Communist leadership was effecting a major reorganization of its own guerrilla units in southern China. On January 1, 1949, PLA Headquarters issued a directive ordering the establishment of three PLA "columns" in the south.[42]

At this time more experienced Communist military commanders from northern China were being transferred to the south. In January 1949, for example, "Yu Wei-min," a Yan'an-trained officer, was reported to be leading Communist guerrillas in southwestern Yunnan.[43] In March Chen Manyuan, who had commanded Communist units since 1933 and who later became a senior official in the Communists' provincial administration in Yunnan, was thought to be leading guerrilla forces in southern Yunnan.[44] Later intelligence information indicated that among the leaders sent to the south was "Chou Pao-ch'un," brother of Chou Pao-chung, the

Moscow-trained graduate of the Yunnan Military Academy who by mid-1949 was a senior PLA commander in northern China. Chou Pao-chung himself also later came to southwestern China.[45] Likewise "Ch'uang T'ien" was soon identified as the commander of the Communists' "Yunnan-Szechwan-Kwangsi Regional Area."[46]

The Viet Minh leadership, meanwhile, was engaged in its own policy review and planning process which gave rise to a new evaluation of the armed struggle against the French. The key meeting at which new "conclusions" were approved was the January, 1949 DRV Council of Ministers meeting; the exact dates of this conference are unknown, but its outcome was reported by the Viet Minh's official "Vietnam News Agency" (VNA) on January 31.[47] At the meeting Ho Chi Minh gave a report "on the international situation in 1948 and its effect on the situation in Viet Nam," and the Ministers "paid special attention to the situation in France and China." The meeting's "conclusions" included rejection of a "compromise" which would allow the French "to regroup … for a new offensive," and a commitment to "continue the battle until complete unity and independence are won." The DRV Ministers also agreed that preparations must begin for "a general counteroffensive," and according to the VNA report, the meeting "concluded" that the Viet Minh had "entered the second phase [of the resistance]."[48]

The significance of this determination lies in the place held by the "second phase" within the Vietnamese Communists' theoretical program for the acceleration of the anti-French revolutionary conflict. This program, based upon a progression of three stages of armed struggle, reflected the theoretical influence of Mao Zedong upon its chief Vietnamese proponent, Dang Xuan Khu, alias Truong Chinh. Chinh had been Secretary of the ICP, and after its public dissolution in 1945, he became the head of its above-ground successor organization, the Marxist Studies Association. In a series of articles written during 1947 and published together under the title "The Resistance Will Win," Chinh outlined the characteristics of each stage of the struggle.[49] Initially the revolutionary forces would operate "defensively," using guerrilla warfare tactics to wear down vastly superior enemy forces. Later an "equilibrium of strength" between revolutionary and enemy forces would develop, and during this "second stage" the revolutionary forces would adopt more sophisticated military tactics, including "mobile warfare" involving larger concentrations of troops. In this stage the resistance would also initiate broad mobilization measures to prepare for a "general counteroffensive" against the enemy. Finally, in the third stage, resistance forces would launch main-force offensive operations, and a point would come when the enemy could no longer militarily contain the political and military power of the people's revolutionary forces, who would join in a nationwide upheaval against imperial authority known as the "general counteroffensive."

This program for the revolution had the twin strengths of providing an abstract theoretical structure around which to plan the development of the war against the French, while also allowing the revolutionary leadership great flexibility in making political determinations as to when each of the stages of the struggle had been reached. In the autumn of 1947 Truong Chinh had affirmed that the struggle was still in the first stage, but in January 1949 at the DRV Council of Ministers meeting, the government momentously concluded that the time had come to move the

resistance to the "second phase" and to begin preparations for the third phase, that of the "general counteroffensive." In the weeks following the Ministers' meeting, Viet Minh radio broadcasts began to reflect the new "line." Great significance was attached to the military engagements which had taken place between October 1948 and January 1949. The VNA declared on 24 February, for example, that during these months Viet Minh armed forces had been able to "capture the strategic initiative, particularly in the northeast sector" of Indochina.[50]

The Viet Minh leadership's new perspective on the armed struggle and the Chinese Communists' increasing presence in southern China were key factors in the continued development of Sino-Viet Minh military collaboration in the border area. At the end of December 1948, pro-Communist Chinese military units near the Indochina border began an offensive which lasted until February 1949. Participating forces concentrated their attacks on larger towns in eastern and southern Yunnan, and several towns along the Indochina border were briefly occupied by the "Democratic United Army" led by "Chu Chia-pi," and other pro-CCP units.[51] The disruptions affected Yunnan's provincial capital at Kunming, where on January 27 an assault was made by 200 members of the Democratic United Army on the KMT weapons arsenal.[52] In early February, according to a US State Department estimate, 50 of Yunnan's 133 *hsien*, or counties, were either wholly controlled by pro-CCP "bandits" or were so controlled as to make tax collection by Nationalist authorities impossible.[53] The CCP's official Xinhua radio station at Yan'an, Shaanxi Province, attributed the offensive operations in Yunnan to the "South East Yunnan People's Liberation Army."[54]

In March 1949, following the Chinese Communist forces' activities in Yunnan, Viet Minh troops in northwestern Tonkin launched what the VNA described as "a great offensive aimed at chasing the French from the Sino-Vietnamese border," while at the same time there were attacks on French installations and outposts in northeastern Tonkin.[55] On March 4, for example, a French military convoy en route to Lang Son was attacked, and Viet Minh propaganda outlets claimed a major victory; British diplomats were confidentially informed by the French that 50 metropolitan troops had been lost.[56]

Moreover, according to Western intelligence reports, pro-Communist Chinese guerrillas grouped in bands numbering between 400 and 600 crossed the border into Tonkin in the area between Lao Cai and Cao Bang in early March 1949 and assisted the Viet Minh's offensive operations against the French.[57] Northeast of Lao Cai, two French posts were overtaken by Chinese units, and the ungarrisoned territory between the provincial town of Ha Giang and the international border was "occupied" by them.[58] French control of Route Coloniale No. 4, the main road between Lang Son and Cao Bang, was threatened by the simultaneous movements of the Chinese guerrilla units in the north and Viet Minh forces in the south; French traffic on the road was cut for several days.[59] On 17 March Chinese units besieged That Khe, south of Cao Bang, apparently to protect a "considerable convoy" of arms and ammunition moving past the French-garrisoned town to the Viet Minh-held areas further south.[60] A combined Viet Minh-Chinese Communist attack on Mong Cai, at the extreme eastern end of the Sino-Indochinese border, led to the

Communists' occupation of part of the town for two days, before French reinforcements arrived to restore the situation.[61] This Viet Minh offensive, launched with Chinese Communist assistance, was apparently coordinated with other attacks against French forces elsewhere in Vietnam, notably in the Hoa Binh area west of the Tonkin delta and in the Ben Tre region of southern Vietnam. These attacks were broken off at the end of March, and the participating Chinese units apparently withdrew back over the border into China.[62] The operational collaboration between the Viet Minh and pro-CCP units from China during this period lends credence to the earlier French report that the Communists had "taken steps" to develop a "frontier force" to coordinate their military activities.[63]

Despite this brief period of battlefield cooperation, however, there is doubt about the degree of consensus between Chinese and Vietnamese Communist leaders on the overall strategy for the war in Indochina. The Chinese Communist leadership had made clear at the secret meeting in Hong Kong during mid-December 1948 that it preferred a concentration of Viet Minh military resources and activity in the far north. The participation of Chinese forces in the March 1949 anti-French actions in the border areas of Tonkin may be seen as consonant with this position.

The Vietnamese, while evidently intent upon securing and expanding their base areas in northern Tonkin, were also beginning to look forward to the launch of a "general counteroffensive," which in theory would involve popular anti-French uprisings and military activities in all parts of Vietnam, and eventually throughout Indochina.[64] The development of the armed struggle in southern Vietnam was not to be ignored, as a VNA report on the "total resistance in Nambo," broadcast on March 11, 1949, explained.[65] According to this report, "great progress" had been made in "all fields of activity" in the southern anti-French resistance, where "the 'people's war' is growing in scope." The tension between the Chinese and Vietnamese views had yet to emerge publicly, but it is useful to bear in mind that bilateral differences on this issue were already apparent by March 1949.

The Chinese Communist leadership was of course principally concerned with its own continuing military struggle against the Nationalists. Barely 10 years earlier, the creation of a military redoubt based upon the occupation of Yunnan and Sichuan provinces had preserved the Nationalist government during Japan's occupation of most of eastern and southern mainland China. The lessons of this experience were now being recalled on both sides of the Chinese civil war. It was openly reported that the strategic plans of many senior Nationalist commanders confronted by the PLA's rapid progress in northeastern and northern China closely resembled decisions taken in the face of Japan's military advance. According to a Reuters report in February 1949, for example, the KMT defense minister planned to convene a meeting of senior regional and provincial commanders at Chongqing, the KMT's World War II-era capital, to discuss the "defence of southwestern China."[66] According to one student of the civil war period, such plans brought the President of the Nationalist government, Li Zongren, into conflict with Gen. Chiang Kai-shek, who had formally retired but who nonetheless wielded formidable influence over the Nationalists' policies.[67] President Li wanted to concentrate all available KMT forces to defend China south of the Yangzi River, believing that

Guangdong, Guangxi, and the southwest "should be regarded as the stronghold from which there would be no retreat." Chiang was "basically unwilling" to accept the need to make a final military stand against the fast- moving PLA on the mainland, and preferred an early withdrawal to the island of Taiwan.

In early 1949 this debate within the KMT leadership remained unresolved, and the Communists, who had already taken firm control of Beijing and Tianjin, and whose forces were advancing southward toward the Yangzi, apparently developed their own plans to prevent the KMT from stabilizing southwestern China under its control again. These plans had two essential elements. First, as we have seen, links with local Party cells in the southern provinces were strengthened, primarily through contacts and couriers managed by the CCP organization in Hong Kong. The internal security of the existing Nationalist administration in the southern provinces was then undermined by the activities of these local Party networks and pro-CCP guerrillas in the southwest, which as we have seen began to launch widespread guerrilla attacks in the spring of 1949.

Second, the Communists made renewed efforts to forge ties with potential allies in the Southeast Asian countries neighboring southern and southwestern China where, if President Li Zongren's policy prevailed, the KMT might try to repeat their World War II-era success in establishing a mountain stronghold. The Chinese had already convened the meeting of Southeast Asian communists in December 1948. Now, at the end of February 1949, just before pro-CCP guerrilla bands entered Tonkin, Chinese Communist activists in Bangkok supported a coup attempt against Premier Phibun Songkhram. The action was organized by the Seri Thai ("Free Thai") organization, acting in coordination with disaffected elements of the Thai Navy and Marines.[68] A senior political assistant to former Premier Nai Pridi Banomyang, in whose favor the coup had been planned, later told Malayan police authorities that Pridi had been offered "armed Chinese help" in undertaking the coup attempt.[69] In Burma the CCP had its own operatives in the Shan States of upper Burma, where "Chu Chia-ho," brother of the CCP guerrilla leader in Yunnan "Chu Chia-pi," ran a network of CCP agents around Mong Yai and Kengtung.[70] The precise activities of these agents during early 1949 remains unknown, but it is the case that the Burma Communist Party-White Flags, which the CCP supported, issued a manifesto on February 12, 1949 calling for "joint struggle" with the anti-government Karen rebels; this policy could have been of particular significance, since the Karens' own rebel forces were at this stage threatening to capture the Burmese capital of Rangoon.[71] Against this background, Sino-Viet Minh military collaboration in the border areas of Tonkin appears to have been one element of a broader CCP strategy of building links with other Communists and rebel forces on the southern perimeter of China's mainland.

The PLA's advance and the Viet Minh's military development

The Second Plenum of the CCP's Seventh Central Committee convened in Pingshan country, northeast of Shijiazhuang in Hebei Province, from March 5–13, 1949.

Mao Zedong's report to the session started from the premise that "the main force of the Kuomintang army [had] been destroyed," and set forth the general policies for bringing the civil war to a rapid conclusion and for initiating the reconstruction of China's economy under a Communist administration.[72] In addition, according to a document captured during a raid on the Communist Party's offices in Hong Kong in April 1949, the plenary session also took a secret decision that shaped the strategy of the military advance into southern China.[73] In keeping with the Party's new emphasis on addressing the problems of China's urban areas – after all, it now controlled not just a vast rural population but also many of China's major cities – the plenum decided that in the conquest of the south, the PLA must "seize the cities first then use them to lead the rural areas." The Party leaders also agreed upon a final gesture toward conducting negotiations with the KMT. On March 29, 1949, Xinhua reported that the CCP Central Committee had decided to open talks on April 1 under the direction of Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, using as the foundation of the Communist position a program of "Eight Points" set out in January by Mao himself.[74]

The course of the ensuing talks is of less importance here than the revelation, made by Mao himself in an article dated April 4, 1949, that the Communist leadership had no intention of seeing a negotiated end to the civil war, nor would it allow any substantial postponement of the PLA's crossing of the Yangzi River.[75] It is thus little surprise that a temporary ceasefire between the PLA and KMT forces, arranged on April 11, collapsed almost immediately. On April 21, Mao and Zhu De, the PLA's Commander-in-Chief, ordered the Communist armies to cross the Yangzi, to "annihilate all Kuomintang reactionaries," and to "liberate the people of the whole country."[76] Within two days, Xinhua reported, 1 million PLA troops were crossing the Yangzi along a 300-mile front.[77] Following the CCP Central Committee plenum's formula for "seizing the cities first," the southern advance began with two victories of symbolic as well as strategic significance: Nanjing, the former Nationalist capital, fell almost immediately, on April 23, and Shanghai, the great commercial metropolis of central coastal China, was taken after a brief siege on May 27.[78]

Just after the Yangzi crossing and the fall of Nanjing, as the complete collapse of the KMT's position on the mainland loomed, the CCP introduced a new political line which, when expounded by Party leader Liu Shaoqi later in the year, acquired the force of a dictum on revolutionary struggle in Asia, including Indochina. An article written by senior Party theorist Guo Moruo was published in the Soviet Union on the international Communist festival of May Day (May 1). In it Guo asserted that "the liberation of China is a signal for the liberation movements in all other colonial and semi-colonial areas of Asia. We should expand our forces to all areas of Asia in order to drive out the forces of imperialism."[79] Guo stopped short of describing the Chinese Communists' experience in defeating the US-backed Nationalists as a "model" for other Asian revolutionary movements, as Liu Shaoqi would do in November 1949, but his article clearly presages what Liu would later claim: that the Chinese Communists – rather than Moscow's Communist leaders – should rightly be seen as the leaders of resistance and revolutionary movements in Asia. This position was validated by Stalin during his secret talks with Liu Shaoqi in

Moscow beginning in June 1949.[80] It also reinforced the impression that within the Chinese Communist leadership there were some who had identified China's strategic interests as lying in the fomenting and support of other Asian "liberation struggles."

The Viet Minh leadership, doubtless aware of Mao's intention to finish the civil war in China as quickly as possible, began to elaborate its own policies for accelerating the military conflict against the French. The spring of 1948 had seen major organizational conferences of political commissars for the regular military structure, and of militia and guerrilla leaders, who were tasked with political instruction, organizational redevelopment, improved supply systems, and with making each fighter "believe in our force, and have confidence in our rudimentary weapons."[81] In early April 1949, while the last round of CCP–KMT talks was underway, a nine-day conference of the DRV's Supreme Council of National Defense was held; few details of the meeting were released, and the Viet Minh broadcast media did not report it until May 9, well after the Chinese Communists' final decision to cross the Yangzi and impose Communist rule on southern China by force.[82] According to the broadcast report Le Van Hien, DRV Minister of Finance and Vice-President of the Supreme Council, delivered a report to the conference identifying the current phase of the resistance as that of "preparation for the general counter- offensive." This meeting seems to have been of particular importance in defining the outlines of an intensified military struggle, yet its results were not publicized immediately. Once the military situation in China had been clarified by the PLA's crossing of the Yangzi on April 21, however, the Viet Minh leadership began to give public expression to the policy decisions reached in early April. On April 30 Ho Chi Minh, in an appeal to mark the international May Day anniversary, reaffirmed that the "patriotic resistance has entered a new stage," described as a stage "of pushing forward the struggle and preparing for the general counteroffensive to win final victory."[83]

Initiatives taken by the Viet Minh during May 1949 marked a turning point both in the process of mobilizing the Viet Minh's resources for an intensification of the anti-French war and in the development of the military capabilities of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). Lockhart has written that in May/June 1949 articles published in *Su That* [Truth], the organ of the Marxist Studies Association, explained that a Central Committee decision had been taken to "push mobilization forward on all fronts – military, economic, cultural and political – between then and the end of the year."[84] According to an article written in 1951 by Hoang Quoc Viet, a senior Party and government figure, this mobilization program was carried out under the slogan "actively shortening the second stage of the resistance and striving to annihilate the enemy's living forces."[85]

Military conferences and Viet Minh radio broadcasts reinforced the new mobilization drive. On April 30, for example, a five-day military congress began in Interzone Five (south-central Vietnam), at which plans to carry out the "strategic and tactical objectives of the new phase" were discussed.[86] On May 5 the senior Viet Minh military commander in Nambo (southern Vietnam), Gen. Nguyen Binh, issued an appeal to "veterans" in the south, urging them to "bring the resistance movement rapidly into the phase of a general counteroffensive."[87] As we have seen, the early

April meeting of the Supreme Council of National Defense was publicized on May 9. A further indication that new developments could be expected came on May 11, when a broadcast report revealed that Pham Van Dong had left Interzone Five, to which he had been assigned for the previous two years, "for a post in the central government."[88] As we shall see, Dong would soon be appointed as vice premier of the DRV at the July DRV Council of Ministers meeting, apparently with special responsibility for overseeing the mobilization program.[89]

Also during May 1949 several important military training campaigns were launched, each with accompanying "emulation movements" intended to stimulate productive participation. One of these campaigns, the "movement for formation of cadres," was designed to train administrators for the military bureaucracy which would be necessary for an enlargement of the forces; some cadres were being prepared for assignment to the Inspection Service of the DRV Ministry of National Defense.[90] In addition, on May 19 (Ho Chi Minh's official birthday), the PAVN Commander-in-Chief Vo Nguyen Giap inaugurated a "movement for training troops," which had as its objective the improvement of both troops and cadres through a review of the PAVN's previous combat experiences.[91] Gen. Le Thiet Hung headed the central coordinating committee for this campaign, which also involved recruitment and training for the Viet Minh's militia forces.[92] A related drive to improve the training of officers was overseen by Gen. Van Tien Dung, head of the Political Department of the PAVN.[93] A special "emulation movement" to encourage improved armaments manufacture by the Viet Minh's embryonic "national defense industries" was also begun.[94]

Another of the major training campaigns, the "movement for reorganization of the troops," was launched by the end of May.[95] This drive aimed to unify the Viet Minh's disparate armed forces under a central command structure. The scale of the difficulty for the PAVN in accomplishing this task may be judged from a mid-1949 British military intelligence report which estimated that the Viet Minh's 40,000 regular forces were divided into 55 battalions and 120 "independent companies."[96] Little is known of the process by which individual units were amalgamated into larger force structures, but Vo Nguyen Giap later described the contrast between the experience of his forces in this period and that of the French:

> While in order to occupy the territory of Indochina the [French] Expeditionary Corps had dislocated itself into regiments, battalions, companies, the PAVN following an opposite process has little by little regrouped its autonomous companies and mobile battalions, reformed its regiments and organized its divisions.[97]

The training and reorganization campaigns initiated during May 1949 were the vehicles by which the leadership prepared not only for an intensification of the anti-French war effort but also for receipt of military assistance on a larger scale from the advancing Chinese Communist forces. These campaigns were in part a response to the prospect of a greatly changed strategic situation once the Chinese Communists had obtained final victory in southern China, but they also followed

from the decision taken in January 1949 to move to the "second stage" of the anti-French resistance war and from the further promise, also dating from January 1949, to "actively shorten" the duration of that second stage.

In this context the military's capabilities to make effective use of increasingly sophisticated battlefield tactics took on particular importance. According to a VNA commentary broadcast on June 11, Giap had announced at a "recent" military conference that the Viet Minh armed forces had demonstrated their "maturity" in both the autumn/winter campaign of 1947 and in the border offensive of January–March 1949.[98] Another broadcast on the following day encouraged the PAVN to "perfect [the] mastery of the techniques of mobile warfare," and to "make possible the establishment of abundant hardened reserves among the regional forces for local battles against the French invaders."[99] Official propaganda supporting the adoption of mobile warfare tactics prominently mentioned both Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap in connection with the policy, leaving little doubt about its authoritative endorsement at the highest levels. Additional commentaries such as that broadcast by the VNA on June 17 claimed that "since the middle of 1948, the strategic initiative has passed progressively to the Vietnamese side."[100] By July 30, according to a spokesman of the PAVN's High Command, much of the retraining work had been done: the Viet Minh forces had "mastered" guerrilla warfare and

> the Vietnamese forces had rapidly shifted from annihilating attacks on isolated outposts to large-scale offensives against strongholds and major cities; generalship had become more efficient and whole regiments had been engaged in recent operations. In short, the stage for the preparation of the final counter-offensive has now definitely been reached.[101]

Other sources indicate that July 30, when this statement was issued, marked the official end of the military mobilization period that began on May 19, 1949, the day that Giap had inaugurated the "movement for training troops."[102] The PAVN spokesman's announcement therefore should be seen as a summation of the accomplishments of that period, as well as a prediction of the acceleration of the anti-French military struggle.

In the midst of these military preparations, however, an important degree of Sino-Viet Minh military tension persisted in northeastern Tonkin, where the activities of the pro-Chinese Communist Doc Lap Regiment had continued virtually unabated. These activities had not been quashed despite the earlier Viet Minh order for the regiment to move out of the area. Two letters from the regional Viet Minh Committee, dated May 1949, reveal the seriousness with which the Viet Minh leadership there had come to view the expansion of Chinese Communist influence.[103]

Of 150,000 Nung and Ngai minority people in the region, the Viet Minh Committee estimated that 75 per cent had been directly affected by the Doc Lap Regiment's activities. Unless action was taken, the Committee feared that "Hai Ninh may become a Chinese province." To prevent this, the Viet Minh leaders ordered the enrollment of Nungs in Viet Minh front organizations, officially terminated the activities of pro-CCP overseas Chinese organizations in the area,

and ordered an end to property ownership rights for all ethnic Chinese. The impact of these decisions has yet to come to light, but the contentious situation helps to illustrate the complexity of the issues in the Sino-Viet Minh relationship at this stage.

After the PLA's seizure of Shanghai on May 27, there were signs that the internal CCP leadership debate over the international orientation of the future Communist government in China, a debate that had been developing throughout early 1949, was gradually coming to a head. On May 31 the Soviet Ambassador to the Nationalist Chinese government, whose very presence constituted a bitter insult to the Communist leadership, left China for Moscow, leaving only an "Acting Chargé" to maintain contact with the KMT government.[104] The publication in *Pravda* between 7 and 9 June of CCP leader Liu Shaoqi's article from November 1948 on "Internationalism and Nationalism" should be seen as confirming a shift in official Soviet policy, away from maintaining diplomatic links with the KMT and toward acceptance of the PLA's battlefield victories and the changes they would bring to international relations in the Far East. For Moscow, one of the difficulties in reaching this point had lain in the CCP leadership's plan to include in the forthcoming Chinese Communist-led government representatives of the national bourgeoisie in a tactical "anti-imperialist alliance."[105] Mao Zedong's June 15 address to the preparatory meeting of the broadly constituted Political Consultative Conference (PCC) and, more emphatically, the publication on June 30, 1949 of his groundbreaking article entitled "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," revealed that the debate amongst CCP leaders about how the new Communist government of China should treat the Communists' "class enemies" was over. A policy of incorporating rather than punishing most of China's middle classes, particularly in rural areas, had been decided upon, albeit under the strict management of well-trained Party cadre whose mission would become one of "re-educating" the Communists' former enemies. Although Moscow may have hoped for a more thorough house-cleaning by the Communists inside China, if only as a mechanism that would force the CCP leadership to continue to focus its energies on the internal schisms in China, Mao and his allies had decided upon the less divisive course of creating cross-class alliances, at least in the short term, as a means of putting China's long-running civil war to an early end.

Moscow was compensated, however, by Mao's decision to adopt a foreign policy of "leaning to one side" in the US–Soviet Cold War: that is, of aligning with the Soviet Union.[106] Mao's move came as no surprise to Stalin. In June 1949 Liu Shaoqi had made his secret visit to Moscow to discuss the situation in China and the projected formation of a Communist government there as soon as possible. Stalin reportedly told Liu that the "center of world revolution" was moving toward China, and that "with this eastward movement of the focus of world revolution, the Soviet leader expected China to play a major part in promoting revolution in the East."[107] This declaration would inform not only the Chinese Communists' policies toward the Viet Minh in Indochina but would also play a fundamental role in Chinese thinking about moves by the North Korean leadership to rally support for its planned military invasion of South Korea in mid-1950.[108] In Washington in

1949 the coincident hardening of official views toward relations with the CCP, which had been underway for many months, culminated on August 5 with the publication of the State Department's damning "White Paper" on relations with China.[109]

Together, Mao's decision to "lean" toward the Soviet Union and the Truman Administration's decision to continue its support for the Nationalists ensured that from the moment it declared its own government in mainland China in October 1949, the CCP would be isolated from the United States, and to a lesser extent, from America's allies in Western Europe, including France.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Communists' military advances continued, accelerated by the capitulation of large numbers of KMT troops. The defection of KMT Gen. Chen Mingren, for example, allowed the PLA to occupy Changsha, the provincial capital of Hunan in central China, on August 4, 1949.[110] The PLA's rapid successes gave new urgency to the Viet Minh's military preparations and reorganization campaigns in the Tonkin border area. In late June, according to a Paris Radio account, "intense military activity" began simultaneously in several parts of Tonkin near the border with China, with the heaviest attacks being launched against French outposts near Lao Cai in the northwest. Viet Minh-initiated actions were also reported southeast of Hoa Binh and north of Hanoi.[111] In mid-July a seven-day conference of Viet Minh leaders convened to review the progress of the mobilization and training campaigns. As noted earlier, at the end of the month the PAVN announced that guerrilla warfare had been "mastered," suggesting of course that more advanced, larger-scale military operations were now in view.[112]

On August 6, the VNA revealed that during late July the DRV Council of Ministers had convened. Its decisions had included "decrees concerning the duty of Vietnamese citizens to join the Army" and the appointment of Pham Van Dong as the DRV's Deputy Premier.[113] In a statement broadcast on August 8, Dong said that Ho Chi Minh himself had instructed him to "speed up the preparation of the general counteroffensive and national reconstruction," and to do so by relying on Vietnam's "own resources to win the war."[114]

Despite Dong's emphasis on Vietnamese self-reliance, the Viet Minh leadership was actively considering the potential positive impact of developments in China on its own anti-French struggle. There were strong indications in the Viet Minh media during August 1949 that the leadership anticipated receiving "significant support from Mao Zedong."[115] Lockhart has introduced evidence indicating that the Viet Minh military organization in Tonkin was being prepared not only for the transition to intensified conflict against the French, but also for the integration of externally supplied equipment and weaponry.[116] On August 14 a Moscow Radio broadcast to Southeast Asia revealed that Ho Chi Minh had written to Stalin himself, acknowledging the Viet Minh's receipt of weapons from the Chinese Communists.[117] Neither the date of the letter nor any details of the reported weapons transfer is available, but the broadcast itself seems to have signaled general Soviet approval for the Chinese Communists' provision of material assistance to the Viet Minh. For its part, the Viet Minh leadership was careful to balance its expectations with public statements that, as Ho Chi Minh himself put it in an interview publicized

on October 16, 1949, the Viet Minh "relied on its own strength to win independence."[118] Both Pham Van Dong's statement and that by Ho Chi Minh specifically linked the policy of self-reliance to the growth and improvement of the Viet Minh's military forces, but neither statement explicitly excluded the possibility that a nucleus of those forces could be equipped with Chinese-supplied materiel. Indeed, Moscow Radio itself had proclaimed as much – no doubt adding to Washington's fears about the march of Communism across the Far East and into Southeast Asia.

On August 1, 1949 Ho Chi Minh launched "a new drive of patriotic emulation;" it may have been of some secret significance that this announcement was made on the anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communists' PLA.[119] Military operations in northern Tonkin continued, and official Viet Minh reports lauded the PAVN's "liberation" of the provincial town of Bac Kan, some 80 miles north of Hanoi, which the PAVN seized on August 9.[120] Vo Nguyen Giap, in a broadcast to all Viet Minh troops, declared that "the liberation of Bac Khan [*sic*] was the first step of the regular army and militia in preparing for the coming general offensive."[121] Thus encouraged by a key battlefield success, a meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Viet Minh Front held in mid-August formally approved the task of mobilizing civilians to make preparations for the general counteroffensive.[122]

An especially noteworthy development came on August 28 when the first PAVN division, "Group 308," was formally organized in the Viet Bac base area in north-central Tonkin.[123] As Lockhart has observed, the formation of this large main-force unit "reflected a significant increase in the Viet Minh's capacity to fight a regular war of movement and set piece battles."[124]

With the victory at Bac Kan, the formation of the first PAVN division, and the expectation of greater military assistance from the advancing Chinese Communists, Ho Chi Minh declared in another message issued on September 2, the anniversary of the founding of the DRV, that Vietnam's "long-term resistance is nearing its victorious end."[125]

The initial re-evaluation of military policies, September 1949

In China, the PLA's advance to the south came to an unexpected halt in early September, and the Communists encountered a significant delay in the "liberation" of the southern and southwestern provinces. The failure of both the Second and Fourth Field Armies of the PLA to secure control of Yichang, a strategically important Yangzi River crossing in southwestern Hubei which governed access to eastern Sichuan, coupled with heavy rains, stalled the PLA offensive.[126] The difficulties in central China were compounded by a political setback in Yunnan province, which was largely controlled by the forces of its Governor, the former commander of the KMT's occupation forces in Tonkin, Lu Han. By 1949 Lu was only loosely allied with the central Nationalist leadership. In early September, however, Chiang Kaishek ordered Lu to attend a strategy conference in Chongqing; Lu's refusal provoked a

crisis in the province, as well as in the Nationalist leadership itself. There was reportedly a possibility that Nationalist armies then in Guizhou and Guangxi provinces would enter Lu Han's Yunnan province by force, where already "active preparations to resist [this] attack were in evidence."[127] Lu Han instead decided to fly to Chongqing on September 6, and returned to his own base in Kunming on September 8. Immediately thereafter, an anti-Communist "purge" was initiated in Yunnan's provincial capital, in which more than 100 Communist Party and left-wing politicians were arrested, the city's university and other schools were closed, and all non-KMT newspapers were shut down.[128] The day after this, senior PLA General Chen Yi, who commanded the PLA's Third Field Army, made a radio broadcast in which he "apologized" to the population of Guangdong province for failing thus far to "liberate" them. Chen announced that Communist troops might require another four months to reach Guangzhou (Canton).[129]

Against this background, with the PLA's main forces still hundreds of kilometers from the Indochina border and the Nationalist Chinese leadership apparently repairing political fissures and standing their ground, the Viet Minh leadership began a re-evaluation of its own offensive capabilities and schedule of operations. The first indications that the official policy of "actively shortening the second phase" of the final anti-French offensive had been placed under review emerged in relation to the Viet Minh forces in Nambo, or southern Vietnam. The special position of Nambo within the overall architecture of the anti-French struggle had been institutionalized by the central leadership in the north as early as December 1945, when a "Bureau of Nambo Affairs" was created within the DRV Ministry of the Interior, led by Vo Nguyen Giap, to oversee military and internal affairs and propaganda work in the south. A special delegate, Vo Van Du (Vu Duc) and a new military commander, General Nguyen Binh (Nguyen Phuong Thao), were dispatched to the south to manage arms supply links from the Thailand-based networks and to take command of the anti-French resistance forces in the south.[130] These forces had participated in the training campaigns undertaken since May 1949, and certain units in the south were becoming larger and more tactically sophisticated. However, the relative inferiority of the Viet Minh's southern military organization *vis-à-vis* that in the north was rapidly becoming an established fact.[131] From September 5–9, a meeting of Nambo military and administrative leaders convened to evaluate the southern Viet Minh's "responsibilities" during the phase of preparation for the forthcoming general counteroffensive against the French.[132] Within two weeks of this meeting, the deficiencies of the Nambo military were being publicly acknowledged in the official Viet Minh media. An appeal issued on 23 September by the "Committee for the Training of Military Cadres and the Reformation of the Army in south Vietnam" to mark the anniversary of the start of the anti-French resistance in the south in 1945, declared that "we must build a well-trained mainforce and an adequate reserve force." The progress toward these objectives already made in Tonkin was implicitly acknowledged in the appeal's exhortation to southern fighters not to "lag behind" their comrades in the north.[133]

The attitude of the leadership in the north was even more critical. Ho Chi Minh's anniversary broadcast on 23 September noted that southern Viet Minh combatants,

located "further from the Central Government [the DRV], have inevitably met with greater difficulties than their compatriots in North and Central Vietnam."[134] Giap's anniversary message listed the accomplishments of the "South Vietnam Army," but mentioned only one military engagement against the French, emphasizing instead the management of the southern Viet Minh organization's relations with the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects and with the Khmer Issarak organization in Cambodia.[135]

Although Giap's message was issued to mark the September 23 resistance anniversary in the south, it was not broadcast until September 27. This anomaly, considered together with other official bulletins transmitted on September 27, indicates that by that date a clear change had taken place in the central leadership's appreciation of the military capabilities of the Nambo organization. A "Voice of Vietnam" commentary broadcast on September 27 declared that the terrain in southern Vietnam was less favorable for guerrilla warfare than that in the North, implying that the stage of guerrilla warfare tactics had not been passed in the South as it had in Tonkin. The commentary also acknowledged that there had been interference with the southern organization's communications with the central leadership in the north.[136] On the same day, another broadcast provided a summary of an article by Truong Chinh in which he underscored the importance of assuring the Viet Minh's military preparedness in Tonkin, where French troops were concentrated along the international border and where collusion between the French and Nationalist Chinese militaries was reported.[137]

At around the same time a military and administrative delegation from Nambo traveled to Tonkin, and a later broadcast revealed that its unnamed chief had given a speech outlining the obstacles to full mobilization in the south.[138] The critical tone of these reports about the south is probably not unrelated to the decision, finalized at the DRV Council of Ministers meeting in early October 1949, to appoint a new Viet Minh Resistance-Administrative Committee for Nambo.[139] As we shall see, the reappraisal of the southern Viet Minh's role in the anti-French resistance preceded and soon became an essential element within a more comprehensive re-evaluation of the entire war against the French.

The establishment of the PRC and the PLA's final advance

Relations between the Chinese Communists and the Viet Minh in the period following the founding of the PRC on October 1, 1949 remain obscure. The undoubted international political significance of this event, underscored by the Soviet Union's immediate diplomatic recognition of the new government on October 2, could not have been ignored by the Vietnamese Communist leadership, yet it apparently made no broadcast response until October 18, when a VNA transmission disclosed that the Viet Minh and the broader Lien Viet front leadership committees had sent a congratulatory telegram to the Chinese people.[140] Ho Chi Minh did not publicly issue his congratulations to Mao Zedong until November 15, and public information about this message and Mao's reply to it was not publicized by Viet Minh broadcast outlets until November 25.[141] This sequence of delays in the publication of formal congratulatory notices suggests, at the very least, that a formula for promulgating even

routine official exchanges had yet to be worked out. There are, however, indications that more was at stake. The military situation in southwestern China, as well as broader political developments within the international Communist movement in late 1949, disposed both the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist leaderships to exercise caution in their relations with each other.

The suspension of the PLA's offensive toward the southern provinces ended in early October. Following rapid advances, the Communists' forces took control of Guangzhou on October 15, and advance patrols reached the border with Hong Kong soon thereafter.[142] On the following day the VNA publicized an interview with Ho Chi Minh in which he reasserted that the Viet Minh would remain self-reliant in its struggle for Vietnam's independence. But even while Ho was issuing this statement, a letter he had written to Mao Zedong "asking for Chinese aid in any and all forms" was being delivered to Mao in Beijing by Ly Ban and Nguyen Duc Thuy, "two ICP envoys with close personal ties to the CCP."[143] Ho now stated that the Viet Minh forces "were even now progressing from harassing attacks to operations of annihilation."[144] As indicated above, on October 18 the first official Viet Minh acknowledgement of the establishment of the PRC was broadcast by the VNA. We know that the September/October period in Vietnam was dominated by a reconsideration of the stage of martial development reached in Nambo, culminating in the appointment of a new Viet Minh Committee for all affairs in the South and with a public statement by Ho Chi Minh about the progress being made in the tactical maturity of Viet Minh forces on October 16. Self-reliance therefore preceded fraternal recognition.

These events, while important in themselves, may also have reflected the increasingly chaotic military situation in southwestern China, where Nationalist forces and their allies still controlled most of Sichuan, Guizhou, Guangxi, and Yunnan provinces. On October 18 the central KMT government, having been driven from Guangzhou by the PLA's advance, was once again – as in World War II – established at Chongqing, the capital of Sichuan.[145] The vulnerability of the new capital and of Sichuan itself was already recognized, and plans were in place for an eventual further retreat to Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, which the Nationalists had decided would be "the site of [a] last-ditch stand."[146] Nationalist authorities now also decided to seek an agreement with France under which KMT troops would be allowed to cross the international border into French Indochina, if necessary.[147] This proposal was reportedly not approved, but Franco-Nationalist cooperation in other areas did take hold. On October 31 Nationalist radio reported that an agreement for an "exchange of goods" had been concluded with the French authorities in Indochina, and that three supply flights per day were operating between Haiphong and the KMT-controlled airfield at Mengzi in southeastern Yunnan.[148] The Nationalists also reported their intention to repair the Yunnan–Indochina railroad, and made secret overtures to the French to "install" pro-KMT Vietnamese politicians in Tonkin.[149]

At this time the Viet Minh leadership's calculations increasingly reflected the concerns expressed by Truong Chinh in his article broadcast on September 27. It will be recalled that the Party secretary had warned that Franco-KMT collusion and the retreat of Nationalist forces toward the Indochina border made the concentration

of Viet Minh forces in the border regions of Tonkin essential. The influx of KMT troops into Guangxi and Yunnan during October and the obvious possibility that they might move to eliminate the local pro-CCP forces that had been collaborating with the Viet Minh also seems to have influenced the Viet Minh's security policy decisions. According to a Nationalist Chinese government representative speaking to US diplomats on October 22, some Viet Minh armed forces had crossed into Guangxi province "on [the] order of Ho Chi Minh at [the] request of [the] Chinese communists" to assist local pro-CCP guerrilla elements to maintain control of rural areas along the border. Many of these areas had been under the *de facto* control of local Chinese pro-Communist units since at least August 1949, and reports suggested that the Viet Minh were openly assisting these units.[150]

The complexity of these developments may account for the fact that after the interview with Ho Chi Minh on October 16, few Viet Minh broadcasts referred to the theme of accelerating the pace of the armed struggle. Indeed, according to Western intelligence reports, during October 1949 the Viet Minh leadership made certain fundamental decisions, the effect of which was to extend rather than "actively shorten" the "second phase" of the resistance struggle. Information obtained by US officials from a Japanese military instructor active with the Viet Minh from 1945 to 1950 indicated that at a major conference held during October 1949 the strategy for the coming year's struggle was determined.[151] An offensive plan was formulated under which the PAVN was to "gain control" of the area around Lang Son and then "isolate and cut off communications" between French garrisons in the Lao Cai-Lai Chau area in the northwest. At the same time, Viet Minh troops in the Tonkin delta area, known in Viet Minh parlance as "Interzone Three," would "withdraw to [the] Phu Ly area for intensive training." Furthermore, in a plan which would have required approval from senior Chinese Communists, up to 6000 troops from each of the Viet Minh's six Interzones, or multi-province military districts, between southern Annam and the border with China were to be sent into Guangxi province in China for training with Chinese Communist forces. Both Chinese and Russian military advisors would reportedly be on hand to deliver instruction to Viet Minh troops on combat tactics and the use of artillery. Finally, according to the same source, the October conference decided to postpone the launch of the Viet Minh's much-vaunted third and final stage of the resistance, known as the "general counteroffensive," from its planned launch on May 19, 1950 – Ho Chi Minh's birthday – until after the rainy season of 1950, probably sometime in October or November 1950.

Reports on other secret decisions taken by the Viet Minh leadership during October 1949 indicated that a basic determination had also been reached on the need to consolidate oversight in the regions and base areas it already controlled. At its early October meeting, the DRV Council of Ministers not only appointed a new "Resistance-Administrative Committee" for the south, as we have seen, but it also approved a plan for reorganizing DRV government ministries at all levels.[152] Later, at a secret ICP Central Committee meeting on October 24, 1949, a new system for structuring the Party's organization within the armed forces was approved.[153] It was decided that the existing system of Party committees operating

at various levels of the military organization would be abolished and replaced by a political commissariat, which would "represent the Party and organize the Party's activities with respect to the army." Further, a "Central Military Committee" chosen by the Party's Central Committee was charged with studying military tactics and strategy for operations at the Interzone level. This Committee was empowered to formulate and propose tactical and strategic battle plans, but according to the secret Party document which recorded these decisions, "the Central Military Committee shall possess a merely consultative character, [and] all [actual military] decisions are to be taken by the Central Committee."[154]

These decisions indicate that in October 1949 a turning point had been reached in the Vietnamese leadership's appreciation of the shortcomings of its own military and political institutions. The full extent to which international developments or consultations informed the leadership's decisions cannot yet be assessed. The Chinese Communists, however, despite having announced the formation of the PRC government at Beijing on October 1, still faced the possibility of a prolonged struggle for full control of the border provinces of Guangxi and Yunnan. It is likely that they approved of the Vietnamese Communists' plans.

On November 7, the PLA Fourth Field Army began a "lightning advance" into Guangxi. By November 26, however, only the main cities of Guilin and Liuzhou in northern Guangxi had been taken.[155] The PLA offensive in Guangxi took place against a background of political developments with special importance for the international Communist movement. In a speech delivered in Beijing on November 7 to mark the anniversary of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia, CCP leader Liu Shaoqi, recently returned from Moscow, declared that "the Chinese Revolution possessed the same world significance as the October Revolution, because it greatly strengthened and expanded the base for developing world revolution."[156] Liu was developing the basic theme set out by Guo Moruo in his May Day article earlier in the year. The import of these statements was to assert that China's revolutionary accomplishments equaled those of Russia, and by implication the Soviet Union could not claim to be – as Comintern policy had long asserted – the principal asset of the international Communist movement, whose security needs must be prioritized above all others. Liu Shaoqi's challenge to this long-established Soviet dogma was further proclaimed in his much-publicized November 16 speech to the opening session of the Conference of Asian and Australasian Trade Unions, held in Beijing. In this address Liu asserted that armed struggle ("the path taken by the Chinese people") was the method most appropriate for national liberation movements pursuing independence from colonialism and imperialism, especially in Asia.[157]

On the day before Liu's speech to the trade union conference, Ho Chi Minh sent a telegram to Mao Zedong congratulating him on the Chinese Communists' successes.[158] The timing of this gesture is unexplained, but it should perhaps be noted that the Viet Minh trade unions' delegation at the Beijing conference was led by a union organizer, Luu Duc Pho, rather than by a senior Vietnamese Communist Party leader, as had originally been planned by the ICP leadership.[159]

Ho's telegram to Mao had been preceded on November 7, the October Revolution anniversary, by a Viet Minh radio broadcast report that a congratulatory cable had

been sent by the "Vietnam Cultural Organization," a Viet Minh front group, to the pro-CCP "Chinese Art and Literature Organization," commending it on the founding of the PRC government.[160] More direct contact was also being maintained between Vietnamese and Communist leaders inside southern China. French intelligence indicated that a Viet Minh representative ("Wang Ming") visited Guangzhou from Hong Kong several times in early and mid-November, and two Viet Minh generals were reported to be going to Guangzhou for a conference with pro-Communist military leaders.[161]

Reports that Mao Zedong had replied to Ho Chi Minh's November 15 congratulatory telegram did not surface in the CCP broadcast media until November 25. The following day Xinhua reported that the PLA's "lightning advance" into Guangxi had finally resulted in the "liberation" of Liuzhou, the important rail terminus in north-central Guangxi.[162] It is possible that the improvements in the PLA's military position in Guangxi, the reported military consultations involving Viet Minh generals inside southern China, and the apparent improvements in Sino-Viet Minh relations at this time were all related developments. It is known that China's senior leaders were deeply concerned about events in Indochina, even more that they were with Taiwan, as Zhou Enlai told the Soviet Ambassador to Beijing on November 10.[163]

In Guangxi, the PLA moved on to occupy the provincial capital of Nanning on December 4, to seize Dongxing on the Indochina border, opposite Mong Cai, on December 8, and to reach Chennanguan (traditionally known as the "Southern Gate" to Indochina), north of Lang Son, on December 16. These successes divided the remaining Nationalist Chinese forces into two sections – those heading toward the Leizhou Peninsula and Hainan Island, and those being driven south and west into Yunnan and toward northern Laos and Burma. Yunnan itself in early December was still free of main-force PLA units, but local pro-Communist forces led by "Chu Chia-pi" had been deployed in the southwest corner of the province along the borders with Burma and Laos, in an apparent blocking move designed to prevent further KMT retreat into that area, while also cutting off Nationalist troops moving south from lower Sichuan.[164]

A brief political crisis developed in Yunnan between December 9 and 12. The Nationalist governor and military head Lu Han was secretly approached by Communist "emissaries," while other Yunnanese politicians made overtures to the United States, seeking support for a declaration of independence by Yunnan and the creation of a US-backed "neutral government" in Yunnan, officially free of both the CCP and the KMT. The United States rejected the approaches, and Lu Han decided that further military resistance against the advancing PLA was futile.[165] On December 12 the immediate crisis was resolved when Lu Han sent a telegram to PLA Generals Liu Bocheng and Deng Xiaoping, respectively the senior military and political leaders of the PLA Second Field Army, "inviting the PLA to march into Yunnan."[166] With Lu Han's forces immobilized, the PLA's Southwest Headquarters ordered a "forced march" to Kunming, Yunnan's capital city, to "reinforce" Lu Han's troops against the splintered KMT armies in the province.[167]

This "coup" in Kunming had important consequences for the Viet Minh. Lu Han's defection from the Nationalists gravely undermined the possibility that KMT troops

could reassemble and create a defensible redoubt in Yunnan. Even so, the KMT ordered that its troops fight the PLA advance and attack any of their erstwhile allies who remained loyal to Lu Han.[168] The French too had finally terminated their cooperation with the KMT. In a statement released on December 10, just days before Lu Han's capitulation, the French High Commissioner in Indochina, Leon Pignon, declared that French forces would oppose the entry into Indochina of any troops under arms, a clear reference to KMT troops in flight from the PLA. Pignon declared that such troops would be disarmed and interned or ejected by French forces.[169] Although France was following the US lead in refusing to bolster a rump KMT regime based in southern Yunnan, the French warning had little effect on the ground. In the turmoil that followed Lu Han's defection to the Chinese Communists, tens of thousands of KMT soldiers fled toward the Indochina border, creating a new politico-military crisis not only for the French, but also for the Viet Minh.

As the PLA moved through Guangxi and lower Sichuan, the Viet Minh military forces had been implementing their own offensive plans. Large actions were initiated around Hoa Binh, apparently with the aim of creating a communication corridor between the Viet Bac base area in the north and the Viet Minh-dominated area south of the Tonkin Delta. Smaller engagements took place in central and southern Vietnam, where Viet Minh harassing attacks tied down French forces.[170] The border area soon became an urgent concern, however, and both Viet Minh and Chinese Communist broadcasts accused the French and Nationalist Chinese of collusion in the border region. On December 15 the VNA outlined the new threat to the Viet Minh's position in the Viet Bac base area: 60,000 KMT troops were said to be crossing the border (French estimates were much lower), and "special security measures had been ordered by the Viet Minh authorities," while " 'brisk resistance' had been offered to Kuomintang troops."[171] Three days later a broadcast by the "Voice of South Vietnam," a Viet Minh radio station located somewhere in Nambo, reported that there had been "fierce battles" between Viet Minh and Nationalist Chinese troops, particularly mentioning a force of around 6000 KMT troops in the That Khe–Dong Dang–Lang Son area.[172]

Perhaps the chief issue under consideration by both the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist leaderships during this military crisis in the border area was the question of cross-border military operations by PLA troops in pursuit of withdrawing KMT forces. On November 29 Zhou Enlai, Prime Minister of the new PRC government in Beijing, issued a statement declaring that the Chinese Communists retained the right to "take up the matter" of the fleeing Nationalist troops, and warned France against the "consequences" of giving shelter to refugee Nationalist forces who might enter French Indochina.[173] Zhou's statement finally found its response from France in the form of Pignon's December 10 announcement of an internment policy. French troops reportedly did take action, disarming and interning some KMT forces.[174]

The mood of the French military authorities in Indochina was apparent from the private remarks made by the commander of all French land forces in Tonkin, General Marcel Alessandri, who told US diplomats on December 13 that he "preferred disciplined [Chinese] Communist troops" on the northern side of Tonkin's

international frontier to "undisciplined roaming Nationalists with disposable arms."[175] At a press conference on December 15, Alessandri declared that all Chinese soldiers of whatever stripe who crossed into Indochina were being disarmed and interned. However, in relation to the appearance of PLA forces on the border near Dong Dang, he made it clear that the French were taking measures to "avoid any incidents."[176]

Inside the Chinese border, the unsettled military situation continued to change rapidly. In the case of Yunnan, Lu Han's capitulation on December 12 had opened the way for advance units of the PLA's Second Field Army to enter the northern sector of the province from Sichuan. The Communists' territorial advance was uneven, however. The western extremes of Yunnan bordering Burma were sealed off first, but the capital at Kunming and much of the interior remained under Nationalist administration or without any effective government. The PLA advance along the Burmese border combined with the flanking maneuvers of PLA Gen. Chen Geng's forces moving through southern Guangxi toward eastern Yunnan threatened to unleash another wave of armed Nationalist forces toward the Yunnan-Indochina border.[177] On December 30 Liu Bocheng and Deng Xiaoping, commanding the Second Field Army, sent a telegram to Generals Li Mi and Yu Chengwan, the senior Nationalist commanders still in Yunnan, warning them not to withdraw into Tonkin.[178] The telegram threatened that the PLA would "wipe out completely" the Nationalist forces if they attempted to "escape" into Tonkin. Mao himself had earlier advocated sending PLA forces into Indochina "to fight alongside the Vietminh against the French and those [Nationalist] remnants that Mao suspected of working for the French and US governments." In early November Zhou Enlai had told the Soviet Ambassador in Beijing that Indochina "had the highest priority in terms of Chinese military preparations."[179] The vulnerability of China's southern border remained a worry for Mao: "throughout 1950 and early 1951, he devoted much effort to eliminating these Nationalist remnants."[180]

It appears, however, that by January 3, 1950 a firm decision had been taken by the Chinese Communist leadership not to send PLA troops across the border into Tonkin. Instead Zhou Enlai was meeting with Luo Guibo, the CCP's representative in the Viet Bac, giving him instructions on establishing contact between the CCP and the ICP and providing the CCP Central Committee with information on the needs of the Vietnamese.[181] An overt indication of the decision not to send in PLA forces came from Moscow, where Mao Zedong had arrived on December 16 for negotiations with Stalin, and where indeed the policy issue on pursuit of the KMT was very likely discussed and decided. On January 3 in Moscow *Pravda* published a report on a meeting between a correspondent and Lin Biao, the senior commander of the PLA's Fourth Field Army. (The date of the meeting itself was not given). In his remarks, Lin made it clear that the Chinese, while concerned about the effects on the Viet Minh of the KMT influx into Indochina, had decided to attempt to cut off the Nationalists' escape across the Guangxi border rather than pursue them into Tonkin:

> We know that the Kuomintang is negotiating with the French to permit its troops to enter Viet Nam, hinting moreover that the French will be able to use

> them for the struggle against the Viet Nam Communists. Of course, this does not suit us … and we shall do everything possible to converge on the Viet Nam border before the Kuomintang troops, although for the time being they are twice as close to the border as we …. The enemy, whom we intend to *surround and annihilate in Kwangsi*, numbers approximately 180,000 regular troops and 120,000 in local formations … commanded by Gen. Pai Chung-hsi …. [emphasis supplied][182]

At this point it should be noted that the PLA's five field armies had been formally organized in February 1949 and that only at the end of that year did the divisions of territorial responsibility between them begin to emerge.[183] Little is known about the process by which the different commands assumed their geographic jurisdictions.[184] The basic structure for the division of responsibility between the Second Field Army in southwestern China and the Fourth Field Army in south-central China was emerging by the time of the crisis in late 1949 and early 1950. Liu Bocheng and Deng Xiaoping, who led the Second Field Army into Yunnan in December 1949, later headed the South West China Military and Administrative Committee (MAC), the Communists' regional apparatus based at Chongquing. Yunnan province became part of the South West MAC when that body was established in early 1950. Lin Biao, who led the Fourth Field Army which entered Guangxi, later became head of the South Central China MAC, based at Wuhan in Hubei. Guangxi province, to which his remarks in the *Pravda* article were relevant, became part of the South Central MAC at its creation early in 1950. Thus, during the late 1949–early 1950 military crisis, control over Communist forces in the Indochina border area was divided between two different PLA commands, a fact which may have posed difficulties within the Chinese Communist leadership of which we are not yet aware. In any case the internal organization of the Chinese Communists' military bureaucracy added another element of complexity to developments in the border region.

