THE SOVIET UNION AND INDOCHINA 1954-1962

by Borys Budny

Master of Arts Degree

Department of Economics and Political Science

Soviet political penetration into Southeast Asia was based on the Soviet desire to enhance its position and extend its influence in an area of a political-military vacuum created by the withdrawal of the Western colonial powers.

Once a status quo was more or less attained in Europe after World War II, the Soviets began to direct their attention more towards Asia, and specifically Indochina. To the Soviet leaders control of Vietnam by the communists would serve as a possible jumping-off point for additional expansion in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, for the most part Soviet involvement in the struggles in Indochina was restricted to granting moral and military support to the communist forces in the area, ~~thus~~ thereby avoiding any direct military participation.

The Soviet Union always attempted to keep the war limited and localized lest it lead to a major clash between her and the U.S., and a possible incursion into the area by China.

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Department of Economics and
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PREFACE

What has been Soviet policy in Indochina? What is it today? What will it be in the coming years? Any meaningful analysis must consider carefully the Soviet Union's national objectives and must reflect a realistic estimate of the ever-changing situation in that important part of the world. In circumstances where the Soviet Union is deeply involved, where its impact is considerable, and where the stakes are high, the alternatives to the policy merit particular attention.

Developments of the past can provide valuable perspective although the U.S.S.R. does not have the advantage of many years of direct contact throughout the area. Only in the last fifteen years has the situation in Indochina - the extension and establishment of communist and Soviet influence in the area - become a considerable concern of Soviet leaders in Moscow.

This thesis seeks to set forth the conditions and problems in this area and show how they affected the Soviet Union and compelled it to increasingly involve itself in the affairs of Indochina.

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B.B.

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INTRODUCTION

Although this thesis covers the period from 1954 to 1962, it was necessary, however, for the sake of cohesion, to go back to the early post-war years. What is attempted in this paper is to show how events both in Europe and Asia influenced the Soviet Union to such a degree that they brought about a gradual Soviet involvement in the Indochina conflict. In addition, Soviet beliefs, attitudes and calculations are brought out to explain the reasoning behind Soviet behaviour and actions with respect to developments in Indochina. It will be interesting to note how Soviet attitudes underwent changes after the death of Stalin, and how the adoption of the new policies facilitated the settlement of the conflict both in 1954 and 1962.

Soviet political penetration into Southeast Asia during the period discussed in this paper was based on Soviet desire to enhance its position and extend its influence in an area of a political-military vacuum created by the withdrawal of the Western colonial powers. The Soviet Union did not propose to accomplish its final goal at once. Rather in a step-by-step process involving many intermediate goals, the Soviet Union hoped to work itself into an increasingly powerful economic and political position. Related to this was the Soviet desire to demonstrate

to the people and leaders of these underdeveloped countries that the Soviet brand of socialism can work, and that in a few short years the Soviet Union, initially weak and impotent, had risen to challenge the most advanced Western nation.

The Soviet leaders make a sharp distinction between tactics and strategy. The goal of communist world rule is a long-run strategic goal. Soviet leaders can justifiably argue that a pre-condition to communism is the firm establishment of the Soviet Union as the promulgator of communism. Whatever is necessary to establish the primacy of the Soviet Union as a world power, including assistance to underdeveloped countries not yet ready for communism, is thus consistent with the eventual triumph of communism. The general political and strategic goals of the Soviet Union in its foreign activities can thus be telescoped into two general categories: promotion of the interest of the Soviet state and promotion of the interests of communism. As the Yugoslav example illustrates so vividly, it is not enough that communism eventually prevail. The Soviet Union insists that communism must be under Soviet leadership. Whenever these two are in conflict, it is invariably the Soviet state which comes first in the eyes of the Soviet leadership.

The prime interest of the Soviet Union as a state is an increase in its voice in international affairs, to be heard in every significant international decision, to eliminate opposition to the Soviet position and to influence decisions so that they favour the Soviet Union.

In view of these goals, control of Vietnam by the communists would serve as a possible jumping-off point for additional expansion in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, Soviet preoccupation with this area never reached a point which demanded any sort of military involvement and this restraint served as a factor in keeping the conflict localized and limited.

