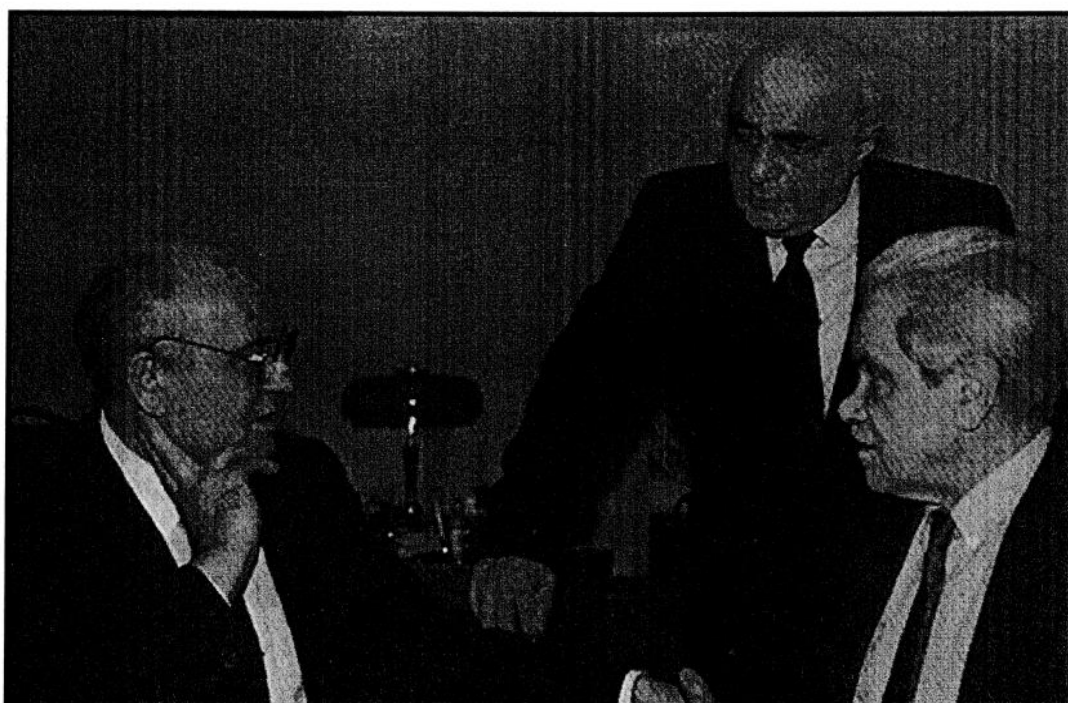


The End of the Cold War



Featuring New Evidence on:

The End of the Cold War, 1989

The Fall of the Wall

Sino-Soviet Relations, 1958-59

Soviet Missile Deployments, 1959

The Iran Crisis, 1944-46

Tito and Khrushchev, 1954

Le Duan and the Break with China

Introduction by Stein Tønnesson

The decision of the Cold War International History Project to publish Christopher E. Goscha's translation of Secretary General Le Duan's long 1979 statement about Sino-Vietnamese relations is a significant event. Until now, few Vietnamese documents of this kind have been made available to scholars. The latter tend therefore to analyze the two Indochina Wars and their role in the Cold War as a power game between Western powers, the Soviet Union and China, and to overlook Vietnamese perspectives. Goscha's translation brings one such perspective into the scholarly debate.

Goscha, a researcher with the Groupe d'Etudes sur le Vietnam contemporain (Sciences Politiques, Paris), consulted the document in the People's Army Library in Hanoi, copied it by hand, and translated it into English. He did so with full authorization. The text is undated, and the author's name is just given as "Comrade B." The content implies, however, that it was written in 1979, most probably between the Chinese invasion of northern Vietnam in February 1979 and the publication of the Vietnamese *White Book* about Sino-Vietnamese relations on 4 October of the same year.¹ It seems likely that the text was composed shortly after Deng Xiaoping's decision on 15 March 1979 to withdraw the Chinese troops from their punitive expedition into northern Vietnam, but before the defection to China of the veteran Vietnamese communist leader Hoang Van Hoan in July 1979.

How can we know that the man behind the text is Le Duan? In it, "comrade B" reveals that during a Politburo meeting in the Vietnamese Workers' Party (VWP, the name of the Vietnamese Communist Party from 1951 to 1976) he was referred to as *Anh Ba* (Brother Number Three), an alias we know was used by Le Duan. The document also refers frequently to high level meetings between Chinese and Vietnamese leaders where the author (referred to in the text as "I," in Vietnamese *toi*) represented the Vietnamese side in an authoritative way that few others than he could have done. We know Le Duan did not write much himself, and the document has an oral style (a fact that has made its translation extremely difficult). It thus seems likely that the text is either a manuscript dictated by Le Duan to a secretary, or detailed minutes written by someone attending a high-level meeting where Le Duan made the statement.

The document can be used by the historian to analyze: a) Le Duan's ideas and attitudes, b) the situation within the socialist camp in 1979, c) the record of Le Duan's relations with China in the period 1952–79.

From a scholarly point of view it is safest to use the text for the first and the second purposes since the document can then be exploited as an artifact, a textual residue from the past that the historian seeks to

reconstruct. As such it illuminates the views and attitudes of Vietnam's top leader in the crisis year 1979, and also some aspects of the situation within the socialist camp at that particular juncture. To use the text as a source to the earlier history of Le Duan's relations with China (the topic addressed in the text) is more problematic, since what Le Duan had to say in 1979 was deeply colored by rage. Thus he is likely to have distorted facts, perhaps even made up stories. As a source to events in the period 1952–79, the document must therefore be treated with tremendous caution, and be held up against other available sources.

Two similar sources, resulting from the same kind of outrage, are the official white books published by Vietnam and China towards the end of 1979.² A third source, with a series of documents from the years 1964–77, is Working Paper No. 22, published by the Cold War International History Project in 1998, *77 Conversations Between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964–1977*, edited by an international group of historians: Odd Arne Westad, Chen Jian, Stein Tønnesson, Nguyen Vu Tung, and James G. Hershberg. This collection contains 77 minutes of conversations—or excerpts of such minutes—between Chinese, Vietnamese and other leaders in the period 1964–77 (presumably taken down during or shortly after each conversation, but compiled, excerpted and possibly edited at later stages). The collection includes several conversations in which Le Duan took part. The editors of the *77 Conversations* write that the minutes have been compiled from "archival documents, internal Communist party documentation, and open and restricted publications from China and other countries" (emphasis here).³ The editors do not tell which of the minutes were written, excerpted and compiled in China and which in "other countries." It would seem possible that some of these minutes were used as background material for the preparation of the white books in 1979, at least on the Chinese side. This would mean that the sources just mentioned are not altogether independent of each other. This fact and the obscure origin of the 77 minutes means that they too must be treated with caution. Their main function may be to offer clues to what the historian should look for when given access to the archives of the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist Parties.

Le Duan's attitude

What does the text reveal about its originator, Le Duan? A striking feature of the text is its directness and the way in which the author comes across as an individual. This is not the normal kind of party document, where individual attitudes and emotions are shrouded in institutionalized rhetoric.⁴ Le Duan seems to have addressed himself to a small group of party leaders, with

the purpose of justifying his own actions vis-à-vis China and ensuring support for maintaining a hard line towards Chinese pressures, possibly fighting another great war. Le Duan speaks of himself as "I," (*toi*) identifies each of his interlocutors on the Chinese side by name, and expresses his emotions towards Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders. The author really likes the word "I", and uses it even when referring to his talks with Ho Chi Minh. This is surprising since using *toi* in relation to conversations with the Uncle (*Bac*), would probably be considered arrogant, even for people who worked closely with him. The proper term in that connection would perhaps be "*Chau*"⁵ Throughout the document, it is Le Duan who does everything. The style is oral. It seems possible that the one who wrote down the text later deposited the document in the Army Library.⁶

Despite the refreshing directness of the text, there is one thing the author almost does not do. He does not speak openly about internal disagreements among the Vietnamese leaders. The only other leaders mentioned by name are Ho Chi Minh and Nguyen Chi Thanh, who had both passed away long before 1979. There is not a word about Vo Nguyen Giap, Pham Van Dong, Nguyen Duy Trinh, Xuan Thuy, Hoang Van Hoan, or any of the others who had played prominent roles in Hanoi's tortuous relations with Beijing. Internal disagreements on the Vietnamese side are only mentioned on one occasion. Le Duan claims that everyone in the Politburo always was of the same mind, but that there had been one person who rose to question the Politburo, asking why Le Duan had talked about the need to not be afraid of the Chinese. On that occasion, says Le Duan, the one who stood up to support *Anh Ba*, was Nguyen Chi Thanh (the army commander in southern Vietnam, who had often been considered a supporter of Chinese viewpoints before his untimely death in 1967). The "comrade" asking the impertinent question was no doubt Hoang Van Hoan, and the fact that he is not mentioned by name may indicate that Le Duan's statement was made before this party veteran defected to China in July 1979.

