

THE WAR
on
VIETNAM



[Date may be incorrect, should be 1965]

May 2, 1956

The contents of this booklet are a montage of old and new ideas about the situation in Vietnam. The editors are Pat and Joe Griffith, who don't know any more about the war than what they can read in popular and academic sources, and hear from speakers who have been there. We have tried to put together a concise history of the U. S. relationship with the country, and make some arguments about the causes and effects of our policies in general.

For the first part we drew heavily on the interesting and detailed political study titled "The Struggle for the Unification of Vietnam," by Philippe Devillers contained in P. J. Money's edition North Vietnam Today. We did not identify specific quotations because they are discontinuous. Much of the analysis, with modifications, comes from that essay, however. The other primary source which is not identified in the text is Bitter End in Southeast Asia, by Victor Perlo and Kumar Goshal.

The second part was inspired by an article in the April 18, 1965 magazine section of the New York Times by Hans J. Morgenthau titled, "We Are Deluding Ourselves in Vietnam." We have used his arguments freely, adding other sources which are identified, and our own general impressions of the political mood of the United States today.

Dan Watt contributed the quiz, Herb Schnopper designed and prepared the cover, and Bob Durling furnished valuable critical suggestions. Gail Hardebeck typed the final copy.

I am sure that the great American people, if they only knew the true facts and the background to the developments in South Vietnam, will agree with me that further bloodshed is unnecessary. . . . As you know, in times of war and hostilities the first casualty is truth.

U Thant

(The following article is reprinted from
The New York Times of April 25, 1965.)

THE PAPER TIGER BLUES

Russel Baker

Washington, April 24 — There are fat, warm rain clouds over the Potomac and the smell of war on the air. It is harder to think calmly. Tulips are bursting open and in the streets the girls go ungirdled. Troops moving, marines engaged. With each fresh headline, you can feel the language being escalated.

They have begun to lob the big ones in. Words like honor, patriotism, appeasement. There is no defense against the big words. They are argument busters, debate enders. It is very risky venturing out with an un-Pentagon opinion once

the language is escalated.

Smack 'em Down

Stand among the daffodils wondering if this war is absolutely necessary and the bigword boys zoom in and smack you with "appeaser," as Senator Fulbright has just discovered. The latest pacifist demonstrators at the White House are no longer dismissed with the low-tonnage epithets, "innocent," "unrealistic," "unsophisticated," which hit the mark neatly without making a mess.

With the language escalation, they are now charged with promoting national dis-

honor, with weakening the President's hand or with giving comfort to Ho Chi Minh. Their patriotism is questioned. The aim at this stage is no longer to understand them, but to give them such a blasting that they will not dare to venture from under cover again.

Verbal Escalation

This is still not total word war, however. In that stage they will be given a dose of the 2,000-pounders - words like "Communist stooges," "draft dodgers," "cowards," "traitors." This stage usually occurs when the casualty lists start to swell. The purpose of the escalation in its present limited stage is to encourage people to think less and emote more.

The process by which war is escalated in controlled stages is well understood, but nobody knows how language escalation is managed. One day, everybody is discussing the war threat very sensibly and saying there must be calm thinking; the next, by some mysterious process, everybody is shouting "honor," "patriotism," "appeasement" and "Don't weaken the President's hand."

This is a dangerous situation. Philosophers like Herman Kahn and Henry Kissinger have given us a clear understanding of how to control war. Thus far, the President and his men seem to have learned it so well that they can control the pressure in Vietnam as cannily as a good chef controls his oven temperature.

The lack of any controls on the language, however, means that the country may easily escalate into a big-word state of mind and slip into a froth of emotionalism just when the President wants to de-escalate the war for diplomatic advantage. In that situation, the President must face the risk of being bombed with "appeaser," "dishonor," "traitor," and all those other 2,000-pounders that make it so hard for Presidents to reverse escalators.

Right now, however, it is every man

for himself in Washington, and the pacifists are not gentler than the hawks. Evenings out are evenings of peril. You can never be certain which side the big words will fall from.

Shrimp Warfare

Strangers bore in on you over the shrimp demanding to know if the war in Vietnam is not terrible. Say, "The President offered to negotiate," and they call you "warmonger," Murmur a noncommittal, "Terrible, terrible," and hawks swoop across the room.

"You talk like a paper tiger," the hawks say. It is no good trying to wriggle out of it lightly. ("Actually I'm a plastic tiger.") The hawks have a way of turning into fang-claw-hide-and-hair tigers right under your nose and roaring, "Appeaser! Honor! Patriotism! Weakener of the President's Hand! Ho Chi Minh lover!"

Who gave these people permission to escalate the language? Nobody knows. At a moment when everybody ought to be thinking with absolute precision, they have been wantonly licensed to make life miserable for anybody who tries.

What Kind of War?