The Viet Minh leadership's position on the issue of cross-border PLA operations appears to have vacillated during this crisis period. French intelligence based upon intercepted communications indicated that the Chinese Communists had "no intention [to] violate [the] border." Supplementary information revealed that there was little cross-border "liaison" between the Chinese and Vietnamese Communists.[185] Official Viet Minh radio broadcasts issued to mark the December 19 anniversary of anti-French hostilities in 1946 gave no indication that Chinese intervention was expected or sought.[186]

The tone of the Viet Minh's public pronouncements changed dramatically in late December, however, perhaps as the number of Nationalist refugee forces crossing into Tonkin began to rise. One official Chinese Communist source later said that 27,000 KMT troops entered the Cao Bang, Lang Son, Nam Quan, and Dong Dang areas between December 14 and 28.[187] This influx was followed on December 30 by Liu and Deng's telegram to the KMT commanders in Yunnan. It was in this context that an article was published in the late December issue of *Su That* and its text was broadcast by VNA on 3 January 1950. The article "called on Vietnamese

security police, intelligence agents, Chinese nationals, and all Viet Namese [sic] people to hunt down Kuomintang bandits and spies and to cooperate with the Army and people of China in shattering the French-Kuomintang collusion."[188] The article went on to declare: "The Viet Nam people and Army not only would welcome but would also actively support the Chinese Liberation Army should the latter deem it necessary to pursue the remnant Kuomintang elements into Viet Nam."[189] This particular passage was given twice during the VNA broadcast on 3 January, the same day that Lin Biao's remarks about his army's intention to remain inside Guangxi were published in Moscow.

An internal Indochinese Communist Party document indicates that on the same day, 3 January 1950, the ICP "Council of Deliberations" convened a secret meeting at which relations with the Chinese Communists were a principal topic.[190] The meeting's decision included a "protest against the plan of operations of Mao Zedong." It is not apparent from the document what precisely this "protest" was about or what it might involve, but in view of the *Pravda* report, the VNA broadcast and the evident restraint of the PLA forces, there is some reason to believe that it may have been a protest against the Chinese Communists' decision to withhold military assistance to the PAVN in meeting the influx of Nationalist Chinese troops into Tonkin. It was likely immediately after this meeting that Ho Chi Minh began his travel to Beijing, walking to the border with Guangxi; from there, as we shall see, he went on to Beijing then secretly to Moscow, in search of secure support from China and the Soviet Union for the war against the French.[191]

2 Diplomatic recognition and military assistance, January–August 1950

The formal diplomatic recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) by the People's Republic of China (PRC) on January 18 1950 and by the Soviet Union on January 30 is often viewed as marking a new escalation of the East–West, Communist–non-Communist political polarization in Asia. The DRV requested recognition from the PRC by telegraph on January 15 1950, and Mao reportedly telegraphed Liu Shaoqi from Moscow, instructing that an affirmative reply be sent immediately and that the DRV's request be passed on to the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.[1] The Communist Powers' recognition of the DRV demonstrated both the Viet Minh's adherence to the international Communist "bloc" and international Communist solidarity generally, and provided a catalyst for American support of the non-Communist governments in Southeast Asia, including the French in Indochina and the local nationalists sponsored by them.[2] That the course of developments surrounding the Communists' recognition of the DRV was marked by a degree of confusion and competition has not been widely recognized or discussed.[3] However, the decisions for formal recognition were taken in a context of complex international and local developments, including the imminent threat to the security of Viet Minh base areas in northern Tonkin posed by Kuomintang (KMT) forces in flight, and they represented a choice on the part of the Communist Powers to extend political rather than immediate military support to the embattled Viet Minh.

The background to formal diplomatic recognition of the DRV

During January 1950 the continuing armed conflict in the southern sectors of Guangxi and Yunnan provinces prevented the Chinese Communists from gaining full and final control over the international border with Indochina. In fact, the troops of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Second Field Army did not enter Yunnan in force until January 11. Only by making rapid advances from southern Guangxi to the county towns along the Tonkin border were these forces, commanded by PLA Gen. Chen Geng, able to reach Mengzi in southeastern Yunnan by January 16, when they occupied the city's airfield and thus cut one of the only remaining Nationalist air links from the mainland to Hainan Island and

Taiwan. The PLA's occupation of Mengzi also denied Nationalist forces in the area access to overland routes through the mountains to Tonkin.[4] The capital of Yunnan province, Kunming, did not come under PLA control until around February 20, although by then it was administered by local pro-Communists and recent defectors from the KMT for some weeks.[5]

As engagements between Nationalist forces and the Communists' armies continued in southern Yunnan and Guangxi, the Viet Minh in northern Tonkin were confronted by an unprecedented advance of refugee KMT troops toward and through their vital base areas. The total number of Nationalist forces crossing into Indochina remains unclear, and the Viet Minh's estimate of 60,000 forces crossing during December 1949 was certainly inflated. Nationalist radio reports in mid-January claimed that 30,000 troops were at that time still in southern China and retreating toward Indochina.[6] An official Vietnam News Agency (VNA) report indicated that a critical phase in the Viet Minh's military resistance to the Nationalist troops came between January 14 and 17, when some 20,000 KMT refugee troops near Cao Bang were "encircled" by one Viet Minh force, while a second "drove off" a French column then advancing from Lang Son to receive the Nationalists. Four thousand KMT troops were reported to have been "put out of action" by the Viet Minh in this engagement.[7] A further 2000 KMT soldiers crossed into Tonkin above Cao Bang on January 17, and for several days during mid-January the outcome of the Viet Minh's many actions against KMT and French forces in the vicinity of the Viet Bac base area was not assured.[8] Against this background of troop movements and battles the PRC's recognition of the DRV was announced, on January 18.

There is insufficient evidence to establish where and when the most important Sino-Viet Minh discussions on establishing formal bilateral relations took place. Viet Minh workers' groups were represented at the Beijing trade unions conference in November 1949, but as we have seen the Vietnamese delegation was led by a mid-level union activist who lacked the seniority to conduct sensitive discussions. Sino-Viet Minh contacts in Guangzhou in late 1949 were probably concerned with local military issues on the border area.[9] We do have more information, however, about the movements and activities of Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) leader Hoang Van Hoan, the future DRV Ambassador to the PRC. Hoan had a long-standing special responsibility for international affairs, and it is most likely that he was centrally involved in arranging the terms and timing of the mutual diplomatic recognition of the DRV and PRC.[10]

Hoan's memoirs note that he was in India, Eastern Europe, and, briefly, the Soviet Union during the last months of 1949. He had originally been selected to head the Vietnamese Communist delegation to the Beijing trade unions' conference in November, but because of "visa difficulties" he spent a great deal of time in Prague where he oversaw the "rectification" of the Vietnamese Communist cell there.[11] He left Prague for Moscow and then continued to Beijing in late December. He reached the Manchurian border city of Manzhouli by January 1 and, traveling by train, he arrived in Beijing about two days later.[12]

Hoang Van Hoan's arrival in the Chinese capital coincided with the ICP leadership's secret meeting on January 3, during which the contents of a draft treaty

proposal were reviewed and a "protest" against some aspects of Mao's policies were approved.[13] On present evidence it appears that Hoang Van Hoan was the only ICP Central Committee member in Beijing at this time, although other senior Vietnamese representatives were there. While any talks have remained secret, progress toward the establishment of diplomatic relations seems to have been made at some level by January 10 when a VNA broadcast reported that Truong Chinh – always closely associated with a pro-Chinese Communist line – had declared that "Viet Nam will be able to establish closer relations with foreign countries and her political and military position will be stronger in view of her propinquity with the People's Republic of China."[14]

Truong Chinh's statement underscores earlier indications that the Vietnamese leadership hoped for military assistance as well as political support. His broadcast statement provided the context within which a telegram was issued in Ho Chi Minh's name on January 14, 1950 expressing the DRV's willingness to establish diplomatic relations with any country.[15] As the KMT–Viet Minh military clashes in the borderlands intensified, especially around Cao Bang, the DRV Foreign Minister Hoang Minh Giam sent a note to Zhou Enlai, PRC Foreign Minister, announcing the DRV's recognition of the PRC; three days later, on January 18, Zhou responded by declaring the PRC's recognition of the DRV.[16]

There is some evidence that in conjunction with the PRC's recognition of the DRV, the Vietnamese were able to obtain a strictly limited promise of future Chinese military assistance. Nationalist Chinese intelligence information, cited by K.C. Chen, indicates that a secret arms sales agreement was concluded on January 18 under which the PRC agreed to sell the Viet Minh 150,000 rifles and 10,000 carbines plus ammunition.[17] No further details have come to light, but in estimating the total number of guns transferred to the Viet Minh through September 1950 at 40,000, the same source suggests that the January 18 understanding involved setting a quota rather than a positive undertaking to supply specific weapons.[18] One feature of the reported agreement is worth noting, since it plays an important part in the analysis of the later stages of China's military assistance program. The KMT's information was that the Viet Minh were required to pay for the weapons they might obtain under the January 18 agreement. As we shall see, payment stipulations were used by the Chinese Communists to impose limitations on the flow of weapons and equipment to the Viet Minh.

China's decision to confer diplomatic recognition on the DRV government was doubtless an important event, but other developments around the same time demonstrate that Beijing intended something less than acknowledgment of the DRV's full sovereignty over all of Vietnam. First, the Chinese Communist media carried a number of articles describing "atrocities" perpetrated by the French against ethnic Chinese residents in northern Vietnam. This press campaign began on January 13 when a Chinese community association in Tonkin was said to have appealed to the PRC (and conspicuously not to the DRV) for protection.[19] After the publication of additional articles criticizing the French authorities for displaying "belligerence" toward ethnic Chinese in Indochina, Zhou Enlai sent a formal note to the French Foreign Minister M. Schuman on January 19, the day after the PRC

had recognized the DRV.[20] In terms that conveyed China's acceptance of the French authority in Indochina, Zhou declared that the PRC retained the right to make demands on France in connection with the Chinese community in Tonkin. The timing of China's official press coverage of the alleged "atrocities," which the report suggested had taken place several weeks earlier, and of Zhou's demarche to Schuman, indicates that the Chinese did not intend to allow diplomatic recognition of the DRV to interfere with China's right to communicate directly with the French.[21] The Chinese Communists' policy of maintaining direct contact with overseas Chinese communities was also upheld, and further underscored in mid-March 1950 when the new Military Control Commission of Kunming held a reception to welcome a delegation of "overseas Chinese [from] Vietnam."[22]

The limited significance of China's diplomatic recognition decision was demonstrated in a different way during the secret visit by Ho Chi Minh to China and then to the Soviet Union in January–February 1950.[23] Ho's precise itinerary is unknown, but he journeyed first to Beijing and then on to Moscow; he did not travel with Zhou Enlai, who arrived in the Soviet capital on January 20 to work with Mao during his visit.[24] Also on January 20, the Party-dominated Lien Viet front and the Viet Minh organization's leaderships jointly sent their first congratulatory telegram to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee, marking the establishment of diplomatic relations.[25]

The CCP Central Committee was busy at this time organizing "an ad hoc commission" including Generals Nie Rongzhen and Zhu De and united front specialist Li Weihan to meet with Ho during his stop in Beijing. Ho reportedly "made it clear that he came to obtain a substantial Chinese commitment to support the Vietnamese Communists," before leaving for Moscow, where he arrived around February 10.[26] In Moscow, Ho and Zhou joined Mao Zedong and Stalin.

Zhou's special diplomatic skills were required to formulate acceptable texts for the Sino-Soviet treaty and economic agreements being worked out in bilateral negotiating sessions.[27] It is now known that Vietnamese Party representatives had been in Moscow earlier in 1949, although one of them, Le Hy, had left under discordant circumstances.[28] It is reasonable to speculate that Ho Chi Minh sought both diplomatic recognition and direct material assistance from the USSR; he may have believed that direct consultations would enhance both the DRV's prestige and the likelihood of concrete results. Without additional details on the discussions about Indochina, it is impossible to know what the positions of the three Communist leaders – Stalin, Mao, and Ho – were during this exceptional series of meetings in Moscow.[29] All that can be said with certainty is that the Soviet Union extended diplomatic recognition to the DRV on January 30, 1950, some 12 days after the PRC had done so.[30]

The ICP leadership had earlier endorsed the idea of concluding a treaty with the PRC. One half-joking remark Ho is said to have made to Stalin on February 16 implied that he also hoped for a "treaty of friendship" for the DRV similar to that just concluded between the USSR and PRC.[31]

Stalin probably did not find Ho's comment amusing. He had told Liu Shaoqi during Liu's secret trip to Moscow in July 1949 that the Soviet Union expected the Chinese to assume responsibility for "promoting revolution in the East," presumably

at its own cost.[32] It would appear that neither of the Communist Powers agreed to establish treaty relations with the DRV at this time. Indeed, neither even agreed to a formal exchange of accredited ambassadors at this time.[33] After attending Stalin's farewell banquet for Mao and Zhou on February 16, Ho left Moscow with the two Chinese leaders on the following day; traveling by train, they reached Beijing on March 4, 1950.[34]

Throughout, while Mao's visit received intensive coverage in both the Soviet and Chinese Communist press, Ho Chi Minh's presence was not publicly noted.

In the Viet Minh-controlled areas of Vietnam, the conclusion of the Sino-Soviet treaty was celebrated with official media acclaim on February 18.[35] Three days later, on the Communists' international "day of anti-colonial struggle," Mao Zedong sent a telegram to Ho Tung Mau, president of the Viet Minh's newly-formed (on February 11) "China–Vietnam Friendship Association," welcoming formation of the organization.[36]

Recognition of the DRV by the Communist Powers also brought with it intensified opposition from the Western governments with strategic, policy, and commercial interests in Southeast Asia. The effects on French policy, including the French National Assembly's immediate ratification on February 2, 1950 of the existing agreements creating the State of Vietnam under former Emperor Bao Dai and the Kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia, must have been expected.[37]

The United States and Britain supported the French government by quickly recognizing its new "Associated State" governments on February 7.[38] The Vietnamese Communist leadership had also anticipated that closer formal relations with the Soviet Union and China could provoke the US into providing greater material support for the French military effort against the Viet Minh, as an article published in *Su That* in early January attested.[39] However, the scope of the actual American response may have exceeded the Communists' expectations.[40] A technical assistance evaluation team, the "Griffin Mission," visited Indochina on March 5–16, as part of a larger tour of Southeast Asia, to assess the Associated States' economic assistance needs, and on March 16–20 several US Navy vessels visited Saigon, along with the commander of the US Seventh Fleet; on May 9 it was announced in Saigon that the United States would begin providing immediate economic aid to the Associated States through a special permanent mission, to be headquartered in Saigon.[41]

Later, in July–August 1950, a joint State Department–Defense Department survey team, the "Melby Mission," spent three weeks in Vietnam assessing the military requirements of French and local forces; this group's findings formed the basis for the expanded US military aid program during the autumn of 1950.[42] These developments were of obvious concern to the Vietnamese leadership. As a result of the visits of the Griffin Mission and the US Navy vessels, for example, Truong Chinh wrote in *Su That* in late March that the United States was organizing "direct intervention" against the Viet Minh in Indochina.[43]

What did emerge in the first quarter of 1950 was a Sino-Vietnamese consensus on the strategy for the conduct of the war in Tonkin, and a consolidation of the Vietnamese Communist leadership's overall strategy for the war throughout

Vietnam. According to Hoang Van Hoan, it was a consequence of Ho Chi Minh's discussions with Chinese leaders in early 1950, both in Moscow and in Beijing, that the CCP Central Committee "agreed to give all-out support to the Vietnamese revolution."[44] But this support was to be administered gradually, according to a timetable prescribed in Beijing. As the Chinese made clear to Ho and Hoan, "China had just won its liberation and had numerous difficulties to overcome."[45] Sino-Vietnamese talks produced a basic understanding on the prosecution of the anti-French war in Tonkin, under which a new order and set of priorities would be imposed on the course of the revolutionary struggle there.

The Communist leaders agreed in early 1950 that it was "imperative to clear the border of enemy troops" before China could begin to deliver anything approaching "massive aid" to the Viet Minh's military forces.[46] In late February 1950, Radio Beijing revealed that the PLA had "eliminated" nearly 31,000 enemy troops in Yunnan.[47]

As a result of these new bilateral understandings, a number of "Chinese Advisers' and Experts' Groups" were formed. Their mission was to develop, implement, and oversee Chinese policy toward the anti-French armed struggle in Vietnam, and to render advice appropriate to Chinese aims to the Viet Minh's leadership.[48] At least two high-level military advisory missions were soon created. One was led by Gen. Chen Geng, who as a representative of the CCP Central Committee "came to Viet Nam to help with the training of cadres and troops and the organization of the [border] campaign [by the Viet Minh in 1950]."[49] The date of Chen Geng's arrival in Tonkin was reportedly July 28, 1950; his appointment as Chairman of the Kunming Military Control Commission in early March 1950, followed by his appointment as Governor of Yunnan province shortly thereafter, coincide with the information that he left China in the late spring, although members of his staff may have been on site in Tonkin earlier than this.[50] It is also likely that a second military mission, led by PLA Gen. Wei Guoqing, arrived in Tonkin earlier. Wei, a Guangxi native who had served under senior PLA commander Chen Yi in the Huai-Hai campaign, had been appointed Chairman of the Fuzhou Military Control Commission in July 1949, but on February 7, 1950 a broadcast by Shanghai's Communist-run radio station suddenly reported that in mid-January Wei had been transferred to other, unspecified duties.[51]

In addition, a "political advisory group" was also sent from China to northern Vietnam some time in 1950.[52] This was the group led by Luo Guibo, who became the first PRC Ambassador to the DRV in September 1954, that went to Tonkin to "pass on China's experience in financial and economic work, rectification of cadres' ideology and working style, government work and mobilization of the masses." According to Hoan, Luo's group provided essential guidance in structuring the Viet Minh's administrative apparatus and in mobilizing the civilian population, "thus ensuring our success in the war against the French." According to Chinese Communist sources, Luo Guibo had begun requesting full gear, ammunition, and communications equipment for 16,000 Viet Minh soldiers in late March, and between April and September 1950 the Chinese delivered thousands of guns, 2800 tons of grain, and large stocks of ammunition, medicine, and uniforms.[53] Isolating

the precise range of all contributions made by Luo's political mission to the Viet Minh's mobilization and political compliance campaigns of 1950 remains impossible.

For the Vietnamese leadership, the understanding with China about concentrating the armed conflict in Tonkin, and more precisely in the area bordering on China, together with the formation and dispatch of Chinese military missions to advise the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), constituted only one element in a broad program of preparations being developed to accelerate the military struggle against the French. In early February, the DRV Council of Ministers approved a "1950 war plan," the details of which were not immediately released. However, Communist-run media reports indicated that the "plan" comprised a set of policies designed to facilitate increased military actions throughout all of Indochina, to secure the early withdrawal of French military forces.[54] As we know, French intelligence indicated that the Viet Minh planned to launch their intensified struggle, the "general counter-offensive," in October or November 1950. The chief domestic requirements of the general counteroffensive strategy, from the Viet Minh leadership's viewpoint, were increased military recruitment and training and increased food production, storage, and transportation, with which to sustain larger military units and auxiliary personnel corps. Beginning in late February, a series of propaganda campaigns to initiate these essential preparatory activities were announced. Radio broadcasts began regularly emphasizing that food economies and intensified food production in Viet Minh-controlled areas were now necessary.[55]

The DRV Council of Ministers had also approved a "decree authorizing the general mobilization of manpower and material and financial resources" to underpin preparations for the general counteroffensive to come, and it seems probable that technical aspects of the mobilization, recruitment, and production drives were discussed at the "National Resistance-Administrative Conference" held during February 1950.[56] Special significance was attached during these planning meetings to the third and final phase of the anti-French struggle, regularly referred to as the "phase of the general counteroffensive."[57]

This stage of the war, to which the Vietnamese Communist and Viet Minh military leaderships were now looking forward, was discussed in extensive detail in an internal document written by senior PAVN General Vo Nguyen Giap in February 1950.[58] Confirming that "1950 is a year of a strategic change of direction," Giap set out ten principles governing the Viet Minh's new "combat plan." The first of these was the imperative to "concentrate forces to a high degree and achieve superiority in the campaigns and in combat." The basic tactical feature of this new phase of the anti-French struggle was the advance of these concentrated forces to "mobile warfare" as the primary method of military engagement. Guerrilla warfare, while important to the overall strategy of the resistance, was of "secondary" tactical importance. Giap's analysis made it clear that the upcoming general counteroffensive would not escalate uniformly throughout Vietnam, nor would it be launched immediately upon the engagements of large Viet Minh units with main-force French troops; rather, Giap maintained, it would develop in "waves" over a "prolonged" period throughout Indochina. The strategic objectives of the general counteroffensive were threefold:

(1) to "annihilate the enemy's manpower;" (2) to "reconquer the entire territory;" and (3) to "destroy the will of the French colonialists to resist." Giap acknowledged that relations with the Chinese Communists would be a critical factor:

> Previously, international influence had a large effect on the Indochina war situation, but before this that effect was more favorable to the enemy than to us. From the time the Chinese revolution was victorious international conditions changed, becoming fundamentally more favorable to us.[59]

While the Viet Minh's own strategic planning and preparation for the general counteroffensive developed rapidly from February, and despite Ho Chi Minh's understanding with Chinese Communist leaders on the need to secure the border area of Tonkin before "massive" aid could be delivered by the Chinese, the pattern of Chinese military assistance did not change substantially. According to British military intelligence, the sale of Chinese weapons to the Viet Minh in early 1950 was handled by local Chinese Communists operating without centralized direction rather than by higher authorities. For example, the former CCP guerrilla commander "Chu Chia-pi," who by early 1950 was a deputy commander of the Communist garrison at Kunming, sold rifles captured from Nationalist stocks to the Viet Minh, reportedly in exchange for opium. He delivered these weapons to Viet Minh units operating in the area between Lao Cai and Ha Giang, where his own Chinese guerrilla force had operated during 1948.[60] Other supplies were transferred from "Halang" (probably Delong), a Guangxi border town where the Viet Minh had organized a "special purchasing bureau," to a depot in a Viet Minh-held area inside Tonkin, just north of Cao Bang.[61] In addition, according to Nationalist Chinese intelligence reports, a shipping company was established by Chinese Communists in Guangzhou to transport arms, ammunition, and explosives to Viet Minh enclaves on the Tonkin coast; one maritime supply convoy sailing from the Chinese coast in early February was said to be carrying 30,000 rifles to the Viet Minh.[62]

In late February 1950 Viet Minh units attacked Ba Xat, a small post on the international boundary just northeast of Lao Cai; the raid was launched from the Chinese side of the international border, and at least one of the mortars used in the successful attack was reportedly situated inside Chinese territory.[63] The Ba Xat operation was part of a two-week offensive in the Lao Cai sector that, according to the VNA, "liberated" 13 French-controlled villages.[64] A British military intelligence assessment concluded that the key to the Viet Minh's effectiveness had been their units' deployments inside Chinese territory, from which they were able to "attack French posts from unexpected directions."[65]

This limited Chinese Communist assistance was to some degree counteracted by the continuing instability in the border region. By one estimate, apparently emanating from Chinese Communist sources, in early 1950 the number of Nationalist troops and guerrillas in Guangxi province alone was around 70,000, operating under at least three separate command structures.[66] One British diplomat described Nationalist guerrilla activity in Guangxi as "widespread and increasing," and the guerrillas' interference with rail lines was proving particularly troublesome.[67]

The Nationalists' movements continued to affect the Viet Minh's military forces, albeit indirectly: the destabilization caused by KMT "remnants" in Guangxi led the Chinese Communists to temporarily seal off the border with Tonkin in order to contain the guerrillas. One consequence of this policy was a temporary suspension of overland arms shipments destined for Viet Minh units.[68] Of course, since only small-scale deliveries of arms and equipment were involved, the measure had little actual impact, but it reportedly provoked "disappointment amounting to near dissatisfaction amongst Vietminh troops in North Tongking [*sic*]."[69] The incident demonstrated the potential for political as well as military interference with the Chinese Communists' promised military aid transfers for the Viet Minh – a feature which took on greater importance when Beijing committed its military forces to the conflict in Korea later in the year.

For the Viet Minh, details now available indicate that crucial decisions in the implementation of the "1950 war plan" were taken during March and April. In keeping with the ICP Central Committee determination, made in October 1949, to create a political commissar system within the PAVN, Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap signed "Decree No. 32," which instituted a commissar system within the military and empowered Communist Party cadres assigned to each military unit to make final decisions over the military operations in which their units became involved. It should be noted that this decree was formally approved on March 4 1950, the date of Ho's arrival in Beijing following his visit to Moscow.[70]

The leadership also took steps to broaden popular participation in the preparations for the anticipated general counteroffensive, scheduled to begin in the autumn. An internal ICP document captured by French forces in late May 1950 revealed that an important ICP Central Committee meeting had been convened on April 12, 1950.[71] At this conference, the Party's most senior leaders decided to initiate a major new propaganda campaign in anticipation of the general counteroffensive, as well as to forestall the development of famine conditions in certain Viet Minh-controlled "liberated" areas. Apparently as a consequence of the decisions taken at this Central Committee meeting, the leadership issued a "general mobilization order" to the Vietnamese people on April 15, 1950.[72] Under this order, "concrete plans" were to be devised for preparations in each region of Vietnam, whether "liberated" and under Viet Minh control or "occupied" and under French control, and penalties were to be imposed upon those who evaded participation.[73]

It was at this time that Ho formally requested that China send military advisers and commanders to assist the Viet Minh military. On April 17 the Chinese leadership approved the creation of the Chinese Military Advisory Group (CMAG) to be based at Nanning, Guangxi, under Gen. Wei Guoqing. The experts were to be placed at Viet Minh military headquarters, amongst the three divisions (304th, 308th, and 312th) so far formed, and with an officers' training school.[74] After consultations in Beijing, CMAG members left for Vietnam in August 1950, arriving at the Viet Minh military headquarters near Cao Bang on August 12. Meanwhile, Ho had requested that Gen. Chen Geng serve as a senior military adviser and Geng, commander of the Yunnan Military Region, was en route to Viet Minh headquarters with a plan in mind for a Viet Minh offensive to seize key towns and passes along the mountainous Vietnamese

border with China.[75] A Chinese Communist order directing ethnic Chinese in Nambo to assist the Viet Minh there was circulated in the south.[76]

Meanwhile, structural adjustments to the disposition of Viet Minh military resources in Tonkin were also set in motion. First, according to several British and US intelligence reports, the Viet Minh made sustained efforts during this period to improve the condition of overland routes from the Chinese border into the Viet Minh-controlled Viet Bac base area. Roads capable of carrying heavy vehicle traffic were under construction between various Chinese border crossings and Thai Nguyen, about 40 miles north of Hanoi, which served as the heart of the DRV government and the center of the Viet Bac zone.[77] Improvement works were also undertaken along Route Coloniale No. 3, the Hanoi–Cao Bang road, and on other routes between Cao Bang and the Guangxi border – the area in which the Viet Minh would soon begin concentrating its forces for offensive operations in the autumn of 1950.[78] These road construction works were believed to have been designed to allow increased weapons and supply traffic to flow from China to the Viet Minh, and may have been the subject of Chinese Communist technical advice.[79]

The second basic adjustment of Viet Minh resources involved the redeployment of the PAVN's best forces and equipment. Not only troops but also food, weapons stocks, equipment, and rudimentary munitions works were withdrawn from various Viet Minh strongholds across Tonkin and relocated to the Viet Bac, beginning in March 1950.[80] Because French forces controlled most roads, the relocation of Viet Minh workshops and equipment involved "great difficulties," including the abandonment of materials and supplies during portage.[81] In addition to large numbers of Viet Minh forces moving from the Red River Delta area to the Viet Bac, some 3000 troops which were withdrawn from the Delta moved south to Thanh Hoa province in Interzone Four, where by July they had been amalgamated into a large force under centralized command, a group that was the forerunner of the PAVN 304th Division.[82] Ten thousand Viet Minh fighters from the Delta area, including a number of Tho nationality soldiers from the Bac Kan area, crossed the international border into Yunnan province north of Ha Giang, and camped in the vicinity of Wehshan, Yunnan, where as we shall see military training camps for Viet Minh forces were soon established.[83]

The April 12, 1950 ICP Central Committee meeting and the April 15 "general mobilization order" were followed by a program of measures designed to expand the scope of the military conflict against the French. A detailed French analysis of these initiatives provided to British officials reported that the objective of the Viet Minh's mobilization campaign was "not only to give the regular forces the numbers required to … pass from guerrilla action to modern warfare," but also "to put at the disposal of the resistance all the resources of the nation."[84] In April the ICP sent to Beijing a list of requests, including military advisers, "large amounts of ammunition and military equipment," and aid in training Viet Minh forces.[85] Steps were also taken to organize the civilian population for military and paramilitary service, particularly in local guerrilla and "home defense" units, and for participation in auxiliary units such as transportation corps and communications networks. Those who continued in civil occupations, especially the peasant farmers, were

encouraged to increase their production. Some reallocation of lands formerly held by French or Vietnamese absentee landlords was quickly carried out, and "rich persons" were coerced into providing cash to Viet Minh cadres and administrators.[86] The development of guerrilla and paramilitary units at the village level and the extraction of "contributions," in kind and in cash, also took place inside French-controlled areas in the north. The French estimated that some 500,000 people could be "mobilized" by the Viet Minh programs. However, while the growth of village-level organizations and guerrilla units could be stimulated by the Viet Minh leaders themselves, "the development of the [Viet Minh] regular [military] operations is dictated by the speed with which equipment arrives from foreign countries."[87]

Although the circumstances were different, there were marked parallels between the mid-1950 preparations for a new offensive to join Viet Minh-controlled territory in the Viet Bac zone to the Chinese border and the drive by Mao himself in mid-1936 to try to link CCP-held base areas with territory controlled by the Soviet Union. In each case the paramount goal was the same: to facilitate the delivery of military materiel across a border to the struggling revolutionists. However, in 1936 Mao not only needed the military equipment itself; he also needed to demonstrate to nearby non-Communist warlords Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng that he could actually obtain such aid from Moscow. By doing so he could meet what Michael Sheng has called "a critical precondition for the establishment of a united front" with important non-Communist commanders in the area.[88] The ICP general mobilization order of April 15, 1950 all but acknowledged that French-occupied areas lacked a fully developed Viet Minh presence. Part of the importance of the relocation of forces to the Viet Bac area would be to receive Chinese military aid, but it would also have, in Sheng's words, a "political dimension," in that it would demonstrate to potential recruits and political allies that Ho Chi Minh's movement was favored by the newly triumphant Chinese Communists. Such favor would have its own effect in bringing new followers to Viet Minh front organizations, militia, and military forces.

The Chinese Communist leadership, meanwhile, was developing its own schedule of military priorities for southern China. The main PLA forces were not moving to eliminate the Nationalist "remnants" from the border area, nor were they delivering substantial quantities of military equipment to the Viet Minh-held areas along the international border. Instead, the bulk of Chinese Communist troops were being deployed to the Leizhou Peninsula in southern Guangdong, in preparation for an amphibious invasion of Hainan Island, then still held by relatively cohesive Nationalist forces. This operation, conducted under the direction of PLA General Deng Hua, was launched on April 17, 1950, and was successfully completed within two weeks.[89] Nationalist Chinese authorities privately informed the British that a decision not to defend Hainan Island had been taken three months before the PLA's invasion began, but the swift success of the PLA operation added weight to the widely held belief that the Chinese Communists were planning to forcibly "liberate" the island of Taiwan.[90] It should be noted that it was not until late May 1950 that Viet Minh radio stations broadcast a congratulatory message to Mao Zedong noting the PLA's victory in the "liberation" of Hainan Island.[91]

According to scholar Chen Jian, the Chinese began the detailed organization of their aid program for the Vietnamese Communist-led forces at this time. On April 17 the Second, Third, and Fourth Field Armies of the PLA were instructed to select advisers at battalion, regiment, and division levels to be sent to northern Vietnam. A military school was organized and the CMAG was set up, by the Fourth and Third Field Armies, respectively.[92] While the advisers were meeting in Beijing under Gen. Wei Guoqing, the Korean War began on June 25, 1950. Even so, on June 27 Mao, Liu, Zhu De, and other senior CCP leaders met with the advisers to urge them to help the Viet Minh "establish a formal army" and "plan and conduct" anti-French operations. Training continued, and CMAG advisers under Wei Guoqing arrived in Vietnam in early August.[93]

Meanwhile, although heavily committed to the mobilization program for the general counteroffensive, the Viet Minh was at the same time prosecuting a series of smaller anti-French military attacks. During January 1950 there had reportedly been "considerable infiltration" by Viet Minh troops into northern Laos, but the center of Viet Minh military activity was in Tonkin itself. In late February, concomitantly with the relocation of its major force reserves toward the Viet Bac, the Viet Minh launched the "Le Hong Phong Offensive," which lasted from late February until the onset of the rainy season in late May.[94] Named for the second General Secretary of the ICP, this operation involved multiple clashes with French forces, during which the PAVN secured control of an expanded area around Lao Cai, including Ba Xat. One goal of the campaign was territorial, certainly, but another was to strengthen the deployment, command, and communications systems of the PAVN. Indeed, official broadcasts during this period began to claim that through its current operations the Viet Minh's forces were "mastering … mobile warfare," which was a prerequisite for defeating main force French troops.[95] The high point of the campaign came on May 27, 1950, when PAVN troops occupied the major French post at Dong Khe, on the Cao Bang–Lang Son road, for two days. French parachutists were able to recover the position, but the "annihilation" of Dong Khe was thoroughly publicized by the Viet Minh media.[96]

As we have seen, the Viet Minh military organization in southern Vietnam was smaller and less sophisticated than that in Tonkin. However, following initial attacks launched during January 1950, southern Viet Minh forces launched larger, more widespread attacks against French positions in April 1950.[97] British observers reported that the Viet Minh offensive in southern Vietnam had been planned during the preceding November, and focused on attacks in Tra Vinh, Soc Trang, and Can Tho provinces.[98] In Tra Vinh the battles and skirmishes lasted for a period of eight days, and the Viet Minh were estimated to have suffered some 400 casualties, while in Soc Trang 180 Viet Minh fighters were killed. In Can Tho, French air operations "routed the rebel concentrations before their attacks had developed."[99] Although British observers reported that French aircraft had "routed" the Nambo command's best troops, a Viet Minh newspaper reporting on the same clashes described the Viet Minh forces as "masters of the situation."[100]

Viet Minh radio also claimed that in Cambodia, entire provinces were being "liberated" by the "Cambodian Liberation Army," and a "resistance administration" was being set up in the "newly-liberated" areas.[101]

The reorganization of Chinese aid, April–July 1950

Students of the Korean War have offered several interpretations of the Chinese Communists' foreknowledge of, involvement in, and reactions to the outbreak of hostilities in Korea on June 25, 1950, and it is not necessary to recount these assessments here.[102] It seems that, as one scholarly study of Chinese decision-making in 1950 has argued, the principal strategic concerns of the Chinese Communist leadership, at least until the second half of August 1950, were the continuing threat posed to Chinese mainland targets by the Nationalist military, now headquartered on the island of Taiwan, and the related issue of the Communists' own plans to eliminate that threat by militarily reunifying Taiwan with the mainland.[103] Nationalist Chinese intelligence reports, perhaps unremarkably, underscored this view: one such report passed to the British indicated that at a major military conference held in Beijing in early June 1950 it was decided that the invasion of Taiwan would go forward, coordinated with military operations in other theaters (said to include Korea), and that some Soviet aid would be made available to the PLA's Second, Third, and Fourth Field Armies for the invasion of Taiwan.[104] Such reports need not be taken at face value, but commentaries in the official Chinese Communist media and the fact that Chinese troops did not become directly involved in the conflict in Korea, until a clear threat to the security of the Chinese mainland developed later in the year, tend to reinforce the view that in the spring of 1950, the Chinese leadership was chiefly concerned with unifying all of China. However, the leadership did maintain its interest in reinforcing the growing military capabilities of the Viet Minh in Tonkin, to shore up its southern perimeter against possible US intervention in support of the French. As US military aid to France grew, the Chinese had more reason than ever to promote the development of the Vietnamese Communist-led military.

Whether or not US intelligence sources in Saigon were correct in reporting that Ho Chi Minh returned to China in April 1950 for talks about expanding Chinese military aid, we now know that this is when Ho initially requested that the PRC send military advisers to help the PAVN.[105] There was persistent speculation both in official circles and in the Western press that a "secret military agreement" was concluded between the PRC and DRV during the spring of 1950.[106]

The actual course of events has not emerged, but there is considerable evidence to indicate that China's military aid program was reorganized and expanded in the late spring. US sources began to note changes in the structure of the program from April to May, while British intelligence concluded that revisions in the program were apparent from June 1950.[107] Local Chinese authorities in the southern provinces were rapidly being "brought under the heel of Communist discipline," and were soon being "prevented from trading privately in arms and equipment with the Vietminh …. [*sic*]"[108] According to a US State Department report, Liu Shaoqi, after discussion with Viet Minh representatives, was expected to impose a new structure on Chinese aid, by developing "government-to-government" arrangements for Chinese arms supply deliveries.[109]

As a consequence of these new arrangements, the Viet Minh would reportedly no longer be required to pay for Chinese equipment; US diplomats reporting this information attributed the change to Soviet pressure on Beijing.[110] Formalization of emerging changes may have taken place at a bilateral meeting reportedly held at Mengzi, Yunnan, on June 8, 1950. French officials confidentially informed British diplomats that at this meeting, plans for an autumn offensive by the Viet Minh in the border region were discussed.[111] In August 1950 the French publicly released reports about this Sino-Viet Minh conference, suggesting that a mutual defense agreement had been concluded that included provisions for direct Chinese military interventions.[112]

Private information available to the British in Hanoi revealed that during June 1950, a major Sino-Viet Minh conference on financial and trade issues convened at Longzhou, Guangxi.[113] This conference reportedly produced a series of decisions which were finalized by the end of the year. Not all of the policies were as favorable to the Viet Minh as the new Chinese policy of providing military grants-in-aid. For example, under the Longzhou agreements, the PRC assumed responsibility for the production and delivery of banknotes for the DRV. The DRV agreed to deposit with the official Bank of China a quantity of gold sufficient to back that portion of the DRV currency to be used in transactions along the international border. In such transactions, the value of the Chinese and Vietnamese currencies was to be established at 1:1 parity. The Vietnamese delegation also reportedly agreed to deposit with China's banks enough gold to finance the expenses of official Viet Minh visitors to the PRC. Customs and trade financing arrangements were also discussed. However, sharp disagreements reportedly developed over the terms for any future loan that the Soviet Union might make to the DRV for the purchase of goods from Communist China. The Viet Minh wanted to deposit any such loan, denominated in rubles, directly into Chinese banks, without converting it to the Chinese Communist currency. Chinese officials were reportedly "adamant" that any ruble loan made to the DRV be converted into Chinese currency before it could be applied to purchases in China.

This position clearly reflected the Chinese desire to secure any ruble credits loaned the DRV for China's own use in offsetting the PRC's mounting ruble deficit with the Soviet Union. The issue was left unresolved by the conferees at Longzhou; indeed, no settlement was reached until perhaps as late as mid-1951. While the impact of this discord upon Soviet policy cannot yet be assessed, it was reported by the same source that, despite having extended formal diplomatic recognition to Ho Chi Minh's DRV government, the Soviet Union did not authorize a loan to the DRV during 1950.[114]

Initially cautious in its public response to the developing conflict in Korea, the Chinese Communist leadership made public its opposition to the immediate US decision to deploy the Seventh Fleet around Taiwan.[115] In this atmosphere, Beijing may have been persuaded of the strategic value of going forward with its plans to subsidize the growth of main-force Viet Minh units in Tonkin. It has been established that on June 18 Liu Shaoqi sent a telegram to Gen. Chen Geng confirming a May 1950 CCP decision to send him to Vietnam to put together plans for military aid deliveries and recruitment, training, logistics, and combat.[116] Chen traveled to Vietnam by mid-July, by which time it was clear that the Chinese Communist

leadership had become actively engaged in overseeing the expansion of the aid program itself. As North Korean troops moved across the 38th Parallel into South Korea, at the June 27 meeting between Mao and other leaders and the CMAG members, Mao said that "since our revolution has achieved victory, we have an obligation to help others. This is called internationalism."[117] Some information on this expanded effort has been discussed by other students of this period, using Nationalist Chinese, Communist Chinese, French, and Vietnamese source materials.[118]

Additional details available in the British and American archives shed new light on both the dimensions and operation of the Chinese military assistance program, and on its utility not only for the Viet Minh but also for the Chinese Communists themselves. The chief feature of the expanded aid program, as others have noted, was the creation of new semi-permanent facilities inside Chinese territory to provide a safe venue for intensive military training and equipment transfers to the PAVN. Training camps were reportedly opened in the early summer of 1950 at Wenshan, Malipo, and Funing in Yunnan province, and at unspecified sites in Guangxi. US intelligence analysts writing in August 1950 estimated that 20,000–30,000 Viet Minh troops could be accommodated in these camps at any one time.[119] At these installations the Chinese conducted training exercises and provided weapons, ammunition, and equipment directly to PAVN soldiers. US intelligence also indicated that during the training period, which lasted around two months, unspecified numbers of Chinese officers and staff were "integrated" into PAVN units.[120] By the end of August 1950, French intelligence maintained, China had trained and equipped about 30 PAVN infantry battalions and six artillery battalions.[121] While this estimate is probably too high, Chinese Communist sources confirm that, for example, the PAVN 308th Division was being trained and equipped at the "Yanshan training camp in Yunnan," and that key Chinese adviser Gen. Chen Geng from Yunnan was busy inspecting China's aid efforts and making plans for the fall 1950 border offensive.[122]

US sources learned that a central weapons procurement office for the Viet Minh was located in Longzhou, Guangxi, and that 11 Soviet administrators were also thought to be present in Longzhou.[123] This may have been the logistics office run by Gen. Li Tianyou. Longzhou itself emerged as the central staging post for Chinese aid delivered from Nanning, at this time the rail terminus nearest the Indochina border. The Chinese Communists also fortified the existing defensive installations on Hainan Island following its "liberation" in April 1950, and by late June another US intelligence report noted that a supply depot had been created on Hainan for storing and disbursing equipment and materiel to the Viet Minh.[124] Again, Soviet military advisers and technicians were reportedly present on Hainan Island.[125] Western sources confirmed that military equipment deliveries were made by junks sailing from Hainan Island to Viet Minh bases on the coast of Vietnam at least as far south as Vinh.[126]

Particular categories of Chinese-supplied weapons devastated static French defenses from mid-1950 onward, when these armaments began to be employed in Viet Minh attacks. First, mortars "furnished by China" were exceptionally effective

against the so-called watchtower system conceived by Gen. de la Tour and widely introduced in southern and central Vietnam from 1948.[127] This was a system of elevated platform fortifications for daytime road surveillance. The towers were usually built about one kilometer apart, with line-of-sight communications enhanced by foliage and brush clearing; at irregular intervals larger "mother towers" housing more weapons and a small contingent of troops were built to conduct traffic stops and provide a mobile force that could be called out to support endangered watchtowers. The system was considered generally effective until mid-1950 when Viet Minh units armed with mortars were easily able to destroy the brick towers and bamboo fences that had previously withstood most automatic weapons fire and small grenades. As mortars came into use, "this fortification … was to crumble." The shift was so great that "very often the smaller garrisons avoided giving the alert or abandoned their position in self-defense rather than be inexorably exposed to destruction." French officials were obliged to deploy troops and auxiliaries to build new reinforced structures by 1951, including earth-covered masonry emplacements, trenches, and triple layers of barbed wire. Further, the 1950 introduction of a second weapon from China, the Samozaryadniy Karabin sistemi Simonova (SKS) gun-mounted rocket launcher, was reported by a French review of the Indochina war to have created a "crisis" for the French.[128] The SKS rifle was coming into general use in the Soviet Union by 1949, and when it was exported to China around the same time it was reproduced locally, often with slight design adjustments that facilitated production in China's less advanced arsenals. It appears that in 1950 the Viet Minh were receiving early Soviet or East European models of the SKS. According to the French, "from the moment the [Viet Minh] obtained Chinese assistance with a sufficient number of these missiles," French defensive fortification plans had to be completely rethought, and structures rebuilt. Now, nothing less than reinforced concrete blockhouses, with underground complexes for mortar firing posts and armor-plated turrets atop the blockhouses were sufficient for static positions, especially in Tonkin. In 1951 Gen. de Lattre ordered construction of about 80 such posts around the periphery of the Tonkin Delta and along major roadways. The Viet Minh reportedly were deterred from attacking these new blockhouses, whose designs were inspired by the emplacements of the Maginot Line.

In addition to providing more and better equipment and extended training under this new aid regime, the Chinese Communists themselves also derived advantages, particularly from their management of the training facilities in Yunnan and Guangxi. In both provinces, internal threats to the Chinese Communist administration persisted: Nationalist guerrillas were especially active in Guangxi, while in Yunnan anti-Communist resistance amongst ethnic minorities undermined the Communists' attempts to establish effective control. Nor was this unrest on a minor scale: in July–August 1950 Communist authorities in Yunnan acknowledged that 600 Party workers had been killed there since January 1950, although unofficial estimates put the number at around 2000.[129] The training camps for the Viet Minh soldiers were purposefully established in areas inhabited by unassimilated minorities in Yunnan, and thereby helped reinforce Chinese Communist military control. The facility at Wenshan, for example, was sited in the homelands of the Lolo and Meo tribes. According to US

reports, the Viet Minh training camp at Wenshan helped the Chinese Communist administration address its internal security problems, since the presence and cross-country transit of several thousand PAVN soldiers served as "a temporary guarantee of the security of the region."[130]

The Chinese also extracted other advantages from the Viet Minh troops being trained inside China. During the summer of 1950 Vietnamese personnel were reported to be working on Chinese defense construction projects, including roads and airfields, and were also believed to be participating in certain anti-guerrilla military operations within China itself.[131] At this point it may be noted that by mid-year the Viet Minh's own road construction and repair works in Tonkin had produced three principal routes from Viet Minh-controlled bases to the Chinese border, as well as a number of subordinate routes and roadways. The road construction work conducted by the Viet Minh inside China involved continuations of these Viet Minh routes from Tonkin, linking them to the training camps and railhead cities in Guangxi and Yunnan.[132]

The expansion of the Chinese military supply program after the spring of 1950 was the principal factor in the improvement of the PAVN leading up to the famous "border campaign" against the French in northern Tonkin in September–October 1950.[133] However, details are available on another source of external supply for the Viet Minh which was also of growing military significance during early and mid-1950. For several years the Viet Minh had been purchasing weapons in Thailand and transporting them into Indochina, primarily to Viet Minh groups in southern Thailand, although distribution routes also ran through northeastern Thailand, into Laos, and on to the "liberated areas" in northern Annam, the Tonkin Delta region, and northern Tonkin itself.[134] Arms traffic along these routes escalated during 1949 and early 1950, and the lack of Franco-Thai cooperation in interdicting seaborne shipments along the Cambodian coast contributed to the success of the Thailand-based arms import operation.[135] French intelligence sources reported that the arms purchases destined for southern Vietnam, accounting for perhaps 90 per cent of the total purchased in Bangkok during this period, were organized and overseen by a "Supply Committee" run by the Viet Minh Nambo organization; deliveries were reportedly coordinated by a network of clandestine wireless communications stations in Thailand and southern Cambodia.[136] Nationalist Chinese sources estimated Viet Minh arms purchases in Bangkok at US $500,000 per month by April 1950, and the following month the French made a formal *démarche* to the Thai government highlighting the resurgent traffic and seeking, without success, a commitment from the Thais to clamp off the arms trade.[137]

Like much of the history of Viet Minh trade and finance in this period, the question of how this level of expenditure was financed remains obscure. Scholar Qiang Zhai has argued that the Chinese charged nothing for their aid in this period.[138] Western intelligence reports afford further insight. There were tensions between DRV representatives in Bangkok and the Vietnamese community in Thailand in this period.[139] Reports indicated that much of the money came from "taxes" imposed by local Viet Minh cells on the large ethnic Vietnamese community residing in northeast Thailand; other funds were derived from security and transit fees charged to the underground criminal smuggling operations that moved

opium, precious stones, and rice from or through Viet Minh-controlled zones.[140] It was also reported that, using a circuitous "laundering" operation, the Soviet Union provided cash subsidies for Viet Minh weapons purchases in Thailand. In mid-1949, for example, reports reaching the British Foreign Office indicated that the USSR had been selling gold (from new production, not from its reserves) on international markets for convertible Western currencies; "most of the proceeds" were thought to be channeled to Communist front organizations, Communist Parties, and pro-Communist political affiliates to finance the promotion of "subversive ends."[141] The transfer of funds was deliberately complex, involving a number of countries and regions including Switzerland, Tangier, and Central America, but secret reports indicated that the endpoints of the Soviets' Western currency distribution network included Macau, Saigon, and Bangkok where the monies financed "Nationalist propaganda in Southeast Asia" and other activities.[142] By mid-1950 senior US intelligence analysts were able to report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Soviet embassy in Bangkok had been financing arms purchases in Bangkok for the Viet Minh.[143]

Sino-Viet Minh relations and preparations for the general counteroffensive

For the US Department of Defense, the opening of the Korean War in June signaled a shift of the "principal source of perceived Communist threat" in Asia from the Soviet Union to the PRC.[144] For its part, the Chinese Communist leadership viewed President Truman's decision to interpose the US Seventh Fleet between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan and the introduction of US-led United Nations (UN) military forces into Korea as a strategic threat.[145]

However, according to Whiting's dated but still compelling analysis of China's reactions to events in East Asia, it was not until the second week of August that the leadership in Beijing came to see Korea rather than Taiwan as its principal military concern.[146] The situation in Indochina was not seen as the primary source of military or strategic threat to Communist Chinese interests in this period. Even so, developments there remained important. As we have seen, Chinese assistance was beginning to play a central role in the Viet Minh's calculus for a new dry season offensive in the border areas of Tonkin.