As a background to the analysis of the text, we should first establish what is generally known about Le Duan's life (1907–86) and career. He came from Quang Tri in Central Vietnam, and based his party career on political work in the southern half of Vietnam. In the 1920s he became a railway worker, joined the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) at its foundation in 1930, and spent the years 1931–36 in a French prison. During the Popular Front period in France, he was free again to work politically and in March 1938 became member of the ICP Central Committee.⁷ In 1940 he was arrested once more, and belonged (with Pham Hung and Nguyen Duy Trinh) to the group of party leaders who spent the war years 1941–45 at the French prison island Poulou Condore.⁸ He was released in 1945 and during the First Indochina War he served as secretary of the Nam Bo (southern region) Party Committee (from 1951 the Central Office for South Vietnam; COSVN), with Le Duc Tho as his

closest collaborator. After the Geneva agreement in 1954, which established the division of Vietnam along the 17th parallel, he is known to have sent a letter to the party leaders, objecting to the concessions made. In 1957, after Truong Chinh had stepped down as secretary general of the VWP and president Ho Chi Minh himself had taken over the party leadership, Le Duan was called to Hanoi where he became acting secretary general. He was the prime mover, in the years 1957–59, for resuming armed struggle in South Vietnam, and gaining Soviet and Chinese support for that policy. The decision of the 15th Central Committee Plenum in January 1959 to move to active struggle in the South was a clear victory for Le Duan, and at the VWP's 3rd Congress in 1960 he was elected secretary general. It took more than 15 years before the next (4th) Party Congress was held in 1976, and Le Duan died in office, half a year before the 6th Congress in 1986.⁹

Le Duan was clearly the second most powerful Vietnamese communist leader in the 20th century, after Ho Chi Minh, the founder of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930 and President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam from its foundation in 1945 to his death in 1969.

Le Duan must be characterized as an indigenous communist leader. He had not, like Ho Chi Minh, traveled around the world during his youth. He had not, like Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap and Hoang Van Hoan, worked closely with Ho Chi Minh in building the Viet Minh front and the National Liberation Army in the border region to China during the Second World War. He also did not belong to the group around Truong Chinh, who constituted the ICP's northern secretariat during the years from 1940 to the August Revolution of 1945. Ho Chi Minh's decision to leave the party leadership Le Duan in the years 1957–1960, and to endorse his formal election in 1960, must be interpreted as a way to ensure national unity. At a time when Vietnam was divided in two, and many southern cadres had been regrouped to the north, the safest way to ensure that the VWP remain a party for all of Vietnam was probably to make the leader of the southern branch the leader of the whole party. Presumably this was the motive behind Ho Chi Minh's choice. The relationship between Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan was never characterized by the same kind of warmth as that between the Uncle and other of his party nephews.¹⁰

Le Duan's text from 1979 shows that he combined an extremely strong national pride with an idea that the Vietnamese, as a particularly struggle-prone people, were playing a vanguard role in the world revolutionary struggle. The text does not reveal much admiration or respect for other nations than the Vietnamese, but it is deeply committed to the idea of national independence struggles, for all peoples, small and great. His pride comes out already in the first paragraph, where he says that after "we" had defeated the Americans, there was no imperialist power that would dare to fight "us" again. Only some Chinese reactionary figures "thought they could." The terms "we" and "us" here denote the big national we.

Le Duan's pride was of a moral nature, and the basic

dichotomy in his moral universe was that between fear and courage. He seems to have despised those who did not "dare" to fight. If it had not been for the Vietnamese, he claimed, there would not have been anyone to fight the Americans, because at the time the Vietnamese were fighting the US, the rest of the world were "afraid" of the Americans. The same kind of moral pride comes out in Le Duan's account of a meeting he had with Zhou Enlai in Hanoi, just after the latter had received Kissinger in Beijing. Le Duan says he told Zhou that with the new Sino-American understanding, Nixon would attack "me" even harder, but "I am not at all afraid." Later in the text, he comes back to the claim that "It was only Vietnam that was not afraid of the US." He also identifies the fearful. The first person to fear the Americans was Mao, he claims. The famous statement about the "paper tiger" is not present in this text. Mao is the one who always feared the Americans, discouraged the Vietnamese from fighting, and refused to offer support if this could entail a risk of US retaliation against China. When China had intervened in Korea, it was not a sign of courage; this was just something China had to do to defend its power interests.

Le Duan's admiration for courage reaches its crescendo in the following statement: "We are not afraid of anyone. We are not afraid because we are in the right. We don't even fear our elder brother. We also do not fear our friends. Even our enemies we do not fear. We have fought them already. We are human beings. We are not afraid of anyone. We are independent. All the world knows we are independent."

On the basis of his moral distinction between courage and fear, Le Duan claims there was also a basic difference between Mao's military strategy and the strategy followed by the Vietnamese. The former was defensive, the latter offensive. The Vietnamese had not learned anything from the Chinese in terms of military strategy. The Chinese had always been very weak. They did little to fight the Japanese. After Le Duan's first visit to China (which he claims occurred in 1952), Ho Chi Minh asked him what he had seen. Two things, he replied: "Vietnam is very brave, and they are not brave at all." From that day on, Le Duan had sensed the basic difference between the Chinese and the Vietnamese: "We were entirely different from them. Within the Vietnamese person there is a very courageous spirit, and thus we have never had defensive tactics. Every person fights."

There is little in the text to indicate that Le Duan felt more respect or sympathy for the Soviet Union than for China, although the Russians caused less worry. He complained about the Sino-Soviet split, but his reason for doing so was that it strengthened US leverage in Vietnam. He complained that he had to explain so many things in China, going there "twice a year." Then he added that he had no such problem with the Soviets, since he just refrained from keeping them informed: "As for the Soviets, I did not say anything at all [...] I only spoke in general terms."¹¹

Another important aspect of Le Duan's thinking is his

ideologically motivated distinction between, on the one side, "the Chinese people," and on the other reactionary Chinese figures. As has been seen he did not have much admiration for the Chinese in general, but he did not want to blame the whole Chinese people for the aggressive policies of their leaders: "We refer to them as a clique only. We do not refer to their nation. We did not say the Chinese people are bad towards us. We say that it is the reactionary Beijing clique."

Le Duan also distinguishes between individuals on the Chinese side, and here the criterion for judging people is their degree of understanding Vietnam. The one who understood the least was Chairman Mao, whom Le Duan seems to have thoroughly disliked: "... the most uncompromising person, the one with the Greater Han heart and the one who wanted to take Southeast Asia, was mainly Mao." He felt more sympathy both for Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. Le Duan claims that Zhou Enlai had agreed, in the 1960s, on the need for a united front of socialist countries to back the struggle in Vietnam, but that Mao had said it was not possible. Zhou had helped Le Duan to understand what was going on in China, and had arranged for much assistance to be given to Vietnam: "I am indebted to him." Hua Guofeng had not understood Vietnam, but then again Deng Xiaoping had shown more understanding. This is somewhat surprising since we know from *77 Conversations* that Deng was the one who most bluntly addressed the problems in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in party-to-party conversations. Le Duan probably preferred Deng's straight, hard talk to Hua's evasiveness and Mao's eccentric allegories, Le Duan's admiration for Deng is confirmed by another source. In October 1977, he had told the Soviet ambassador in Hanoi that Hua Guofeng was one of those Chinese leaders who "does not understand us," but that Deng Xiaoping "treats Vietnam with great understanding." At that time Le Duan had predicted that Deng Xiaoping would win the Chinese power struggle and that this would lead Sino-Vietnamese relations to improve.¹²

That Le Duan retained some of his positive attitude to Deng in 1979 is surprising in view of the fact that it was Deng who had ordered the invasion of northern Vietnam. Le Duan claims that Deng had sincerely congratulated the Vietnamese in 1975, when Vietnam won its struggle for national unification, while some other Chinese leaders had been grudging. And in 1977, Deng had agreed with Le Duan about the need to start negotiations concerning border issues. Le Duan thought Deng was under pressure from other, less understanding Chinese leaders, and that he had to show resolve in relation to Vietnam to avoid accusations of revisionism: "...now he is rash and foolish. Because he wants to show that he is not a revisionist, he has struck Vietnam even harder. He went ahead and let them attack Vietnam" [emphasis added—ST].¹³

The final aspect of Le Duan's attitude to be addressed here is his staunch internationalism. This may seem strange in view of his almost parochially nationalist attitude, but he understood Vietnam as the vanguard in a world-wide

struggle for national liberation. This is not like the olden days, he says, when Vietnam stood alone against China. Now the whole world is closely knit together: "... this is a time where everyone wants independence and freedom. [Even] on small islands, people want independence and freedom. All of humankind is presently like this. ... To harm Vietnam was [is] to harm humanity, an injury to independence and freedom. ... Vietnam is a nation that symbolizes independence and freedom."

1979

The next use that can be made of the document is for throwing light on the situation in the year when it was written. 1979 marks the main turning point in the history of the international communist movement. By 1977–78 it was at the apex of its power, with some thirty Marxist governments world-wide. In 1979–80, international socialism entered a period of crisis that would reduce, in a matter of twelve years, the number of Marxist governments to only five (China, North Korea, Laos, Vietnam and Cuba). The "disastrous" events of 1978–80 did not only include the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, the Chinese punitive expedition into Vietnam, and the commitment of the Soviet Navy to the South China Sea, but also the election of the cardinal-archbishop of Krakow to the papacy and the founding of the Solidarity movement in Poland, the dismantling of collectivist agriculture and introduction of market forces in China, the creation of a *de facto* US-Chinese alliance in East Asia, the establishment of an anti-communist Islamist regime in Iran, the crisis in Afghanistan leading to the Soviet invasion of December 1979, and the destabilization of several newly established Marxist regimes in Africa through anti-communist insurgencies. This meant notably that the guerrilla weapon was turned around to become "low intensity warfare," directed against socialist regimes. "Inverse Vietnams" were created in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia and elsewhere; Leonid Brezhnev's Soviet regime took on so many international commitments that it went into a period of classic economic over-stretch.

As of 1979, of course, neither Le Duan nor any other communist leader could see the approaching disaster. They were accustomed to success, and still deeply imbued with the fundamental Marxist belief that socialism represented a more advanced stage in human development than capitalism. The *White Book* published by the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry in October 1979 claimed that "today the revolutionary forces have grown, and are in a most favorable position."¹⁴ The victory of the Vietnamese Revolution was still fresh in their minds, and had been followed by the establishment of socialist regimes in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa and, most recently, in Central America. US imperialism, claimed the white book, was sinking deeper and deeper into an irremediable and general crisis and could not even maintain its position in its apparently secure strongholds in Asia, Africa and Latin America.¹⁵ The Soviet and Vietnamese communist leaders no doubt interpreted the

trouble in Cambodia and Afghanistan, the introduction of market forces in China, and China's alignment with the US, as temporary setbacks from the general course of global evolution, which was bound to further strengthen the socialist forces. It was not till the mid-eighties that socialist leaders began to realize that the trend had turned against socialism.