It is not always easy to ascertain the real motives behind some Soviet move or behaviour on a basic issue because not enough material is available to enable one to support one assumption against another. In many instances then, in order to remain within the realm of objectivity, all possible reasons contributing to a particular Soviet action are presented with equal emphasis. It should be remembered that the Soviets formulate their policies on a long term basis and adapt their day to day operations accordingly. They change tactics as they see fit, but rarely do they stray from the main objective, which is to defeat capitalism and to set up a communist world society. Any opportunity which presents itself in this gigantic

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struggle with capitalism they exploit to the fullest, and there is little wonder that Soviet unpredictability, which arises out of this practice, is a matter of great concern to the West.

Any treatment of Soviet policy towards an Asian country must eventually deal also with the subject of Sino-Soviet relations. The rise of Communist China heralded a new power structure in Asia that challenged Soviet predominance on this continent. As time passed, the Soviets recognized the gravity of the Chinese challenge and quickly realized that the Communist Chinese were attempting to extend their influence over all the communist movements in Asia. An entire chapter is devoted to this problem in an attempt to illustrate how the developing Sino-Soviet rift affected Soviet relations with the countries of Indochina.

Finally, with the advent of the Laotian crisis between 1959 and 1962, we find the Soviets involved more deeply than they ever had been before. By this time the stakes were high, American involvement was much more ominous, the Chinese challenge so much more dangerous and the situation showed visible signs of getting out of hand. A viable solution was finally reached after more than a year of negotiations between the communist side headed by the Soviet Union and the

non-communist side headed by the United States. The only problem that remained after the delegates parted was that the solution was not viable. But by that time attention was already focused on the developments in Vietnam.

CHAPTER I
THE EVOLUTION OF SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS ASIA AFTER WORLD WAR II

The end of the war in 1945 brought about many changes in the world. The European structure was radically altered with the defeat of Nazi Germany and the ascendancy in the East of a powerful state which once again threatened the security of Europe. In Asia the end of the war heralded a new epoch which witnessed the beginning of the end of colonialism and the rise of nationalism and communism as new forces in the power vacuum which existed for a brief period in Asia before the return of the colonial powers. One significant development after the war was the end of friendly co-operation between the West and the Soviet Union.

Communist suspicions of capitalist states began to manifest themselves in pronouncements made by Soviet leaders, while frequent references were made to the teachings on capitalism of Marx and Lenin. Thus by the end of 1945, the Soviet leaders felt that capitalism had been seriously weakened, that European empires were tottering, and that the developing Arab-Asian revolutionary movements were a force which might accelerate the decline of Europe. Accordingly, they resurrected the Leninist theory of imperialism applied to underdeveloped areas, i.e. that the capitalist countries in their quest for raw materials, cheap labour and potential markets had seized the underdeveloped areas, thus forestalling their own inevitable decay and disintegration. These ideas

that Lenin expounded are found in one of his important works; Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism.

> The more capitalism develops, the stronger the need for raw materials is felt, the more bitter the competition and the hunt for raw materials become throughout the world, the more desperate the struggle for the acquisition of colonies becomes...
>
> If it were necessary to give the briefest possible definition of imperialism, we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism. (1)

Nevertheless, Soviet preoccupation with Asia was not very marked. The views expressed above were mostly for the benefit of underdeveloped countries, while Stalin's primary interest was still Europe, not Asia or Africa of the Middle East per se. His bipolar view of international politics suited a strategy intended for Europe, not Asia. However, postwar Soviet Asian policy may be conveniently divided into four main periods; the first period, 1945 to 1947; the second period, 1948 to 1949; the third period, 1950 to 1953; and the fourth period, 1953 to the present.

(1) Quoted in Alvin Z. Rubinstein, The Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union, (New York: Random House, 1960) pp 15-16 from V.I. Lenin, Sochinenia, Vol XIX (Moscow: State Publishing House, 1929, 2nd ed.) pp 120-175, exerpts Ed's translation.

