passive, formal role the U.S. was to play at the Conference, Dulles told the Under Secretary (1) that if a settlement should be reached he was to issue a unilateral (or, if possible, multilateral) statement that "conforms substantially" to the seven points; (2) that "The United States will not, however, become cosignatory with the Communists in any Declaration"; (3) that the U.S. should not be put in a position where it could be held responsible for guaranteeing the results of the Conference; (4) that Smith's efforts should be directed toward forwarding ideas to the "active negotiators" (France, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam); and (5) that the U.S. should avoid permitting the French to believe that a breakdown of the negotiations was due to U.S. advice or pressure, thus making the U.S. in some way morally obligated to intervene militarily in Indochina. Dulles stated with respect to this last point that the U.S. was "not prepared at the present time to give any commitment that it will intervene in the war if the Geneva Conference fails..." This decision, of course, remained unknown to the communists at Geneva, who continued to speculate on U.S. intentions.

h. Smith's Presence Reinforces Western Position

Coming soon after the Dulles-Bidault talks in Paris (13-14 July), Smith's return was apparently interpreted by the Chinese, and doubtless by the Russians as well, as a sign of a united Western front at the Conference. When taken in conjunction with what Mendes-France had already publicly told the National Assembly of his intentions to ask for conscripts in the event his 20 July deadline passed without a settlement, and with what the Premier told Malenkov about not intending Geneva to "turn into a Panmunjom," the return of Smith gave the French negotiating position the appearance of real strength. The communist delegations, therefore, were presented with an option. They could call France's bluff -- by refusing further concessions or by making a settlement contingent on a U.S. guarantee -- or they could seek to gain French agreement that, hopefully, would obviate a U.S.-U.K.-French alignment in Asia. As the Conference ground on toward Mendes-France's 20 July deadline, major concessions from the communist side brought the settlement essentially in line with the seven points.
GVN STATUS AND NEGOCIATING POSITION AT GENEVA

1. GVN is Independent Before Geneva

  a. Status of GVN Changes

The sovereign independence of Vietnam was a constant source of irritation and contention between France and the U.S. From the conclusion of World War II until the Geneva Conference, Washington continually urged Paris to follow the nationalist winds and establish an independent State of Vietnam. Coupled with pressures from Vietnamese nationalists, France did move in this direction -- albeit as slowly as possible.

In June, 1948, Bao Dai was persuaded to become political leader of a "State of Vietnam," incorporating Cochin China, Tonkin, and Annam, which would be "independent...within the French Union." A treaty to this effect, the Elysee Agreements, was drawn up and approved by both sides in March, 1949, but was delayed in ratification by the French Assembly until 29 January 1950. There were a number of qualifications on the meaning of "independence" in the French Union, including complete freedom of movement of French military forces throughout the countries of the French Union and legal immunity for French enterprises on the territory of other Union nations. On 3 July 1953, the French were pressured into announcing plans to negotiate and redefine Franco-Vietnamese political relations. But it was not until March, 1954, that these negotiations began, producing on 28 April a joint declaration recognizing what it called "total independence" for Vietnam. Buttinger calls this "a shabby independence." The country became fully sovereign on 3 June 1954.

It is important to remember that French procrastination, among other reasons, on setting the demands for full Vietnamese independence led to hesitancy on the part of the U.S. to intervene militarily in support of the French. With all, the status of the Bao Dai government did begin to change prior to the conclusion of the Geneva Conference -- too late to figure in Franco-American deliberations about "united action," but soon enough to make Vietnam an independent state before the Conference agreed to a settlement of the war.

b. Talks Lead Toward GVN Independence

Between July, 1953, and April, 1954, French and Vietnamese representatives had a series of talks on ways to complete the independence of Vietnam promised in France's 3 July 1953 declaration. On 8 March 1954, the final round of talks began in Paris, and at a meeting on 28 April, agreement was reached by a Franco-Vietnamese political committee on the text of separate treaties of independence and association, with the latter (consisting of seven articles) to be spelled out in subsequent conventions. Premier Laniel and Vice President Nguyen Trung Vinh signed a common declaration that same day which specified that the treaties would come into force
upon ratification by the two governments. But, the ratification process was delayed for over a month. The U.S. Mission in Saigon was clearly annoyed that the long-awaited break in the Franco-Vietnamese deadlock did not lead immediately to ratification. The Mission speculated that the French were delaying to keep a free hand at Geneva by making no commitments on Vietnam until the outcome of the conference could be known. The Mission noted that in doing so, the French were only feeding the doubts and suspicions of the Vietnamese about future French intentions toward Indochina. \(^1\) Washington, for its part, refused to consider the 28 April initialling of agreements as satisfying its pre-condition on complete Vietnamese independence. \(^2\)

c. **GVN Independent After 4 June 1954**

Not until 4 June, did the French National Assembly finally ratify the two treaties. \(^3\) By the Treaty of Independence, Vietnam was recognized "as a fully independent and sovereign State invested with all the competence recognized by international law." Vietnam agreed to replace France "in all the rights and obligations resulting from international treaties or conventions contracted by France on behalf or on account of the State of Vietnam or of any other treaties or conventions concluded by France on behalf of French Indochina insofar as those acts concern Vietnam." In other words, the GVN assumed responsibility for all agreements executed prior to ratification of the independence treaty. Under the accompanying Treaty of Association, Vietnam's status as an equal in the French Union was acknowledged for the first time, and with it the right (subsequently re-confirmed) to determine its extent of participation in the Union. The State of Vietnam was, therefore, a fully independent entity by 4 June 1954. France's international obligations in or for Vietnam as of that date were freely taken over by the GVN. This was in contrast, it might be added, to the DRV's abrogation of agreements concluded in Vietnam's behalf by France when Ho's regime took power on 2 September 1945. \(^4\)

d. **GVN and DRV Status at Geneva Differ**

The final communiqué of the Berlin Conference (18 February 1954) specified that the Indochina phase of the Geneva deliberations would be attended by the United States, Great Britain, Communist China, the Soviet Union, France, "and other states concerned." Invitations to participants, it was further agreed, would be issued only by the Berlin conferees (U.S., UK, USSR, and France).

There had been some doubt as to the status of the DRV at the upcoming Indochina convention, but subsequent talks between Molotov and Bidault in April clarified the position of the DRV. \(^5\) Although the DRV was still considered a rebel group by the West, rather than an interested State, admission of the Viet Minh to the conference was never a serious problem. As one of the principal combatants whose consent to a cease-fire was considered indispensable, the Viet Minh could hardly be
ignored. Moreover, the Soviet Union indicated to the French that it would not accept the presence of delegates from the Associated States unless the DRV were admitted to the conference. 6/ The principal Western objection concerning the DRV was that the invitation had been tendered to the Viet Minh not only by the Soviet Union but also by Communist China, a move admitted by Molotov at the first plenary session on 8 May and protested by France and the United States. 7/

Word of the DRV's admission naturally angered the Bao Dai government. When informed of Franco-Soviet Agreement on the DRV's admission, the Bao Dai government decided that Vietnam would go to the conference only upon invitation of the Western Big Three -- that is, only if the SVN status differed from that of the DRV. On 2 May the invitations arrived with the Soviets being informed that GVN participation would in no way confer de jure recognition on the DRV. 8/ Although the Bao Dai government could not bar the DRV from the conference table, it did not accord Ho's regime anything more than the status of a belligerent.

There was, then, a distinction between the status of the DRV and the GVN at the Geneva Conference. Whereas all the major powers implicitly or explicitly recognized the full status of the GVN as a state, the Western powers conceded only belligerent status for the DRV/Viet Minh. In practice, however, the Viet Minh were much more a part of the negotiating process, particularly as regards military arrangements. The GVN, in its own right, pursued a consistent public line, emphasizing its independence and its hope for the continued political unity of Vietnam -- under Bao Dai.

2. GVN Unable to Forestall Partition

a. GVN Requests Written Assurance Country Will Not be Partitioned

At the time the Conference began, the State of Vietnam was concerned and suspicious about the possibilities of a partitioning of the country. Mindful of past instances of partition in Korea and Germany, and deeply in doubt of French willingness to stand firm against Viet Minh territorial claims, the GVN urged the French government to give written assurance that Paris would not seek a division of Vietnam. On 25 April, Bao Dai had served notice on the French that his government would not tolerate partition. GVN representatives in Paris issued a communiqué in the name of Bao Dai's cabinet which noted various plans in the air for a partition of Vietnam. The communiqué stated that a partition "would be in defiance of Vietnamese national sentiment which has asserted itself with so much strength for the unity as well as for the independence of its country. Neither the Chief of State nor the national government of Vietnam admit that the unity of the country can be severed legally..." In calling for French assurances that they would not negotiate a sacrifice of Vietnamese interests with the "rebels," the communiqué implied that the Vietnamese government would not sign the April treaties until such assurances were received. And, the GVN cabinet warned that a compromising agreement would never receive Vietnam's approval:
"...neither the Chief of State, nor the Vietnamese Government, will consider themselves as bound by decisions running counter to the interests, i.e., independence and unity, of their country that would, at the same time, violate the rights of the peoples and offer a reward to aggression in opposition to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and democratic ideals." 9/

b. France Assures GVN it Will Not Seek Partition

In response to this clear-cut statement, the French came forward with both oral and written promises. On 3 May, Maurice Dejean, the Commissioner General for Indochina, said in Saigon:

"The French government does not intend to seek a settlement of the Indochina problem on the basis of a partition of Vietnamese territory...Formal assurances were given on this subject last April 25 by the French minister for foreign affairs to the minister for foreign affairs of Vietnam, and they were confirmed to him on May 1." 10/

Written assurance came from Bidault on 6 May, when he wrote Bao Dai that the task of the French government was to establish peace in Indochina, not "to seek here [at Geneva] a definitive political solution." Therefore, the French goal would be, said Bidault, to obtain a cease-fire with guarantees for the Associated States, hopefully with general elections in the future. Bidault continued:

"As of now, I am however in a position to confirm to Your Majesty that nothing would be more contrary to the intentions of the French government than to prepare for the establishment, at the expense of the unity of Vietnam, of two states having each an international calling (vocation)." 11/

c. DRV Admits Feasibility of Partition

In their talks with the Viet Minh, however, the French found their adversary as stubborn at the bargaining table as on the battlefield. The negotiations during most of May made insignificant progress; but toward the end of the month, the Viet Minh made their first major concession when they strongly hinted that, given the right conditions, they might lift their demand for a united Vietnam. This, it can be speculated, was seen by Paris as a way of getting itself off the hook. While it may have been unacceptable to negotiate all of Vietnam away, half of Vietnam could be sold to the U.S. as a realistic compromise.