What does Le Duan's text reveal about the Vietnamese leadership's assessment of the general situation in 1979, and its expectations for the future? It shows that the Hanoi leaders were preparing for a larger war with China, and that Le Duan felt confident that Vietnam could survive such a war since the greater part of the Chinese army would be compelled to remain posted along the Soviet border. Le Duan prepared his comrades for a new drawn-out national resistance struggle, and saw Vietnam as playing a crucial role in defending all of Southeast Asia against Chinese expansionism. He intended to utilize the traditional strongholds of the Indochinese Communist Party in the north central provinces of Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Thanh Hoa (where a disproportionate number of Vietnamese communist leaders had come from) as rearguard bases for the struggle against the northern enemy: "In the near future we will fight China. We are determined to win," Le Duan exclaimed, and this (most probably) was after the end of the Chinese punitive expedition. To bolster the determination of himself and his comrades, Le Duan resorted to his pride in his struggle-prone nation: "... the truth is that if a different country were to fight them, it is not clear that they would win like this.... we have never shirked from our historical responsibilities. ... By guarding its own independence, Vietnam is also guarding the independence of Southeast Asian nations. Vietnam is resolved not to allow the Chinese to become an expansionist nation. The recent battle was one round only. ... if they bring one or two million troops in to fight us, we will not be afraid of anything. We have just engaged 600,000 troops, and, if, in the near future, we have to fight two million, it will not be a problem at all. We are not afraid. We will make each district a fortress, every province a battlefield. We have enough people. We can fight them in many ways. We are capable of taking two to three army corps to fight them fiercely in order to surprise them; thereby making them waver, while we still defend our land. If this is so desired, then every soldier must [give rise to or produce a] soldier and every squad a squad."

It seems that Deng Xiaoping made a clever calculation in March 1979, when he decided to withdraw the Chinese troops, so the fight against Vietnam could be left to the Khmer Rouge, and China could concentrate on economic achievements.

The record of Le Duan's relations with China

The third, more difficult, utilization we can make of Le Duan's document is as a source to the author's relations with China and the Chinese leaders in the whole period from 1952 to 1979. In the absence of more reliable archival

sources, it is tempting to make an attempt, but one should have no illusions as to the accuracy of what Le Duan has to say.

Le Duan tells that he first visited China to gain better health in 1952. In his account he was struck by the fact that the region he visited (which would probably have been Guangxi or Guangdong) had not waged any guerrilla struggle against Japan during the Japanese occupation despite of its huge population. This fact is used in the text to draw the basic distinction between Vietnamese courage and Chinese pusillanimity. Le Duan claims that Ho Chi Minh confirmed the impression. This story probably has more to tell about Le Duan's attitude as of 1979 than about what his real impressions were at the time. We don't even know from other sources that he went to China at all in 1952.

What he tells about his reaction to the Geneva agreement in 1954 is more reliable. At that time he led the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) in southern Vietnam, and there is little reason to doubt his disappointment at having to ask his comrades to refrain from any further struggle and resort to only political struggle or regroup north of the 17th parallel. In his 1979 text, he claims to have had an emotional outburst in front of Zhou Enlai (probably on 13 July 1971) when the latter came to Hanoi to explain the Sino-American honeymoon. Le Duan had then spoken about his feelings in 1954, when he had been in Hau Nghia (north-west of Saigon, where the famous Cu Chi tunnel system would later be dug out). And he says Zhou apologized, admitting his mistake.¹⁶

What is less certain, however, is if he blamed China already in 1954. At that time, China, the Soviet Union and the North Vietnamese leadership stood firmly behind the agreement, and Le Duan may well have blamed his own national leaders more than Beijing and Moscow. It probably took some time before Le Duan discovered the crucial role played by Zhou Enlai in persuading the DRV leaders to accept the 17th parallel as the dividing line between north and south Vietnam. The one most likely to have told him would be Pham Van Dong, who led the Vietnamese delegation in Geneva.¹⁷

The formative period for Le Duan's negative attitude to China may well have been the late 1950s, when he led the effort to gain Soviet and Chinese support for the renewal of armed struggle in South Vietnam. At that time, Mao was launching his Great Leap Forward, which plunged the country into a crisis that was not conducive to fulfilling international obligations. Le Duan no doubt saw this.

In his 1979 text he returns several times to how Zhou Enlai and Mao tried to prevent the Vietnamese from resuming the armed struggle in South Vietnam. However, Le Duan does not mention the fact that the Soviet Union also believed in the Geneva agreement and discouraged the Vietnamese from doing anything that could make it easier for France and the South Vietnamese regime to disregard their obligations.¹⁸

Le Duan's text is not devoid of contradictions. First he quotes Zhou as having said that whether or not the

Vietnamese continued to fight was up to their own discretion. Then he accuses him of having "pressured us to stop fighting." The first claim accords well with Chen Jian's conclusion about China's Policy: "the Beijing leadership neither hindered nor encouraged Hanoi's efforts to 'liberate' the South by military means until 1962."¹⁹ The second assertion seems more dubious. Le Duan also claims that he defied Chinese advice and went ahead with building armed forces in South Vietnam: "...we were not of the same mind. We went ahead and clandestinely developed our forces." It was only when "we had already begun fighting that they then allowed us to fight." What Le Duan conveniently refrains from mentioning, is the difference between the views of the south-based cadre and some of the North Vietnamese leaders.

When coming to 1963–64, Le Duan turns the tables. The Chinese are no longer being accused of trying to temper the Vietnamese urge to fight, but instead of imposing themselves, building roads to facilitate the expansion of Chinese power into Southeast Asia, and sending troops to pave the way for controlling Vietnam. The main culprit is Mao.

We know of three occasions when Le Duan met Mao. The first was in 1963 in Wuhan, where Mao (according to the Vietnamese *White Book*) received a delegation from the VWP. During that meeting Le Duan claims to have understood Mao's real intentions and to have warned him that Vietnam could well beat Chinese forces. Mao allegedly asked him: "Comrade, isn't it true that your people have fought and defeated the Yuan army?" Le Duan said: "Correct." "Isn't it also true, comrade, that you defeated the Qing army?" Le Duan replied: "Correct." Mao said: "And the Ming army as well?" It is then that Le Duan claims to have added boldly: "Yes, and you too. I have beaten you as well [or "and I'll beat yours as well"]. Did you know that? ... I spoke with Mao Zedong in that way," Le Duan asserts, and Mao just said: "Yes, yes!"

This is a tricky conversation to interpret. On the one hand it seems plausible that Mao asked the questions mentioned. Mao liked to tease people in such a way. But it seems highly unlikely that Le Duan would have challenged Mao so openly. From the *77 Conversations* it appears that Le Duan rather behaved like an obsequious servant in front of his master during his next two meetings with Mao (on 13 August 1964 and 11 May 1970).²⁰ In 1964 he said that "support from China is indispensable," and that "the Soviet revisionists want to make us a bargaining chip." In 1970 he asked for Mao's instructions, and ascribed Vietnam's successes to the fact that "we have followed the three instructions Chairman Mao gave us in the past," the first of which was "no fear, we should not fear the enemy."²¹ The Le Duan that appears in some of the *77 Conversations* seems quite another person than the one who turns up in the 1979 account—but then the memory of one's own actions normally differs from others' perceptions at the time.

There is a big discrepancy between what Le Duan (and

the Vietnamese *White Book*) tells about Sino-Vietnamese relations in 1963–65, and what we know from Chinese sources. According to Le Duan's account, it was Mao who wanted to build roads into Vietnam, and to send troops there, while he himself wished only for material assistance. In all accounts based on Chinese sources, the request for roads and volunteer troops came from the Vietnamese side, and was expressed by Le Duan and Ho Chi Minh.²² This is also confirmed by some of the *77 Conversations*. Le Duan's claim that "I only asked that they send personnel, but they brought guns and ammunition" does not seem to stand up to the evidence. After the Chinese engineer troops and anti-aircraft artillery units had arrived, however, tension soon emerged between the two sides, and after Premier Alexei Kosygin committed the Soviet Union to substantially aiding Vietnam during a visit to Hanoi in February 1965, Vietnam assumed a more independent posture. The tone in the *77 Conversations* turns more sour from that time onwards. What Le Duan says about the late 1960s and the 1970s is more in line with what Chinese sources tell. By 1969, Le Duan claims to have summoned the military cadres to warn them that China had joined hands with the US imperialists, and that they had to study this problem, i.e., prepare themselves for future conflicts with China. Concerning Beijing's new line towards the US, Le Duan makes the same accusation as the Vietnamese *White Book*: "During that time, China made the announcement [to the US]: 'If you don't attack me, I won't attack you.' Thus they left the US with greater leverage in Vietnam." This, of course, makes sense. China really did emphasize its own great power interests to the detriment of North Vietnam.

The rhetorical highlight of Le Duan's text is the conversation he claims to have had with Zhou Enlai in Hanoi (probably in November 1971). Before Nixon went to China, says Le Duan, his goal was to disentangle the US from Vietnam with the help of China, while enticing China over to the US side in world affairs. Zhou Enlai allegedly told Le Duan: "At this time, Nixon is coming to visit me principally to discuss the Vietnamese problem, thus I must come to meet you, comrade, in order to exchange views."

Le Duan then claims to have answered: "Comrade, you can say whatever you like, but I still don't follow. Comrade, you are Chinese; I am a Vietnamese. Vietnam is mine; not yours at all." Le Duan again claims to have spoken harshly in the face of his Chinese interlocutor. This time the claim seems more reliable. It was much easier to speak harshly to Zhou Enlai in Hanoi in 1971 than to Mao in Wuhan in 1963. It would be interesting to see if Chinese reports about Zhou's November 1971 meetings in Hanoi carry traces of Le Duan's nationalist credo.

