Anti-Vietnamese Escalation

After the total victory of the national liberation revolution, a Vietnamese Party and Government delegation, in implementation of the Testament of President Ho Chi Minh, visited a number of countries to convey the deep gratitude of our people for the help extended to us in our resistance against American aggression, for national salvation. In Peking as in the other socialist countries, our delegation raised the question of long-term cooperation in various fields in the new stage. But the Chinese government turned a deaf ear to our proposals.

Worse still, “since the end of 1975 China ceased all non-refundable aid to Vietnam, and since 1977, even its loans. At the same time, it showed reticence in the execution of aid projects already agreed upon in the previous years. [...] Concerning the projects under construction, the Chinese leaders promised that they would carry out in the quickest possible way what they regarded as their internationalist obligations. In fact, the handing over of blueprints was delayed, the supply of machinery, equipment and materials postponed or badly coordinated; Chinese experts often found themselves twiddling their thumbs. For these reasons work in many construction sites dragged and this had a bad effect on the plans for the building and commissioning of such projects.” (Note of the Vietnamese Government to the Chinese Government, 18 May 1978)

Why such a state of affairs? Let facts supply the answer. First, one should mention the events
happening on the southwestern border of Viet-

nam.

Barely one day after the collapse of the US- puppet regime in South Vietnam, thirteen days after the coming to power of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary in Phnom Penh, on 1st May 1975, this reactionary tandem unleashed their troops on the Vietnamese islands of Tho Chu and Phu Quoc, thus starting a war that was to grow ever more brazen and ferocious against the Vietnamese people. Who, standing in the wings, were then urging the Phnom Penh warlike clique to rebuff all proposals of the Vietnamese side for peaceful negotiation? Who were supplying them with arms, ammunition, food and military advisers? The answers to these questions are now known to all.

By using the criminal hand of the reactionary clique in Phnom Penh to stab Vietnam in the back while the wounds our country had suffered in the anti-American resistance were not yet healed, and this while mouthing honeyed words about their “internationalist obligations” to the Vietnamese people, the Peking leaders unveiled their Machiavellian schemes.

As early as 1957-1958 the Central Committees of the Vietnam Workers’ Party and the Chinese Communist Party had agreed to respect the frontier between the two countries as it had been defined previously and that all differ-

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1. The Vietnamese-Chinese border was defined by agreements signed between the French government and the Chinese Qing dynasty in 1887-1895. It was officially plotted by a system of border posts.
ences concerning problems of border and territory were to be settled by the two governments through negotiation. As emphasized in the Vietnamese memorandum of 14 February 1979 “the Vietnamese side has always respected the agreement reached by the Central Committees of the two Parties and has done its utmost to make the Vietnamese-Chinese frontier one of friendship. [...] And yet, in execution of their dark designs, the Chinese authorities have never ceased to violate the above-mentioned agreement and have caused ever more complicated and serious frontier incidents. [...] Chinese violations of Vietnamese territory and Chinese provocations along the land frontier [...] multiplied from year to year at a quick tempo: 294 incidents in 1975, 812 in 1976, and 873 in 1977. [...] Likewise, from 1975 to 1977, 1,500 violations of our territorial waters by Chinese vessels took place, in some cases less than 2-5 kilometres from our islands.”

In 1978, apart from border provocations, outright violations of our frontier by Chinese armed forces numbered 584 (as against 1355 cases in the four years between 1974 and 1977). They assumed a more and more serious character, in view of the forces involved, the length of penetration into our territory, the weapons employed — going from infantry rifles to machineguns and mortars. Besides, more than 100 violations of our air space were counted and 481 provocations in our territorial waters.

The opening of a second hostile front on the Chinese-Vietnamese border was the second jaw
of a vice that China wished to tighten on Vietnam—the first being that on our southwestern border—so as to weaken us and prevent us from building an independent socialist country south of China, which would be an obstacle to Chinese Great-Han expansionist designs.

But that was not all. On 24 May 1978, the spokesman of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the PRC State Council made this declaration to the New China News Agency: “Vietnam has taken measures for ostracizing, persecuting and expelling Chinese residents in Vietnam.” The colossal Chinese propaganda machinery was set in motion to complain and protest against the “tragic fate of the victimized Chinese residents in Vietnam.” What is the truth about this affair?