On May 24, Hoang Van Hoan, DRV Ambassador to Peking and spokesman of the DRV delegation, informed a special envoy of the French newspaper Le Monde (Jean Schwoebel) that a military settlement through a cease-fire...
need not, as the Viet Minh had previously insisted, be preceded by a political settlement. Hoan reportedly stated: "It is first necessary to have a cease-fire. We do not pose a single prior political condition. If, in the plan of M. Dong, political proposals precede those which concern the cease-fire, it is solely a question of presentation..." Hoang Van Hoan's statement was confirmed the next day when Phan Van Dong, speaking at the sixth restricted session, referred for the first time to territory under Viet Minh control. Dong's proposals included specific reference to areas under the control of each Vietnamese state; in regrouping forces of the two sides, he suggested that territorial readjustments also be made so that each side would be able to have complete economic and administrative, as well as military, control. So as not to be misunderstood, Dong further urged that a line of demarcation be drawn that would be topographically suitable and appropriate for transportation and communication within each state. Thus, quite contrary to French and Vietnamese expectations, the Viet Minh had opened the way toward partition, and appeared willing to contemplate the creation, albeit temporary, of separate zones of political control.

d. French Opposition to Partition Collapses

French support of GVN opposition to partition, which Bidault upheld privately to Smith and Eden at Geneva, collapsed once the new government of Pierre Mendes-France took over in mid-June. Mendes-France, keenly aware of the tenor of French public anti-war opinion, was far more disposed than his predecessor to make every effort toward achieving a reasonable settlement, and he quickly foresaw that agreement with the Viet Minh was unlikely unless he accepted the concept of partition. His delegate at Geneva, Jean Chauvel, and the new Commissioner General for Indochina, General Paul Ely, reached the same conclusion. At a high-level meeting in Paris on 24 June, the new government thoroughly revised the French negotiating position. The objectives for subsequent talks, it was decided, would be: (1) the regroupment of forces of both sides and their separation by a line at about the 18th parallel; (2) the establishment of enclaves under neutral control in the two zones, one for the French in the area of the Catholic bishoprics at Phat Diem and Bui Chu, one for the Viet Minh at an area to be determined; (3) the maintenance of Haiphong in French hands in order to assist in the regroupment. At this same meeting, it was also decided that, for the purpose of psychological pressure on the Viet Minh, if not military preparedness for future contingencies, France should announce plans to send a contingent of conscripts (later determined as two divisions) to Indochina.

3. GVN Refuses to Accept French Leadership

a. Vietnamese are Stubborn and Unyielding

The State of Vietnam delegation at Geneva was determined to be intimidated neither by the DRV and its communist allies, nor by the
Western powers. The GVN representatives continually referred to their sense of responsibility to the Vietnamese people and to national aspirations for unity and freedom. The obvious dependence of the GVN on the military power of the West was not mirrored by an accompanying political spirit of accommodation: the GVN attitude at Geneva must be characterized as stubborn, unyielding, and idealistic. The GVN was the one nation at Geneva that remained completely unmoved by the spirit of compromise.

b. GVN Consistently Opposes Partition

The attitude of GVN toward the Geneva Settlement was the product not only of its non-recognition of the DRV, but also of its hostility to partition and its opposition to national elections held in a divided country. Evidently quite independent of American instigation or pressure, the Saigon government concluded well in advance of the Conference termination on 21 July that it could not accept what it regarded as a set of agreements contracted in defiance of Vietnamese aspirations and without GVN consent. Nguyen Quoc Dinh, speaking for the GVN in the third plenary session (12 May) at Geneva, first read into the record in detail the new treaty guaranteeing GVN independence, then laid down his country's unyielding opposition to any agreement which would tend to split the country either geographically or politically. Any document tabled for consideration, said Quoc Dinh, "Must not lead to partition, either direct or indirect, final or provisional, de facto or de jure, of the national territory." Free elections can be held, he asserted, "as soon as the UN Security Council has decided that the authority of the State has been established in the whole of the territory, and that conditions of freedom have been obtained." 18/ In the fifth restricted session, on 24 May, Quoc Dinh again stressed the GVN's total independence from France:

"...the problem of the independence of Vietnam dominates all events in Indochina whether considered from the point of view of the independence which the state of Vietnam has secured as a result of negotiations with France, or from that of the independence which Vietnam must defend from all foreign invaders." 19/

On the following day, Quoc Dinh repeated, in the Sixth Restricted Session, that the GVN "would not agree to any plan which would result in the partition of Vietnam." Any partition, he said, would incur "the grave danger one would gradually move down a path which would lead to what his people feared most." 20/ On the 27th of May, Quoc Dinh once again spoke on partition. He reminded the other delegates that the GVN had finally achieved independence, the first of its aspirations. The second aspiration, also achieved, was territorial integrity. The GVN could not now accept partition "without betraying its own people":

"With reference to Vietnam, the Vietnam delegation wished to warn the conference against any measures tending to divide the national territory. If a division
of Vietnam were to be sanctioned, the result would not be peace but only a pause before fresh hostilities... Partition would therefore mean sooner or later -- probably sooner -- a renewal of war." 21/

On 29 May, speaking in rebuttal to the DRV delegation, Quoc Dinh stated, "it is impossible for a people to accept of its own free will a mutilation of its country...No Vietnamese patriot could accept partition." This marked the fourth successive meeting in which the GVN delegate emphasized his country's point of view on partition, elections, or both subjects. This emphatic repetition continued. In the Seventh Plenary Session, on 10 June, speaking of a statement made by Molotov, Quoc Dinh accused the USSR of laboring under certain misunderstandings of the GVN and, for the fifth time since tabling his proposals, he repeated the DRV position:

"I noted in his statement...what I suppose was a mistake of inadvertent omission. He said that only the Viet Minh delegation had proposed that a free general election should take place in Vietnam. I'm sorry that I must contradict. The Delegation of the State of Vietnam also had the honor to propose such elections; the difference being that, whereas the Delegation of Viet Minh proposed that there should be no international supervision which, in the present circumstances, means that elections could not possibly be honest and true, the Delegation of the State of Vietnam has proposed that elections should take place under international supervision." 22/

Quoc Dinh then reasserted the complete independence of GVN from France, referring to the treaty of 4 June 1954. A week later, the Vietnamese delegate was again pushing his case on the floor of the conference:

"As regards the independence of our country, it is a well-known fact that we have indicated the contents of two treaties we had with the French on that...As regards the elections, we ourselves, in our proposal of May 12, have taken the initiative of proposing elections in Vietnam. These elections must be free, sincere, and supervised. The best control would be exercised by the UN." 23/

The GVN insistence on territorial integrity and on elections only after full control was pressed with great energy -- almost with vehemence -- up to the very last moment of the Geneva Conference.

c. GVN not Informed of French-DRV Agreements

The evidence suggests that it was not until sometime in early July that the Bao Dai government learned of France's readiness to partition the country, given an acceptable demarcation line. According to a
CIA source, based upon the report of a nationalist southern Vietnamese with "extensive" political contacts, Diem was greatly troubled in early July over France's apparent inclination to abandon the North rather than seek to retain a foothold there. 24/ Diem was said to be convinced that partition would be suicidal, since it would put an end to active anti-Viet Minh resistance. Moreover, Diem was convinced that the French intended to maintain a hold on the South only through manipulating independent irregular forces, such as the armed sects to whom the French allegedly were providing rifles.

d. Note to French Delegation Rejects Partition

GVN anger at hints of a possible French sellout on the partition issue was reflected in a note handed the French delegation (and, without France's knowledge, to the U.S. delegation also) by Nguyen Huu Chau of the Vietnamese delegation on 17 July 1954. The note maintained that not until 16 July did Vietnam learn that at the very time the French High Command had ordered the evacuation of troops from important areas in the Tonkin Delta, the French had also "accepted abandoning to the Viet Minh all of that part situated north of the eighteenth parallel and that the delegation of the Viet Minh might claim an even more advantageous demarcation line." The Vietnamese delegation protested against having been left "in complete ignorance" of French proposals, which were said not to "take any account of the unanimous will for national unity of the Vietnamese people." Disparaging the regroupment plan and the "precarious" nature of the cease-fire being considered, the note again urged that a cease-fire be accompanied by the disarmament of "all the belligerent forces in Vietnam." This would be followed by provisional United Nations control of all Vietnam "pending the complete re-establishment of security, of order and of peace...which will permit the Vietnamese people to decide their destiny by free elections." UN control of a unified Vietnam, the note stated, was preferable to "its maintenance in power in a country dismembered and condemned to slavery." 25/

e. Vietnamese Register Opposition to Elections

The long-standing GVN hostility to partition, expressed well in advance of final agreement to that arrangement, was paralleled by a wariness of a national plebescite on unification. In June, 1954, the Saigon Mission cabled Washington that a national election:

"...to which Department quite rightly attaches importance...is now of less significance in Vietnam than before owing to general feeling of panic and anxiety lest entire country be lost through unfortunate armistice terms. Press has announced that decrees will presently be signed by Bao Dai providing for municipal elections and, with exception of Saigon-Cholon, for direct election of mayors. This should
to some extent meet Department's requirement in this regard although it is far less than national elections or preparations for National Constituent Assembly."