Here, for example, are the latest summaries of the Vietnam situation. They say that it is a civil war for independence but that it is a war of naked aggression by alien powers. They say that it cannot be won by either side but that neither side can lose. They say that it is deepening the division between Peking and Moscow but bringing Peking and Moscow closer together.

They say that American troops must not fight on land but that American troops must fight on land, and that while relations between the Vietcong, Hanoi and Peking are strained, relations between the Vietcong, Hanoi and Peking are very close.

Could we tone down the language long enough to get the score?

THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia) had been a French colony for 100 years when the Japanese invaded Southeast Asia at the start of World War II. Vichy-French cooperation with the Japanese invaders prompted the formation of the Vietminh (under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh), a guerrilla army dedicated to ridding the country of both the Japanese and the French.

Following V-J Day in August 1945, the Japanese peacefully transferred power to the Vietminh. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam set up its capital at Hanoi, in the North, established effective control over Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina (all of what is now North and South Vietnam), sent cables to all the world capitals seeking recognition, asked admission to the United Nations and requested a U. N. committee to supervise a plebiscite and a national election.

The government of the Vietnam Republic included the largest Indochinese political parties. Eight of the sixteen members of the cabinet belonged to no political party, while the rest represented the Democratic, Socialist and Communist parties, youth organizations, women's groups and the Catholic and Buddhist parties. The Cabinet was headed by the President of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, a communist. The Vietnam Republic rightly claimed it was a truly national government representing all sections of public opinion. In the first and only nationwide free elections in Vietnamese history, held January 6, 1946, Ho Chi Minh's political coalition won 230 of 300 seats in the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

But at the Potsdam Conference the Allies gave Indochina back to France. Between autumn 1945 and December 1946 Vietnam was reconquered. The Vietminh regrouped in the countryside to begin again their battle against the French. By 1954 the revolt had become immensely popular among the people and the Vietminh was able to defeat France's 400,000 soldiers.

America had supplied a billion dollars to help France in its Indochinese War. In a last desperate effort to defeat the people of Vietnam French General Paul Ely solicited U.S. forces to rescue the French troops besieged at Dien Bien Phu. Roscoe Drummond and Gaston Coblenz reported in their book, Duel at the Brink, that U. S. Secretary of State John F. Dulles offered the French two atomic bombs to be used against the Vietminh forces at Dien Bien Phu, as he had earlier offered atomic bombs to destroy Vietnam's supply lines on the Border of China.

Dulles made this offer at a time when President Eisenhower himself was aware of the popular support Ho Chi Minh enjoyed. In his 1963 book The White House Years, Eisenhower wrote: "I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held as of the time of the fighting, possibly 80 per cent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader."

French Premier Bidault, however, rejected the offer of A-bombs.

THE DIEM REGIME

Peace in Indochina was concluded at Geneva on July 21, 1964. The conference reached a series of agreements, which were signed by all parties except the U. S. and the puppet South Vietnam government set up by France. John F. Dulles walked out of the conference; but his deputy, General Walter Bedell Smith, gave oral assurance that the U. S. would abide by the Geneva agreements. (See page 13 for text of relevant articles in the Geneva accord).

The roots of today's Vietnamese war go back to the very beginning of South Vietnam as an independent state. Ngo Dinh Diem took office in 1954, replacing the French and Japanese puppet emperor Bao Dai. Diem had served as Bao Dai's prime minister during the Geneva negotiations and had shown himself to be strongly anti-communist and very friendly to the United States. While Bao Dai was still nominally head of the government, President Eisenhower pledged U.S. support to Diem personally. With this assurance, Diem staged a 'national' referendum in October 1954, to ratify the palace coup which made him 'Chief of State' in place of Bao Dai. Three days later he proclaimed a 'Republic of Vietnam' and appointed himself its first president. Fewer than 15 percent of those eligible to vote in the referendum did so.

Diem presided not over a state, but over one-half of a country arbitrarily and temporarily severed from the other half. He was generally regarded as a caretaker who would establish the rudiments of an administration until the country was united by nationwide elections to be held in 1956 in accordance with Article 7 of the Geneva agreement.

Diem however, remained in power with U. S. military and economic support and the promised elections were never held. North Vietnam repeatedly urged the Diem government to meet with it in the consultative conferences provided for by the Geneva agreements in order to set up the machinery for the unifying elections. On August 9, 1955, the government of South Vietnam refused, and Hanoi could only protest to the co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, England and Russia. In May and June 1956, in July 1957, in March 1958 and July 1959 and 1960, the Hanoi government suggested to the Diem government that pre-electoral consultative conferences

should begin. These proposals were all met by either refusal or silence, and by indifference from the rest of the world.

