INDIA, SOUTH-EAST ASIA
AND
VIETNAM

By
A. G. Noorani

DEMOCRATIC RESEARCH SERVICE
Maneckjee Wadia Bldgs., 127 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 1.
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To Mr. Douglas Pike
With the writer's regards,

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"In the modern world it is inevitable for India to be the centre of affairs of Asia, and in that term I would include Australia and New Zealand, or even East Africa..." said Mr. Nehru1 about the time India gained freedom. India occupies a position of pivotal importance in Asia and, as has happily come to be recognised now more widely than before, its security is dependent on the security of the free countries of S. E. Asia. One of India's abler diplomats Mr. V. C. Trivedi put it most felicitously when he said 2 "I would like to emphasize that the defence of India has to be viewed not only in the context of defending the territorial integrity of India but also in the context of the Chinese aims and pretensions in Asia and the world. Although actual warfare has ceased on the Himalayas, there is conflict and violence in Vietnam and Laos. And I submit that stability in South East Asia is fundamentally associated with the stability of India. The Chinese doctrine of Ts'ao-Ts'ao to which I referred earlier is patently relevant in this context; for the question we should ask themselves is 'If India falls, can South East Asia survive?'

"Besides saying 'no' in answer to this question, it is also necessary to go somewhat deeper into this problem. It is not only the question of the territorial integrity of India or Burma, Cambodia or the Philippines that one has to consider, but also that of the social and political values in the region. Some of the countries in South East Asia may have been psychologically overwhelmed by China's military strength and may wish to continue on Chinese sufferance but the real issue is whether it is in the interest of the people of these countries or of international peace and security for them to do so. It is in this context, in the context of principles and values of human conduct, of freedom of belief,

1 “India's foreign policy” in Current Notes on International Affairs, Australia. (Dec. 1947), p. 762. It is interesting to compare these with Curzon's words years ago. "He would be a shortsighted commander who merely manned his ramparts in India and did not look beyond."

2 Alastair Buchan, China and the Peace of Asia.
speech and action, of human dignity and independence in the region that I would like to view the problem of the defence of India against Chinese adventurism." It is this writer's submission that India's foreign policy went wrong precisely because it overlooked both, the importance of the S.E. Asian region and the ideological challenge of Communism.

Of course this was not always so. Early in the day, the Indian National Congress, showed every sign of an Asian consciousness. As far back as 1928 it directed its executive "to correspond with the leaders and representatives of other Asiatic Nations and to take other steps to summon the first session of a Pan-Asiatic Federation in 1930 in India." Later, in September 1945, under Mr Nehru's inspiration, the Congress pledged: "A free India will inevitably seek the close and friendly associations with her neighbour countries, and would especially seek to develop common policies for defence, trade and economic and cultural developments with China, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia and Ceylon as well as the countries of the Middle East."

It is worth noting that about this time (March 1946) the Congress also showed a keen awareness of the new menace. "The old imperialism still continues and in addition new types of imperialism are growing." (italics mine throughout) There can be no mistaking what Mr Nehru, the party's foreign policy mentor, had in mind. The party had already gone on record in criticism of "the attempts that are being made to maintain the political and economic subjection of Burma, Malaya, Indo-China and Indonesia and" adding prophetically "to continue imperialist domination over these countries, under whatever name or guise, would be a denial and repudiation of the professions made by the U.N. during war time and would sow the seeds of future wars."

India's concern for S.E. Asia was very evident. The Asian conference on Indonesia met in New Delhi on January 26, 1949 on India's initiative. Burma, Ceylon, Pakistan, the Philippines and the Arab States participated. So did Australia. The Confer-

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3 The Background of India's Foreign Policy, AIFF, 1952, p. 47.
5 Ibid p. 91.
6 Ibid p. 89.
ence condemned the Dutch military action of the previous month and propounded very reasonable proposals for the solution of the political problem. Its impact was great. By the end of the year Indonesia's independence was fully conceded.

The conference passed, however, another resolution asking the participants "to consult among themselves in order to explore ways and means of establishing suitable machinery, having regard to the areas concerned for the purpose of promoting consultation and cooperation within the framework of the U.N."

This emboldened Dr. Herbert Evatt, then Australia's Foreign Minister, to hope for "a permanent organization for South-East Asia." The resolution, unfortunately, has remained a dead letter. The host country itself was the least enthusiastic for its enforcement. Incidentally, the Soviet Union branded the Conference as "an auxiliary instrument of the North Atlantic grouping."

On February 28, 1949 India convened an informal regional conference of a few members of the Commonwealth to consider how best to help Burma face the Communist and Karen rebels. Eventually a Burma Aid Committee was set up to give aid to Burma in the form of arms and loans. The ambassadors of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and the U.K. in Rangoon were the members of the Committee. One can only wonder why this precedent was not followed later in the case of Vietnam. The fact is that with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in October 1949 India's foreign policy underwent a basic change in a vain attempt, as later events showed, to ward off a border confrontation with China. In this regard, India's policy may be compared to Britain's quest for a "special relationship" with the U.S. to the neglect of Europe.