The GVN protest note to the French of 17 July asserted that a cease-fire without disarmament was incompatible with a plebiscite. They held further that the regroupment of the armed forces of the belligerents into separate north-south zones compromised in advance the freedom of any future elections. Moreover, in the GVN view, elections could be considered only after internal security and peace had been re-established, thereby excluding a set time-frame. In short, the GVN argued strongly against any scheduled post-settlement national election, and warned that a plebiscite to determine a government for a unified Vietnam could hardly be envisaged with the northern zone controlled by communist armed forces.

f. GVN Rejects Draft of Final Declaration

On 18 July, GVN, in a conference session, Foreign Minister Tran Van Do spoke out against the draft Final Declaration of the Conference which had been circulated among the delegations. He said that Vietnam could not associate itself with the declaration, and pointed in particular to the conditions for a cease-fire, which stipulated a division of the country, and to Vietnam's lack of an opportunity to present its own proposals. Tran Van Do requested the right to offer Vietnam's own draft declaration at another plenary session.

g. GVN Presents Counter-Proposals

The next day, 19 July, the Vietnamese delegation offered its proposals, an elaboration of the ideas contained in the note to the French delegation. The proposal warned that the French, Soviet, and Viet Minh drafts all spoke of a provisional partition, whereas the inevitable result would in fact be "to produce in Vietnam the same effects as in Germany, Austria, and Korea." The proposal went on: "It would not bring the peace which is sought for, deeply wounding the national sentiment of the Vietnamese people; it would provoke trouble throughout the country, trouble which would not fail to threaten a peace so dearly acquired." The delegation then renewed its plan for a cease-fire in small regroupment zones; the disarming of irregular troops and, after a fixed period, of all Viet Minh troops; the withdrawal of foreign troops simultaneous with disarmament of the Viet Minh; and UN control of the cease-fire, the regroupment, the disarmament and withdrawal, the elections which would follow the restoration of order, and national administration.

Tran Van Do's proposal did not receive consideration at the final plenary session of the Geneva Conference on 21 July. The delegation head protested this as well as the "hasty conclusion of the Armistice Agreement by the French and Viet Minh High Commanders only..." Furthermore, Tran Van Do protested the abandonment of national territory...
to the Viet Minh even though still occupied by Vietnamese troops, and the setting up of a date for national elections by a military command without Vietnamese agreement. He concluded: "...the Government of the State of Vietnam wishes the Conference to take note of the fact that it reserves its full freedom of action in order to safeguard the sacred right of the Vietnamese people to its territorial unity, national independence, and freedom." After other delegation leaders had indicated consent to the military agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities and Final Declaration, Tran Van Do spoke again. He requested the Conference to incorporate in the Declaration the following text:

"The Conference takes note of the Declaration of the Government of the State of Vietnam undertaking: to make and support every effort to re-establish a real and lasting peace in Vietnam; not to use force to resist the procedures for carrying the cease-fire into effect, in spite of the objections and reservations that the State of Vietnam has expressed, especially in its final statement." 31/

Tran Van Do's final effort was dismissed by Eden (as chairman), who urged that, the Final Declaration having already been printed, the conference take note of Do's statement. Nevertheless, Do's comments then and previously clearly established his government's opposition to the Geneva Accords. That the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was signed by the French and Viet Minh military commands, the main belligerents, accommodated the fact that the GVN did not recognize the political existence of the DRV. The French, correctly anticipating adverse reactions from the GVN, avoided seeking GVN official consent to the armistice. The French also knew that the GVN would never accede to a partition arrangement, and formal approval of the armistice by the military commands removed the possibility of GVN obstruction of a cease-fire.

h. GVN Unable to Influence Outcome

The French had good reason for avoiding communication with the Vietnamese during the last days of the Geneva Conference: scheduled elections were prominent among the concessions that France had to make in order to obtain a settlement at all; and the reunification of Vietnam was deferred by the device of the promised plebiscite. As the Conference drew to a close, and time was running out for the French, they traded on the Viet Minh desire for the future "integrity of the Vietnam state" in order to salvage what they could from their own tottering situation. The French finally agreed to Vietnam-wide elections within two years. As in the partition agreements, the GVN was not able to influence that decision to any appreciable degree. In the larger sense, GVN aspirations were sacrificed to the position of France versus its Communist antagonist. Each side was determined not to allow all of Vietnam to fall into the hands of the other. France agreed to elections, knowing -- as the USSR and China also knew -- that elections might never be held. 32/
   
ea. U.S. Refuses to Influence GVN for France

   French readiness to accept a divided Vietnam -- a disposition which before the end of June culminated in abandonment of the enclave alternative in favor of a north-south partition -- was not communicated to the GVN. To the contrary, then and throughout the conference, the GVN delegation and government were informed of shifts in position, if at all, as faits accomplis. During June, for instance, Chauvel on several occasions approached the U.S. with news of the "underground" negotiations with the Viet Minh and with the hope that, once partition had been fixed, the U.S. would "sell" that solution to Saigon. 33/ In the same month, Chauvel, evincing understanding that the U.S. would prefer to disassociate itself from a partition settlement, nevertheless asked if the U.S. would soften Bao Dai opposition by indicating it was the best solution obtainable. Chauvel described Diem and Bui Loc as "difficult," unrealistic, and unreasonable in their opposition, and likely to upset the delicate negotiations. 34/ The U.S. consistently reacted negatively to these approaches, in the undoubtedly correct belief that the French were merely attempting to identify the U.S. with the partition concept in Vietnamese eyes. For example, Secretary Dulles instructed the U.S. Ambassador on 2 July concerning Diem as follows:

   "It seems to me that the new Vietnamese Prime Minister, Ngo Dinh Diem, who has the reputation of uncompromising nationalist, is quite in the dark about developments critically affecting country he is trying to lead. We fear that if results of French negotiations with communists are revealed to him as a fait accompli, the very reaction French wish to avoid will result. You should therefore indicate our concern to the French and ascertain their own intentions with respect to consulting him or minimizing his resentment and their views with respect to plans and prospects for maintaining order in South Vietnam." 35/

   By refusing to act as intermediaries for the French, the U.S. in turn kept free of entanglement in a "French solution" to the Vietnam problem.

   b. French Disregard U.S. Requests, Remain Aloof from GVN

   French aloofness from the GVN continued into July. Despite U.S. requests of the French delegation that the GVN be kept informed of developments, the French remained wary of contact for fear of provoking a GVN reaction that, in turn, might fracture the delicate French discussions with the Viet Minh. Chauvel consequently informed U. Alexis Johnson that "he was handling this liaison with the GVN through members of his staff and was avoiding direct contact with Vietnamese in order not to have to answer their questions." 36/ When Offroy, another member of the French
delegation, suggested that the U.S. placate the Vietnamese with assurance of free world political, economic, and military support after the settlement, U. Alexis Johnson replied that this was a matter which the French had to handle. 37/

c. U.S. Declines to Support Final GVN Position

When the penultimate session of the Conference recessed, Tran Van Do and another member of his delegation, Tran Van Chuong, explained Vietnam's position to U. Alexis Johnson. Even though they admitted that they recognized the impracticality of the GVN proposals, the GVN delegation felt that "they must make the moral position of their government clear to the world and to the Vietnamese people. If the other side rejected it, the position of their government would have been improved." U. Alexis Johnson observed that time was short for another plenary session; he suggested that they ask Mendes-France for an extension of his self-imposed deadline for concluding the negotiations. After some hesitation, they did so, and Mendes-France, although he urged the Vietnamese to circulate their proposal, stated he definitely could not ask the French National Assembly for more time at Geneva. Johnson at this point "reminded Mendes-France of the U.S. position on GVN concurrence with any agreement. Mendes-France [said] he was very conscious of this and was asking De Jean [sic] immediately to go to Cannes to see Bao Dai." 38/ Nothing came of this exchange.

In summary, however, it must be said that while the GVN attained none of its major objectives, and while it received little support from the U.S., it continued to exist. Its territorial and political integrity below the 17th parallel was assured, after a fashion, for at least two years by the Geneva Accords.
French and GVN Responsibilities After Geneva

1. French Presence Does Not Imply French Sovereignty

The fact that French Union forces were still in Vietnam at the time the Geneva military agreements were signed, and that they remained there during and after the Conference, need not be interpreted as evidence of lack of Vietnamese sovereignty. French Union forces could hardly have left the country immediately without surrendering all Vietnam to the communists, and without inviting the slaughter of the Vietnamese National Army. French officers and noncommissioned officers led the latter troops. Clearly, only a gradual withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps was reasonable in view of the prevailing military situation. The GVN accepted these realities and recognized the need for continued French presence. The French government, in granting the GVN independence had agreed that the Expeditionary Corps would be pulled out of Vietnam at the request of the GVN -- although no doubt it hoped to delay that day. In fact, the French moved swiftly after Geneva, under American urging, to relinquish to the GVN the full trappings of the sovereignty granted in June, 1954. By mid-September, the turning over of the civil service, police, and other public administration in South Vietnam was formally completed. By February, 1955, the Vietnamese Army was placed under the command of Vietnamese leaders, and the French accepted American primacy in advising, training, and equipping GVN armed forces.