Throughout this period the U. S. seems to have been the only foreign power extensively involved in the politics of Vietnam. In spite of General Smith's assurances that the U. S. would abide by the Geneva agreements, we countenanced Diem's violation of Article 6 of the Geneva convention -- his refusal to participate in the elections to unify the country. Dulles viewed South Vietnam as another outpost in his containment of communism, and, as in China, viewed the communist coalition of Ho in the North as an outlaw government and a threat to the free world. The de facto integration of South Vietnam into the American military defense structure implied that the region ought to be secure, and hence, ought to be purged of anything which might, however remotely, serve the Communist cause, such as unification of the country.

Men who before 1954 had fought for the Vietminh with Ho Chi Minh were therefore to all intents and purposes subversives. The Diem government launched in 1957 what amounted to a series of man-hunts. The population were called upon to redouble their vigilance and to denounce all Communist activity. The organization of the police, which was already elaborate, was yet further strengthened. Guided by informers, 'mopping-up operations' became only too frequent, particularly in the Centre, where the President's brother, Ngo Dinh Can, had recourse to the toughest of methods. 150,000 people were arrested in this process and sent to concentration camps, or political re-education camps, as they were euphemistically called.

This repression was supposedly aimed at the Communists. In fact it affected all those who had been bold enough to express their disagreement with the policies adopted by the ruling oligarchy -- the Diem family. Democrats, socialists, liberals, adherents of the various religious sects and often people of no political affiliations at all found themselves subjected to the repression.

THE RESISTANCE

As early as 1958 the dissidents, finding themselves hunted down, began gradually to fight back. Informers were sought out and shot in increasing numbers and village chiefs who had presided over the denunciations, village notables, and members of the militia were frequently treated in the same way. Diem's police and army saw their sources of information drying up one after another as the people of the villages fell silent. To make good the lack, they resorted to worse barbarity, hoping to inspire a greater terror among the villagers than that inspired by the insurgents.

In December 1958, the death of some 20 detainees in the Phy Loi concentration camp fanned the flames of anger to the

point where guerrilla warfare seemed the only answer. The Diem government tried to re-establish its administrative hold over villages they had lost. It launched against dissident regions what amounted to a series of full-scale military operations bringing infantry, artillery, paratroops and aircraft to bear. But this time the forces of Diem met with organized resistance from the peasants. At the end of March 1959 Diem told the correspondent of Figaro that "at the present time Vietnam is a nation at war."

What did Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnam do in the face of these circumstances? It protested in diplomatic notes. The members of the Vietminh cadres in the south, who had been assured by Hanoi that reunification would be rapidly and peacefully achieved, had to listen to the bitter remarks that were made to them about the inability of the North to do anything about the Diem dictatorship. It was in such a climate of feeling that, in 1959, responsible elements of the Communist Resistance in Indochina came to the conclusion that they had to act, whether Hanoi wanted them to or no. Hanoi preferred diplomatic notes, but it was to find that its hand had been forced.

A CIVIL WAR

The National Liberation Front was armed in South Vietnam after this disenchantment with national and international response to their political complaints. It was thus by its home policy that the government of the South finally destroyed the confidence of the population, and drove them into revolt and desperation. The non-Communist (and even anti-Communist) opposition had long been aware of the turn events were taking. But at the beginning of 1960 many elements, both civilian and military, in the Nationalist camp came to a clear realization that things were moving from bad to worse, and that something must be done to put an end to the absolute power of Diem.

In a manifesto dated April 26, 1960, eighteen well-known personalities of varying political affiliations demanded that Diem liberalize his regime. At the beginning of November an influential Nationalist journal after indicating that the government would in all probability have to deal with a popular insurrection, wrote: "This rising is justified: in a country where the most elementary rights of the people are ignored, where the legality of the actions of the government has become an empty expression, the will of the people can only make itself felt by means of force, that is to say, by means of a revolution and the taking over of the government..." (Pour le Vietnam, Paris, No.2, Nov. 1960)

FURTHER DISSATISFACTION

The economy also suffered. Land was going out of cultivation. The rice crop had decreased from 5,421,000 metric tons in 1960-61 to 4,500,000 in 1961-62x. In the same period cultivated areas decreased from 6,103,370 acres to 5,434,000

acres. In 1961-62 South Vietnam, which formerly exported one million tons of rice annually, at the same time covering North Vietnam's annual deficit of 250,000 tons, was forced to import 100,000 tons.

While there were many small merchants, manufacturing only employed 50,000 to 70,000 persons. Industry was mainly restricted to breweries, handicrafts, textiles and construction. The building index, however, had fallen off seventeen points by 1962. Unemployment was high and while the cost of living rose steadily, wholesale prices increased at the rate of 12% annually.

In seven years the U. S. had given Diem at least two billion dollars in economic aid and another one billion dollars in military aid. For this bonanza, South Vietnam had little to show besides luxury imports for the wealthy: expensive autos, outboard motors, French perfumes, scooters, radios, typewriters. The New Republic (June 19, 1961) complains of the U. S. providing "such status symbols as a nuclear reactor when government offices cannot even afford scotch tape, and an electric computer when reliable statistics are non-existent and there is nothing to compute."