The sudden development of a major international crisis provoked by events in Korea occasioned a round of high-level Sino-Viet Minh discussions. According to a Chinese informant "close to" CCP authorities in Guangdong province, Ho Chi Minh flew to Bejing via Hainan Island in "early July" 1950.[147] Ho reportedly held talks with Mao Zedong on the issue of "joint Chinese-Viet [*sic*] military defense and methods [of] supplying Chinese combined army group which is to enter Indochina;" Ho returned to Indochina on July 18. No more is known about this secret visit to Beijing, but the same informant also told US diplomats that Hoang Van Hoan passed through Dongxing, Guangxi, in early August en route to Kunming for meetings with CCP General Chen Geng.[148] The informant provided the US with early details on the changes in Chinese Communist troop deployments

in southeast China after the start of the Korean War: by July 27, he said, the main elements of Lin Biao's Fourth Field Army would begin their withdrawal from southern Guangdong province and proceed to the north. Troops from Chen Geng's forces in Yunnan were to replace Lin's forces in Guangdong, and eventually the greater part of the Fourth Field Army was expected to regroup near Mukden (Shenyang) in Manchuria.[149] The informant claimed that the Soviet Union had formulated a "Mao Tse-tung–Ho Chi Minh joint plan," under which an offensive could be launched in Tonkin "as soon as Ho's preparations [were] completed;" a Soviet adviser was said to be overseeing 13,000 troops supplied with equipment from depots on Hainan Island.[150] This source also later claimed that the "mixed units," presumably including both Viet Minh and Chinese forces, entered Tonkin in late July 1950. Of the 12,000 troops that reportedly crossed into Indochina, 4000 were Viet Minh while the others were Chinese Communists drawn from the Eighth Military Sub-District of Guangdong.[151]

There is no known confirmation of this informant's reports. However, the general picture created by this string of information is in close accord with what is known from other sources about the training and supplying of Viet Minh troops inside China and about the reorganization and centralization of the Chinese military assistance program to the Viet Minh in the late spring and summer of 1950, even if the supposed border crossing by Chinese troops is inaccurate. Gen. Chen Geng did have special responsibilities for supplying and planning operations for the Viet Minh, and he claims that he was already in Tonkin in July 1950.[152] He reportedly telegraphed the CCP Central Committee on July 22 that "he had reached consensus with the Vietnamese leaders concerning the general strategy of the forthcoming Border campaign."[153] The plan was to hit strong posts around Cao Bang, attack the French reinforcements that would be sent to stabilize the situation, and then "seize Cao Bang;" the plan was approved by the Chinese Central Military Committee on July 26.[154] The assertion that Chinese troops entered Tonkin as part of a Soviet or Chinese joint plan with the Vietnamese leadership cannot be substantiated on present evidence, but the general picture may be right. The informant's data may have been an elucidation of a Chinese (or Soviet) contingency plan for China's southern border area. In any event the balance of the evidence indicates that Chinese advisers and/or observers were almost certainly attached to the PAVN units they had trained and equipped at special installations in Yunnan and Guangxi, and Chinese military officers were deployed with PAVN units back into Tonkin in anticipation of renewed large-scale fighting against the French. The CMAG reportedly operated in Tonkin until at least 1952.[155]

It is known that the changing international security situation in the Far East was discussed at the DRV Council of Ministers meeting in mid-July, perhaps just after Ho Chi Minh's return from Beijing. The meeting "passed important decisions" after considering "the new international events;" the meeting endorsed the view that as US intervention in Korea escalated "they [the US] will interfere more strongly in Indochina." According to the official broadcast report on this meeting, "President Ho Chi Minh has said: 'In order to realize their independence, the peoples of Indochina have decided to annihilate the French colonialists who are their first enemy and also fight against the American interferers.' "[156] A call to "increase [the]

fight … for national independence" was thereafter repeated by all major Viet Minh front organizations in their own official announcements.[157] Soon the various echelons in the Viet Minh administrative apparatus were passing on directives to "speed up rapid transition to the general counteroffensive."[158]

By early August 1950 preparations for a large Viet Minh offensive in the border area of north and northeastern Tonkin and for supporting and diversionary military actions elsewhere in Vietnam were well advanced. A senior Communist leader, Ho Viet Thanh, reporting that Vietnamese peasants made up 95 per cent of the Viet Minh's new military recruits, revealed that in some locations peasant families were giving up to 42 per cent of their summer rice crop to "resistance funds," the supplies which would feed PAVN soldiers in the field.[159] The DRV Ministry of Finance was organizing the accumulation of these rice stocks through "subscriptions" and "contributions," while at the same time trying to suppress the inflation in rice prices caused by the consequent shortages of rice in local markets.[160] Besides the spot shortages, other ominous developments accompanying the Viet Minh's preparations for a major military offensive also began to emerge. An article in a Viet Minh newspaper, summarized in a broadcast by the VNA, noted that peasants' living conditions must be improved in order to enable them to "continue their support of the people's state. To achieve this goal the Peasant Association [a Viet Minh front agency] must be further consolidated and submitted to tight control by the people in order to weed out elements unwilling to carry out the government's policy."[161]

Having recognized the need for closer political supervision of the peasantry, the Viet Minh central leadership judged that conditions were generally favorable for its mobilization program. At the August 19 anniversary of the 1945 Revolution, official pronouncements declared that the revolution against French control had reached "the state of speeding passage to the general counteroffensive." Indeed, official broadcasts claimed that "strenuous efforts" had been made, and the Vietnamese people would now "further endeavor to speed up the liberation war for victory."[162] The messages transmitted by official Chinese Communist media outlets were similarly enthusiastic. According to a *Renmin Ribao*'s [*The People's Daily*] editorial marking the Vietnamese' August Revolution anniversary, the Chinese people had full confidence in the ultimate victory of the Vietnamese people.[163]

Behind the exhortations of the official media, the Vietnamese leadership was working with the Chinese on details for managing the mobilization campaigns for civilians which would be twinned with the planned military offensive itself. Chinese administrative advisers may have played roles in the Peasant Association campaign, in the rice management programs to support the enlarged military operations, and in the new financial initiatives begun in 1950 and announced by the Viet Minh in early 1951, including a DRV bond issue in January and the creation of the DRV central bank in the spring of 1951.[164] Indeed, in a May 1951 article outlining the tasks of the new banking institution, Pham Van Dong specifically cited the Chinese Communists' experience in stabilizing the value of its currency as an example to be followed by the Communists in Vietnam.[165]

In early August 1950, according to Western intelligence reports, a joint Sino-Viet Minh decision was taken to improve the command and control apparatus of the

PAVN. The French learned from their sources that on August 5 Xiao Wen, former adviser to the KMT and now believed to be Chen Geng's successor-in-waiting as CCP South China Bureau's chief liaison agent for interactions with the Vietnamese Communist leadership, had met with two senior Viet Minh representatives, Le Van Tham and Nguyen That, in Macau.[166] The Chinese military supply program was one of the key topics at the meeting, but the PAVN command and cadre structures were also reportedly discussed. According to the French source, an agreement was reached that a "Sino-Viet Minh general staff would be created immediately." French sources also reported in September 1950 that Chen Geng and Ho Chi Minh were planning to create a "Joint Operations Committee" composed of five Viet Minh and five Chinese officers, under the direction of Chen Geng himself.[167]

CCP operatives were also reportedly making plans for a long-term increase in Chinese influence within the PAVN itself. At a meeting of the CCP South China Bureau on August 14, Xiao Wen and another CCP liaison officer ("Ma Wei Yu") proposed a number of measures to enhance the Chinese Communists' political presence in Indochina.[168] Xiao proposed that PAVN soldiers being trained in Guangxi should be used to transport Chinese arms to Tonkin, and that "more modern arms" be transferred to them. Furthermore, Xiao suggested that every PAVN battalion should be assigned a Chinese Communist "Assistant Political Commissar" selected by the CCP. This "assistant" would advise Viet Minh troop commanders and the PAVN's own political commissars, who as we have seen were empowered by a special decree issued in March 1950 to make operational decisions for their units. Xiao reportedly left for Tonkin on August 15, apparently to present the proposals to the Vietnamese Communist and military leadership.

There is reason to believe that the proposal for placing Chinese Communist Party commissars with PAVN units would have been strongly resisted. By mid-August, Western intelligence agencies believed, the main Chinese military mission in Tonkin already numbered around 300 advisers, with "small detachments" also present with PAVN forces in Annam.[169] By the end of the summer "all" PAVN regular battalions were also thought to have Chinese military advisers, as opposed to political commissars, attached to them.[170] Nationalist Chinese sources reported that Chinese Communist instructors were already presenting "political indoctrination" courses to members of the PAVN officer corps.[171] Leaving aside general suppositions about the affront to nationalist pride, the Vietnamese Communist leadership must also have considered the potential political impact upon their organization of delegating decision-making power to CCP representatives, especially when the PAVN's own political commissar system was still relatively underdeveloped.[172] The nominal seniority of Vietnamese commissars under Xiao Wen's plan may not have been adequate to ensure ICP, rather than CCP, control over the growing Viet Minh military.

The Vietnamese leaders began devoting new efforts to balancing their close relations with Communist China with public praise for the Soviet Union. A Voice of Vietnam radio commentary broadcast on the August 19 anniversary of the 1945 Revolution, for example, gave particular prominence to the Soviet Red Army and to the ICP's leadership of the struggle for "liberation" from the French in Indochina; mention of the CCP and the Chinese PLA was conspicuously absent from the

editorial.[173] On the following day, August 20, the VNA referred in a broadcast commentary to Liu Shaoqi's speech on armed struggle, which had been delivered in November 1949. However, the commentary went on to declare that such struggles "must be closely linked with the worldwide movement for peace and democracy headed by the Soviet Union."[174] Just as it appears that Chinese Communist aid and advice began to make a serious impact upon the Viet Minh's military capabilities, the Vietnamese Communist leadership publicly reinforced its obeisance to the crucial political nostrum that the Soviet Union remained the preeminent force within the international Communist movement.

3 Increasing tensions in Sino-Viet Minh relations, August 1950–February 1951

The military history of the Viet Minh's "Le Hong Phong II" offensive in northern Tonkin in the autumn of 1950 has been studied extensively, and many writers have emphasized the fact that the French lost nearly 3000 troops within a few days in engagements near Cao Bang and That Khe.[1] The French defeats and subsequent withdrawals from remote border posts in Tonkin left the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) in virtually undisputed military control of the Chinese frontier from Lang Son to Lao Cai. The French losses produced a crisis of confidence in France itself, but within 48 hours of the disastrous battle at Cao Bang, the French government assured its military command in Indochina that substantial new reinforcements would be sent to the theater before the end of the year.[2] Nonetheless, US observers in Indochina were anxious about the effect of the PAVN's major military successes upon political resolve in metropolitan France to continue the war.[3] French generalship was also being questioned, a development that would intensify over the next few years. The chief of the new US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Saigon, Brigadier General Francis Brink, told British military officials that because of the defeats in the Chinese border area, the French were now likely to over-react, including by overestimating the Viet Minh's military capabilities.[4]

On the Communist side, there can be little doubt that the Chinese and Vietnamese both saw the offensive in late 1950 as militarily significant, not only because it brought the vital border zone of central Tonkin fully under Viet Minh control, but also because cross-border communications and supply lines between the two Communist military organizations could now be secured. However, the two Communist leaderships also held differing perspectives on the next step in the anti-French struggle. For the Viet Minh, individual military victories were important, but each was seen chiefly as part of a broader plan for developing the political and military capabilities that would permit launch of a final "general counteroffensive" that would envelope not only French armies but also the French civilian administration in an irresistible, crushing, nationwide anti-colonial revolt. According to the Viet Minh's strategic program, main-force battles were important not only for punishing their opposite numbers and for propaganda purposes; they also contributed to a strategic environment in which smaller armed units could harass French emplacements of all kinds, including civilian and commercial targets, while Communist-led political protests and disturbances could escalate throughout Vietnam. Together, main-force

military victories, widespread guerrilla attacks, and civilian non-compliance and protests against French administration could neutralize the effects of French troop reinforcements, air and weapons superiority, and continued materiel and financial support from the United States. Reassertion of French military control over the Viet Minh's best-developed bases in Tonkin would become impossible, and the continuation of French administrative authority in southern and central Vietnam would become progressively untenable. Main-force PAVN units would be able to intensify and broaden their military operations and move to the strategic offensive, ultimately driving both France's military troops and its civilian administration from Vietnam altogether. This carefully planned, multi-phased, nationwide acceleration of the anti-French struggle was the essential objective of the Vietnamese Communists' leadership.

For the Chinese Communists, however, the war in Indochina was only one element in a much broader and more fluid anti-imperialist struggle in Asia, to which the security of Chinese Communist accomplishments – and not Vietnam's liberation from French rule – was central. Chinese Communist leaders were interested chiefly in the Viet Minh's control and political consolidation of the border area adjoining China's southernmost provinces. Even the US State Department, which adopted the view that all Communist parties and movements had shared or interlocking strategic agendas dictated by Soviet foreign policy goals, noted in mid-1950 that "the only problem for China in Indochina is the potential military threat [posed by] the presence of a pro-Western regime backed by a French army on China's southern border, particularly in the event of a world war."[5] Although fraternal inter-Party relations were of course important on the plane of international Communist politics, the Chinese Communist leadership was simultaneously involved in several major gambits to enlarge its territorial reach throughout central, northeastern and eastern Asia. These included establishing Communist control over Tibet and Taiwan, and after June 1950 to assess the potential for engagement in the Korean conflict. Beijing could not permit successes (or failures) by the Viet Minh to interfere with its broader strategic objectives. It was essential, therefore, that once the PAVN established control over the key zones in Tonkin's borderlands with China, the Vietnamese could not take other steps or pursue other objectives that could threaten or undermine the Chinese Communists' own national security position.

The underlying tensions between the Chinese and Vietnamese Communists' perceptions of the anti-French war in Indochina began to emerge sharply in the third quarter of 1950, when China's strategic concerns became focused on the threat posed by US and United Nations (UN) military forces committed to the widening war in Korea. The political background to the PAVN's Le Hong Phong II offensive in northern Tonkin reveals a great deal about these mounting tensions. Despite the campaign's military successes in the border area and the coordinated offensive actions launched in central and southern Vietnam, the offensive itself was abruptly terminated only eight days after Ho Chi Minh personally announced its formal launch. This development must be seen as a turning point, both in Viet Minh military planning and in Sino-Viet Minh political relations. Termination of the campaign

signaled the Vietnamese leadership's abandonment of the idea that these operations would launch the "general counteroffensive" which would finally resolve the anti-French war, but it also signaled the start of a new period of growing bilateral tensions between the Communist leaders in China and Vietnam, which would last well into 1951.

Preparations for the general counteroffensive

In February 1950 the Viet Minh leadership endorsed a comprehensive plan of military and political preparations for initiating the final "general counteroffensive" against the French. Official commentaries declared that the objective was to instigate "an uninterrupted series of great victories until the complete liberation of the national territory" had been effected.[6] As we have seen, extensive efforts were made to mobilize substantive contributions from the civilian population, to improve communications, establish supply depots, and create overland routes through northern Tonkin, and of course, to reorganize, train, and equip PAVN regular battalions with Chinese Communist assistance. While these activities were concentrated in the Viet Minh-controlled, or "liberated," areas of Tonkin, the acquisition of weapons and the mobilization of resources proceeded in Nambo as well. The Viet Minh strategy for the general counteroffensive took account of the relative underdevelopment of revolutionary armed forces in the South, but it aimed at the elimination of French rule from southern as well as northern Vietnam. Motivational broadcasts and official statements by Viet Minh media regularly referred to the goal of the "complete liberation of the national territory." The Viet Minh's open radio broadcasts from the period clearly suggest that complete "liberation" was imminently anticipated. Even the Chinese Communists' official Xinhua news agency declared in a broadcast on August 20, 1950 that the Viet Minh was "ready" to launch its general counteroffensive against the French.[7]

This announcement and other similar statements issued by the Chinese Communist media around the anniversaries of the Vietnamese Communists' "August Revolution" (August 19) and the founding of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) (September 2) came just as international political tensions and military preparations arising from the conflict in Korea escalated dramatically. US ground forces had participated in their first major engagement with North Korean troops near Taejon on July 20, and during the first two weeks of August large contingents of American troops, tanks, and equipment began arriving in Korea.[8] In his pioneering study of Chinese Communist decision-making, Whiting has identified these factors, as well as the failure of a Soviet-sponsored initiative at the UN, as having contributed to a fundamental change in Chinese policy toward the Korean conflict during the last two weeks of August 1950. At this stage, Whiting says, Korea replaced Taiwan as the Chinese leadership's paramount security concern.[9]

As concern about developments in Korea grew, the Chinese Communist leadership was at pains to publicly catalog its other security interests in Asia. In a series of public warnings to the Western Powers issued during August, Beijing made clear its intention to preserve the security of China's southern perimeter. On August 12, for

example, Xinhua reported that in a recent speech to the People's Republic of China (PRC) State Administrative Council, Zhang Yunyi, Governor of Guangxi Province and a member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee and of the PRC's powerful Military Control Commission, had given details of alleged French violations on the border, including unauthorized aircraft overflights and artillery shelling incidents.[10] Zhang charged the French with trying to "create a serious situation leading to international strife," and argued that "the defenses of the frontier must be strengthened to meet any eventuality." Zhang's statement came at about the same time that Western intelligence reports noted a marked increase in People's Liberation Army (PLA) troop deployments to the Indochina border region, apparently in support of newly intensified counter-insurgency operations by other pro-Communist forces directed against remnant guerrilla Kuomintang (KMT) units.[11]

Also in early August, the South West China Military and Administrative Commission (MAC) was reported to have convened for a discussion of its "primary task" of "liberating" Tibet.[12] On August 24 a public statement was issued by Gen. Ye Jianying, who was not only one of the most senior PLA leaders and Governor of Guangdong province, but also a member of both the Party's Central Committee and the Government's Military Control Commission. Ye harshly criticized Britain for a series of alleged "violations" of Guangdong's border with Hong Kong.[13]

These statements and reports, considered together with PRC Premier Zhou Enlai's August 24 telegram to the UN protesting the presence of US military forces in Taiwan, particularly the presence of the US Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Straits, comprised a comprehensive warning by Beijing against foreign interference with China's southern perimeter or any part of the interior and coastal territories controlled or claimed by the People's Republic.[14] As the publicity given to military planning for PLA operations in Tibet indicates, China's strategic posture was not exclusively defensive. Indeed, the PLA's Commander-in-Chief, Gen. Zhu De, told Burmese officials in mid-August 1950 that the Chinese Communists were "going on with (their) plans for Formosa and Tibet," an allusion to the Communists' oft-repeated intent to unify under the Communist government at Beijing all of the lands that constituted China's historical national territory.[15]

At least initially, Chinese Communist support for the Viet Minh's Le Hong Phong II offensive seemed to be an adjunct to Beijing's strategic objectives. As the Korean conflict sharpened, there was at first little indication that the Chinese might be revisiting their policy of support for the PAVN. According to US intelligence reports, PAVN troops continued to arrive at military training centers in southern Guangxi throughout late August.[16] Likewise, editorial endorsements of Viet Minh military activities continued to appear in the official Chinese media, including the August 19 anniversary editorial in *Renmin Ribao*, which declared that the Chinese people had full confidence in the ultimate victory of the Vietnamese people's revolution.[17] This was followed on August 20, as we have seen, by Xinhua's proclamation that the Viet Minh was "ready" to launch the general counteroffensive. Even then, the Chinese view of the Korean situation was changing. Whiting has identified official statements issued by Beijing on August 20–27 as crucial indications of a new consensus on

strategic questions forming amongst the senior Communist leadership.[18] Still, public support for the Vietnamese anti-French war continued to be issued. An editorial from *Guangming Ribao*, broadcast on the DRV's anniversary on September 2, claimed that "the international situation today is entirely advantageous to the revolutionary war carried out by Vietnam."[19] According to this broadcast, the official Chinese view was that the Korean War "encouraged" the Vietnamese in their own armed struggle against the French.

As we have seen, the US acquired intelligence information to the effect that in October 1949 the Viet Minh leaders had decided to launch the general counter-offensive one year later, in either October or November 1950. This report seemed to be substantiated in early September 1950 when US officials learned from a Viet Minh informant, a PAVN officer stationed inside China at Dongxing in Guangxi, that the start of the offensive was scheduled for the end of November, "because heavy Soviet military equipment including tanks will have arrived by then and training will have been completed."[20] While we may dismiss the report of Soviet tanks being delivered to PAVN forces, and perhaps we can safely discount most of the data from this source as designed to misinform US intelligence analyses, it is worthwhile noting that Nationalist Chinese radio reports claimed that key Soviet supplies destined for PAVN units, including artillery and machine guns, arrived in Nanning, Guangxi, in early September.[21] We know from Soviet archival sources that in February 1950 Stalin had promised trucks, anti-aircraft guns, and medical supplies for Viet Minh forces.[22] Whatever the nature of equipment from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), it seems to be the case that the launch of the Viet Minh offensive in Tonkin did not hinge upon their arrival, but was timed in part to take advantage of expected increases in both Chinese and Soviet assistance and its integration into Chinese-trained main-force units in the north.

Meanwhile behind the scenes, Chinese leaders' perceptions of the Korean War and its potential impacts upon the Communists' overall strategic outlook and priorities were beginning to change, and these changes included a re-evaluation in Beijing of the war in Indochina. There are strong indications that the timing and duration of the Viet Minh's Le Hong Phong II offensive was directly influenced by the escalating conflict in Korea. Notification that Beijing was changing its view of the planned PAVN offensive may first have been delivered to the Vietnamese during a two-week bilateral conference which, according to British military sources, was held in early September at Mengzi, Yunnan; Ho Chi Minh and Chen Geng were reported to have attended, and the principal topic was bilateral military cooperation.[23] British intelligence reported that Chen spent most of the period between late July and early October 1950 in southeastern Yunnan, apparently as part of his duties as chief of the Chinese military mission to the Viet Minh.[24] Immediately after the conclusion of his meeting with Ho Chi Minh in early September, Chen is thought to have traveled to Beijing, presumably to report on the situation in Indochina.[25] No further details have emerged, but the Ho-Chen conference may have been crucial to the planning of the imminent PAVN offensive in Tonkin.

PAVN operations began on September 16, 1950, with an assault on Dong Khe and smaller diversionary attacks in Ha Giang Province and at Phat Diem, south of

the Tonkin delta. Dong Khe, on the Lang Son-Cao Bang road, fell to the PAVN within two days, and the importance of Chinese Communist training, command coordination, and weaponry was immediately evident: a French military communiqué pointed out the new heavy artillery and mortars supplied by China had been deployed and used during the attack on Dong Khe, and that for the first time the Viet Minh had used anti-aircraft weapons against the French Air Force.[26] A British intelligence report, noting that the French had only 33 survivors from the battle for Dong Khe, observed that because the specific Viet Minh units involved in the battle had not been identified, it was "not yet possible to say whether the cause [of Viet Minh success] was the presence of Chinese advisers or the result of intensified training in China."[27] Certainly both factors could have been in play. As if to underscore China's role in the victory at Dong Khe, on September 16 a Viet Minh radio station broadcast the text of an article published in *Su That* which emphasized the influence of the Chinese Communist revolution upon the development of the Vietnamese anti-French struggle.[28] The fall of Dong Khe left the large French garrison at Cao Bang isolated from overland support; a command decision resulted in its withdrawal southward, with cover provided by French paratroopers, toward Lang Son. There, the Cao Bang force along with the Lang Son garrison were attacked by PAVN forces in a pitched battle that destroyed the French position on October 7. In mid-October US military observers reported that in this and other actions elsewhere, in Tonkin particularly, the French had lost the equivalent of seven battalions in less than four weeks.[29]

With clear victories at Dong Khe, Cao Bang, Lang Son, and That Khe in hand, Ho Chi Minh issued a special message to PAVN troops on October 7, formally launching the Le Hong Phong II offensive.[30] This political stratagem was followed by other public statements with similar themes. The Vietnam News Agency (VNA) reported on October 10 that Vo Nguyen Giap had ordered the PAVN to pursue the retreating French troops, and on October 12 a joint statement issued by the Lien Viet and Viet Minh leadership committees urged all cadres to "speed up preparations for the general counteroffensive."[31] China's approval of the PAVN victories was reflected in a *Da Gong Bao* article broadcast by Beijing Radio on October 14, which enthused about the PAVN's demonstration of superiority and claimed that it had shown itself to be "capable of taking the offensive."[32]

Meanwhile, a major Viet Minh military campaign had also been developing in southern Vietnam. According to a British military intelligence report, on October 7 (the date of Ho's announcement of the start of the Le Hong Phong II offensive), the initial attacks were launched in what emerged as a Viet Minh military drive to sever roads and French communications lines between Saigon and the Ben Cat-Thu Dau Mot area.[33] As it developed, the offensive's objectives of cutting road and rail links seemed to be aimed at preventing the transport of rubber from the great French-owned plantations around Route 13 to Saigon, from which the rubber would have been exported overseas. The operations of at least ten Viet Minh battalions were reportedly being coordinated by a command system that was utilizing wireless radio communication equipment. Increased guerrilla activity was reported elsewhere in southern Vietnam, but the heaviest fighting occurred north and northwest

of Saigon. On October 11, a French military spokesman described a three-hour battle of "rare violence" in which French forces using artillery and aircraft drove the Viet Minh from one outpost located 30 miles north of Saigon, killing at least 130 Viet Minh fighters.[34] Other Viet Minh forces launched "strong attacks" near Ben Cat and Ben Suc over the following weeks, but French authorities claimed to have repulsed these assaults and destroyed important rebel command posts, including the Viet Minh's "military schools, stores and plants" in the area, "which led to a complete stirring-up of the Viet Minh organization" in the south.[35] A press report describing a "compulsory conscription" campaign in early October by pro-Viet Minh forces in Kampot, southwest of Phnom Penh, may indicate that additional military activities were being planned by Viet Minh adherents in southern Cambodia.[36]

At the same time, developments in the Korean conflict were causing immediate national security concerns within the Chinese Communist leadership. In a later speech, Ye Jianying confirmed that the surprise landings of UN forces at Inchon, on the western coast of Korea on September 15, 1950 had had a catalytic impact upon the Chinese Communists' strategic calculations.[37] Ye implied that soon after the landings, with which Gen. MacArthur's forces punched through the North Koreans' light rear defenses, pushed immediately into Seoul itself, and then began moving northward, the Chinese Communists determined that they could not "allow Korea to be the victim of aggression." The Indian Ambassador in Beijing, K.M. Pannikar, who functioned as the chief diplomatic link between the PRC and Western governments, also reported that during the period between the UN landing at Inchon and the end of September, the Chinese had a "complete change of outlook" on the situation in Korea.[38] This is confirmed by Chen Jian, who also says this is when Stalin's view of the Korean War changed to support the idea of direct Chinese troop commitments.[39] During those critical two weeks, UN and South Korean forces broke out of the "Pusan Perimeter" in extreme southeastern Korea, while the UN troops moved north from Seoul. According to Pannikar these advances led the Chinese to conclude that "the presence of a hostile force on their flank can no longer be permitted and that they have no alternative but to take military action."[40] Outside analysts have disagreed about the precise date on which China decided to commit to military intervention in the Korean War. Nakajima has argued that Mao Zedong issued a secret directive on October 1, the first anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic, ordering Chinese ground troops to enter North Korea with an expectation of engaging UN forces.[41] Stueck contends that China's decision emerged in stages, with an initial decision having been made on October 2, confirmed by a Politburo meeting on the 13th which took into account the results of urgent meetings between Zhou Enlai and Stalin on October 10 in Russia.[42] Chen Jian gives October 7 as the date of the final decision.[43]

Certainly different elements of the Chinese leadership were grappling with the problem throughout this period. Perhaps in a final attempt to elicit evidence of US military restraint in the Korean conflict, PRC Premier Zhou Enlai delivered an ultimatum to the United States through Pannikar in Beijing early on October 3:

according to Zhou, Chinese military intervention in the Korean Peninsula would be authorized if US forces crossed the 38th Parallel, although not if South Korean forces crossed that line alone.[44] American troops under MacArthur did cross the 38th Parallel on October 8.[45] In an official dispatch to the UN Security Council, MacArthur reported that the first Chinese Communist combat forces, numbering 2500 soldiers, crossed the Yalu River into North Korea on October 16, 1950.[46]

Contemporary evidence from official Vietnamese sources indicates that just as the Chinese leadership in Beijing made final preparations to commit forces to the Korean conflict, Viet Minh military strategy in the anti-French war changed dramatically. The Le Hong Phong II offensive, much of which had already taken place and with surprising effectiveness, was formally terminated on October 15, just eight days after Ho Chi Minh himself had announced its launch and one day before Chinese forces entered Korea.[47] Whereas days before the Lien Viet and Viet Minh fronts had appealed to the Vietnamese people to "speed up" preparations for the general counteroffensive, on October 16 – the day that Chinese troops reportedly entered North Korea – Ho Chi Minh himself ordered a sharp reversal of policy in the anti-French war. In a radio message congratulating the PAVN on its victories, Ho reportedly revised his earlier announcements when he declared that the time had not yet come for the big counteroffensive of the Viet Minh and warned his troops to expect intensified French attacks during the forthcoming months. He also enjoined the Viet Minh to step up its guerrilla warfare and sabotage activities.[48]

On October 17 the VNA broadcast the text of a letter addressed by Ho to the PAVN, announcing that a review of military policy would be conducted through "review conferences," and that new "training committees" would be created to ensure the army's compliance with all new directives.[49] Ho said the conferences and committees were to conduct "democratic criticism and self-criticism at all levels" in studying the PAVN's recent military victories. The objective of these internal exercises would be both to enhance positive qualities already existing within the PAVN and to "correct our defects."

Also on October 17, a VNA broadcast revealed that in some units an internal criticism campaign had already begun. As early as September 27, a Viet Minh newspaper had issued a critique of the upper management of the PAVN's logistics systems during the Dong Khe battle, and accused "a number" of PAVN commanders of "still applying guerrilla methods in a mechanical way."[50] Xinhua re-broadcast Ho's letter to the PAVN on October 18, in a report which noted that the PAVN's "review conferences" authorized by Ho Chi Minh would reconsider the entire general counteroffensive strategy.[51] Underscoring the decisive change of policy from that heralded by official broadcasts only a few days earlier, subsequent broadcasts by Viet Minh radio stations continued to warn listeners against "expecting the main Vietminh [*sic*] counteroffensive too soon …."[52]

PAVN offensive operations, at least in some areas like Dong Khe, seem to have been launched before all logistical and preparatory arrangements had been completed. Despite the ensuing decisive victories over the French, key elements of the

Viet Minh military efforts remained rudimentary, and during the criticism campaign that followed, they were deemed to have been inadequate. These shortcomings, while of obvious operational importance to PAVN forces in the field, do not seem in themselves to have been of a degree sufficient to warrant Ho Chi Minh's public announcement that, in effect, the much-heralded general counteroffensive had been postponed. After all, Viet Minh propaganda organs had been trumpeting the build-up to the general counteroffensive for months, even years.

The timing of Ho's announcement, and the additional publicity given to it by the Chinese Communist media outlets, indicate that the context of military developments in Korea was a key factor in the Vietnamese leadership's decision to change its policy direction. How actively Chinese Communist leaders or advisers on the ground in northern Tonkin may have "guided" the policy change remains unknown. However, once Beijing had taken the final decision to intervene with ground troops in North Korea, the Chinese may have determined that an escalation of the war against the French posed an unacceptable risk of involving China simultaneously in another conflict, this one on its still relatively unsettled southern perimeter. Indeed, the consideration that the United States might dispatch troops to reinforce the French in Indochina could not be dismissed at a time when US troops were mobilizing at home, reinforcing Japan, and in Korea moving well north of the 38th Parallel. The Chinese Communists were determined to reduce the possibility of a US or Nationalist attack on its southern coastal provinces, whether it be a minor diversionary harassment or a large-scale incursion. As defensive preparations accelerated in southern and southeastern China, the continued provision of material assistance to the Viet Minh's military for its general counteroffensive was quickly subordinated to the demands of China's own defense mobilization.

Revising Viet Minh military strategy in Indochina

China's decision to intervene directly in the Korean conflict occasioned a round of secret, high-level international consultations amongst Communist leaders. It appears that Sino-Soviet talks were conducted at the highest levels. The British Foreign Office, for example, noted Premier Zhou Enlai's absence from several important gatherings in Beijing between October 5 and 12, and there was speculation that he had gone to Moscow for additional discussions on the changing international situation.[53] Ho Chi Minh, who had made a secret trip to Beijing in late September, now traveled to Moscow for the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.[54] According to French intelligence reports, a military conference was held in Tonkin, probably around the end of October 1950, at which both Soviet and Chinese advisers discussed with Viet Minh representatives both the Korean situation and the PAVN's future offensive plans, including further operations in Tonkin; reportedly, a decision emerged to launch major attacks on Hanoi and Haiphong only.[55] PLA Gen. Xiao Ke, who until recently had been Chief of Staff of the PLA Fourth Field Army and of the Central-South military region, was said to have attended this conference in Tonkin.[56] A separate French report identified Xiao Ke as the chief of a new permanent Chinese Communist

military liaison mission to the PAVN based in Tonkin; it seems likely that Xiao Ke was replacing Chen Geng, who by November at the latest was recalled to China to take up the post of deputy commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) in Korea.[57]

Western intelligence information indicated that in late October 1950, problems with the flow of Chinese military aid over the border into Tonkin began arising. It is important to put such problems into context. Truck convoys carrying materiel from the Nanning railhead to the Indochina border continued, as did the movement of Chinese Communist junks sailing with supplies from Hainan Island to the vicinity of Vinh on the Annam coast, so both the primary Viet Minh base areas in the Viet Bac (northern Tonkin) and in northern Annam, south of the Tonkin delta, continued to receive arms, ammunition, and other military supplies; the PLA's Railway Corps was also reported to be continuing construction work on a line from Liuzhou, Guangxi, to the Tonkin border.[58] However, according to a British report, the movement of PAVN troops across the border into China to obtain training and arms was suspended by China around the end of October.[59] French analysts backed this view, although they noted some reports that a greatly restricted number of Viet Minh troops began crossing into Chinese territory again to obtain supplies in mid-November.[60]

For the Vietnamese leadership, the reduction of cross-border arms supplies must have been particularly unwelcome, since it came just at a time when a major intensification and broadening of the anti-French war had been planned. Beijing's policy decisions no doubt stirred up resentments in some quarters of the Communist leadership and amongst PAVN commanders and commissars. The withdrawal of Chen Geng and his reassignment to the Korean conflict also demonstrated the relative importance of the two theaters to China's central leadership. However, serious new military concerns about French capabilities and intentions were also developing at the same time. One Viet Minh official, in an interview with *Renmin Ribao*, made it clear that the PAVN High Command knew that the French would soon be sending reinforcements to the Hanoi–Haiphong redoubt, the newly agreed target of forthcoming PAVN offensive actions.[61] Moreover, the Vietnamese leadership also faced the problems of maintaining popular favor and morale in the ranks following its sudden turn away from launching the "general counter-offensive." Unfortunately for the Vietnamese Communist leaders, the decisions of North Korean, Soviet, and Chinese Communists had downgraded the strategic significance of the Vietnamese anti-French war. The struggle to eliminate French rule from Vietnam was subordinated to the need to force UN troops back down the Korean Peninsula away from the Chinese border, and to guard against opportunistic attacks by the West on China's relatively vulnerable southeastern flank.

Confronted by these considerations, the Vietnamese Communists' senior leadership made a strategic decision which, while based in part upon years of differing political circumstances in northern and southern Vietnam, would come to define the terms of the military liberation struggle for the next 25 years. This crucial decision developed in the unique geostrategic circumstances of the autumn of 1950. In it, the leadership determined that the military strategy to be pursued in southern Vietnam,

Nambo, and in northern Vietnam, chiefly in Tonkin, from the Chinese border to the rich rice-producing districts of the Tonkin delta, would have to be differentiated, and that priority must be attached to the liberation of the north. Indeed, the solution that gained favor was one that had tremendous far-reaching political and military consequences: the Viet Minh's armed forces in Nambo, already much smaller and less well equipped than those receiving Chinese aid in Tonkin, would rely exclusively upon guerrilla tactics that highlighted mobility, harassment, and terrorism rather than the seizing and holding – or "liberating" – of French-controlled territory. In Tonkin, the Viet Minh would continue to form, supply, and deploy battalions and even divisions of main-force troops, capable of sustained conventional warfare engagements with the battle-hardened regular troops of the French Union Forces (FUF). One analysis of this emerging Vietnamese military policy has suggested that the political determination to intentionally differentiate between the types of military forces and tactics to be developed and deployed in southern and northern Vietnam arose from the political circumstances prevailing in mid-1951, and was probably informing specific policy decisions on military and other matters by the end of that year.[62] As we have seen, however, the origins of that new strategic perspective can now be identified as early as October–November 1950, when the Viet Minh leadership began to assess the impact of decisions made by its Communist allies about the Far East.

The development of Vietnam's new strategies for the anti-French war in the south, and in the north, conformed closely to Chinese Communist prescriptions for the conflict in Indochina and provoked serious and divisive tensions within the Vietnamese Communist leadership itself. Naturally such a rift, caused by the acceptance of a quasi-permanent north–south divide in anti-French military strategy, engaged the interest of other Communist leaderships, particularly those in Southeast Asia, where the Viet Minh's war against the French had become a clarion call to other left-wing nationalists to take up or to accelerate their own anti-colonial struggles. The split within the Vietnamese leadership over the issue of strategic distinctions between the anti-French struggle in northern and southern Vietnam caused crucial political casualties within the Communist movement as a whole before it was resolved in the second half of 1951. At that time, a new consensus on the political utility of differentiated struggle policies in the north and south was finally forged.

Two related considerations formed the critical underpinning of the Vietnamese leadership's strategic reassessment in October–November 1950. First, having publicly postponed progress toward the "general counteroffensive," the leadership needed a new governing principle to lend form and coherence to its continuing, although much altered, application of military pressure against the French. This principle would have to possess theoretical integrity within the Communist political system, and it would have to be sufficiently malleable for widespread use in training, recruitment, and propaganda, the content of which must be fitted to particular political conditions as they might develop and change. What emerged from the leadership's internal consideration of these questions was a familiar formula, one advocated in secret bilateral talks by the Chinese Communist Party as early as

December 1948. As we have seen, the Chinese had advised then that the relative superiority in size, operational capabilities, and armaments strength of the Viet Minh's armed forces in Tonkin, already quite apparent in 1948, should become the basis for imposing a policy of dichotomy between the revolutionary military tasks to be assigned to the northern and southern regions of Vietnam. As early as October 12, 1950, amid the changing policies necessitated by China's decision to enter the Korean War, the broad outlines of the new approach were apparent in a Viet Minh radio commentary that emphasized the different "duties" of the people's revolutionary armed forces in the anti-French struggle in Tonkin and Nambo:

> Due to its strategic base and due to the [balance] of our forces and the enemy's, North Vietnam must be a principal battlefield, charged with annihilating a great part of the enemy's force. Being in the common campaign plan, South Vietnam must also fully carry out guerrilla warfare so as to [wear out] and [keep occupied] a part of the enemy's force. Even though the duties are different, the two battlefields complement each other closely.[63]

As planning for subsequent offensive operations against Hanoi and Haiphong went forward in November 1950, and as new battle plans were devised in the first half of 1951, the north–south divide began to crystallize into the Vietnamese Communists' new overarching strategy for the conduct of the anti-French war. As we shall see, an attempt by some in the Nambo military command to challenge the division of military labor that relegated the struggle in southern Vietnam to secondary status created a major crisis for the entire Viet Minh organization.

A second factor in the Vietnamese Communist leadership's re-evaluation of its military strategies in late 1950 was the increasing involvement of the United States in Indochina. On one level, US involvement meant that the French military was obtaining more and better weapons and equipment than had been available earlier in the war; the creation at Saigon of the US MAAG office in September–October 1950 which organized the distribution of US military aid to the French signaled greater permanence of US intervention.[64] More broadly, however, the "imperialist" powers were also developing and implementing plans for greater regional collaboration against the growing number and strength of left-wing nationalist- and Communist-led anti-colonial military uprisings. For example, on September 1, 1950, the French High Commissioner in Indochina, M. Leon Pignon, publicly endorsed proposals for more consultation amongst the French, British and US commanders-in-chief in Southeast Asia.[65] Indications of growing US military involvement and of greater regional cooperation against revolutionary and nationalist movements by the Western powers underscored the increasing internationalization of the war in Vietnam. As we shall see, the Communist leadership soon began to identify both France and the United States as enemies of the revolution, and its strategic outlook became increasingly dominated by the anticipation of a "long-term struggle," which might unfold in many extended stages.[66]

While the promised internal criticism and review campaigns got underway inside the PAVN in late October 1950, the Viet Minh's High Command was at pains to

make clear that it could successfully commit PAVN units to battles against the FUF.[67] The postponement of the general counteroffensive had not wholly precluded offensive operations; indeed it was expected that some PAVN attacks would continue, particularly at vulnerable points on the French defensive perimeter around the Hanoi–Haiphong redoubt. Instead, new offensive operations were first launched at remaining French installations near the Chinese border. On November 1, six PAVN battalions launched attacks on French posts and fortifications near Lao Cai, in northwestern Tonkin. Although many French military commanders had recommended that Lao Cai be stubbornly defended, troops on the ground evacuated the town and all posts in the surrounding sector, allowing PAVN forces to take control of the entire border zone around Lao Cai without having to fight any sustained engagements.[68] Seeking to capitalize upon the French evacuation, PAVN units pursued retreating French elements southward toward Lai Chau, which the French Command had elected to defend. According to British observers, the French hope was that by doing so they would bolster the confidence of their ethnic minority military allies in the French-sponsored "Thai Autonomous Federation" zone in northwestern Tonkin, of which Lai Chau was the capital. The British believed that the decision to defend Lai Chau was also made with an eye toward dissuading Thailand, which France suspected of harboring designs on parts of northern Laos, from concluding that the French had decided to abandon northwestern Tonkin, as it had effectively abandoned the northeast the month before.[69] Nonetheless, by the end of the first week of November 1950 the Viet Minh had gained control of virtually the entire length of Tonkin's border with China, from Lao Cai in the west to Lang Son in the east.

It would be a mistake to imagine that in this period of increasing international tensions in Asia and changing military strategies for the anti-French war, the Vietnamese Communists repudiated or neglected their long-standing interest in extending their authority throughout the whole of Indochina. These interests were anchored in a long history of Vietnamese Communist activism and recruitment, as well as posturing and pairing with the indigenous left-wing nationalist movements that developed within Laos and Cambodia.[70] Indeed, cultivating and controlling left-wing anti-French nationalists and Communist groups in Cambodia and Laos were already beginning to emerge as strategically significant sequelae to the decision to allow anti-French military activities in southern Vietnam to fall behind those in Tonkin. The Vietnamese leadership certainly would have known that if southern Vietnam remained under French control, the smaller Viet Minh organization there would need reliable lines of communication and supply, and that support from within Laos and Cambodia would be invaluable. Thus, as the decision to accept a north–south divide in the anti-French war took shape during November 1950, the Vietnamese leadership's long-standing impulses to provide leadership for the entire anti-French movement in Indochina took on renewed importance and received greater definition and coherence.[71] The convocation in Warsaw of the USSR-sponsored "World Peace Congress" provided the Vietnamese with a convenient opportunity to call its own "international" meeting, the goal of which would be to tighten its links with anti-French Laotian and Cambodian leaders.[72]

On November 11, 1950 Viet Minh radio stations began announcing that a fraternal meeting of revolutionists would be held in Vietnam, and on November 19 the "Vietnam Conference of World Peace Defenders" opened in the Viet Bac zone in Tonkin, with delegates from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia attending.[73] The conference was chaired by Ton Duc Thang, a senior Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) member and President of the Lien Viet Front. Attendees included Prince Souphanouvong, President of the Lao Issarak Front, an unidentified member of the "National Front of Laos," and Sieu Heng, a leader of the pro-Viet Minh element of the Khmer Issarak movement and a member of the central Executive Committee of the "Cambodia Liberation Committee."[74] Ho Chi Minh apparently did not attend, but his message to the delegates said that "their chief task now was to unite closely with one another to carry on the long-term struggle and crush both the French imperialists and the American interventionists."[75] A joint statement by representatives of the "national fronts" of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam was later reported to have been issued on November 22, after the close of the conference; the purpose of the meeting was said to have been "to discuss the setting up of a joint national united front of the three States" (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia).[76] According to the meeting's communiqué, a "joint policy" had been agreed upon to "speed creation of an alliance between the peoples of the three States." The conference itself was described as the "first step" toward this alliance.

For the Vietnamese Communists, the consolidation of the Khmer and Lao anti-French and Communist movements under Vietnamese authority reflected not only its planning for the potential needs of a less robust Viet Minh organization in southern Vietnam, but also for the changing international situation. An official VNA commentary broadcast at the end of November, for example, condemned the US "presence" in Laos and Cambodia, and pointed out that this development was of great concern because it rendered vulnerable any gains made by the Viet Minh within Vietnam itself.[77] The editorial made explicit the ICP's long-held belief that Vietnam's security interests legitimately extended to developments inside Laos and Cambodia. As tensions in the Far East intensified in late 1950, the planning for a joint Vietnam–Laos– Cambodia front organization represented a step toward creating an "alliance" structure dominated by the Vietnamese Communist leadership and used to pursue its view of a "common strategy of Indochina."[78]

The tripartite Vietnam Conference of World Peace Defenders of November 19–22 appears to have been accompanied by a marked improvement in Soviet–Viet Minh relations. Most telling in this regard is the fact that the conference elected Ho Chi Minh and Stalin as its honorary chairmen; mention of Mao Zedong was omitted.[79] The conference itself was portrayed in the Viet Minh media as an element of the then-current international "peace movement" sponsored by Moscow. Within the British Foreign Office there was discussion about whether Moscow's international campaign might eventually produce an international organization of Communist-led nations and nationalist movements that might rival the UN, from which the Soviet Union had absented itself between January and August 1950, and which other Communist states found difficult to enter.[80] By sponsoring its own local "peace movement" conference, the Vietnamese leadership could certainly lay claim to membership in such an

organization, should that opportunity arise. Equally suggestive is the fact that just before the conference opened in the Viet Bac, the Soviet Union's media outlets began issuing editorials and announcements that emphasized the importance of Communist Party leadership of nationalist movements; certainly both the Vietnamese and Moscow, where Ho Chi Minh was visiting, were by now communicating about the formal public re-emergence of the Indochinese Communist Party apparatus, planned for early 1951.[81] Indeed, the Soviet Union let the news out quite prematurely, when on November 13 *Pravda* and Radio Moscow reported that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had received a message from the as yet still officially dissolved "Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party," conveying its fraternal greetings on the anniversary of the October Revolution.[82] The importance of the November 1950 tripartite conference in the Viet Bac included coordination of the program under which separate Communist Parties for Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam would publicly emerge in early 1951.[83] The Soviets' decision to publicize their contact with the ICP in November 1950, and subsequent Moscow-based media mentions of the ICP, can be seen as signals that Moscow endorsed the public reappearance of the Communist Party in Vietnam, as well as a tacit expression of approval for the Vietnamese leadership's efforts to coordinate Communist policies within Indochina.[84]

Beijing's reaction, on the other hand, is difficult to assess. Unusually, during the period in November when the Conference of World Peace Defenders was taking place in the Viet Bac, the official Chinese media carried little coverage of either the conference or Vietnamese affairs.[85] This fact in itself probably indicates China's disapproval of the conference; the fact that the conference did not include an honorary reference to Mao Zedong suggests that the Vietnamese were aware of China's disaffection. There is additional evidence that Chinese and Vietnamese views on Indochinese "unity" were diverging. A comparison of the commentaries issued by the Chinese and Vietnamese Communists' media outlets shortly after the Peace Defenders Conference, on November 30, reveals subtle but significant differences between the two Communist leaderships' perspectives on Indochina as a whole. In its main editorial on international affairs on November 30, *Renmin Ribao* listed several instances of US "aggression" in Asia, pointedly referring several times to the threat developing in "Vietnam."[86] On the same day a VNA commentary explicitly stressed the unity of developments throughout Indochina, which it called "a single battle front;" US activities in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam were portrayed as equally threatening, and unification of the "liberation wars" in all three states was said to be essential to the "new phase" of struggle, the goal of which would be "to liberate the whole of Indochina."[87] Somewhat later a Xinhua article was broadcast which called for "Ho's Government" in Vietnam to support the efforts of Laotian and Cambodian Nationalists, who had created "their own liberation armies [that] controlled large liberated areas," a distinctly different view from that put forward in the communiqué of the Conference of World Peace Defenders.[88] Significantly, Moscow Radio gave continued publicity to the creation of the joint Laos–Cambodia–Vietnam united front in Indochina as late as January 1951.[89]

Chinese defense planning for its southern tier

Several weeks before Chinese combat troops entered North Korea in mid-October 1950, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) produced a classified analysis of the PRC's likely policies toward Indochina during the remainder of that year. The CIA asserted that the Chinese Communist regime was militarily capable of sustaining simultaneous military interventions, not only in Korea and Indochina, but also in Taiwan, Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau.[90] This conclusion reflected not only intelligence information of PLA troop strength and dispositions, but also, more broadly, the assumption current amongst many Western policymakers that the "spread" of Communism in Asia was imminent unless military force was deployed to protect the local governments threatened by it.[91]

Structural dislocations arising in China's national economy from its participation in the Korean War were substantial; their scope became noticeable in the spring of 1951.[92] Other problems emerged more swiftly. It is essential to recognize that although there was a substantial redeployment of PLA forces in the fourth quarter of 1950 from the interior provinces and from southern and southeastern China to Manchuria and Korea, as well as to the Shandong peninsula, emergency defense preparations and measures to assure internal security in southern China were also an integral part of the Chinese response to developments in Korea. Since the Sino-Viet Minh aid relationship was deeply affected by the implementation of these policies in China, they are of direct concern here.

A series of developments during the period of November 23–30, 1950 seems to have been crucial to the Communists' defense posture in southern China. In addition to the intensification of the Communist forces' military operations in Korea, which were successfully driving United Nations forces from northern Korea, the Chinese leadership was also concerned to stabilize the southern border with Indochina. A *Renmin Ribao* editorial on November 30 revealed something of the nature of this concern by declaring that "the objective of America's armed intervention in Vietnam … is not only to invade Vietnam but also to threaten the border area of the People's Republic of China."[93] The Chinese were probably occupied with assessing the potential of the US-supplied French Air Force based in the Tonkin delta; southern China, including its major cities, did not have comprehensive air defense systems in place at this time.[94] On November 23 the PRC Foreign Ministry issued a statement condemning alleged "atrocious invasions" of Chinese territory and airspace by French military forces; the Ministry also announced that Chinese troops had been ordered to strongly defend the border with Indochina.[95]

According to a British report, the French military authorities in Indochina were "seriously perturbed" by the PRC statement, viewing it not as a defensive move but as a possible portent of intervention by the PLA across the border, where the French now had virtually no forces, "in the same fashion as in Korea."[96] Two additional developments inside China did much to strengthen French apprehensions, which to some extent were shared in London and Washington. These developments appeared to replicate key features of the Chinese Communists' official media campaign that had preceded the dispatch of Chinese ground troops

into the Korean War. A symposium of South West Military Region "combat heroes" convened on November 25 to endorse the PRC Foreign Ministry statement about French "invasions" and reinforcement of the borderlands of Indochina issued two days earlier.[97] Pro-Communist mass organizations, not only in southern China but throughout several provinces in central and northern China as well, were reported to have held rallies and issued statements condemning France's "provocative acts" in the border area with China; some of these statements called for "serious blows" to be dealt to France, which was termed an "aggressor."[98]

The key to the importance of these reports may lie with the PRC's concurrent attendance at a special session of the UN on the Korean situation. The Chinese delegation, led by Wu Xiuquan, flew from Prague to New York via London on November 23–24, just as the PRC Foreign Ministry was issuing its inflammatory statement about French border violations.[99] The Chinese Communists were of course not members of the UN organization, but via the Soviets the delegation promulgated a resolution on "US Aggression Against Taiwan," which was soundly defeated by a vote of UN members on November 30; at that point it became apparent that a lessening of the venom in Beijing–Washington relations was unlikely to be accomplished through the vehicle of the UN. However, over the previous days, the Chinese delegates were involved in several different lines of communication and discussion in New York, and the anti-French media campaign that seemed to threaten Chinese intervention in Indochina may have been unleashed as a means of strengthening China's diplomatic hand in these talks.[100]

Little information has come to light which would indicate that the Chinese leadership actually planned to intervene directly in Indochina at this stage. Instead, in southern China, most military activity was devoted to enhancing defensive preparations, bolstering existing military installations, and expanding internal security capabilities. According to a French intelligence report, defense strategy for southeastern coastal China was the central topic at a November 28 meeting between Marshal Ye Jianying, governor and provincial military commander of Guangdong Province, and the leaders of the province's nine military districts; it was reportedly determined that defense of the province against invasion was to be based upon the employment of guerrilla tactics against the invaders, and equipment, food, and ammunition were to be stored immediately using the network of secret caches developed by pro-CCP guerrilla forces in the 1940s.[101] Western intelligence services soon noticed intensified defense construction activity in Guangdong, including new artillery emplacements, and the evacuation of administrative agencies and vital supplies from Guangzhou (Canton) to rural districts in northern Guangdong, particularly to the Shaoquan area.[102] Work also reportedly began on further upgrading of highways and airfields throughout southern China, and there were some reports that Soviet advisers were assisting with these infrastructure projects.[103]

Not surprisingly, the Chinese Communists' military efforts to eliminate Nationalist Chinese "remnant" forces in southern China also regained momentum. The official Communist media reported that during December 1950 alone the number of "bandits" that were "eliminated" in Guangdong and Guangxi provinces

was 59,000, and one PLA unit later received special commendation for its "annihilation" of 20,000 "bandits" in the Nanning-Liuzhou area of Guangxi between mid-October and December 1950.[104] The local Communist authorities also initiated a widespread militia recruitment drive, similar to those being undertaken in northern China in connection with the mobilization for the Korean War. The expansion of local forces had in part been made necessary by the withdrawal of the PLA Fourth Field Army from Guangdong Province and its redeployment to the north, which left the Communists' defenses under strength in vital areas such as the East River around the key port of Shantou (Swatow).[105] According to the US State Department, in a memorandum written in January 1951, China's "current plans call for developing an inter-district and inter-province defense network [in southern China] and for integrating militia forces more closely with the regular army."[106] In the South West Military Region, augmentation of militia forces was carried out in conjunction with land rent reduction campaigns, which helped to curry favor amongst the recruits, many of whom were from poor tenant-farming families. Between November 1950 and mid-February 1951 official sources claimed that the "people's armed might" had increased by 150 per cent.[107] However, over this period, class-based and anti-Communist political tensions were running high in China's southeastern provinces, where Communist administration had only recently been introduced; most Communist policies remained quite alien to local people. Contrary to the advice of local Communist officials, directives were issued ordering a sudden acceleration of the land reform program in Guangdong, which had originally been designed for gradual implementation; this volte-face was in part designed to gain greater popular support for both the Communist government in Beijing and the increasing local demands of internal security and militia forces.[108] The additional training, armament, and equipment demands, as well as the drive to stockpile military supplies in the event of an invasion of southeastern China, were to have an immediate and serious impact upon the flow of Chinese assistance to the Viet Minh.

Consultations amidst crises

By mid-November 1950 senior PAVN commanders were completing the final stages of the "review conferences" that had been ordered in mid-October, following the victories along the border with China. Planning for new, albeit limited, offensive actions in Tonkin was going forward.[109] According to Western intelligence reports, a top-level meeting to evaluate the Le Hong Phong II offensive was convened in Bac Kan province on November 19–23.[110] At the same time, on November 21, according to a US intelligence report, Chinese Communist military leaders were also meeting at Guangzhou to consider again the future course of the Viet Minh's anti-French war; this conference was reportedly attended by Ye Jianying, Chen Geng, Chen Yi, and by a representative of Lin Biao, then commanding the PLA Fourth Field Army that had redeployed to the north.[111] At around the same time Xiao Ke, reportedly accompanied by Soviet representatives, was believed to have met with Ho Chi Minh in Tonkin to discuss again plans for PAVN

operations in the Tonkin delta and near Hanoi.[112] Immediately thereafter, according to official Viet Minh broadcasts, senior PAVN commanders met on November 24–25 and authorized a plan for a new set of anti-French actions, called the "Middle Regions Offensive," to be launched in Tonkin and focusing on the Tonkin delta and Hanoi–Haiphong corridor; this offensive was to last from December through the late spring of 1951, when seasonal rains would end large-scale military campaigning.[113] Following the general outline of offensive planning discussed at the meeting in late October 1950 with Chinese and Soviet advisers, the PAVN was now preparing main-force battalion-level attacks on the middle sector of the Tonkin delta, which formed the heart of the French redoubt around Hanoi and Haiphong. The ultimate objective of this offensive would be to develop successful assaults on the French perimeter around the delta, and eventually force a climactic confrontation over Hanoi itself. More precise planning for the opening battle in the expected sequence of assaults, which would take place at Vinh Yen in January 1951, was also approved at this meeting in late November.