2. France Is The Executor Of The Geneva Agreements
   a. GVN Does Not Inherit French Responsibilities

   Article 27 of the Armistice agreements signed by France states in part: "The signatories of the present Agreement and their successors in their functions shall be responsible for ensuring and observance and enforcement of the terms and provisions thereof..." That clause seemed to obligate the State of Vietnam in the event France abrogated its responsibilities -- but even if construed thusly, the obligation extended only to "the present military Agreement," and not to the political provisions included in the unsigned Final Declaration. It is also possible to construe the reference to "successors" as a binder on the procession of French governments likely to follow Mendes-France. In any event, the State of Vietnam explicitly denied responsibility for all the agreements concluded by France at Geneva, although it pledged not to interfere with the cease-fire. The declarations of Vietnamese disavowal were early, repeated and specific. Moreover, these declarations included warnings that the partition and elections provided for by the Geneva Conference would lead to renewed violence. Examples of these statements follow:

TOP SECRET - Sensitive
Geneva Conference Declarations of GVN

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<th>Note</th>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25 May 54</td>
<td>State of Vietnam &quot;would not agree to any plan which would result in the partition of Vietnam.&quot; Partition involved &quot;grave danger.&quot;</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>27 May 54</td>
<td>&quot;...The Vietnam delegation wished to warn the Conference against measures tending to divide the national territory. If a division of Vietnam were to be sanctioned, the result would not be peace, but a pause before fresh hostilities: There was no example of a country torn physically apart which had not endeavored to recover its unity and its historic frontiers. Partition would therefore mean sooner or later -- probably sooner -- a renewal of war.&quot;</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>29 May 54</td>
<td>&quot;We do believe that there are certain principles which should guide us. Among these principles is the political and territorial integrity of the Vietnamese country. When it was agreed that representatives of Vietnam should attend this conference, it is obvious that one could not ignore the consequences of this attendance. It is impossible for a people to accept of its own free will a mutilation of its country... No Vietnamese patriot could accept partition.&quot;</td>
<td>Elections can be held &quot;as soon as the [UN] Security Council has decided that the authority of the State has been established in the whole of the territory, and that conditions of freedom have been obtained...&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10 Jun 54</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;The delegation of the State of Vietnam...had the honor to propose...elections;...whereas the Delegation of Viet Minh proposed that there should be no international supervision which,...&quot;</td>
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Geneva Conference Declarations of GVN

(Continued)

On Partition

5 (Continued)

7 16 Jun 54

"The de facto partition... does not take any account of the unanimous will for national unity of the Vietnamese people... Vietnam would prefer... provisional control by the United Nations over a truly unified and independent Vietnam to its maintenance in power in a country dismembered and condemned to slavery."

8 17 Jul 54

"In order to avoid any misunderstanding, Tran Van Do wished to state firmly that Vietnam delegation could not associate itself with any discussion of this Final Declaration... Vietnam does not agree to conditions advanced for cessation of hostilities... Delegation of Vietnam can only protest the idea of partition... Vietnamese delegation flatly rejects both drafts submitted to the conference... Vietnamese delegation cannot accept declaration or agreement where Vietnam, which was invited to the conference as an existing state, is not even mentioned."

On Elections

the present circumstances, means that elections could not possibly be honest and true, the Delegation of the State of Vietnam has proposed that elections should take place under international supervision."

The GVN, "In our proposal of May 12, have taken the initiative on proposing elections... these elections must be free, sincere, and supervised. The best control would be exercised by the U.N."

"Regroupment... reinforces the threat that they constitute to the free expression of the will of the people. Therefore not only does such a cease fire not lead to a durable peace, since, ignoring the will for national unity, it provokes the people to 'unify' the country, but, by the consolidation of the armed forces now facing each other, it violates in advance the liberty of the future elections... The cease fire... far from leading to peace, makes peace improbable and precarious."
Geneva Conference Declarations of GVN
(Continued)

On Partition

"French, Soviet and Viet Minh drafts all admit the principles of a partition of Vietnam in two zones, all of North Vietnam being abandoned to the Viet Minh. Although this partition is only provisional in theory, it would not (repeat not) fail to produce in Vietnam the same effects as in Germany, Austria, and Korea. It would not bring the peace which is sought for, deeply wounding the national sentiment of the Vietnamese people, it would provoke trouble throughout the country, trouble which would not fail to threaten a peace so dearly acquired."

On Elections

"The Vietnamese Delegation therefore proposes:

1. A cease fire on present positions.

2. Regroupment of troops in two zones which would be as small as possible.

3. Disarmament of irregular troops.

4. After a period to be fixed, disarmament of Viet Minh troops and simultaneous withdrawal of foreign troops.

5. Control by the United Nations
   A. Of the cease fire.
   B. Of the regroupment.
   C. Of the disarmament and the withdrawal.
   D. Of the administration of the entire country.
   E. Of the general elections, when the United Nations believe that order and security will have been everywhere truly restored

This proposal made on the formal instructions of His Majesty Bao Dai, and of President Ngo Dinh Diem, shows that the Chief of State of Vietnam once more places the independence and the unity of his country above any other considerations, and that the national government of Vietnam would prefer this provisional UN control over a truly independent and United Vietnam to its maintenance in power in a country dismembered and condemned to slavery."

TOP SECRET - Sensitive
Geneva Conference Declarations of GVN

On Partition

"Mr. Tran van Do (State of Viet-Nam) (Interpretation): Mr. Chairman, the Delegation of the State of Viet-Nam when it tabled its proposal, saw an armistice without a partition, even provisional, of Viet-Nam through disarmament of all belligerent forces after their withdrawal into perimeters as limited as possible and by the establishment of a provisional control by the United Nations on the whole of the territory, while the re-establishment of order and peace would enable the Vietnamese people to decide its fate through free elections.

"The Delegation of the State of Viet-Nam protests against the fact that its proposal has been rejected without an examination, a proposal which is the only one to reflect the aspirations of the Vietnamese people. It requests urgently that the demilitarization and neutralization of the Catholic communities, the Bishoprics of the Delta in North Viet-Nam be at least accepted by this Conference.

"It solemnly protests against the hasty conclusion of the Armistice Agreement by the French and Vietminh High Commanders only, whereas the French High Command does command Vietnamese troops only through a delegation of powers given by the head of the State of Viet-Nam, whereas especially many provisions of this Agreement are of a nature to be seriously detrimental to the political future of the Vietnamese people.

"It further solemnly protests against the fact that this Armistice Agreement abandons to Vietminh territories some of which are still occupied by Vietnamese troops and which are, nevertheless, fundamental to the defense of Viet-Nam against a greater Communist expansion, and results practically even in depriving the State of Viet-Nam from its right to organize its defense by other means than by the maintenance of the foreign army on its territory.

"It also solemnly protests against the fact that the French High Command was pleased to take the right without a preliminary agreement of the Delegation of the State of Viet-Nam to set the date of future elections, whereas we deal here with a provision of an obviously political character. Consequently, the Government of the State of Viet-Nam requests that this Conference note that it does protest solemnly against the way in which the Armistice has been concluded and against the conditions of this Armistice which have not taken into account the deep aspirations of the Vietnamese people.

"And the Government of the State of Viet-Nam wishes the Conference to take note of the fact that it reserves its full freedom of action in order to safeguard the sacred right of the Vietnamese people to its territorial unity, national independence, and freedom.
...as regards the final Declaration of the Conference, the Vietnamese Delegation would request the Conference to incorporate in this Declaration after Article 11, the following text:

'The Conference takes note of the Declaration of the Government of the State of Viet-Nam undertaking:

'to make and support every effort to re-establish a real and lasting peace in Viet-Nam;

'not to use force to resist the procedures for carrying the cease-fire into effect, in spite of the objections and reservations that the State of Viet-Nam has expressed, especially in its final statement.'
It has been held that, the declaratory policy of the State of Vietnam disassociating itself from the Geneva Accords notwithstanding, Vietnam was obligated by the Treaty of Independence (4 June 1954) to accept France's action on its behalf at Geneva. Yet, the reference in the Treaty of Independence to Vietnam's observance of treaties and conventions signed for it by France is in the past tense; no provision is made for France to conclude binding agreements after 4 June on Vietnam's behalf. The passage of Article 27 of the Geneva Agreements in question charges France with the responsibility of insuring Western compliance with the terms of the agreements, as far as the southern part of Vietnam was concerned. Indeed, throughout the conference, France was one of the two principal protagonists, shaped the final position accepted by the West, and signed the cease-fire agreements (the final declaration was not signed, an oral declaration of assent being substituted when it became clear that the U.S. would not sign -- the U.S. refrained also from joining in the oral assent). French forces and political elements were present in South Vietnam and were not required, under the agreements, to be removed. It was not at this time envisioned by any of the Geneva Convention nations that France would precipitately withdraw its armed forces from Vietnam.

b. GVN Position Is Anomalous

It was generally recognized at Geneva that the position of the GVN was, at best, contradictory. The GVN asserted its desire for international status by demanding concessions which the other nations considered impossible. The GVN also was severe in criticism of the French, while at the same time acknowledging a debt to France for its very existence in the face of Viet Minh military and political pressures -- which even France, at that time, could barely sustain. The unsupported opposition of the GVN was understood by the other nations as a small country's fight for survival.

Partition, regroupment, and cease-fire conditions intended to lead to a final political settlement at Geneva, were all imposed on Saigon. While it is true that the alternatives offered by the GVN were impractical and unacceptable given the extent of Viet Minh territorial and population control, the salient fact is that the GVN, speaking from what it regarded as an independent position, held fast against every proposal that departed from its concepts of national unity and self-determination. The limitations on the GVN's role as an independent participant at the Conference stemmed from French determination to conclude a settlement in line with French interests. France commanded the power to attract Conference support; the GVN did not. However, the GVN was neither obligated by previous commitment, by its legal status, nor by the Accords themselves to abide by the Franco-Viet Minh agreements which emerged. This anomaly ultimately made France, and French presence in Vietnam, pivotal to the fulfillment of the Geneva agreements.
DRV NEGOTIATING POSITION

1. The DRV is Determined to Press a Very Hard Line

a. The DRV Recognizes Its Own Strong Position

The victory at Dien Bien Phu cost the DRV 21,000 men. Ho realized he had paid dearly for this psychologically crippling stroke against the French, and he was determined to make the most of his advantage at Geneva. The effect of Dien Bien Phu on the Western delegations at the conference was evident not only in the initial shock, but also in the continued sensitivity to military developments in Indochina. Thus, of primary importance to the DRV negotiating position was the goal of making political capital from battlefield supremacy. Closely allied with this sense of military invincibility was the Viet Minh belief that France was in political turmoil and, therefore, psychologically weak.

b. The DRV Attitude is Defiant

To the DRV, the victories of their troops and the impending collapse of France in Indochina were quite clear. Less clear was the possibility that the U.S., either unilaterally or in some form of united action might intervene. The DRV gambled, however, on the French struggling on alone. In the opening phase of the conference, the Viet Minh released a communication that indicated there was no need to hasten the conclusion of the war:

"We still remember the Korean lesson which taught us that one could negotiate and fight at the same time..." 1/

This attitude of mild defiance was intended not only for consumption in the West but also for the communist countries. The DRV was resisting early pressures of the USSR and the PRC who feared U.S. intervention and a wider war to move quickly to a solution. Instead, the DRV moved rapidly to increase its own forces in the Tonkin Delta, 2/ to compress the French forces there to a smaller territory, and they apparently instructed their delegation to continue pressing a hard line on political concessions. The goal was to delay a settlement until they bettered the military position even further. The DRV was determined to gain every inch that the French could be forced to concede.

c. The DRV Outlines Its Proposals

The initial Viet Minh gambit came at the second plenary session of the Conference on 10 May. 3/ Phan Van Dong stated that the DRV was the "stronger" force in "more than three-fourths of the country." He went on to describe the successful administration of this territory by his government, which he said "represents the will of the entire Vietnamese nation..." The opposition, characterized as "the government of the tempo-
rarily occupied zone," did not enjoy popular support, he said, and was merely a tool of the French. Pham Van Dong did not, however, propose that France recognize "the sovereignty and independence of Vietnam throughout the territory of Vietnam," a statement which amounted to a rejection of the Franco-Vietnamese treaties approved on 28 April by Laniel and Nguyen Trung Vinh. He instead offered an eight-point proposal for a political settlement and a cease-fire:

1. Recognition by France of the sovereignty and independence of Viet-Nam throughout the territory of Viet-Nam, and also recognition of the sovereignty and independence of Khmer and Pathet Lao.

2. Conclusion of an agreement on the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the territory of Viet-Nam, Khmer, and Pathet Lao within the time limits to be agreed upon by the belligerents. Pending the withdrawal of troops, the dislocation of French troops in Viet-Nam shall be agreed upon -- particular attention being paid to limit to the minimum the number of their dislocation points. Provision shall be made that the French troops should not interfere in the affairs of local administration in the areas of their dislocation.

3. Holding of free general elections in Viet-Nam, Khmer, and Pathet Lao with a view to constituting a single government in each country, convening of advisory conferences of the representatives of the governments of both sides in Viet-Nam, Khmer, and Pathet Lao -- in each of the States separately and under conditions securing freedom of activity for patriotic parties, groups, and social organizations; the preparation and the holding of free general elections to establish a unified government in each country. Interference from outside should not be permitted. Local commissions will be set up to supervise the preparation for and the carrying out of the elections. Prior to the establishment of unified governments in each of the above-mentioned States, the governments of both sides will specifically carry out the administrative functions in the districts which will be under their administration, after the settlement has been carried out, in accordance with the agreement on the termination of hostilities.

4. The statements by the Delegation of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam on the readiness of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam to examine the question of the entry of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam into the French Union in conformity with the principle of free will, and on the conditions of this entry corresponding statements should be made by the Governments of Khmer and of Pathet Lao.
5. Recognition by the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam as well as by Khmer and Pathet Lao, of the economic and cultural interests of France in those countries. After the establishment of unified Governments in Viet-Nam, Khmer, Pathet Lao, the economic and cultural relations of these States with France should be subject to the settlement in conformity with the principles of equality and mutual interest. Pending the establishment of the unified governments in the Three States, the economic and cultural relations of Indochina with France will temporarily remain without a change such as they exist now. However, in the areas where communications and trade ties have been broken off, they can be re-established on the basis of understanding between both sides. The citizens of both sides will enjoy their privileged status to be determined later in matters pertaining to domicile, movement, and business activities on the territory of the other side.

6. The belligerent sides undertake not to prosecute persons who collaborated with the other side during the war.

7. There shall be mutual exchange of prisoners of war.

8. Implementation of measures that are referred to in paragraphs one through seven should be succeeded by the cessation of hostilities in Indochina, and by the conclusion to this end of appropriate agreement between France and each of the Three States which should provide for a complete and simultaneous cease-fire throughout the whole of the Indochinese territory by all armed forces of the belligerent sides, ground, naval, and air force. Both sides, in each of the Three States of Indochina, for the purpose of strengthening the armistice, will carry out a necessary settlement of territories and of the areas occupied by them, and it should also be provided that (a) both sides shall not hinder each other during the passage, for the purpose of the above mentioned settlement, by the troops of the other side over the territory occupied by the other side; (b) the complete termination of transportation into Indochina from abroad of new ground, naval, and air units of personnel, or of any kind of arms of ammunition; (c) to set up control over the implementation of the terms of agreement on the cessation of hostilities, and to establish, for this purpose, in each of the Three States, mixed commissions composed of the representatives of the belligerent sides.

d. The DRV Proposals Demand a Political Settlement Before a Cease-Fire

The meaning of Dong's list of proposals was clear. A political settlement would precede a military agreement (cease-fire) rather than
the reverse, which the French preferred. Elections would take place under the supervision of local commissions, and the DRV preference was for holding them country-wide and soon. By first removing the French, and then by dealing directly with the non-communist Vietnamese on the issues of control and supervision of the cease-fire, regroupment, and general elections, the Viet Minh could legitimately expect a quick takeover of power from the relatively weak Vietnamese National Army. As Dong well knew, the relocation of French forces in the Tonkin Delta into a tighter perimeter was having, and would continue to have, major repercussions on Vietnamese army morale. Once the French were persuaded to withdraw, the VNA would undoubtedly collapse under Viet Minh military pressure. Moreover, inasmuch as Dong's plan made no allowance for the disarming, much less the regrouping, of indigenous forces on either side, the Viet Minh would be militarily in a virtually unassailable position to control any general election that might be held (if, in fact, the political process were ever to advance that far). Dong's proposal, then, amounted to a request that the French abandon Vietnam.

e. The DRV Indicates Ambitions for Pathet Lao and Free Khmer

In the same speech, Dong evidenced that the DRV's ambitions extended beyond Vietnam. Acting as spokesman for the Pathet Lao and Free Khmer -- whose representatives had formally come under Viet Minh direction with the announcement on 11 March 1951 of formation of a Viet Minh-Free Khmer-Pathet Lao "National United Front" -- Dong argued that these two movements enjoyed widespread popular support and controlled most of the territory of their respective countries. With considerable distortion of history (subsequently corrected by the Laotian and Cambodian delegates), Dong sought to demonstrate that the Pathet Lao and Free Khmer were de facto governments carrying out "democratic reforms" in the areas their armies had "liberated." The negotiating objective was to gain the status of lawful governments for the Pathet Lao and the Free Khmer. Dong seemed strongly to imply that the DRV spoke not only for itself, but for all the Indochinese peoples.

Dong included the Pathet Lao and Free Khmer in his settlement plan. He demanded that France recognize the "sovereignty and independence" of those movements no less than of the DRV:

"...the Peoples of Khmer and Pathet Lao have liberated vast areas of their national territory. The governments of resistance have exerted all their efforts in creating a democratic power and in raising the living standards of the population in liberated areas. That is why the government of resistance of Khmer, as well as that of Pathet Lao enjoy the support of and warm affection of the population in liberated areas and they enjoy great prestige and influence among the population of both countries."
"These governments represent the great majority of the people of Khmer and Lao, the aspirations of whom they symbolize..." 6/

French forces alone were to withdraw from Cambodia and Laos; the Pathet Lao and Free Khmer were not "foreign" troops. As in Vietnam, elections then would be held -- but, without neutral or international supervision. During these elections, Dong insisted there must be "conditions securing freedom of activity for patriotic parties, groups, and social organizations..." agreement to which would have guaranteed the functioning with impunity of various communist fronts.

f. The Initial DRV Demands are Excessive

Viet Minh ambitions in Indochina, it must be concluded, were not simply oratorical gestures intended strictly for the establishment of a bargaining position. In the absence of Sino-Soviet pressure and the threat of U.S. participation, it seems clear that the DRV would not have reduced their demands. Viet Minh ambitions were extensive and partially realized. They were, however, excessive and contrary to the compromise mood of their communist allies and to the relatively firm Western position.

2. Later DRV Positions Represent a Compromise

a. The DRV Begins to Soften Its Position

The implacable DRV position ran contrary to Chinese and Soviet desires to forestall American intervention in Indochina, and after as early gesture of unity, it was soon evident that the large communist powers were bringing pressure to bear on the DRV. By 17 May, Pham Van Dong was ready to withdraw from his strong position requiring a political settlement before a cease-fire, and also to give up his demands for seating Khmer and Pathet Lao delegations, although he still insisted that recognition of these movements was a part of the Vietnam solution:

"As regards procedure, Dong stated that his delegation was in full accord with the Soviet proposal that both political and military questions be dealt with together. He also agreed to treating the military questions first not because they were more important but more urgent. The questions of Khmer and Pathet Lao were closely linked to that of Vietnam and could not be separated. He did not see any real question for considering first the question of Khmer and Pathet Lao." 7/

This softening of the DRV position at Geneva was not reflected in the military operations in Indochina, where the Viet Minh were still determined to achieve control of as much of the Tonkin Delta as possible; in fact, the Viet Minh were planning heavier operations in the Tonkin Delta. A captured document in the last days of May directed Viet Minh commanders
b. A Weak Laniel Position Delays DRV Concessions

The Viet Minh were considering further concessions in late May and early June when it became evident that the Laniel government was cracking at the seams, and that a harder communist line might force either the fall of Laniel or some significant concessions from France. Either of these results would be profitable, since any government replacing Laniel's would certainly be more willing to end the Indochina war. For this reason, the DRV hard line once more came to the fore, to the point that Pham Van Dong was able to reverse himself on some points he had been ready to concede. On 8 June, he insisted once again on the necessity for a political solution prior to discussions of the cease-fire. As a psychological inducement, he added the hint that, whatever the outcome, France would remain influential in cultural and economic fields, and even suggested that some vestige of the French Union concept would continue to exist:

"To this effect, finally, the Delegation of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam invites the conference to embark without delay upon the consideration of political questions such as the recognition by France of the sovereignty and of the real independence of Viet-Nam and of the other countries of Indochina, the organization of general elections in Viet-Nam, the relations of Viet-Nam and of France; that is, the question of the economic and cultural interests, as well as the question pertaining to the association of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam to the French Union, and the conditions under which such associations should be effected, and so on and so forth." 9/

Possibly the words "and so on and so forth" give a truer indication of the environment in which this projection of future ties was made. The main point was a demand for immediate general elections in exchange for a cease-fire.

c. The DRV Presents a New Series of Proposals

The USSR backed the DRV at this time, insisting on independence for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, free elections in these states, and withdrawal of all foreign troops. 10/ With the continued demand by the DRV for even more territory than its units held on the ground, and with General Ely stating privately in the field that the French Union troops were "very, very tired," 11/ the Laniel government staggered, lost a vote of confidence, and fell on 12 June. It was replaced, on 18 June, by the government of Mendes-France, pledged to end the war in Indochina by 20 July or step down. While the new French government was being formed, the DRV brought forth a new position, embodied in six points to be agreed on prior to a cease-fire:

1. Complete and real sovereignty and national independence of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.
2. Free general elections by secret ballot throughout the territory of Vietnam.