Under Diem's family rule, corruption was manifest in all aspects of the economy. Landowners and merchants hoarded their wealth or banked it abroad; agriculture was stagnant; modern industries were non-existent and reliance on American aid increased with time.

U. S. INVOLVEMENT

In 1961, shortly after he took office, President Kennedy decided to further commit the U. S. by sending military personnel in larger numbers and providing a war-time budget. The N. L. F. continued to gain popular support against the American-bolstered Diem regime. The U. S. adopted a policy of forced optimism, and under the guidance of General Harkins and Ambassador Nolting, our government became increasingly incensed at the discrepancy between official pronouncements and the reports of U. S. correspondents. Diem's nepotistic rule increasingly lost touch with reality and the role of the Nhu family in the government was a source of constant embarrassment to the U. S. President Kennedy at last let it be known that the U. S. would look with favor on a palace coup replacing the Diem family, and on November 1, 1963, the government was overthrown by the military, and Diem and his brother Nhu were assassinated.

The U. S. has supported each new military dictatorship with financial, military and political resources. But the government position has continued to disintegrate. Indeed, the bombings of North Vietnam, which began on February 7 of this year and have intensified steadily since that date, mark the implicit admission of failure for the much vaunted U. S. attempt to wage 'counter-insurgency' warfare.

MYOPIA OR DECEIT?

The reasons for American failure are of general significance, for they stem from a deeply ingrained habit of the American mind. We like to think of social problems as technically self-contained and susceptible of simple, clear-cut solutions. We tend to think of foreign aid as a kind of self-sufficient, technical economic enterprise subject to the laws of economics and divorced from politics, and of war as a similarly self-sufficient, technical enterprise, to be won as quickly, as cheaply, as thoroughly as possible and divorced from the foreign policy that preceded and is to follow it. Thus our military theoreticians and practitioners conceive of counterinsurgency as though it were just another branch of warfare like artillery or chemical warfare, to be taught in special schools and applied with technical proficiency wherever the occasion arises.

This view derives of course from a complete misconception of the nature of civil war. People fight and die in civil wars because they have a faith which appears to them worth fighting and dying for and they can be opposed with a chance of success only by people who have at least as strong a faith.

To disguise this failure in policy and strategy, the White House and State Department have changed the character of the war to fit their pattern. The February White Paper is the most blatant example of this attempt to identify the 'war of liberation' of the South Vietnamese people as aggression from North Vietnam or Chinese expansionism.

THE WHITE PAPER

Up to very recently, American military experts claimed that the guerrilla forces were 80-85% supplied by captured American weapons. A year ago last February, Secretary of Defense McNamara on a trip to South Vietnam was asked for 8,000 new American weapons to replace those captured by the guerrillas. The U. S. Airman, official journal of the Air Force, printed an article a year and a half ago, describing the "primitive weapons of the Vietcong." The Air Force described the ingenious home-made weapons of the guerrillas. The American government gave the public the impression that the guerrillas were fighting with either primitive or U. S. weapons.

On February 27, 1965 the State Department issued its "White Paper" which told us "South Vietnam is fighting for its life against a brutal campaign of terror and armed attack inspired, directed, supplied and controlled by the Communist regime in Hanoi."

The Defense Department announced that 15,000 weapons were captured from the guerrillas during the three years 1962-1964. The State Department White Paper reported on weapons captured during an eighteen month period: June 1962

to January 1964. On the basis of Defense Department figures the total number of guerrilla weapons captured during the State Department's eighteen month period must have approximated 7,500. Out of this total, the White Paper identifies 179 'communist-made' weapons. This figure would represent 2 1/2% of total weapons captured. Only two of these weapons were definitely made in North Vietnam.

The State Department describes eight citizens of North Vietnam who had been captured in the South. Of the nineteen 'case studies' of accused infiltrators, sixteen were identified as native South Vietnamese returning to the South, as provided in Article 8 of the Geneva agreements (see page 14). One was unidentifed as to origin and two were definitely listed as originally North Vietnamese. Later the document lists six more 'infiltrators' from the North. From these figures they draw the conclusion that "as many as 75% of the now more than 4,400 Vietcong who are known to have entered the South in the first eight months of 1964 were natives of North Vietnam."

Helen Mears (in the Progressive, October, 1962) remarks, "The important point is that many rebels called 'Communists' are not communists; and even the Communists, both South and North, are native Vietnamese. When the U. S. government, in effect, tells the Vietnamese 'Reds' to go back where they came from or be killed, it puts both the 'Reds' and the American people in a difficult position. For the Vietnamese 'Reds' are already where they came from. It is the Americans who are a long way from home."

The logic of the State Department's analysis leads it to claim that serious sources of internal discontent have played little or no role in the development of the guerrilla movement. In pointing to the North as the source of the conflict, the State Department ignores the early history of the Diem regime, its attempt to reimpose an oppressive and feudal system of land tenure on the countryside, its repression of all non-Diemist political organizations (both Communist and non-Communist), its persecution of religious groups (which led finally to the Buddhist uprisings and Diem's fall), the corruption and nepotism of the Saigon regime since 1954. The artificial and revolving Saigon governments which have followed Diem have done nothing to correct these conditions.