Among the great family of ethnic groups in Vietnam, the Hoa (people of Chinese extraction) have been living for many generations. They number about one and a half million, of whom 700,000 live in Cholon (now roughly the 5th and 6th districts of Ho Chi Minh City), 160,000 in Quang Ninh province bordering on China, the rest being scattered in other provinces and towns.

Most of the Chinese who had emigrated to Vietnam in the course of history had come by land. They were either fleeing the pitiless repression and exploitation of Chinese tyrants or seeking a means of subsistence after falling victim to natural calamities. In the South, however, they had come by sea in the late 17th, early 18th centuries.
After their arrival in Vietnam, they generally lived in colonies made up of people from the same region in China. Thus, although placed under the jurisdiction of the Vietnamese authorities, they preserved their language and customs.

Eventually, however, many married Vietnamese. Being mostly working people, they were, like their Vietnamese counterparts, subjected to imperialist, feudal and capitalist exploitation. After a few generations, they were integrated into the Vietnamese community and became Vietnamese. At present, many Vietnamese are descended from those people of Chinese stock. But because of the successive waves of immigration — hardly had one been assimilated when another arrived — there remained distinct Hoa quarters and villages.

On the whole, having come with the intention of settling down permanently in the country, the Chinese residing in Vietnam gradually became Vietnamese. In fact, apart from old people who had arrived before the victory of the Chinese revolution, the overwhelming majority of the Hoa were born in Vietnam and have never set foot on China.

That process of assimilation was interrupted under French colonial occupation. In Cholon in particular, as a result of French manoeuvres aimed at dividing them politically and exploiting them economically, the Hoa community was separated from the Vietnamese population as early as 1859 and divided into many “congregations” according to the region in China from which their members came (Hainan,
Kwangsi, etc.). These congregations enjoyed some autonomy and elected representatives to deal directly with the colonial administration. A section of those Hoa were to work hand in glove with the imperialists and colonialists to exploit the Vietnamese population and also their own Hoa compatriots. Selling goods and buying raw materials for the Western capitalists they became handy tools for the colonial administration. Some especially zealous Hoa received economic privileges and became comprador bourgeois.

When the American imperialists arrived in South Vietnam, they availed themselves of the relatively developed commercial network (goods and services) of the Hoa bourgeoisie to serve their colossal expeditionary corps and their war of aggression. Thanks to their well-structured organization based on “kinship ties” and long-standing business experience, the Hoa bourgeoisie in Cholon, particularly the comprador bourgeoisie, grew into an essential political and economic force of the puppet regime which controlled almost all the vital parts of the economy of South Vietnam. Cholon under their rule became a separate world, based on “kinship ties” — a veritable kingdom.

For its part, right from its foundation, in 1930, the Vietnamese Communist Party, proceeding from the viewpoint that the Hoa, like all other ethnic groups in Vietnam, were living under the same colonialist yoke, held that they constituted one of the revolutionary forces, especially the workers and toiling peasants. And so the Party actively mobilized them in
the national liberation struggle. Many Hoa mass organizations were set up under the leadership of the Party.

In 1955, following the victory of the anti-French resistance, the Central Committees of the Vietnam Workers’ Party and the Chinese Communist Party officially agreed that “all the Hoa in North Vietnam are under Vietnamese jurisdiction and will gradually become Vietnamese citizens.”

In February 1975, the Chinese government instructed its embassy in Hanoi to hand over authority over the Hoa to the Vietnamese side:

1. The Ngai, that section of the Hoa who had been living in Quang Ninh since very long, were regarded as Vietnamese citizens and were to enjoy the same rights and fulfil the same duties as the other Vietnamese citizens.

2. The Hoa living in other parts of the North were, by virtue of the new principle, to adopt Vietnamese citizenship.

3. All affairs concerning the Hoa were to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Vietnamese authorities. All the Hoa having become Vietnamese citizens in practice, in January 1961, the Chinese embassy in Hanoi agreed, obviously under instructions from the Chinese government, that Hoa people wishing to visit China should apply first to the Vietnamese authorities. The Chinese consular service would, on the basis of the lists supplied by the latter, confine itself to delivering tourist entry visas, not passports. The Chinese embassy in this way recognized that all the Hoa in the
North had ceased to be Chinese residents to become Vietnamese citizens.