3. No prosecution of collaborators.

4. Establishment of economic and cultural relations between France and the DRV.

5. Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos to respect the independence, unity and internal regime of the other states.

6. Other political questions concerning Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia must be settled at a later time in the interests of consolidating peace and the guarantee of democratic rights and national interests of the peoples of Indochina. 12/

d. The DRV Agrees to a Separate Solution for Laos and Cambodia

The speech by Chou En-lai at this meeting seemed to support the DRV view, although it was more mildly stated. In retrospect, however, it appears that this meeting marked a turning point, at least for the DRV on their insistence for including the Pathet Lao and Free Khmer in a settlement. Chou's proposals, contrary to Pham Van Dong's, implied the withdrawal of Viet Minh forces from Laos and Cambodia and also suggested the postponement of a political settlement for those two states:

"I have stated, on several occasions at this conference, that the situations in the three states are not completely alike. That is to say, that the situation in Vietnam is not completely the same as that in Laos, while the situation in Laos is not completely the same as that in Cambodia. Therefore, the concrete situations in Laos and Cambodia should be taken into consideration in working out solutions for the problems of these two countries." 13/

Two days later, Pham Van Dong, in the fifteenth restricted session, announced the decisive termination of efforts to include all of Indochina in the political agreement:

"...I would like to say there have been Vietnam volunteers which fought on the side of the resistance elements of Laos and Khmer. They have been withdrawn. Today if there are such forces they will be withdrawn." 14/

e. The DRV Reluctantly Accepts Partition

In its early proposals, the DRV did not recognize the possibility of partition, aiming instead at a unification of all Vietnam. In conjunction with their demands for immediate elections, this was calculated to give them control of the whole country. Lacking support from
Peking and Moscow, the DRV was forced to give in on this point. Molotov, on 17 May, opened the door by agreeing that military solutions should precede political solutions, and Eden, on 25 May, moved to include on the agenda the question of "regrouping areas for Vietnam." Pham Van Dong, in reply, accepted this concept of including a demarcation line and made the following points:

1. There should be a recognition of the principles of readjusting the areas under control of each state;

2. Readjustment would mean an exchange of territory taking into account actual areas controlled including population and strategic interests;

3. Each side would get territory in one piece to include complete control of the area both economic and administrative;

4. A line of demarcation should be established following the topographical line of territory so that it is easy to follow and would make transportation and communications possible within each state. 15/

The subsequent discussions of a cease-fire and partition were stymied initially by the DRV demand for a demarcation line at the 13th parallel. After two weeks, by 16 June, the DRV reduced this demand to "all of Tonkin and the entire delta area." The French, "without agreeing," said if such an arrangement were made, they "would demand a free hand in the South, indicating area south of the line starting approximately 16th parallel..." 16/ Discussions continued through the rest of June. The French Ambassador, Bonnet, commented on 28 June that the Viet Minh disposition to negotiate arose, in the French opinion, from a fear that the conflict might expand to include the U.S.; 17/ in other words, the DRV had come around to the view of China and the USSR. From this time on, the French increasingly threatened the DRV with the possibility of U.S. intervention, even though, ironically enough, the U.S. was moving further away from such a position:

"Chauvel reports that he spoke most firmly to Dong regarding military discussions. He said French have accepted Viet Minh proposal that Viet Minh receive Tonkin area, including Capitol, but that further Viet Minh proposal for demarcation line is unacceptable. Chauvel reiterated in strongest terms fact that French proposal for demarcation line just north of Dong Hoi would be acceptable to conference and would thus eliminate danger of extension of war." 18/

By 6 July, Pham Van Dong was almost willing to accept the 17th parallel. His attitude indicated that he, personally, was ready to compromise and that he felt his government was coming around:

"Chauvel had seen Dong this morning. On question of demarcation lines, Dong again referred to status of popu-
lations sympathizing with Viet Minh who would be left south of demarcation line proposed by French. He said this question would be easier for him if he could get some general political assurances regarding eventual status these people. Chauvel said Dong indicated that with such assurances he might be able to accept Dong Hoi line." 19/

f. The DRV is Disappointed on Elections

In Pham Van Dong's 10 May plan, a take-over of all Vietnam by the DRV was almost certain. "Foreign" troops would be withdrawn and elections would take place as soon as possible. "Local government" would fill in during the interval. Supervision of the elections themselves would be by locally composed commissions. The French and the GVN vehemently opposed both immediate elections and elections unsupervised by some kind of international commission. There was no movement in this impasse until 16 July when Molotov opened new possibilities by suggesting that a decision on elections be left up to the GVN and DRV after a military settlement was made. The Chinese were willing to concede that elections might not take place for two or three years. Even under these pressures, there was no progress until very near the time set by the French for termination of Geneva talks. On 19 July, at an extraordinary meeting attended by Molotov, Eden, Mendes-France, Chou En-lai, and Pham Van Dong agreement was reached on postponing elections for two years. 20/ This, of course, represented a severe setback for the ambitions of the DRV.

g. The DRV Does Not Achieve Its Goals at Geneva

The DRV, by the end of the conference, had moved a long way from its initial position on every important consideration. The cease-fire was considered ahead of the political decisions. The country was partitioned, giving the GVN about half the total territory, which was probably much more than it deserved on the basis of France-GVN military strength. Elections were put off for two years instead of being held immediately, and control of the elections was to be international rather than local. The Pathet Lao and Free Khmer movements were not represented at the convention, and the DRV had drawn its Viet Minh troops out of Laos and Cambodia. Bernard Fall's comment that the DRV was forced "to accept conditions far less favorable than the military situation warranted" 21/ is reinforced by a detailed analysis of the French military position in the Tonkin Delta by Lacouture and Devillers in La fin d'une guerre, in which the French situation is described as on the verge of collapse. 22/ The DRV, according to Kahin and Lewis, probably expected, however, that the concessions they had made were only temporary:

"...in evacuating its military units from the South, the Viet Minh was not being called upon to abandon its struggle for power, but only to transfer the competition from the military to the political plane. And whether in a military or an exclusively political contest, the Viet Minh confidently expected victory." 23/
This, as Victor Bator points out, was a serious mistake:

"...there must have been some miscalculation at that time on the part of Democratic Republic of Vietnam. They must have thought that South Vietnam Government would never be able to assert its independence and become strong enough to demand the French withdrawal. They underestimated the American interest in South Vietnam and expected to exploit the chaotic conditions in the South for gaining their political ends. However, as has already been observed, the events took a different turn in the South."  24/

Ho commented much later on his personal feelings about the results of the Geneva Conference, and from these comments comes an indication of his feelings on later situations:

"We thought we had achieved something with the French by compromising and it turned out to be shaky. Only through full and unconditional independence can we achieve stability...We are determined to continue to fight until we achieve total victory, that is, military and political..."  25/
SINO-SOVIET OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

1. USSR and China Motivated by Different Objectives

a. Atmosphere at Geneva is Different from Panmunjom

During the Korean War, the initial communist move toward negotiations came at a time of fairly clear-cut military stalemate. Discussions at Panmunjom extended over two years while UN and communist armies fought over small parcels of strategically valuable terrain. In Indochina, to the contrary, the first communist indications of willingness to negotiate came in September 1953 (from both Peking and Moscow), while the Viet Minh were preparing for the "general counteroffensive," and with the French Union forces constricting their defensive perimeter and desperately seeking to prevent large-scale desertions by the Vietnamese. Moreover, a final settlement was reached after only two months of bargaining. The reasons for this unexpectedly rapid and compromise settlement lie in Moscow and Peking. For reasons that were either the same or complementary, these two communist powers created an atmosphere for serious negotiations.

b. Soviet Objectives

Unlike the Chinese, the Soviet Union was never explicit about its motivations for working toward a settlement. Nevertheless, there are strong grounds for believing that the Soviets had these goals in view: (1) averting a major war crisis over Indochina that would stimulate Western unity, provide the U.S. with support previously lacking for "united action," and conceivably force Moscow to help defend the Chinese; (2) reducing the prospects for successful passage of the European Defense Community in the French National Assembly; (3) seizing the opportunity to create a communist-controlled enclave in Vietnam which could then be expanded into a new communist state.

(1) USSR Seeks to Avert a Major International Crisis

On the first point, the Soviets were surely aware that the United States probably would be prepared, under certain conditions, to consider active involvement in the war. Newspaper reports of the time added both credence and uncertainty to American plans for "united action." The Soviets during this period were caught up, moreover, in a full-fledged policy debate over the import of Eisenhower's defense program for Soviet national security. When the debate was resolved sometime in April 1954, apparently First Secretary Khrushchev's perception of the continued danger of a new world war that might be touched off by a reckless American nuclear strike won out over the relative optimism of Premier Molenkov. Specifically, Moscow probably reasoned that a failure to settle at Geneva would lead to U.S. involvement and escalation in Indochina, that at one point there might be another direct clash between American and Chinese forces, and that the Soviet Union therefore would be called upon to come to the aid of its Chinese ally.
As the Soviets entered the Geneva Conference, then, it seems that one of their primary aims was to diminish the possibility of U.S. intervention, either in the guise of a united action or unilaterally, in Indochina. While this outlook did not prevent the Soviets from seeking to capitalize on the change in administration in Paris from Ianvel to Mendes-France, it did work in the general direction of a reasonable settlement that would be honorable for the French and generally acceptable to the Viet Minh. The Russians evidently believed, however, that so long as the French (and the British) were agreeable to a settlement, the Americans would be hard-pressed to disregard their allies and intervene.