The United States government is thus fighting a losing war against the population of South Vietnam. As the Manchester Guardian declared, "time is not on the side of the Americans in Vietnam, and the more they shake the hour-glass the faster the sands run through." (March 11, 1965)

Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia bitterly blamed American policies: "Our American friends are remarkable organizers, brilliant technicians and excellent soldiers. But their

incontestable realism stops short of the realm of politics, where the attitude of the ostrich seems to them to conform best to their interests." (N. Y. Times, Sept. 25, 1964)

THE POLICY OF CONTAINMENT

We are militarily engaged in Vietnam by virtue of a basic principle of our foreign policy that was implicit in the Truman Doctrine of 1947 and was put into practice by John Foster Dulles from 1954 onward. This principle is the military containment of Communism. Containment had its origins in Europe; Dulles applied it to the Middle East and Asia through a series of bilateral and multilateral alliances. Yet what was an outstanding success in Europe turned out to be a dismal failure elsewhere. The reasons for that are twofold.

First, the threat that faced the nations of Western Europe in the aftermath of World War II was primarily military. It was the threat of the Red Army marching westward. Europe was temporarily weak and disorganized from the war. Its people were literate and articulate enough to deal with social problems in political terms. Its economy was well-organized and highly centralized. It had no industrial or agricultural deficits other than those imposed by the war.

The situation is different in the Middle East and Asia. The threat there is not primarily military but political in nature. Weak governments and societies provide opportunities for Communist activity and ideology to 'subvert' the system. Military containment is not only irrelevant to that threat, it has proved more likely to cause further dissatisfaction and frustration. Thus the Baghdad Pact did not protect Egypt from Soviet influence and SEATO has had no bearing on Chinese influence in Indonesia and Pakistan.

Second, and more important, even if China were threatening her neighbors primarily by military means, it would be impossible to contain her by erecting a military wall at the periphery of her empire. For China is, even in her present underdeveloped state, the dominant power in Asia. She is this by virtue of her geographic position, her civilization, her size, and her past power remembered and her future power anticipated.

The issue China poses is political and cultural predominance. The U. S. can no more contain Chinese influence in Asia by arming South Vietnam and Thailand than China could contain American influence in the Western Hemisphere by arming, say, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

AN ALTERNATIVE

We can today distinguish four different types of Communism in view of the kind and degree of hostility to the United States they represent: a Communism identified with the Soviet Union, e.g., East Germany; a Communism identified

with China, e.g., Albania; a Communism that straddles the fence between the Soviet Union and China, e.g., Rumania; and independent Communism, e.g., Yugoslavia.

A policy of containment should take into account these varying degrees of unfriendliness and competitiveness with the U. S. Ho Chi Minh, like Tito and unlike the Communist governments of the other states of Eastern Europe, came to power not by courtesy of another Communist nation's victorious army but at the head of a victorious army of his own. He is, then, a natural candidate to become an Asian Tito, and the question we must answer is: How adversely would a Titoist Ho Chi Minh, governing all of Vietnam, affect the interests of the U. S. It would be in our interest if the western periphery of China were ringed by a chain of independent states, though they would, of course, take account of the predominance of their powerful neighbor.

It is also important that China is the hereditary enemy of Vietnam, and Ho Chi Minh will become the leader of a Chinese satellite only if the United States forces him to become one.

Senator Aiken has expressed exactly this view on the floor of the Senate: "I do not believe that the smaller countries of southeast Asia have any more desire to become satellites of China and come under the control of Red China than have the countries of Eastern Europe any desire to be satellites of Russia... I believe that North Vietnam has every reason in the world not to wish to become a satellite of Red China; and that she will not become a satellite of Red China unless the U. S. forces her to become one. But, if we continue raids over North Vietnam and continue the use of the weapons which we have been using more or less indiscriminately, we may force North Vietnam to call on China for Chinese troops by the millions." (March 25, 1965).

At a press conference on January 31, 1964, de Gaulle proposed a neutral Southeast Asia and explained his reasons for establishing diplomatic relations with Peking: "On this continent (of Asia) there is no peace or war without Peking being implicated and it is inconceivable to suppose that it is ever possible to conclude a neutrality treaty concerning the states of Southeast Asia, to which we French show a very special and cordial attention, without China's being a party to it."

O. Edmund Chubb points out that there are "deadly parallels" to previous actions in China, South Korea, and Formosa indicative of fundamental faults in our strategy toward Asia.

"It is not a question of Communism alone," he says, "but of the "general tide of revolutionary change, with its accompanying demands for political and economic advancement."