With great reluctance India attended the Baguio conference held in May 1950 (Australia, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand participated) and then only to ensure that it came to nothing. The change in attitude was glaring.

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7 Sisir Gupta, *India and Regional Integration in Asia*, p. 75.
8 Vide the writer's *Our Credulity and Negligence*, pp. 4-7 for a fuller discussion.
9 Werner Levi, *Free India in Asia*, p. 58. "There was a widespread hope and expectation in India that nothing concrete would result from it. This is what eventuated, owing largely to Indian activity to that end."
Ceylon's Prime Minister, Sir John Kotelawala, convened a conference of India, Burma, Pakistan, Indonesia and Ceylon at Colombo in April 1954 to discuss "the problems of Indo-China and the threat to democracy, internal or external." Ceylon, with Pakistan's support, made clear at the conference that it regarded the threat as emanating from international communism.

Mr. Nehru, assisted as he was by Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon at Colombo, thought otherwise. The upshot was this formula "The Prime Ministers made known to each other their respective views on and attitude towards Communist ideologies. The Prime Ministers affirmed their faith in democracy and democratic institutions and being resolved to preserve in their countries the freedoms inherent in the democratic system, declared their unshakeable determination to resist interference in the affairs of their countries by external Communist, anti-Communist or other agencies." A fatuous equation. A similar attempt by Ceylon at Bandung also came to naught.

It is not that Mr. Nehru was wholly unaware of the Communist menace. Only, he underrated it and chose Panchshila as a shield. Speaking in the lower House of the Indian Parliament on September 29, 1954 he referred to the extra territorial affiliations of the Communist Parties and said "The other country might well utilise that (communist) party for its advantage. That is the fear that comes to all these South East Asian countries."

In November 1949 Liu Shao Ch'i had openly declared "The path taken by the Chinese people in defeating imperialism and its lackeys and in founding the Chinese People's Republic is the path that should be taken by the peoples of the various colonial and semi-colonial countries in their fight for national independence and people's democracy." The platform of the Lao-Dong (Workers' Party) in March 1950 proclaimed Viet Nam to be "an outpost of the democratic camp in South-East Asia." *The Times of India* then (Feb. 3, 1950) wrote of Ho "It is now sufficiently clear that a victory by Ho-chi-Minh over the rival nationalist movement would give communism a strategic hold inside the rice-producing area of South East Asia and thus immediately threaten Burma and Siam."

Faced with the menace in an aggravated form in 1954 India first refused to associate itself with moves for collective defence
(necessitated, be it recalled, by the Soviet and Chinese refusal at the Geneva conference to join in a reciprocal guarantee of the agreements concluded). Next, India sought assurances of non-intervention on the basis of Panchsheel from both China and the West. "During Chou-En-Lai's visit to Delhi in June 1954, and during his own visit to Peking in October 1954, Mr. Nehru also sought from the Chinese Prime Minister assurances that China would not interfere in the affairs of South East Asia — and, ipso facto — in Laos and Cambodia. These assurances were given to him by Chou-En-Lai on both occasions. However, Mr. Nehru realised that China's promise of non-interference in Laos and Cambodia was conditional upon the acceptance of this principle by the Western powers also. But, this he could not secure. In particular, he could not prevent the setting up of the South East Asia Defence Pact. Hence his bitter criticism of the West and his vehement denunciation of this pact."

Events proved the West to be right in its distrust of Chinese assurances, particularly having regard to China's earlier refusal to join in a guarantee of the Geneva agreements. Mr. Thien also writes¹¹ "Did Mr. Nehru give any assurance to Chou-En-Lai in 1954 that he would do his best to prevent Western intervention in South East Asia? We do not know. But subsequent events show that India acted as if she tried hard to fulfil her part of a bargain. India's determined opposition to SEATO, the attitude of the Indian delegations in the three International Commissions in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, in the first three years following the Geneva Conference, the efforts of the Indian government to wean Laos and Cambodia away from the Western bloc and draw them towards neutralism, were indeed applauded by China and North Vietnam as proofs of India's firm adherence to Panch Sheel."

If Western power were eliminated from South and South East Asia and Indian power not strengthened, thanks to the false sense of security fostered by the Panchsheel, Chinese power would, doubtless, have had unchallenged sway. India's policy from at least 1954, if not 1950, till 1962 was one of withdrawal from S. E. Asia

and appeasement of China. The smaller countries of the region were not insensitive to India’s aloofness. Mr. Purshottam Trikamdas, an eminent Indian jurist and politician, visited S. Vietnam in 1961, among other countries in the region. He reported, “We had the privilege of meeting several leading personalities including the President. Many of them told me that they had great admiration for India, but were sorely disappointed at the utter political indifference of India towards the happenings and the problems of South East Asia. This motif, I am sorry to say, recurred in practically every country we visited.”

In keeping with this attitude, China’s attack on Burma in November 1955 aroused little concern in New Delhi. (Vietnam was to fare no better later.)