The first period, 1945 to 1947, was one of "lingering wartime semi-cooperation and reconstruction. It extended from the Yalta Conference of February, 1945 to the formation of the Cominform in October, 1947."(2) There were two practical considerations, and two wrong assumptions which appear to have substantially influenced Soviet Asian policy during the initial postwar period. The practical considerations were (1) the relative weakness of the Soviet power position and (2) Western domination of the Asian scene. The two assumptions, both of which were proved wrong, were as follows: first, the Soviets assumed that once the war was over, "the capitalist United States would immediately drop any pretense of co-operation and revert to the Soviet conception of the standard capitalist-imperialist pattern, which would mean a forceful United States anti-Soviet policy in Asia..."(3)

Early postwar American policy in China, however, does not seem "to have been motivated by fears of the Soviet Union nor of Chinese communism, while the degree of official optimism in the United States in 1945 regarding the prospects for genuine co-operation with the Soviet Union in the postwar decade now appears considerably greater than the circumstances justified..."(4)

(2) Arthur E. Adams, Readings in Soviet Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice, (Boston; D.C. Heath and Company, 1961) p. 305.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid., p. 306

The second wrong assumption which the Soviets appear to have made indicates that the Soviet leaders must have "underestimated the strength and potential of the Chinese Communists and assumed that it would be some years before the Communists in China could expect significantly to influence the situation in Asia."(5)

During this first phase of postwar communist operations in the Southeast Asian countries, the policy was to play down independent party activities in favour of strengthening communist positions within the broad framework of the revolutionary nationalistic movements. Communist leaders endeavoured to gain for themselves strategic positions in "the new governments, nationalist parties, labour unions, student and peasant groups, for the purpose of transforming the allegedly inevitable anti-imperialist struggle in the direction of communist-patterned economic and social revolution. Overt efforts to destroy the vestiges of European economic and political control in Southeast Asia were delayed in anticipation of the imminent collapse of the tottering capitalist regimes in Europe and the opportunity that would result from co-ordinated action in both areas."(6)

(5) Ibid., p. 306
(6) George B. De Huszar & Associates, Soviet Power and Policy, (New York; Thomas Y. Cromwell Company, 1955) p. 28.

Perhaps because of problems at home, involvements elsewhere, especially in Eastern Europe, and the distance from the area, the Soviet Union displayed little direct interest in South and Southeast Asia during this initial postwar period. In the absence of any degree of Soviet initiative, Communist policy in the immediate postwar years continued to reflect the wartime pattern of co-operation, essentially the old Comintern 1935 united front line. This strategy regarded imperialism and feudalism as the Communist's main enemies. Accordingly, "a two-stage revolution was prescribed which called first for a bourgeois-democratic revolution to prepare the ground for the subsequent proletarian-social revolution."(7)

This policy persisted until near the end of 1947. The second period, 1948 to 1949, was a militant, aggressive phase which followed the establishment of the Soviet Cominform in Eastern Europe and began to change in character with the establishment of the Chinese People's Republic in the fall of 1949. The initial postwar policy was abandoned for two reasons:

(7) Arthur E. Adams, Op. cit., p. 307

"In the first place, all the imperialist powers except France were making progress toward negotiated settlements covering nationalist demands. In the second phase, the projected American Marshall Plan aid programme promised to save Europe from the economic collapse and thus to upset the communist timetable."(8)

Toward the end of 1947, Soviet policy and propaganda in China, as elsewhere, became increasingly anti-American in character. The Soviet press began to speak of the traditionally aggressive nature of American Far Eastern policy, harking back to the 1844 treaty with China and Perry's expedition to Japan and pointing accusingly to the annexation of Hawaii and the Philippines. The rivalry between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. in Southeast Asia since the end of World War II "has taken the form, among several others, of a competition for control of all areas of the world which have not committed themselves in this titanic struggle of the mid-twentieth century."(9)

The new Moscow policy for Southeast Asia was carried to India by the first Soviet ambassador, Novikov, in December, 1947, and by party representatives attending the Calcutta Youth Congress in early 1948. Communists were ordered to