In the South, after the Ngo Dinh Diem regime had promulgated its decree No.53 of 3 October 1956 which closed eleven trades to foreigners, the overwhelming majority of the Hoa opted for Vietnamese citizenship. Thenceforth they were referred to as Vietnamese citizens of Chinese stock. After the total liberation of the South, the revolutionary authorities had all foreign nationals registered. No Vietnamese of Chinese extraction presented themselves for registration. So the status quo was maintained. Proceeding from the fundamental interests of the Hoa, the authorities created all necessary conditions for them to participate in all social activities on an equal footing with the other citizens.

In a word, apart from a very small number of Hoa with identification papers delivered by the authorities in Taiwan or Hongkong, all the Hoa in the North and the Vietnamese of Chinese stock in the South have been holding Vietnamese citizenship for the last twenty-odd years.

Together with the entire population of the country the Hoa in the South participated in the general elections to the reunification National Assembly of 1976 and to the election of people's councils at all levels. Many of them work in State organs, as workers, engineers, teachers, doctors, etc. Many are even members of the people's armed forces, mass revolutionary organizations, and administrative organs.
at various levels. A number of them are mem-
bers of the National Assembly of the Socialist
Republic of Vietnam. One may assert that the
rights enjoyed by the Hoa living in Vietnam
go far beyond those given Vietnamese residents
in other countries, China included.

And yet in early 1978, a large number of
Hoa who had been living peacefully in Viet-
nam, especially in provinces bordering on
China, suddenly started leaving illegally for
China. The network of agents manipulated by
the Chinese embassy in Hanoi were very
active propagating tendentious rumours. For
instance: "Vietnam has been attacking Kam-
puchea, which is supported by China. For its
part, the Soviet Union supports Vietnam.
Large-scale war will break out, the Hoa in
Vietnam will be the first to suffer. So they
must leave for China as soon as possible."
And: "The new policy pursued by China is to
welcome back those Hoa in Vietnam who wish
to return to China to help build the country.
The sooner they are back, the more privileges
they will enjoy. If they refuse to return they
will be regarded as traitors to the mother
country." Or: "The Chinese government will
help those who wish to do so to go abroad," etc.

Terrified by the specter of war, the majority
of Hoa living in border areas left for China,
causing disturbances in the economy and public
order. It is to be noted that the Chinese author-
ities forbade them to use the normal passages
to cross the frontier, forcing them to ford rivers
and make their way through forests. Films were
shot of those scenes and shown on Chinese
television or in Chinese motion-picture theatres as well as abroad in support of the claim that Vietnam “is ostracizing, persecuting and expelling the Hoa.” The first aim was to fan up hatred of Vietnam in the Chinese masses. It was a time when in Ho Chi Minh City and the rest of southern Vietnam the socialist transformation of trade was being carried out: capitalist traders, whether they were Vietnamese or Hoa, were required to switch over to productive activities. By distorting the facts Peking claimed that Hoa traders were being persecuted. And yet when Pol Pot in Kampuchea drove nearly half a million Hoa from the cities, murdered a large number of them and starved the others, not a single protest was raised by the Chinese authorities.

After more than 150,000 Hoa had crossed into China, the Chinese authorities suddenly ordered the closing of the frontier, forcing large crowds of Hoa who had sold their houses and possessions in Vietnam before beginning their journey to China to wait for weeks at border crossing-points and finally to return to their former places of residence. As for those Hoa who had passed into China, able-bodied elements among them were incorporated in Chinese army units, in which they were to fight and serve as guides when China started an armed invasion of Vietnam in February 1979. Thus the Peking rulers did not hesitate to sacrifice the Hoa to their wicked policies, uprooting hundreds of thousands of Hoa who had been living peacefully in Vietnam and wrecking mixed marriages.
For many years already Peking had been striving to organize the Hoa in Vietnam, especially in Cholon in the South and in those provinces of the North where they were living in large numbers, into such groupings as "Hoa Association for Salvation", "Marxist-Leninist Youth", "Association of Patriotic Hoa Students", etc. These organizations were to agitate among the Hoa in Vietnam to incite them to leave for China, foment troubles, sabotage the Vietnamese economy, ask for a return to Chinese nationality, demand a special status in which they would enjoy all rights attached to Vietnamese citizenship but without assuming any of the duties, etc.