Even after the Chinese openly staked claims to Indian territory in 1959, Mr. Nehru refused to make common cause with Nepal, Burma or Indonesia, which were all under Chinese pressure then. No wonder that when India was attacked in October 1962, barring a few countries like Malaya most others of the Afro-Asian fraternity were neutral. An editorial in the official organ of the U.A.R., “The U.A.R. Magazine”, explained: “The Asian neighbours of China were apprehensive of Peking’s wrath” The DRV was unabashedly pro-Chinese. “The Vietnamese people support the legitimate measures taken by the government and brotherly people of China to defend their national sovereignty.”

It was then that the Government of India began, however vaguely, to realise both the importance of South East Asia and the nature of the challenge. “The conflict with China was more one of ideology than of mere territory and China was a threat not only to India but to Asia as a whole, “said Mr. Nehru.

This realisation, however, did not inform policy which continued, basically, as before. There lurked the hope that someday China would accept the Colombo Proposals, someday, and before long, a border settlement would be arrived at. Chinese

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13 Vide the author’s Our Credulity and Negligence, Ramdas G. Bhatkal; 35 C, Tardeo Road, Bombay-34, Dec. 1963, p. 39.
14 The Times of India, January 21, 1963.
16 The Times of India, May 11, 1963.
bellicosity was viewed as a momentary aberration rather than a problem which called for response in concert with the like-situated.

It is worth noting that the Vietnam crisis came to the fore after China's honeymoon with the Asian countries had ended.

"As Prime Minister of Democratic India, Sir, would you be disturbed to see Communist influence spread throughout the Indo-Chinese peninsula", Mr. Niven asked Mr. Nehru in the course of a CBS TV interview in November 1961 when the latter visited the U.S. Mr. Nehru replied, "Well, I wouldn't like it."

India, as Chairman of the International Control Commission, was peculiarly well qualified to appraise the situation correctly and to make known the facts as they were. Not much effort was made to discharge these inescapable duties satisfactorily.

The insurgency in South Vietnam is a mainly Communist North Vietnamese enterprise. The documentary evidence is simply overwhelming on the point. The Central Committee of the Lao Dong (Workers) Party of North Vietnam met in May 1959 and decided to take over the South by force. In September of that year met the 3rd National Congress of the Party in Hanoi. Its resolution, passed on September 10, declared "Since the re-establishment of peace and the complete liberation of the North, the Vietnamese revolution has shifted over to a new stage. Under the leadership of the party, the North is advancing by firm steps towards socialism; it has strengthened its forces in all fields and become the bulwark of the nationwide revolution. Meanwhile, the U.S. imperialists and the Ngo Din Diem clique have set up a despotic and warlike administration in the South and turned it into a colony of a new type and a military base of the American imperialists. They are hampering and sabotaging the cause of national reunification of our people. In the present stage, the Vietnamese revolution has two strategic tasks: first, to carry out the socialist revolution in North Vietnam; second, to liberate South Vietnam from the ruling yoke of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen in order to achieve national unity and complete independence and freedom throughout the country. The two strategic tasks are closely related to each other and spur each other forward." It proceeded to talk of "stepping up the national democratic revolution in South Vietnam."
decision was made in Hanoi. Anyone can read the speeches of Ho Chi Minh (September 5) and Defence Minister Vo Nguyen Giap (September 12) at the Congress and the elaborate political report presented to it, which all testify to North Viet Nam's new drive to "liberate South Viet Nam from the ruling yoke of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen." The Special Report of the I.C.C. published on June 2, 1962, held North Viet Nam guilty of subversion. India was a party to the Report.

As for the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV), it was created on December 20, 1960. The (North) Viet Nam News Agency (VNA) announced its programme on January 29, 1961. At Geneva, after the Laos Agreements were signed in 1962, a senior member of the (DRV) North Vietnamese delgation revealed the names of four members of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party (Communist Party of North Viet Nam) who had been assigned the job of running NFLSV (Sunday Telegraph, London, July 29, 1962). NFLSV's composition was almost exactly similar to that of the former Vietminh, and Hanoi broadcast its decisions. At the core of this typical united Front is the South Vietnamese People's Revolutionary Party, the Communist Party proper, and the declared "vanguard" of the Front. As that eminent authority, Prof. Bernard Fall writes in his book The Two Viet Nams, "The wholly artificial character of the National Liberation Front at least during the first year of its operation, is perhaps best shown by the fact that until April 13, 1962, it had not disclosed the names of its alleged leaders, in spite of the fact that its programme had been made public almost at the inception of the Front. Even so, the leaders thus far known are hardly of the calibre to constitute a 'shadow government' ready to take over from the Saigon regime at the first sign of disintegration". He adds, "In order to promote the concept that the Front and the Lao-Dong Party were separate entities, Hanoi informed the world on January 20, 1962, that a 'conference of representatives of Marxists-Leninists in South Viet Nam' had taken place on December 19, 1961, in the course of which it was decided to set up the Viet Nam People's Revolu-

17 Department of State, U.S., "A Threat to the Peace" 1961 Appendix A entitled "Direction of the Viet Cong by North Viet Nam."
tionary Party (Dang Nhan-Dan Cash Mang), which officially came into existence on January 1, 1962." In the first week of January 1964 the Second National Congress of the Front was held. Significantly while the Front has 'missions' in China, Cuba, Indonesia, Algeria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and the Soviet Union, in the last country it presented its credentials not to the Soviet Government, but to the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee.