(2) USSR Wishes to Prevent French Support of EDC

EDC was also almost certainly on Molotov's mind during the negotiations. There is no evidence to support the contention of some writers that Molotov explicitly baited Mendes-France with a lenient Indochina settlement in return for Assembly rejection of EDC, but Molotov need not have been that explicit. Throughout 1953 and into 1954, Soviet propaganda was dominated by comments on EDC and the danger of a rearmed Germany. It was certainly in Soviet interest to pressure the DRV for concessions to the French, since removal of the French command from Indochina would restore French force levels on the Continent and thereby somewhat offset the need for an EDC. Soviet interests, in short, probably dictated the sacrifice of Viet Minh goals if necessary to prevent German re-militarization.

(3) USSR Seizes the Opportunity to Create a New Communist State

Soviet efforts to gain control of Iran, Manchuria, Greece and Korea indicate a possible third objective of their diplomacy at Geneva. In these instances, the Soviet Union attempted to gain control of the target state by establishing a communist enclave in the target state itself. This enclave would become, then, "a first stage in the ultimate absorption of the whole state by the communist bloc." It may have been that, in the Soviet view, the timing for such a move in Vietnam was correct and that control of Vietnam would come without the necessity for military conquest.

c. Chinese Objectives: The Need for Border Security

In contrast to the Soviet position, the Chinese made their goals at Geneva quite clear: (1) emphasizing the commitment to assist "wars of national liberation"; (2) guarding against the possibility of U.S. military intervention; (3) preventing the Indochinese states from becoming U.S. bases or joining the American alliance system; and (4) promoting the "five principles of peaceful coexistence" as part of China's effort to extend its influence across Asia. Central to each of these objectives was the need to create a zone of security that encompassed Laos, Cambodia, and the northern half of Vietnam, to insure China's southwestern flank against intrusion by the U.S. or any other large foreign power.
(1) China's Policy Calls for Assistance to "Wars of National Liberation"

From the moment Chinese troops arrived at the Sino-Vietnamese border, Chinese assistance to the Viet Minh was clearly in line with Peking's policy of assisting wars of national liberation. This theme was alluded to frequently by Chinese delegates at Geneva. The Chinese, however, carefully controlled the dispensation of that aid in support of the war, and only after the Berlin Conference did they significantly augment it to assure the fall of Dien Bien Phu. Regardless of Marxist rationale advanced by China for its policy toward the Viet Minh, China historically had acted to obtain vassal states on its periphery. China's domestic cohesion having been restored, it turned, consistent with centuries of policy towards Vietnam, to projecting its influence into Southeast Asia via Vietnam.

(2) China Wary of U.S. Intervention

In providing less assistance than it could have, Peking may very well have been wary of prompting American intervention and a wider war. In this respect, U.S. warnings to China during 1953 from an American Administration which publicly vowed a very hard line toward the communist bloc could not be ignored by Peking. The Chinese by 1954 had evinced, moreover, greater concern than previously over the military effectiveness of nuclear weapons. Having been through a costly war in Korea, and having decided as early as the fall of 1952 to give priority to "socialist reconstruction" at home, Peking was in no position to risk provoking the United States. Its willingness to work for a settlement of the Indochina war may have stemmed, in this light, from the conviction that: (a) the DRV had made sufficient military gains for China, i.e., territorial control in northern Vietnam; and (b) that the DRV should not be allowed to provoke the West (and the U.S. in particular) into a precipitous military response that would change the nature of the war and perhaps of China's commitment as well.

(3) China Wishes to Prevent Laos and Cambodia from Becoming U.S. Allies

Besides assuring that a communist state would occupy the northern portion of Vietnam, China also sought to neutralize the two other Indochinese states. Chou indicated at the conference that he had no objection to the introduction of arms and military personnel into Cambodia or Laos after the cease-fire; nor did he object to their monarchical form of government, to their independent handling of internal political problems, or to their joining the French Union. Surprisingly, Chou asked no concessions from the French on these counts, although the French had half-expected Chou to press for better trade relations, support for a CPR seat in the United Nations, or French diplomatic recognition of Communist China. Instead, Chou made clear that China was concerned preeminently about the establishment of U.S. bases in Cambodia and Laos for potential use against the mainland. Concessions to the French may
have been seen by Peking as a way of keeping the French "in" and the Americans out. The rapid collapse of France could create a vacuum into which the U.S. would be forced to move.

The Chinese were disturbed about the prospect of Cambodia, Laos, and the State of Vietnam becoming members of the proposed U.S. security treaty system for Southeast Asia. When, for example, Chou met with the Cambodian Foreign Minister (Rong Kimny) on 17 July, the Chinese Premier implicitly warned against Cambodian participation in a Southeast Asian pact or acceptance of foreign bases. The consequences of either move by Cambodia, Chou said, would be very serious for Cambodian independence and territorial integrity. And he specifically stated that his remarks applied equally to Laos and Vietnam. Peking was not interested in new territorial acquisitions; but neither would it tolerate an American military threat close by.

(4) China Attempts to Enhance the Image of "Peaceful Coexistence"

A final Chinese objective was to enhance China's image as an Asian power sincerely dedicated to peaceful coexistence. The policy of "peaceful coexistence" was framed in terms of the five principles: mutual friendship, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, non-aggression, equality and mutual respect for territorial integrity. The Chinese invested much time and travel in convincing their Asian neighbors of Peking's sincerity. Seen in this larger context, the Indochina settlement, for which Chou must be credited with a major share, bolstered Peking's image as a dedicated worker for peace whose voice had to be heeded in Asian councils. Not inconsequentially, China's stock in the communist bloc must have risen as well.

2. USSR and China Serve as Moderating Influences on the Viet Minh

a. Opening Position of Both Countries Supports DRV Hard Line

For a variety of reasons the Soviets and Chinese found it in their respective interests to work for a peaceful settlement of the Indochina War. Although giving the impression, at first, of being fully behind the Viet Minh negotiating position, Molotov and Chou En-lai gradually moved toward accommodation with the French. The two chief communist delegates were in fact instrumental in gaining concessions from the Viet Minh and in proposing acceptable alternatives to the French. At the outset of the Conference, Molotov and Chou outwardly supported without qualification Pham Van Dong's proposal for a political settlement to be followed by a cease-fire. When it became clear that the French were not going to accept that proposal, they evidently agreed that further progress required a separation of military from political discussions. Molotov's suggestion at the first restricted session of 17 May along these lines, and Chou's remark to Eden on 20 May that a cease-fire should have priority, represented real breakthroughs and probably were the cause of Pham Van Dong's willingness to engage in private military discussions with French General Delteil.
b. Shift to Support of Bilateral French-DRV Discussions is Apparent Early

The Soviet and Chinese delegations -- much more than the Viet Minh -- were more anxious for direct Franco-Viet Minh discussions. The fact that Soviet officials on 30 March and again 5 May told Western officials that bilateral talks would be the most profitable form of negotiations for a cease-fire suggests that the communists' initial backing of Pham Van Dong's proposal may have been simply a trial balloon. Once the French, supported by the U.K. and U.S., refused to budge from their call for an immediate, closely inspected cease-fire, Chou and Molotov were left free to initiate talks in the direction of compromise.

c. USSR and China Change DRV Approach to Cease-fire

The pressure that the Chinese and the Soviets were able to bring to bear apparently forced the DRV to acquiesce in a cease-fire prior to a military settlement. Pham Van Dong had argued for a plan which would have made a cease-fire throughout Indochina contingent on the satisfaction of Viet Minh conditions for general elections and the formation of three united governments. But at the first restricted session of the Conference on 17 May, Molotov pointed out that French proposals up to that point had dealt only with military matters, and proposed therefore that these be dealt with before going on to political arrangements. The Chinese agreed with this approach. In a conversation with Eden, Chou En-lai concurred in the separation of military from political matters, with priority to a cease-fire. When, therefore, Hoang Van Huan reportedly told Le Monde on 24 May that the DRV posed "not a single prior political condition," he was reflecting the views of the Soviets and Chinese as much as paying the way for Dong's initiative of the next day.

d. DRV Responds to Sino-Soviet Pressure on Partition

There is evidence to believe that both the Chinese and the Soviets were instrumental in bringing about a series of Viet Minh concessions on the issue of where to draw the demarcation line between North and South Vietnam. The possibility of partition had been suggested initially to U.S. officials as early as 4 March by a member of the Soviet Embassy in London, apparently out of awareness of Franco-American objections to a coalition arrangement. The partition line mentioned at that time was the 16th parallel, which would have placed Tourane (Da Nang) in the hands of the Viet Minh (the 16th parallel crosses a few miles south of the port). It was also the Soviets who, on the opening day of the conference, approached the U.S. delegation on partition -- this time averring that the establishment of a buffer state to China's south would be sufficient satisfaction of China's security needs.