A remark on the need for archival research

During the 1990s, the Sino-Vietnamese relationship improved tremendously. 1979 was the worst year, but China and Vietnam remained hostile throughout the 1980s, with troops massed on both sides of the border, no rails on the

railways, no open roads. Relations gradually improved from the mid-1980s, and the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia in 1989 marked a huge step forward, paving the way for the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1991. On New Year's Eve 1999 (Western calendar), the two foreign ministers were able to sign a border treaty in Hanoi, and they renewed earlier promises to reach an agreement on the delineation of maritime zones in the Gulf of Tonkin before the end of 2000. This fulfils the tasks that Le Duan and Deng Xiaoping set for themselves in 1977, at that time without much hope of success. The railways are now open again, and border trade flourishes. Relations between the two countries, the two parties and the two armies have become more and more frequent, and the border provinces are playing a leading role in improving commercial and cultural ties. The Chinese and Vietnamese research communities also now communicate. This could be seen at the huge Vietnam Studies Conference in Hanoi 1998, where Chinese and Vietnamese social scientists discussed highly tendentious issues (such as ethnicity in the border region between the two countries) in the presence of researchers from other countries.

What will this mean for the study of the history of contemporary Sino-Vietnamese relations? When two countries improve their relationship, this normally entails studies of their difficulties in the past. How will Vietnamese and Chinese historians go about the study of their problematic historical relationship? One possibility is that each nation generates its own separate historical studies, that Chinese historians work in Chinese archives and write books in Chinese about China's Vietnam policy, and that Vietnamese researchers gain access to Vietnamese archives and write Vietnamese books about Vietnam's difficulties with the northern neighbor. A second possibility is a bilateral process, with groups of Chinese and Vietnamese historians working together to explore the history of their relationship, and issuing shared publications, preferably in both languages. This could be done in a highly formalized, closed manner, with trusted party historians on both sides forming a joint committee and gaining privileged access to sources screened by the two party leaderships, or it could be done more openly.²³ The third possibility is an open intellectual process, where all interested scholars gain access to Chinese and Vietnamese source material, and a number of competing books and articles are being published in Chinese, Vietnamese, English and other languages.

All three possibilities are premised on the assumption that Chinese and Vietnamese authorities become more self-assured than in the past, that they show more courage in giving up their fear of independent research, and allow access to key historical sources. At present—in January 2001, the intellectual climate in both countries seems instead to be hardening. This may prolong the current paradoxical situation, where scholars based outside China and Vietnam can have access to better sources than their colleagues on the inside, and are more free to publish accounts arousing general interest. The only way to ensure that scholars based in China and Vietnam can play a significant role in research-

ing the history of their mutual relations, in an international context, is to allow a new, more open intellectual climate, with declassification of documents, joint conferences, and encouragement of independent scholarship.



DOCUMENT
COMRADE B ON THE PLOT OF THE
REACTIONARY CHINESE CLIQUE
AGAINST VIETNAM²⁴

Translated and annotated by Christopher E. Goscha

Generally speaking, after we had defeated the Americans, there was no imperialist that would dare to fight us again. The only persons who thought they could still fight us and dared to fight us were Chinese reactionaries. But the Chinese people did not want it like that at all. I do not know how much longer some of these Chinese reactionaries will continue to exist. However, as long as they do, then they will strike us as they have just recently done [meaning in early 1979]. If war comes from the north, then the [northern central] provinces of Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Thanh Hoa will become the bases for the entire country. They are unparalleled as the most efficient, the best and the strongest bases. For if the Deltas [in the north] continued as an uninterrupted stretch, then the situation would be very complicated. Not at all a simple matter. If it had not been for the Vietnamese, there would not have been anyone to fight the USA, because at the time the Vietnamese were fighting the USA, the rest of the world was afraid of the USA ...²⁵ Although the Chinese helped [North] Korea, it was only with the aim of protecting their own northern flank. After the fighting had finished [in Korea] and when the pressure was on Vietnam, he [this appears to be a reference to Zhou Enlai as the text soon seems to suggest] said that if the Vietnamese continued to fight they would have to fend for themselves. He would not help any longer and pressured us to stop fighting.

When we had signed the Geneva Accords, it was precisely Zhou Enlai who divided our country into two [parts]. After our country had been divided into northern and southern zones in this way, he once again pressured us into not doing anything in regard to southern Vietnam. They forbade us from rising up [against the US-backed Republic of Vietnam]. [But] they, [the Chinese,] could do nothing to deter us.

When we were in the south and had made preparations to wage guerrilla warfare immediately after the signing of the Geneva Accords, Mao Zedong told our Party Congress that we had to force the Lao to transfer immediately their two liberated provinces to [the] Vientiane government.²⁶ Otherwise the Americans would destroy them, a very dangerous situation [in the Chinese view]!

Vietnam had to work at once with the Americans [concerning this matter]. Mao forced us in this way and we had to do it.²⁷

Then, after these two [Lao] provinces had been turned over to Vientiane, the [Lao] reactionaries immediately arrested Souphanouvong [President of Laos, 1975-86]. The Lao had two battalions which were surrounded at the time. Moreover, they were not yet combat ready. Later, one battalion was able to escape [encirclement]. At that time, I gave it as my opinion that the Lao must be permitted to wage guerrilla warfare. I invited the Chinese to come and discuss this matter with us. I told them, "Comrades, if you go ahead pressuring the Lao in this way, then their forces will completely disintegrate. They must now be permitted to conduct guerrilla warfare."

Zhang Wentian,²⁸ who was previously the Secretary General [of the Chinese Communist Party] and used the pen name Lac Phu, answered me: "Yes, comrades, what you say is right. Let us allow that Lao battalion to take up guerrilla war".

I immediately asked Zhang Wentian: "Comrades, if you allow the Lao to take up guerrilla war, then there is nothing to fear about launching guerrilla war in south Vietnam. What is it that frightens you so much so that you still block such action?"

He [Zhang Wentian] said: "There is nothing to be afraid of!"

That was what Zhang Wentian said. However, Ho Wei, the Chinese ambassador to Vietnam at that time, [and] who was seated there, was listening to what was being said. He immediately cabled back to China [reporting what had been said between Le Duan and Zhang Wentian]. Mao replied at once: "Vietnam cannot do that [taking up guerrilla war in the south]. Vietnam must lie in wait for a protracted period of time!" We were so poor. How could we fight the Americans if we did not have China as a rearguard base? [Thus], we had to listen to them, correct?²⁹

However, we did not agree. We secretly went ahead in developing our forces. When [Ngo Dinh] Diem dragged his guillotine machine throughout much of southern Vietnam, we issued the order to form mass forces to oppose the established order and to take power [from the Diem government]. We did not care [about the Chinese]. When the uprising to seize power had begun, we went to China to meet with both Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. Deng Xiaoping told me: "Comrade, now that your mistake has become an accomplished fact, you should only fight at the level of one platoon downward." That was the kind of pressure they exerted on us.

I said [to the Chinese]: "Yes, yes! I will do that. I will only fight at the level of one platoon downwards." After we had fought and China realized that we could fight efficiently, Mao suddenly had a new line of thinking. He said that as the Americans were fighting us, he would bring in [Chinese] troops to help us build roads. His essential aim was to find out about the situation in our country so

that later he could strike us, and thereby expand into Southeast Asia. There was no other reason. We were aware of this matter, but had to allow it [the entry of Chinese troops]. But that was OK. They decided to send in their soldiers. I only asked that they send personnel, but these troops came with guns and ammunition. I also had to countenance this.

Later, he [Mao Zedong] forced us to permit 20,000 of his troops to come and build a road from Nghe Tinh into Nam Bo [the Vietnamese term for southern Vietnam]. I refused. They kept proposing, but I would not budge. They pressured me into permitting them to come, but I did not accept it. They kept on pressuring, but I did not agree. I provide you with these examples, comrades, so that you can see their long-standing plot to steal our country, and how wicked their plot is.

—After the Americans had introduced several hundred thousand troops into southern Vietnam, we launched a general offensive in 1968 to force them to de-escalate. In order to defeat the US, one had to know how to bring them to de-escalate gradually. That was our strategy. We were fighting a big enemy, one with a population of 200 million people and who dominated the world. If we could not bring them to de-escalate step-by-step, then we would have floundered and would have been unable to destroy the enemy. We had to fight to sap their will in order to force them to come to the negotiating table with us, yet without allowing them to introduce more troops.

When it came to the time when they wanted to negotiate with us, Ho Wei wrote a letter to us saying: “You cannot sit down to negotiate with the US. You must bring US troops into northern Vietnam to fight them.” He pressured us in this way, making us extremely puzzled. This was not at all a simple matter. It was very tiresome every time these situations arose [with the Chinese].

We decided that it could not be done that way [referring to Ho Wei’s advice not to negotiate with the US]. We had to sit back down in Paris. We had to bring them [the US] to de-escalate in order to defeat them. During that time, China made the announcement [to the US]: “If you don’t attack me, I won’t attack you. However many troops you want to bring into Vietnam, it’s up to you.” China, of its own accord, did this and pressured us in this way.

They [the Chinese] vigorously traded with the Americans and compelled us to serve as a bargaining chip in this way. When the Americans realized that they had lost, they immediately used China [to facilitate] their withdrawal [from southern Vietnam]. Nixon and Kissinger went to China in order to discuss this matter.

—Before Nixon went to China, [the goal of his trip being] to solve the Vietnamese problem in such a way as to serve US interests and to lessen the US defeat, as well as to simultaneously allow him to entice China over to the US [side] even more, Zhou Enlai came to visit me. Zhou told me: “At this time, Nixon is coming to visit me principally to discuss the Vietnamese problem, thus I must come to meet

you, comrade, in order to discuss [it with you].”