As North Vietnam stepped up its aid to the Viet Cong and the fighting in the South increased, the U.S. began the bombing of North Vietnam. India's first and deliberate reaction to the American bombing of North Vietnam (Feb. 8, 1965) bears recalling. It called for the "suspension of all provocative action in South Vietnam as well as in North Vietnam by all sides involved in the Vietnam situation." Only later was the emphasis put solely on the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam.

Worse, the Indian Representative on the International Control Commission in Vietnam, Mr. M. A. Rahman, even sought to water down the finding of N. Viet Nam's guilt which his predecessor had endorsed in June 1962. "In order to clarify the factual position, the Indian Delegation draws attention to quotations in the Canadian Statement of so-called 'conclusions' of the Legal Committee. The reference to the Special Report of 1962 made in the third sentence of para 3 of the Canadian Statement concerned only specific cases. The other quotations which immediately follow in the same paragraph purporting to be 'conclusions' of the Legal Committee have neither been presented to, nor have the sanction of, the Commission or any of its Committees."

18 This effort was wholly misconceived. The 'specific cases' were obviously part of a pattern which led the Legal Committee to the general conclusion. In para 10 of its Special Report of June, 1962, the Commission fully accepted the Legal Committee's findings with regard to those cases and declared its readiness to await "the fuller report, that is being prepared by the Legal Committee, covering all the allegations and incidents", upon which "the Commission will take action as

appropriate in each individual case.” (italics mine) The Commission’s prudence and tact are patent. Even so, the Legal Committee’s findings deserve respect and the quotations Mr. Rahman sought to dissociate the Commission from deserve to be reproduced in extenso for their candour, accuracy, and, indeed, authoritativeness. 19

“The Legal Committee concludes (reference paragraph 742 to 746 and paragraph 754 in Section VI) that it is the aim of the Vietnam Lao Dong Party (the ruling Party in the Zone in the North) to bring about the overthrow of the Administration in the South. In September 1960, the Third Congress of the Vietnam Lao Dong Party held in Hanoi (in the Zone in the North) passed a resolution calling for the organization of a ‘Front’ under the leadership of the Vietnam Lao Dong Party for the overthrow of the Administration in the South. Such a ‘Front for Liberation of the South’ was, in fact, constituted under the sponsorship of the Vietnam Lao Dong Party. There are present and functioning in the Zone in the South, branches of the Vietnam Lao Dong Party and the Front for Liberation of the South along with its armed branches, namely, the ‘Forces of Liberation of the South’ and the ‘People’s Self-Defence Armed Forces’. The Vietnam Lao Dong Party and the Front for Liberation of the South have the identical aim of overthrowing the Administration in the South. The Vietnam Lao Dong Party, the Front for Liberation of the South, the Forces for Liberation of the South and the People’s Self-Defence Armed Forces have disseminated in the Zone in the South propaganda seeking to incite the people to oppose and overthrow the Administration in the South. There exists and functions a ‘Voice’ of the Front of Liberation of the South and a ‘Liberation Press Agency’ which assist in the above mentioned activities. It is probable that Hanoi Radio also has assisted in the said activities. Propaganda literature of the Front for the Liberation of the South and in favour of the activities of the Front has been published in the Zone in the North and has been distributed abroad by the official representatives of the DRVN.

19 Ibid, p. 12.
“The Legal Committee further concludes that:—

(1) The Vietnam Lao Dong Party in the Zone in the North, the various branches of the Vietnam Lao Dong Party in the Zone in the South, the Front for Liberation of the South, the Forces for Liberation of the South and the People’s Self-Defence Armed Forces have incited various sections of the people residing in the Zone in the South, including members of the Armed Forces of the South, to oppose the Administration in the South, to overthrow it by violent means and have indicated to them various means of doing so.

(2) Those who ignored their exhortation and continued to support the Administration in the South have been threatened with punishment and in certain cases such punishment has been effected by the carrying out of death sentences.

(3) The aim and function of the Front for Liberation of the South, the Forces for Liberation of the South and the People’s Self-Defence Armed Forces are to organize and to carry out under the leadership of the Vietnam Lao Dong Party, hostile activities against the Armed Forces and the Administration of the South by violent means aimed at the overthrow of the Administration of the South.

“The Legal Committee concludes also that the PAVN has allowed the Zone in the North to be used as a base for the organization of hostile activities in the Zone in the South, including armed attacks, aimed at the overthrow of the Administration in the South in violation of its obligations under the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam.”