The Chinese Communists' active involvement in shaping the plans for the "Middle Regions Offensive," carried out under the pressure of the strategic threat from UN forces in Korea, may have been the catalyst for rumors, reported by British military intelligence in early December 1950, that Ho Chi Minh and Mao Zedong were in disagreement over the timing of the forthcoming PAVN offensive.[114] Mao was said to favor an early launch, while Ho reportedly preferred to allow PAVN forces more time for preparations. "Rumors" must be evaluated with skepticism, but in this case there is some circumstantial support for the report. Mao and Ho themselves undoubtedly had much more complex attitudes toward the planning of PAVN operations, but it is the case that the PAVN's operations at Dong Khe and Lang Son in October had unveiled logistical shortcomings, as we have seen; the planned launch of main-force assault operations on the Tonkin delta perimeter, over 200 kilometers from the Viet Bac base area, would certainly require different and more sophisticated logistical support. Ho Chi Minh, under the strictures of China's restraining influence, and cognizant both of the logistical problems revealed in the border offensive and of the PAVN's great good fortune that the French had decided to withdraw from the border posts of Dong Khe and Lang Son, delivered a speech in mid-November 1950 that summed up the new caution that characterized PAVN planning: "We too must win time in order to make preparations. That is a condition for defeating the opponent."[115] Bernard Fall, the great French analyst of the Viet Minh, wrote that in early January 1951, PAVN Commander Vo Nguyen Giap and his estimated 81 PAVN battalions "were ready for the general counteroffensive, the big push on to Hanoi itself."[116] In fact progress toward the general counteroffensive had been deliberately curtailed, and under Chinese advice the PAVN was anticipating an offensive restricted to the Hanoi–Haiphong redoubt.

Ho Chi Minh would have had sound reasons for seeking to delay the opening of the Middle Regions Offensive. A corruption scandal had developed within the DRV Ministry of Defense. Indeed, the ministerial portfolio was held by Vo Nguyen Giap himself. French radio reported that an official in the DRV's Interzone Four, which

comprised most of northern Annam, had been dismissed from the Ministry's Supply Bureau for refusing to implement reforms in the logistical system, while a PAVN General, Tran Dac Tro, had reportedly embezzled foreign currencies worth 20 million Viet Minh piasters; a military tribunal constituted by the PAVN issued a death sentence for Tro, while another general and a Supply Bureau chief from the Ministry of Defense were also punished for "having associated with overseas Chinese smugglers."[117] At the DRV Council of Ministers meeting held in the third week of November 1950, Giap and General Ta Quang Bu, the Deputy Defense Minister, both made self-criticism statements because of the corruption cases. An official report broadcast by the VNA declared that Tran Dac Tro (also called "Tran Duo Hau"), who had been head of the Defense Ministry's Supply Bureau, had been shot under the order of the tribunal "a few months ago."[118] Giap himself seems never to have been in jeopardy, as Ho Chi Minh's award of a special medal to him at the same November Council of Ministers meeting indicates.

In early December an even more serious obstacle to an early PAVN offensive arose as a result of Chinese policy. Western intelligence reports indicated that Chinese military aid to the Viet Minh was completely cut off throughout December 1950, and was resumed only on a much smaller scale than hitherto in the first weeks of January 1951.[119] Some arms were reportedly available for sale to the Viet Minh, but an increasingly serious rice shortage in the "liberated areas" of Tonkin precluded the Viet Minh from making substantial purchases.[120] Within China, a general military mobilization order for the entire country was promulgated on November 30, and its implementation seems to have contributed to a reshaping of the pattern of military supply distribution.[121] Priority was given to the demands created by the Korean conflict and by the accompanying domestic defense programs. US observers reported that the interruption of Chinese aid to the Viet Minh was due to the redirection of available supplies to PLA troops bound for Korea and Manchuria, and to the new militia units being formed for internal security and defense tasks throughout southern China.[122] As the interval between deliveries of Chinese supplies lengthened, intercepted communications revealed that PAVN commanders were becoming increasingly anxious.[123]

Evidence of a concomitant deterioration in Sino-Viet Minh relations may be gathered from an intelligence report on bilateral talks which took place during December 1950. The Bao Dai government's intelligence service informed US officials that an important Sino-Viet Minh conference, with Soviet advisers present, met in early December at Nanning.[124] The report suggested that the Chinese position was that the PAVN needed further improvements in its recruitment, logistic systems, and field command. The Chinese may have had more than one reason for raising criticisms of these areas, which were already the subject of internal review and criticism campaigns. As military aid donors the Chinese may have been dissatisfied with the Viet Minh's rectification efforts, or there may have been a desire to underscore internal Viet Minh difficulties as a means of shifting attention away from the suspension of Chinese aid deliveries. The available intelligence report indicates that the conference reached an agreement on modest increases in the Chinese and Soviet technical personnel to be assigned to the Viet Minh and

on future supplies of heavy weaponry, but there seems to have been no resolution of the crisis caused by the interruption of Chinese supplies during December.

At this stage, however, senior Chinese policymakers in the south were already preoccupied with intensified defense planning. At least two important meetings are believed to have been convened in December to oversee local and regional defense policies in the south. The first, held in Guangzhou on December 15, reportedly considered strategic planning for a general war involving southern coastal China, including developing outlines for evacuation, stockpiling, and force deployment measures to meet an invading enemy force.[125] Shortly after this meeting, according to US intelligence, the Guangdong Military Control Commission ordered a series of enhancements and improvements to be made at key defense installations along Guangdong's coast. The Commission itself moved its headquarters from Guangzhou to Shaoquan, further inland; hundreds of air defense specialists were also said to have been dispatched from Beijing and Shanghai to Guangzhou, to bolster the city's air defenses.[126]

The second key meeting took place in Nanning during the third week of December. Senior Chinese leaders, including Liu Shaoqi, Ye Jianying, Chen Geng, and perhaps even Korean War commander Zhu De were reported to have attended, and the agenda included discussion of the military aid program for the Viet Minh.[127] Zhu De was reported separately to have arrived in Guangzhou on December 18, perhaps lending credence to reports that a major military conference in the south was in the offing.[128] The precise decisions reached at this meeting, if indeed it took place, remain unknown. However, there is reason to believe that Chinese leaders were under some pressure to resume military assistance deliveries to the Viet Minh. On December 16, for example, President Truman had proclaimed a national emergency in the United States, a measure which enabled the administration to ban all trade with the PRC, freeze PRC assets in the US, and begin to place the United States economy on a war footing. On December 23 the US concluded military aid conventions with the French-backed Associated States governments in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and with France itself; these aid agreements were known at the Penta lateral Agreements.[129] It may be that these developments, especially the new US military agreements, provoked some crisis during the Communists' conference at Nanning: Ye Jianying had been scheduled to leave Nanning and return to Guangzhou on December 25, but reportedly at Liu Shaoqi's request he delayed his departure from the Guangxi meeting for another two days.[130]

Several contemporary intelligence reports indicate that the flow of Chinese aid to the Viet Minh was restored within days of the conclusion of this secret conference at Nanning. KMT reports indicated that on January 2, 1951 a celebration marking the transfer of a fleet of motor vehicles to the Viet Minh was held in Nanning. Chang Yunyi, the PRC's Governor of Guangxi, and "Wu Minh-ch'ing," a nephew of Vo Nguyen Giap, were said to have been present.[131] The vehicles involved may have formed the Chinese aid convoy which another source reported as reaching Viet Minh forces near Cao Bang in early January.[132] US diplomats concurred that Chinese military assistance resumed in the first half of January, but they reported that the pace of deliveries had slowed.[133]

The first stage of the Middle Regions Offensive

The start of the Viet Minh's Middle Regions Offensive in the Tonkin delta, also known as the "Tran Hung Dao campaign," officially began on December 22, 1950.[134] The offensive itself included a variety of military actions culminating in the battle at Vinh Yen, northwest of Hanoi, from which PAVN main-force units withdrew in defeat on January 18–19, 1951.[135] However, in a confidential briefing for senior British and US military observers, French commander Gen. de Lattre revealed that French troops had been involved in a major clash with nine PAVN "heavy battalions" (that is, infantry battalions reinforced by artillery batteries) on December 25; according to de Lattre, the PAVN troops had been "newly-equipped Chinese-trained" units, and the French force of four battalions suffered heavy losses in the encounter.[136] De Lattre was concerned about the possibility of direct Chinese military intervention in Indochina in early 1951, but he was also of the opinion that the PAVN forces he faced in Tonkin were "much superior, man for man, to the Chinese troops now in South China."[137]

The PAVN clash with the French in late December must have strengthened the hand of those Viet Minh leaders who now began a new round of talks with the Chinese on the question of military aid. According to British reports, Vo Nguyen Giap arrived in Guangzhou on January 7, 1951 for discussions on arranging for medical treatment in China for Viet Minh casualties, on supplies of vehicles and communications equipment, and most importantly, on increased Chinese food and military supplies for PAVN forces.[138] On January 11 Giap reportedly went to Wuhan, the seat of the Central-South China MAC.[139] Meanwhile, Hoang Van Hoan, the DRV's chief diplomatic representative to the PRC, was in Nanning, which he left on January 6 for Guangzhou.[140] Hoan's activities in Guangzhou are unknown, but he may have met the new Soviet Consul-General, A.M. Malukhin, who arrived in the city on January 11.[141] Hoan planned to leave Guangzhou for Beijing on January 15, and he may have remained in the Chinese capital until February 24, when he reportedly returned once again to Nanning.[142]

One historian of this period, William Stueck, has remarked that in January 1951 "the world stood closer to Armageddon than at any moment since 1945."[143] One perhaps underrated aspect of the instability was China's policy toward the war in Indochina. Beijing had long sought to restrain the Viet Minh, particularly by pressing for limitations on the anti-French struggle in southern Vietnam. However, under the pressure of growing US aid to the French, the opportunity in Korea to move Chinese forces south of the 38th Parallel, and suspected threats from the US and Taiwan to its southern flank, China continued to prepare for a wider war. Although precise details remain unclear, it does appear that during the Sino-Viet Minh talks of January 1951, an outline plan for Chinese military intervention in Indochina on behalf of the Viet Minh was discussed. According to a US informant who traveled with Hoang Van Hoan from Nanning to Guangzhou early in the month, the DRV envoy had recently met with Gen. Chen Geng; Hoan told this source that Chen had received "recent telegraphic instructions" from Beijing to the effect that a "Chinese People's Volunteer Army" should be prepared to enter Tonkin by February 6, the Chinese New Year.[144] The principal force

within this "volunteer army" was to be troops from the PLA's Second Field Army. The informant also reported that some troops within the Bao Dai government's forces had been "subverted" and would "revolt simultaneously with [the] entry [of] Chinese troops into Indochina." French intelligence reports, relayed to US diplomats by Gen. de Lattre on January 30, indicated that China's planning included contingency arrangements for concurrent operations affecting Thailand and Burma.[145] According to de Lattre, the unofficial DRV representative in Bangkok, Nguyen Duc Quy, had "instructed" his counterpart in Rangoon, Tran Van Luan, to "go ahead with preparations in Burma as originally planned," noting that "developments in Siam would take place in the first part of February." De Lattre also revealed that a Viet Minh representative in Hong Kong had "advised Quy [in Bangkok] that conditions were now more favorable and that operations in [the] northern Tongking [*sic*] frontier region would take place in February as planned."[146] French intelligence reports suggested that some Chinese troops were already in Tonkin at Cao Bang during January, and reports from British sources in Hong Kong indicated during February that a "volunteer army" was being formed under the command of "Ch'uang T'ien," a Communist guerrilla commander in southern China in the late 1940s.[147]

Meanwhile, in Tonkin the Viet Minh faced the increasing difficulty of sustaining major offensive military operations against a background of increasingly serious food shortages. On January 11, for example, a broadcast interview with Nguyen Huu Tao, a member of the Viet Bac Resistance-Administrative Committee, revealed that the shortage of supplies and rice in the Viet Bac zone, which formed the heart of Communist-controlled northern Vietnam, had become "acute:" "The rehabilitation of these areas is extremely urgent," he said, and while "on one hand a self-supplying spirit must be created among the population, on the other hand the government must attempt to help, provide funds, facilities and so forth."[148] The rice deficit appears to have played a role in shaping not only the aid requests presented to Chinese leaders by Vo Nguyen Giap, then arriving at Wuhan, but also in the actual conduct of PAVN operations at Vinh Yen, northwest of Hanoi, between January 14 and 19. According to US military analysts, PAVN forces appear to have attempted to drive French forces deep into the Hanoi–Haiphong redoubt as a means of recovering the rice crop from the territories along the fortified perimeter of the Tonkin delta, rather than attempting a full-scale sustained assault on the approaches to Hanoi itself.[149] If indeed the food supply situation had become so serious as to skew PAVN main-force military operations, it surely would have been an important subject of discussion at the various Sino-Viet Minh talks then underway. According to Nationalist Chinese radio, Vo Nguyen Giap's envoy then in South China was meeting with officials there, perhaps along with Hoang Van Hoan, to seek improved arrangements for Viet Minh wounded in the camps in Guangdong and Guangxi, to ask for more transportation and communications equipment, and increased food supplies from China for the liberated areas of Vietnam.[150] As late as April 1951 at the DRV Council of Ministers meeting, increasing food output to support both the Army and the standard of living inside "liberated" areas was declared to be a top priority for a new "emulation drive" that would last from May to December.[151]

The battle at Vinh Yen, on the extreme western edge of the French perimeter around Hanoi and Haiphong, began in earnest on January 14, 1951.[152] Over 10,000 PAVN combat troops, including the 308th and 312th Divisions, as well as thousands of porters and auxiliary personnel and militia forces took part. Gen. de Lattre estimated that 42 Viet Minh regular battalions were involved, and US observers believed that one third of the Viet Minh's forces in Tonkin had been committed to the battle.[153] Crucially, the weather favored French air operations, which included a massive airlift of forces from southern Vietnam, and US-supplied napalm bombs were used extensively for the first time in Indochina.[154] During the savage battle, the PAVN employed "human wave" assault techniques, which made the troops particularly vulnerable to accurately placed napalm bombs. It was thought afterward that the PAVN lost between 3500 and 6000 dead and wounded.[155] Despite his terrific manpower losses, Giap issued a congratulatory telegram to the Viet Minh troops during the attack, claiming that it was the PAVN's "first victorious mobile warfare battle in the plains" of Tonkin's Red River delta.[156] A Voice of Vietnam commentary said that the "victories" of the PAVN showed "the correctness of our tactics and the rapid progress of the Vietnam People's Army in attacking fortified positions and mobile groups" and demonstrated that the "troops have correctly applied the tactics of the quick march, swift surprise attack, utmost secrecy, and the tactics of wiping out the enemy to the last man."[157] Nonetheless, by January 18–19 Viet Minh military forces had "withdrawn at all points" along the French-held perimeter.[158]

China's strategic determinations, February 1951

During February 1951 the Chinese Communist leadership determined that the preservation of China's security precluded any substantial change in the pattern of conflict on its borders. The precise sequence of events informing this calculus remains unknown, but two strands of salient developments can be identified from Western intelligence reports and from pronouncements in the Communist media. These two strands involve military developments in Korea and Indochina, and while the leadership's thinking about these two theaters must to some degree have evolved in tandem, the unique course of events in each of the two theaters also affected decision-making outcomes. Because the leadership decided that China's security interests were under greatest threat in Northeast Asia, it is perhaps useful to look first at the shaping of Chinese strategy concerning the Korean conflict, and then turn to the less immediate, though perhaps not less important, question of the Franco-Viet Minh war in Indochina.

The signal dates for Chinese policy in Korea at this stage of the war were February 1, 1951, when the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the PRC as the "aggressor" in Korea, and February 15–16, when it appeared that the United States and Soviet Union were approaching a consensus on the need for a ceasefire in the Korean War. A massive offensive by the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV), as Chinese troops in the Korean theater were termed by the Chinese government, in early January 1951 had made substantial progress against

UN forces in central Korea. By the middle of the month the CPV's advance had slowed, and there had been no sign that the United States would consider the PRC's standing proposal for a seven-nation diplomatic conference to negotiate on a withdrawal of foreign troops from Korea and from Taiwan, as well as "other Far Eastern problems." The UN resolution on February 1 effectively ended the possibility of bringing the Communist Chinese into multilateral peace negotiations on any other basis.[159] A new Communist offensive in western Korea, meanwhile, had begun well at the end of January, but stalled north of Seoul within two weeks, and UN forces were again in a position to cross the 38th Parallel.[160] Diplomatists on all sides were clearly becoming concerned about how much further to prosecute the war on the Korean Peninsula.

Secret diplomatic overtures were made to the Chinese Communists by Swedish diplomats, and the issue of the continuation of the war was publicly raised both by President Truman, in a press conference on February 15, and by Marshal Stalin, in an interview published in *Pravda* on February 16.[161] Stalin's remarks are of particular interest. He discussed at length the incompatibility of military mobilization and domestic economic development; this topic was apparently relevant to a policy debate within China, as we shall see. Stalin also hinted that in terms of the advancement of international Communism, the war in Korea was becoming redundant: he declared that the UN forces would be destroyed if China's peace proposals were not accepted, but he also added that expansion of the war against imperialism was not necessary and that imperialist aggression should be combated chiefly by the Soviet Union's then-current internal propaganda line, known simply as the "peace campaign."

The Chinese reaction to Stalin's remarks was noticeably restrained, and it indicates a degree of divergence between the official Chinese and Soviet views of the Korean conflict, at least on a diplomatic level.[162] *Renmin Ribao*'s editorial response, broadcast on February 19, dwelt on China's mistrust of the UN and on the need for "intensified support" of the CPV and North Korean troops, rather than on Stalin's main themes.[163] On the same day, Xinhua broadcast a summary of an article published in *World Culture*, another official Chinese publication, which stated more fully the emerging official view in Beijing of the international struggle against imperialism.[164] The "common aim of the people of the East," it said, was to continue opposition to American policies in Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, and to "prevent America from following its old path of aggression in China and in South East Asia."

The *World Culture* editorial's clear but subtle distinction between China's policies for Northeast and Southeast Asia seemed to suggest that a basic decision had been made by the central Chinese leadership to "continue" its military support for the North Koreans while seeking to "prevent" an escalation of the conflict in Southeast Asia. However, additional evidence is needed before a firm determination on this point can be offered. More details are available on Beijing's official views at this time in a speech given by Guo Moruo, head of China's delegation to the latest World Peace Conference in East Berlin. Guo's speech, which was broadcast by Xinhua on February 25, emphasized that the "peace campaign," to

which Stalin had referred in his interview with *Pravda*, had not deterred the United States from continuing and even expanding its disruptive activities in Asia, where China itself was imperialism's chief target:

> American imperialism itself had begun to imitate the example of Japanese imperialism in the Far East; it had initiated a simultaneous policy of Continental and Oceanic expansion by invading Korea and the Philippines, and by the hasty creation of an American "co-prosperity sphere" with the objective of conquering China.[165]

Guo's speech suggested that China's concerns about an expanding conflict with the United States were intensifying rather than subsiding during February 1951, just at the time that the Soviet Union seemed to be indicating a willingness to reduce the level of intensity of the East–West conflict.[166]

This apparent divergence between Moscow and Beijing formed the background to two basic Chinese domestic policy decisions, each of which had implications for China's regional and defense policies. First, the Chinese leadership resolved to intensify its efforts to eliminate internal opposition to Communist Party authority. Although for some years the Chinese Communist Party had broadly endorsed cross-class cooperation amongst peasants, handicraft producers, and small landholders, at a central People's Government meeting on February 20, chaired by Liu Shaoqi, new regulations mandating the arrest and in some cases the execution of "counter-revolutionaries" were approved. As Chairman of the Party, Mao Zedong issued a directive promulgating the harsh new regulations on February 21.[167] Second, a fundamental decision was made to subordinate the Communist Party's much discussed industrialization program to the priorities of eliminating the Communists' domestic political "enemies" and to building and maintaining the country's military readiness. In a speech to a meeting of Party and administrative cadres in Beijing, held from February 25 to 28, Liu Shaoqi said that industrialization efforts and the creation of "democratic" institutions in China could not be fully pursued until military rule in China had ended, and that military rule must continue until the Chinese Communist Party had secured basic advances in its land reform and mass political organization programs, and until it had achieved the elimination of domestic "reactionaries."[168]

Beijing's commitment to continuing the war in Korea and to reordering domestic economic development priorities to accommodate that commitment surely influenced the Chinese leaders' continuing evaluation of the Franco-Viet Minh war in Indochina. However, circumstances within Vietnam itself must also have figured strongly in Beijing's calculations, which at this point began moving away from active consideration of forceful direct military intervention in Indochina. On the other side of the coin, it is reasonable to suggest that the issue of massive Chinese military intervention in Indochina was a contentious one within the Vietnamese Communist leadership, not least because any such move would seriously undermine the Viet Minh's claims to the mantle of Vietnamese nationalism and anti-foreign rule. This dimension of the internal Vietnamese situation took on heightened significance

during February 1951, when arrangements were being finalized for the public re-emergence of the Communist Party in Vietnam, which had originally been "dissolved" in 1945 as a tactical move to assuage both the victorious Allies and apprehensions amongst non-Communist Vietnamese nationalists about Ho Chi Minh's declaration of the creation of the DRV.[169] A "founding congress" met to re-establish the ICP in Vietnam, now called the Vietnam Workers' Party (VNWP), between February 11 and 19 somewhere in northern Tonkin.[170]

It remains particularly difficult to assess the impact of the VNWP's "founding" upon Sino-Viet Minh relations. We do not know, for example, whether Chinese Communist representatives or other Communists from other regional Communist organizations attended the congress. However, the Viet Minh's international consultations with its established Communist allies on military issues continued, although the terms of these exchanges were probably deeply disappointing to senior Vietnamese Communist leaders. According to French intelligence reports, a mission of Chinese Communist and Soviet military advisers arrived in Tonkin on February 10, 1951, in order to "ascertain V[iet] M[inh] capabilities for [a] new general offensive [in the] Delta area."[171] This mission's findings were not disclosed, but it seems likely that one of the principal issues being communicated to the Vietnamese by both the Soviets and Chinese, each for their own strategic reasons, was that the Franco-Viet Minh war would not attract the full measure of material support from the major Communist Powers. This view is supported by official Vietnamese Communist statements, which demonstrate that at this time the Vietnamese leadership announced a change of course in its near-term politico-military planning. In his political report to the VNWP Party Congress, a moment which certainly marked the policy high-point of that gathering, Ho Chi Minh confirmed that the long-awaited general counteroffensive, which the border campaign of late 1950 had originally been designed to initiate, "[was] not yet actually being carried out." Preparations were still being made by the Viet Minh's military and political organizations, under VNWP direction, and only when these were completed would the people be ready to "launch the general counteroffensive."[172]

The message of a slow-down in progress toward the climax of the anti-French struggle was reiterated soon thereafter, in Vo Nguyen Giap's military report to the February 1951 DRV Council of Ministers meeting. In this forum, which convened in "mid-February," just after the re-founding of the VNWP, Giap announced that the Middle Regions Offensive in the Tonkin delta area, which had begun in late December 1950 and included the battle at Vinh Yen in mid-January, would continue, and that although immediate victory over the French was not yet in sight, the PAVN would go on in the future to fight additional "big mobile warfare battles."[173] These declarations indicate that while the progress of the anti-French military struggle had not kept pace with earlier Vietnamese leadership projections, main-force clashes with the FUF in Tonkin, where the PAVN's greatest strength lay, were expected to continue. Current evidence does not allow a firm conclusion that the Chinese/Soviet military mission to Tonkin in early February 1951 forced the Vietnamese Communist and military leadership to these more circumspect conclusions. Certainly the Vietnamese themselves were well capable of assessing the

performance of their forces in the field, the logistical problems they confronted in main-force battles against the French, and the degree to which the development of Communist forces in southern Vietnam lagged behind the development of the PAVN in the Tonkin. However, it is noteworthy that the shift in military policy publicly announced by Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap in February 1951 was generally in accord with the Chinese Communists' emerging strategic preference for a concentration of its own military efforts in Korea, rather than an expansion of Chinese military involvement in Indochina, and for a focusing of Viet Minh military efforts on securing the border area of northern Tonkin and the important Tonkin delta area, rather than nationwide battles and uprisings.

However, Sino-Viet Minh tensions over the provision of military supplies from China to the PAVN continued. A secret PAVN High Command directive issued during February 1951 ordered all military units to inventory and ration their ammunition, because the flow of Chinese supplies to the PAVN was proving inadequate to planned military operations.[174] US intelligence reported that ammunition for delivery to the PAVN was being stockpiled in Guangxi, but it was not being delivered across the border.[175] Intercepted internal communications between Vo Nguyen Giap and his senior commanders revealed that, while Giap was dissatisfied with the time taken by his own forces in making preparations for offensive operations, he was also "urgently demanding artillery and other equipment from [the] Chinese."[176] These supply problems were apparently compounded as the Chinese battlefield situation in Korea began to deteriorate. In early March Western intelligence agencies began to receive information indicating that the Viet Minh were being made to purchase military equipment from China, and according to a British report, Gen. Ye Jianying had been instructed by Beijing to "terminate" China's military training program for PAVN troops.[177]

It is possible that continuing military supply problems, combined with China's own recent strategic decisions about its Korean and domestic policies, as well as the public re-emergence of the Communist Party in Vietnam, were of sufficient importance to merit a new round of high-level bilateral talks between the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist leaderships. Certainly, the VNWP's "founding" congress, which convened between February 11 and 19, 1951, was not publicly announced in the official Vietnamese Communist-controlled broadcast media until early March, as we shall see. By then, according to French intelligence, Ho Chi Minh had paid a brief secret visit to Beijing, in late February 1951.[178] Hoang Van Hoan, the Vietnamese leadership's chief diplomatic liaison to the Chinese, reportedly arrived from Beijing in Nanning, Guangxi, on February 24, which if true underpins other reports that Ho Chi Minh may also have stopped off in Nanning during this period.[179] The Vietnam News Agency confirmed that Ho was absent from the central governing apparatus at this time, but reported that he "spent a week at the end of February" visiting PAVN units in the field.[180] More likely, Ho was in China, in Beijing or Nanning or both, pressing Chinese officials for a resumption of the training and military equipment transfers which had given the PAVN key battlefield assistance during the Le Hong Phong and Middle Regions Offensives of late 1950 and early 1951.

4 The prospect of longer wars, March–April 1951

The broad coincidence of military offensives by Communist military forces in Korea and in Tonkin during January 1951 lent credence to the widely held Western belief that, as Peter Calvocoressi has written, "communist activities in Asia were not unconcerted."[1] As the junior partner in the Sino-Viet Minh relationship, the Vietnamese Communist leadership found itself increasingly subject to the constraints imposed by, if not coordination, then limited cooperation with the Chinese Communists. By March–April 1951, a series of domestic and foreign policy developments forced both the Chinese and Vietnamese senior leaderships to confront the possibility that the military conflicts in which they were involved could entail wider armed engagement with the Western Powers. To a large extent Beijing anticipated such a situation in Korea as early as mid-February 1951, but during March and April China's leadership faced the possibility of Sino-American military conflict in southern China as well as in Korea. The Viet Minh, already beginning to exhibit some effects of political demoralization following the postponement of the general counter-offensive, was soon to discover that the Vietnam Workers' Party (VNWP) leadership had entirely shifted its "strategic direction" of the war to a conflict which would instead be "based on the long-drawn-out and hard nature of our resistance" against the French.[2] The practical impact of the Chinese and Vietnamese Communists' efforts to prepare for longer wars in Korea, southern China, and Indochina complicated the already strained relationship that existed by late February 1951. These growing tensions laid the groundwork for a more serious deterioration in bilateral relations later in the year.

Strengthening the Communist organizations

In a speech to the Central People's Government meeting on February 20, 1951, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee member Peng Zhen called for the death penalty for all actions that "opposed" Communist Party authority in China.[3] Peng's speech initiated a new period of Party-led internal repression which culminated in the "three antis" and "five antis" campaigns of late 1951 and 1952, respectively. As these mass campaigns developed, they acquired new targets and diverse purposes, but at the beginning Peng's target was primarily those within China who might be tempted to try to destabilize the Communist government.[4]

The elimination of these "counter-revolutionaries," accompanied by moderate land reform, intensified political organization efforts and the creation of local militia forces, were the main elements in the Communist leadership's program for assuring internal security.

Meanwhile the Vietnamese Communist leadership faced a problem with which the CCP had dealt for years, that of strengthening the authority of the Communist Party within its military and political front organizations. The clandestine Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) apparatus had faced not only a loss of credibility following the postponement of the much-heralded "general counter-offensive," but the underground nature of the Party organization itself hampered efforts to eradicate "some erroneous views among cadres and Party members about the protracted character of the resistance." According to an official Party history this factor, along with "changes in the international and national situations," required "increased leadership of the Party in all fields."[5] As we have seen, the Party's senior leaders met secretly between February 11 and 19, 1951 and founded the VNWP, a development which in fact "represented … the official re-emergence of the Indochinese Communist Party … after its official dissolution in November 1945."[6]

The first "public appearance" of the VNWP came on March 3, 1951 when it was "inaugurated" at the "Unification Conference of the Lien Viet and Viet Minh Fronts."[7] Some authors have maintained that the formation of the VNWP was not announced to the Vietnamese people until March 16, but in fact the "Voice of Nambo" radio station broadcast news of the formation of the Party, along with a summary of the Party congress communiqué, on March 11, 1951.[8] Then, between March 12 and 15 the Vietnam News Agency (VNA) broadcast the text of the VNWP Party program.[9] As if to underscore the urgency of the announcement, on March 15 Ho Chi Minh issued a public appeal to Vietnamese peasants to increase their food production because, he said, "the resistance had entered a new phase;" food output must be increased by 20–30 per cent over the previous year's level, and stores must be set aside "so that the Army could fight bigger battles."[10]

At roughly this time, in "mid-March" according to the VNA, the VNWP Central Committee held its first plenum.[11] At this meeting the Party leadership determined a series of principles which guided much of the political and military activity of the Viet Minh during the rest of 1951. In addition to setting forth the "strategic direction" based on "long-drawn-out … resistance," the plenum decided that the Party must strengthen its leadership over the Viet Minh military, over economic and financial work, and over the national front organizations both within Vietnam and in Laos and Cambodia.[12]

Broadcast of the plenum's communiqué was delayed for several weeks, but publicity was finally given to the VNWP founding congress, to Ho Chi Minh's declaration of a "new phase" in the anti-French resistance, and between March 19 and 21 to the Lien Viet–Viet Minh merger conference of March 3–6. It may be instructive that no mention was made of these events in the Chinese Communist broadcast media until March 26–27, when suddenly a series of congratulatory editorials and reports were broadcast by multiple Chinese stations.[13] By that time, as we shall see, the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) was engaged in a major

main-force battle against French forces at Mao Khe, northwest of Haiphong. The Chinese, whose own military position in Korea was deteriorating, were straining to secure a new strategic understanding with the Vietnamese Communist leadership on the course of the war in Indochina.

On March 15, the day of Ho Chi Minh's appeal for more food production to support the PAVN's participation in "bigger battles," the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) in Korea lost control of key positions north of Seoul; the city itself had been evacuated by Communist troops around March 7.[14] The coincidence of the CPV's defeat and Ho's statement draws attention to the fact that both regimes faced the prospect of lengthening military conflicts, but from markedly different perspectives. As Giap had made clear in his report in mid-February to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) Council of Ministers, the PAVN leadership was committed to continuing the policy of launching large offensives in Tonkin. For the Chinese, however, the loss of Seoul and the mounting economic burdens of the war in Korea, discussed below, were contributing to an increasingly defensive posture in that conflict.

The communiqué of the VNWP's first plenum, convened in mid-March, revealed how much the Vietnamese leadership's thinking about the development of the anti-French war had changed in the wake of the decision to postpone the general counter-offensive in mid-October 1950.[15] The plenum decided that the Party "will concentrate all its energies on leading the war;" in doing so it would "hold firmly to the strategic direction … based on the long-drawn-out and hard nature of our resistance." This statement marked the revision in strategic thinking since mid-1950, when the leadership had announced its plans for a "final counter-offensive" against the French. The plenum communiqué also presented an analysis of the international situation in which Stalin and the Soviet-led "peace campaign," which Stalin emphasized in his February 16 *Pravda* interview, were given particular prominence. There was virtually no mention of Mao Zedong, the success of the Chinese Communist revolution, or of Chinese policy in Korea. The communiqué did, however, underscore the degree of the American military threat to the "peoples of the world," and restated the Party's commitment to continuing the struggle against the US-backed French. Other key elements of the plenum communiqué were its declaration of the Party's new "strategic direction" based upon a long-term war against the French, and its statements of the Party's commitment to "increase the main forces of our People's Army and reinforce the local people's armies, militia and guerrillas."

Although the VNWP plenum convened in mid-March 1951, its communiqué was not broadcast by the VNA until April 22. The evidence suggests that this delay was introduced by design, in order to protect the Party leadership from exposing its plans while a series of complex and potentially disastrous strategic and military developments unfolded in the Far East, causing new tensions in the Sino-Viet Minh political relationship and coinciding with preparations for the imminent launch of a new PAVN offensive in northeastern Tonkin. By about the third week of April, as we shall see, many of these difficulties had been largely resolved, and the Vietnamese Communist leadership was in a firmer position to reveal the policy determinations settled upon in March.

By early March senior Vietnamese Communist leaders were confronting the practical problems associated with the long-term anti-French struggle now envisioned. Hints began to emerge in radio broadcasts that a policy change was in the offing. For example, in "early March" a conference of the "Vietnam Youth Union for National Salvation" met to define its tasks in the "new phase;" its decisions involved approving procedures for the mobilization of youth for Army and guerrilla service.[16] On March 21 the program of the newly consolidated Lien Viet Front was broadcast; listeners learned that the Front's policies would subsequently be based on the principles of "total national resistance for a long time" and of "resistance until complete victory."[17] Moreover, the resolutions adopted by the March 3–6 Lien Viet–Viet Minh merger conference included an endorsement of "an alliance between the Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian peoples," the goal initially espoused in November 1950 by the meeting of the "Vietnam Peace Defenders Conference."[18] The decisions of the youth conference and the political front merger conference reflected two fundamental concerns of the Vietnamese Communist leadership. First, the Communists were well aware of the growing articulation of the French-sponsored Associated States governments in Indochina. The French had been negotiating for some months with these governments on the creation of national armies, which could draft Vietnamese and help relieve the strain on French manpower. On March 20, 1951, for example, it had been announced that a "National Army of Laos" was to be established under French auspices.[19] Second, Vietnamese Communist leaders were experiencing their own manpower difficulties. The employment of main-force battle tactics in Tonkin required more trained troops, and greater reserves had to be available to commit to each major battle, as events at Vinh Yen in mid-January 1951 had shown. The PAVN was stepping up its preparations for a massive assault on the northeastern edge of the French-held Hanoi–Haiphong redoubt. This battle, according to later estimates, directly involved some 40,000 PAVN troops, along with thousands of laborers and auxiliaries.[20]

The battle at Mao Khe

In Beijing, meanwhile, the Chinese Communist leadership was bracing for a possible surge by United Nations forces in central Korea, following the CPV's withdrawal from Seoul. It is now known that there was an intense high-level debate within the Truman administration in Washington from March 15 onwards about whether United Nations troops should again be authorized to push their operations north of the 38th Parallel.[21] The Chinese military command clearly expected this, and initiated a massive reinforcement program. UN headquarters intelligence reports characterized the Communists' effort as involving "the largest number of fresh and second troops [*sic*] ever committed in the Korean War," an estimated 63 divisions, or perhaps more than 500,000 Chinese troops.[22] Within a few days unnamed officials in Washington "let it be known" to the press that UN offensive operations north of the 38th Parallel would be authorized.[23]

On March 24, 1951 UN Commander in Korea, US Gen. Douglas MacArthur, issued his own public statement which implied that he intended to use UN troops to

extend the war in Korea across the international border at the base of the Korean Peninsula and into mainland China itself:

> The enemy, therefore, must by now be painfully aware that a decision of the United Nations to depart from its tolerant efforts to contain the war to the area of Korea through the expansion of our military operations to [China's] coastal areas and interior bases would doom Red China to the risk of imminent military collapse.[24]

The following day, March 25, MacArthur secretly requested authorization for the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to dispatch a naval task force to the Straits of Formosa and the southeastern coast of China to conduct aerial surveillance of Chinese Communist military installations and to "make a show of force" in the Straits area; the JCS approved the proposal on March 26.[25] As we shall see, the operation thus approved produced an exceptionally dangerous situation in the South China Sea in April 1951.

That MacArthur's public statement of March 24 produced a crisis within Chinese leadership councils may be seen from the apparent failure of the official Chinese media to broadcast a response to the threat until March 29.[26] The intervening period, March 24–29, was a crucial one not only for developments in Korea but also for the PAVN in Tonkin, and for Sino-Vietnamese relations overall. Beijing's concerns about the Korean situation played a direct role in shaping its perceptions of military developments in Tonkin. There, the second stage of the Middle Regions Offensive plan, based upon the use of main-force PAVN troops, began on March 23–24 when PAVN units carried out a series of attacks on French posts north and northwest of Haiphong. These initial probing attacks culminated in a mass-formation assault on the mining town of Mao Khe on March 27–28.[27] Intense French artillery fire eventually forced the PAVN to pull back from Mao Khe, where an estimated 3000 Communist soldiers were left for dead.[28]

It was at least possible until March 28 that the PAVN assault would break through French defenses at Mao Khe, and move quickly south to launch a main-force assault on Haiphong itself.[29] US intelligence reports indicated that although Giap had not received all the aid and materiel he had requested during February and March, a vital shipment of 327 tons of rice from China reached PAVN forces near Dong Trieu, north of the main battlefield at Mao Khe, on March 27, just as the offensive there reached its climax.[30] In addition, the Chinese leaders chose this moment to give the first publicly broadcast acknowledgement of the founding of the VNWP; broadcasts on March 26 reported on the Party congress, and on March 27, before the outcome of the clash at Mao Khe had been determined, *Renmin Ribao* published an editorial praising the VNWP and its programs.[31] By March 28–29, however, the PAVN's defeat at Mao Khe was unmistakable, and the subsequent withdrawal of Giap's forces signaled the failure of the PAVN attempt to break through the French defensive perimeter to Haiphong. Overall, the huge losses at Mao Khe had not served to substantially improve the Communists' military position in Tonkin. On March 30 and 31 Viet Minh radio stations broadcast reports praising the "victories" of the PAVN, but by this stage the wider concerns of the Chinese leadership,

preoccupied with developments in Korea, were once again imposing themselves on the Vietnamese Communists' military decision-making.[32]

On March 29 the Chinese leadership responded publicly to MacArthur's threat to expand the war beyond the Korean peninsula. A *Renmin Ribao* commentary used strong terms to criticize "MacArthur's shameless and insolent boast," but a more radical line was taken by the "China Peace Committee" on the same day. A Party-controlled body with an anti-Western political orientation, this Committee issued a statement calling upon the Chinese people to "intensify the sacred struggle to resist America" and recommended that China adopt a defensive military posture until it had "liberated the whole of Korea and … driven out the aggressors who have the intention of invading China."[33]

With the Chinese position thus showing signs of hardening, official opinion on the utility of the Viet Minh's main-force war against US-backed French Union Forces on China's southern perimeter changed abruptly. According to a French intelligence report, a Sino-Viet Minh meeting held in late March 1951 produced a "decision" under which the central thrust of PAVN military tactics in the war against the French would be changed. This report declared that guerrilla warfare would now become the principal method of armed struggle against the French, implying that the PAVN's use of main-force battle tactics would be curtailed.[34] French intelligence sources obtained a copy of a VNWP directive to the PAVN General Staff, dated April 1. According to a US report on the directive, it ordered that "in case of the failure of [the] present Tonkin operation, the Viet Minh must return to the previous tactics of sabotage, guerrilla warfare, harassing of [lines of communication] and creation of [political] unrest."[35]

The known sequence of events reveals that news of the "decision" to adopt guerrilla warfare did not reach the Party's regional leadership in Nambo, southern Vietnam, for some days.[36] In the crucially important interim, Viet Minh activists in the south appear to have acted on the assumption – perhaps bolstered by official VNA broadcasts at the time about the Mao Khe "victories" – that the PAVN was on the verge of a breakthrough near Haiphong. Indeed, the activities of southern Viet Minh armed units and the statements broadcast by Viet Minh radio stations in the South indicated that major military operations of greater sophistication were already planned there. On March 27, as the Mao Khe assault began, for example, a "Voice of Nambo" broadcast about Viet Minh military operations in the southern provinces of Sa Dec and Soc Trang during February and March 1951 claimed that these actions had proved that "resistance activities in Nambo [and] Trung Bo (southern central Vietnam) were not confined solely to guerrilla warfare."[37]

It had been the Chinese Communists' view since at least December 1948 that the military struggle against the French in southern Vietnam should be subordinated to that in Tonkin. Now the Vietnamese leadership, which had espoused the same position at least since the collapse of the general counteroffensive movement in mid-October 1950, hardened its views on the scale of the struggle in Nambo. The need to do so was proven by the activities of the southern Communist leadership in Nambo, following the report that Viet Minh military operations in at least two southern provinces were now sophisticated beyond the guerrilla warfare stage.

On March 31, as the VNA in Tonkin was reporting the "important victory" of PAVN forces on the "perimeter of the Haiphong defenses," Viet Minh operatives in Saigon were distributing leaflets throughout the city announcing that the "day of the gen[eral] counter-offensive has come."[38] The leaflets called for an immediate mass uprising in the city, saying that "the opportune time has come." The French and Americans would not oppose the people, the Viet Minh leaflet said, because "we have the formidable forces of the Russian Red Army and those of new China to help us free Vietnam." US diplomats reporting on the distribution of the leaflets suggested that they revealed a new level of activism by the Viet Minh in the South, and argued that it was linked to the recent "founding" of the Vietnam Workers' Party.[39]

It now appears that the timing of the leaflets' distribution, and the content of their message, was of crucial significance in the development of the relatively neglected Viet Minh struggle in southern Vietnam. Had the PAVN broken through French defenses at Mao Khe on March 27–29, the Saigon leaflets would have appeared at the same time that a major Communist assault upon, or even an occupation of, Haiphong was taking place. Contingency planning for a corollary Communist action led by pro-Communist workers in Saigon may have taken place on March 26, when a meeting was held there of the "South Vietnam Trade Unions Federation," a Viet Minh labor front that had affiliates in both Vietnam and Cambodia.[40] In the event, the uprising call in Saigon coincided only with the PAVN retreat after the disaster at Mao Khe. However, Viet Minh leaders in Saigon may not have been fully aware of the outcome at Mao Khe until well after the leaflets had been prepared and distributed in Saigon. There seems not to have been any appreciable public response to the message in the leaflets, and possibly only a few were actually distributed to key downtown locations. Nonetheless, as late as April 5 the Viet Minh broadcast a retraction of the uprising call, warning against pushing forward with any kind of revolt in Saigon: "Saigon-Cholon was an occupied city …. To liberate it internal armed revolt must be combined with resistance from the outside. This required the participation of all the people of the city and not merely a few military and paramilitary organizations."[41]

That there were unorthodox elements within the Nambo Viet Minh organization committed to an intensification of the military struggle in southern Vietnam will be examined later. Here, it should be noted that during the first week of April 1951, following the April 1 Party directive and the distribution of leaflets calling for an uprising in Saigon, both Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap reportedly made radio broadcasts endorsing a return to the use of guerrilla tactics, rather than main-force or mobile group tactics. Accounts of these broadcasts were authenticated by "positive information in French hands."[42] Extracts from Giap's radio announcement indicated that he disavowed the large-unit mobile warfare tactics he had endorsed for at least two years, saying that they did not "constitute the best strategy for the present."[43] Giap also reportedly declared that the goal of mounting attacks on Hanoi and Haiphong had been abandoned, and that the Viet Minh and its military elements were now engaged in a "war of attrition" against the French. The Western press gave extensive publicity to this supposed policy reversal on the part of the Vietnamese Communists, and US diplomats reported that the change had been authorized because of the PAVN's heavy losses in the battle at Mao Khe.[44]

The circumstances surrounding the policy change broadcasts made by Ho and Giap were considerably more complex than the contemporary American diplomatic interpretation suggested. The secret April 1 VNWP directive on returning to guerrilla warfare reflected a Sino-Viet Minh consultation and "decision" reached in late March. Grasping the international context which called forth this decision is fundamental to an accurate understanding of the apparent military policy "reversal" announced by Ho and Giap in radio statements in early April. It is essential to examine the increasingly unstable security situation in the Far East generally, and along China's southern perimeter in particular, before the "reversal" of early April can be more fully assessed.

The security of China's southern perimeter

There can be little doubt that throughout early 1951 military developments in and around the Korean peninsula were the principal strategic concern of the Chinese Communist leadership. However, as Guo Moruo's speech to the World Peace Congress in late February made clear, the official Chinese view was that the conflict in Korea was one element in a more dynamic and threatening pattern of US intervention in Asia, which had as its objective the "conquering" of China – or, more plainly, the overthrow of the Chinese Communist government. From Beijing's perspective, the southern perimeter of the country was particularly vulnerable to US "aggression." In many places Communist rule was only loosely established, especially in frontier areas. Some adjacent and neighboring countries were either allied with the United States or harbored anti-Communist forces.

In the early spring of 1951, challenges to Chinese Communist interests and territorial control developed at a number of points along the mainland's southern perimeter. The first of these challenges emerged along the strategically important China–Indochina border near Lao Cai in northwestern Tonkin. Because of the "Middle Regions Offensive" plan, the PAVN had concentrated most of its military manpower and resources around the Hanoi–Haiphong redoubt. Large areas in northwestern Tonkin, formerly tightly controlled by PAVN troops, were left lightly garrisoned, as major PAVN units moved toward the expected breakthrough battleground at Mao Khe. The French had withdrawn from Lao Cai in early November 1950, but French troops and pro-French ethnic minority units maintained a strong presence at Lai Chau, capital of the "Thai Autonomous Region." Pro-French ethnic minority partisans were also active throughout the Red River Valley and, by early February 1951, many pro-French units were in position along the border with China both east and west of the town of Lao Cai itself, which was held by the Viet Minh. During the first week of February, pro-French forces reoccupied the district town of Phong Tho, which dominates the Red River Valley west of Lao Cai along the Chinese border.[45] The PAVN 148th Regiment, regularly engaged in the suppression of the non-Communist mountain tribes in this area, was apparently unable to respond adequately to the threat at Phung Tho because of manpower shifts toward the Hanoi–Haiphong redoubt and because of an estimated 40 per cent sickness rate within its ranks. Intercepted radio communications between the PAVN

High Command and the PAVN 165th Regiment at Lao Cai indicated that the latter was also encountering "trouble with local inhabitants," and so was unable to dispatch two of its battalions to assist the 148th Regiment near Phung Tho.[46] The Communists' security situation along the border with China was further compromised when anti-Viet Minh ethnic minority armed units east of Lao Cai increased their level of harassing activities at the same time.[47] Viet Minh military leaders were suddenly confronted with an internal security crisis along the Chinese border, ranging from the Laos border in the west to Ha Giang province in the east, including the vital border crossing at Lao Cai, which had regularly been used as a transfer point for military assistance from the Chinese Communists.

The importance of control over this region for both the Viet Minh and the Chinese Communists lay in its politico-strategic value. The minority tribes inhabiting both sides of the international border shared cultural and political characteristics, and anti-Communist activism among the tribes inside Tonkin could encourage similar developments inside China's Yunnan province. The Chinese Communist administration in Yunnan, less that one year old in some places, gave priority to minimizing the potential for minority unrest by creating administrative structures that extended nominal autonomy to local tribes, while simultaneously intensifying recruitment for Communist-led militia units, supporting political indoctrination campaigns, and conducting paramilitary operations against pro-Nationalist or ethnic minority "bandits" in the sensitive border regions.[48]

These policies were designed to safeguard Communist control of the extreme southern and southwestern corners of Yunnan province, where Tonkin, Laos, and Burma abut Chinese territory and where northern Thailand is closest to China. Besides the convergence in this area of natural overland communication routes through the mountains, southern Yunnan's rail line from the provincial capital at Kunming to Haiphong crosses the international border at Lao Cai. There is some reason to believe that this route was becoming more important for the Viet Minh apparatus during early 1951, not only for overland communications and supplies but also for potential trade links from Yunnan province to the South China Sea. In February 1951, for example, the Communist authorities in Yunnan began reorganizing the province's foreign trade bureaucracy, and it is known that by mid-year reconstruction work on the Kunming–Lao Cai rail line had begun.[49] The Chinese leadership may have been considering the potential advantages of re-opening this long-closed rail line from landlocked Yunnan to the sea through Tonkin, and if so would have been awaiting positive reports on the PAVN's "Middle Regions Offensive," which if successful would have placed the port and rail terminus at Haiphong under Viet Minh control. In that event, the security of the border crossing at Lao Cai would become a paramount issue for the Chinese as well as for the Viet Minh.

Against this background, the Chinese determined by March 1951 that the emerging security crisis developing around Lao Cai required direct Chinese military intervention, albeit on a limited scale. According to French intelligence, on March 9 and 11, 1951, armed Chinese Communist units entered Tonkin at the border town of Ban Nam Chuong, west of Lao Cai, ostensibly to pursue a group of retreating pro-Nationalist guerrillas.[50] After coming into contact with the pro-French garrison at

Ban Nam Chuong, the Chinese Communist units withdrew, only to return in greater force later, when they entered and occupied the village of Phong Tho.[51] The Chinese force seems thereafter to have deliberately avoided contact with the French themselves, in order to minimize the possibility of a major international incident arising from what was essentially a local operation, and perhaps to avoid attracting the attention of the United States to the Tonkin–Yunnan border area. Few details on the Chinese Communist incursion have become available, although captured "internal Communist documents" reportedly revealed that a Chinese Communist militia battalion had been "loaned" to the Viet Minh command to help conduct security operations in the Lao Cai area for a limited period, until April 15, 1951.[52]

French policy at this time was to "play down any reference to Chinese assistance and to ignore Chinese intervention as long as possible."[53] This approach prevailed even in early April, when Chinese Communist forces captured two French officers during a short advance south toward the village of Lai Chau.[54] Nonetheless, this incident received extensive coverage in the Western press, and on April 11, 1951 a Chinese Communist radio broadcast attributed the confrontation to alleged French violations of the international border with China.[55] This Chinese statement was issued in the midst of a larger crisis provoked by US naval exercises in the South China Sea, which will be discussed below. It may have been intended to remind the West of China's ability to retaliate in Indochina, should US forces interfere with or attack China's coastal perimeter. In any event, the Chinese Communists' militia units were apparently ordered to withdraw from the Lai Chau area shortly after April 11, and the French limited their military response to aerial bombing of known Viet Minh force concentrations which had moved to Lai Chau to replace the Chinese Communists.[56] The French Air Force then delivered 80 planeloads of troops to the area, but the whole incident produced no significant military engagements.[57] The chief feature of the Chinese incursion was its obvious limitations. The Chinese Communist leadership had authorized the release of official statements blaming the French for border violations, but it had also moved quickly to withdraw from Tonkin territory, as more serious and pressing threats to China's southern perimeter developed elsewhere.

Another source of concern to Chinese leaders was the growth of US military activities in Thailand and Burma. Later official Chinese broadcasts made it clear that Beijing was particularly alarmed by US participation in the construction of military airfields in northern Thailand.[58] The United States was also covertly sponsoring the consolidation and re-arming of refugee Nationalist Chinese troops that had escaped to the mountainous borderlands of Burma and Thailand in late 1949 and 1950. By March 1951 one relatively large contingent of some 10,000 KMT "remnants," as the Communist media called then, had gathered in the Thai–Burma border area and was reportedly "regrouping into a Yunan [*sic*] Liberation Army," and the force was being secretly supplied with US arms flown in from American bases in Okinawa.[59] The Chinese Communist leadership, faced with coincident threats to China's extreme southwest, placed increased emphasis on militarizing key districts in Yunnan, both by dispatching regular People's Liberation Army troops and by accelerating militia recruitment and political indoctrination programs. Official Chinese Communist

reports revealed that by February 1951, 11 *hsien* (counties) along China's borders with Burma and Laos had been designated as the "Puerh special zone of Yunnan," and that Communist-led militia "reorganization and training" was being rapidly completed in that area.[60]

In late March and early April 1951, the gravity of these limited challenges to Chinese security was compounded by the threat that the confrontation in Korea could escalate into a wider Sino-American conflict. On March 24 Gen. MacArthur had publicly threatened to expand the war to mainland China, and the Chinese government had responded by publicizing its determination to resist any "aggression" against Chinese territory. In Korea itself, Chinese forces had been substantially reinforced, and on March 31 CPV forces drove back two US armored columns that had crossed the 38th Parallel.[61] This defeat did not long stem the US advance, and major UN detachments were reported crossing the line in force on April 3.[62] As US Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk told the British Ambassador in Washington on April 5, US policy was dominated by an expectation that the Communists planned "a major new offensive in the immediate future."[63]

The set of naval exercises in the Taiwan Straits and South China Sea requested by MacArthur and approved by the JCS was assigned to the US Seventh Fleet's striking force, Task Force 77. The operation, which involved sending two aircraft carriers and a flotilla of warships "through the Formosa Straits and down to Hainan [Island]" was ostensibly designed to facilitate aerial reconnaissance of Chinese Communist military installations on Hainan Island. According to JCS member Gen. Omar Bradley, "it ha[d] to do with the possibility of an invasion [by Chinese Communist forces] of Indochina from Hainan."[64] An official history of US Navy operations in the Korean War, however, later maintained that the Task Force 77 operation was undertaken in response to "intelligence of troop and junk concentrations in mainland [China] ports [which] suggested the possibility of an invasion attempt when the April good weather came," referring to a potential Communist attack on Taiwan.[65] Possibly US military decision-makers were receiving conflicting intelligence information about Communist Chinese intentions. British understandings of the US Administration's intentions were less confused: expressing his country's objection to the naval operation, the British Ambassador in Washington told Rusk that the plan amounted to " 'dragging coat tails' [which was a World War II expression applied to operations which challenged the enemy to come out and fight.] [*sic*]"[66]

Although MacArthur was relieved of his command of UN forces in Korea on April 11 under highly charged circumstances in Washington DC, the naval operation he had requested for the South China Sea was carried out. Air reconnaissance missions were flown over Hainan Island on April 11 and 13, 1951, and unspecified naval maneuvers were conducted by Task Force 77.[67] According to an official account the aerial reconnaissance operations were completed "without incident, except that some anti-aircraft fire from coastal batteries had been encountered."[68] It is clear that the operations marked a new escalation of the Sino-American confrontation. A *Renmin Ribao* editorial published on April 15 claimed that on April 11 "over 200 US planes invad[ed] the sky over the coast of Fukien" (Fujian province) and strafed targets at Fuzhou. Xinhua reported on April 14 that

the US planes had caused deaths and injuries on the ground.[69] The US forces had conducted naval and aerial operations hundreds of kilometers from the UN's sphere of operations in Northeast Asia and beyond the US zone of protection around Taiwan. The Task Force 77 operations demonstrated the capacity and willingness of the United States to project its military power into the South China Sea area and against southern mainland China targets.