In face of this situation, the Vietnamese government, inspired by a desire to settle all problems relating to the Hoa in a peaceful and fraternal way, proposed a high-level meeting of the two parties. While calling on the Hoa to "stay on in Vietnam to live peacefully and work together with the entire Vietnamese people to build the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and a decent and happy life for themselves", it declared that, "All Hoa people in the North who enjoy rights and assume duties relating to Vietnamese citizenship and all Vietnamese citizens of Hoa extraction in the South who wish to leave Vietnam will be authorized to do so by the Vietnamese authorities after fulfilling all exit formalities. Those who leave Vietnam will be permitted to take with them all their personal possessions in conformity with the current legislation in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam."
In early September 1978, when the “victimized Chinese residents” card had been played out, China unilaterally suspended the negotiations being held at ministerial level between the two countries on the question. The move was not difficult to understand: on 3 October, Deng Xiao-ping was to declare in Bangkok that China was in no hurry to resolve its differences with Vietnam and that their solution could wait ten or even a hundred years.

Meanwhile the Chinese vice was tightened on the northern and southwestern frontiers of Vietnam. Wang Dong-xing, vice-president of the Chinese Communist Party, personally went to Phnom Penh to urge Peking’s agents there to intensify their war with Vietnam. Tens of thousands of Chinese militarymen made their way to Kampuchea. Kampuchean airfields, ports and railways were operated by Chinese military personnel in workers' garb. So were Kampuchean tanks, armoured cars, artillery, aircraft and radar equipment manned by Chinese. The tempo of Chinese air-and sea-borne supplies was stepped up. An airfield for combat and transport aircraft was built at Kompongcham, 50 km northwest of Phnom Penh, and war equipment were urgently airlifted from China.

Along the northern border of Vietnam, considerable Chinese forces were deployed on the Chinese side while Chinese military provocations were stepped up on land, at sea and in the air. More than 20,000 Hoa returned from Vietnam.
were selected for military training against Vietnam. Evil-minded Hoa elements and reactionaries of all kinds were infiltrated into Vietnam where they were to create hotbeds of trouble behind our lines.

In early 1979, people’s revolutionary forces in Kampuchea staged an uprising which overthrew the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary regime. One jaw of the Chinese vice, that on our southwestern border, was broken. Peking immediately intensified its hostile activities on the Chinese border with Vietnam. Tens of infantry divisions together with armour, artillery and air force units were mustered in the area. Everywhere in the world, a chorus of anti-Vietnamese clamour was raised by Peking and other imperialist forces. In Washington, with tacit American approval, Deng Xiao-ping told American journalists: “Yes, China has mustered forces along the border with Vietnam, as you already know. If we don’t give the Vietnamese a necessary lesson, then we might as well sit with folded arms.” (New China News Agency, 31 January 1979) Chinese Vice-premier Li Hsien-nien said in the same vein: “We must warn Vietnam against turning a deaf ear to our words.” New China News Agency, 11 February 1979).

The above actions heralded even more brazen-faced and dangerous moves—the consequences of a chauvinistic policy pursued by a great power frustrated in its expansionist ambitions and encouraged by the alliance it
has concluded with imperialism, U.S. imperialism in the first place. On 17 February 1979, Peking started an open war of aggression against Vietnam, cynically invading the territory of an independent and sovereign country.

This aggression laid bare the Peking leaders’ wicked reactionary nature before the eyes of the whole world. They had not hesitated to shed their “socialist” mask and their true features: warlike, aggressive and counter-revolutionary, even more abject than those of the imperialist forces which had been defeated by the Vietnamese people over the past decades.

The Vietnamese people had been willing to forget about the aggressions perpetrated by Chinese feudalists in the past, let bygones be bygones, and cultivate friendship with China. But the Peking expansionists have persistently followed in the footsteps of the former Chinese emperors and doggedly pursued unforgivable designs against the Vietnamese people.