Mr. Rahman’s note was criticized by Mr. Rakshat Puri, The Hindustan Times S.E. Asia Correspondent (in the issue of June 16, 1965) as having “added to the confusion about India’s seemingly ambiguous attitude towards development in Vietnam. The widespread impression among diplomatic observers in South-East Asia is that New Delhi has practically shelved the 1962 ICC report and has tended to minimize the gravity of the findings in the report.”
Shortly thereafter, a very fair proposal[^20] was made by the President of India in reply to the speech made by the High Commissioner of Tanzania on April 24, 1965. “As non-aligned countries we deplore the tragic loss of life and property in Vietnam. If the present drift is not checked in this nuclear age events may turn out to be dangerous and disastrous. We should, therefore, try our best to check the drift. Cessation of hostilities in both parts of Vietnam, policing of boundaries by an Afro-Asian force and maintenance of the present boundaries so long as people desire it, may be thought of as necessary steps for restoration of peace and stability in this area. We have to think on some such line.” On August 9, India informed the British Foreign Office by way of clarification “The proposal envisaged the termination of aerial bombing of North Vietnam and cessation of fighting in South Vietnam. The purpose of an Afro-Asian force would be to police the ceasefire not only along the border and sea coast of South Vietnam but also at suitable points in the interior. It was also intended that the present division of Vietnam would be maintained only so long as the people of the areas desired it. In that regard the proposal, it was hoped, would expedite and facilitate the unification of Vietnam.”

That Peking and Hanoi should have rejected the Indian President's proposals was understandable. It negated their attempt at forcible reunification of Vietnam. What is hard to understand is the Government of India's deliberate and persistent cold shoudering of these proposals. They were not so much as mentioned in the Ministry of External Affairs' Annual Report. India's recent policy on Vietnam has been at best confused and, occasionally, even perverse. On April 1, 1965, with 16 other non-aligned States, India appealed to the parties, “to start such negotiations as soon as possible without posing any pre-conditions, so that a political solution” may be found.

This appeal was accepted by the U.S. and rejected by North Vietnam. On April 20, however, India's Prime Minister Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri, himself imposed a one-sided “pre-condition.”

Referring to President Johnson's peace overtures, he said, “There

[^20]: Recent Exchanges Concerning Attempts to Promote a Negotiated settlement of the Conflict in Vietnam; Cd. 2756; HMSO, London, p. 6.
is hardly any point in the offer he has made. The first thing is that the bombing must stop.”

At Kathmandu, five days later, Mr. Shastri reverted to his former position. Asked to comment on President Johnson’s complaint that, while appeals for cessation of bombing were addressed to him, none asked North Vietnam to stop its hostilities, Mr. Shastri replied that the appeal of the non-aligned was addressed to both sides. “Unless both sides do so it will not be feasible for them to meet and discuss…”

In Moscow, in May 1965, Mr. Shastri agreed with his Russian hosts “that the bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam should be stopped immediately.”

In the Indo-Canadian joint communiqué (June 14), issued at Ottawa on the conclusion of Mr. Shastri’s visit, however, the two Prime Ministers called for “unconditional negotiations” and “expressed their regret that lack of respect for the cease-fire agreement, as reported by the Commission in 1962, had led to the present higher level of hostilities.” This was then, and is even now, in total contradiction to the Government of India’s policy.

The Statement of Guidance given to the Commonwealth Premiers’ Vietnam Mission, with India’s full approval, mentioned (June 17) in the same breath two conditions:

“(a) A suspension of all U.S. air attack on North Vietnam:
(b) A North Vietnamese undertaking to prevent the movement of any military forces or assistance or material to South Vietnam.”

At Belgrade, Mr. Shastri joined President Tito (August 1) in calling for a unilateral “stoppage of bombing”. He went a step further. Advocating a conference of the parties concerned, their joint communiqué said, “at any such conference, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam should take part.”

Earlier, at Kathmandu, Mr. Shastri had said that, if North Vietnam and the U.S. stopped hostilities, the Viet Cong operations would automatically come to a halt. The implication was all too clear. Consistently with the Indian appraisal, expressed in the Report of 1962, no other view was possible.

Hanoi was not satisfied with India’s new stand. “Advertisers and errand boys” of the U.S. was the sobriquet India earned at its hands. Peking followed suit.

By now Mr. Shastri had had enough. At a meeting of the
Congress Parliamentary Party (August 14) he deplored the fact that China was not prepared to co-operate with any peace moves in Vietnam.

During her visit to the U.S. the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, on the other hand said on March 20, 1966 that she had been "impressed by the sincerity of the President's desire for a peaceful settlement in that war-torn country."

None can say that of Mao or Ho.

Then came the famous Report of the Ministry of External Affairs. There was not a word of criticism of China or North Vietnam for their long, persistent obstruction of all peace moves.

The Report in ponderous tones proclaimed "the resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam caused deep concern to India."

It expressed the view *inter alia* that: "(i) aerial bombing of North Vietnam should be stopped; (ii) there should be a cessation of fighting in Vietnam and the withdrawal of American forces from South Vietnam."

A comparison of this formula with that adumbrated by the Commonwealth Premiers—with Indian approval—reveals the vital omission of any reference to the stoppage of North Vietnam's interference in the South and the gratuitous addition of a reference to the withdrawal of U.S. troops. Given America's declared readiness to withdraw her troops as part of a settlement, this was wholly unnecessary.

In the Commonwealth Statement, on the other hand, India urged that after the cessation of hostilities by both sides a conference was to be convened, one of whose objectives was to "secure the withdrawal of all foreign military presence from Vietnam."