I answered: “Comrade, you can say whatever you like, but I still don’t follow. Comrade, you are Chinese; I am a Vietnamese. Vietnam is mine [my nation]; not yours at all. You have no right to speak [about Vietnam’s affairs], and you have no right to discuss [them with the Americans].³⁰ Today, comrades, I will personally tell you something which I have not even told our Politburo, for, comrade, you have brought up a serious matter, and hence I must speak:

—In 1954, when we won victory at Dien Bien Phu, I was in Hau Nghia [province]. Bac [Uncle] Ho cabled to tell me that I had to go to southern Vietnam to regroup [the forces there] and to speak to the southern Vietnamese compatriots [about this matter].³¹ I traveled by wagon to the south. Along the way, compatriots came out to greet me, for they thought we had won victory. It was so painful! Looking at my southern compatriots, I cried. Because after this [later], the US would come and massacre [the population] in a terrible way.

Upon reaching the south, I immediately cabled Bac Ho to ask to remain [in the south] and not to return to the north, so that I could fight for another ten years or more. [To Zhou Enlai]: “Comrade, you caused me hardship such as this [meaning Zhou’s role in the division of Vietnam at Geneva in 1954]. Did you know that, comrade?”

Zhou Enlai said: “I apologize before you, comrade. I was wrong. I was wrong about that [meaning the division of Vietnam at Geneva].”³² After Nixon had already gone to China, he [Zhou Enlai] once again came to Vietnam in order to ask me about a number of problems concerning the fighting in southern Vietnam.

However, I immediately told Zhou Enlai: “Nixon has met with you already, comrade. Soon they [the US] will attack me even harder.” I am not at all afraid. Both sides [the US and China] had negotiated with each other in order to fight me harder. He [Zhou Enlai] did not as yet reject this [view] as unfounded, and only said that “I will send additional guns and ammunition to you comrades.”

Then he [Zhou Enlai] said [concerning fears of a secret US-Chinese plot]: “There was no such thing.” However, the two had discussed how to hit us harder, including B-52 bombing raids and the blocking of Haiphong [harbor]. This was clearly the case.

—If the Soviet Union and China had not been at odds with each other, then the US could not have struck us as fiercely as they did. As the two [powers of China and the Soviet Union] were in conflict, the Americans were unhampered [by united socialist bloc opposition]. Although Vietnam was able to have unity and solidarity both with China and the USSR, to achieve this was very complicated, for at that time we had to rely on China for many things. At that time, China annually provided assistance of 500,000 tons of foodstuffs, as well as guns, ammunition, money, not to mention dollar aid. The Soviet Union also helped in this way. If we could not do that [preserve unity and solidarity with China and the USSR], things would have been very dangerous. Every year I had

to go to China twice to talk with them [the Chinese leadership] about [the course of events] in southern Vietnam. As for the Soviets, I did not say anything at all [about the situation in southern Vietnam]. I only spoke in general terms. When dealing with the Chinese, I had to say that both were fighting the US. Alone I went. I had to attend to this matter. I had to go there and talk with them many times in this way, with the main intention to build closer relations between the two sides [meaning Chinese and Vietnamese]. It was precisely at this time that China pressured us to move away from the USSR, forbidding us from going with the USSR's [side] any longer.³³

They made it very tense. Deng Xiaoping, together with Kang Sheng,³⁴ came and told me: "Comrade, I will assist you with several billion [presumably *yuan*] every year. You cannot accept anything from the Soviet Union."

I could not allow this. I said: "No, we must have solidarity and unity with the whole [socialist] camp."³⁵

In 1963, when Khrushchev erred, [the Chinese] immediately issued a 25-point declaration and invited our Party to come and give our opinion.³⁶ Brother Truong Chinh and I went together with a number of other brothers. In discussions, they [the Chinese] listened to us for ten or so points, but when it came to the point of "there is no abandonment of the socialist camp,"³⁷ they did not listen ... Deng Xiaoping said, "I am in charge of my own document. I seek your opinion but I do not accept this point of yours."

Before we were to leave, Mao met with Brother Truong Chinh and myself. Mao sat down to chat with us, and in the end he announced: "Comrades, I would like you to know this. I will be president of 500 million land-hungry peasants, and I will bring an army to strike downwards into Southeast Asia."³⁸ Also seated there, Deng Xiaoping added: "It is mainly because the poor peasants are in such dire straits!"

Once we were outside, I told Brother Truong Chinh: "There you have it, the plot to take our country and Southeast Asia. It is clear now." They dared to announce it in such a way. They thought we would not understand. It is true that not a minute goes by that they do not think of fighting Vietnam!

I will say more to you comrades so that you may see more of the military importance of this matter. Mao asked me:

—In Laos, how many square kilometers [of land] are there?

I answered:

—About 200,000 [sq. km.].

—What is its population? [Mao asked]:

—[I answered]: Around 3 million!

—[Mao responded:] That's not very much! I'll bring my people there, indeed!

—[Mao asked:] How many square kilometers [of land] are there in Thailand?

—[I responded]: About 500,000 [sq. km.].

—And how many people? [Mao asked].

—About 40 million! [I answered].

—My God! [Mao said], Szechwan province of China has 500,000 sq. km., but has 90 million people. I'll take some more of my people there, too [to Thailand]!

As for Vietnam, they did not dare to speak about moving in people this way. However, he [Mao] told me: "Comrade, isn't it true that your people have fought and defeated the Yuan army?" I said: "Correct." "Isn't it also true, comrade, that you defeated the Qing army?" I said: "Correct." He said: "And the Ming army as well?" I said: "Yes, and you too. I have beaten you as well."³⁹ Did you know that? I spoke with Mao Zedong in that way. He said: "Yes, yes!" He wanted to take Laos, all of Thailand ... as well as wanting to take all of Southeast Asia. Bringing people to live there. It was complicated [to that point].

—In the past [referring to possible problems stemming from the Chinese threat during these times], we had made intense preparations; it is not that we were unprepared. If we had not made preparations, the recent situation would have been very dangerous. It was not a simple matter. Ten years ago, I summoned together our brothers in the military to meet with me. I told them that the Soviet Union and the US were at odds with each other. As for China, they had joined hands with the US imperialists. In this tense situation, you must study this problem immediately. I was afraid that the military did not understand me, so I told them that there was no other way to understand the matter. But they found it very difficult to understand. It was not easy at all. But I could not speak in any other way. And I did not allow others to grab me.⁴⁰

—When I went to the Soviet Union, the Soviets were also tough with me about China. The Soviet Union had convened a conference of 80 [communist] Parties in support of Vietnam, but Vietnam did not attend this conference, for [this gathering] was not simply aimed at helping Vietnam, but it was also designed to condemn China. Thus Vietnam did not go. The Soviets said: "Have you now abandoned internationalism [or] what? Why have you done this?" I said: "I have not abandoned internationalism at all. I have never done this. However, to be internationalist, the Americans must be defeated first. And if one wants to defeat the Americans, then there must be unity and solidarity with China. If I had gone to this conference, then the Chinese would have created very severe difficulties for us. Comrades, please understand me."

—In China there were also many different and contending opinions. Zhou Enlai agreed on forming a front with the Soviet Union in order to oppose the Americans. Once, when I went to the USSR to participate in a national day celebration, I was able to read a Chinese cable sent to the Soviet Union saying that "whenever someone attacks the USSR, then the Chinese will stand by your side."⁴¹ [This was] because there was a treaty of friendship between the USSR and China dating from earlier times

[February 1950]. Sitting next to Zhou Enlai, I asked him: "In this cable recently sent to the USSR, you have agreed, comrade, to establish a front with the Soviet Union, but why won't you form a front to oppose the US?" Zhou Enlai said: "We can. I share that view. Comrades, I will form a front with you [on Vietnam]." Peng Zhen,⁴² who was also seated there, added: "This opinion is extremely correct!" But when the matter was discussed in Shanghai, Mao said it was not possible, cancel it. You see how complicated it was.

—Although Zhou Enlai held a number of those opinions, he nonetheless agreed on building a front and [he] helped Vietnam a lot. It was thanks to him that I could understand [much of what was going on in China]. Otherwise it would have been very dangerous. He once told me: "I am doing my best to survive here, to use Li Chiang⁴³ to accumulate and provide assistance for you, comrades." And that there was [meaning that Zhou was able to use Li Chiang in order to help the Vietnamese]. My understanding is that without Zhou Enlai this would not have been possible at all. I am indebted to him.

However, it is not correct to say that other Chinese leaders shared Zhou Enlai's view at all. They differed in many ways. It must be said that the most uncompromising person, the one with the Greater Han mentality, and the one who wanted to take Southeast Asia, was mainly Mao. All of [China's] policies were in his hands.

The same applies to the current leaders of China. We do not know how things will turn out in the future, however, [the fact of the matter is that] they have already attacked us. In the past, Deng Xiaoping did two things which have now been reversed. That is, when we won in southern Vietnam, there were many [leaders] in China who were unhappy. However, Deng Xiaoping nonetheless congratulated us. As a result of this, he was immediately considered a revisionist by the others.

When I went to China for the last time,⁴⁴ I was the leader of the delegation, and I met with the Chinese delegation led by Deng Xiaoping. In speaking of territorial problems, including discussion of several islands, I said: "Our two nations are near each other. There are several areas of our territory which have not been clearly defined. Both sides should establish bodies to consider the matter. Comrades, please agree with me [on this]. He [Deng] agreed, but after doing so he was immediately considered a revisionist by the other group of leaders.