The Task Force maneuvers coincided with an intensification of the air war in Korea which threatened to expand the conflict further in Northeast Asia. The UN command had responded to the massive Chinese reinforcement program during late March by increasing its bombing runs on overland Chinese supply lines moving materiel through North Korea. This effort also involved bombing strikes on the bridges over the Yalu River, which formed the international boundary between China and North Korea. On one such mission on March 30, US pilots encountered 38 MiG jet fighters.[70] Augmented air operations by both fighters and bombers on both sides continued for almost three weeks. On April 12 two engagements, officially described by the US Far East Air Forces Command as "the greatest jet air battle in history," involved at least 65 MiG fighters attempting to intercept 32 US bombers and 115 US jet aircraft providing air cover for bombing missions against the Yalu bridges.[71] On April 15 *Renmin Ribao* claimed that on April 12 US planes had bombed the city and suburban districts of Andong, just inside Chinese territory, which Chinese and Soviet air forces used as a base.[72]

These developments, combined with the US naval operations in the South China Sea and with incipient Sino-French confrontation inside northwestern Tonkin, mark the period between April 11 and 13, 1951 as one during which the threat of a general war in the Far East escalated to a critical stage.

For this study, the most important aspect of the developments in the Far East is the deep volatility of the overall situation and the potential for an eruption of Sino-American hostilities outside the limits of the Korean theatre. It is within this context of escalating conflict that the decision by Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap to broadcast statements in early April declaring a return to guerrilla warfare must be assessed. The larger crisis in the region began to move toward relaxation in the period after MacArthur was removed from his command, but before this the Viet Minh leadership, no less than Chinese and Soviet leaders, confronted the possibility that a much larger war was imminent in East Asia. The Vietnamese might lose control of the "national liberation struggle" if it became enmeshed in a larger regional war, while the leaders in Beijing sought to limit the potential for direct US intervention on the mainland's perimeter. The broadcast statements by Ho and Giap seem to have reflected a combination of expediency and Chinese pressure rather than internal decisions about fundamentally new tactics for military struggle in Vietnam.

That no definitive shift in Viet Minh struggle policy had yet taken place was indicated by additional Viet Minh broadcasts, which after the immediate crisis in the Far East had passed moved toward a more familiar treatment of military policy issues. On April 18, for example, a VNA broadcast reported that Giap had advised an artillery unit that the basic goal of military operations was, as it had been at the still-secret Party plenum in mid-March, to "annihilate the main forces of the

enemy."[73] French intelligence, based upon captured documents and aerial reconnaissance of Viet Minh troop movements, also indicated that there had been no major changes in PAVN tactics in Tonkin, and that preparations for "another major effort" were underway.[74]

The economic impact of the Korean War and China's aid to the Viet Minh

One contemporary analysis of China's economy estimated that the expenses incurred by the People's Republic of China (PRC) for its military and internal security program in 1951 would be three and half times government revenue.[75] This level of expenditure entailed particular difficulties and policy adjustments because, despite some Soviet aid in key sectors, the Chinese leadership was determined to finance its military program chiefly by mobilizing China's own domestic wealth and resources. It is known that in accepting Soviet military equipment for use in Korea, the PRC was accumulating a growing financial debt to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).[76] In 1964 the CCP acknowledged that to defray this debt some of the credits granted by the USSR under the February 1950 Sino-Soviet agreements were diverted from commercial purchases to military procurement.[77] However, the PRC relied primarily upon a variety of domestic programs for extracting wealth that was held inside China. At first this strategy operated relatively benignly, but as the financial costs of the Korean conflict mounted, stringent new fundraising drives were introduced.[78] On June 1, 1951 a nationwide drive was inaugurated to secure from private sources funds for the purchases of aircraft, heavy artillery, and other weapons, including small arms and machine guns. The "June First Call" required the participation, "except for the postal service and the railways, (of) all individuals, enterprises, government organizations and associations."[79] A classified US analysis produced in late 1952 estimated that the equivalent of US $278 million was raised through this program.[80] The PRC also increased its pressure on overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia to remit foreign currencies to relatives on the mainland, and it solicited direct investment from overseas Chinese for mainland companies and development projects as another means of obtaining foreign exchange.[81] In October 1951 even greater austerity measures were heralded by Mao Zedong's announcement of an "increase production and practice economy" campaign.

For the Chinese, the costs of a prolonged war included the imposition of draconian restrictions, as Peng Zhen's speech of February 1951 indicated, as well as the subordination of the industrialization recovery program to the requirements of international and internal security. The economic problems associated with the Korean War did not emerge immediately; indeed, the initial flow of government purchasing orders in the autumn of 1950 gave rise to a small boom in the economy.[82] The early battlefield successes of the CPV boosted confidence in the PRC's currency, the yuan, and until January–February 1951 the government appreciated the yuan's value against other currencies by adjusting its official exchange rates.[83] In late 1950, however, fundamental economic problems began to arise. Shortages in key industrial

sectors and the effects of years of neglect and civil war were aggravated by the imposition by the UN of an embargo on the export of "strategic goods" to the PRC; important US trade legislation banning exchanges with China enacted in late 1950 also damaged the PRC's economy.[84]

China's counter-strategy of purchasing embargoed items indirectly, especially through Hong Kong, depleted its limited foreign currency holdings and fueled latent suspicions both inside China and elsewhere in Asia about the soundness of the yuan.[85] Whereas the Chinese currency had maintained its trading value in Hong Kong until about mid-February 1951, by early March the yuan had depreciated by almost 20 per cent, threatening the PRC's ability to purchase embargoed items via the Colony.[86] To reinforce the currency and to control the flight of yet more capital from the southern provinces, the PRC was forced to prohibit the import and export of its own currency on March 6, 1951.[87] As battlefield reverses in Korea continued, so did the depreciation of the yuan. The Communist authorities reportedly became increasingly "alarmed" by the deteriorating financial situation, and took further measures to curb the activities of currency traders.[88]

The growing financial crisis informed several important decisions by the Chinese leadership in the spring of 1951, including the launch of the "June First Call." The country was also encountering additional problems in its military supply sector; it has already been shown that shortages in southern China had led to a temporary suspension of aid deliveries to the Viet Minh in December 1950–January 1951 and to irregular supply deliveries thereafter. As the reinforcement of the Korean theatre was accelerated and as defense mobilization went forward in China, the shortage of weapons became acute. A high-level US intelligence assessment produced in early July 1951 revealed that by that time the Chinese government was "unable to replace from its own resources the stocks of materiel now being expended in Korea."[89] Faced with both foreign exchange shortfalls and impending weapons shortages, the Chinese leadership was compelled to seek more military supplies from Moscow, and to alter the structure of its military assistance program for the Viet Minh.[90]

According to US sources, a series of Sino-Viet Minh conferences took place in late March and early April 1951, some of which were also reportedly attended by Soviet representatives; as discussed earlier, one of these conferences produced the "decision" on a return to guerrilla warfare.[91] In private talks in 1952 with a former senior official in the DRV Ministry of Finance, British diplomats obtained a detailed account of another Sino-Viet Minh meeting held during April 1951.[92] According to this source, a Chinese delegation led by Gen. Chen Geng and a Viet Minh delegation led by DRV Deputy Minister of Finance Trinh Van Binh met to discuss the basis and composition of China's assistance program. Chen notified Binh that China's stocks of war materiel were depleted and that all further equipment to be provided to the Viet Minh could only come from China's own production or from Viet Minh purchases – presumably from the USSR and Eastern European countries, or on the open market. The Chinese delegation then outlined the new policy reflecting this situation: the Viet Minh would be required to pay for all future supplies from China. As to the manner of payment, the delegations agreed that the DRV would open an account with the PRC's "National Bank" (probably the

Bank of China) and that the account would record as debits the costs of all military supplies and training, visits to China by Viet Minh officials, and the operating costs of bilateral institutions. The account could be credited only by the deposit of gold or exchangeable foreign currencies, or by the deposit of any future loan to the DRV from the USSR.[93]

This April 1951 conference marked a turning point in Sino-Vietnam relations. By putting Chinese military assistance back on a financial basis, China's position was changed from that of a donor-sponsor to that of a creditor of the DRV. From this point, despite later growth in the levels of Chinese supplies reaching the Viet Minh, China's political influence over the Vietnamese leadership began to decline, leaving open the possibility that the USSR might emerge as an alternative sponsor of the Viet Minh. China's policy shift also brought new dimensions to the developing debate within the Viet Minh over its own military tactics against the French, particularly in relation to the nature of the struggle in the south.

For the Viet Minh, the immediate termination of China's military grants and the need to accumulate cash surpluses with which to finance materiel imports from the Chinese came at a particularly difficult juncture. Successive small rice harvests had resulted in food shortages in the Viet Bac, and as we have seen Ho Chi Minh himself appealed for increased production.[94] In late March 1951 VNWP Secretary Truong Chinh alluded to a rigorous new production campaign that would underpin the Viet Minh's efforts to meet increased output targets.[95] After April the scope of the Viet Minh's production and revenue accumulation drives was expanded through a series of administrative measures outlined by Pham Van Dong in May 1951.[96] The early-May DRV Council of Ministers meeting ratified the key decisions about the details of the new austerity drive: it approved the consolidation of agricultural taxes into a single levy and authorized a reorganization of the tax collection bureaucracy.[97] At the same time substantial reductions in the numbers of administrative personnel in the state structures were announced.[98] These initiatives, along with a drive to produce goods for export, demonstrated the Viet Minh leadership's recognition that it had been forced to enter a new phase of the war, in which full domestic mobilization would be essential to meet the growing financial burdens of the resistance struggle.[99]

The April 1951 Sino-Viet Minh conference on aid policy left one critical issue unresolved: the administration of any future Soviet loan to the DRV. At the April 1951 conference, the Viet Minh sought Chinese support in approaching the USSR for a loan of 20 million rubles, repayable after 30 years at 1 per cent interest.[100] We have seen how, at a bilateral conference in June 1950 the Chinese insisted that any loan from the USSR to the DRV be managed through Chinese banks and be denominated in Chinese currency, rather than in rubles as the Viet Minh preferred.[101] The question of the currency denomination of such a loan, and of Chinese support for the DRV application may have become linked during these negotiations, but that was not fully resolved during the critical April 1951 period.

It seems likely that the resolution of such financial issues awaited the outcome of the separate Sino-Soviet negotiations on military aid, commercial relations, and the relative value of the ruble and the yuan, all of which became perennial issues

between Beijing and Moscow throughout the 1950s.[102] According to one analyst, an agreement establishing the non-trade ruble–yuan rate was reached on June 1, 1951.[103] Settlement of this rate may have been a necessary preliminary to any finalization of Sino-Viet Minh agreements governing Chinese administration of a Soviet loan to the DRV. At a further Sino-Viet Minh financial conference held during July 1951, arrangements for China's administration of a Soviet loan to the DRV were reportedly agreed.[104] When or even if a Soviet loan was extended to the DRV during this period has not been established.[105]

The challenge to the policy on guerrilla tactics in Nambo, April 1951

During early 1951, the decision to postpone the general counteroffensive remained at the center of Viet Minh military policy. Under the "Middle Regions Offensive" plan, the Viet Minh launched main-force actions against the French in Tonkin while subordinating the armed struggle in southern Vietnam. The emerging differentiation of tactics pursued in Tonkin and in Nambo led to dissatisfaction among some southern Viet Minh activists. The weight of evidence indicates that the southern activists, taking advantage of the instability in the general politico-military situation in late March and early April, began to press the case for a defiant intensification of Viet Minh military operations in Nambo.

A later official Party history acknowledged that "erroneous views" had already emerged "about the protracted character of the resistance" before the founding of the VNWP in February 1951.[106]

At the time, it became increasingly clear that dissent from the "protracted struggle" line was concentrated in Nambo, where the official policy prescribed a fundamental restriction on the level of the anti-French armed conflict. Broadcasts by Viet Minh-run radio stations located in the south began specifically endorsing the activities of larger military units operating in Nambo. For example, a March 6, 1951 report on recent attacks around Saigon praised the efforts of militia, local forces, and "the army," noting that the latter "struck heavily at the principal targets of the campaign."[107] As noted earlier, on March 27, the "Voice of Nambo" claimed that "resistance activities" in south and central Vietnam "were not confined to guerrilla warfare" and a call for an uprising was circulated in Saigon on March 31. The broadcasts by Ho and Giap in early April on guerrilla warfare, whatever the international and internal complexities which informed them, would have been seen as reasserting the central leadership's line on the lower level of armed struggle appropriate to conditions in the south. Those in the southern Viet Minh organization who had opposed this line now became more active in challenging it.

The central figure in this challenge was the Commander-in-Chief of Viet Minh armed forces in Nambo, Gen. Nguyen Phuong Thao, who used the alias "Nguyen Binh." He was born in Hung Yen in Tonkin, but he seems to have had family connections among active Vietnamese nationalists in Saigon; he went south after serving on a French ship (which may have taken him to France at some point), and in the south he, along with Tran Huy Lieu and others, joined the Viet Nam Quoc Dan

Dang (VNQDD) in September 1929.[108] His involvement in security and intelligence work in Saigon began soon afterwards, and he became chief of "*Sûreté*" and organization in a VNQDD leadership cell headed by Tran Huy Lieu.[109] After his conviction by a French court in 1930, Nguyen Binh was incarcerated at Poulo Condore Island prison, where, with Tran Huy Lieu and many other nationalist leaders, he was "converted to communism."[110]

He may have visited China afterwards, but this is uncertain; French records report, however, that by September 1945 he was commander of Viet Minh forces in the Mong Cai area on the border with China.[111] Following "difficulties" between him and Nationalist Chinese occupation troops, Vo Nguyen Giap reportedly ordered him to the south in late 1945. He first commanded southern Viet Minh troops in the Saigon-Cholon area, and was later appointed Commander-in-Chief of all Viet Minh forces in Nambo.[112]

On several occasions after his appointment to the Nambo command, Nguyen Binh is reported to have expressed differences with policy decisions made by Viet Minh and Party leaders. In June 1947, for example, rumors circulated of a split between Nguyen Binh and the President of the Viet Minh Executive Committee for Nambo, Pham Van Bach, although the details are unclear.[113]

In May 1948 US reports claimed that disagreements within the Viet Minh in the south had led Ho Chi Minh to dispatch a delegation to the south to mediate between Gen. Nguyen Binh and regional political leaders; according to a French *Sûreté* official in October 1948, Nguyen Binh had retained his command position despite his "differences" over political issues with the Viet Minh leadership.[114] Nguyen Binh's autonomy increased as he directed an acceleration of the struggle in 1949–50 "to take advantage of the gradual transfer of authority [by the French] in Saigon to the new Vietnamese government [under Bao Dai]."[115]

Within the Viet Minh organization in Nambo the military was still relatively free of the structures of Party control before 1951; as military commander, therefore, Nguyen Binh possessed a considerable degree of freedom in the direction of his forces. This situation persisted until after the open "founding" of the VNWP in February 1951. Attempts to assert Party authority coincided with the Nambo commander's own effort to prevent the marginalization of the armed struggle in the south, which had been deepening due to China's policies of providing aid to the Viet Minh in the north and of seeking a stabilization of the pattern of conflict on its southern perimeter. This clash of interests between the central military command in the north and Nguyen Binh's command in the south produced a major internal political crisis in Nambo.

The initial phase of this crisis began on April 9, 1951, amid the major international crises in East Asia described earlier. On that day, a broadcast statement by Viet Minh Gen. Nguyen Chi Thanh, the head of the PAVN's General Political Department, declared that the Army enthusiastically welcomed the founding of the VNWP: he said that the "new" Party would afford the people and their Army "a firmer steering hand and a firmer revolutionary staff."[116] It was later revealed that on April 10 a similar message aimed specifically at the Viet Minh in Nambo was formulated; when this statement was finally made public on May 3, however,

it revealed a more complicated formula for Party–army relations in the south.[117] The message for Nambo was signed on behalf of the Nambo troops by Nguyen Binh and his deputy, "Duong Quoc Dhin" (an alias used by Le Hien Mai), and on behalf of the VNWP by "Political Commissar" Le Duan. The period between the actual date of this statement, April 10, and the date of its public broadcast, May 3, was one of full-blown crisis within the Viet Minh leadership in the south.

In this period major differences between the strategic policies endorsed by the most senior Party and military principals in Nambo became clear. Broadcasts by southern Viet Minh stations made repeated references to the intensification of combat within the jurisdiction of the Nambo command, including in Cambodia, which was said to have become a "stage for large-scale people's warfare."[118] In April French intelligence sources obtained information about a plan to reorganize the internal territorial structure of the Nambo Command. Under the proposal, southern Interzones Seven, Eight, and Nine were to be consolidated into two new areas designated "North" and "South," covering all of Cochinchina on either side of the Mekong River, comprising Nambo and much of Cambodia.[119]

This plan may have been designed to complement and underpin Nguyen Binh's greater objective of upgrading and expanding the anti-French war in the south. According to French intelligence, a military conference convened in western Nambo during September 1951 criticized Nguyen Binh for his actions during April 1951, when he was accused of having attempted to create four main-force army regiments in the south.[120]

The potential impact of Nguyen Binh's plans for enlarging military units in the south and intensifying the conflict there raised fundamental questions about the overall strategy and organization of the war, but certain issues in particular emerged as key to the Party leadership's concerns. First was the question of balancing the strengths of the components of the Viet Minh organization in the south. Given the relative weakness of the Party in Nambo, it was at least possible that Nguyen Binh's acceleration of the war could develop beyond the Party's capacity to control it. There was also the practical problem of actually equipping and supporting main-force units in Nambo.[121] Thailand, which earlier had been the chief external source of supplies for the forces in Nambo, had developed much closer relations with the United States during 1950, and actions to curb Viet Minh political and purchasing activity in that country had been taken: on March 26, 1951, for example, Thai officials ordered Nguyen Duc Quy, the unofficial DRV representative in Bangkok, to leave the country.[122]

Nguyen Binh nonetheless went forward with measures to create larger regiments, and the central leadership was forced to respond. Official Party disapproval seems to have been conveyed on April 20, 1951 at a meeting between the VNWP Southern Directorate, the new Party committee responsible for affairs in Nambo, and Viet Minh mass organizations in the south.[123] The meeting was convened to "introduce" the Southern Directorate to Viet Minh elements in the south, and to assert the Party's authority over all major policy decisions. In his speech at this meeting Le Duc Tho, a senior VNWP member and member of the Southern Directorate, revealed that the Party was concerned about internal opposition to its policies in the south.

He declared that Viet Minh organizations in the south need not be afraid to criticize the VNWP, but he also warned that "compatriots who had gone astray should return to the fold where they would be welcomed in a spirit of reconciliation."[124]

The offer of "reconciliation" seems to have allowed a temporary accommodation to emerge by early May. The formal welcoming message from the Nambo military, Nguyen Binh's power base, to the Party, originally "signed" on April 10, was not broadcast until May 3. Instead of offering an unqualified endorsement of the Party's political preeminence, however, the broadcast text of the message indicated that the role of the Lien Viet front in the southern struggle would be virtually equal to the roles of the Party and military.[125] This formula, co-signed by Le Duan and Nguyen Binh, suggests that Party and military leaders had arrived at a compromise that avoided making a formal statement of either organization's supremacy. As we shall see, the Lien Viet front was relatively weak in the south, and elevating its role could do little to ease Party–army tensions. Whatever the precise arrangements behind the broadcast statement, it fell short of replicating Nguyen Chi Thanh's unambiguous declaration of April 9 that the Party was the military's "revolutionary staff."

The direct connection between the Party's need to reconcile the Nambo military to its line on maintaining guerrilla tactics in the south and the Party's relationship with the Chinese was illustrated by two commentaries broadcast by Viet Minh stations on May 5. A Voice of Vietnam commentary on military tactics and strategy declared that the Vietnamese struggle, in developing the capacity for guerrilla warfare, "must … imitate the strategy used by Mao Tse-tung."[126] This strategy was synthesized in Mao's principles of "people's war," which implied that the Viet Minh must "develop guerrilla warfare intensively, for it is our dominant preoccupation if we want to adopt the Chinese method gradually [*sic*]." This commentary did not preclude the use of main-force tactics, but repeated Mao's view that such tactics must be employed only when the situation was favorable. The VNWP position was increasingly one which judged the situation to be "favorable" for main-force operations in Tonkin, but not in Nambo.

The second broadcast on May 5 was directed to southern Vietnam from the Voice of Nambo, the station that previously had espoused Nguyen Binh's position on accelerating anti-French warfare in the south. It argued that the war in Korea against US "imperialists" was directly relevant for the people of Nambo: as the "common enemy" intensifies its attacks, it claimed, the people must be "conscious of the risks they run, of the menace that hangs over everybody."[127] This seems to have been an allusion to the possibility of direct US intervention in Indochina, one of the reasons behind the Party's strategy – supported by China – of restricting main-force warfare to Tonkin only. The commentary asserted that the international situation was a major factor in the "combat we are waging for the liberation of our country," and implied that the political, economic, and military struggles must be seen as being of equal importance.

The commentaries of May 5 were broadcast to a domestic audience, but they seem to have reflected a sudden, albeit brief, improvement in Sino-Viet Minh relations, which had been on the decline for months. For the Chinese the war in Korea was becoming increasingly costly, but some gains had been secured in late April;

Chinese units had crossed the 38th parallel in some places by April 24 and were threatening to outflank Seoul by the end of the month.[128] Against this background Hoang Van Hoan again visited Beijing, arriving on April 25. In contrast to his many previous visits to the Chinese capital, Hoan's appearance, engagements, and speeches were given extensive publicity by the Chinese media.[129] For the first time, Xinhua referred to Hoan as the DRV's "Ambassador," and he presented his diplomatic credentials to Zhu De, Vice-Chairman of the PRC, on April 28.[130] The tensions which must have arisen earlier in the month when the Chinese changed their financial policy on assistance to the Viet Minh must have dissipated, but the precise reasons for this are far from clear. There may have been some important development in Sino-Viet Minh thinking on strategy for the conflict in Indochina; perhaps the bringing of Nguyen Binh under greater central control was appreciated in Beijing, as a factor that reduced the likelihood of US military intervention on the Korean model in Vietnam. The strategic crises surrounding China's southern perimeter earlier in April lent greater urgency to China's dictum that the Vietnamese should not risk provoking greater US involvement in Indochina by escalating anti-French warfare in the south. It is certain that in early May, just as the Party's Southern Directorate and Gen. Nguyen Binh were coming to an accommodation about the struggle strategy in southern Vietnam, and Truong Chinh was declaring that guerrilla warfare remained crucial to the Communists' military strategy, Hoan's arrival in Beijing was being marked by special celebrations in China. On May 12, a banquet was given in Hoan's honor in Beijing, and the event was hosted by Mao Zedong himself.[131]

5 The crises of mid-1951

The failure of the Communists' offensives in Korea in late April and mid-May 1951 and the growing tensions between the Vietnam Workers' Party (VNWP) and southern military activists in Vietnam forced both the Chinese and Vietnamese leaderships once again to reassess their respective military struggles. For the Chinese, the question of entering direct negotiations with the United States in Korea had not yet arisen publicly, but it was the US belief that the disastrous losses suffered by the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV), reportedly totaling 68,000 casualties in the period May 17–20, 1951 alone, would undermine China's ability to continue the war on its present course.[1] For the Vietnamese leadership in Tonkin, a new defeat in early June raised the issue of whether military policy should be changed again, to give greater emphasis to guerrilla actions, even in Tonkin. Debates arose over the possible revision of military strategies, and these tensions emerged within a context of uncertainty and debate, especially for the Vietnamese.

Debates in Tonkin and Nambo, early June 1951

The People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN)'s third major offensive of 1951, in the Day River region southwest of the French redoubt around Hanoi and Haiphong, began with preliminary attacks during the last week of May, but the heaviest fighting took place between May 29 and June 5–6. Supporting operations were also planned in Nambo. The PAVN's actions southwest of the Tonkin delta achieved important objectives, including the seizure of substantial supplies of rice and the infiltration of a full regiment into the delta northeast of Nam Dinh, from where it would be able to cooperate with another regiment already active inside the French defense perimeter. Western officials recognized that this would facilitate the Viet Minh's "organization and control of smuggling of rice over a longer time."[2]

The principal goal of pushing back the French perimeter, and perhaps of breaching it irreparably, was not realized. Given the experiences at Vinh Yen and Mao Khe, the PAVN leadership may have foreseen the army's failure to "liberate" key posts near the district town of Ninh Binh, but the scale of the casualties incurred in the fighting seems not to have been anticipated. According to the French Gen. Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, the 60 Viet Minh battalions involved in the Day River battle suffered around 10,000 casualties.[3] These losses probably played some role in the

subsequent sharp debate over military policy in Tonkin. A relatively detailed picture of that debate emerged from official Viet Minh media. Giap reported to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) Council of Ministers during the first 10 days of June.[4] So far there is no record of his report's content, but three articles released during the Ministers' meeting offer clues about both the nature of Giap's report and the central leadership's debates in the wake of the Day River defeat.

As recently as May 19, 1951 (Ho Chi Minh's official birthday), Giap had reiterated his endorsement of main force engagements against the French, intimating that Ho himself approved of conducting "large-scale offensive battles with concentrated forces."[5] As the Day River battle developed on June 3, Giap published an article in *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* [*People's Army*] which asserted that the Viet Minh had scored a great "victory" in the battle, that Ninh Binh was the first delta town "liberated" by the PAVN, and that since the Middle Regions Offensive "we have gone from mobile warfare strategy, wearing out the enemy strength, to the open-warfare strategy, liberating towns."[6] This optimistic assessment, broadcast by the Vietnam News Agency (VNA) on June 3, reflected Giap's appreciation of the battle before the heaviest fighting took place.

Meanwhile, the Viet Minh media issued an acknowledgement of Chinese guidance in the struggle. A broadcast on June 2 repeated an article from *Cuu Quoc* [*National Salvation*] which declared that "we must unite closely with all the peoples of Asia and put ourselves under the direction of the oldest people of Asia, that is to say the Chinese people, who are actually living in a democratic and popular [country]."[7] As the PAVN's battlefield position began to deteriorate, the question of Chinese guidance was never far from the center of the Vietnamese leadership's considerations.

These debates were also sensitive to the international situation. This point emerged in a VNA broadcast on June 6 in which Le Liem, Assistant Head of the PAVN Political Department, emphasized the international links of the leadership. He rebuked those cadres who failed to understand that the "resistance is a difficult task of long duration" and criticized those who ignored the international context of the armed struggle:

> the cadres do not understand yet, or enough, the duty which falls on them in the international plane, to assure the defense of peace against the imperialist warmongers. They are losing sight of the fact that our resistance is integrated in the world peace movement.[8]

By June 6–7 the PAVN's heavy losses in the Day River battle rendered invalid any hope that the offensive there would produce a "victory." On June 7 the central leadership took firm decisions both to initiate a program for improving the PAVN while diversifying the application of its power in Tonkin, and to vigorously reassert the authority of the Party in Nambo. The DRV Council of Ministers meeting, in session from June 1 to 10, seems to have been accompanied by concurrent high-level Party meetings on military and political policy.[9] On June 7 another article by

Giap was published in *Nhan Dan*, the Party's paper; it gave a *précis* of the problems of military organization in Tonkin.[10] Despite earlier improvements in the PAVN's equipment, organization, and motivation, and the adoption of mobile warfare tactics, Giap declared, important deficiencies persisted. These were particularly evident in the logistics systems, in the management of peasants' "contributions" to the military, and in preparations, especially by the regional forces, for the distinctly different demands of guerrilla warfare and "pitched battles." According to Giap, the "troops have often lost sight of the absolute necessity of total discipline as soon as the struggle passes from the guerrilla plane to that of frontal assault." Apparently on the basis of this evaluation of the PAVN's shortcomings, the DRV Ministers meeting approved a "circular on the reorganization of the armed forces."[11]

In the June 7 article, Giap confined his criticisms to the implementation and organization of the Day River battle plan, never acknowledging (at least in the available version of the article) that the plan itself or the tactics employed had been flawed. This is significant insofar as it suggests that the central leadership had not decided to abandon completely the use of main force tactics in Tonkin. It was, however, obvious that even the best PAVN divisions could not yet be assured of clear victories in sustained set-piece battles against the US-supplied French.

Against this background, a renewed commitment to the flexible deployment of the Viet Minh's armed forces in Tonkin arose. By mid-June the Viet Minh were promoting the use of guerrilla warfare in the Tonkin delta where, as we know, an additional regiment was now in place inside the French delta area perimeter.[12] In an article broadcast on July 18 Gen. Hoang Sam, PAVN Commander of Interzone Three (the Tonkin delta area), confirmed that the intensification of guerrilla warfare was now "of primary importance" in the delta.[13] While main-force battles could still be expected elsewhere in Tonkin, the form of struggle appropriate in the Hanoi–Haiphong area had clearly been changed since the Day River defeat.

The second clear decision by the central leadership on June 7 involved the leadership in southern Vietnam. On that day a secret Party directive was issued which abolished the VNWP Southern Directorate and established as its replacement the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN).[14] The text of the directive indicates that the change had been decided upon by the VNWP Central Executive Committee at its "first meeting," probably a reference to the plenum held in mid-March 1951. This would suggest that the problems in the south had been recognized by that stage. The exact reasons for issuing the directive creating COSVN on June 7 are not known, but the growing autonomy of the southern military organization, discussed below, must have clarified the need for firm measures to ensure Party control over the struggle in the south. The June 7 directive specified that COSVN would be composed of six senior commissars: Le Duan, "special secretary;" Le Duc Tho, "assistant special secretary;" Pham Hung; Nguyen Van Khin, alias "Thuong Vu" (using the name "Trung Nam"); Ha Huy Giap; and Ung Van Khiem. The COSVN leadership thus differed from that of the old Southern Directorate in one crucial respect: it did not include the Nambo Commander-in-Chief, Nguyen Binh.[15] The June 7 directive may therefore be identified as the point at which the central leadership formalized a decision to reduce Nguyen Binh's influence.

Although a new Party leadership for Nambo had been formally approved, delays occurred in the transmission of the directive to the south. The actual situation there remained confused as tensions between the Party and the military continued. At a meeting on June 1–2, representatives of the military, administrative, and front organizations and the VNWP Southern Directorate "examined the situation in the world, in Vietnam, and in Nambo" and "studied the … instructions of the Central Committee and the Steering Committee of the South."[16] The military's challenge to limitations on the armed struggle in the south must have been a major concern. Radio broadcasts by southern stations presented a symptom of the continuing difficulties. On June 2, the final day of the conference, the Voice of Saigon-Cholon endorsed the strategy of the general counteroffensive: while cautioning against the error of believing that "the counter-offensive will be launched simultaneously in Saigon-Cholon and North Vietnam," the commentary recalled that "the cue for intensive preparation of the general counter-offensive was issued some time ago."[17] On June 4 another station broadcast an editorial which referred to the Day River battle, saying that "all battlefields throughout the Nation are determined to compete in killing the bandits, and to cooperate with the Ninhbinh battlefield so as to powerfully drive the resistance toward early ultimate victory."[18] On June 8, a third broadcast asserted that the armed struggle in the south "had gone beyond the stage where it was a movement of resistance; it had passed over to a victorious offensive on all fronts. It was the same in Cambodia …."[19] As if to shield this statement from criticism, the broadcast claimed that the army in the South was following the example of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).

These broadcasts were transmitted as PAVN operations in the Day River developed, and as the June 8 broadcast suggests, they presaged new large operations by the Nambo military. Intelligence reports indicated a significant increase in Viet Minh activity in the south in mid-June, including assaults on guard towers and a "heavy attack" on a pro-Bao Dai Vietnamese garrison at Vinh Chau.[20] As happened following the Mao Khe battle in late March, these operations by Nambo forces continued to develop after the PAVN in Tonkin had been decisively defeated.

However, a change in the tone of southern stations' broadcasts became apparent around mid-June. On June 15 the formerly recalcitrant Voice of Nambo endorsed guerrilla tactics, but described them as a useful supplement to "regular forces" fighting "major battles."[21] The Voice of Saigon-Cholon transmitted an important three-part article on struggle policy between June 16 and 18.[22] This article declared that the long-term resistance policy for the cities of Saigon-Cholon must involve political mobilization and economic sabotage as well as armed struggle; where armed struggle is undertaken, it must be based on the creation of guerrilla units inside the city. The article also warned that "the armed revolt within [the cities] must be prepared so that it blazes at the same time that the forces from outside come to liberate Saigon-Cholon." Here the broadcast echoed the criticism of premature action issued on April 5, after the distribution of leaflets calling for an uprising in the city. The June 16–18 commentary also included a barbed criticism which pointed to the commanders, notably Nguyen Binh and his allies, responsible for the increased level of conflict then evident in Nambo:

> For certain persons, the words "preparation for the quick passing over to the general counter offensive" mean that the final moment has come, that the general counter offensive is launched. They then make propaganda which is not proper, which does not fit in with the Governmental directives at all, which seems to contradict what is said and done in the free zone. In acting this way these people tire the population which is disappointed and becomes prey to the enemy's terrorist actions. The chief cause of these false maneuvers is in their failure to recognize this essential truth: It is necessary for the resistance to endure. [*sic*][23]

The broadcast reflected the declining influence of Nguyen Binh, but he had yet to be finally removed from power.

A month of crisis, July 23–August 22, 1951

The tensions within the Vietnamese leadership and between the Viet Minh and Chinese Communists over various aspects of struggle policy still presented serious difficulties for bilateral relations. Strangely, but for the death of senior Vietnamese Communist Party and DRV government leader Ho Tung Mau (alias Ho Ba Cu) on July 23, 1951, it might not have been possible to identify the importance of the events which took place during late July and August 1951. His death was not publicly announced until August 11. In keeping with standard protocol on the occasion of the death of a senior leader, the Chinese issued a formal condolence statement, but not until August 22. The complex course of events behind this unusual sequence, which corresponded closely with the key activities of a Vietnamese mission to China, merits detailed scrutiny.

Official reports from the Xinhua agency announced that a "Vietnamese people's delegation" arrived in Beijing on either July 23 or 24; the precise date is uncertain.[24] The delegation was lead by Hoang Quoc Viet, a veteran Party leader active since the late 1920s. The group included Le Tung Son, a Party organizer active for many years in southern China.[25] The delegation initially received high-level attention from the Chinese leadership, including a welcoming committee of senior officials and a banquet in its honor attended by Liu Shaoqi.[26] However, a *Renmin Ribao* editorial welcoming the mission strongly implied that Sino-Viet Minh relations needed improvement. The commentary said that "fraternal and friendly unity must be strengthened further in the fight against imperialist aggression and for the defense of peace in Asia and the reconstruction of the two countries."[27] This, the editorial said, was the mission of the Vietnamese delegation visiting Beijing. *Renmin Ribao*'s phraseology indicates both that there were differing views between the two sides on the "defense of peace in Asia" – apparently a reference to strategic policy in the region – and that discussions would include consideration of "reconstruction," a euphemism for trade or aid issues. Here it may be useful to note that also on July 23, the Chinese announced a three-day suspension of the ceasefire negotiations that had opened on July 10 at Kaesong in central Korea.[28]

Additional reports suggest that developments during the delegation's visit to Beijing were of considerable importance. A Hong Kong newspaper claimed that

Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap secretly visited the Chinese capital between July 28 and August 1, and that their discussions resulted in a promise from Liu Shaoqi to speed the dispatch of Chinese volunteers to "infiltrate" into Indochina to help the Viet Minh.[29] Whether or not Ho and Giap actually travelled to Beijing in this period, it seems clear that some basic improvement in bilateral relations had been achieved by August 3, when Hoang Quoc Viet made a radio broadcast to Vietnam from Beijing praising the "gigantic strength of the Chinese people."[30] On the same day an article in the Lien Viet front's newspaper *Cuu Quoc* [*National Salvation*] emphasized Sino-Vietnamese affinity based on shared anti-imperialism.[31]

It may be that, as Nationalist Chinese authorities informed US and French diplomats in 1954, a secret conference of Asian Communist leaders and Soviet representatives took place between August 7 and 12, 1951 near Beijing, where a "military alliance pact" of some kind was said to have been concluded.[32] Whether this report is accurate or not, Sino-Viet Minh relations remained complicated in this period. A new stage seems to have been reached around August 10, when Hoang Quoc Viet and his delegation left Beijing for Tianjin, perhaps indicating that a plateau had been reached in the bilateral talks at the capital.[33] Some degree of continuing bilateral tension is suggested by the failure of the Chinese broadcast media to give the customary publicity to the anniversary on August 19 of the Viet Minh's 1945 August Revolution.[34]

There are substantial indications that a key policy shift resulting in important new bilateral understandings occurred around August 21–23. It is known, for example, that Hoang Quoc Viet's delegation arrived in Pyongyang from Tianjin on August 21, reportedly with the purpose of participating in celebrations to mark Korea's liberation anniversary on August 27.[35] The delegation, the first from the Viet Minh to visit North Korea since the beginning of hostilities there in June 1950, arrived in time to observe at first hand the Communists' decision, on the night of August 22–23, to suspend indefinitely the ceasefire talks at Kaesong. According to official Chinese reports this action was taken because United Nations forces had attacked the neutral zone where the talks were being held.[36] Also on August 22, an article published in *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* [*People's Army*] praised PAVN "victories" in the central highlands and claimed that the troops' confidence had increased since the "tactics and techniques of the people's army (were) applied according to the 'military conceptions of the revolutionary policy of the Chinese Liberation Army.' "[37] The new pro-Chinese theme in the Viet Minh media continued on August 23, when a VNA broadcast referred to *Nhan Dan*'s publication on July 19 of translations of some writings by Mao Zedong.[38]

Certain key developments in Vietnam during this period correspond closely to the significant sequence of events in Hoang Quoc Viet's mission to China and North Korea. On August 11, the day after the delegation's departure from Beijing to Tianjin, the VNA reported that the VNWP Central Executive Committee had announced the death of Ho Tung Mau. Mau was said to have died on July 23, the likely date of the mission's arrival in Beijing, "while [he was] on an inspection tour of North-Central Vietnam."[39] Ho Tung Mau had been involved in the Communist movement in Vietnam since at least 1924; by 1928 he had also become a member of

the Chinese Communist Party.[40] In January 1950 he was appointed inspector-general of the DRV, and in that capacity he toured the "liberated" areas under DRV control, observing and reporting on the implementation of government policies.[41] According to French intelligence information, in late July 1951 Ho Tung Mau had been in Interzone Four, and on July 23 he was believed to have been in Thanh Hoa province, on the southern edge of the French Hanoi–Haiphong redoubt.[42] The VNA's account maintained that Mau died of natural causes, but there was speculation that his death had political dimensions, if not political causes. A variety of rumors circulated amongst non-Communist Vietnamese in Hanoi, including one that held that he had been killed in a French air raid, and another reporting that he had committed suicide "in chagrin at his government's failure to alleviate the sufferings caused by the Thanh Hoa famine;" French authorities privately confided to US diplomats that they believed Ho Tung Mau had been "purged."[43] On August 22, the day after Hoang Quoc Viet arrived in Pyongyang, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee finally issued a condolence statement on Ho Tung Mau's death, calling him a "brilliant revolutionist," although not referring to his long membership in the CCP.[44]

The importance of the events of July 23, the probable date of the Vietnamese delegation's arrival in Beijing and the date of Ho Tung Mau's death, is underscored by the fact that on this date the decisions of the early-July DRV Council of Ministers meeting were publicly revealed, in broadcast reports transmitted on July 22–23.[45] Crucially, these reports revealed that Tran Van Giau had been removed from his post as director-general of the DRV Central Information Service and replaced by To Huu. This personnel change, involving a key leader of the Communist movement in southern Vietnam, was a new and unanticipated twist in the fortunes of the senior leadership in the south. As recently as July 4, Tran Van Giau had been described in an official broadcast as the Central Information Service's director-general, while To Huu was a Party literary expert who seems at this time to have been close to VNWP Secretary Truong Chinh.[46]

There is another level, too, on which the juxtaposition of delegation leader Hoang Quoc Viet's arrival in Beijing and the formal announcement of the removal of Tran Van Giau is particularly intriguing. In September–October 1945, when the shortcomings of the Viet Minh leadership in Nambo under Tran Van Giau had been recognized in the north, it was Hoang Quoc Viet who had been dispatched to the south by the central leadership to oversee Giau's demotion and to impose the leadership's policy prescriptions on the southern cadres formerly led by Giau.[47] Key features of those events in 1945 and the developments of July 1951 are similar. Hoang Quoc Viet gained influence, including new connections in China, at the same time that Tran Van Giau's importance declined, and Tran Van Giau's demotions prefigured new efforts by the central leadership to exert its authority over the leaders in the south. The developments of 1951, however, were even more disruptive to north–south relations within the Vietnamese Communists' Party, government, and military establishments than had been those of 1945. As we shall see, around August 21 – when Hoang Quoc Viet arrived in Pyongyang and when the CCP publicly acknowledged Ho Tung Mau's death – the ambitious

military commander of Viet Minh forces in Nambo, Nguyen Binh, was finally removed from power.

In understanding these critical developments in the south, it is useful to explore more closely the background of Ho Tung Mau's death. He was a senior figure of special importance in Sino-Vietnamese relations. Not only was Mau a long-standing member of the CCP, but he was also President of the China–Vietnam Friendship Association, the principal front organization in Vietnam concerned with boosting, publicizing, and mobilizing popular support for strong bilateral relations. As its president, Ho Tung Mau maintained contact with Chinese leaders assigned to oversee the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s ties with Vietnam, and he was often publicly reported as exchanging telegrams with Chinese officials to mark special occasions.[48]

Present information allows only an incomplete examination of conditions in the Viet Minh base areas in Thanh Hoa at the time of Ho Tung Mau's death, but it is clear that there had been important developments affecting his special domestic responsibility as inspector-general, that of the implementation and oversight of land ownership, reclassifications, redistributions, and agricultural tax assessments in the Viet Minh-held areas. In April 1950 "special committees" had been created under DRV auspices to evaluate peasants' tax liabilities under the government's new consolidated tax system.[49] As cadres strove to motivate peasants to meet the increased revenue collection targets introduced during the general mobilization programs of 1950, serious local food shortages developed, including in Thanh Hoa province. Cadres were driven on by reminders that "in the present phase of the resistance expenses were rising."[50] There was growing discontent in some Viet Minh-held areas of Tonkin, both because of food shortages and because of alleged maltreatment of peasants by goal-oriented Party cadres.[51] On July 19, 1951, four days before Ho Tung Mau's death, *Nhan Dan* published an editorial criticizing "erroneous and contrary tendencies" amongst cadres involved in the collection of the agricultural tax; in one northern province, the editorial said, cadres' actions had provoked "dissatisfaction amongst the people."[52] It was also acknowledged that the Viet Minh's military had been used to intimidate the populace in the area and to force peasants to work. A US State Department report later indicated that serious military difficulties arose from the food shortages caused by both policy decisions on tax collection and by cadres' "errors:" the PAVN's 308th and 312th Divisions were believed to have shed "several thousand" officers and men, and recruitment to main-force units was inhibited.[53]

It is not yet possible to establish a clear link between the *Nhan Dan* editorial of July 19 and Ho Tung Mau's death on July 23, but publication of the editorial was the signal for a new campaign of criticism of cadres' "mistakes" in collecting paddy loans and taxes in Tonkin and in assessing peasants' landholdings, in perpetuating "excessive bureaucratism," and in failing to submit to Party instructions and thus "incurring risk of creating separatist tendencies."[54] Among the articles issued during the campaign was one written by Le Van Luong and published in *Nhan Dan*; the article was broadcast on July 24, the day after Ho Tung Mau's death. Luong criticized "deviations from the Party line" in cadres' treatment of both peasants and landowners during the early stages of land reform.[55] As the DRV

inspector-general, Ho Tung Mau would have borne responsibility for many of the difficulties and shortcomings identified during this criticism campaign. It is worth noting that two of the major articles in the propaganda campaign, both penned by Le Van Luong, were publicized before the VNWP's official announcement of Mau's death on August 11.[56]

The events in Tonkin, as well as the concurrent events in Sino-Viet Minh relations, also cast new light on a series of simultaneous developments in Nambo. The central leadership's June 7 directive creating COSVN had excluded Gen. Nguyen Binh from the new body, but irresolution in the south persisted as delays occurred in the transmission of the directive to southern Party cells. By June 15–18, as shown earlier, the tone of official broadcasts on struggle policy had begun to change, emphasizing the themes of protracted struggle and the use of guerrilla tactics. Still, it appears that a serious internal political struggle within the southern Viet Minh organization was underway.

One stage in this struggle was reached around July 25 when, as available copies of the June 7 COSVN directive indicate, it was approved by a provincial Party committee (in Vinh Long) in the south.[57] It was not, however, officially ratified at district level in that province until August 11, which as we have seen was the date of the announcement of Ho Tung Mau's death. In the interim, two significant developments are known to have taken place in the south. First, according to a later broadcast by the Vietnam Information Service, a "month-long" conference of Nambo's political commissars was held during August 1951.[58] The conference was chaired by Le Duan, acting as "political commissar of the Nambo Command;" it is now known, of course, that he was also the "special secretary" at the top of the new COSVN structure. The commissars' conference emphasized the Nambo Viet Minh military's dependence upon the success of the Lien Viet front, and according to the broadcast report the conference "marked an extremely important phase in the training of the Army." The opening date of the conference is unknown. It may be that it was already in session by August 9, when the "VNWP Nambo Directorate" (the designation used in public pronouncements because the creation of COSVN itself remained secret) issued a public statement to Party members in French-held areas, instructing them to disobey the new military conscription orders of the Bao Dai government and to continue economic sabotage efforts while beginning guerrilla warfare.[59] Two days later, the COSVN directive of June 7 was ratified by a district-level Party committee in Vinh Long.

The August 9 statement's emphasis on civil disobedience and low-intensity warfare – as opposed to building up large forces and launching conventional main-force engagements – echoed themes set out in the June 16–18 broadcast on struggle policy transmitted by the Voice of Saigon-Cholon. It also seems to have represented the line put forward at the Nambo commissars' conference. According to a British intelligence report, a chief topic at that meeting was the formulation of "plans for the organization of bases from which guerrilla operations could be conducted."[60] These conference objectives clashed with the policies of large-scale warfare and force amalgamation embraced by Gen. Nguyen Binh, and it soon became clear that the commissars' conference marked the climax of the political struggle between

Le Duan and Nguyen Binh over military policy and the authority of the Party over military affairs in the south. As the conference continued during August, Le Duan secured the commissars' endorsement of the central Party leadership's policy on restricting the level of anti-French operations in the south, set forth publicly in the August 9 statement. Nguyen Binh's position as the chief Viet Minh commander in Nambo became untenable.

The process by which Nguyen Binh was removed from his command has been the subject of much speculation, as has the precise date on which it became effective, but it may have occurred around August 21. An Australian news service reported on August 20 that French military operations in southeastern Vietnam had destroyed Nguyen Binh's command headquarters 30 miles north of Saigon and forced his troops to flee toward the Cambodian border.[61] This defeat may have been the "last straw" for the southern commander: on August 24 French radio reported that Nguyen Binh had been formally removed from his post.[62]

According to French intelligence information, Nguyen Binh was killed by a patrol of pro-French Cambodian soldiers near Stung Treng in northeastern Cambodia on September 29, 1951; he had reportedly been summoned to the Viet Bac base area in Tonkin to attend a meeting of the PAVN High Command.[63] A US intelligence report suggests that he was en route to a "showdown" with the leadership in Tonkin when he was killed.[64] Party leaders in the south continued to encounter difficulties in asserting the Party's policy on guerrilla warfare even after the removal of Nguyen Binh and this may explain the delay in the official announcement of his death. The announcement, made by the Viet Minh Resistance Administrative Committee of Nambo, was issued on January 18, 1952, the second anniversary of the diplomatic recognition of the DRV by the PRC.[65] China had always favored guerrilla-level tactics in southern Vietnam whereas Nguyen Binh wanted large-scale operations; his removal could only have pleased Chinese leaders, and the announcement of his death on this anniversary should be understood as a milestone in improved Sino-Vietnamese relations.

By mid-1951 a distinct change in the character of the Franco-Viet Minh war itself was becoming evident. The Viet Minh's differentiation of military tactics employed in northern and southern Vietnam was crystallizing into two distinct strategies for the anti-French struggle. Within Tonkin itself, the pattern of military supply routes and engagements was changing. The Viet Minh's Middle Regions Offensive had failed to break through the French defense perimeter around Hanoi and Haiphong, both north of the redoubt (at Vinh Yen in January and at Mao Khe in March) and southwest of the delta (at the Day River in early June). The Viet Minh's difficulties following the defeat of the Middle Regions Offensive strategy were compounded by an important modification in the pattern of Chinese military assistance deliveries: from July 1951 the Chinese terminated the transfer of aid via the sea routes from Hainan Island to the Viet Minh base area in Thanh Hoa province south of the Tonkin Delta, known as Interzone Four.[66] The precise reason for this change is unknown. The Chinese may have decided against accepting the risks of confrontation with the United States on the maritime supply routes following the demonstration of US naval power in the South China Sea and around

Hainan Island during April, but present evidence permits no more than speculation on this point.

Whatever other effects the termination of Chinese aid deliveries to the Thanh Hoa coast may have had, it certainly gave special new significance to the territory between Thanh Hoa and Yunnan province in China. In particular, new importance was soon to be attached to the overland routes by which military supplies from the Chinese border supply camps could be moved south to Interzone Four and via which rice from the Thanh Hoa rice-producing base area could be moved north to the Viet Minh-held base areas in the rugged areas of northern and northwestern Tonkin. The importance of the communication routes between Yunnan and Thanh Hoa was a key factor in the re-orientation of the Viet Minh's military strategy in Tonkin which emerged in the autumn of 1951, when the major Franco-Viet Minh engagements began to develop in the area west of the French redoubt around the Hanoi–Haiphong corridor.

Epilogue

Rectification, regroupment, and Chinese aid before and after the Geneva Conference, 1952–54

Additional evidence about the permanence of the shift away from big-unit warfare in the south continued to accumulate throughout the first half of 1952, marking this as a clear turning point both in the conduct of the anti-French war and in the growing cooperative links between the Viet Minh units in the north and the Chinese Communists. An official Viet Minh communiqué about events in Nambo in the first three months of 1952, for example, noted that while guerrilla forces had been active the French had nonetheless "been compelled to transfer troops from South to North Vietnam," demonstrating that the French too had realized that the big-unit war would now develop almost exclusively in the north.[1] The Voice of Nambo, previously so closely associated with Nguyen Binh's policies of upgrading the conflict in the south, began to shift its emphasis altogether. On July 11, 1952, for example, it broadcast a long commentary marking the previously obscure anniversary of the revolution in Mongolia, and offering the gratitude of the Vietnamese people to the USSR, "bastion of world peace."[2]

Nguyen Binh's death had been a significant development in both internal and international relations. But below the surface of elite politics, the Party's need for an ideological reclamation of Nguyen Binh's followers in the south and for the elimination or political reconstruction of those front organizations and administrative institutions that had gained influence during his period of ascendancy was acutely apparent. A well-coordinated effort to initiate this process began in mid-1952. In early June, in the western sub-Interzone of Nambo, the Viet Minh Central Information Service organized a five-day seminar that criticized southern cadres for abject failures in their propaganda efforts, up to and including utilizing overly complex literary works and music rather than the simplest folk songs and straightforward political theatre. Cadres were told, "South Vietnam has some points which differ from those of Central and North Vietnam," and that these points should be addressed by the substitution of simplified propaganda stylings for the Chinese-style classical and French music and bourgeois theater as the means of mobilizing the masses for a long-term guerrilla war struggle.[3]

In fact, however, this seminar had a much more extensive agenda: the complete rectification of all information service and propaganda work in the south.[4] First, a new effort was to be made to recruit new agents for the Central Information Service (CIS) from members of peasant and trade unions. At the village and sub-prefectural

levels these agents would gather local information on both Viet Minh and enemy activities, functioning as "receiving antennae" in even the smallest hamlets and districts. In larger towns, more agents would be needed, representing a wider range of front groups and other occupations, including government employees, third political parties, Catholics, Cao Dai adherents, and overseas Chinese. Clusters of such activists must now cohere, according to the new instructions given at the conference, to "become secret intelligence centers and [to] collect information" which could then be used whether as intelligence or as news that would support Party-approved goals for propaganda, "to develop hatred, enthusiasm and confidence among the people in order to get them to produce and take part in the extermination of the enemy." The CIS had to coordinate its efforts with those of the military and administrative services, and in providing its information to these other services it must prioritize military information:

> the group must know the exact situation of the enemy and the rebels, must work out a plan of action, and must have "antennae" everywhere. To this end, members of information and arts and letters groups must maintain constant contact with "various groups and army units." … The army would lay down the plan of action and the rural information services and armed propaganda groups would carry it out.