The Report, most surprisingly, did not even refer to President Radhakrishnan's suggestion, which he repeated in early 1966, in an interview with Mr. M. H. Heykal, Editor of *Al-Ahram*.

On July 7, 1966 broadcasting to the nation, India's Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi proposed "the two Co-Chairman Britain and the Soviet Union should immediately convene a meeting of the Geneva Conference. We would appeal for an immediate ending of the bombing in North Vietnam. This should be closely followed by a cessation of hostilities as well as of hostile movements and actions on all sides throughout Viet Nam,
in full observance of the Geneva Agreement.” Very clearly, Mrs. Gandhi envisaged not an unconditional cessation of bombing, but one as part of a plan wherein its “immediate ending” would be “closely followed” by cessation of “hostile movements” contrary to the Geneva Agreement. North Vietnam’s help to the Viet Cong, which the ICC held was in breach of the Agreement, was, thus, well covered by these proposals.

Neither President Nasser nor President Tito, whom Mrs. Gandhi visited soon after making these proposals endorsed them. Predictably, China denounced them. In the Joint Communiqué, issued on the conclusion of Mrs. Gandhi’s visit to Moscow in July 1966, her proposals were conspicuous by the absence of any reference to them. Instead, there was the familiar plea that the bombing of North Vietnam be stopped immediately without more.

Mrs. Gandhi’s proposals, thus, met the fate of the non-aligned State’s appeal and the Radhakrishnan plan. On October 7, Mr. Swaran Singh, the Foreign Minister buried them. Speaking in the U.N. General Assembly, on October 7, he made a three-point proposal which was a repetition of Mrs. Gandhi’s of July 7, except that the cessation of bombing of North Vietnam was now delinked from the cessation of hostile activities in the South. Mr. H. R. Vohra reported from the U.N.21 “A Senior Official explained that the Indian proposal presupposed the cessation of bombing would be unconditional. The other steps could then be expected to follow.” In place of an express stipulation there was now a bare expectation. The correspondent commented, “Mr. Swaran Singh’s speech left scope for doubt about the basis of India’s confidence that a stoppage in bombing would bring about negotiation. The doubt was deepened by the statement that a way would ‘perhaps’ be found to make things move.”

Once such a position was adopted it was not at all difficult for Mr. Singh to exculpate Hanoi from all blame, as indeed, he did three days later in New Delhi. “I would be disinclined to interpret Hanoi’s reluctance at the present stage to say that it would go to the Conference table if bombing stops as a negative attitude.” Mr. Singh took little notice of the U.S. Representative Mr. Arthur

21 The Times of India, October 8, 1966.
J. Goldberg's offer in the U.N. General Assembly on September 22 to stop the bombing of North Vietnam given assurances, private or public, that N. Vietnam will take steps "to reduce or bring to an end its own military activities against South Vietnam".

The Joint Communique of the New Delhi Conference of the heads of Governments of Yugoslavia, the U.A.R. and India declared "They reiterate that the bombing of North Vietnam should be ended immediately without any pre-conditions." What, of course, they did not reiterate was the appeal they made in April 1965 for negotiations without pre-conditions. The three leaders went further to say that the participation of the NFLSV "would be necessary as one of the main parties in any efforts for the realisation of peace in Vietnam."

The Communique caused widespread dismay. The U.A.R and Yugoslavia, it will be recalled, had brusquely brushed aside India's proposals of July 7. What had crystallised now was a clear Indian shift away from her own position to theirs. The Times of India's correspondent's report under a New Delhi October 24 dateline explained a lot. "On the eve of the tripartite summit meeting, the North Vietnamese had indicated through diplomatic channels that a mere unconditional suspension of American bombing would not meet their basic conditions for peace talks unless it was followed by some understanding that there would be a definite time-limit of two or three years for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Vietnam. The Hanoi Government is reported to have hinted that its four-point proposal for a complete American withdrawal before the commencement of any negotiations need not prove an insurmountable obstacle provided there was an understanding in advance about some sort of a deadline for it. It was against this background that the three heads of Government decided to make a separate mention in the joint communique of the need for a withdrawal of all foreign forces from Viet Nam along with their common stand that the Geneva agreements should be implemented in full by all the parties now involved in the conflict."