"Asia has come of age. We cannot have a viable and effective Asia policy until we learn how to align ourselves

with the thinking and hopes of Asian peoples instead of with the ambitions of individual politicians maneuvering for power." (York Gazette and Daily, May 20, 1961)

THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

President Johnson's speech at Johns Hopkins University on April 7 reiterated the assumptions and policies which brought us to this impasse and which make it difficult to extricate ourselves. He started from the false assumption that there are two Vietnamese nations, one of which has attacked the other, and he sees that attack as an integral part of unlimited Chinese aggression. The President has linked our involvement in Vietnam with its independence and has invoked the freedom of all nations to justify our Asian policy. He at the same time offered to make peace with the enemy.

He mentioned, for the first time, that the United States might be willing to enter into 'unconditional discussion'; yet he implied or stated at least three conditions that the other side is at any rate not going to overlook as too trivial to bother with. First, he said, "We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of meaningless agreement." Secondly, the world is given to understand that the U. S. will not accept the right of the N. L. F. to take part in the talks; yet this is one, at least, of our enemies. Thirdly, President Johnson gave as his objective "the independence of South Vietnam," thereby apparently ruling out reunification. This was a retreat from some of his earlier speeches in which he used to invoke the Geneva agreements of 1954. "But you cannot, by insisting that South Vietnam is an 'independent' nation, beg one of the main questions and then claim to be imposing no conditions," criticizes an editorial in the Manchester Guardian, April 15.

Senator Wayne Morse evaluated the speech in the Senate: "The President's speech is being described as the carrot that goes with the stick, the offer and the promise to go with the use of force. Presumably, the air raids on the North were designed to force North Vietnam to a conference table more or less on our terms. Now, so the argument goes, we can say that we have offered to negotiate a peace and if the offer is not accepted it is the fault of someone else, not the United States.

"I heard nothing in the President's speech that suggests to me he has any negotiations in mind at all. There was a lot of lip service paid to the theory of peace, grandiose utopian verbiage was plentiful, and the dollar sign was liberally displayed, apparently in hopes of quieting criticism from abroad. But there was no language that suggested that the United States is going to return to the rule of law in Southeast Asia or that we are actively seeking a peaceful solution to its problems. There was no word that the U. S. plans henceforth to observe either the U. N. Charter or the Geneva Agreement of 1954.

"... We will not have any real negotiations until we talk to the people we are fighting, and we will not have a genuine offer to negotiate from the White House until the offer is directed to the people we are fighting and not the shadows behind them." (April 8)

Senator Gruening added his criticism in the Senate: "The refusal to concede that the fighting in South Vietnam is essentially a civil war and that to bring that fighting to a halt it is necessary to discuss the issues with the principals -- the Vietcong -- is tantamount to retaining a precondition to our willingness to negotiate. In addition, our continued bombing of North Vietnam is not conducive to bringing about peace in Vietnam -- it is asking North Vietnam to parley with a gun at its head.

"Furthermore, our continued insistence upon a free independent South Vietnam tragically and unwarrantedly disregards the clear commitments of the Geneva Convention of 1954 for free, supervised elections designed to unify the two parts of Vietnam...

"There is, in the President's speech, the obvious attempt to downgrade the fact that there is a civil war going on in South Vietnam. The President said: 'Of course, some of the people of South Vietnam are participating in attack on their own government.' That is all the lip service the President paid to the basic civil war being waged by the Vietcong aimed at the reunification of all of Vietnam... In terms of measurable aggression that of the U. S. is and has been not only greater, but came first." (April 9)

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GENEVA DECLARATIONS

July 22, 1954

Article 4) The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam prohibiting the introduction into Vietnam of foreign troops and military personnel as well as of all kinds of arms and munitions.

Article 5) The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement of the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam to the effect that no military base at the disposition of a foreign state may be established in the regrouping zones of the two parties, the latter having the obligation to see that the zones allotted to them shall not constitute part of any military and shall not be utilized

for the resumption of hostilities or in the service of an aggressive policy.

Article 6) The conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Vietnam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary. The conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities creates the necessary basis for the achievement in the near future of a political settlement in Vietnam.

Article 7) The Conference declares that, so far as Vietnam is concerned,

the settlement of political problems, effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity and territorial integrity, shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedom, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot.

In order to insure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that all the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the member states of the international supervisory commission referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from 20th July onwards.

Article 8) The provisions of the agreements on the cessation of hostilities intended to insure the protection of individuals and of property must be most strictly applied and must, in particular, allow everyone in Vietnam to decide freely in which zone he wishes to live.

Article 9) The competent representative authorities of the northern and southern zones of Vietnam must not permit any individual or collective reprisals against persons who have collaborated in any way with one of the parties during the war or against members of such persons' families.

Article 12) In the relations with Vietnam, each member of the Geneva conference undertakes to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity and the territorial integrity of the above-mentioned state, and to refrain from any interferences in its internal affairs.