(8) George B. De Huszar, Op. cit., p. 507
(9) Amry Vandenbosch and Richard A. Butwell, Southeast Asia among the World Powers, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press; 1957) p. 11

break off co-operation with nationalist elements and to inaugurate a programme of armed struggle by worker and peasant groups directed primarily against the new non-communist indigenous governments. The Moscow "Left" aggressive strategy considered capitalism and native bourgeoisie enemies at least as important as imperialism and feudalism. Accordingly, the concept of the need for a bourgeois-democratic revolution was dropped in favour of an early socialist revolution, a "united front from below", direct action. Throughout South and Southeast Asia, Communists "abandoned their earlier practice of co-operation with the non-communist Left; leaders of the nationalist parties were denounced as traitors to their followers and within six months of the announced change, terrorism and insurrections began or were intensified in India, Pakistan, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, Indochina and the Phillippines."(10)

The new policy had little relevance to the progress of communism in the colonies themselves, for in most countries the governments were leftist, and the communist rebels were usually not in a position to undertake effective armed rebellion. It was apparent that the basic aim was to destroy

(10) Arthur E. Adams, Op. cit., p. 309.

any surviving economic stake, investment or commercial, which the West might still have in Southeast Asia, as a means of preventing the stabilization of capitalism in Europe by the American-sponsored European Recovery Program. Asian objectives in this instance were clearly subordinated to European.(11)

The third period, 1950 to 1953, represents the years of readjustment during which the Moscow-Peking axis became a reality with a number of implications for international communist theory and tactics in Asia. The period extended roughly from the creation of the Chinese People's Republic to Stalin's death. The unexpected communist victory in China marked a great Russian advance in Asia and a corresponding American withdrawal. For the first time since the end of the Second World War the Soviet Union had an ally in fact as well as in name. Moscow was clearly impressed and possibly even surprised by the swiftness of the communist victory in China. The emergence in Asia of a second Communist power-center with a population of more than 550 million added a new dimension to Soviet foreign policy. The Sino-Soviet alliance

(11) George B. De Huszar, Op. cit., p. 508

"was a source of strength to the U.S.S.R. far greater than the capture of another satellite; for a satellite is in the nature of things, an undependable associate, while an ally, much more than an insurance, is a present help in trouble, whether the trouble is of one's own or somebody else's making."(12)

However, since early 1950, it has not been entirely clear how much communist policy in the area had been directed by Moscow and how much by Peking, but an increasing emphasis on Asian rather than European considerations suggests a diminuition of Soviet direction. Nevertheless, the first thaw in the frozen attitude towards Asian-African independence and non-alignment came during the Korean War, in the last two or three years of Stalin's life. Moscow began to perceive that the interests of the new Asian countries were shared by the Soviet Union. Emerging as an identifiable group which, though differing politically and economically from the Communist bloc, was not irrevocably tied to the West on all issues, the new Asian countries could not be lumped with the capitalist camp. The Soviet Union recognized that these countries were not part of the Western anti-Soviet coalition and that they had objective reasons for not wishing to be tied too closely to the West.

(12) Survey of International Affairs, 1949-1950, (London, New York, Toronto; Oxford University Press) p. 42

"The role played by some of the Arab-Asian diplomats in the behind-the-scene negotiations that led to serious Korean armistice talks, helped convince many top Soviet officials of the political importance of the underdeveloped countries: of the convenient use that they might serve in transmitting Soviet views to the West and in influencing the West to adopt a more conciliatory policy toward the Soviet Union."(13)

It was time, therefore, to reappraise and reallocate roles and missions in Asia both in terms of power politics and ideology. Powerwise, the Soviet position in Asia was vastly superior to that enjoyed by Moscow at the end of the Second World War. By 1950, the Soviet Union is thought to have had air, submarine and troop superiority in the Far East. Significant changes related to foreign policy also characterized the ideological front, especially with respect to the employment of ideology as a tactical weapon in Asia. "Maoism appears to have been authorized by Moscow for colonial areas and for all of the Asian Communist Parties. The end of violence and a shift of peaceful Maoism occurred in India, Burma, Pakistan, Ceylon and Indonesia during 1951. In Indochina, Malaya and the Philippines, the Maoist armed struggle strategy was still employed as late as 1952 when in the latter two cases observers began to note decreasing militant activity and increasing propaganda for peace, though the anti-American campaign remained a dominant theme."(14)