Hanoi's reward for all this was not very slow in coming. On November 13 in a commentary on Indian affairs its authoritative "Bao Tan Viet Hoa" accused the Government of India of having been long dependent on U.S. imperialists and the countries
governed by "modern revisionists". The Government of India was their mere "bond servant." It was also accused of playing a "shameful role" in the "anti-China" chorus conducted by the imperialists, the revisionists and the reactionaries. Other crimes were the "plunder and suppression" of the people of India and "repression" of popular movements. This had only brought closer "the extermination of the reactionaries of India". The paper greeted the New Delhi demonstration of November 7, seeking a ban on cow slaughter, and the students' agitation in co-ordination with "a movement of mass struggle" as "the inevitable outbreak" of the Indian people's indignation against the Government. (The Hindustan Times, November 18) All this appeared in "Bao Tan Viet Hoa's" issue of November 13. Significantly, just the previous day People's Daily had published an article entitled "Indian People Have Arisen in Resistance" which NCNA had widely circulated. It said "A 700,000-strong anti-government demonstration broke out in New Delhi on November 7. This was a violent eruption of the Indian people's pent-up feelings against the Government, an inevitable outcome of the retrogressive domestic and foreign policies pursued by the Indian reactionary government, and a signal of the sharpening of class contradictions in India. In foreign relations, the Indian reactionaries have thrown themselves further into the laps of the US imperialists and the Soviet revisionist leading clique and become their humble and mean flunkies. Internally, they have pursued an anti-popular policy of stepped-up plunder and repression, pushed the national economy to the brink of bankruptcy and plunged the people into deep misery. Where there is oppression, there is bound to be resistance. The Indian people have now arisen in resistance."

Hanoi, it is obvious, echoes Peking far more than many in India and abroad are willing to admit. On two crucial occasions in the past, the Chinese invasion in October 1962 and the Indo-Pak War of September 1965, Hanoi had supported Peking, and Pakistan because of Peking's support to that country. (Vide Appendix 'A' for full text of "Nhan Dan's" commentary of September 11, 1965 on the war. Among other things it said "India has shown its unwillingness to peacefully settle the Kashmir issue, but wants to expand further the conflict").

Mr. K. Rangaswami, the New Delhi correspondent of The
Hindu's despatch\textsuperscript{22} reflected a widely shared dissatisfaction. "What exactly is India's policy in regard to Viet Nam is not clear. No one wants that Chinese influence must be allowed to extend to South of North Viet Nam. But, will this object be achieved by asking the United States to withdraw unilaterally from Viet Nam? One or two senior Ministers have been reported to have commented in private that the United States should withdraw unilaterally from Viet Nam and apparently this has reached various sources. This line of thinking is based on the assumption that the North Viet Namese do not like the Chinese and that even if the Americans withdrew, the Chinese would not be in a position to fill the vacuum. But how can a small country like North Viet Nam, be in a position to withstand the pressure of the Chinese colossus? Secondly, there is the question of the American prestige and their commitment to help the South Viet Namese to have their own way of life. If the North Viet Namese are quite certain that the South Viet Namese are just waiting to become part of the North, why should it be difficult for them to stop fighting for six months so as to enable the Americans to quit and then proceed to form a United Viet Nam? It is obvious the North Viet Namese cannot stop fighting and come to the conference table, without the permission of the Chinese. Why India should be specially sympathetic to North Viet Nam is not clear, particularly if it is remembered that North Viet Nam joined hands with China in condemning India as the aggressor when Pakistan attacked Kashmir last year. One can understand North Viet Nam supporting China's stand against India. But why should North Viet Nam support Pakistan's claim on Kashmir and condemn India as the aggressor? According to informed observers the time has come when India must have a close look at its basic foreign and economic policies."

It is an exercise long overdue and one which needs to be made even if the Vietnam crisis comes to be resolved in the days ahead.

Perhaps the most determined and sincere effort to make India realise her role in South and South East Asia was made by Singapore's Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew. In an interview with Mr. Frank Moraes (\textit{The Indian Express}, August 29, 1966)

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{The Hindu}, December 15, 1966.
he expounded at length his idea of a regional arrangement to contain Chinese expansionism. “India should come into this regional arrangement. I’d welcome her. We in this region must realise that in Peking’s eyes, South-East Asia is China’s Eastern Europe. If we stand separately, Peking would have no difficulty in gobbling us up one after the other. United we would pose a bigger problem. We could checkmate China’s ambitions and plans.” Mr. Moraes added his personal comment, based on first hand impressions acquired in the course of his tour of the region, “We in India do not realise how strong is the feeling in South-East Asia for some form of Asian regional arrangement to contain China.”

On the eve of his departure for New Delhi, Mr. Lee spoke to Indian newsmen. He warned that if India abdicated from its natural role in Asia and withdrew to an isolated position, its smaller neighbours might be forced into unpleasant circumstances. India’s own long-term security and other vital interests, he argued, demanded measures to prevent the “gradual erosion of the fringes.” (The Hindustan Times, September 1, 1966). He said that while in New Delhi he would exchange views on a large number of subjects of mutual interest and not least of all, future security arrangements of the whole region. The rationale of these latter was simple: “in say five, ten or twenty years either there must be a new balance of power struck on multiracial arrangement or a power vacuum would lead to attempts by those who are ambitious to fill the role of big Power.”

In New Delhi on September 3, Singapore’s Premier elaborated his ‘idea’, stressing that the need was to preserve the independence of the nations in South-East Asia from all alien pressures whatever they be. “I can think of no better arrangement for us than to pledge to maintain each other’s integrity and the integrity of the whole region so that nobody comes poaching.”

This, however, is the very definition of collective security, a concept which New Delhi has repeatedly rejected.