The meeting also called for an overhaul of the techniques of open communication for propagating Viet Minh program directives, including the increased use of megaphones, distribution of tracts, putting on plays, using works of art, and – crucially – the "spreading of news broadcast by 'our stations,' particularly the Voice of Nambo and the Voice of Saigon–Cholon." In the past, mistakes in the use of these methods had been made. Indeed, "it seemed that propaganda methods had not hitherto been clearly explained." One purpose of this conference, whose proceedings were broadcast in detail by the Viet Minh's South Vietnam Radio station, was to rebuild the entire structure of personnel and methods of work of the CIS and its many local agents and units throughout the south, where Nguyen Binh had regularly used the propaganda organs – including the main open broadcast radio stations – to put forward his own program advocating the acceleration of the military struggle in the south.

This key information conference, with its emphasis on new recruitment, tight interfacing of local organs with approved propaganda themes, and deference to the military (and thus to the directives of Lao Dong, or VNWP, political commissars), constituted nothing less than a call for a full-scale redevelopment of all information and propaganda services in the south, in accordance with instruments, techniques, and themes approved by the central Vietnamese Communist leadership in the north. But the problems of centralizing political control over the south were greater than any one such conference could correct. One of the most significant declarations illustrating that one period of struggle in the south had passed and another had begun came in the half-yearly government report delivered to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) Council of Ministers at the end of June 1952. The report seems to have been

given by Ho Chi Minh himself, who chaired the meeting. The report "reviewed the general situation of the Vietnamese resistance" and drew attention to "the importance of ideological remolding in the people's army and Government organs," an apparent reference to the widening effort to build a new unity in the south around the concept that the anti-French war there would proceed on a guerrilla, rather than a main-force, footing. The report concluded that the people must now expect a longer war, perhaps lasting many more years, and that they must recognize the "long-standing and hard character of the present attrition phase of the Vietnamese resistance."[5]

The information conference and the Council of Ministers meeting were only the early signals that a full-fledged political rectification program was underway in the south. These events were followed at the end of June by perhaps the most crucial of the series of meetings, "the first conference of Lao Dong cadres" in western Nambo organized by "the central leadership for the South."[6] This 15-day conference included leading cadres from across the south, including Saigon–Cholon, and its purpose was to communicate directly to them "the rapid development of a 'line of thinking' in accordance with the instructions given by the [Lao Dong] Congress and the last two conferences of the Party, which had laid down the tasks to be accomplished on the military and economic-financial planes." The attendees, numbering around 100 key Party functionaries in the south, unanimously agreed "that the fundamental reason for the mistakes which occurred in each branch was ignorance of the … motto 'guerrilla warfare above all.' " Party adherents were ordered to "support and develop guerrilla warfare and at the same time struggle against 'forced conscription'; and spread propaganda among the enemy and the rebels." This rectification meeting left little doubt how great the divergence between the policies of the central Party leadership and those of Nguyen Binh had become. The Party organization in the south had been too weak or too influenced by Nguyen Binh's positions to enforce Lao Dong Party principles, and this situation was the most important internal subject that demanded immediate attention from the center. Attendees were told that to achieve all these aims they must above all consolidate and develop the popular support on which all action must be based, and they must give proper direction to the formation of good morale and the education of the cadres, with the motto "improvement of the cadres." Education, based on "a perfect comprehension of the political line of the Party and of the Government," was an urgent task at the present moment.

The rectification effort continued in the south throughout the rainy season. Reactions ranged from self-criticism and contrition to actual defection to the French, including by a larger than usual number of Viet Minh military functionaries who reportedly gave documents and information to French intelligence.[7] In central and northern Vietnam, blocking actions made possible by the reinforced French troops were preventing the flow of newly harvested summer rice across both the Viet Minh-controlled zones in the Tonkin delta, lessening supplies to the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) forces in the field and, reportedly, to Chinese Communist forces. In the border area of southern China, the Chinese were reported by the French to be awaiting deliveries of Viet Minh rice, perhaps as part payment for the continuing Chinese military equipment transfers, tactical training, and logistical

assistance that had made Viet Minh military main force actions in the North possible.[8]

New meetings and signs of the political changes being brought about in the South were reported in the Viet Minh press. On the August 19 Revolution anniversary, southern "compatriots" were instructed to show gratitude to both the Soviet Red Army, which helped defeat Japan in World War II, and to the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), which had also fought the Japanese and "helped the August Revolution to succeed."[9] More pointedly, listeners were told to complete their payment to the Viet Minh of the agricultural, or rice, tax then being collected, and to "learn to use criticism and self-criticism to combat cupidity, waste and bureaucracy." This echoed the "*san fan*" movement launched in China in early July to fight "corruption, waste and the bureaucratic spirit."[10] It was then revealed that in the period of August 4–7, Pham Van Bach had chaired a meeting of the Resistance-Administrative Committee of Nambo, the chief object of which had been to issue more directives to correct cadres' "mistakes" in the overly slow agricultural tax collection campaign and to restructure its own "working methods." It was also to develop a plan "for precautionary measures against traitors and for the security of military secrets and the reinforcement of 'strategic positions,' " information about which seems to have been leaking to the French at an alarming rate.[11] "Preparations" were also underway for convening a morale-building "congress of 'top combatants and of production' " set for October 1952. For the anniversary of the DRV on September 2, Vo Nguyen Giap issued an "Order of the Day" which drove home the message about the changed political agenda in the South.[12] It instructed that everyone participate in the current "political and ideological reformation drives." Further, all combatants, particularly those in Nambo, must

> thoroughly imbue themselves with the thought of guerrilla warfare, firmly carry on the struggle in the enemy rear areas, unite with the rest of the people in order to develop guerrilla warfare, defend guerrilla bases, and frustrate the enemy's plots to feed war by war and to use Vietnamese to fight Vietnamese.

Fighting and negotiating

By 1953, as the Viet Minh implemented its plans for guerrilla warfare programming and moderate land reform, and moved their large forces in the north into Tonkin's northwest corridor between China and Laos, one scholar has noted that "a close bond had been created between the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist parties."[13] The Chinese believed that the threat to the southern flank had receded. PAVN forces struck twice in northern Laos in the spring of 1953, seeking to enable creation of a Lao-manned base area. Chinese advisers pushed for a concentration of forces in the northwest, particularly around Lai Chau, while Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap argued for movement into the Red River delta to prepare for renewed attacks on the Hanoi–Haiphong redoubt. Ho Chi Minh sided with the Chinese, who now included Wei Guoqing, a Guangxi native who had a background in both combat command and political commissariat work during the Chinese civil war; apart from his stint as

adviser to the Vietnamese, he spent much of his career building Chinese Communist Party (CCP) structures in Guangxi's military and civilian, including ethnic minority, spheres.[14] As French Commander-in-Chief Gen. Henri Navarre responded to the movement of PAVN forces to the northwest by sending paratroopers to establish a blocking position around the crossroads town of Dien Bien Phu in late 1953, a Vietnam Workers' Party (VNWP) Politburo meeting agreed with Chinese advice to prepare for an attack on the newly formed French position.[15]

The battle for Dien Bien Phu famously developed into a six-month siege of the complex of satellite encampments which the French built around the town. The French posts were dependent upon reinforcement and resupply from the air, and resembled nothing so much as warrens of World War I-style entrenchments. Vulnerable both to anti-air operations and to head-on attack by superior numbers of soldiers, Dien Bien Phu became a trap set by the French themselves. The Chinese provided special training for four anti-aircraft battalions and supplied them with specialized guns, some reportedly captured from US forces in Korea.[16] The siege, which included numerous attacks against French bases by waves of PAVN soldiers as well as the construction, mostly at night, of overland supply trails to permit the flow of Chinese-supplied equipment and ammunition, finally reached its climax on May 8, 1954, just as the international conference on Indochina and Korea was opening at Geneva. The French surrender at Dien Bien Phu gave the Communist side enormous negotiating advantage at the meeting, which was co-chaired by Britain and the USSR.

Mao and the Chinese leadership had been preparing for the conference for months, including by increasing the flow of armaments and ammunition for the ongoing battle at Dien Bien Phu. Having just finalized negotiations for a ceasefire in Korea in July 1953, the Chinese were well aware of the opportunity to argue for peace presented by their attendance on the world stage at the conference, the first East–West international meeting to which the People's Republic of China (PRC) had been invited since its founding in 1949. The pace of pre-conference diplomacy amongst the Communists was furious, with Ho Chi Minh secretly visiting Beijing in March and Moscow in April, and Zhou Enlai visiting Moscow three times during April 1954.[17] In bilateral talks the Vietnamese agreed to a Chinese proposal to divide Vietnam into northern and southern sections; the VNWP Politburo confirmed the decision.[18] On the other hand, Britain successfully resisted US pressure to participate in joint airstrikes against Communist forces at Dien Bien Phu, and the US narrowly sidestepped unilateral action in the weeks before the conference convened.[19] When the Conference opened, PAVN forces had just secured a French surrender after grueling fighting at Dien Bien Phu, and the USSR and China had agreed that reaching an Indochina settlement would fit well with their post-Stalin "peaceful coexistence" platform.

The plan to which all adhered as conference sessions began was one based upon complete independence from France and a division of Vietnam, with reunification elections to take place at a later date. As the talks developed it was determined that Laos and Cambodia would have neutral governments and complete independence; only two northern provinces in Laos, Sam Neua and Phong Saly, would be held by Communist forces which would regroup to those places. These conditions, even the

latter which was an added demand by the Vietnamese at the conference, were acceptable to France, which under Premier Pierre Mendes France was committed to a secure but swift exit from Indochina. The United States remained largely aloof from the talks because of the presence of the Chinese, and did not sign the final agreements. It saw in the southern part of Vietnam a potential bastion of freedom in Southeast Asia, which could eventually be made to more than compensate for the "loss" of Tonkin, Hanoi, and Haiphong to Communism.

Implementing the post-Geneva ceasefire and military regroupment

Since 1979 the Vietnamese Communists have charged that the Chinese delegation at the Geneva Conference, led by Zhou Enlai, compromised with the French at the expense of the Viet Minh and their allies in Laos and Cambodia. At the time of the settlement, however, the Vietnamese leadership accepted the formula devised at Geneva. During a recess in the conference sessions, Zhou travelled to the Sino-Vietnamese border area (July 3–5, 1954) to meet with Ho Chi Minh. During this meeting he persuaded Ho to endorse the Chinese formula, which was based on the withdrawal of opposing forces into regroupment zones and on eventual reunification of Vietnam through elections. Ho also agreed that the DRV's future relations with Laos and Cambodia would be based on the principles of "peaceful coexistence," which emphasized non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.[20] Having secured Ho's acceptance of the formation of non-communist governments in both Laos and Cambodia as well as in part of Vietnam, Zhou returned to Geneva. Just as US threats to walk out of the conference were about to be carried out, he was able to conclude a set of agreements based on immediate military disengagement, the regroupment of forces into defined zones of administration, and deferment of any permanent political solution for the future of Indochina.

The format of the Indochina settlement negotiated at Geneva has been the subject of numerous academic studies.[21] Its provisions form the backdrop of this discussion, for what has not been examined in detail is the course of events on the ground in Indochina immediately after the signing of the Geneva Agreements on July 20, 1954, and the way that Sino-Viet Minh tensions about the progress of the conference and its conclusions affected subsequent bilateral relations. The ceasefire arrangements were formulated separately for Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam; five different ceasefire dates were established, viz., North Vietnam July 27; Central Vietnam August 1; Laos August 6; Cambodia August 7; and South Vietnam August 11. The reasons for this pattern have not been explored, but a few details are available. According to the Royal Government of Laos, the delayed ceasefire date for Laos was due to tenuous communications with forces in remote areas.[22] In the case of South Vietnam, however, where the ceasefire was set more than two weeks after the signing of the Geneva accords, it appears that the delay was a political concession to the Communist leadership, which anticipated difficulties in persuading Viet Minh activists in the south, where no Dien Bien Phu-like victory had been won, to end their military actions against the French.

The possibility of resistance to the ceasefire agreement among Viet Minh supporters was certainly anticipated in Vo Nguyen Giap's "Order of the Day" on July 22, which required all fighters to act with discipline and to "constantly heighten vigilance over any act of provocation and sabotage of bellicose elements."[23] In addition, delegations charged with "conveying the ceasefire order" were dispatched to the Quang Tri and Qui Nhon areas and to South Vietnam from the PAVN High Command in north-central Vietnam; with French logistical assistance, these representatives of the central military authority left Gia Lam airport in Hanoi on July 27.[24]

The delegation sent to South Vietnam split into two groups, one bound for Soc Trang, south of Saigon on the northern edge of the longtime Viet Minh stronghold in the Ca Mau area, and one bound for Dau Tieng in Thu Dau Mot Province, along the Cambodia border. These delegations confronted continuing Viet Minh military activity in both areas. Press reports indicated that the greatest activity took place in coastal areas. French radio maintained that a "general offensive" was launched by the Viet Minh forces against the city of Nha Trang on July 23, after the conclusion of the Geneva Conference and after Giap's stand-down "Order" issued the previous day; the French press also reported that attacks were made against French posts near Qui Nhon and Phan Rang and on the railroads at Phan Thiet.[25] There is also evidence that Viet Minh units carried out attacks specifically in the areas to which the PAVN High Command representatives were sent, in the My Tho and Sadec areas and in Thu Dau Mot.[26] In some cases, these attacks appear to have involved the seizure of watchtowers and control posts, and the "liberation" of French-held territory; they were not limited to incidents of sabotage.

Political statements originating from Viet Minh sources in Nambo and Cambodia give strong indications that there was disapproval within the Communist movement of the Geneva agreements and the consequent ceasefire arrangements. On July 22 the "Voice of Khmer Issarak" broadcast a report on a conference that had taken place in northwest Cambodia in late June which had resolved that Son Ngoc Minh's Khmer Issarak government was the only legitimate government of Cambodia – a position denied it by the terms of the Geneva settlement. The conference had also endorsed the June 20 declaration of the Khmer–Pathet Lao–Vietnam "alliance," which had been reversed by the Zhou–Ho agreement reached in early July.[27] This report was not simply a broadcast of old news; it appears instead to have been issued as a protest against "the maneuvers of the French and US imperialists and Sihanouk's … traitors, who want to separate the Khmer people from [those] of Vietnam" and against "all those who do not want to recognize the patriotic struggle of the Khmer people." It constituted at least a sidelong attack on the failure of the Communist conferees at Geneva to secure recognition for the Khmer Resistance Government, a policy which the Zhou–Ho agreement had ensured. A similar message was carried again on July 26 by the same radio station.[28]

The Viet Minh leadership clearly anticipated that its own organs in South Vietnam would criticize, and perhaps challenge, the basic outlines of the Geneva accords. The Communists' official line on this kind of dissidence was set out in the North by Ton Duc Thang at a special session of the National United Front, when he

declared that "our compatriots in South Vietnam will struggle … in accordance with the new directives and policy … [and] bring into effect the free general election to realize national unification."[29] In contrast, on July 27 the South Vietnam radio station of the Viet Minh broadcast a long report on a meeting of combatants of the western sub-Interzone of Nambo, held on June 20–22, 1954. A summary of this broadcast is worth quoting:

> at the end of 1952 and beginning of 1953, mistakes provoked by "too many Right-wing political tendencies" had hindered the guerrilla movement, a situation of which the enemy had taken advantage. … In 1953, thanks to an avoidance of past mistakes, the local troops and the people had decided to seek out the enemy and infiltrate into the occupied zones. In this way, a category of elite combatants had been formed.[30]

The timing of this broadcast criticism of "rightist" policies that limited the scope and strength of the anti-French struggle in the South suggests that it was aimed at the Party center's endorsement of the Geneva settlement, which required an end to the struggle. Suppressing such emergent criticism of the accords and the consequent ceasefire agreement was one of the key objectives of the PAVN High Command delegations sent to the South and south-central areas at the end of July. Some progress must have been made along these lines by August 1, when the same South Vietnam radio station carried an official *Nhan Dan* article highlighting the southern people's acceptance of Ho Chi Minh's pledge that the "demarcation line would definitely be cleared away" in future general elections.[31] Nonetheless, Viet Minh units in the South continued to launch isolated attacks in early August, apparently focusing their efforts on Saigon itself as the August 11 ceasefire date drew near. These actions were interpreted by the media solely as anti-French attacks, but they may have been intended to secure local advantages, obtain arms and equipment, and punish potential adversaries who might contest the promised elections; there may also have been an element of registering southern-based protests against the pattern of Geneva agreements that would heavily privilege the Viet Minh movement in the North. There was no widespread Viet Minh defiance of the ceasefire once it came into effect, but demonstrations of isolated resistance certainly took place. For example, it was reported that Viet Minh leaders in Tay Ninh Province, on the Cambodian border, refused to disarm their forces in accordance with the ceasefire protocols.[32] In general, however, by the August 11 deadline, the Communists' general policy of ending the armed conflict against the French, adopted under Chinese guidance at the Zhou–Ho meeting in early July, was being observed by virtually all its military forces throughout Indochina.

For the Communist leadership, obtaining compliance with the ceasefire agreements was only the first part of a two-stage process for ending the war. The second stage involved the withdrawal and redeployment of its military forces into specified zones agreed upon in consultation with French military authorities. In Vietnam the Communists were to occupy all territory north of the 17th Parallel, although French forces would remain in the Haiphong area until May 1955. In return, the Communists

would retain control of part of Interzone V, the Quang Ngai–Binh Dinh area, for the same period. In Laos, the Pathet Lao forces were to regroup into the two northern Provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly, which adjoined northwestern Tonkin and China's Yunnan Province, respectively. The Khmer Issarak forces had received no territorial refuge under the Geneva agreements. Vietnamese "volunteer" forces that had been deployed in both Laos and Cambodia during the anti-French war were to withdraw to northern Vietnam, although the "volunteers" in Cambodia went first to the Viet Minh's provisional assembly zones in southern Vietnam. This general withdrawal was implemented in stages after the observance of the ceasefire in each area had been confirmed by both French and Viet Minh military leaders.

By mid-October the Vietnamese Communist central leadership in the North could be confident that the regroupment provisions of the Geneva settlement would be observed throughout Indochina. For example, on September 24 at the Joint Armistice Commission for Cambodia, the Khmer Issarak delegate "Keo Meas" acknowledged that the demobilization of his forces had been confirmed by the International Control Commission (ICC), a body set up to monitor implementation of the military aspects of the settlement.[33] In Laos, the Pathet Lao handed over administration of Attapeu Province, which it had completely controlled, to the Royal Laotian Government on October 3.[34] In southern Vietnam, Viet Minh units which were assigned to regroup to the North duly moved to the areas in Ca Mau and in the south-central area to await transport by sea in Soviet and Polish ships to the Viet Minh zone above the 17th Parallel.[35] The French Union Forces were required only to withdraw from their remaining positions in Tonkin. They left most of the provincial capitals in the Red River delta directly after the ceasefire in the North, and the handover of Hanoi took place in early October. By October 9 PAVN forces had entered the central districts of the capital of the DRV.[36] It might be significant that the DRV delegation tasked with negotiating the first aid deal with China arrived in Beijing on the same day that the last of the regroupment actions, the withdrawal of Vietnamese "volunteers" from Laos, was completed.[37]

China's aid for reconstruction of the North

Initial discussions between China and Vietnam on a framework for Vietnam's economic reconstruction probably began in late September or early October, when the DRV's Minister of Communications went to Beijing as part of the DRV delegation to China's National Day celebrations. Directly thereafter, the DRV Government made known its intention to rebuild the railway between Hanoi and Lang Son, known as "the Gate of China."[38] At first, the North's own resources, particularly its labor pool, were mobilized to undertake the first steps toward rehabilitation of the North's war-torn infrastructure. On October 22, work began on the short rail section from Gia Lam (near the Hanoi airport) to Yen Vien, a station 11 km from the capital that was to become the main terminus of the DRV's rail system.[39] On the same day a new drive was launched in Lang Son to gather scrap metal and to organize a workforce; by October 26 over 5000 people had been drafted.[40] Shock brigades of youths, formed in the provinces along the route of the rail line, were consolidated and

sent to construction sites.[41] The basic preparatory construction work proceeded rapidly, but for engineering and technical expertise and for heavy equipment the Vietnamese relied upon the promise of Chinese aid.

The five-member delegation which was to arrange for this aid arrived in Beijing on November 16, 1954. It was led by Nguyen Van Tran, Deputy Chief of the DRV Communications Ministry.[42] His brief in the negotiations was to secure a broad range of material and technical assistance for the rapid redevelopment of the North's infrastructure, particularly for projects that affected food supplies, freight transportation between China and the DRV, and internal communications in the North. On November 21, 1954 the VNWP paper *Nhan Dan* set out Vietnamese expectations for the negotiations. Not only would postal arrangements and a rail link be discussed, but so would "land and river communication lines [and] harbors." The talks, it said, were a symbol of Sino-Vietnamese "friendship … which becomes closer and closer with the development of transport and communications lines."[43]

The negotiations seem to have been quite comprehensive; indeed, their length – six weeks – might suggest that some difficulties were encountered. Certainly the Vietnamese were anxious to assure that perceptions of the DRV's independence and sovereignty would be enhanced, not undermined, by its first intergovernmental negotiations after Geneva. On the other hand, internal political pressures arising from the rapidly advancing agricultural crisis in the North probably presented the Vietnamese delegation with every incentive to quickly conclude the bilateral talks and announce a package of tangible benefits from China. In the event, agreement on a substantial assistance package was announced in a joint communiqué released on December 24, 1954.[44] Aid would be given in five fields: rebuilding the Hanoi–Nanguan railway, postal and telecommunications facilities, highway construction, civil air service, and water conservancy. Chinese experts would be sent to the North to advise on technical matters. The monetary value of the agreement was not revealed, but China's own financial difficulties at this time probably led it to limit the direct costs of materials and credits and to emphasize technical assistance rendered by specialists.[45] In the DRV press, the announcement of the new aid agreement was overshadowed by the fanfare which greeted a separate "non-governmental" gift of 10,000 tons of rice and 5 million meters of cloth from the Chinese People's Relief Administration.[46]

Although the significance of the railway and infrastructural agreement was underplayed by the Vietnamese media, important improvements in the North's economy and transport facilities took place under its terms. First, the opening of regularized postal and communications links between the two countries was announced as having been accomplished on January 1, 1955.[47] Among the first Chinese technicians to be sent to the DRV was the team of air traffic controllers which took over Gia Lam airport when the French team, which had stayed on to ensure the safety of ICC-related flights, left Hanoi on December 31.[48] This decision must have provoked rumors about an expansion of Chinese influence in the North. The Vietnamese were obliged to issue a statement claiming that "our technical progress permitted us to realize our sovereignty in the domain of aviation."[49]

By January 8, it was reported, 1000 Chinese railway workers and technicians were already in northern Vietnam.[50] According to the joint communique, China's

participation in the Hanoi–Nanguan railroad project was to be managed by the rail engineering corps of the China National Communications Engineering Corporation.[51] This may have been a formal redesignation given to units of the PLA Railway Corps, because the numbers of foreign military advisers allowed in both North and South Vietnam were strictly limited under the Geneva accords; one Chinese unit that did participate in the construction effort was identified as the "102nd Engineer Battalion."[52]

The presence of Chinese specialists caused more tensions between the DRV and PRC than the brief tangle over the air traffic controllers: it was revealed in 1979 that China used the presence of its railway workers at this time to physically adjust some of the markers at the international border to its own advantage.[53] Nonetheless, at the time, the DRV's media organs lavishly praised China for its assistance. With Chinese specialists' advice, a three-fold increase in track-laying efficiency over the best French-directed efforts had been achieved.[54] This rapid pace allowed the final sections of the track to be joined on February 16, 1955.[55] The line was inaugurated at Yen Vien in a celebration held on February 28, with Pham Van Dong and the PRC Ambassador to the DRV, Luo Guibo, in attendance.[56] The previous day Ho Chi Minh himself commended a group of model railway workers, of whom 31 were Vietnamese and 21 were Chinese.[57] As *Nhan Dan* pointed out, "the road of prosperity [was] open."[58]

Of course the key question concerning the railroad was the purpose to which the new transport capacity would be put. A British military intelligence report asserted that by early 1955 "China's military aid programme had already been realized" and that the railroad was used only in the delivery of non-military goods and technicians to assist the North.[59] The premise that military supplies were no longer being moved in from China is questionable, although public reports on such aid would not have been reasonable to expect, given the restrictions on such supplies ordered by the Geneva agreements. And indeed, it seems that at least initially the new rail links were not utilized for transporting military material to Tonkin. The observation teams of the ICC charged with monitoring the flow of materiel into the DRV were convinced that the familiar overland routes used during the anti-French war, chiefly those through Dong Dang, were more likely to be used than the railroad for making prohibited arms transfers.[60] Meanwhile, the bureaucratic structure for increasing China's non-military exports to the North was strengthened with the creation in December 1954 of an office in Guangxi Province to administer exports "to foreign countries."[61] Very probably this office coordinated the freight traffic in consumer goods, food, and construction materials delivered to the DRV on the newly completed rail line through Guangxi.

Along with the railroad, the reconstruction of the DRV's road system was of strategic importance. The North's highways had been severely damaged by weather, heavy use, lack of repairs, and sabotage attacks. For China, the commitment of road-building equipment and materials to aid the DRV was probably no more than a minor extension of its own large-scale "overall scheme for improving the highway network in Central and Southwest China, where motor roads are still the major means of communications."[62] This program had seen the completion in late 1954 of a highway

between Guiyang, Guizhou, and Chinchengjiang in north-central Guangxi. With this road Guangxi, Yunnan, and Sichuan were finally linked together via the terminus city of Guiyang.[63] By January 1955, work had also begun on a new route into Yunnan that reportedly would increase load capacities and reduce travel time by 20 per cent.[64]

It is difficult to determine which regions in the North were the first to benefit from China's road-building assistance. The best source of information is the reports of the ICC investigation and observation teams active in the DRV. Summaries of these reports provided to the British Foreign Office indicated that the Vietnamese acted to prevent the teams from conducting reconnaissance of all subordinate cross-border routes where road construction might be underway, but their access to the northwest was especially limited. For example, in December 1954 the DRV forbade border reconnaissance by air in the Lao Cai–Lai Chau area. When access for ICC teams by land was requested, the Vietnamese at first denied the existence of a road between Hanoi and Lai Chau. Under pressure from the ICC, DRV officials conceded for the first time that there were routes between Hanoi and the Chinese border other than the one through Lang Son.[65] Such delaying tactics may have been related to the DRV's efforts to redevelop the road system in the restricted areas without the presence of international observers, because these routes were being used to transport military materiel forbidden under the Geneva agreements. However, as the next section of this study will argue, the Vietnamese were at least as concerned about rehabilitating the roads linking the northwest to the delta region as they were about rebuilding secret cross-border road connections with China.

Meanwhile, within a week of the completion of the Hanoi–Nanguan rail line, the DRV's director of railway administration announced that during 1955 two other railroads would be rebuilt: one between Hanoi and Nam Dinh and the other between Hanoi and Lao Cai on the Yunnan border.[66]

The connection with Nam Dinh, the North's third largest city, was certainly significant for internal security and distribution networks. Once completed, this project would join by rail the three largest cities – Hanoi, Haiphong, and Nam Dinh – both with each other and with China. Workers from the Hanoi–Nanguan project were transferred directly to the construction sites for the two new rail lines, and preliminary work began on the route to Nam Dinh on March 9, and on the route to Lao Cai on March 17, 1955.[67]

A new phase in bilateral aid arrangements

Just as work on these new rail lines began, in March 1955, another DRV trade delegation, again led by Nguyen Van Tran, arrived in Beijing "for negotiations on trade between China and Vietnam in 1955."[68] The Vietnamese media was much less forthcoming about the expectations for this second delegation, perhaps because its projections for the first mission, notably in the area of Chinese aid for harbor and waterway improvements, had not been fully realized. However, Tran's continued leading role may suggest that his mission was to carry forward discussion of fulfillment of the provisions of the December 1954 assistance agreement where possible, maintaining the momentum of successful bilateral cooperation

demonstrated in the rail and road works programs and continuing the emphasis on the reconstruction of the North's transportation and communications infrastructure.

The first concrete outcome produced by the delegation that was reported in the open media came on May 25, 1955, when an agreement was reached to open through freight and passenger traffic between the two countries.[69] But these discussions, like the first round of talks, were also extended over a long period. When the DRV delegation led by Ho Chi Minh arrived in Beijing in late June, Tran's trade mission was at the airport to welcome it.[70] It seems clear that during its four-month stay in China, Tran's group had been engaged in detailed negotiations on the massive 800 million yuan (1224 billion piasters), five-year aid package which was eventually finalized during Ho's visit in early July. This package, whose size and, presumably, scope, was styled on China's own fraternal assistance program from the USSR, must have had the effect of stabilizing redevelopment planning in the North in those sectors that would benefit from its provisions. This multi-year agreement signaled the end of the brief post-Geneva period of *ad hoc* bilateral aid agreements between the DRV and PRC.

Details of the components of this huge aid package were not revealed at the time of its announcement, but in August 1955 Hanoi radio disclosed that part of the Chinese assistance was to be used to underwrite the costs of a new program of rail, highway, and bridge construction as well as the restoration of "coastal and maritime communications services."[71] This disclosure can be linked to a statement made on June 21, 1955 by the DRV Minister of Public Works and Communications, Le Dung. He announced the launch of a new program of highway, railroad, and irrigation system construction and of airport, postal, and telecommunications improvements.[72] Although Dung did not explicitly mention any Chinese subsidies for these projects, the format of his statement closely resembled that of the December 1954 DRV–PRC joint statement on the initial bilateral assistance agreement. In addition, Dung's announcement came exactly six months after the original agreement. It appears that the improvements announced by Dung in June 1955 were indeed based upon aid pledges given by China in the continuing negotiations at Beijing, but the publicity that might have been given to what appears to have been a second communications and transportation aid agreement was reserved for the announcement of the entire 800 million yuan package, with which Ho Chi Minh himself, then visiting Beijing, was personally associated. Sino-Vietnamese relations had reached a new plateau in cooperative consolidation which would help the Vietnamese to continue their struggle for unification.

Notes

Introduction

1. See, for example, A. Rotter, *The Path to Vietnam: Origins of the American Commitment to Southeast Asia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987); A. Short, *The Origins of the Vietnam War* (London: Longman, 1989); G. Kahin, *Intervention: How American became Involved in Vietnam* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1987), and G. Kahin, "The United States and the Anti-Colonial Revolution in Southeast Asia, 1945–50," in Y. Nagai and A. Iriye, eds., *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: University of Tokyo and Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 338–61. One study which draws together information from official Vietnamese Communist sources is that by G. Kolko, *Vietnam: Anatomy of War 1940–1975* (London and Sydney: Unwin, 1987).
2. Among these studies the following are particularly useful: A. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960); R. Simmons, *The Strained Alliance: Peking, P'yongyang, Moscow and the Politics of the Korean Civil War* (New York: The Free Press; London: Collier Macmillan, 1975); R. Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950–1953* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985); S. Zhang. *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950–1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995); W. Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); J. Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and Z. Shen and D. Li, *After Leaning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011).
3. K. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938–1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).
4. G. Lockhart, *Nation in Arms: The Origins of the People's Army of Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin Australia, 1989).
5. The division of responsibility for radio broadcast monitoring amongst Commonwealth countries and the United States is discussed in J. Richelson, *The US Intelligence Community* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1985), pp. 197–98, 201–02. During World War II the US Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), previously part of the Federal Communications Commission, became part of the Office of Strategic Services; it was transferred to the new Central Intelligence Group in 1946. See A. Karalekas, "History of the Central Intelligence Agency" [prepared for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 1976 (?)], reprinted in W. Leary, *The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1984), p 24. On the publication of FBIS *Daily Reports*, see J. Andriot, *Guide to US Government Publications* (McLean, VA: Documents Index, 1989), pp. 890, 894.

6. Details on those parts of the British Broadcasting Corporation's *Summary of World Broadcasts* series consulted for this study are given in the Bibliography. See also L. Calkins, "Patrolling the Ether: US-UK Open Source Intelligence Cooperation and the BBC's Emergence as an Intelligence Agency, 1939–1948," *Intelligence and National Security* 26(1), Feb 2011, 1–22.
7. Vietnamese Communist "propaganda" during the 1945–1954 period has been examined in some detail by N. Minh, "A Study of the Literature of Political Persuasion in North Vietnam," unpublished PhD dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1973.
8. "Introduction," in W. Chen, "Wartime 'Mass' Campaigns in Communist China: Official Country-wide 'Mass Movements' in Professed Support of the Korean War," (Series II, No. 4, 1952, of "Studies on Chinese Communists"), Air Force Personnel and Training Research Center (Lackland Air Force Base, Texas): *Research Memorandum* No. 43, Oct 1955.
9. R. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: Volume I: Revolution versus Containment* (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 166–69.
10. See the convincing discussion of "commemorative effusion" in P. Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the National Past* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 170ff.
11. These files, maintained by the US State Department's country desk officers in Washington, DC, include a selection of research reports and military intelligence papers as well as embassy dispatches. The confidential central files series consulted for this study is given in the Bibliography.
12. The intelligence directorate in the British General Headquarters for the Far East Land Forces (FARELF), commenting on developments during early 1950, noted that "an arrangement for the exchange of information with the French in Indochina has become operative and the results have been favorable." According to the same report, "an increasingly close liaison has been developed with the French military authorities in Indochina, particularly as regards the exchange of information on the Indochina/China border." US files give evidence of similar arrangements. See General Headquarters FARELF, "Quarterly Historical Report," quarter ending Mar 31, 1950, in Great Britain. The National Archives. The Records of the War Office (WO) 268/746.
13. Military Attaché, Paris, MA/Paris/50, Jan 19, 1950, Enclosure to Paris to Foreign Office, London, 10 Nov 1950: Great Britain. The National Archives. The Records of the Foreign Office (FO) 371/89172.
14. Saigon to US State Department, No. 344 (Nov 25, 1950): US State Department Decimal Files, Record Group 59, 751G.00/11-2550. Unless otherwise noted, all State Department records in this study are from Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, which are available in the "Confidential Central Files" series listed in the Bibliography.
15. British officials reported that the French evacuation of Lao Cai on the Chinese border in northwestern Tonkin in late October 1950 "seriously affected French intelligence coverage of southwestern China," the more so since "no measures" were taken in advance to establish "listening posts" before the withdrawal. General Headquarters FARELF to WO London, 1307 GSI, Nov 6, 1950, in FO 371/83641.
16. By November 1949 some US diplomats privately believed that the Nationalist Chinese leadership actively sought to draw the United States into direct conflict with the Chinese Communists, and that the Nationalists were "quite capable of assisting to that end;" Chungking to US Secretary of State, Nov 10, 1949, in US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 1949 Vol. VIII, pp. 582–83.
17. Great Britain. The National Archives. The Records of the Colonial Office (CO), "Review of Communism in the Colonies," No. 17 (Jan 16–29, 1949), in FO 371/77570; and "Hong Kong to CO London," No. 77 (May 10, 1948), in FO 371/75789.

18. In June 1951, for example, at what was clearly a critical juncture for the formulation of Viet Minh military policy, General Vo Nguyen Giap published an article on the current status of the Viet Minh's military forces. The article was selected for translation by British officials and extracts are available in English in the archives of the British Foreign Office. See V. Giap, "Let Us Reinforce Our Army," *Nhan Dan*, Jun 7, 1951, Enclosure, Foreign Office Research Department, Jul 10, 1951, in FO 371/92410.
19. A large selection of articles from the Chinese Communist press was translated and published under several serial titles by the US Consulate General, Hong Kong; for details on these series, see the Bibliography. Documents and press articles produced by Vietnamese Communists may be found in radio monitoring reports and in, for example, A. Cole, ed., *Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions: A Documentary History, 1945–1955* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956); G. Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions, Vol. 1 and 2* (London: Heyden, 1979); and "Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Viet-Nam" (Washington, DC: US Department of State), May 1968, in *Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes* No. 137, Jun 1968. This "Working Paper" was originally accompanied by a very limited number of copies of a documentary appendix. A rare copy of the original appendix is held by the Government Documents Division of the Widener Library, Harvard University.
20. "Comments by the Joint Intelligence Committee," Appendix to Joint Planning Staff, "The Probable Effects on British Interests of a French Withdrawal from Part or the Whole of French Indochina," J.P. (49)87(0), Sep 20, 1949, in CO 537/5013.
21. H. Khanh, *Vietnamese Communists 1925–1945* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 115–16.
22. Khanh, *Vietnamese Communists*, pp. 249–56.
23. D. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 401–02.
24. On Tran Van Giau's demise and the role of northern cadres, see Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp. 150–58.
25. See, for example, Simmons, *The Strained Alliance* (1975); M. Nakajima, "The Sino-Soviet Confrontation in Historical Perspective," in Y. Nagai and A. Iriye, eds., *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (1977); M. Nakajima,"The Sino-Soviet Confrontation: Its Roots in the International Background of the Korean War," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* I, Jan 1979, pp. 19–47; J. Cotton and I. Neary, eds., *The Korean War in History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); and D. Heinzig, *The Soviet Union and Communist China 1945–1950: The Arduous Road to the Alliance* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004).

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1. *The Times* (London) Aug 3, 1946, p. 3.
2. S. Tonnesson, *Vietnam 1946: How the War Began* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010). E. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, 1940–1955* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966), pp. 184–87.
3. G. Lockhart, *Nation in Arms: The Origins of the People's Army in Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin Australia, 1989), pp. 186–87.
4. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 131 (Apr 25, 1947): 851G.00/4-2547.
5. S. Pepper, "The KMT-CCP Conflict, 1945–1949," in J. Fairbank and A. Feuerwerker, eds., *The Cambridge History of China Volume 13: Republican China 1912–1949, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 764.
6. T. Chinh, "The Resistance Will Win," in T. Chinh, *Selected Writings* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977). This article is also available in T. Chinh, *Primer for Revolt* (New York: Praeger, 1963).
7. Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp. 183–88.

8. C. Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution, 1885–1950* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), p. 205.
9. K. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938–1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 189.
10. Hanoi to US Secretary of State, No. 64 (Mar 30, 1948): 851G.00/3-3048.
11. Hanoi to US Secretary of State, No. 77 (Apr 10, 1948): 851G.00/4-1048.
12. Hanoi to US Secretary of State, No. 91 (Apr 27, 1948): 851G.00/4-2748.
13. Z. Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 12.
14. Enclosure, Memorandum for HBM Minister, Saigon, Jul 11, 1950, in Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the Foreign Office (FO) 959/104. Bangkok to US State Department, No. 761 (Jun 22, 1954): 793.00/6-2254. Enclosure, Legation de France, Manila, to Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, No. 321 AS, Nov 14, 1950: Archives Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Asie-Oceanie 1944–1955, Vol. 164, Indochine, pp. 3ff. The Hague to FO, London, No. 102 (Apr 4, 1950), in FO 959/104.
15. Enclosure, Memorandum for HBM Minister, Saigon, Jul 11, 1950, in FO 959/104.
16. US Central Intelligence Agency, Intelligence Memorandum, No. 208, "Communist Methods in Asia," Aug 26, 1949, in P. Kesaris, ed., *Documents of the National Security Council, Fourth Supplement* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1987).
17. Kunming to US Secretary of State, No. 27 Sep 10, 1948: 893.00 YUNNAN/9-1048.
18. Kunming to US Secretary of State, No. 27 Sep 10, 1948: 893.00 YUNNAN/9-1048. Other Chinese Communist leaders associated with the Democratic United Army reportedly included Liao Chengzhi and "Hsiang Ying:" Chen, *Vietnam and China*, pp. 188–89.
19. Hanoi to US Secretary of State, No. 165 (Sep 21, 1951): 793.001/9-2151.
20. Kunming to US Secretary of State, No. 90 (Nov 9, 1949): 893.00B YUNNAN/11-949.
21. GHQ Far East Land Forces (FARELF) to Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the War Office (WO) London, BM/FARELF/115A/JIS, Sep 17, 1948, in WO 208/3931.
22. Kunming to US Secretary of State, No. 27 Sep 10, 1948: 893.00 YUNNAN/9-1048. "Tuan Ying" and his associates were executed in early December 1948: Kunming to US Secretary of State, No. 34 (Dec 10, 1948): 893.00 YUNNAN/12-1048.
23. Foreign Office Minute, Sep 29, 1949, in FO 371/69694.
24. Kunming to US Secretary of State, No. 29 (Nov 3, 1948): 893.00 YUNNAN/11-348.
25. Great Britain. The National Archives. The Records of the Colonial Office (CO), "Review of Communism in the Colonies," period ended Oct 22, 1948, in CO 537/2638.
26. Colonial Office, "Review of Communism in the Colonies," period ended Sep 24, 1948, in CO 537/2638.
27. Colonial Office, "Review of Communism in the Colonies," period ended Nov 5, 1948, in CO 537/2638.
28. Mao Zedong, "The Momentous Change in China's Military Situation," (Nov 14, 1948), in Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, *Vol. IV* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975), pp. 287–88.
29. Directorate of Military Intelligence (MI 2), War Office, "The Military Situation in South China," Nov 3, 1948, in CO 537/2657.
30. Directorate of Military Intelligence (MI 2), War Office, "The Military Situation in South China," Nov 3, 1948, in CO 537/2657.
31. Directorate of Military Intelligence (MI 2), War Office, "The Military Situation in South China," Nov 3, 1948, in CO 537/2657.
32. The report does not identify the meeting's participants, except for one Dai Ching, Saigon to UK Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia, Singapore, Jan 18, 1949, in FO 371/74972.
33. This body has not been identified. It may refer only to the informal concert of Communists active at the time in Southeast Asia. See Saigon to UK Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia, Singapore, Jan 18, 1949, in FO 371/74972.

34. Enclosure, Saigon to UK Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia, Singapore, Jan 18, 1949, in FO 371/74972.
35. Saigon to UK Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia, Singapore, Jan 18, 1949, in FO 371/74972.
36. Ho Chi Minh, "Appeal on the Occasion of the Anniversary of Two Years of Nation-Wide Resistance War," in Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works, Vol. III* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), pp. 156–59.
37. Ho Chi Minh, "Appeal on the Occasion of the Anniversary," pp. 156–59.
38. Enclosure 3, Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 196 (Mar 7, 1947): 851G.00B/3-747.
39. Enclosure, Hanoi to US State Department, No. 112 (Jan 8, 1951): 751G.001/1-851.
40. Enclosure, Hanoi to US State Department, No. 112 (Jan 8, 1951): 751G.001/1-851.
41. "Comments by the Joint Intelligence Committee," Appendix to Joint Planning Staff, "The Probable Effects on British Interests of a French Withdrawal from Part or the Whole of French Indochina," J.P. (49)87(0), Sep 20, 1949, in CO 537/5013.
42. Of the "columns," one was to cover Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hunan, and was to be commanded by Lin Ping: "Hong Kong to CO London," No. 7 (Feb 23, 1949), in FO 371/75779. It is possible that this reorganization was related to the formal establishment in February 1949 of the PLA Field Armies; if so, Lin Ping may actually be Fourth Field Army Commander Lin Biao. W. Whitson, *The Chinese High Command: A History of Communist Military Politics, 1927–71* (London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 498.
43. Kunming to US Secretary of State, Jan 8, 1949: 893.00 YUNNAN/1-849.
44. Kunming to US Secretary of State, No. 39 (Apr 8, 1949): 893.00 YUNNAN/4-849.
45. Kunming to US Secretary of State, Mar 21, 1949: 893.00 YUNNAN/3-2149. Hong Kong to US Secretary of State, No. 1239 (Dec 15, 1949): 893.00 YUNNAN-12-1549. US Consulate General, Peiping, *Translations, Radio Broadcasts of Communist Hsin Hua Station, North Shensi*, Feb 24, 1949, p. 4.
46. Kunming to US Secretary of State, Mar 21, 1949: 893.00 YUNNAN/3-2149. A report in early Jul 1949 stated that "Ch'uang T'ien" was "overall Communist commander of the Yunnan-Kwangsi-Kweichow area:" Kunming to US Secretary of State, No. 52 (Jun 3, 1949): 893.00 YUNNAN/6-349.
47. Vietnam News Agency (VNA), Jan 31, 1949, US Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) *Daily Report* (*DR*) 20 (1949), pp. EEE 2–3.
48. According to Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, p. 218, the "Sixth Cadres Conference of the Central Committee," held in January 1949, determined that the time had come for "preparations for the general counter-offensive." If this Conference was an ICP Central Committee meeting, or the consequence of a Central Committee meeting, it probably preceded the DRV Council of Ministers meeting which was publicly reported by the VNA: the conclusions of the Ministers' meetings typically reflected decisions taken earlier by the Party leadership.
49. Chinh, "The Resistance Will Win," *Selected Writings*, pp. 141–50.
50. VNA Feb 24, 1949, FBIS *DR* 39 (1949), pp. PPP 1–5. See also VNA Feb 16, 1949, FBIS *DR* 33 (1949), pp. PPP 7–9.
51. Kunming to US Secretary of State, Jan 8, 1949: 893.00 YUNNAN/1-849.
52. Rangoon Police, Special Branch, Report No. 4240/SB-10 (Jun 11, 1949), in FO 371/75676B.
53. Kunming to US Secretary of State, No. 19 (Feb 10, 1949): 893.00 YUNNAN/2-1049.
54. Kunming to US Secretary of State, No. 29 (Mar 10, 1949): 893.00 YUNNAN/3-1049. Other pro-Communist forces in southern China increased their activities at the same time. The "Hainan PLA" launched a "spring offensive" on the Island from February 15 to March 15, 1949, and the South China Bureau of the CCP Central Committee sent a telegram to the "Kwangtung 10th Peace Preservation Regiment" in the Leizhou Peninsula urging it to "strive in common" with other Communist forces to "liberate all

South China." NCNA Apr 22, 1949, British Broadcasting Corporation. Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB) Pt V (The Far East) No. 1, p. 24; and NCNA North Shensi, Feb 12, 1949, FBIS *DR* 29 (1949), p. CCC 7.

55. VNA Apr 18, 1949 and VNA Apr 20, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 1, pp. 34, 35.
56. VNA Apr 18, 1949 and VNA Apr 20, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 1, pp. 34, 35. Military Liaison Officer (MLO), Saigon to HBM Consulate-General, Saigon, Mar 18, 1949, in FO 371/75961.
57. Air Liaison Officer, Saigon, "Intelligence Report covering period 17th January–20th March 1949," in FO 959/36.
58. Military Liaison Officer (MLO) Saigon to HBM Consulate-General, Saigon, Mar 18, 1949, in FO 371/75961.
59. MLO Saigon to HBM Consulate-General, Saigon, Mar 18, 1949, in FO 371/75961; and MLO Saigon to HBM Consulate-General, Saigon, Apr 4, 1949, as Enclosure, Saigon to FO, London, No. 37 (Apr 6, 1949), in FO 371/75962.
60. MLO Saigon to HBM Consulate-General, Saigon, Apr 4, 1949, as Enclosure, Saigon to FO, London, No. 37 (Apr 6, 1949), in FO 371/75962.
61. MLO Saigon to HBM Consulate-General, Saigon, Apr 4, 1949, as Enclosure, Saigon to FO, London, No. 37 (Apr 6, 1949), in FO 371/75962.
62. VNA Apr 18, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 1, pp. 34–35.
63. According to pro-French Radio Saigon, a Viet Minh broadcast on March 31 stated that the "High Command of the Vietnam resistance forces" had acknowledged that "forces of the Chinese Army of Liberation have joined Viet Minh troops all along the Chinese-Indochinese frontier;" in a broadcast on 1 April Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap reportedly denied the earlier broadcast had been made and attributed the report to French propaganda. Saigon Radio (Apr 4, 1949), *SWB* Pt III (First Series) No. 98, pp. 6–7. See also Hanoi to US Secretary of State, Apr 2, 1949, in US State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 1949 Vol. VII Part 1, pp. 17–18.
64. An internal Party document written by Vo Nguyen Giap in February 1950 explained in detail the outline plan for the general counteroffensive. Extracts of the article are in G. Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, *Vol. I* (London: Heyden, 1979), pp. 231–37.
65. VNA 11 Mar 1949, FBIS *DR* 48 (1949), pp. EEE 2–3.
66. Reuters from Shanghai, Feb 10, 1949, FBIS *DR* 27 (1949), pp. BBB 2–3.
67. F. Liu, *A Military History of Modern China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 264, 267.
68. Bangkok to FO, London, No. 145 (Feb 25, 1949), in FO 371/76281; and Foreign Office Minute (R.H. Scott), Mar 10, 1949, in FO 371/76281.
69. Pridi reportedly refused the offer of Chinese Communist assistance in order to preserve Thai control over the coup: Bangkok to FO, London, No. 210 (Aug 16, 1949), in FO 371/76280. The conclusion on Jan 9, 1949 of a Thai–Malayan agreement on new anti-Communist police measures may have affected the Chinese Communists' view of the desirability of eliminating Phibun at this juncture. This agreement was later cited by a pro-CCP Bangkok newspaper as a milestone in the intensification of "Communist suppression" and in Thailand's entry into the "Anglo-American anti-Communist war;" US Embassy, Bangkok, *Translations of Chinese Newspapers* (Jan 1–7, 1950), in FO 628/69.
70. Rangoon Police, Special Branch, Report No. 4260/SB-10 (Jun 11, 1949), in FO 371/75676B. It is worth noting that following the failed coup attempt in Bangkok, Prince Souphanouvong of Laos fled to Kengtung, Burma, where he remained for about two months, contacting other Lao political exiles: Memorandum (Jun 22, 1949), reported as Enclosure, US Embassy Bangkok to HBM Embassy Bangkok (Jun 29, 1949), in FO 371/76280.

71. Rangoon to FO, London, No. 90 (Mar 14, 1949), in FO 371/75662; and HQ FARELF to WO London, Feb 11, 1949, in FO 371/75995.
72. Mao Zedong, "Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China," (Mar 5, 1949), in Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. IV* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975), pp. 361–75.
73. Enclosure, Hong Kong to CO London, No. 77 (May 10, 1949), in FO 371/75780.
74. NCNA Mar 26, 1949, *SWB* Pt III (First Series) No. 96, p. 85. On the "Eight Points" see Mao Zedong, "Statement on the Present Situation," (Jan 14, 1949), in Mao Zedong, *Selected Works, Vol. IV*, pp. 315–19.
75. Mao Zedong, "Whither the Nanking Government?" (Apr 4, 1949), in Mao Zedong, *Selected Works Vol. IV*, pp. 383–85. Mao's views on the issue of negotiations with the KMT during this period can be followed in a series of statements published in the fourth volume of his *Selected Works*. See also John Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 71.
76. Nanking Radio, Apr 11, 1949, *SWB* Pt III (First Series) No. 99, p. 68. NCNA Apr 21, 1949, *SWB* Pt V (Second Series) No. 1, p. 23.
77. NCNA Apr 23, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 1, p. 23.
78. L. Chassin [trans. by T. Osato and L. Gelas], *The Communist Conquest of China: A History of the Civil War, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 221. NCNA May 28, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 7, p. 23.
79. Moscow Radio, May 6, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 3, pp. 27–28.
80. N. Jun, "The Origins of the Sino-Soviet Alliance," in O. Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Alliance 1945–1963* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 69–71.
81. Ho Chi Minh, "To The Conference of Political Commissars," March 1948, Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works Vol. III*, pp. 140–42; and Ho Chi Minh, "Message to the National Congress of Militiamen," Apr 1948, Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works Vol. III*, pp. 143–45.
82. La Voix du Vietnam May 9, 1949, in Enclosure, Saigon to US Secretary of State, May 16, 1949: 851G.20200/5-1649.
83. Ho Chi Minh, "Appeal on the Occasion of May Day Regarding the Main Tasks in the New Stage," Apr 30, 1949, Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works Vol. III*, pp. 162–64.
84. Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, p. 218.
85. Hoang Quoc Viet, "Brief View of the Viet-Nam Situation after 6 Years of Resistance," Aug 15, 1951, Viet-Nam Central Information Service, April 1952, p. 3.
86. VNA May 17, 1949, FBIS *DR* 95 (1949), p. EEE 5.
87. VNA May 10, 1949, FBIS *DR* 90 (1949), p. EEE 2.
88. Voice of South Vietnam May 11, 1949, FBIS *DR* 91 (1949), p. EEE 2.
89. VNA Aug 7, 1949, FBIS *DR* 151 (1949), p. EEE 1.
90. At a conference held during May 1949, the VNA reported that Gen. Tran Tu Binh, then head of the military Inspection Service and later DRV Ambassador to the PRC, was present: VNA May 30, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 7, p. 40.
91. VNA May 21, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 6, p. 35.
92. VNA Jun 10, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 8, pp. 32–33.
93. VNA, Jun 11, 1949 and Jun 12, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 9, pp. 35–36.
94. VNA Jun 18, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 9, p. 36.
95. VNA May 30, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 7, p. 40.
96. War Office, London, "French Indochina Intelligence Digest," Aug 10, 1949, in FO 371/75967.
97. V. Giap, "The Viet-Nam People's Liberation Army in the Fight for National Independence, Democracy and Peace," Sep 2, 1951, Viet-Nam Central Information Service, April 1952, p. 8.
98. VNA Jun 11, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 9, p. 36.
99. VNA Jun 12, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 9, pp. 35–36.