But now he [Deng] is crazy. Because he wants to show that he is not a revisionist, therefore he has struck Vietnam even harder. He let them go ahead in attacking Vietnam.—After defeating the Americans we kept in place over one million troops, leading Soviet comrades to ask us: "Comrades, whom do you intend to fight that you keep such a large [standing] army?" I said: "Later, comrades, you will understand." The only reason we had kept such a standing army was because of China's threat to Vietnam]. If there had not been [such a threat], then this [large standing army] would have been unnecessary. Having

been attacked recently on two fronts, [we can see that] it would have been very dangerous if we had not maintained a large army.

(B) [The meaning of this "B" in the original text is unclear]—In the wake of WWII, everyone held the international gendarme to be American imperialism. They could take over and bully all of the world. Everyone, including the big powers, were afraid of the US. It was only Vietnam that was not afraid of the US.

I understand this matter for my line of work has taught me it. The first person to fear [the Americans] was Mao Zedong. He told me, that is, the Vietnamese and Lao, that: "You must immediately turn over the two liberated provinces of Laos to the [Vientiane] [government]. If you do not do so, then the US will use it as a pretext to launch an attack. That is a great danger." As for Vietnam, we said: "We have to fight the Americans in order to liberate southern Vietnam." He [Mao] said: "You cannot do that. southern Vietnam must lie in wait for a long period, for one lifetime, 5-10 or even 20 lifetimes from now. You cannot fight the Americans. Fighting the US is dangerous". Mao Zedong was scared of the US to that extent ...

But Vietnam was not scared. Vietnam went ahead and fought. If Vietnam had not fought the US, then southern Vietnam would not have been liberated. A country which is not yet liberated will remain a dependent one. No one is independent if only one-half of the country is free. It was not until 1975 that our country finally achieved its full independence. With independence would come freedom. Freedom should be freedom for the whole of the Vietnamese nation ...

—Engels had already spoken on people's war. Later the Soviet Union, China, and ourselves also spoke [on this matter]. However, these three countries differ a lot on the content [of people's war]. It is not true that just because you have millions of people you can do whatever you like. China also spoke on people's war, however, [they held that] "when the enemy advances, we must retreat." In other words, defense is the main feature, and war is divided into three stages with the countryside used to surround the cities, while [the main forces] remain in the forests and mountains only ... The Chinese were on the defensive and very weak [during World War II]. Even with 400 million people pitted against a Japanese army of 300,000 to 400,000 troops, the Chinese still could not defeat them.⁴⁵

I have to repeat it like that, for before China had sent advisers to us [some of our Vietnamese] brothers did not understand. They thought the [Chinese] were very capable. But they are not so skilled, and thus we did not follow [the Chinese advice].⁴⁶

In 1952, I left northern Vietnam for China, because I was sick and needed treatment. This was my first time abroad.⁴⁷ I put questions to them [the Chinese] and saw many very strange things. There were areas [which had been] occupied by Japanese troops, each with a population of 50 million people, but which had not [had] a single guerrilla fighter ...

When I returned from China, I met Uncle [Ho]. He asked me:

—This was your first time to go abroad, isn't that right?

—Yes, I went abroad for the first time.

—What did you see?

—I saw two things: Vietnam is very brave and they [the Chinese] are not brave at all.

I understood this from that day on. We [the Vietnamese] were entirely different from them. Courage is inherent in the Vietnamese person, and thus we have never had a defensive strategy. Every inhabitant fights.

Recently, they [the Chinese] have brought several hundred thousand troops in to invade our country. For the most part, we have used our militia and regional troops to attack them. We were not on the defensive, and thus they suffered a setback. They were not able to wipe out a single Vietnamese platoon, while we wiped out several of their regiments and several dozen of their battalions. That is so because of our offensive strategy.

The American imperialists fought us in a protracted war. They were so powerful, yet they lost. But there was a special element, that is the acute contradictions between the Chinese and the Soviets. [Because of this,] they have attacked us hard like this.

—Vietnam fought the Americans, and fought them very fiercely, but we know that the US was an extremely large country, more than capable of amassing 10 million troops and bringing all of its considerably powerful weapons in to fight us. Therefore we had to fight over a long period of time in order to bring them to de-escalation. We were the ones who could do this; the Chinese could not. When the American army attacked Quang Tre, the Politburo ordered troops to be brought in to fight at once. We were not afraid. After that I went to China to meet Zhou Enlai. He told me: "It [the attack in Queng Tre] is probably unparalleled, unique. In life there is only one [chance,] not two. No one has ever dared to do what you, comrades, have done."

... Zhou Enlai was the Chief of the General Staff. He dared to speak, he was more frank. He told me: "If I had known before the ways which you comrades employ, we would not have needed the Long March." What was the Long March for? At the beginning of the march there were 300,000 troops; and at the end of the Long March there were only 30,000 remaining. 270,000 people were lost. It was truly idiotic to have done it in this way ... [I] speak as such so that you, comrades, know how much we are ahead of them. In the near future, if we are to fight against China, we will certainly win ... However, the truth is that if a different country [other than Vietnam] were to fight against China, it is not clear that they would win like this [like Vietnam].

... If China and the USSR had been united with each other, then it is not certain that the US would have dared to

fight us. If the two had been united and joined together to help us, it is not certain that the US would have dared to have fought us in the way in which they did. They would have balked from the very beginning. They would have balked in the same way during the Kennedy period. Vietnam, China, and the USSR all helped Laos and the US immediately signed a treaty with Laos. They did not dare to send American troops to Laos, they let the Lao [People's Revolutionary] Party participate in the government right away. They did not dare to attack Laos any more.

Later, as the two countries [the USSR and China] were at odds with each other, the Americans were informed [by the Chinese] that they could go ahead and attack Vietnam without any fear. Don't be afraid [of Chinese retaliation]. Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong told the Americans: "If you don't attack me, then I won't attack you. You can bring in as many troops into southern Vietnam as you like. It's up to you."⁴⁸

... We are [presently] bordering on a very strong nation, one with expansionist intentions which, if they are to be implemented, must start with an invasion of Vietnam. Thus, we have to shoulder yet another, different historical role. However, we have never shirked from our historical tasks. Previously, Vietnam did carry out its tasks, and this time Vietnam is determined not to allow them to expand. Vietnam preserves its own independence, and by doing so is also safeguarding the independence of Southeast Asian nations. Vietnam is resolved not to allow the Chinese to carry out their expansionist scheme. The recent battle [with China] was one round only. Presently, they are still making preparations in many fields. However, whatever the level of their preparations, Vietnam will still win ...

Waging war is no leisurely walk in the woods. Sending one million troops to wage war against a foreign country involves countless difficulties. Just recently they brought in 500,000 to 600,000 troops to fight us, yet they had no adequate transport equipment to supply food to their troops. China is presently preparing 3.5 million troops, but they have to leave half of them on the [Sino-Soviet] border to deter the Soviets. For that reason, if they bring 1 or 2 million troops in to fight us, we will not be afraid of anything. We have just engaged 600,000 troops, and, if, in the near future, we have to fight 2 million, it will not be a problem at all. We are not afraid.

We are not afraid because we already know the way to fight. If they bring in 1 million troops, they will only gain a foothold in the north. Descending into the mid-lands, the deltas, and into Hanoi and even further downwards would be difficult. Comrades, as you know, Hitler's clique struck fiercely in this way, yet when they [the German Nazis] arrived in Leningrad they could not enter. With the cities, the people, and defense works, it is impossible to carry out effective attacks against each and every inhabitant. Even fighting for two, three, or four years they will still not be able to enter. Every village there [in the north] is like this. Our guidelines are: Each district is a fortress, each province a battlefield. We will fight and they will not be

able to enter at all.

However, it is never enough just to fight an enemy at the frontline. One must have a strong direct rearguard. After the recent fighting ended, we assessed that, in the near future, we must add several million more people to the northern front. But as the enemy comes from the north, the direct rear for the whole country must be Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh ... The direct rear to protect the capital must be Thanh Hoa and Nghe Tinh. We have enough people. We can fight them in many ways ... We can use 2 to 3 army corps to inflict a strong blow on them that will make them stagger, while we continue to hold our land. To this end, each soldier must be a real soldier and each squad a real squad.

—Having now fought one battle already, we should not be subjective. Subjectivism and underestimation of the enemy are incorrect, but a lack of self-confidence is also wrong. We are not subjective, we do not underestimate the enemy. But we are also confident and firmly believe in our victory. We should have both these things.

—The Chinese now have a plot to attack [us] in order to expand southwards. But in the present era nothing can be done and then wrapped up tidily. China has just fought Vietnam for a few days, yet the whole world has shouted: “[...]Leave Vietnam alone! [...] The present era is not like the olden times. In those days, it was only us and them [meaning the Chinese]. Now the whole world is fastened closely together. The human species has not yet entered the socialist phase at all; instead this is a time where everyone wants independence and freedom. [Even] on small islands, people want independence and freedom. All of humankind is presently like this. That is very different than it was in olden times. In those days, people were not yet very aware of these things. Thus the sentence of Uncle Hồ: “There is nothing more precious than independence and freedom” is an idea of the present era. To lay hands on Vietnam is to lay hands on humanity and infringe on independence and freedom ... Vietnam is a nation that symbolizes independence and freedom.

—When it came to fighting the US, our brothers in the Politburo had to discuss together this matter to consider whether we dared to fight the US or not. All were agreed to fight. The Politburo expressed its resolve: In order to fight the Americans, we must not fear the USA. All were of the same mind. As all agreed to fight the US, to have no fear of the USA, we must also not fear the USSR. All agreed. We must also not fear China. All agreed. If we don't fear these three things, we can fight the US. This was how we did things in our Politburo at that time.