In late June, after several rounds of secret Franco-Viet Minh military talks had failed to make headway, Ta Quang Buu (Vice Minister of National Defense) was still insisting on the 13th parallel, which strikes the coast just south of Tuy Hoa, as the partition line. As suggested
by Lacouture and Devillers, the Viet Minh may have been seeking to capitalize on Mendes-France's reputation as a man of peace, and on the ongoing withdrawal of French Union forces from the southern Delta. 15/ This Viet Minh position underwent a drastic change by the middle of July; and the change can be traced to a meeting between Chou En-lai and Ho Chi Minh at Nanning near the China-Vietnam border. According to CIA reports, Chou applied pressure on Ho to accept a partition line much farther to the North, probably the 17th or 18th parallel. 16/ Pham Van Dong's subsequent compromise position indicating a willingness of the Viet Minh to discuss partition at the 16th parallel seems to have originated in the talks between Chou and Ho. 17/

The French, however, refused to budge from their opposition even though Molotov argued that the 16th parallel represented a substantial Viet Minh concession and demanded a French quid pro quo. 18/ The Soviet delegate then came forward with a new proposal to draw the demarcation line at the 17th. 19/ Precisely what motivated Molotov to make this proposal is not clear. Speculatively, Molotov may simply have traded considerable territorial advantage to the French (much more than was warranted by the actual Tonkin military situation) for some progress on the subject of elections. The Western negotiators, at least, recognized this possibility: Eden considered a line between the 17th and 18th parallels worth trading for a mutually acceptable position on elections; 20/ and Mendes-France observed in a conversation with Molotov that the election and demarcation questions might be linked in the sense that each side could yield on one of the questions. 21/

e. Molotov Proposes Compromise on Elections

The French had consistently held out for general elections in Vietnam, but without a time limit. (Election dates for Laos and Cambodia were already set by their constitutions as August and September 1955, respectively.) Molotov, however, reflected Viet Minh thinking in proposing that a date be fixed, offering June 1955, but suggesting that elections might be agreed upon for 1955 with the exact date to be decided between Vietnamese and Viet Minh authorities. 22/ The Chinese proved much more flexible. In a talk with a member of the British delegation, Li K'o-nung argued for a specific date, but said his government was willing to set it within two or three years of the cease-fire. 23/ Once again, the compromise was worked out on Molotov's initiative. At a meeting on 19 July attended by Eden, Mendes-France, Chou, and Dong, Molotov drew the line at two years. 24/ In view of the DRV demand for six months, the French compromise position of 18 months, and the Soviets' own one-year plan, the West had good reason to accept Molotov's offer.

f. DRV is Pressed to Give Up Claims for Pathet Lao and Free Khmer Representation

A third instance in which Viet Minh ambitions were cut short by the diplomatic intrusion of their comrades concerned the status of the
Throughout the month of May, the DRV had demanded that representatives of these movements be invited to the Conference to sit, like the Viet Minh, as belligerents wielding governmental power. These demands were consistently rejected by the non-communist side, which argued that the Pathet Lao and Free Khmer were creatures of the Viet Minh, guilty of aggression against the Cambodian and Laotian governments (in contrast to the "civil war" in Vietnam), and not deserving status which they had in no way earned. When Molotov, on 17 May, recommended that "military matters" should be considered first, the question of seating the Pathet Lao and Khmer delegations was dropped.

Nevertheless, the Viet Minh persisted in their position on an all-Indochina political settlement when the significant bargaining was reduced to "underground" military talks between them and the French beginning in early June. The first compromise of the Viet Minh's position case on 20 May when Chou En-lai, in the same conversation with Eden at which the chief Chinese delegate also agreed to separate military from political matters, admitted that political settlements might be different for the three Indochinese states. Chou thus moved a step closer to the Western position, which held that the Laotian and Cambodian cases were substantially different from that in Vietnam. Not surprisingly, the Viet Minh, at a secret meeting with the French on 10 June, suddenly indicated their preference for concentrating on Vietnam rather than demanding the inclusion of Laotian and Cambodian problems in the bilateral discussions.

The Viet Minh's major concern, as indicated on 16 June, was that they at least obtain absolute control of the Tonkin Delta, including Hanoi and Haiphong. Neither Chou nor the Viet Minh, however, went so far as to dismiss the existence of legitimate resistance movements in Laos and Cambodia. But in ongoing talks with the British, Chou proved far more willing than the Viet Minh to push aside Pathet Lao-Free Khmer interests. On 17 June, at a time when four rounds of secret Franco-Viet Minh military talks had failed to make headway, Chou told Eden that it "would not be difficult" to gain Viet Minh agreement on withdrawing their "volunteers" from Cambodia and Laos. Eden, moreover, got the impression from his meeting with Chou that the latter earnestly wanted a settlement and was greatly concerned over the possible break up of the conference. Cambodian resistance forces were small, making a political settlement with the Royal Government "easily" obtainable. In Laos, where those forces were larger, regroupment areas along the border with Vietnam and China (Sam Neua and Phong Saly Provinces) would be required. Asked by Eden whether there might not be difficulty in gaining Viet Minh agreement to the withdrawal of their forces from the two countries, Chou replied it would "not be difficult" in the context of a withdrawal of all foreign forces.

The Chinese, almost certainly with Soviet support, had made a major breakthrough in the negotiations by implicitly adopting the Western view that the Pathet Lao and Free Khmer forces did not represent...
legitimate indigenous movements and should be withdrawn. The Viet Minh
volte-face came, as in the other cases, soon after. A Laotian delegate
reported on 23 June that the Viet Minh were in apparent accord on the
withdrawal of their "volunteers" and even on Laos' retention of French
treaty bases. The Viet Minh's principal demand was that French military
personnel in Laos be reduced to a minimum. Less clearly, Dong made sug-
gestions about the creation of a government of "national union," Pathet
Lao participation in 1955 elections for the national assembly, and a
"temporary arrangement" governing areas dominated by Pathet Lao military
forces. But these latter remarks were meant to be suggestive; Dong
had come around to the Western view (now shared by the Soviets and Chinese)
on the important point of removing Viet Minh troops from Laos. Later in
the conference, Dong would have to make a similar retreat on Cambodia.

h. USSR and China Agree to a Control Commission

While the Viet Minh from the beginning had pressed for no
outside control or supervision of either military or political agreements
concerning Indochina, all other delegations quickly moved in that direc-
tion. The Soviets took the lead on the communist side. The major issue
was the composition and voting procedure of the proposed International Con-
trol Commission. From the Western standpoint, the ICC should not have
had a communist representative, since no communist could be considered
neutral. The Soviets retorted, as expected, that Western backing of a
Colombo Power (India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Ceylon, or Burma) was subject to
the same objection, namely, that each of these nations always would vote
with the Western bloc. As the matter evolved, a compromise settlement
provided for a three-nation formula including one communist state. Both
aspects of this agreement were based on Molotov's original plan.

As to voting procedure, the communists not surprisingly in-
sisted on unanimity, at least for "major questions." The West, while accept-
ing that rule, considered pushing for acceptance of majority voting to de-
termine whether a question was minor or major. The result (Article
42 of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam) was to
specify unanimous agreement among the Commission representatives on matters
pertinent to violations, or threats of violations, that might lead to the
resumption of hostilities. However, minority reports could be issued where
the Commission was unable to agree on a recommendation.

i. Sino-Soviet Influence Has Significant Effect

There is little doubt that the conference would not have been
able to move against the initial DRV intransigence without assistance from
the Soviets and Chinese. In the opening phase of discussion, both the
major powers voiced complete agreement with the DRV in policy and aims,
but through a series of moves both powers also made great efforts to soften
the DRV hard line and to allow enough flexibility for concessions. The
first problem, involving the seating of the Pathet Lao and Khmer, was solved
by Soviet and Chinese agreement to postpone -- indefinitely, as it turned
out -- any discussion of the question. The second stumbling block was the
Viet Minh insistence on a political solution before a cease-fire. The ability of the Chinese and Soviets to overcome DRV resistance on this point was very encouraging early in the proceedings. Russia and China were active behind the scenes on the question of partition, with Russia taking the initiative even before the conference began, and with both major powers influencing the decisions as the French and Viet Minh moved toward a mutually agreeable demarcation line. The common-sense role that the USSR and China played with reference to Pathet Lao and Free Khmer inclusion brought about a key concession that had nearly stopped the conference -- the need to separate the Vietnam question from the rest of Indochina. The final difficult question, the composition and function of the Control Commission, dragged along for several weeks, but was finally solved with no little assistance of the USSR and China.
THE OUTCOME FOR THE COMMUNISTS

1. Major Communist Powers Achieve Their Objectives

To judge from the public commentaries of the communist delegation leaders -- Molotov and Chou -- China and the Soviet Union were satisfied with the outcome at Geneva. The final settlement seemed to meet most of their objectives, measured not simply in terms of their narrow interests in Indochina, but more broadly in terms of their global interests. The Viet Minh, however, accepted a settlement considerably at variance not only with their initial demands and their actual military control in Vietnam, but with their compromise position as well. Yet, even the Viet Minh appeared content with the results of Geneva. The reason -- the belief that time was on their side.

a. Communists See Complete Takeover as Inevitable

At the final plenary session on 21 July, the Soviet, Chinese, and North Vietnamese delegates agreed that the Accords, if properly implemented, would end hostilities and give the DRV a territorial base in the North. The stage would thus be set for general elections in Vietnam and produce the desired communist takeover. The political situation in South Vietnam was precarious. In addition, there was a multitude of armed sects and other groups hostile to the central government of Bao Dai who continually relied on the French. The communists certainly had good cause for considering that South Vietnam could not cohere sufficiently within the two-year period prior to national elections, stipulated by the Final Declaration, to pose a viable alternative to the DRV. The communists had good reason to believe that a stable regime in the southern zone would never be formed; hence the DRV would assume control of the entire country almost by default.

b. Chinese Not Adverse to Permanent Partition

Interestingly, however, the Chinese accepted the notion that the Geneva Accords had, at least temporarily -- and perhaps permanently -- created two separate political entities. As early as June, Chou told Jean Chauvel that the Chinese recognized the existence of Viet Minh and Vietnamese governments. In talking of a final political settlement, Chou again stated that this should be achieved by direct negotiations between the two Vietnamese governments. 1/ So far as the CPR was concerned, partition meant not a simple division of administrative responsibility -- which is the implication of the Vietnam armistice provision (Article 14a) for the conduct of "civil administration" by the "parties" who were to regroup to the two zones -- but the establishment of governmental authority in North and South Vietnam. What still remains unclear, of course, is the permanency which Chou privately attached to that arrangement.

TOP SECRET - Sensitive