100. "Emission Radiophonique V.M.," Jun 12, 1949, Enclosure, Hanoi to US Secretary of State, Jul 1, 1949: 851G.20200/7-149. VNA Jun 17, 1949, *SW*B Pt V No. 10, pp. 40–41.
101. VNA Jul 30, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 16, p. 31.
102. N. Minh, "A Study of the Literature of Political Persuasion in North Vietnam," unpublished PhD thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1973, p. 364.
103. Enclosure, Hanoi to US State Department, No. 112 (Jan 8, 1951): 751G.001/1-851.
104. A. Malukhin, "Bankruptcy of US Expansionist Policy in China," *Problemy Dal'nego Vostok* No. 3 (Jul–Sep 1984), pp. 110–20, trans. in US Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS)-UFE-85-002 (1985), pp. 138–48. See also A. Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), p. 694.
105. J. Kautsky, *Moscow and the Communist Party of India*: *A Study in the Postwar Evolution of International Strategy* (New York: Technology Press and John Wiley and Sons, 1956), p. 87. Publication of Liu Shaoqi's article also reflected the changing balance of power within the Soviet leadership, as Suslov's power grew at the expense of Zhdanov: see W. Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics: The Fall of Zhdanov and the Defeat of Moderation, 1946–53* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 111–12.
106. Mao Zedong, "Address to the Preparatory Meeting of the New Political Consultative Conference," (Jun 15, 1949); and "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship: In Commemoration of the Twenty-eighth Anniversary of the Communist Party of China," (Jun 30, 1949), in Mao Zedong, *Selected Works Vol. IV*, 1975, pp. 405–09 and 411–24. The importance of Mao's Jun 30, 1949 article has been examined by many analysts; see, for example, Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1966), pp. 250–51.
107. Z. Qiang, "Transplanting the Chinese Model: Chinese Military Advisers and the First Vietnam War, 1950–1954," *Journal of Military History* 57(4), Oct 1993, pp. 694–95. J. Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 120, 122.
108. W. Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 38–40.
109. The White Paper was published as US Department of State, *United States Relations with China, with Special Reference to the Period 1944–1949* (Department of State Publication 3573), Aug 5, 1949 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1949). The background to its publication may be traced in State Department papers available in *FRUS*, 1949 Vol. IX, pp. 1365–92. "A Summary of American-Chinese Relations," a letter from the US Secretary of State transmitting the White Paper to the President, is also available in US Department of State, *A Decade of American Foreign Policy Basic Documents 1941–1949*, rev. ed. (Department of State Publication 9449) (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1985), pp. 481–89.
110. J. Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 71–72. NCNA Aug 5, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 16, p. 16.
111. Paris Radio Jul 8, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 12, p. 37.
112. VNA Jul 19, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 14, pp. 38–39; VNA Jul 30, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 10, p. 31.
113. VNA Aug 6, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 17, pp. 39–40.
114. VNA Aug 8, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 17, p. 39.
115. Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp. 219–21.
116. Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, p. 221.
117. Paris to FO, London, No. 915 (Sep 2, 1949), in FO 959/31.
118. VNA Oct 16, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No 27, p. 39.
119. N. Minh, "A Study of the Literature," p. 363. On Aug 1, 1949 Ho Chi Minh himself announced that "today is the first day of a new drive of patriotic emulation … to wipe

out famine, ignorance, and foreign invasion." See Ho, "Appeal for Patriotic Emulation," Ho, *Selected Works Vol. III*, pp. 165–66.

120. VNA Aug 16, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 18, p. 37.
121. Voice of South Vietnam Sep 7, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 21, p. 41. The importance of the victory was acknowledged two years later by Hoang Quoc Viet in his review of the resistance struggle; see Hoang Quoc Viet, "Brief Review of the Viet-Nam Situation After 6 Years of Resistance," p. 7.
122. VNA Sep 8, 1949, FBIS *DR* 175 (1949), p. EEE 2.
123. The fortieth anniversary of the event was celebrated on Aug 28, 1989; see Hanoi Home Service Aug 27, 1989, *SWB/FE*/0548/B/6.
124. Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp. 215–16. Lockhart suggests that the creation of this unit was "an elaborate armed propaganda operation designed to attract support from China and so strengthen internal unity" (p. 219). It seems more likely that the formation of the first PAVN division was a logical outcome of the military training and reorganization drives initiated during May 1949, which in turn were based upon the leadership's political decisions to accelerate the armed struggle taken during January 1949. In any event the Chinese Communists would have been unlikely to further expand their assistance on the basis of Viet Minh "propaganda operations" alone.
125. VNA Sep 3, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 21, p. 41.
126. Chassin, *Communist Conquest*, p. 235; Whitson, *The Chinese High Command*, pp. 322–23; Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army*, p. 72.
127. Kunming to FO, London, No. 17 (Sep 9, 1949), in FO 371/75769.
128. Kunming to FO, London, No. 19 (Sep 16, 1949), in FO 371/75770; and Canton to FO, London, No. 196 (Sep 12, 1949), in FO 371/75769.
129. Canton to FO, London, No. 44 (Sep 12, 1949), in FO 371/75770.
130. Goscha, *Thailand*, pp. 144–45, 158, 162. Nguyen Binh was immensely popular with his forces, and rose to control the south's military by September 1948; see *Who's Who in Southeast Asia* (Aug 1945–Dec 1950: Indochina, Washington, DC, n.p., 1950), pp. 69–70; and R. O'Neill, *General Giap: Politician and Strategist* (Sydney: Cassell Australia, 1969), pp. 102–03.
131. On the accomplishments of certain larger units in the south, see Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp. 213, 216. The disparity between the southern forces and those in the North was reinforced, according to a VNA report, by a "movement of volunteers from south to north to contribute to the resistance:" VNA May 16, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 5, pp. 36–37.
132. Voice of South Vietnam Sep 14, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 22, p. 40.
133. Voice of South Vietnam Sep 23, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 23, p. 43.
134. VNA Sep 24, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 23, pp. 42–43.
135. VNA Sep 27, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 24, p. 51.
136. La Voix du Vietnam Sep 27, 1949, in Enclosure, Hanoi to US Secretary of State, Oct 21, 1949: 851G.20200/10-2149.
137. La Voix du Vietnam Sep 27, 1949, Enclosure, Hanoi to US Secretary of State, Oct 21, 1949: 851G.20200/10-2149.
138. La Voix du Vietnam Oct 28, 1949, in Enclosure, Hanoi to US Secretary of State, Dec 3, 1949: 851G.20200/12-349.
139. The new Committee included Pham Van Bach, President; Pham Ngoc Thach, Vice-President; Nguyen Binh, Kha Van Can, Ca Van Thinh, Ung Van Khiem, and Nguyen Van Thinh, members. La Voix du Vietnam Oct 19, 1949, in Enclosure, Hanoi to US Secretary of State, Nov 5, 1949: 851G.20200/11-549.
140. VNA Oct 18, 1949, FBIS *DR* 202 (1949), p. EEE 5.
141. Peking Radio Nov 25, 1949, FBIS *DR* 228 (1949), p. BBB 8.
142. Chassin, *Communist Conquest*, p. 236.
143. Chen, *Mao's China*, p. 120.
144. VNA Oct 16, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 27, p. 39.

145. Chungking to FO, London, No. 46 (Oct 19, 1949), in FO 371/75773.
146. Chungking to US Secretary of State, Oct 19, 1949, in *FRUS*, 1949 Vol. VIII, p. 554.
147. Chungking to US Secretary of State, Oct 23, 1949, in *FRUS*, 1949 Vol. VIII, pp. 560–61.
148. Chungking Radio Oct 31, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 29, p. 32.
149. Chungking Radio Nov 4, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 29, p. 33; and Chungking to US Secretary of State, Nov 10, 1949, in *FRUS*, 1949 Vol. VIII, pp. 582–83. One pro-KMT Vietnamese politician, Quoc Lang, former leader of the Phuc Quoc Quan National Party who fled to China in 1940, arrived on Oct 17, 1949 in Hanoi, where he met with Bao Dai's representatives: Saigon Radio (pro-Bao Dai) (Oct 19, 1949), *SWB* Pt V No. 27, p. 37.
150. Chungking to US Secretary of State, Oct 23, 1949, in *FRUS*, 1949 Vol. VIII, pp. 560–61; and War Office, "MI2(a) Contribution to DMI's Monthly Talk to Chiefs of Staff, Aug. 1949," in FO 371/75966.
151. Enclosure, MLO Saigon to WO London, 3/Int/B, Nov 17, 1950, in FO 959/48. It is known that many former Japanese officers were attached to Viet Minh military schools; see Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp. 176–79.
152. La Voix du Vietnam Oct 19, 1949, Enclosure, Hanoi to US Secretary of State, Nov 5, 1949: 851G.20200/11-549.
153. A French translation of a captured document outlining the ICP Central Committee decisions "on the system of organization of the Party in the army," dated Oct 24, 1949, is available in Saigon to FO, London, No. 32, 43, 50 (Jul 10, 1950), in FO 371/83605. An English translation is available in Saigon to US State Department, No. 225 (Sep 30, 1950): 751G.001/9-3050.
154. Saigon to US State Department, No. 225 (Sep 30, 1950): 751G.001/9-3050.
155. NCNA Nov 28, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 33, p. 34.
156. NCNA Nov 8, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 30, pp. 24–25.
157. The text of Liu's speech to the Conference of Asian and Australasian Trade Unions was broadcast by NCNA Nov 23, 1949, FBIS *DR* 229 (1949), pp. PPP 20–27. Its significance has been discussed by many authors, including Milton Sacks, "The Strategy of Communism in Southeast Asia," *Pacific Affairs* XXIII(3), Sep 1950, pp. 232–36.
158. Peking Radio Nov 25, 1949, FBIS *DR* 228 (1949), p. BBB 8.
159. In his memoirs, Hoang Van Hoan revealed that he had been chosen by the ICP Central Committee in October 1949 to lead the Vietnamese delegation to the Beijing Conference; see Hoang Van Hoan, *A Drop in the Ocean: Hoang Van Hoan's Revolutionary Reminiscences* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1988), pp. 267–68. Luu Duc Pho's speech was broadcast by NCNA Nov 20, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 32, pp. 30–31. This speech outlined the progress made by Viet Minh-sponsored trade unions in Vietnam, and proposed that the Permanent Liaison Bureau set up by the Conference "study" the workers' movements in Laos and Cambodia. It also invited a delegation from the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) "to visit the liberated areas in Vietnam to study the problems there."
160. Voice of South Vietnam Nov 7, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 30, p. 42.
161. Military Attaché, Canton to WO London, AMA 78, Nov 19, 1949, in FO 371/75777.
162. Peking Radio Nov 25, 1949, FBIS *DR* 228 (1949), p. BBB 8; and NCNA Nov 26, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 33, p. 35.
163. O. Westad, "The Sino-Soviet Alliance and the United States," in O. Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance 1945–1963* (Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 169, 183 n. 9.
164. Kunming to FO, London, No. 59 (Nov 29, 1949), in FO 371/75777. US Consul Kunming (at Hong Kong) to US Secretary of State, No. 1 (Jan 11, 1950): 793.00/1-1150.
165. US Consul Kunming (at Hong Kong) to US Secretary of State, No. 1 (Jan 11, 1950): 793.00/1-1150.

166. NCNA Dec 15, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 35, p. 41.
167. NCNA Jan 1, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 38, pp. 30–31.
168. Central News Taipeh Dec 15, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 35, p. 41.
169. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 437 (Dec 12, 1949): 893.00/12-1249. Chen, *Vietnam and China*, pp. 203–06.
170. HQ FARELF to WO London, No. 465 (Dec 16, 1949), in FO 371/75995. VNA Feb 3, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 42, p. 45. VNA Dec 21, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 36, p. 27.
171. VNA Dec 15, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 35, p. 47. On alleged Franco-KMT cooperation, see NCNA Dec 20, 1949 and VNA Dec 21, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 36, pp. 24, 26.
172. Voice of South Vietnam Dec 18, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 36, p. 26. The crisis in north-central Tonkin may have played a role in the consolidation of the Viet Minh's military command in Interzones One and Ten into the single area "North Vietnam" under Maj. Gen. Chu Van Tan: see VNA Dec 28, 1949, FBIS *DR* 250 (1949), p. EEE 4. The Interzones continued for a few days at least to issue their own military communiqués: VNA Jan 4, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 38, p. 39.
173. NCNA Nov 29, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 33, p. 27.
174. Hanoi to US Secretary of State, No. 162 (Dec 14, 1949): 893.00/12-1449.
175. Hanoi to US Secretary of State, No. 162 (Dec 14, 1949): 893.00/12-1449.
176. Hanoi Radio (pro-French) Dec 15, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 35, p. 48.
177. Xinhua's account of the battle for Yunnan is available at NCNA Feb 1, 1950, FBIS *DR* 24 (1950), pp. PPP 5–6.
178. Peking Radio Dec 321, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 38, p. 31, and FBIS *DR* 3 (1950), p. PPP 11.
179. O. Westad, "The Sino-Soviet Alliance," in *Brothers in Arms*, p. 169.
180. Qiang, "Transplanting," p. 694.
181. Chen, *Mao's China*, pp. 120–21.
182. *Pravda* Jan 3, 1950, translated in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* II(2), Feb 25, 1950, pp. 23–24. The fact that Lin Biao's remarks were published in Moscow may indicate Soviet endorsement of the Chinese policy of restraint.
183. Whitson, *The Chinese High Command*, pp. 498, 503.
184. Whitson, *The Chinese High Command*, pp. 503–04.
185. Hanoi to US Secretary of State, No. 162 (Dec 14, 1949): 893.00/12-1449.
186. "Appeal from the Lien Viet and Viet Minh Tong Bo," Voice of South Vietnam Dec 19, 1949, FBIS *DR* 245 (1949), pp. EEE 3–5.
187. *A Chronicle of Principal Events Relating to the Indo-China Question, 1940–1954* (Peking: Shihchieh Chihshih, Special Supplement to No. 8, Apr 20, 1954), p. 28. Xinhua reported that in late December a French news source had reported that 2000 KMT soldiers were to be enlisted to "fight against the Viet Minh on the side of Bao Dai;" Xinhua also claimed that KMT "espionage agents" had been sent into Viet Minh-controlled areas: NCNA Jan 10, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 39, p. 26.
188. VNA Jan 3, 1950, FBIS *DR* (1950), pp. EEE 1–2.
189. VNA Jan 3, 1950, FBIS *DR* (1950), pp. EEE 1–2.
190. Document No. 4, Haut Commissariat de France en Indochine, Saigon to Monsieur le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et Monsieur le Ministère de la France d'Outre-mer, No. 3152/CD (Jun 14, 1950): Archives, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Asie-Oceanie 1944–1955, Vol. 163 Indochine, p. 120.
191. Chen, *Mao's China*, p. 126.

2 Diplomatic recognition and military assistance, January–August 1950

1. Z. Qiang, "Transplanting the Chinese Model: Chinese Military Advisers and the First Vietnam War, 1950–1954," *The Journal of Military History* 57(4), Oct 1993, p. 692.
2. A. Rotter, *The Path to Vietnam: Origins of the American Commitment to Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 171–72; and R. Buhite, *Soviet-American*

Relations in Asia, 1945–54 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), pp. 203–05.

3. Certain Western diplomats did identify implications for Southeast Asia in the potential and actual sources of friction between the Chinese and Soviet Communists. The director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs in the US State Department pointed out that the USSR's recognition of the DRV might indicate "an element of competition between the two Communist powers for the leadership and direction of the revolutionary movement in Southeast Asia:" State Department Memorandum, Jan 31, 1950, in US State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*), 1950 Vol. VI, pp. 710–11. Nonetheless, US policies increasingly relied upon an "undeniable tendency to view the worldwide 'communist threat' in monolithic terms:" *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967* (*USVNR*) (study prepared by the US Department of Defense) (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1971), Book 1, II.A.3, p. A45. Hence, in the language of the National Security Council's policy memorandum NSC 48/1, dated Dec 23, 1949, it was "clear that Southeast Asia is the target of a coordinated offensive directed by the Kremlin:" *USVNR*, Book 1, IV.A.2, p. 3.
4. Kunming to Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the Foreign Office (FO), London No. 12 (Jan 20, 1950), in FO 371/83243. Kunming to FO, London, No. 15 (Jan 26, 1950), in FO 371/83243.
5. New China News Agency (NCNA) Feb 21, 1950, in British Broadcasting Corporation. *Summary of World Broadcasts* (*SWB*) Pt V No. 45, p. 29.
6. Voice of Free China (Taipei) Jan 23, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 41, p. 42.
7. Vietnam News Agency (VNA), Jan 26, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 41, p. 44.
8. VNA Feb 8, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 43, p. 48.
9. French intelligence indicated that Viet Minh generals and a Viet Minh political representative visited Guangzhou in November 1949: Military Attaché, Canton, to Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the War Office (WO) London, AMA 78, Nov 19, 1949, in FO 371/75777.
10. Hoang Van Hoan's memoirs of his international travels and contacts as an ICP leader between 1928 and 1979, particularly in relation to China, were published in Beijing in 1988, after his defection to China following the Sino-Vietnamese border war in 1979. Hoang Van Hoan, *A Drop in the Ocean: Hoang Van Hoan's Revolutionary Reminiscences* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1988).
11. Hoan, *A Drop in the Ocean*, pp. 267–73.
12. Hoan, *A Drop in the Ocean*, p. 275.
13. This source gives a report on the decisions of the Jan 3, 1950 meeting and indicates that Truong Chinh signed the document on January 7: Document No. 4, Conseiller Diplomatique, Haut Commissariat de France en Indochine a Mansieur le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, et. al., No. 3152/CD, 14.6.1950, in Archives de Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Asie-Oceanie 1944–1955, Vol. 163 Indochine, p. 120.
14. VNA Jan 10, 1950, US Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) *Daily Report* (*DR*) 7 (1950), p. EEE 1.
15. VNA Jan 15, 1950, FBIS *DR* (1950), pp. EEE 1–2.
16. VNA Jan 16, 1950, FBIS *DR* 11 (1950), p. EEE1. Peking Radio Jan 18, 1950, FBIS *DR* 13 (1950), p. BBB 1.
17. K. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938–1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 261.
18. Chen, *Vietnam and China*, pp. 262–63, notes that "from January to September 1950 the Viet Minh received from China about 40,000 rifles, 125 machine guns, 75 mortars." These numbers, while substantial, fall far short of the 150,000 weapons reportedly agreed upon in January 1950.
19. NCNA Jan 13, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 39, p. 28. The alleged "atrocities" occurred on Nov 19, 1949.

20. Peking Radio Jan 14, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 39, p. 28. NCNA Jan 19, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 40, p. 26.
21. A Soviet work on Franco-Chinese relations claims that in this period the French government and the Chinese Communists maintained "relations on an unofficial level," and that France might have normalized its relations with the PRC "by the summer of 1950" if the United States had not pressured its allies to permit its forces to enter the Korean War under the sanction of the United Nations Security Council, of which France was a member. See the review by Y. Stepanov of T. Sulitskaya, *Kitay I Frantisaya 1949–1981* (Moscow, 1983), n.p. published in *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka* No. 1 (Jan–Mar 1984), pp. 190–94, trans. in US Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS)-UFE-84-005 (1985), pp. 187–90.
22. NCNA Mar 17, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 48, p. 26. There is a substantial literature on China's policy toward the overseas Chinese. See, for example, C. Fitzgerald, *China and Southeast Asia Since 1945* (London: Longman, 1973); W. Mallory, "Chinese Minorities in Southeast Asia," *Foreign Affairs* 34(2), January 1956, pp. 258–70; Y. Lu, "Programs of Communist China for Overseas Chinese," *Communist China Problem Research Series*, EC 12 (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, June 1956).
23. Rumors that Ho Chi Minh had visited Beijing and Moscow circulated in Saigon during February 1950; see Paris Radio Feb 13, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 44, p. 38. In 1979 Hoang Van Hoan confirmed that "in early 1950 President Ho Chi Minh made a secret visit to China and asked for Chinese help:" Hoang Van Hoan, "Distortion of Facts about Militant Friendship between Vietnam and China is Impermissible," *Renmin Ribao*, Nov 22, 1979 (available in translation in *SWB/FE*/6283/A3 and in *Beijing Review*, Dec 7, 1979, pp. 11–23). Ho's activities in Beijing are also discussed in Hoan, *A Drop in the Ocean*, pp. 276–78. A 1985 memoir by a senior Chinese diplomat confirmed that Ho also went to Moscow: X. Wu, *Eight Years in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (January 1950–October 1958)* (Beijing: Shijie zhishi, 1985), p. 19.
24. The State Department, which reported Ho's visit, was able to identify only ten of the sixteen persons accompanying Zhou: see US State Department, Division of Biographic Information, Memorandum, Jan 23, 1950: US State Department Confidential Central Files, 661.931/1-2350.
25. The ICP Central Committee, still officially dissolved at this point, could not perform this public function itself; see VNA Jan 27, 1950, FBIS *DR* 21 (1950), p. PPP 1.
26. J. Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 121.
27. On the Stalin–Mao negotiations, see A. Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* (New York: Viking, 1973), pp. 694–99; and M. Nakajima, "The Sino-Soviet Confrontation in Historical Perspective," in Y. Nagai and A. Iriye, eds., *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 210–13. Revelations by an observer at the talks reinforce earlier reports about difficulties in the bilateral talks; see Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao," *Far Eastern Affairs* (2), Moscow, 1989, pp. 125–33. For the "new cold war history" coverage of these talks, see J. Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); S. Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1995); and W. Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
28. Hoang Van Hoan described Le Hy's visit to Moscow in early 1949 as "unauthorized" and as a "violation of organizational discipline." After realizing this, Hoan says, the Soviet leadership reacted and Le Hy "was not allowed to continue to remain in Moscow:" Hoan, *A Drop in the Ocean*, pp. 251–53.
29. For a review of other aspects of the talks in Moscow, see N. Jun, "The Origins of the Sino-Soviet Alliance," in O. Westad, ed*., Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the*

Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945–1963 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 72–74.

30. Soviet diplomatic recognition of the DRV was followed swiftly by similar recognition from Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary: *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Jan 28–Feb 4, 1950, p. 10494.
31. Wu, *Eight Years*, p. 19.
32. Qiang, "Transplanting," pp. 694–95.
33. DRV ambassadors to the PRC and USSR were not accredited to those countries until 1951 and 1952, respectively. The Communist Powers did not officially dispatch credentialed ambassadors to the DRV until after the Geneva Conference of 1954.
34. Ho's arrival in Beijing was kept secret. Wu, *Eight Years*, p. 19. NCNA Mar 4, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 47, p. 25. Scholar Chen Jian says the party arrived in Beijing on March 3: Chen, *Mao's China*, p. 121.
35. NCNA Feb 22, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 45, p. 19.
36. Mao's telegram of Feb 21, 1950 to Ho Tung Mau is available in M. Kau and J. Leung, eds., *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976. Volume I: September 1949–December 1955* (Armonk, NY and London: ME Sharpe, 1986), p. 62.
37. US State Department to National Security Council, "Position of the United States with respect to Indochina," NSC 64, Feb 27, 1950 in P. Kesaris, ed., *Documents of the National Security Council, 1947–1977* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1980).
38. US State Department. *Department of State Bulletin* XXII(555), Feb 20, 1950, pp. 291–92. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Feb 4–11, 1950, p. 10508.
39. VNA Feb 6, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 43, p. 48.
40. On the same day that formal US diplomatic recognition was extended to the Associated States of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, a National Security Council document (NSC 64) directed that the US State and Defense Departments must employ "all practicable measures" to "protect US security interests in Indochina:" *USVNR* (1971), Book 1, IV.A.2, p. 3.
41. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 189 (Mar 18, 1950), in *FRUS*, 1950 Vol. VI, pp. 762–63. See also S. Hayes, *The Beginning of American Aid to Southeast Asia. The Griffin Mission of 1950* (Lexington, MA: Heath Lexington Books, 1971). Viet Minh protests against the visit of US military ships to Saigon are reported in Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 192 (Mar 19, 1950), in *FRUS*, 1950 Vol. VI, pp. 765–66. See also UK Commissioner General for Southeast Asia, Singapore, "Political Summary, March 1950," Apr 15, 1950, in FO 371/84773.
42. The Melby Mission's findings were reported in its letter to the US Foreign Military Assistance Coordinating Committee, dated Aug 6, 1950, in *FRUS*, 1950 Vol. VI, pp. 840–44.
43. VNA Mar 25, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 50, pp. 48–49.
44. Hoan, "Distortion of Facts," p. 12.
45. Hoan, *A Drop in the Ocean*, p. 276.
46. Hoan, "Distortion of Facts," p. 12.
47. Peking Radio Feb 22, 1950, Box N156, BBC Monitoring Archive, Imperial War Museum, Duxford, UK.
48. This title for the advisory mission is used in the description of the pictorial frontispiece in Hoan, *A Drop in the Ocean*, n.p.
49. Hoan, "Distortion of Facts," p. 12. A semi-official biography of Chen Geng released in 1951 described him as a "famous 'tactician in mobile warfare:' " *Hsing Tao Wan Pao* (Hong Kong) Nov 12, 1951, trans. in US Consulate-General, Hong Kong, *Survey of China Mainland Press* (*SCMP*) No. 216, pp. 25–26. Chen Geng's diary has been published in China: G. Chen, *Chen Geng ri ji* (Beijing: Jie fang jun chu ban she, 2003).
50. NCNA Mar 6, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 47, p. 28. Chungking Radio Mar 25, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 50, p. 24. Z. Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 28–29.

51. Shenyang Radio Aug 25, 1949, FBIS *DR* 165 (1949), P. BBB 8. Shanghai Radio Feb 7, 1950, FBIS *DR* 27 (1950), p. BBB 10. Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, p. 29.
52. Hoan, "Distortion of Facts," p. 12.
53. Chen, *Mao's China*, p. 126.
54. VNA Feb 19, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 45, p. 44.
55. VNA Feb 28, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 46, p. 48.
56. VNA Mar 11, 1950, FBIS *DR* 49 (1950), pp. EEE 2–3. A Chinese logistics committee under Gen. Li Tianyou was being formed in August 1950: see Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, p. 29.
57. Truong Chinh explained the "general counter-offensive" stage of the armed struggle in his article entitled "The Resistance Will Win," see T. Chinh, *Primer for Revolt* (New York: Praeger, 1963), pp. 146–55.
58. A translation of extracts from the document is available in G. Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions, Vol. I* (London: Heyden, 1979), pp. 231–37.
59. A translation of extracts from the document is available in Porter, *Vietnam, Vol. I*, pp. 231–37.
60. Military Liaison Officer (MLO) Saigon, "Military Intelligence Report, Indochina No, 4," MLO/3/Int/a, Mar 31, 1950, in FO 371/83647.
61. MLO Saigon, "Military Intelligence Report, Indochina No, 4," MLO/3/Int/a, Mar 31, 1950, in FO 371/83647.
62. Voice of Free China (Taipei) Feb 2, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 42, p. 45. Naval Liaison Officer, Tamsui to Director of Naval Intelligence, Hong Kong, 220325Z, Feb 22, 1950, in FO 371/83245.
63. Saigon to FO, London, No. 26 (Mar 8, 1950), in FO 371/83593. See also Note from the French Ambassador in London to the Foreign Office, London, Mar 13, 1950, in FO 959/104.
64. VNA Mar 29, 1950, FBIS *DR* 63 (1950), p. EEE 5.
65. Memorandum, General Headquarters (GHQ), Far East Land Forces (FARELF), Mar 17, 1950 in Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the War Office (WO) 268/747.
66. Hong Kong to US Department of State, No. 490 (May 22, 1950): 793.00/5-2250.
67. Canton to WO London, AMA/152, Feb 13, 1950, in FO 371/83245.
68. Saigon to US State Department, No. 1970 (Jul 30, 1950), in FO 371/83640.
69. Enclosure, "Indochina" Political Summary No. 6 (June 1950), Saigon to FO, London, No. 51 (Jul 1, 1950), in FO 371/83593.
70. Saigon to US State Department, No. 195 (May 19, 1950): 751G.001/5-1950.
71. The document, captured near Hon Gai on May 27, 1950, is available in French translation as Enclosure, Saigon to FO, London, No. 32A/50 (Aug 7, 1950), in FO 371/83605.
72. In the mobilization plan "propaganda was still the essential condition:" *The Sacred Resistance War of the Vietnamese People*, *Vol. 2* (Hanoi: 1958–60), pp. 348–51, cited by G. Lockhart, *Nation in Arms: The Origins of the People's Army of Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin Australia, 1989), p. 224, note 4.
73. Lockhart attributes the issuance of the Apr 15, 1950 mobilization order to "Chinese recognition:" Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, p. 224, note 4.
74. Qiang, "Transplanting," pp. 693–94.
75. Qiang, "Transplanting," pp. 698–701.
76. C. Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution, 1885–1954* (Richmond, Surry: Curzon Press, 1999), p. 298.
77. Military Attaché, Saigon, "Military Intelligence Report, Indochina No. 4," MLO/3/Int/a, Mar 31, 1950, in FO 371/83647.
78. Enclosure, US Army Acting Chief of Intelligence Division to US State Department, Jun 27, 1950: 751G.00/6-2750.
79. United Kingdom (UK) Commissioner General, Singapore, "Political Summary, March 1950," Apr 15, 1950, in FO 371/84773.

80. Enclosure, Saigon to FO, London, Jul 15, 1950, in FO 371/83596. Naval Attaché, Bangkok to Saigon, Mar 31, 1950, in FO 371/83693.
81. UK Commissioner General, Singapore, "Political Summary, April 1950," May 16, 1950, in FO 371/84773.
82. Saigon to Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 30, Jul 26, 1950: 751G.00(W)/7-2650. Weekly "Joint Weeka" reports, sent from Saigon to the US State Department and to the armed service departments, contained both political and military intelligence information.
83. Saigon to FO, London, No. 15 (Jul 28, 1950), in FO 371/83640.
84. Enclosure B, "Translation of a note prepared by Deuxième Bureau on Vietminh General Mobilisation Procedures," (n.d.) MLO Saigon to WO London, 3/Int/B, Nov 17, 1950, in FO 959/48.
85. Chen, *Mao's China*, p. 123.
86. VNA Aug 12, 1950, FBIS *DR* 160 (1950), p. EEE 6.
87. Enclosure B, "Translation of a note prepared by Deuxième Bureau on Vietminh General Mobilisation Procedures," (n.d.) MLO Saigon to WO London, 3/Int/B, Nov 17, 1950, in FO 959/48.
88. M. Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism: Mao, Stalin and the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 27.
89. Canton to WO London, AMA 182, Apr 20, 1950, in FO 371/83245. The Fourth Field Army's communiqué on the Hainan Island operations was reported by NCNA Apr 28, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 54, p. 45.
90. The Nationalist Chinese claim to have "written off" Hainan Island is discussed in Great Britain. National Archives. Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) London to Various Embassies, No. 61 (Apr 29, 1950), in FO 371/83248.
91. VNA May 26, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 58, p. 38.
92. Chen, *Mao's China*, p. 123.
93. Chen, *Mao's China*, pp. 123–24.
94. US Commissioner General, Singapore, "Political Summary, January 1950," Feb 13, 1950, in FO 371/84773. Viet Minh radio reported that the "Laotian People's Liberation Army" had obtained successes in early 1950: VNA Apr 27, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 54, p. 53.
95. VNA May 23, 1950, FBIS *DR* 101 (1950), p. EEE 4.
96. VNA Jun 7, 1950, FBIS *DR* 111 (1950), pp. PPP 4–5.
97. US Commissioner General, Singapore, "Political Summary, January 1950," Feb 13, 1950, in FO 371/84773.
98. UK Commissioner General, Singapore, "Political Summary, April 1950," 16 May 1950, in FO 371/84773.
99. UK Commissioner General, Singapore, "Political Summary, April 1950," May 16, 1950, in FO 371/84773.
100. Military Attaché, Saigon, "Military Intelligence Report No. 5," MLO/3/Int/a, Apr 21, 1950, in FO 371/83647. Enclosure, Saigon to US Department of State, No. 237 (Jun 16, 1950): 751G.00/6-1650.
101. VNA May 2, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 55, p. 56. Developments in Cambodia, including the creation of the United Issarak Front and of a "proto-government" by Communist-led activists in April 1950, are discussed in B. Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism and Communism in Cambodia, 1930–1975* (London: Verso, 1985), p. 79.
102. See Chen, *Mao's China*, pp. 55–56, and S. Goncharov, J. Lewis and L. Xue, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993). Official US evaluations of the Communist Powers' policies are discussed in R. Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950–1953* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 55–87. Research into the origins of the war in Chinese, Soviet, and Korean policies in introduced in H. Kim, "China's Non-Involvement in the Origins of the Korean War: A Critical Reassessment

of the Traditionalist and Revisionist Literature," and G. Kim, "Who Initiated the Korean War?" both in J. Cotton and I. Neary, eds., *The Korean War in History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989). See also M. Nakajima, "The Sino-Soviet Confrontation: Its Roots in the International Background of the Korean War," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* I, Jan 1979, pp. 19–47. Recent studies generally concur with Schram, who has written that "it is most unlikely that Mao Tse-tung deliberately engaged his country before 25 Jun 1950 in a policy he believed might involve it in war:" S. Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (Harmondsworth, Middx: Penguin Books, 1966), pp. 261–63.

103. A. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), pp. 82–84.
104. A second conference, held in Guangzhou, was reported to have selected Lin Biao as "supreme commander" of the invasion operation: Tokyo to FO, London, No. 670 (Jul 15, 1950), in FO 371/83251.
105. Qiang, "Transplanting," p. 693. See also Chen, *Mao's China*, p. 123.
106. Enclosure, Saigon to Department of State, No. 224 (Sep 30, 1950), in *Declassified Documents Reference System* (*DDRS*), *Retrospective Collection* (*R*) 549 A. *New York Times* 9 May 1950, p. 1.
107. Enclosure, Saigon to Department of State, No. 224 (Sep 30, 1950), in *DDRS*, (*R*) 549 A. Foreign Office Research Department, "Events in Indochina, 1949–1950," Jan 24, 1951, in FO 371/92492.
108. Saigon to FO, London, No. 73 (Sep 21, 1950), in FO 371/83640.
109. Saigon to US State Department, No. 1970 (Jul 30, 1950), in FO 371/83640.
110. Enclosure, Saigon to Department of State, No. 224 (Sep 30, 1950), in *DDRS*, (*R*) 549 A.
111. A Viet Minh document outlining decisions reached at the conference may be found in FO 959/104.
112. P. Calvocoressi, *Survey of International Affairs 1949–1950* (London: Royal Institute for International Affairs, 1953), p. 434.
113. Information on the conference was given to a British diplomat in Hanoi by a former official in the DRV Ministry of Finance, Luu Quang Hoa: Enclosure, Hanoi to Saigon, No. 28 (Oct 23, 1952), in FO 959/131.
114. Enclosure, Hanoi to Saigon, No. 28 (Oct 23, 1952), in FO 959/131.
115. The distinction drawn by Beijing between developments in Korea and in Taiwan during the summer of 1950 has been noted by Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, pp. 56–57, 80–82; and by R. Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950–1953* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 61–66.
116. Chen, *Mao's China*, pp. 124–25.
117. Qiang, "Transplanting," p. 695.
118. Chen, *Vietnam and China*, pp. 262–63. Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp. 225–26. Lockhart notes that "unfortunately, references in Vietnamese sources to these developments are oblique." See also Qiang, "Transplanting," p. 698, and Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, pp. 29–31.
119. "Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Estimate of the Indo-Chinese Situation," JCS 1992/22, Aug 25, 1950, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Part 2 1946–1953: The Far East* (Washington, DC: University Publications of American, 1979).
120. "Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Estimate of the Indo-Chinese Situation," JCS 1992/22, Aug 25, 1950, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Part 2 1946–1953: The Far East*.
121. Appendix A, MLO Saigon to WO London, 4/Int/A, Oct 25, 1950, in FO 959/104.
122. Qiang, "Transplanting" pp. 699–701.
123. Enclosure, Saigon to Department of State, No. 224 (Sep 30, 1950), in *DDRS*, (*R*) 549 A.

124. Enclosure, US Army Acting Chief of Intelligence Division to US State Department, Jun 27, 1950: 751G.00/6–2750.
125. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 28, Jul 17, 1950: 751G.00 (W)/7–1350.
126. Saigon to GHQ FARELF 3/50, Nov 15, 1950, in FO 959/48.
127. Gen. Paul Ely, *Lessons from the War in Indochina, Vols II and III* (Saigon, May 31, 1951), trans. by US Department of Defense, n.p., pp. 32–33.
128. Gen. Paul Ely, *Lessons from the War in Indochina*, pp. 33–34.
129. London to US Secretary of State, No. 1483 (Sep 8, 1950): 793.00/9–850. The recalcitrance of Yunnan inhabitants, particularly toward payment of agricultural taxes and having to support the influx of Communist troops and political workers, provoked fears of "severe food shortages and possibly famine." Kunming to FO, London, No. 45 (Apr 14, 1950), in CO 537/5647.
130. "Recent Developments in Southern Yunnan," Saigon to FO, London, No. 15 (Jul 28, 1950), in FO 371/83640.
131. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 33, Aug 16, 1950: 751G.00(W)/8-1650.
132. Enclosure, Saigon to Department of State, No. 224 (Sep 30, 1950), in *DDRS*, (*R*) 549 A. The Viet Minh also repaired French airstrips in the Viet Bac, completing work on two landing fields by mid-1950; see "Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Estimate of the Indo-Chinese Situation," JCS 1992/22, Aug 25, 1950, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Part 2 1946–1953: The Far East*. In late 1950 the Viet Minh were reported to have 40 light aircraft; see Chief, US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Saigon to US State Department, No. 763 (Nov 4, 1950), reported as Enclosure A, National Security Council, "Note … on the Position of the United States with Respect to Indochina," NSC 64/1, Dec 21, 1950, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Part 2 1946–1953: The Far East*.
133. Enclosure B, "Translation of a note prepared by the Deuxième Bureau on Vietminh General Mobilisation Procedures" (n.d.), MLO Saigon to WO London, 3/Int/B, Nov 17, 1950, in FO 959/48.
134. Major distribution routes through Laos and Cambodia had been established at least as early as late 1947, but a British report in January 1948 noted that "the Viet Minh are concentrating their attention on Cochinchina." MLO Saigon, "Military Situation in French Indochina," Jan 6, 1948, in FO 371/69653B. Goscha, *Thailand*, pp. 285–89.
135. Naval Attaché, Bangkok to Director of Naval Intelligence, Mar 6, 1950, in FO 371/84349.
136. Bangkok to FO, London, No. 124 (Jun 21, 1950), in FO 371/84606. Deuxième Bureau, HQ French Armed Forces in the Far East, "Notes on Arms Smuggling," Jul 5, 1950, in FO 371/83654. The British Embassy in Bangkok found the French report of a "supply committee" in the city dubious, maintaining instead that "much of the work ascribed to this Committee … is done by the 'Vietnam in Siam Friendly Society:' " Bangkok to FO, London, Nov 1, 1950, in FO 371/83654.
137. Voice of Free China (Taipeh) Apr 10, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 52, p. 43. Bangkok to FO, London, No. 124, in FO 371/84606.
138. Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, p. 19.
139. Goscha, *Thailand*, pp. 285–89.
140. Deuxième Bureau, HQ French Armed Forces in the Far East, "Notes on Arms Smuggling," Jul 5, 1950, in FO 371/83654.
141. Foreign Office Circular, No. 128 (Oct 31, 1949), in FO 371/86774.
142. Foreign Office Minute, "Soviet Gold Dealings," (n.d.), RC/115/49 ("Circulated Aug 30, 1949"), in FO 371/77636.
143. "Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Estimate of the Indo-Chinese Situation," JCS 1992/22, Aug 25, 1950, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Part 2 1946–1953: The Far East*.

144. US Department of Defense, *The Pentagon Papers* (*Senator Gravel Edition*) (*The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*) Vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 82–83.
145. A. Farrar-Hockley, "The China Factor in the Korean War," in Cotton and Neary, *The Korean War in History*, pp. 6–7. On the effects of the changing situation upon Mao's thinking, see Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*, pp. 262–65.
146. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, pp. 82–84, 139; and Schram, *Mao Tse-tung*, p. 263.
147. Hong Kong to Secretary of State, No. 249 (Jul 29, 1950): 793.00/2950. The informant gave several interviews to political officers of the US Consulate in Hong Kong; see Hong Kong to US Secretary of State, No. 559 (Sep 13, 1950): 793.00/9-1350.
148. US Consulate in Hong Kong; see Hong Kong to US Secretary of State, No. 559 (Sep 13, 1950): 793.00/9–1350.
149. Hong Kong to US Secretary of State, No. 247 (Jul 28, 1950): 793.00/7-2850. By 1 August British diplomats in Mukden (Shenyang) reported the arrival of 50,000 Chinese troops just south of the city, although it is not clear whether these were the same forces withdrawn from Guangdong; see Peking to FO, London, No. 1262 (Aug 18, 1950), in FO 371/83253.
150. Hong Kong to US Secretary of State, No. 247 (Jul 28, 1950): 793.00/7-2850.
151. US Consulate in Hong Kong; see Hong Kong to US Secretary of State, No. 559 (Sep 13, 1950): 793.00/9-1350.
152. Qiang, "Transplanting," pp. 699–700.
153. Chen, *Mao's China*, p. 125.
154. Chen, *Mao's China*, pp. 125–26.
155. Qiang, "Transplanting," p. 705.
156. Voice of South Vietnam Jul 22, 1950, FBIS *DR* 143 (1950), pp. EEE 1–2.
157. VNA Jul 30, 1950, FBIS *DR* 148 (1950), p. PPP 10.
158. For example, the Third Conference of the South Central Vietnam Resistance Executive Committee, meeting between Jul 27 and 31, 1950, addressed these themes; see Voice of South Vietnam Aug 4, 1950, FBIS *DR* 152 (1950), p. EEE 3.
159. Ho Viet Thanh, Secretary-General of the Vietnam Peasants' Association, gave these figures in an interview with the VNA Aug 5, 1950, FBIS *DR* 152 (1950), pp. EEE 6–7.
160. Le Van Hien, the DRV Finance Minister, gave an interview publicized by VNA Aug 11, 1950, FBIS *DR* 159 (1950), p. EEE 8.
161. VNA Aug 12, 1950, FBIS *DR* 159 (1950), p. EEE 1.
162. VNA Aug 15, 1950, FBIS *DR* 163 (1950), pp. PPP 29–30.
163. NCNA Aug 19, 1950, FBIS *DR* 163 (1950), pp. PPP 12–13.
164. Pham Van Dong announced a series of economic initiatives on Jan 3, 1951; see VNA Jan 4, 1951, FBIS *DR* 5 (1951), pp. PPP 12–13. The DRV bond issue was reported by VNA on Jan 23, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 93, p. 72. Details on the DRV Central Bank were broadcast by Voice of Vietnam Jun 15, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 114, p. 68.
165. Pham Van Dong's article, "The National Bank of Vietnam," appeared in *Nhan Dan* on May 27, 1951; VNA Jun 5, 1951, FBIS *DR* 118 (1951), pp. CCC 1–3.
166. On Xiao Wen's position, see "Sino-Viet Minh Collaboration," Saigon to US State Department, No. 246 (Oct 11, 1950), in *DDRS*, (*R*) 549 D. On his earlier contacts with Gen. Ye Jianying and Ho Chi Minh, see Chen, *Vietnam and China*, pp. 34–37. The August 5 meeting is reported in "SDECE (Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionage) Intelligence Reports re Sino-Viet Minh Collaboration," Enclosure, Saigon to US State Department, No. 150 (Sep 11, 1950): 751G.00/9-1150. The site of the meeting would not have been unusual: a US intelligence report in May 1950 indicated that a "Macao organization of the South China Bureau" of the CCP had been established by that time. See Hong Kong to US Department of State, May 29, 1950: 793.00/5-2950.
167. Saigon to US State Department, No. 234 (Oct 3, 1950), in *DDRS*, (*R*) 549 B.

168. "Sino-Viet Minh Collaboration," Saigon to US State Department, No. 246 (Oct 11, 1950), in *DDRS*, (*R*) 549 D.
169. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 33, Aug 16, 1950: 751G.00(W)/8-1650. Saigon to FO, London, No. 73 (Sep 21, 1950), in FO 371/83640.
170. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 39, Sep 27, 1950: 751G.00(w)/9-2750.
171. Saigon to US Department of State, No. 361 (Dec 5, 1950), in *DDRS*, (*R*) 553 G.
172. The initial frailty of the Indochinese Communist Party's commissar system may have been one reason that Giap later dated effective Party control over "commanders and political officers" from 1952; see Vo Nguyen Giap, *Hoc Tap*, January 1960, cited by D. Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam* (Novato, CO: Presidio Press, 1986), p. 159.
173. NCNA Aug 19, 1950, FBIS *DR* 163 (1950), p. EEE 3.
174. VNA Aug 20, 1950, FBIS *DR* 164 (1950), pp. PPP 5–6.

3 Increasing tensions in Sino-Viet Minh relations, August 1950–February 1951

1. See, for example, B. Fall, *Street Without Joy* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), pp. 32–33. E. O'Ballance, *The Indo-China War 1945–1954: A Study in Guerilla Warfare* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), pp. 114–19.
2. In a debate in the French National Assembly, Premier Pleven reported on assurances given to the command in Indochina, and on October 19 the Assembly voted to support the government's policy. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Oct 28–Nov 4, 1950, p. 11047.
3. United States. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Saigon to State Department, No. 763 (Nov 4, 1950), in Enclosure A, National Security Council Executive Secretary, "Note on the Position of the United States with respect to Indochina," NSC 64/1, Dec 21, 1950, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Part 2 1946–1953. Far East* (Washington, DC: University Publications of America, 1979).
4. Far East Land Forces (FARELF) to War Office (WO) London, 2/CIC, Nov 3, 1950, in Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the Foreign Office (FO) 371/83641.
5. US Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research, "Factors Involved in Chinese Communist Military Policy toward Indochina," OIR Report No. 5222 (Jun 1, 1950), *OSS/State Department Intelligence and Research Reports. Part IX. China and India: 1950–1961 Supplement*.
6. Vietnam News Agency (VNA) Mar 1, 1950, United States. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) *Daily Report (DR)* 42 (1950), p. EEE 2.
7. K. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938–1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 263.
8. A. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960), pp. 56, 70.
9. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, pp. 84ff.
10. New China News Agency (NCNA) Aug 12, 1950, British Broadcasting Corporation, *Summary of World Broadcasts* (*SWB*) Pt V No. 70, p. 46.
11. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 31, Aug 2, 1950: US State Department, Confidential Central Files, 751G.00(W)/8-250.
12. Peking Radio Aug 11, 1950, FBIS *DR* 158 (1950), pp. PPP 28–29.
13. NCNA Aug 24, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 71, pp. 40–41.
14. NCNA Aug 24, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 71, p. 41. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, p. 85.
15. Peking to FO, London, No. 1288 (Aug 21, 1950), repeated as Great Britain. National Archives. Commonwealth relations Office (CRO) London to New Delhi, No. 1804 (Aug 22, 1950), in Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the Dominions Office (DO) 133/22.
16. Saigon to US State Department, No. 234 (Oct 3, 1950), in *Declassified Documents Reference System* (*DDRS*), *Retrospective Collection* (*R*) 549 B. Hong Kong to US State Department, No. 559 (Sep 13, 1950): 793.00/9-1350.

17. NCNA Aug 19, 1950, FBIS *DR* 163 (1950), pp. PPP 12–13.
18. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, pp. 86, 91.
19. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, pp. 84, 97. Peking Radio Sep 2, 1950, FBIS *DR* 173 (1950), p. PPP 22.
20. Hong Kong to US State Department, No. 559 (Sep 13, 1950): 793.00/9-1350.
21. Taipeh Radio Sep 6, FBIS *DR* 174 (1950), p. AAA 4.
22. M. Olsen, *Soviet–Vietnam Relations and the Role of China, 1949–64: Changing Alliances* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 15.
23. Canton to FO, London, No. 175 (Oct 12, 1950) (AMA No. 244), in FO 371/83254.
24. Kunming to FO, London, No. 110 (Oct 7, 1950), in FO 371/83254.
25. Kunming to FO, London, No. 110 (Oct 7, 1950), in FO 371/83254.
26. Manila Radio Sep 20, 1950, FBIS *DR* 184 (1950), p. EEE 1.
27. Military Liaison Officer (MLO) Saigon, "Monthly Intelligence Report No. 10," Oct 4, 1950, MLO/3/Int/A, in FO 371/83647.
28. VNA Sep 26, 1950, FBIS *DR* 182 (1950), pp. PPP 22–23.
29. FARELF to WO London, Oct 18, 1950, in FO 371/83641.
30. Voice of South Vietnam Oct 7, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 78, p. 69.
31. VNA Oct 24, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 80, p. 51.
32. Peking Radio Oct 14, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 79, p. 34.
33. Saigon to FO, London (MLO Saigon to WO London), No. 274 (Nov 2, 1950), in FO 371/83641.
34. *The Nation* (Rangoon) Oct 13, 1950, p. 6.
35. *The Nation* (Rangoon) Oct 13, 1950, p. 6. See also Steve Heder, *Cambodian Communism and the Vietnamese Model, Vol. I, 1930–1975* (Bangkok: White Lotus Co. Ltd, 2004), p 29.
36. *The Nation* (Rangoon) Oct 13, 1950, p. 6.
37. *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong) Nov 19, 1950, trans. in US Consulate-General, Hong Kong, *Current Background* No. 41 (Dec 18, 1950), pp. 3–6.
38. UK High Commissioner in India to CRO London, No. 2748 (Sep 27, 1950), in FO 371/84109.
39. J. Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 55–56.
40. UK High Commissioner in India to CRO London, No. 2748 (Sep 27, 1950), in FO 371/84109.
41. M. Nakajima, "Foreign Relations: From the Korean War to the Bandung Line," in R. MacFarquhar and J. Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 14. The People's Republic, Part I: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1949–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 274.
42. W. Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 98–101.
43. Chen, *Mao's China*, p. 56.
44. Peking to FO, London, No. 1529 (Oct 3, 1950), in FO 371/84109.
45. P. Calvocoressi, *Survey of International Affairs 1949–1950* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 507.
46. "Special Report from Commanding General," United Nations Command, Nov 5, 1950, United National Security Council *Document* S/1884, Nov 6, 1950.
47. Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works Vol. III* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), p. 222.
48. *New York Times* Oct 18, 1950, p. 18.
49. VNA Oct 17, 1950, FBIS *DR* 203 (1950), pp. EEE 1–2.
50. VNA Oct 17, 1950, FBIS *DR* 203 (1950), pp. EEE 2–3.
51. NCNA Oct 18, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 79, p. 34.
52. *New York Times* Oct 29, 1950, p. 11.

53. Peking to FO, London, No. 1625 (Oct 19, 1950), in FO 371/83254.
54. Z. Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 38.
55. Saigon to Secretary of State, No. 1134 (Dec 26, 1950): 751G.00/12-2650.
56. "Hsiao K'o," D. Klein, and A. Clark, *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Communism 1921–1965, Volume I: Ai Szu-ch'i – Lo I-nung* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp 335–36.
57. 2ème Bureau, L'etat-major interarmées et des forces terrèstres (EMIFT), "Note d'information sur les Relations Sino-Viet Minh, Janvier 1950 a Juin 1952," Saigon, 7 Juillet 1952: Service historique de l'armée de terre (SHAT) 10 H 621. See also Qiang Zhai, "Transplanting the Chinese Model: Chinese Military Advisers and the First Vietnam War, 1950–1954," *The Journal of Military History* 57(4), Oct 1993, p. 703.
58. On the PLA Railway Corps, see NCNA Aug 5, 1951, US Consulate General, Hong Kong, *Survey of China Mainland Press* No. 149, p. 33, and *Changchiang Jih Pao* (Hankow) Oct 13, 1951, *Survey of China Mainland Press* No. 196, pp. 18–19. On construction of rail links to the Tonkin border, see United Kingdom (UK) Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong to Board of Trade, London, OTB 404, Oct 16, 1950, in FO 371/83254; Saigon to FARELF 3/50, Nov 15, 1950, in FO 959/48; and Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 49, Dec 5, 1950: 751G.00(W)/12-550.
59. Saigon to FO, London, No 267 (MLO Saigon to WO London), 30 Oct 1950, in FO 371/83641.
60. Saigon to FO, London, No. 311 (MLO Saigon to WO London), Nov 14, 1950, in FO 371/83641.
61. The official was "Va Mien Vinh," a member of the Vietnamese student delegation to a World Federation of Democratic Youth conference; see NCNA Oct 27, 1950, *SWB* PtV No. 80, p. 26.
62. R. Smith, "China and Southeast Asia: The Revolutionary Perspective, 1951," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* XIX(1), Mar 1988, p. 105.
63. Voice of Nambo Oct 12, 1950, FBIS *DR* 201 (1950), p. EEE 7.
64. G. Eckart, *Command and Control 1950–1969* (*Vietnam Studies*) (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1991), p. 7.
65. Paris Radio Sep 1, 1950, *SWB* Pt VIa (Western Europe) No. 71, p. 20.
66. See the report on the resolutions of the "Vietnam Peace Defenders Conference:" VNA Nov 24, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 84, p. 69. The Conference itself is discussed below.
67. In an interview with *Renmin Ribao*, "Va Mien Vinh" referred to the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) High Command's views, perhaps indicating that his stay in Beijing as a student delegate included work on the military dimensions of youth organizing for the Viet Minh; see NCNA Oct 27, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 80, p. 26.
68. Saigon to FO, London, No. 267 (MLO Saigon to WO London), Oct 30, 1950, in FO 371/83641.
69. FARELF to WO London, Nov 3, 1950, in FO 371/83641. FARELF to WO London 1307 GI, Nov 6, 1950, in FO 371/83641.
70. On the Vietnamese Communists' activities in Cambodia and Laos, see B. Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power. A History of Communism in Kampuchea, 1930–1975* (London: Verso, 1985), and M. Brown and J. Zasloff, *Apprentice Revolutionaries: The Communist Movement in Laos, 1930–1985* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986).
71. In April 1950 the Khmer United Front and the "Mouta Seiha" Party of Western Cambodia, both pro-Communist groups, had been formed: Voice of Nambo May 27, 1951, FBIS *DR* 110 (1951), pp. CCC 3–5. In addition, the VNA later reported that "bases of the Laos Liberation Army were consolidated" during 1950: VNA Jun 2, 1951, FBIS *DR* 114 (1951), pp. CCC 3–4.
72. Warsaw to FO, London, No. 47 (Nov 17, 1950), in FO 371/86582.