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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT VIETNAM

True - False Quiz

Answer each of the following questions. Be sure to check only one box — True or False (Not Both!)

True False

1a. "To those governments who doubt our willingness to talk the answer is simple: Agree to discussion. Come to the meeting room. We will be there." President Johnson, Apr. 17, 1965.

1b. "On terms for face-to-face discussions or negotiations President Johnson has offered discussions in any framework with any government — but not with the Viet Cong rebels - without conditions. Officials have refused to say, however, that this commits them to any specific, even though unconditioned conference that might be suggested by the other side. They say that the President means only that he would 'discuss' any proposal." Max Frankel, N. Y. Times, April 20, 1965.

True False

- 2a. "Air strikes against North Vietnamese roads, bridges and railroads are not choking off aid to the Viet Cong, and a land invasion of the North should begin immediately, the commander of South Vietnam's air force (Brig. Gen. Nguyen Coa Ky) says." AP interview, April 29, 1965.
- 2b. "The effectiveness of the air strikes, which began on a regular basis March 2, was hailed by Major Gen. Tran Van Minh, Commander in Chief of the South Vietnamese armed forces. General Minh... remarked at a reception that he considered the strikes and the dropping of propaganda leaflets into the North as turning points in the war." N. Y. Times, April 22, 1965.
- 3a. "Mr. McNamara said, however, that the military operation in South Vietnam had not seriously depleted United States military stocks and that there would be no need for any specific additional procurements." N. Y. Times, April 27, 1965.
- 3b. "The limited numbers of aircraft available and the technical shortcomings or unsuitability of the United States planes used in South Vietnam are causing increasing worry among military officials. Several manufacturers - Douglas, Northrup and others - have received indications that they may be called upon to initiate or to speed up production of some military types." Hanson Baldwin, N.Y. Times, April 25, 1965.
- 4a. "I think that we have friends throughout the world. I'm not concerned with any friends we've lost. Following my Baltimore speech, I received from our allies almost universal approval." President Johnson, April 27, 1965.
- 4b. "The United States has the support of some governments whose interests are linked, or are parallel, to ours; but it is not much exaggeration to say that the world outside our borders is against what we are doing in Vietnam." N.Y. Times Editorial, April 25, 1965.
- 5a. "We want honest, forthright discussion in this country, and that will be a discussion with differences of views, and we welcome what our friends have to say, whether they agree with us or not." President Johnson, April 27, 1965.
- 5b. "Today, Mr. Johnson squelched at least one anti-administration speech that had been scheduled for the Senate. He sent Under Secretary of State W. Ball to 'reason together' with the senator in question. The speech was cancelled." N.Y. Times, April 27, 1965.

(The following article is reprinted from The New Republic, May 1, 1965)

RUSSIA, the U. S. and VIETNAM

Hans J. Morgenthau

Having just returned from Moscow after talking to American diplomats, to representatives of allied and neutral countries, and to Soviet officials, academicians and military men, I carry with me two major impressions: the hopelessness of a negotiated settlement of the war in Vietnam under present conditions and the likelihood of Soviet military intervention.

A negotiated settlement is now rendered impossible by three factors: the irreconcilable character of the positions taken by either side, the military situation remaining unfavorable to the United States, and the ambiguity of the American negotiating position. Moscow, Hanoi, Peking and the Viet Cong are at one in seeking the elimination of the American military presence in South Vietnam, while the United States appears to be willing to remove its military presence only on conditions of stability in South Vietnam which are unattainable in the foreseeable future. The military situation remains as desperate as it has been in recent times. Richard Dudman has given in the St. Louis Post Dispatch a vivid picture of incessant military deterioration, of cities supplied only by air or sea, of the Viet Cong exacting tribute even from government convoys. The London Economist reports in its issue of April 17 that "two slogans that are now heard quite often in Saigon and elsewhere are: 'Yank go fight your war someplace else,' and, in Army circles: 'He who doesn't fight has no need to run away'" and that "north of Saigon, it is with the greatest difficulty that the Americans can persuade the government forces to keep the main coastal road open during the day." Finally, the President's speech of April 7, intended to open a new, more conciliatory phase in American policy, is contradictory

within itself in that it attempts to combine elements of the old policy of indiscriminate peripheral military containment of Communism in Asia with a new policy of creating an independent Indo-China including North Vietnam and supported by the Soviet Union. In Soviet eyes, however, these constructive elements in the President's speech have been obliterated by the massive air raids on North Vietnam, following the President's speech by less than 24 hours. Wherever I mentioned in Moscow the constructive elements in the President's speech, I was referred to the bombs whose detonations seem to have drowned out the words uttered in Baltimore.