The Vietnamese people want peace. They need to have peace to rebuild their country. But now that they have fallen victim to the Peking rulers’ aggressive and hegemonist policy, the only way left to them is to stand up arms in hand to defend their country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. For the sake of their independence and freedom, they have endured great sacrifices. They are ready to make even greater sacrifices in order to repel the new aggressors, the Great-Han expansionists.
The war of aggression started by the Peking leaders has dealt a hard blow at the friendship between the two peoples. But the Vietnamese people always know how to distinguish friends from foes. In the past they never confused the ruling feudal class in China with the Chinese people. Likewise, they do not confuse at present the Chinese people with the Peking rulers who, by starting a war of aggression against Vietnam, have unmasked themselves as the enemy of the Chinese people as well as the Vietnamese people. History is full of evidence that the Chinese feudalists, who repeatedly attacked Vietnam, were also the authors of the hunger and destitution which weighed on the Chinese people.

The Peking authorities are grossly mistaken if they think that their invasion of Vietnam will force our country to forsake its just line of national independence and sovereignty and internationalist solidarity. Our people’s strength at present is infinitely greater than at the time when they defeated the redoubtable Yuan [Mongol] forces in the 13th century and more recently the American imperialist aggressors. This strength, added to the global might of the three revolutionary currents of our time and the power of progressive mankind, who stand for freedom and justice, will allow the Vietnamese people to get the better of any aggressor. “The Vietnamese people will defeat the war of aggression started by the Peking rulers, safeguard their independence and sovereignty,
and contribute a worthy part to the defence of peace and stability in Southeast Asia and the world.” (Declaration of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 17 February 1979)

The brilliant feats of arms recorded by our people's forces in the course of the first week of resistance to Chinese aggression are eloquent proof of this.

26 February 1979
NGUYEN HUU THUY
APPENDIX
In the early hours of 17 February 1979 Chinese forces started their attacks all along the Vietnamese-Chinese border. This 1200 km-long frontier line crosses mountainous areas in which high mountain peaks alternate with lower hills, the average altitude decreasing gradually as one goes from west to east. In spite of the rugged terrain, there exist many north-south passages due to the disposition of the mountain chains and the valleys. In particular, the valley of the Red River, which takes its rise in southwestern China and enters Vietnam at the frontier town of Lao Cai, and the Dong Dang—Lang Son artery where run the railway and highway (National Highway One) which link Hanoi to Peking and beyond it to all the other socialist countries, constitute historical roads of invasion. The Cao Bang region is also a crossroads of land and water communication lines,
which former Chinese imperial dynasties often sought to annex. On the Vietnamese side of the frontier six provinces lie from west to east: Lai Chau, Hoang Lien Son (capital: Lao Cai), Ha Tuyen (capital: Ha Giang), Cao Bang, Lang Son and Quang Ninh, a coastal province well known for its Bay of Ha Long and its coal mines. The coastal town of Mong Cai lies just on the border.

Although similar hill-and-forest areas lie on either sides of the frontier, the border line is well-defined thanks to a system of border-posts set up in the late 19th century following an agreement signed between the French colonial administration and the Peking Court, and has been recognized by the Vietnamese and Chinese Parties after 1955.

Let us recall that in the six above-mentioned provinces live many ethnic groups — Tay, Nung, Meo, Zao, to mention only the more important ones — as well as a large Hoa population (people of Chinese extraction). On both sides of the frontier live people of the same ethnic origins; they trade at the same markets and are bound by ties of kinship. A Meo, Tay, Nung or Hoa is a Vietnamese citizen when he lives south of the border line, whereas his cousin who lives on the other side of this line holds Chinese citizenship. All through the year 1978 a large number of Peking agents conducted agitation among those ethnic groups, especially
the Hoa community, urging them to leave for China. Thus 150,000 Hoa people crossed the frontier. Now they—or at least able-bodied elements among them—serve as guides for the Chinese troops or form units of “montagnards” which operate commando raids on Vietnamese positions, using mountain tracks for launching attacks on their rear.

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During this first week of their offensive, the Chinese have fielded 16 divisions and nearly 300 tanks, while their aircraft have flown only reconnaissance flights. A whole series of border posts and localities in all the six Vietnamese provinces close to China have been attacked; frontal assaults being often combined with attacks in the rear by montagnard commandos. A frontal attack would begin with an intense artillery barrage (130-mm guns and 105-mm howitzers) followed by assault troops spearheaded by tanks. The first wave of assaults was aimed at capturing a whole series of points along the frontier within a short time: these points were to serve as springboards for important forces rushing forward toward the three provincial capitals: Lao Cai, Cao Bang, and Lang Son.