(13) Alvin Z. Rubinstein, The Soviets in International Organizations, Changing Policy toward Developing Countries, 1953-1963. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964)

(14) Arthur E. Adams, Op. cit., p. 310

Indications of a new Asian approach in Moscow was witnessed in early 1952. In January of that year, Stalin sent a New Year's message to the Japanese people applauding their "courageous struggle for independence from American occupation." In the same month, Pospelov, Editor of Pravda, devoted a considerable portion of a speech on the anniversary of the death of Lenin to Asian affairs. In April, Stalin took an unusual step in receiving the Indian ambassador, Radhakrishnan. It was the ambassador's parting interview with Stalin, in which the Soviet leader said that there was no outstanding problem incapable of settlement by discussion. In 1952, the Soviet Union began to foster good relations with India by supporting the Indian stand on the Kashmir question in the Security Council. Then in January 1953, the Cominform newspaper mentioned India, Vietnam, Malaya, Burma, the Philippines and Indonesia among others as areas of progress in the conflict between freedom and imperialism.

The fourth period, 1953 to about 1960, may be characterized as one of "peaceful co-existence" and calculated cordiality. The change towards this policy began after the death of Stalin and took final shape in 1955, after the Bandung Conference. Thus the period since Stalin's death has witnessed a mellowing of Soviet

behavior and propaganda though not any apparent change in Soviet objectives or, for that matter, any fundamental concessions on major policy questions. Once it was accepted "that there could be more than one road to communism, that each country was entitled to fashion its own revolution according to its own genius consistent with the basic canons of Marxism and Leninism, a certain flexibility of approach to nationalist movement in Asia was inevitable."(15)

The first aspect of this new policy was economic. For the first time in its history, the Soviet Union was in a position to help developing nations of Asia in their economic growth. Soviet leaders after 1955 began to put increasing emphasis on the economic aspect of their Asia policy. In the course of four years, Soviet aid to the countries of Asia assumed significant proportions and was a challenge to the United States. The second aspect was the establishment of personal contacts between leaders of the Soviet Union and leaders of Asia. Toward the end of 1955 Bulganin, who was then Prime Minister, and Khrushchev, who was then First Secretary of the Soviet

(15) Chanakyo Sen, Against the Cold War, A Study of Asian-African policies since World War II. (London: Asia Publishing House, 1962) p. 99

Communist Party, made history by undertaking a journey to Asia which brought them to Afghanistan, India, Burma and Indonesia. This was the Soviet's beginning of personal diplomacy. The third aspect of the new Soviet policy was that it banked heavily on fruitful exploitation of conflicts between Asian nationalism and Western imperialism. The fourth aspect was that the new policy found ample reward in Asian refusal to join Western military alliances. The Soviet Government did not ask for positive support of its own policies. It merely expected the countries with which it was going to enter into economic collaboration to stick to their non-commitment in the cold war. This suited Asian countries so well that they found in the Soviet Union a welcome champion of their independence and sovereignty.

Thus the current Soviet foreign policy objectives in Asia were characterized as (1) strengthening of the Moscow-Peking axis, (2) removal of United States influence and power, military bases and regional security groupings, and neutralization of the area, particularly the key countries of Japan and India, and (3) destruction of the Western alliance and unity. There was no reason to assume that the long-range goal of Soviet domination has changed.(16) But the new Russian leaders appeared

(16) Arthur E. Adams, Op. cit., p. 311.

to have accepted the fact that in the near future there was no chance of any of the newly independent countries in Asia going Communist. The new Soviet policy involved a temporary retreat from the concept of the hegemony of the proletariat in the national movements and consequently a re-discovery of the progressive role of the national bourgeois. But Soviet "willingness to render as much help as possible to the national bourgeois governments of Asia... obviously does not mean that the Soviet Union believes that these governments and the forces which they represent are capable of playing a longtime progressive role in their country's affairs. Soviet theoreticians of the post-Stalin era appear to hold that sooner or later, the nationalist leaderships will lose their progressive content and in the ensuing struggle, the Communists will emerge in power."(17)