The Soviet attitude toward American policy is one of despair, alarm and exasperation. The despair is most keenly felt by those who have been identified with Khrushchev's policy of peaceful co-existence and of mitigating the conflict with the United States. They declare themselves to be fighting with their backs to the wall, barely holding their own against the growing influence of the faction that favors the hard line of the Chinese. It is not necessary to take such statements at face value in order to recognize the dilemma in which the Soviet Union finds itself and the impossibility for the Soviet Union to remain indefinitely a passive bystander in the face of the progressive destruction of North Vietnam by American military power. It is likewise easy to see why the Soviet Union would take an active part in the hostilities only with the greatest reluctance, being forced by American policy to take a course of action it would not have taken if it had had a choice.

The dilemma the Soviet Union faces stems from the fact that, on the one

hand, the Soviet Union has a vital interest in avoiding a direct military confrontation with the United States and that, on the other hand, it cannot remain indifferent to the fate of another Communist country and ally, such as North Vietnam, especially as it must compete with China for the control of the world Communist movement. However anxious the Soviet Union is to avoid a direct military confrontation with the United States, it is not willing to buy that avoidance with its abdication as leader and protector of its Communist allies.

Thus the bombing of North Vietnam, a complete failure as an inducement to bring Hanoi to the negotiating table, is likely to succeed in bringing the Soviet Union to the battlefields of Southeast Asia. The bombing is bound to continue on an ever-expanding scale; for such are its inner dynamics in view of its assumptions and of its failure to achieve its end. Every target hit - one marvels to believe the official reports, at the number of bridges and radar stations with which the landscape of North Vietnam must be dotted - weakens not the resolution of Hanoi to unify Vietnam under its auspices but the resolution of the Soviet Union to stay out of the conflict.

Yet military intervention, carefully limited, brings compensation to the Soviet Union, and the hard liners have not been remiss in pointing them out. Military intervention might well serve to restore the ascendancy of the Soviet Union in the world Communist movement. That ascendancy has been effectively challenged by China, and the main talking point of China has been the lack of the Soviet Union's revolutionary militancy. However, in the present conflict China is in no position to come to the aid of North Vietnam without risking the destruction of its atomic and major industrial installations; for it is not yet a nuclear power. But the Soviet Union is under the cover of its nuclear deterrent. It could go a long way, albeit facing the risk of escalation, to

demonstrate to the Communist world that while China only speaks loudly but can do very little, it is the Soviet Union who in actuality carries the big stick and is willing to use it on behalf of another Communist nation. If worse should come to worse, and China, too, were to be involved actively in the conflict, she would have to rely for her protection upon the deterrent nuclear power and the conventional arms of the Soviet Union.

Thus is the end the monolithic character of the Communist camp would be restored under the auspices of the Soviet Union, which would have demonstrated by deed where effective power lies within that camp.

Turning from the substance of policy to its intellectual quality, the critical observer is struck by the motivating force which considerations of prestige exert both in Washington and Moscow. That this is so in Washington hardly needs extensive elaboration. If one probes beneath the rationalizations for our military presence in South Vietnam, one finds as the dominant motivation the fear that if South Vietnam should go Communist, no nation threatened by Communism would entrust its protection to us. Thus one nation after the other would go Communist. In other words, the Communization of South Vietnam would be the beginning of the end of the free world. We have even dignified this historic determinism with the name of a theory, the so-called "Domino Theory." It assumes that as South Vietnam goes so will Thailand, and as Thailand goes so will India, and so forth, until the whole world will have gone Communist. This theory is a slogan born of fear and of a misconception of history and politics. It is unsupported by any historic evidence. The Soviet Union went Communist in 1917 and China in 1949, but no other nation followed suit. In 1945, Poland and Hungary went Communist, but Finland did not, and all the Balkan States went Communist, but Greece did not. In 1948 Czechoslovakia went Communist, but no other nation did. In

1954 North Vietnam went Communist all by herself, and in 1960 or so Cuba went Communist without being followed by any other Latin American nation. Social and, more particularly, revolutionary change is not the mechanical result of imitation and prestige but of objective conditions peculiar to individual nations. It is, however, illuminating to note that the "Domino Theory" is but a replica of a vulgar Marxism which also believes in the inevitable spread of Communism from one country to the rest of the world.

Similarly, the Soviet Union operates on assumptions of prestige, both for itself and for North Vietnam. It cannot allow Hanoi to go to the negotiating table under a hail of American bombs; for to do so would be tantamount to admitting that the United States can impose its will upon a small Communist na-

tion by force of arms. It cannot afford to remain indefinitely passive while American bombs destroy North Vietnam; for to do so would be tantamount to admitting that the Soviet Union cannot protect a small Communist nation against America's military power. When I mentioned to a Soviet official American considerations of prestige and pointed to the need for a face-saving device and for Soviet cooperation in providing it, he replied: "Other nations must take care of their prestige, too." He was right. But then it is the task of statesmanship to settle disputes in such a way as to minimize the damage to the prestige of the parties concerned. Of such statesmanship there is not a trace to be found on either side. As a result we are moving closer and closer to that military confrontation which nobody wants but which nobody knows how to avoid.

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