Speaking in the Lok Sabha on March 21, 1966 India’s Foreign Minister, Mr. Swaran Singh, declared that India was opposed to the idea of collective security because it provides no protection and, on the contrary, compromises the sovereignty of the member States. Mr. Singh, it is interesting to note, was replying to a
question whether India would take the lead for collective security of Asia against the Chinese threat. The Minister proceeded to speak of India's quest for a joint guarantee from the great Powers against nuclear attack, not realising, apparently, that that was nothing but an extreme application of collective security. If his two objections to the concept are at all valid, they make nonsense of the protracted quest for guarantee under his stewardship. Besides, it would be most odd, to say the least, that non-aligned India, while looking askance at the Western presence in Asia to deter China, should also reject its only alternative, an Asian alliance to the same end.

Mr. Lee's mission ended in failure. Reportedly, he told his friends after his talks with India's Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Swaran Singh, that India was living "in a dream world." According to the Washington Post, "The Indian Government showed no interest in his suggestion for a regional security arrangement", (The Indian Express, September 18).

Five years earlier in South Vietnam, Mr. Purshottam Trikandadas had heard suggestions not dissimilar to Mr. Lee's. "A closer association of South East Asian countries including India could develop, even if it does not result in an alliance of mutual defence, it could act as a moral deterrent to International Communism and be more valuable than SEATO".

Obviously, in these years, despite their momentous events, official Indian thinking has remained bourbonically static.

To fulfill its role in Asia, indeed, for sheer survival, India must need be a power in her own right and a power with a sense of direction. Years ago Sir G. S. Bajpai, then Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs, wrote "In Asia she alone can help to create and maintain a political equilibrium which no potential aggressor would lightly dare to disturb." Indian power, however, will be measured not only in terms of military but also in terms of its own internal strength and stability, its sense of purpose and values. None of these is too evident today.
Appendix A

NORTH VIETNAM AND INDIA

Nhan Dan Observer’s commentary of 11th September: Text of report:

The Kashmir problem—which triggered off the current armed conflict between India and Pakistan—must be settled peacefully on the principle of respect for the right to self-determination of the Kashmir people, said the Hanoi paper Nhan Dan today (11th September) in a commentary signed (by) the Observer. After recalling the developments of the conflict, the paper pointed out: The Indian-Pakistan conflict was triggered off by the Kashmir question, a problem arising since India and Pakistan proclaimed their independence in 1947. That year it was agreed that the Kashmir question would be settled in accordance with the Kashmir people's aspirations, but since then hostilities have broken out between India and Pakistan.

In early 1949, the two sides signed a cease-fire agreement and a demarcation line was drawn across Kashmir. Since then the Governments of India and Pakistan have on many occasions held negotiations in the matter. The UN too has many times discussed the problem but the Kashmir question still remains in a deadlock.

Nhan Dan said: The Kashmir issue has become complicated because the Anglo-American imperialists have meddled in it. The British imperialists sowed national division immediately after they were compelled to withdraw from their old colony then comprising India, Pakistan and Kashmir. In the eyes of the American and British imperialists, Kashmir, lying deep in Asia, constitutes an ideal strategic position and a prize game...(VNA ellipsis) It is precisely the Anglo-American imperialists—who are deploring the conflict between India and Pakistan—who are deliberately sowing discord between the peoples of India, Pakistan and Kashmir, and have not ceased to take advantage of the Kashmir question to carry out their aggressive and warmongering plans in Asia.

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At the recent meetings of the SEATO military bloc, Pakistan expressed her disagreement with the US aggressive policy in Vietnam and the acts of war of the USA and its henchmen in Asia. This attitude has infuriated the US imperialists. The attack on Pakistan by Indian troops in fact is closely connected with the US scheme of bringing pressure to bear upon Pakistan, and is completely incompatible with the Indian people’s interest. The American and British imperialists must be held responsible for the blood conflicts over the Kashmir question.

The UN—a US-dominated organisation—is also acting allegedly to stop the conflict between India and Pakistan and to solve the Kashmir problem. The truth is that, since 1949, the UN has had more than enough time to help solve the problem. But it has practically done nothing. Rather, it is the UN that has created conditions for the US imperialists to intervene in Kashmir and violate the national right to self-determination of the Kashmir people. With such an attitude, how can the UN solve the Kashmir problem.

On the Kashmir problem, the stand of the Indian Government is inappropriate, and at variance with the principle of respect for the national right to self-determination of the Kashmir people. The Indian Government has overtly regarded Kashmir as part of the Indian territory. In the conflict, India has expanded hostilities from Kashmir to Pakistan and at the same time sent troops to thrust deep into many other areas on Pakistan’s territory. India has also shown its unwillingness to peacefully settle the Kashmir issue, but wants to expand further the conflict.

The Vietnamese people have followed with great concern the developments of the widening conflict between India and Pakistan. These developments are very detrimental to the defence of peace in Asia and to the solidarity among the Asian peoples in their struggle against the imperialists and colonialists, headed by the US imperialists, who always want to reimpose their enslaving yoke on the liberated peoples in Asia. The Vietnamese people fully support the national right to self-determination of the Kashmir people and hold that the Kashmir problem must be settled peacefully with the aim of ensuring to the Kashmir people the right to decide their own destiny themselves.