On the whole, Communist agitation in postwar Southeast Asia enjoyed the advantage of enhanced Soviet prestige. For the peoples of the area, the Soviet Union, victorious over Hitler's armies, was a powerful neighbor

(17) Chanakyo Sen, Op. cit., p. 102

worthy of deference. Soviet "prestige was strengthened by the fact that U.S.S.R. had managed to advance in a surprisingly short time from the economic and social backwardness of the tsarist period to a high level of technical competence and industrialization, all this without drawing on foreign capital..."(18) Most Asians were also aware that the Soviet Union had been an advocate of racial equality and of freedom for colonial peoples, matters about which they were particularly sensitive. Thus Soviet prestige added materially to the influence of communist partisans in Southeast Asia who advocated national freedom and the alleviation of poverty.

However, because of the geographical location of Southeast Asia, the Soviet Union had found it difficult to directly implement some of its policies in that area. The only near approach to Southeast Asia from the Soviet Union lies across the Hindu Kush Mountains of Afghanistan and through the Khyber Pass into the Indus Valley. A longer but less difficult approach runs via Iran and through Baluchistan. Throughout eastern Asia, China's enormous mass separate Southeast Asia from the Soviet Union. The predicament is clearly illustrated by the lack

(18) George B. De Huszar, Op. cit., p. 508.

of access the Soviets have to North Vietnam in their efforts to give Hanoi aid against American bombings. This difficulty likewise greatly minimizes Soviet threat in that area. Although the Soviets have taken no direct role in subversive activity in the area since the abortive revolts which were touched off by the Calcutta Conference in February 1948, still they were very much concerned with happenings in Southeast Asia. The Soviet Union had continued to be the capital of conspiratorial international Communism, however, and a material and moral supporter of Communist China. For a time at least, Soviet interest in the region was taken care of by Red China.

Moscow's shift of the responsibility for "liberating" Southeast Asia from alleged imperialist control, to Red China, was apparently based on the belief that the resulting turmoil would serve Russian interests by tying down British, French, and American military resources and by denying the West access to the raw materials and markets of the region. But the political-military vacuum which had resulted in Southeast Asia from the withdrawal of the Western colonial powers was an obvious temptation to the imperialistically inclined Soviet Union. By the inauguration of its friendship offensive in South and Southeast

Asia in 1955, the Soviet Union sought to take advantage of the decline of Western power and influence in this part of the world. It also sought to utilize the large body of neutralist nationalist sentiment which flowered in many vital areas. The Soviets sought to establish an "arc of neutralist countries where once stood, in proud confidence, the British Empire South Asian defence arc."(19) The purpose of this effort was to consolidate Asian neutralist opinion to offset the new gains of the West-potential as well as actual-embodied in the newly established Southeast Asian Treaty Organization.

(19) Amry Vandenbosch and Richard A. Butwell, Op. cit., p. 279.

CHAPTER II
INDOCHINA: 1945-1954
BACKGROUND TO A PROLONGED CONFLICT

French confrontation with strong nationalist opposition in Indochina was not a sudden unexpected development which sprung up with the ending of hostilities in the Second World War. Indochinese resentment against European control began to assume importance during the first decade of the twentieth century. The differences between France and Indochina increased because the French failed to appreciate the growth of native nationalism, to comprehend the intense desire for independence, and to understand the increased resentment toward economic exploitation of the land and its people by either European or Asiatic foreigners. But prior to 1945 few successes were scored by the nationalist movement in Indochina. Nevertheless, during the Japanese occupation, the movement for independence became much stronger. The myth of white man's insurmountability was effectively shattered by Japanese victory over the colonial powers in Asia at the beginning of the war. This development, plus the strong hope that independence could finally be achieved, encouraged the nationalists to organize themselves. Thus after 1942, the Annamese party, the Viet Minh (League for independence), - urged by its communist members, organized its forces to take over the administration of the country at the end of the war. The Viet Minh was a

nationalist coalition with Communists such as Vo Nguyen Giap, Pham Von Dong and Ho Chi Minh in key positions. It was a well organized movement and the only one in Vietnam capable of keeping track of Japanese military activities. It was for this reason that Ho Chi Minh was released from a Chinese jail in 1943(1) and given direction of the Vietnamese nationalist movement operating from China.