73. Convocation of the Conference was reported by VNA Nov 12, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 83, p. 57. Ostensibly the Conference in Vietnam was called because "war conditions" prevented Vietnamese delegates from travelling from Vietnam to Warsaw. It is known that representatives were selected from the Vietnamese community in France and Tran Thanh, "the chief Vietnamese delegate," attended the Warsaw meeting; see Voice of South Vietnam Nov 15, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 83, p. 57, and NCNA Nov 29, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 84, p. 45.
74. VNA Nov 24, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 84, p. 69.
75. VNA Nov 24, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 84, p. 69.
76. VNA Jan 22, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 93, pp. 71–72. It remains unclear whether there were two separate conferences, attended by the same delegates, or two sessions of a single conference. My reading of the monitored radio broadcasts is that there were two consecutive meetings: the "Vietnam Conference of World Peace Defenders" on November 19 and a second conference dealing with the "alliance" of the national united front organizations, probably held November 20–22.
77. VNA Nov 30, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 85, p. 72.
78. The "common strategy" concept had been mentioned in earlier broadcasts; see, for example, Voice of South Vietnam Sep 9, 1950, FBIS *DR* 181 (1950), pp. EEE 1–2.
79. VNA Dec 5, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 86, p. 72.
80. Warsaw to FO, London, No. 50 (Dec 1, 1950), in FO 371/86752.
81. One of the seminal articles declaring the Soviet policy on the "leading role" for Communist parties in liberation struggles, which emerged first as a report to Soviet Academicians on Jun 8, 1949, is that by Y. Zhukov, "Problems of the National–Colonial Struggle Since the Second World War," *Voprosy ekonomiki* No. 9 (Oct 26, 1949), trans. in American Council of Learned Societies, Joint Committee on Slavic Studies, Washington, DC, *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* I(49), Jan 3, 1950, pp. 3–6.
82. Moscow Radio, Nov 13, 1950, and Editor's Note, *SWB* Pt I (The Soviet Union), No. 159, pp. 12, 43.
83. The Khmer People's Revolutionary Party was established on Sep 30, 1951; see Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, p. 83. Organizational progress was also made in Laos in 1951, although four additional years of "preparations" ensued before the Lao People's Revolutionary Party was created; see Brown and Zasloff, *Apprentice Revolutionaries*, p. 47.
84. A Moscow Radio commentary later asserted that the liberation struggle in Indochina was "led by the Communist Party under Ho Chi Minh;" see Moscow Radio, Jan 28, 1951, *SWB* Pt I No. 180, p. 12. In early January 1951 a Viet Minh broadcast announced that the anniversary of the Indochinese Communist Party's founding (on Jan 6, 1930) would be celebrated; see Voice of South Vietnam Jan 5, 1951, FBIS *DR* (1951), pp. EEE 1–2.
85. NCNA Dec 1, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 85, p. 48.
86. NCNA Nov 30, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 85, pp. 38–40.
87. VNA Nov 30, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 85, p. 72.
88. NCNA Dec 20, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 88, pp. 45–46.
89. Moscow Home Service Jan 23, 1951, *SWB* Pt I No 179, p. 2.
90. "CIA Estimate of the Prospects for Chinese Communist Action in Indochina During 1950," ORE 50–50, Sep 7, 1950, in Annex No. 2 to Interdepartmental Southeast Asia Policy Committee, "Proposed Statement of US Policy on Indochina for NSC Consideration," SEAC D-21, Oct 11, 1950: *Records, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Part 2 1946–53. The Far East* (Washington, DC: University Publications of America, 1979).
91. The British Foreign Office had reached this basic conclusion by December 1948; its evaluation at that time, however, was that "the Americans are apparently not prepared to accept any responsibility in Southeast Asia …." See FO, London to Washington, DC, No. 1803 (Dec 20, 1948), in FO 371/69547. The evolution of the US position on the need to "contain" Communist China, with particular emphasis on the repercussions for US engagement with Southeast Asia, has been explored by G. Kahin, *Intervention: How American Became Involved in Vietnam* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1987), pp. 28–35.

92. Some aspects of the economic difficulties which arose for China because of its participation in the Korean War are discussed in Chapter 4.
93. NCNA Nov 30, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 85, pp. 38–40.
94. A plan to divert two US combat groups, totaling 50 aircraft, from Korea to French Indochina was announced on Nov 19, 1950: *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, April 28–May 5, 1951, p. 11434.
95. NCNA Nov 23, 1950, FBIS *DR* 229 (1950), pp. AAA 1–2.
96. FARELF to WO London, Dec 1, 1950, in FO 371/83641.
97. Chungking Radio, Southwest Regional Service, Nov 25, 1950, FBIS *DR* 231 (1950), pp. PPP 12–13. On Chinese propaganda campaigns at the time of China's intervention in Korea, see Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, pp. 127–30, 139–43. See also G. Rawnsley, "The Great Movement to Resist America and Assist Korea: How Beijing Sold the Korean War," *Media, War and Conflict* 2(3), 2009, pp. 285–315.
98. NCNA Nov 25, 1950, FBIS *DR* 231 (1950), p. PPP 11, and NCNA Nov 25, 26, 27, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 85, pp. 35–36. Similar statements by mass organizations in relation to Korea are noted in Whiting (1960), p. 117.
99. X. Wu, *Eight Years in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (January 1950–October 1958) – Memoirs of a Diplomat* (Beijing: New World Press, 1985), p. 53. The Chinese delegation's activities at the UN meeting are discussed in B. Weng, *Peking's UN Policy: Continuity and Change* (New York: Praeger, 1972), pp. 88–89.
100. For details on the Chinese delegation at Lake Success, see Stueck, *The Korean War*, pp. 138–42.
101. Saigon to US Department of State, No. 575 (Mar 19, 1951): 793.5/3-1951.
102. Saigon to US Department of State, No. 575 (Mar 19, 1951): 793.5/3-1951; and Saigon to US Department of State, No. 582 (Mar 20, 1951): 793.5/3-2051. The defensive nature of the Communists' military activities in Guangdong was also noted in Hong Kong Police, Special Branch, Summary, Nov 1950, p. 2, in Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the Colonial Office (CO) 537/6075.
103. UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong to Board of Trade, London, OTB 7, Jan 5, 1951, in FO 371/92193. *Far Eastern Economic Review* (*FEER*) IX(10), Sep 7, 1950, p. 276.
104. Wuhan Radio Jan 21, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 93, p. 24. UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong to Board of Trade, London, OTB 7, Jan 5, 1951, in FO 371/92193.
105. Hong Kong Police, Special Branch, Summary, Nov 1950, p. 3, in CO 537/6075.
106. US Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research, Division of Research for Far East, "Chinese Communist Intentions in South China," OIR Report No. 5445 (Jan 30, 1951), p. 77, in *O.S.S./State Department Intelligence and Research Reports. Part IX. China and India: 1950–1961 Supplement*.
107. UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong, to Board of Trade, London, OTB 35, Jan 23, 1951, in FO 371/92194. NCNA Feb 17, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 97, p. 23.
108. H. Siu, *Agents and Victims in South China: Accomplices in Rural Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), pp 119–20.
109. For example, the review conference in Interzone Five met between Nov 5 and 20, 1950: Voice of South Vietnam Dec 1, 1950, FBIS *DR* 235 (1950), p. EEE 5.
110. Enclosure 1, Hanoi to US State Department, No. 116 (Jan 18, 1951): 751G.00/1-1851.
111. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 54, Jan 9, 1951: 751G.00(W)/1-951.
112. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 1134 (Dec 26, 1950): 751G.00/12-2650.
113. Enclosure 1, Hanoi to US State Department, No. 116 (Jan 18, 1951): 751G.00/1-1851.
114. Military Attaché, Saigon to WO London, Dec 11, 1950, in FO 371/83641.
115. Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works Vol. III*, p. 224.
116. Fall, *Street without Joy*, p. 35.
117. Radio Saigon France-Asie Jan 26, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 94, p. 67.
118. VNA Nov 27, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 85, p. 71.
119. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 1390 (Feb 9, 1951): 751G.00/2-951.

120. Hanoi to US Secretary of State, No. 389 (Jan 31, 1951): 751G.00/1-3151.
121. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 54, Jan 9, 1951: 751G.00(W)/1-951.
122. Hanoi to US Secretary of State, No. 389 (Jan 31, 1951): 751G.00/1-3151.
123. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Jan 18, 1951: 751G.00/1-1851.
124. The Viet Minh delegation included Chu Van Tan, Le Van Thinh, Ly Binh Xuong, and Duong Van Nan. See Hanoi to US State Department, No. 117 (Jan 24, 1951): 793.01/1-2451.
125. In the event of "world conflict" and enemy landings in Guangdong, the meeting reportedly decided that main force PLA troops would withdraw from the province, leaving local militia to carry out guerrilla operations; see Saigon to US Department of State, No. 582 (Mar 20, 1951): 793.5/3-2051.
126. Saigon to US Department of State, No. 582 (Mar 20, 1951): 793.5/3-2051.
127. UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong to Board of Trade, London, OTB 7, Jan 5, 1951, in FO 371/93193.
128. Washington, DC to FO, London, No. 3492 (Dec 22, 1950), in FO 371/83256.
129. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Dec 23–30, 1950, pp. 11157–58, and Apr 28–May 5, 1951, p. 11434. See also Eckhart, *Command and Control 1950–1969*, p. 7.
130. UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong to Board of Trade, London, OTB 7, Jan 5, 1951, in FO 371/93193.
131. "Wu Ming-ch'ing" was reportedly a liaison officer assigned to a Chinese military team under Zhang Yunyi: Taipei to US Department of State, No. 189 (Apr 7, 1951): 795.5/4-751.
132. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 54, Jan 9, 1951: 751G.00(W)/1-951.
133. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 1390 (Feb 9, 1951): 751G.00/2-951.
134. Editor's Note in Ho Chi Minh. *Selected Works, Vol. III*, p. 223.
135. The date of the beginning of this "Tran Hung Dao II" campaign is given in an Editor's Note in Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works, Vol. III*, p. 232.
136. Saigon to FO, London, Jan 6, 1051, in FO 371/92533.
137. De Lattre estimated that there were between 150,000 and 200,000 Chinese forces within 300 kilometers of the Indochina border; see Saigon to FO, London, Jan 6, 1051, in FO 371/92533.
138. UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong to Board of Trade, London, OTB 35, Jan 23, 1951, in FO 371/92194. Taipeh Radio Jan 12, 1951, FBIS *DR* 11, p. EEE 3.
139. UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong to Board of Trade, London, OTB 7, Jan 5, 1951, in FO 371/93193.
140. Hong Kong to US Secretary of State, No. 1816 (Jan 10, 1951): 751G.00/1-1051.
141. UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong to Board of Trade, London, OTB 7, Jan 5, 1951, in FO 371/93193.
142. Hong Kong to US Secretary of State, No. 1816 (Jan 10, 1951): 751G.00/1-1051. Taipeh to US Department of State, No. 189 (Apr 7, 1951): 795.5/4-751.
143. Stueck, *The Korean War*, p. 148.
144. Hong Kong to US Secretary of State, No. 1816 (Jan 10,1951): 751G.00/1-1051.
145. Washington, DC to FO, London, No. 108 (Feb 2, 1951), in FO 371/92433.
146. Washington, DC to FO, London, No. 108 (Feb 2, 1951), in FO 371/92433. The precise dates of these internal Viet Minh messages are not revealed in this document.
147. The Dutch learned of Chinese troop movements in January from the French; see Peking to FO, London, No. 449 (Mar 3, 1951), in FO 371/92194. UK Trade Commissioner to Board of Trade, London, OTB 85, Feb 23, 1951, in FO 371/92194. During January 1951 measures were taken to increase the capacity of military hospitals in Yunnan; see Kunming to Peking, No. 6 (Jan 16, 1951), in FO 371/92191. The Nationalist Chinese Defense Ministry publicly reported that a Sino-Viet Minh agreement had authorized the entry of Chinese "volunteers" into Tonkin if the Viet Minh failed "to conquer the

whole territory within three months:" *Bangkok Post*, Jan 22, 1951, p. 1. See also United Press from Taipeh, Jan 31, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 94, p. 38.
148. Voice of South Vietnam Jan 11, 1951, FBIS *DR* 12 (1951), pp. EEE 2–4.
149. Saigon to WS Secretary of State, No. 1303, Joint Weeka 3, Jan 24, 1951: 751G.00(W)/1-2451.
150. Taibei Radio Jan 12, 1951, FBIS *DR* 11 (1951), p. EEE3.
151. VNA Apr 18, 1951, FBIS *DR* 81 (1951), pp. FFF 1–3.
152. Saigon to FO, London, No. 27 (Jan 17, 1951), in FO 371/92433.
153. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 1390 (Feb 9, 1951): 751G.00/2-951. Saigon to FO, London, No 32 (Jan 18, 1951), in FO 371/92433. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 1303, Joint Weeka 3, Jan 24, 1951: 751G.00(W)/1-2451.
154. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Jan 18, 1951: 751G.00/1-1851.
155. Hanoi to US Secretary of State, No. 356 (Jan 18, 1951): 751G.00/1-1951. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 1390 (Feb 9, 1951): 751G.00/2-951. Saigon to FO, London, No. 53 (Jan 24, 1951), in FO 371/92433.
156. VNA Jan 16, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 92, p. 65.
157. VNA Jan 24, 1951, FBIS *DR* 22 (1951), pp. PPP 15–18.
158. Saigon to FO, London, No. 33 (Jan 19, 1951), in FO 371/92433.
159. China's peace proposals received extensive publicity; see *Bangkok Post* Jan 23, 1951, p. 1. The text of the 1 Feb 1951 UN General Assembly resolution is available in R. Dennet and K. Durant, eds., *Documents on American Foreign Relations Vol. XIII* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 451–52.
160. The offensive was reported in a United Press dispatch from Tokyo, United Nations Command Headquarters: see *Bangkok Post* Jan 29, 1951, p. 1. The significance of its failure has been noted by R. Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950–1953* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 132–33.
161. Calvocoressi, *Survey of International Affairs*, p. 344; and Moscow Radio, Feb 16, 1951, *SWB* Pt I No. 185, pp. 1–4. These statements followed secret overtures by the UN General Assembly President to the PRC through Swedish diplomats in Stockholm and Beijing on Feb 14, 1951: see US Deputy Representative to the United Nations to US Secretary of State, Feb 17, 1951, in *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*), 1951 Vol. VII, Part 1, pp. 181–82.
162. Official praise for Stalin's remarks emerged later in February; see Peking Radio (to Korea) Feb 27, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 98, p. 10. Sino-Soviet tensions over Korea have also been discussed in M. Nakajima, "The Sino-Soviet Confrontation in Historical Perspective," in Y. Nagai and A. Iriye, eds., *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: University of Tokyo and Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 217–18.
163. NCNA Feb 19, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 97, p. 17.
164. NCNA Feb 19, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 97, pp. 9–10.
165. NCNA Feb 19, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 98, pp. 7–9.
166. From late January 1951 the Chinese Communist press actively criticized the US "plot" to exclude China from the proposed treaty with Japan; see NCNA Jan 28, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 94, pp. 14–15.
167. Shanghai Radio Feb 20, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 97, p. 20; and Peking Home Service Feb 22, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 97, p. 6.
168. NCNA Mar 14, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 100, pp. 14–15.
169. Huynh Kim Khanh, *Vietnamese Communism, 1925–1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp 328–33.
170. Voice of Nambo Mar 11, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 100, p. 61.
171. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 9, Mar 6, 1951: 751G.00(W)/3–651.
172. Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works Vol. III*, pp. 252–53.

173. VNA Feb 25, 1951, FBIS *DR* 46 (1951) pp. FFF 1–3. Some sources have suggested that Giap was forced to make a self-criticism (on Jan 23, 1951) because of the defeat at Vinh Yen. French radio claimed that Giap was criticized by other PAVN commanders at a meeting on February 7; see Fall, *Street Without Joy*, p. 40; and Radio Saigon France-Asie Mar 9, 1951, FBIS *DR* 53 (1951), p. FFF 11. These reports have yet to be confirmed, but if they are accurate it is clear that Giap had prevailed over his critics by the time of his report to the DRV Council of Ministers.
174. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 1390 (Feb 9, 1951): 751G.00/2-951. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 8, Feb 27, 1951: 751G.00(W)/2-2751.
175. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 9, Mar 6, 1951: 751G.00(W)/3-651.
176. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 1603 (Mar 11, 1951): 751G.5/3-1151.
177. *Bangkok Post* Mar 6, 1951, pp. 1, 3. UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong to Board of Trade, London, OTB 113, Mar 14, 1951, in FO 371/92196.
178. De Lattre informed the British that Ho Chi Minh had left Tonkin for meetings with Mao Zedong in Beijing; see Saigon to FO, London, Feb 23, 1951, in FO 371/92412. See also Voice of Vietnam (Bao Dai government) Feb 23, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 98, p. 71.
179. Taipeh to US State Department, No. 189 (Apr 7, 1951): 795.5/4–751. Voice of Vietnam (Bao Dai government) Feb 26, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 98, p. 71.
180. VNA Mar 6, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 99, p. 70. Xinhua repeated this report; see NCNA Mar 7, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 99, p; 13. Ho Chi Minh attended the Lien Viet–Viet Minh "merger conference" on March 3; see Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works Vol. III*, pp. 269–70.

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1. P. Calvocoressi, *Survey of International Affairs 1951* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 435.
2. Vietnam News Agency (VNA), Apr 22, 1951, US Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) *Daily Report* (*DR)* 83 (1951), p. FFF 7.
3. *Bangkok Post* Feb 23, 1951, p. 1. UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong to Board of Trade, London, OTB 85, Feb 123, 951, in Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the Foreign Office (FO) 371/92194.
4. *Bangkok Post* Feb 23, 1951, p. 1.
5. *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1970), pp. 62–63. Ho Chi Minh's political report to the Party congress in February 1951 demonstrates that the problem of explaining the postponement of the general counteroffensive was of immediate concern; see Ho Chi Minh, "Political Report Read at the Second National Congress of the Viet Nam Workers' Party Held in February 1961 [*sic*]", *Selected Works Vol. III* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), pp. 252–53.
6. D. Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 227.
7. See Editor's Note in Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works Vol. III*, p. 268. Voice of Vietnam Apr 10, 1951, British Broadcasting Corporation. *Summary of World Broadcasts* (*SWB*) Pt V No. 104, p. 66.
8. D. Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 227. Voice of Nambo Mar 11, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 100, p. 61. It was later revealed that March 11 was also the day on which the Lien Viet–Viet Minh merger conference issued its manifesto: VNA Apr 23, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 106, p. 63.
9. VNA Mar 12–15, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 100, pp. 63–67.
10. Voice of South Vietnam Mar 15, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 100, p. 67.
11. The plenum communiqué was broadcast by VNA Apr 22, 1951, FBIS *DR* (1951), pp. FFF 4–7.
12. VNA Apr 22, 1951, FBIS *DR* (1951), pp. FFF 4–7.

13. First broadcast reports on the VNWP congress were transmitted by New China News Agency (NCNA) Mar 26, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 102, p. 10. *Renmin Ribao* and *Guangming Ribao* commentaries were broadcast by NCNA Mar 27, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 102, p. 10.
14. R. Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950–1953* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 17. *Bangkok Post* Mar 15, 1951, p. 1. Chinese broadcasts acknowledged the withdrawal from Seoul on March 21; see Peking Radio Mar 21, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 101, p. 8.
15. VNA Apr 22, 1951, FBIS *DR* 83 (1951), pp. FFF 4–7.
16. VNA Apr 13, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 104, p. 68.
17. Voice of Vietnam Mar 21, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 102, pp. 58–59.
18. Voice of Vietnam Mar 19, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 101, pp. 53–54.
19. Vientiane Radio Mar 20, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 101, p. 57.
20. Radio Saigon France-Asie Apr 3, 1951, FBIS *DR* 70 (1951), pp. FFF 4–5.
21. On March 15 Truman stated that the decision to send forces north of the 38th Parallel rested with the UN Commander. Earlier in the day MacArthur had publicly stated that no useable defense line could be established in central Korea, asserting that the Yalu River must serve as the "future main line of defense." See Editorial Note and MacArthur's statement in *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*), 1951 Vol. VII Part 1, pp. 234–35. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) met on March 15 to discuss the issue; see memorandum, State–JCS Meeting, Mar 15, 1951, US State Department, *FRUS*, 1951 Vol. VII Part 1, pp. 232–34.
22. *Bangkok Post* Apr 3, 1951, p. 1.
23. *Bangkok Post* Mar 23, 1951, p. 1.
24. The text of MacArthur's statement is available in *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Apr 7–14, 1951, p. 11381.
25. MacArthur to Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Mar 25, 1951, *FRUS*, 1951 Vol. VII Part 2, pp. 1608–09.
26. Editor's Note, *SWB* Pt V No. 102, p. 7.
27. The battles are described in Fall (1961), pp. 35–38. Other attacks took place in Quang Yen and Son Tay provinces: VNA Mar 27, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 102, p. 64.
28. E. O'Ballance, *The Indo-China War 1945–1954: A Study in Guerrilla Warfare* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 133.
29. The PAVN attacks produced a "serious threat" to the Hon Gai coal mines, and the main reservoir for Haiphong's water supply was actually seized at one point by Viet Minh units; see Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 13, Apr 4, 1951: 751G.00(W)/4-451.
30. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 14, Apr 10, 1951: 751G.00(W)/4-1051.
31. NCNA Mar 26–27, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 102, p. 10.
32. VNA Mar 30–31, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 103, pp. 64, 65.
33. Peking Radio Mar 29, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 102, pp. 7–8.
34. Saigon to US State Department, Joint Weeka 14, Apr 10, 1951: 751G(W)/4-1051.
35. Saigon to US State Department, Joint Weeka 14, Apr 10, 1951: 751G(W)/4-1051.
36. In 1949 official broadcasts noted that communications difficulties between northern and southern Vietnam introduced a time lag into the administration of policy; see La Voix du Vietnam Sep 27, 1949, in Enclosure, Hanoi to US Secretary of State, Oct 21, 1951: 851G.20200/10-2149.
37. Voice of Nambo Mar 27, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 103, p. 66.
38. The leaflets, the authenticity of which was confirmed by French authorities, were reported in US Secretary of State to Certain Offices, Apr 10, 1951, *FRUS*, 1951 Vol. VI Part 1, pp. 415–16.
39. US Secretary of State to Certain Offices, Apr 10, 1951, *FRUS*, 1951 Vol. VI Part 1, pp. 415–16.
40. Voice of South Vietnam Apr 17, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 105, p. 69. Curiously, on March 27 the Soviet TASS news service broadcast a report claiming that in Vietnam "workers are

strengthening underground trade organizations" in French-held areas and that "workers' partisan detachments are growing in the rear of the enemy." TASS Mar 27, 1951, *SWB* Pt I No. 196, p. 9.

41. Voice of Saigon–Cholon Apr 5, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 104, p. 70.
42. Paris Radio Apr 7, 1951, FBIS *DR* 73 (1951), p. FFF 8. Saigon to FO, London, No. 183 (Apr 13, 1951), in FO 9595/107.
43. *Bangkok Post* Apr 17, 1951, p. 1.
44. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 16, Apr 25, 1951: 751G.00(W)/4-2551.
45. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 6, Feb 13, 1951: 751G.00(W)/2-1351.
46. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 6, Feb 13, 1951: 751G.00(W)/2-1351.
47. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 9, Mar 6, 1951: 751G.00(W)/3-651.
48. NCNA Mar 6, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 99, p. 23. NCNA Feb 17, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 97, p. 23. Kunming to FO, London, No. 12 (Feb 13, 1951), in FO 371/92191.
49. Kunming Radio Feb 18, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 97, p. 32. Karachi Radio Jul 23, 1951, FBIS *DR* 147 (1951), p. AAA 5.
50. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Mar 14, 1951, *FRUS*, 1951 Vol. VI Part 1, p. 396.
51. *Bangkok Post* Apr 9, 1951, p. 1.
52. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 17, May 2, 1951: 751G.00(W)/5-251.
53. London to US Department of State, No. 4546 (Feb 21, 1951): 795.00/2-2151.
54. Hanoi to Saigon No. 86 (Apr 24, 1951), in FO 371/92433.
55. Peking Radio Apr 11, 1951, reported by BBC Monitoring Service, in FO 371/92412.
56. Hanoi to Saigon No. 86 (Apr 24, 1951), in FO 371/92433.
57. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 15, Apr 18, 1951: 751G.00(W)/4-1851. Saigon to FO, London, No. 184 (Apr 14, 1951), in FO 371/92433.
58. Peking Home Service Nov 25, 1952, FBIS *DR* 323 (1952), p. AAA 3.
59. FO Minute, "Kuomintang Troops in Burma," May 22, 1951, in FO 371/92140. These KMT troops crossed into Yunnan by mid-May and in June, this force (numbering about 10,000 soldiers) successfully engaged Chinese Communist troops inside Chinese territory. Bangkok to FO, London, No. 265 (May 17, 1951), in FO 371/92410. Bangkok to FO, London, No. 37 (Jun 19, 1951), in FO 371/92410.
60. NCNA Feb 17, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 97, p. 23. The policy of assigning special administrative status to key parts of Yunnan province continued in January 1952, when southern and western parts of Yunnan were "declared a military zone:" Peking to FO, London, No. 107 (Feb 16, 1952), in FO 371/99233.
61. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Mar 31–Apr 7, 1951, p. 11368.
62. *The Times* (London) Apr 4, 1951, p. 1.
63. Memorandum of Conversation, Apr 5, 1951, *FRUS*, 1951 Vol. VII, Part 1, pp. 296–98.
64. Memorandum, Apr 4, 1951, *FRUS*, 1951 Vol. VII Part 2, pp. 1616–19.
65. J. Field, Jr., *History of United States Naval Operations: Korea* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 343.
66. Memorandum of Conversation, Apr 5, 1951, *FRUS*, 1951 Vol. VII Part 1, pp. 296–98.
67. Editor's Note, *FRUS*, 1951 Vol. VII Part 2, p. 1619. See also Foot, *The Wrong War*, pp.142–43.
68. Editor's Note, *FRUS*, 1951 Vol. VII Part 2, p. 1619.
69. NCNA Apr 15, 1951 and NCNA Apr 14, 1951, *Survey of China Mainland Press* No. 94, pp. 2–3, 5.
70. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Mar 31–Apr 7, 1951, p. 11368. Soviet aircraft had been operating in this area since Nov 1, 1950: Z. Shen, "China and the Dispatch of the Soviet Air Force: The Formation of the Chinese-Soviet-Korean Alliance in the Early Stage of the Korean War," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 33(2), Apr 2010, p. 228.
71. "Far East Air Forces Summary of April 12 Operations," United Nations Security Council Document S/2093, New York: United Nations, 1951, p. 203.

72. NCNA Apr 15, 1951, *Survey of China Mainland Press* No. 94, pp. 2–3. Jian Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 356–57, n. 66.
73. VNA Apr 18, 1951, FBIS *DR* 81 (1951), p. FFF 4. The plenum communiqué, broadcast four days later, said that the military's principal aim must be to "kill the enemy's main forces and simultaneously preserve and strengthen our armed forces …." VNA Apr 22, 1951, FBIS *DR* 83 (1951), pp. FFF 5–6.
74. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 16, Apr 25, 1951: 751G.00(W)/4-2551.
75. The analysis, by Akira Tsuchii, Director of the Asian Economic Research Institute, is cited in UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong to Board of Trade, London, OTB 254, Jun 22, 1951, in FO 371/92199.
76. G. Ginsburgs, *The Legal Framework of Trade Between the USSR and the People's Republic of China* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), p. 15, n.26, 27.
77. A Letter from the CCP Central Committee to the CPSU Central Committee, Feb 29, 1964, *Peking Review* 19, 1964, p. 14.
78. NCNA Feb 18, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 97, p. 6.
79. Wuhan Radio Sep 26, 1951, FBIS *DR* 194 (1951), p. AAA 11.
80. W. Chen, "Wartime 'Mass' Campaigns in Communist China: Official Country-wide 'Mass Movements' in Professed Support of the Korean War," (Series II, No. 4, 1952, of "Studies on Chinese Communists"), Air Force Personnel and Training Research Center (Lackland Air Force Base, Texas): *Research Memorandum* No. 43, October 1955, p. 29.
81. Peking Radio Feb 19, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 97, p. 10.
82. C. Riskin, *China's Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 45–46.
83. NCNA Feb 21, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 97, p. 32. *Far Eastern Economic Review* (*FEER*) IX(26), Dec 28, 1950, p. 789. *FEER* X(2), Jan 11, 1951, p. 59. *FEER* X(7), Feb 15, 1951, p. 192.
84. S. de Vylder, "Foreign Trade and Self-Reliance in China: An Introduction," *China's Development Strategy* No. 11 (Stockholm: Stockholm School of Economics, Economic Research Institute, 1974), p. 51.
85. US Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research, "Significant Trends in Communist China's Foreign Trade in 1951," Intelligence Report No. 5740 (Jan 8, 1952), in *O.S.S./State Department Intelligence and Research Reports. Part IX. China and India: 1950–1961 Supplement*.
86. *Far Eastern Economic Review* (*FEER*) X(11), Mar 15, 1951, p. 337.
87. *FEER* X(11), Mar 15, 1951, p. 337.
88. *FEER* X(14), Apr 5, 1951, p. 439.
89. National Intelligence Estimate 32, "Effects of Operations in Korea on the Internal Situation in Communist China," Jul 10, 1951, *FRUS*, 1951 Vol. VII Part 2, pp. 1737–43.
90. K. Weathersby, "Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War," in O. Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance 1945–1963* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 99.
91. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 14, Apr 10, 1951: 751G.00(W)/4-1051.
92. The former DRV official was Luu Quang Hoa; see Enclosure, Hanoi to Saigon No. 28 (Oct 23, 1952), in FO 959/131.
93. Enclosure, Hanoi to Saigon No. 28 (Oct 23, 1952), in FO 959/131.
94. Ho Chi Minh, "Letter to Peasants on Emulation in Production," *Selected Works Vol. III* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), pp. 234–35. Voice of South Vietnam Mar 15, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 100, p. 67.
95. VNA May 8, 1951, FBIS *DR* 95 (1951), pp. CCC 3–6.
96. Voice of South Vietnam May 11, 1951, FBIS *DR* 95 (1951), pp. CCC 2–3. VNA May 12, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 109, pp. 68–69.

97. VNA May 9, 1951, FBIS *DR* 96 (1951), pp. CCC8–9. Tax consolidation was administered later, and differently, in Nambo, where measures rationalizing the system were authorized at a conference held Oct 23–Nov 2, 1951; all existing taxes were abolished and seven new levies were introduced; see Voice of Nambo Dec 13, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 140, p. 76. W. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (New York: Theia, 2000), p. 444.
98. VNA May 9, 1951, FBIS *DR* 96 (1951), pp. CCC 8–9.
99. The VNWP Plenum in March 1951 endorsed the concept of an export drive; see VNA Apr 22, 1951, FBIS *DR* 83 (1951), p. FFF 7.
100. Hanoi to Saigon No. 28 (Oct 23, 1952), in FO 959/131.
101. Hanoi to Saigon No. 28 (Oct 23, 1952), in FO 959/131.
102. K. Chao, "Sino-Soviet Exchange Rates," *China Quarterly* 47, 1971, p. 546.
103. Ginsburgs, *The Legal Framework*, pp. 38–39.
104. Hanoi to Saigon No. 28 (Oct 23, 1952), in FO 959/131.
105. In 1952 Bao Dai told British diplomats that the USSR had denied the DRV a loan because the PRC refused to give its guarantee of repayment: Saigon to FO, London, No. 155 (Nov 12, 1951), in FO 959/131.
106. *An Outline History of the Vietnam Workers' Party*, pp. 62–63.
107. Voice of Nambo Mar 6, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 99, p. 70.
108. Details of Nguyen Phuong Thao's early political activities emerged during the 1930 trial of some 40 Vietnamese nationalists accused of public security offenses in Saigon; see *La Tribune Indochinois*, Jul 25, 1930, p. 4; Jul 30, 1930, p. 4.
109. *La Tribune Indochinois*, Jul 25, 1930, p. 4.
110. Robert O'Neill, *General Giap: Politician and Strategist* (Melbourne: 1969), pp. 102–03. Lancaster (1961), pp. 136–38.
111. Annex A, Saigon to US High Commissioner, New Delhi, Sep 17, 1949, in FO 371/75972.
112. Annex A, Saigon to US High Commissioner, New Delhi, Sep 17, 1949, in FO 371/75972; and Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp. 158–59.
113. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 260 (Jun 24, 1947): 851G.00/6-2447.
114. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. 103 (May 13, 1948): 851G.00/5-1348. Saigon to US Secretary of State, No. A-93, Oct 28, 1948: 851G.00/10-2848.
115. W. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder CO: 1981), pp. 137–38. On Mar 8, 1949 the French President Vincent Auriol and Bao Dai signed the Élysée agreements, "stating more precisely than ever before French commitments to the unity and independence of the State of Vietnam" under Bao Dai: M. Lawrence, "Recasting Vietnam: The Bao Dai Solution and the Outbreak of the Cold War in Southeast Asia," in C. Goscha and C. Ostermann, eds., *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945–1962* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 27.
116. Voice of South Vietnam Apr 9, 1951, FBIS *DR* 74 (1951), pp. FFF 6–7.
117. Voice of Nambo May 3, 1951, FBIS *DR* 95 (1951), pp. CCC 8–10.
118. Voice of South Vietnam Apr 29, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 107, p. 66. Voice of Nambo Apr 13, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 105, p. 64, claimed that 1951 would "bring complete victory" in Cambodia, whose links with Vietnam and Laos would help its people "begin the general counter-offensive to recover complete independence."
119. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 19, May 16, 1951: 751G.00(W)/5-1651.
120. Dieuxème Bureau, L'état-major interarmées et des forces terrestres (EMIFT), "Note d'information sure les Forces Rebelles: 'Pourquoi Nguyen Binh a perdu la Confiance:' principles des bases de la lute VM en Indochine," Saigon, Jun 5, 1952: Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre (SHAT) 10 H 621.
121. Giap had drawn attention to the general problems of equipping large armed units as early as February 1950, before the start of large-scale Chinese military assistance to the Viet Minh, in his article explaining the general counteroffensive strategy; see extracts

in G. Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions, Vol. I* (London: Heyden, 1979), p. 233.
122. Bangkok to FO, London, No. 216 (Apr 20, 1951), in FO 371/92405.
123. Voice of Nambo Apr 29, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 107, pp. 60–61; also in Voice of Nambo Apr 27, 1951, FBIS *DR* 92 (1951), pp. CCC 4–9.See also C. Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution, 1885–1954* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), p. 350.
124. Voice of Nambo Apr 29, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 107, pp. 60–61. French radio reported that some of Nguyen Binh's senior subordinates were purged earlier in the spring of 1951: Radio Saigon France-Asie Apr 3, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 103, pp. 73–74. More details will be required before we can determine who ordered all the demotions, removals, and eliminations that occurred in Nguyen Binh's command, but the fact that Le Duan co-signed the April 10 statement with Nguyen Binh suggests that he led the purge campaign. Le Duc Tho was present at the April 20 meeting of the VNWP Southern Directorate, and must also have been deeply involved. See also Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), pp. 24–27.
125. The broadcast praised the Vietnam Workers' Party but declared that the Party, the Lien Viet front, and the military "are the three essential conditions of our success against the enemy." See Voice of Nambo May 3, 1951, FBIS *DR* 95 (1951), pp. CCC 8–10.
126. Voice of Vietnam May 5, 1951, FBIS *DR* 96 (1951), pp. CCC 5–7.
127. Voice of Nambo May 5, 1951, FBIS *DR* 96 (1951), p. CCC 1.
128. *Bangkok Post* Apr 24, 1951, p. 1; Apr 30, 1951, p. 1.
129. NCNA Apr 25, 1951, *Survey of China Mainland Press* No. 99, p. 1.
130. NCNA Apr 28, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 107, pp. 12–13.
131. NCNA May 12, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 109, p. 11.

5 The crises of mid-1951

1. US State Department Memorandum, May 22, 1951: 795.00/5-2251.
2. Saigon to FO, London, No. 244 (Jun 14, 1951), in FO 371/92434. Saigon to US Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), Joint Weeka 23, Jun 23, 1951: 751G.00 (W)/6-1251. Saigon to FO, London, No. 14 (Jun 30, 1951), in FO 371/92401.
3. Saigon to US Department of Army, Joint Weeka 26, Jun 30, 1051: 751G.00(W)/6-3051.
4. Voice of Vietnam, Jun 7, 1951, British Broadcasting Corporation, *Summary of World Broadcasts* (*SWB*) Pt V No. 112, p. 65.
5. Giap said that Ho had taken particular interest in battlefield progress since the PAVN had adopted advanced techniques in Tonkin. Vietnam News Agency (VNA) May 19, 1951, US Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) *Daily Report* (*DR*) 103 (1951), pp. CCC 3–4.
6. The precise date of the article's publication is not available from this source: VNA Jun 3, 1951, FBIS *DR* 112 (1951), pp. CCC 4–5. A later transmission gave excerpts from Giap's article with what seem to be revisions reflecting the French reoccupation of Ninh Binh; significantly, the defiant, celebratory tone of the article was not altered. See Voice of Nambo Jun 6, 1951, FBIS *DR* 116 (1951), pp. CCC3–4.
7. Voice of Vietnam Jun 2, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 111, p. 59.
8. VNA Jun 6, 1951, FBIS *DR* 118 (1951), p. CCC 3. Le Liem, former head of the Viet Minh militia, replaced Van Tien Dung as head of the DRV Ministry of Defence Political Department in late 1949 when Dung was transferred to Interzone Three: VNA Nov 30, 1949, *SWB* Pt V No. 33, p. 40.
9. Voice of Vietnam Jun 14, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 114, p. 67.
10. Appendix, Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the Foreign Office (FO) Research Department to Southeast Asia Department, FO, London, Jul 10, 1951, in FO

371/92410. A broadcast by the VNA on June 22 seems to have given extracts from the article, but no author was mentioned: VNA Jun 22, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 115, p. 75.

11. The date of the decision is unknown. Voice of Vietnam Jun 14, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 114, p. 67. G. Lockhart, *Nation in Arms: The Origins of the People's Army in Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin Australia, 1989), pp. 241–42, suggests that there followed greater attention to "balanced institutional development," involving a build-up of regional forces rather than creation of new main force units.
12. For example, the Interzone Three Military-Administrative Committee ordered an emulation drive for the period June 12–30 "to develop guerrilla warfare and intensify the protection of rice crops:" VNA Jun 19, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 114, p. 68.
13. VNA Jul 18, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 118, pp. 72–73.
14. Appendix Item 211 [in French], "Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Viet-Nam," (Washington, DC: US State Department), May 1968. The same document is available in English as Appendix A in Albert E. Parmerlee, "The Central Office of South Vietnam," *Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes* No. 40, Aug 1966, pp. 19–20.
15. According to one expert, the VNWP's Nambo regional committee between 1948 and 1951 was composed of Nguyen Binh, secretary; Le Duan, political affairs; Le Duc Tho, deputy for political affairs; Le Hien Mai, military affairs; and Pham Ngoc Thuan, political affairs: see Carlyle A. Thayer, "South Vietnamese Revolutionary Organizations and the Vietnam Workers' Party: Continuity and Change, 1954–1974," in Joseph J. Zasloff and McAlister Brown, eds., *Communism in Indochina: New Perspectives* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1975), p. 32.
16. Voice of Vietnam Jun 11, 1951, FBIS *DR* 120 (1951), p. CCC 3.
17. Voice of Saigon–Cholon Jun 2, 1951, FBIS *DR* 113 (1951), p. CCC 9.
18. Voice of South Vietnam Jun 4, 1951, FBIS *DR* 114 (1951), p. CCC 9.
19. Voice of Nambo Jun 8, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 113, p. 69.
20. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 24, Jun 20, 1951: 751G.00(W)/6-2051.
21. Voice of Nambo Jun 15, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 114, p. 73.
22. Voice of Saigon–Cholon Jun 16–18, 1951, FBIS *DR* 125 (1951), pp. CCC 1–5.
23. Voice of Saigon–Cholon Jun 18, 1951, FBIS *DR* 125 (1951), pp. CCC 3–5.
24. New China News Agency (NCNA) Jul 23, 1951, FBIS *DR* 147 (1951), pp. AAA 4–5. A Xinhua broadcast on the following day said the delegation arrived on July 24: NCNA Jul 24, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 119, p. 69.
25. NCNA Jul 24, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 119, p. 69; and K. Chen, *Vietnam and China, 1938–1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 251.
26. NCNA Jul 25, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 119, p. 11.
27. NCNA Jul 24, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 119, p. 12.
28. NCNA Jul 23, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 118, p. 57.
29. The origin of the report, which appeared in *Wah Kiu Yat Pao*, is unknown, but it was broadcast by Nationalist Chinese radio: Taipeh Radio Aug 14, 1951, FBIS *DR* 163 (1951), p. BBB 1. A British commentary on the newspaper article said that it indicated that the meeting in Beijing decided to raise a force of "volunteers" that would infiltrate rather than "invade" Indochina to assist the Viet Minh. UK Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong, to Board of Trade, London, OTB 339, Aug 22, 1951, in FO 371/92201.
30. VNA Aug 6, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 121, p. 63.
31. VNA Aug 9, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 121, p. 63.
32. Those attending reportedly included Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Nie Rongzhen, Wu Xiuquan, Kim Il Sung, Hoang Van Hoan, and Nguyen Son, as well as several Soviet, Japanese, Burmese, and Mongolian representatives. Enclosure, Bangkok to US State Department, No. 761 (Jun 22, 1954): 793.00/6-2254.
33. NCNA Aug 11, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 122, p. 20.
34. Summaries were given of Ho's appeal for increased resistance and production activities and of Giap's official Order of the Day; see Editor's Note, *SWB* Pt V No. 123, p. 16.

35. Pyongyang Radio Aug 21, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 123, p. 57. The delegation remained in Korea until September 18: Peking Radio Sep 21, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 128, p. 68.
36. Official Chinese reports on "incidents" in the neutral zone are reported in *SWB* Pt V No 124, pp. 4–8. Indications that the Communists staged an "attack" on the zone on August 22 are discussed in P. Calvocoressi, *Survey of International Affairs, 1951* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 445.
37. Vietnam Information Service Sep 6, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 126, p. 71. Earlier a southern Viet Minh radio station had described one of these battles, at Komplong, as having revealed "the great progress which the 'local forces and militia' had made in coordinated warfare:" Voice of South Vietnam Aug 20, 1051, *SWB* Pt V No. 123, p. 68.
38. VNA Aug 23, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 123, p. 64.
39. VNA Aug 11, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 122, p. 61.
40. Ho Tung Mau's early association with Ho Chi Minh is noted in W. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (London: Theia, 2000), pp. 120, 151, 159. Information on Ho Tung Mau's CCP membership, based upon his own research in French military archives, was made available to me by the late Professor R.B. Smith, and I here record my gratitude. Mau's CCP membership is also noted in Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 181.
41. VNA Jan 11, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 39, p. 45.
42. Hanoi to US Department of State, No. 11 (Sep 13, 1951): 751G.00/9-1351.
43. Hanoi to US Department of State, No. 11 (Sep 13, 1951): 751G.00/9-1351; and Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 34, Aug 26, 1951: 751G.00(W)/8-2651.
44. NCNA Aug 22, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 123, p. 16.
45. VNA Jul 22, 1951 and Voice of South Vietnam Jul 23, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 119, pp. 65–67.
46. Voice of Vietnam Jul 4, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No 116, p. 68. To Huu authored the official biography of Truong Chinh released after the latter's public emergence as the VNWP Secretary: VNA Apr 20, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 106, pp. 66–67.
47. Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, p. 158.
48. Mao Zedong's telegram to Ho Tung Mau on Feb 21, 1950 welcoming the establishment of the Vietnam–China Friendship Association is available in M. Kau and J. Leung, eds., *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976 Vol. I: September 1949–December 1955* (Armonk, NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), p. 62. Ho Tung Mau sent a telegram to Mao congratulating him on the "liberation" of Hainan Island: VNA May 26, 1950, *SWB* Pt V No. 58, p. 38.
49. VNA Apr 15, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 53, p. 50.
50. Voice of Vietnam Aug 14, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 123, p. 65.
51. Saigon to US Department of the Army, Joint Weeka 35, Sep 1, 1951: 751G.00(W)/9-151. Saigon to US Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 36, Sep 9, 1951: 751G.00(W)/9-951. VNA Jul 24, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 119, p. 72.
52. VNA Jul 31, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 121, pp. 66–67.
53. Saigon to US Department of the Army, Joint Weeka 35, Sep 1, 1951: 751G.00(W)/9-151.
54. See, for example, VNA Aug 6, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 121, p. 67; and Voice of Vietnam Aug 21, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 123, pp. 65–66. Summaries of articles by Pham Van Dong which formed part of the campaign were broadcast by VNA Sep 3, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 125, p. 60, and VNA Sep 21, 23, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 129, pp. 67, 69.
55. VNA Jul 24, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 121, p. 67.
56. VNA Jul 24, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 121, p. 67; and VNA Aug 6, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 121, p. 67.
57. Appendix Item 211, "Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Viet-Nam," May 1968.
58. Vietnam Information Service Sep 19, 1951, *SWB* Pt V No. 129, p. 69.
59. Voice of Nambo Aug 9, 1951, *SWB* Pt V, No. 122, p. 70.

60. Saigon to FO, London, No. 40 (Nov 2, 1951), in FO 371/92401. According to this report, "the necessity for an improvement in communications in Viet Minh-held areas of Cochin-China was also acknowledged" at the conference.
61. Melbourne Radio Aug 20, 1951, FBIS *DR* 169 (1951), p. 64.
62. Radio Saigon France-Asie Aug 24, 1051, *SWB* Pt V No. 123, p. 68.
63. 2ème Bureau, EMIFT, "Note d'information sur les Relations Sino-Viet Minh …," SHAT 10 H 621. This report indicates that Nguyen Binh had already been dismissed by the PAVN High Command by the time of his death.
64. Saigon to US Department of the Army, Joint Weeka 48, Dec 1, 1951: 751G.00(W)/11-3151 [*sic*].
65. Voice of Nambo Jan 20, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 145, p. 93. At the December 1951 DRV Council of Ministers meeting a minute's silence was observed in memory of Maj. Gen. Nguyen Binh, "former commander of the people's forces in South Vietnam, who was recently killed in action. President Ho posthumously awarded him the Military Medal First Class:" VNA Jan 13, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 144, p. 85.
66. French intelligence agencies intercepted a message from Viet Minh headquarters "advising all Viet Minh units (in) Indo-china (that they) will no longer receive logistic support from Hainan Island:" Saigon to US Secretary of State (US Navy Message 300939Z) Jun 30, 1951: 751G.5/6-3051. See also Saigon to WS Secretary of State, Joint Weeka 27, Jul 9, 1951: 751G.00(W)/7-951.

Epilogue

1. Vietnam News Agency (VNA) Jul 6, 1952, British Broadcasting Corporation. *Summary of World Broadcasts* (*SWB*) Pt V No. 169 (1952), p. 66.
2. Voice of Nambo Jul 11, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 170, p. 78.
3. South Vietnam Radio Aug 4, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 173, p. 65.
4. An extended report on this meeting, upon which this paragraph relies, was broadcast by South Vietnam Radio Aug 5, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 19, pp. 86–87.
5. VNA Jul 16, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 170, p. 78.
6. South Vietnam Radio Jul 12, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 174, pp. 74–75.
7. Radio France-Asie, Saigon, Jul 5, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 169, p. 67.
8. Dalat Radio Jul 10, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 170, p. 86.
9. Voice of Saigon–Cholon Jul 19, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 176, p. 45.
10. Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, 3rd edition (New York: The Free Press, 1999).
11. South Vietnam Radio Jul 18, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 176, pp. 46–47.
12. VNA Sep 3, 1952, *SWB* Pt V No. 180, pp. 37–38.
13. Z. Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 42.
14. D. Klein and A. Clark, *Biographic Dictionary of Chinese Communism 1921–1965, Vol. II, Lo Jui-ch'ing – Yun Tai-ying* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 942–44.
15. Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, pp. 45–46.
16. V. Colwell and R. Rikhye, " 'It is Verdun!': Dien Bien Phu 1954 v.2.0. March 29, 2006." Online. Available HTTP: http://orbat.com/site/history/volume4/435/Dien%20Bien%20Phu%201954%20v.2.htm (accessed Jul 19, 2012).
17. Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, pp. 51–53.
18. Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, p. 51.
19. A. Stockwell, "Southeast Asia in War and Peace: The End of European Colonial Empires," in Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol. Two, Part Two: From World War II to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 43.

20. NCNA Aug 13, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 381, pp. 5–6.
21. R. Randle, *Geneva 1954: The Settlement of the Indochinese War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 1969; J. Cable, *The Geneva Conference of 1954 on Indochina* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1986); F. Dawson, "The 1954 Geneva Conference: Eisenhower's Indochina Policy," unpublished PhD thesis, University of West Virginia, 1985; J. Chen, "China and the Indochina Settlement at the Geneva Conference of 1954," in M. Lawrence and F. Logevall, eds., *The First Vietnam War: Colonial Conflict and Cold War Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 240–62.
22. Vientiane Radio Jul 24, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 375, p. 41.
23. VNA Jul 24, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 375, p. 38.
24. NCNA Jul 27, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 376, p. 75.
25. Radio Saigon France-Asie Jul 25, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 376, p. 86.
26. Radio Saigon France-Asie Jul 25, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 376, p. 86; Saigon Radio (Jul 28, 1954), *SWB* Pt V No. 376, p. 86; Saigon Radio (Jul 29–30, 1954), *SWB* Pt V No. 377, p. 36.
27. Voice of Khmer Issarak Jul 22, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 376, pp. 80–81.
28. Voice of Khmer Issarak Jul 26, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 376, p. 80.
29. VNA Jul 29, 1954, and NCNA Jul 30, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 377, p. 32.
30. South Vietnam Radio Jul 27, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 378, pp. 73–74.
31. South Vietnam Radio Aug 1, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 379, p. 30.
32. *Bangkok Post* Aug 11, 1954, p. 1.
33. Cambodian News Agency Sep 28, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 395, pp. 41–42.
34. Vientiane Radio Oct 9, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 397, p. 32.
35. Some details of the intermediate regroupment in Nambo and Interzone V were given by NCNA Jan 29, 1955, US Consulate General, Hong Kong, *Survey of China Mainland Press* No. 978, Feb 1, 1955, pp. 14–15.
36. NCNA Oct 9, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 397, p. 29.
37. VNA Nov 21, 1954, US Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) *Daily Report* (*DR*) 227 (1954), pp. CCC 4–5.
38. Voice of Vietnam Oct 13, 1954, FBIS *DR* 200 (1954), p. CCC 3.
39. VNA Nov 1, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 404, p. 48.
40. Hanoi Radio Oct 26, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 402, p. 51.
41. Hanoi Radio Nov 2, 1954, *SWB* Pt V No. 404, p. 40.
42. NCNA Nov 16, 1954, FBIS *DR* 223 (1954), p. AAA 7. Tran later headed the DRV Ministry of Communications and became vice-chairman of the State Planning Board. On several occasions in the late 1950s, he was publicly associated with Chinese aid agreements and assistance deliveries.
43. VNA Nov 22, 1954, FBIS *DR* 227 (1954), p. CCC 1. A *Nhan Dan* article of Jan 18, 1955 said that the delegation had been "charged with negotiating on communications and maritime resources;" see Voice of Vietnam Jan 18, 1955, FBIS *DR* 14 (1955), p. CCC 5.
44. Chinese KMT sources indicated that the agreement was actually concluded on Dec 20; see Taipeh Radio Jan 18, 1955, *SWB* Pt V No. 425, p. 21.
45. Nguyen Huu Main, DRV Director of Railroads, commented that China had not completed its own railroad and irrigation works, but "despite this the Chinese workers come to help us." Voice of Vietnam Jan 18, 1955, FBIS *DR* 14 (1955), p. CCC 5.
46. VNA Dec 31, 1954, FBIS *DR* 1 (1955), p. CCC 2.
47. NCNA Jan 9, 1955, FBIS *DR* 6 (1955), p. AAA 14.
48. On the Chinese team at Gia Lam, see Appendix A, Military Attaché, Saigon to Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the War Office (WO) London, Jan 18, 1955, in Great Britain. National Archives. Records of the Foreign Office (FO) 371/117180; and Voice of Free Vietnam (Saigon), Jan 12, 1955, FBIS *DR* 9 (1955), p. EEE 1. On French controllers and the ICC, see VNA Jan 6, 1955, *SWB* Pt V No. 422, pp. 21–22.

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