Although the Politburo met and held discussions like this and everyone was of the same mind, there was later one person who told a comrade what I said. That comrade rose to question the Politburo, asking for what reason does Anh Ba⁴⁹ once again say that if we want to fight the Americans then we should not fear the Chinese? Why does he have to put it this way again?⁵⁰

At that time, Brother Nguyen Chi Thanh, who thus far

was suspected of being sympathetic to the Chinese, stood up and said: “Respected Politburo and respected Uncle Ho, the statement of Anh Ba was correct. It must be said that way [referring to the need not to fear the Chinese], for they [the Chinese] give us trouble on many matters. They blocked us here, then forced our hands there. They do not let us fight ...”⁵¹

While we were fighting in southern Vietnam, Deng Xiaoping stipulated that I (*toi*) could only fight at the level of one platoon downward, and must not fight at a higher level. He [Deng Xiaoping] said: “In the south, since you have made the mistake of starting the fighting already, you should only fight at the level of one platoon downward, not at a higher level.” That is how they brought pressure to bear on us.

—We are not afraid of anyone. We are not afraid because we are in the right. We do not fear even our elder brother. We also do not fear our friends.⁵² Of course, we do not fear our enemies. We have fought them already. We are human beings; we are not afraid of anyone. We are independent. All the world knows we are independent.

We must have a strong army, because our nation is under threat and being bullied ... It cannot be otherwise. If not, then it will be extremely dangerous, but our country is poor.

—We have a strong army, but that does not in any way weaken us. The Chinese have several policies towards us: To invade and to occupy our country; to seek to weaken us economically and to make our living conditions difficult. For these reasons, in opposing China we must, first of all, not only fight, but also make ourselves stronger. To this end, in my view, our army should not be a force that wastes the resources of the state, but should also be a strong productive force. When the enemies come, they [the soldiers] grab their guns at once. When no enemy is coming, then they will produce grandly. They will be the best and highest symbol in production, producing more than anyone else. Of course, that is not a new story ...⁵³

—At present, our army shoulders an historical task: to defend our independence and freedom, while simultaneously protecting the peace and independence of the whole world. If the expansionist policy of the reactionary Chinese clique cannot be implemented any longer, that would be in the interest of the whole world. Vietnam can do this. Vietnam has 50 million people already. Vietnam has Lao and Cambodian friends and has secure terrain. Vietnam has our camp and all of mankind on its side. It is clear that we can do this.

... Do our comrades know of anyone in our Party, among our people, who suspects that we will lose to China? No one, of course. But we must maintain our friendly relations. We do not want national hatred. I repeat: I say this because I have never felt hatred for China. I do not feel this way. It is they who fight us. Today I also want you comrades to know that in this world, the one who has defended China is myself! That is true.

Why so? Because during the June 1960 conference in Bucharest, 60 Parties rose to oppose China, but it was only I who defended China.⁵⁴ Our Vietnamese people is like that. I will go ahead and repeat this: However badly they behave, we know that their people are our friends. As for our side, we have no evil feelings towards China. Yet the plot of several [Chinese] leaders is a different matter. We refer to them as a clique only. We do not refer to their nation. We did not say the Chinese people are bad towards us. We say that it is the reactionary Beijing clique. I again say it strictly like this.

Thus, let us keep the situation under firm control, remain ready for combat, and never relax in our vigilance. It is the same with respect to China. I am confident that in 50 years, or even in 100 years, socialism may succeed; and then we will not have this problem any longer. But it will take such a [long] time. Therefore, we must prepare and stand ready in all respects.

At present, no one certainly has doubts any more. But five years ago I was sure there [were no] comrades who doubted] that China could strike us. But there were. That as the case because [these] comrades had no knowledge about this matter.⁵⁵ But that was not the case with us [Le Duan and the leadership].⁵⁶ We knew that China had been attacking us for some ten years or more. Therefore we were not surprised [by the January 1979 Chinese attack].

[Source: People's Army Library, Hanoi. Document obtained and translated for CWHIP by Christopher Goscha (Groupe d'Etudes sur le Vietnam Contemporain, Sciences Politique, Paris).]

Dr. Stein Tønnesson is the director of the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO).

Christopher Goscha currently teaches history at the American University and the International School of Paris. He is also co-director of the Group d'Etudes sur le Viet Nam contemporain, SciencesPo, Paris. He has recently published 'The Borders of Vietnam's Early Wartime Trade with Southern China' (*Asian Survey*, 2000) and submitted his thesis on the "Le Contexte Asiatique de la guerre franco-vietnamienne," *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, La Sorbonne*.

¹ *The Truth Concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations over the Past 30 Years*, (Hanoi: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1979). The White Book was published also in foreign languages, and in the following we shall refer to the French version: *La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises durant les trente dernières années* (Hanoi: Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, 1979)

² The Vietnamese White Book was countered by a similar Chinese publication: *On the Vietnamese Foreign*

Ministry's White Book Concerning Viet Nam-China Relations, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1979.)

According to the Chinese reply, the Vietnamese white book was an attempt to "distort, tamper with and fabricate history in an effort to convert the history between the two countries in the 30 years which was interwoven mainly with friendship and co-operation into one in which China tried to take control of Viet Nam" (pp. 2-3). Unfortunately, the Chinese found that the Vietnamese "lies" were "not worth refuting one by one." Thus the Chinese white book is less detailed and less interesting for the historian than the Vietnamese one.

³ Odd Arne Westad, Chen Jian, Stein Tønnesson, Nguyen Vu Tung and James G. Hershberg, eds., 77 *Conversations Between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964-1977*, Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 22 (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1998), p. 6.

⁴ A useful, meticulous study of Vietnamese official rhetoric, including Le Duan's official publications can be found in Eero Palmujoki, *Revolutionary Pragmatism and Formal Marxism-Leninism: An Analysis of Vietnam's Foreign-Policy Argumentation from the Fall of Saigon to the Collapse of the Socialist World System* (Tampere: PhD dissertation, 1995). The study includes a number of documents also from before 1975.

⁵ This is based on Christopher Goscha's observation to the author that it would be surprising if Le Duan actually used the word "tụi" when speaking to Ho Chi Minh. Goscha points to the fact that Ho had long established a revolutionary and hierarchical family in which each member had (or did not have) his place (anh hai, ba, etc.) as part of a special cast.

⁶ The arrogance displayed by Le Duan seems to confirm some of Bui Tin's allegations in his *Following Ho Chi Minh. Memoirs of a North Vietnamese Colonel* (London: Hurst, 1995). esp. p. 66. Bui Tin also says that "Le Duan scarcely ever seemed to write anything down. He just said what he thought on the spur of the moment. He also stammered a lot and was difficult to listen to. That was what everybody felt. They all became weary trying to understand what he was saying because he also spoke ungrammatically" (p. 105).

⁷ William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996), p. 385, note 4.

⁸ Ralph B. Smith, "Appendix: The Vietnam Workers' Party and its Leaders," *An International History of the Vietnam War*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 263-271.

⁹ On Ho Chi Minh, see Williams F. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh* (New York: Hyperion, 2000)

¹⁰ Ralph B. Smith goes as far as to claim that Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan were rivals. R.B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War*, vol. 1, p. 129. Pierre Asselin makes the same claim, asserting that by 1965,

Ho Chi Minh had (due also to his rapidly deteriorating health) "for all intents and purposes been sidelined." Pierre Asselin, "Le Duan and the Creation of an Independent Vietnamese State", unpublished paper presented at the International Conference on Vietnamese Studies in Hanoi, July 1998, p. 2. Bui Tin (whose hero is General Giap) claims that Le Duc Tho, Le Duan and Pham Hung "progressively tried to neutralise Ho Chi Minh" as well as Pham Van Dong in their struggle to downgrade the role and reputation of Giap. Bui Tin, *Following Ho Chi Minh*, p. 32.

¹¹ Pierre Asselin claims that Le Duan "epitomized Vietnamese disrespect for the overlordship of both those countries" (the Soviet Union and China), and that his death in 1986 opened the door for improving Vietnam's relationship not only with China, but with the Soviet Union as well. Pierre Asselin, "Le Duan and the Creation...", p. 8. This seems an exaggeration in view of Vietnam's heavy dependence on the USSR between 1978 and 1986, but there may be a grain of truth in it. Soviet archives will show.

¹² Stephen J. Morris, *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia. Political Culture and the Causes of War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 181. Morris bases this information on Soviet archival sources.

¹³ There may be some truth in Le Duan's impression. Although Deng Xiaoping had personally ordered the Chinese "self-defensive counterattack" against Vietnam, it was also he who called off the operation in March, after the Chinese had suffered more than 30,000 casualties. And Deng came under criticism afterwards for not having broken the fingers of the Vietnamese, but merely hurt them. See Richard Baum, *Burying Mao. Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 80.

¹⁴ "Aujourd'hui, les forces révolutionnaires ont grandi et occupent une position des plus favorables." *La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises*, p. 58.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ In the 77 *Conversations* there are short excerpts of minutes from three meetings between Zhou Enlai and Le Duan in 1971 (7 March in Hanoi, 13 July in Hanoi, and November in Beijing). None of the excerpts include references to Geneva, but both Mao and Zhou had allegedly admitted earlier, when talking with Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong, that a mistake had been made in Geneva. See the 7 September 1971 conversation, 77 *Conversations*, p. 180.

¹⁷ See François Joyaux, *La Chine et le règlement du premier conflit d'Indochine, Genève 1954* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1979).

¹⁸ See Mari Olsen, *Solidarity and National Revolution: The Soviet Union and the Vietnamese Communists 1954–1960* (Oslo: Institutt for Forsvarsstudier 4/1997), and Ilya V. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996).

¹⁹ Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964–69," *China Quarterly* 142 (June 1995), pp. 356–387, especially p. 357.

²⁰ However, according to Bui Tin, Le Duan told his official biographers in an interview in 1983 that he had been better than Uncle Ho. Ho always said "Yes" to what Stalin and Mao told him. "As for me, I dared to argue with Khrushchev and Mao." Bui Tin, *Following Ho Chi Minh*, p. 43.

²¹ 77 *Conversations*, pp. 74 (note 117), 163–164.

²² Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War," pp. 368–369. See also 77 *Conversations*, p. 85, where Le Duan tells Liu Shaoqi on 8 April 1965: "We want some volunteer pilots, volunteer soldiers...and other volunteers, including road and bridge engineering units."

²³ The comparison may perhaps be far-fetched, but an open kind of co-operation between Norwegian and Swedish historians has been initiated in preparing for the 100 years' anniversary in 2005 of the break-up of the Swedish-Norwegian Union.

²⁴ This document is a translation of a copy of the extracts of the original. It was copied by hand in the Library of the People's Army, Hanoi. The translator of this document, Christopher E. Goscha, had full authorization to do so. The text is attributed to "comrade B." It can either have been written by comrade B himself, or (much more likely) it is the typed notes of someone who listened to an oral presentation by comrade B. In the text, comrade B reveals that during a Politburo meeting he was referred to as Anh Ba (Brother Number Three), the alias we know was used by Secretary General Le Duan within the Vietnam Workers' Party (from 1976 "Vietnamese Communist Party"). Although the document is undated, it is clear from the text that it was written sometime in 1979, in the wake of the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. This is supported by another highly charged document, published in 1979 at the behest of the Vietnamese Communist Party, which chronicles Chinese perfidy and, not entirely surprisingly, mentions many of the same incidents which Le Duan describes in this document. See, *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations over the Past 30 Years* (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban in Thet, 1979) [hereafter cited as *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese*]. The endnotes includes references to the page numbers of the French version of the same document: *La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises durant les trente dernières années* (Hanoi, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, 1979). The translator would like to thank Thomas Engelbert, Stein Tønnesson for their invaluable suggestions and corrections. The translator is responsible for all errors.

²⁵ All ellipses indicated as such are in the original; translator's ellipses and comments are in brackets: [...]

²⁶ The Geneva Accords of 1954 allowed the Pathet Lao, closely allied with the DRV, to maintain a provisional presence in the two Lao provinces of Phongsaly and Sam Neua. No similar concession was made to Khmers allied with the Vietnamese during the resistance against the French.

²⁷ *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations* puts these high-level discussions on Laos in

August 1961. (*La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises*, p. 34.)

²⁸ Zhang Wentian was one of the members of the Chinese delegation who was present when comrade B made this remark. He was also then Deputy Foreign Minister, as well as a longtime member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party. During the 1950s, he had been an alternate member of the Politburo in charge of relations with socialist countries.

²⁹ *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations* puts the meeting, this way: "In an exchange of opinions with the Vietnamese leadership, the Deputy Chinese Foreign Minister, Zhang Wentian expressed his view that one could carry on with guerrilla warfare in southern Vietnam. But afterwards, in accordance with a directive from Beijing, the Chinese Ambassador to Hanoi informed the Vietnamese side that this had not been the official opinion of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, but rather a personal view." *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations*, p. 40. (*La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises*, p. 31.)

³⁰ See *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese*, p. 60. (*La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises*, p. 47.)

³¹ Le Duan is referring to the task of explaining the repatriation of southern cadres to the north. Le Duan forgets conveniently to mention that the Chinese helped the Vietnamese to win at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

³² See *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations*, p. 60, where the Vietnamese reportedly told the Chinese in November 1972: "Vietnam is our country, you comrades, are not to negotiate with the US about Vietnam. You have already admitted your mistake of 1954, now you should not commit the same mistake again". (*La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises*, p. 47.)

³³ One of Le Duan's close advisors, Tran Quyen, has recently circulated his memoirs in Vietnam, providing interesting details on Le Du An's policy towards the Sino-Soviet split and the divisions within the Vietnamese Worker's Party on this issue in the 1960s. Tran Quyen, *Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts)*, undated, privately published, copy in the translator's possession.

³⁴ Kang Sheng (1903-1975), one of the PRC's top national security experts. He had been trained by the Soviet NKVD in the 1930s, and had become Mao's closest advisor on the problem of interpreting Soviet policies. Kang Sheng was Secretary of the Central Committee of the CCP in 1962, a member of the CCP Politburo from 1969; between 1973 and 1975 he was member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo.

³⁵ See: *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations*, p. 43, in which the Vietnamese claimed that in exchange for renouncing all aid from the Soviet Union, Deng Xiaoping promised to make Vietnam China's number one priority in foreign aid. (*La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises*, p. 33.)

³⁶ See, *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese*, p. 43. (*La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises*, p. 33.)

and also Tran Quyen, *Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts)*.

³⁷ In November 1966, the Soviets charged the Chinese with having abandoned the world Communist line adopted at the 1957 and 1960 Moscow Conferences. See also Tran Quyen, *Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts)*.

³⁸ *The Truth concerning Vietnamese-Chinese Relations* has Mao making this statement to a delegation of the Vietnamese Worker's Party in Wuhan in 1963. Mao is quoted by the Vietnamese as saying: "I will be the Chairman of 500 million poor peasants and I will send troops down into Southeast Asia." (*La vérité sur les relations Vietnamo-Chinoises*, p. 9.)

³⁹ This could also translate as "and I'll beat yours as well" or "I could beat your's as well."

⁴⁰ It is not exactly clear to the translator to whom Le Duan is referring by the "military."

⁴¹ This appears to be a reference to the words relayed to the Soviets by the Chinese Ambassador to Moscow, on 14 February 1965, on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. As Ambassador Pan Tzu-li told the Soviets: "...if the imperialists dare to attack the Soviet Union, the Chinese people, without the least hesitation, will fulfill their treaty obligations and together with the great Soviet people [...] will fight shoulder to shoulder until the final victory..." Quoted by Donald S. Zagoria, *Moscow, Peking, Hanoi* (New York: Pegasus, 1967), pp. 139-140.

⁴² Peng Zhen was member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CCP from 1951 to 1969.

⁴³ Li Chiang was Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Economic Relations with Foreign Countries within the Chinese State Council from 1965 to 1967. Between 1968 and 1973, he was Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade and from 1973 served as Minister of Foreign Trade.

⁴⁴ A reference to Le Duan's trip in November 1977.

⁴⁵ Le Duan forgets the fact that even fewer French had been able to rule Vietnam without too much trouble until March 1940.

⁴⁶ On Chinese advisors, see Qiang Zhai, *China & the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), and Christopher E. Goscha, *Le contexte asiatique de la guerre franco-vietnamienne: Réseaux, relations et économie* (Paris, thesis, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, La Sorbonne, 2000, section chinoise).

⁴⁷ While Le Duan traveled often to northern Vietnam during the war against the French, he is normally assumed to have stayed in southern Vietnam at this time, at the head of the southern branch of the party which became COSVN in the early 1950s. The translator doubts that Le Duan traveled to China in 1952. Ho Chi Minh did, but not Le Duan.

⁴⁸ On this, see the 2000 Hong Kong Conference paper by Chen Jian and James Hershberg, "Sino-American Signaling," presented at the Conference "China, Southeast Asia and the Vietnam War, January 2000.

⁴⁹ This confirms that comrade "B" is the same person

as "Anh Ba." With the knowledge that Anh Ba is another name for Le Duan, comrade B, by extension, is Le Duan. From the events described in the text, this is certain and Tran Quyen, *Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts)*, confirms it.

⁵⁰ This may be a reference to Hoang Van Hoan. For a contending view, one must consult *A Drop in the Ocean (Memoirs of Revolution)* (Beijing: NXB Tin Viet Nam, 1986).

⁵¹ See also Tran Quyen, *Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts)*.

⁵² Perhaps an allusion to the Soviet Union.

⁵³ This type of warfare had existed in China as well. And elsewhere in the world of guerilla warfare.

⁵⁴ This took place in June 1960. For more on Le Duan's position on this matter, see Tran Quyen, *Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts)*. After the Party Congress of the

Romanian Communist Party in June 1960, the Soviets organized an on-the-spot meeting with the leaders of the foreign delegations present, during which Khrushchev severely criticized the Chinese, especially Mao whom he denounced as a "dogmatist" for his views on the question of peaceful co-existence. See Adam B. Ulam, *The Communists. The Story of Power and Lost Illusions 1948-1991* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), p. 211.

⁵⁵ This seems to be a stab at Hoang Van Hoan and no doubt others.

⁵⁶ This is probably a reference to the group of leaders listening to Le Duan's talk, and can be taken as an indication that the pro-Chinese comrades referred to above, were not part of the group listening. See also Tran Quyen, *Souvenirs of Le Duan (Excerpts)*.

NOW IN PAPERBACK!

BROTHERS IN ARMS THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SINO-SOVIET ALLIANCE, 1945-1963

Edited by Odd Arne Westad

This volume brings together young scholars from China, Russia, the United States, and Western Europe who, drawing on much newly available documentation, analyze the complicated history of the Sino-Soviet relationship. It is offered as a first assessment of massive amounts of new information, providing new insights and many reevaluations of various aspects of the alliance between China and the Soviet Union—its creation, aims, and instruments, its strains and conflicts, and its final collapse. Revising earlier views, the contributors emphasize the role of ideology and cultural aspects of interaction, the links between alliance policies and domestic politics, and the way the partners' differing perceptions of the United States influenced the fate of the alliance.

Reviews

"These first-rate essays inform the reader about the outpouring of primary source materials on the early Cold War from Russian and Chinese archives during the past decade. . . . The essays are written by a superb group of international scholars . . . who have contributed in recent years to reshaping understanding of the Cold War era. Westad's excellent introduction provides a framework for the volume. . . . As an added bonus, the editor has included the most important documents in an appendix that further enhances the volume's usefulness."

—Choice

"Westad has assembled an unusually important collection. . . . This volume is essential reading for anyone interested in the highly dynamic and increasingly international field of Cold War studies."

—Michael H. Hunt, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Cold War International History Project Series

A co-publication of Stanford University Press and the Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, D.C.

Odd Arne Westad is Reader in International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science.