At Lao Cai, a border town lying on the bank of the Red River and separated from the Chinese town of Ho Keou by a bridge spanning a
tributary of this river, the Nam Thi, the assault began with an intense artillery pounding during the night, which made hundreds of civilian victims. Two pontoon bridges were thrown across the Red River and the Nam Thi, while the Vietnamese posts of Bat Xat and Muong Khuong, located a dozen kilometres northwest and northeast of Lao Cai, were furiously attacked. Vietnamese regional forces and the popular militia reacted immediately. The pontoon bridges were blown to pieces by Vietnamese artillery and many invading troops were drowning. In and around the town fighting is still raging, with the Chinese forces trying to seize the important Cam Duong mining centre, about 20 kilometres south of Lao Cai, which accounts for almost all the apatite produced in Vietnam.

It is in Cao Bang province that the aggressors have penetrated the most deeply, with two spearheads converging on the provincial capital located about thirty kilometres from the border. Although sustaining severe losses, the Chinese forces have succeeded in getting close to the town and occupying a few positions around it. Dong Khe, which sits on strategic Highway 4 running along the border and linking Cao Bang to Lang Son, has been captured. The people of Cao Bang town, evacuated in neighbouring villages, have suffered casualties due to artillery poundings. Chinese commandos
trying to penetrate into the Tinh Tuc [tin] mining centre have been annihilated.

It is in the direction of Lang Son town located about 15 kilometres from the frontier that the enemy has launched his main thrust. He began with attacks on a certain number of frontier posts then tried to seize the small town of Dong Dang where is the railway terminal. The hills surrounding it have been the targets of furious attacks and counter-attacks. After a week of efforts the Chinese forces have not yet been able to control the whole of Dong Dang and, naturally, the town of Lang Son. They have had to bring up important reinforcements.

In Quang Ninh province, fighting is still confined to attacks on frontier posts and artillery poundings of Mong Cai town, although important forces have been mustered on the Chinese side of the frontier and out at sea. In the westernmost Lai Chau province, Chinese forces are engaged in attacks on frontier posts but without succeeding in setting foot on Vietnamese soil.

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After a week of fighting, what “lesson” is to be drawn, to use a favourite word of Deng Xiaoping?

This is clearly a large-scale aggression launched with important forces—10 divisions at the
outset, 16 divisions at week's end, and hundreds of tanks. Many more divisions are waiting on the Chinese side of the frontier.

The Chinese have suffered heavy losses: 16,000 troops put out of action, 160 tanks and armoured vehicles destroyed. The Vietnamese forces have made the most of the rugged terrain and brought into full play their anti-tanks weapons and artillery against the enemy's armoured vehicles and truck convoys. The destruction of Chinese armour has sown confusion among the infantrymen who followed and the coordination between Chinese artillery, armour, infantry and montagnard commandos has failed to operate. If one looks at the forces the Chinese have fielded and the losses they have sustained, the results they have reaped have been paltry: the border town of Lao Cai alone has been occupied, and Vietnamese forces still operate there. On 28 February, an important Chinese column setting out from Lao Cai suffered severe losses. Lang Son has not yet been reached although it is located a mere 15 kilometres from the border and is easily accessible through a large road.

On the Vietnamese side, only local defence forces, i.e. popular and regional forces have been involved. They are well-equipped, know the terrain perfectly, and above all are resolved to defend every inch of the national territory.
Stubborn and effective resistance has been opposed to the aggressors by the self-defence units of State farms and logging-camps. Neither our large infantry units, armour, nor air force have yet joined the fighting.

Barely two days after the start of their offensive, the Chinese forces have been forced to stop, their advance blocked by effective Vietnamese resistance and facing repeated counterattacks on the few positions they have occupied. It is clearly a serious failure for the Chinese army not to be able to capture Lang Son, located only 15 kilometres, and Cao Bang, 30 kilometres, from the border after a week of fighting, and this while the Vietnamese side has committed only regional forces. The Chinese command may try even harder and send reinforcements with a view to seizing those localities but in any event the proof has been administered that a war of aggression against Vietnam is no walkover. Perhaps this was already known before things started but the leaders in Peking saw matters in another light. They had thought that Vietnam, exhausted by 30 years of war, torn by north-south contradictions, undermined by the Hoa community (a million and a half people), was vulnerable. In the last months of 1978, following the terrible floods which had ravaged the country, Peking thought it could deal Vietnam a fatal blow. Almost the whole of the army of Pol Pot was unleashed on the southern border of the coun-
try. It was to seize the Vietnamese town of Tay Ninh, thereby bringing panic to Ho Chi Minh City, where live 700,000 Hoa people and where the price of rice had skyrocketed. What happened is known: the Pol Pot army was destroyed, and Kampuchea was quickly liberated. Deng Xiao-ping has refused to draw a lesson from these events. Having received assurances in Washington and Tokyo, still bent on taking advantage of the situation brought about by the floodings in Vietnam and overestimating his strength he unleashed the aggression of 17 February.

This armed offensive is only a continuation of a policy worked out by Peking over many years.

A brutal policy has thus been laid bare, whose fundamental components are as follows:

— A will of expansion and hegemony in the direction of the whole of Southeast Asia, which carries on the “Great Han” traditions of imperial China. Let us recall that the last invasion of Vietnam by Chinese imperial troops took place in 1789: 200,000 Chinese troops — the same number as committed so far in the present aggression — were ‘shattered’ by a lightning counter-offensive launched by the Vietnamese side. Two centuries of peace between the two countries have passed. It is now the sad privilege of the leading group in Peking at present to start a new aggression against Vietnam.
Open collusion with American imperialism in the form of co-operation on a world scale, the Washington-Peking axis having engaged in concerted action in Chile as well as in Vietnam, in Angola as well as in Ethiopia and Iran.

Outright treason of the world revolutionary movement, the Peking leaders no longer even troubling to hide behind a screen of pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric, as they did in the past. Now they openly proclaim their warlike policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, and their hostility to the national liberation movements.

The anti-Vietnamese policy of Peking is no novelty. As soon as the Nixon-Kissinger team came to power in the United States, Peking colluded with Washington with a view to preventing the liberation of South Vietnam. In 1974, with the agreement of the US fleet, Chinese forces seized the Vietnamese islands of Hoang Sa (Paracel Islands). In April 1975, the Chinese leaders tried to dissuade the Vietnamese command from liberating Saigon. After southern Vietnam was liberated, they unleashed the Pol Pot forces against Vietnam while trying to use the Hoa community in the country to sow troubles. The February 1979 offensive only continues a policy that has been thought out over long years. This policy, none the less shows a glaring weakness: Peking has
not dared to give the Chinese people information about the war, a total news blackout is on. For a week now the Chinese media have kept silent on the subject. However, as early as 23 February some *dazibaos* (wallposters) appeared on the walls of Peking criticizing the aggression against Vietnam.

Another weakness: apart from notorious imperialists and reactionaries, Peking has received no approval from any quarter in the international scene. A broad movement has taken shape worldwide against the Chinese aggression in the very first week of the war. The Vietnamese people are not alone in their struggle, for everyone knows that the conflict might lead to a world war.

This war, as everyone knows, is the third trial faced by the Vietnamese people over the last 30 years. In 1945 they had to resist French imperialism at a time when they had not yet acquired any experience in armed struggle and had no material means of defence. In 1965, when American forces intervened massively, half of Vietnam was occupied by the enemy, who had colossal technical means at his disposal. Now, Vietnam wholly liberated, with plenty of combat experience, more united than ever, and inspired by millennia-old traditions, faces Chinese aggression calmly and firmly. This situation has existed for several years already. The
Peking leaders can exert the strongest pressure on the country; they may hamper its reconstruction efforts considerably; but they will never succeed in subduing it and forcing open the way for their penetration into Southeast Asia. Only a total withdrawal of Chinese troops will put an end to the conflict. All foreign observers can see what calm prevails among the Vietnamese population. Work goes on in a normal way while large numbers of people from all walks of life enlist in the armed forces. Through the experience of Kampuchea the Vietnamese people know what price they would have to pay if the country should ever be subjected to the will of the men in Peking. Once again, the people of Vietnam will fight until the last foreign soldier is driven out of the national territory.
Printed in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
- Chinese aggression against Vietnam
- Underlying causes
- History of the relations between Vietnam and China over the past few years