The sudden Japanese withdrawal of support from the French regime on March 9, 1945, took both the Vietnamese and the French by surprise. Act one, scene one of the drama that extends to this day commenced with the decision the Japanese made that March. The effects of allied pressure upon Japan were beginning to show deep strains. The significance of the Japanese move was not so much the mere overthrow of the Vichy sponsored French regime in Indochina, but the decision to place the responsibility of administration into the hands of the Vietnamese. The Japanese, reluctant to assume the burden of direct government, decided to let the Vietnamese shoulder this responsibility and at the same time provide continuity in the administration of Vietnam. After this initial step

(1) He was arrested by the Chinese government while in exile in China.

had been taken, developments proceeded at a rapid pace. The Annamese nationalists, supported by the Japanese, set up a government with Bao Dai as Emperor of "Free Annam".

But trouble soon erupted when the Viet Minh refused to support the new Bao Dai government and subsequently animosity and conflict developed between the two factions. In the far north the Viet Minh quickly consolidated its control over what was called the "liberated zone". The intense struggle between the Viet Minh and Bao Dai's government soon resulted in the downfall of the latter and the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. This development took place on September 2, 1945, ten days before the British troops, in accord with the Potsdam decision, arrived in Saigon to disarm the Japanese. The French soon followed while the Chinese occupied Laos and Tonkin where they allowed the Vietnamese, much to the dislike of the French, to assume control for themselves. Following a prolonged discussion between the French and the Chinese, the latter finally agreed on 28 of February 1946 to withdraw from Indo-China in return for special concessions. Thus, France slowly began to assume control over Indo-China.

The resistance to French encroachment was bloody but indecisive; the Vietnamese would not accept a return

to colonialism and the French would not tolerate Vietnamese independence. The need for accommodation and some form of modus vivendi between the two adversaries became a necessity and consequently

> "...the Paris government sought to conciliate the native rulers of the peninsula and to negotiate settlements with them. Ho's government, confronted by famine and fearful of China's intentions, willingly entered into proposed conversations with France. The rulers in the south also were quick to make peace with France. The first agreement was signed with the friendly kingdom of Cambodia on January 7, 1946. Three months later France recognized the Viet-Nam Republic. In the agreement, Viet-Nam was recognized as a free state in the Indo-China federation, but its precise boundaries were not fixed. The major issue was whether or not Cochin-China should be included within Viet-Nam and this was supposed to be decided by popular referendum. Laos was reoccupied by French forces, and the French administration was installed with some native support but also with widespread disapproval. (2)

But in spite of the provision for a referendum in the March agreement, France set up an autonomous government in Cochin-China, which nevertheless could be expected to respond to French directives. The Vietnamese, who had long considered that Cochin-China ought to be within their frontiers, believed France's action was in violation of the March agreement. Relations between the French and the Vietnamese began to deteriorate rapidly and in December of 1946 a full-scale civil war erupted.

(2) H.F. MacNair and D.F. Lach, Modern Far Eastern International Relations, (Toronto, New York, London: Van Nostrand Company Inc., 1955), p. 666.

As a counter-measure to the government headed by Ho Chi Minh, the French finally were able to persuade Bao Dai to assume leadership over a new government sponsored by the French. By 1950 the conception of an Indochina Federation within the earlier formulation of the French Union had been replaced by that of 'independent' states of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, associated with one another and each in separate association with France. The established government in Vietnam with Bao Dai as Chief of State "was thereafter considered as being assisted by France (1) to overcome the internal opposition presented by the Viet Minh, and (2) to secure its independence within the limits determined externally by its membership in the French Union."(3)

Slowly this internal struggle began to attain international dimensions. Both Peking and Moscow recognized the Ho government in 1950 while the United States and other Western states recognized the Bao Dai regime. The prospect of Ho receiving increased support from China aroused the French to seek aid from the United States. The United States feared that the loss of Indochina would endanger the security of other vital areas in Southeast Asia.

(3) Harold M. Vinacke, Far Eastern Politics in the Postwar Period, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956), p. 278.

Thus, assistance for the French became both diplomatic and military. But despite American aid, the French found it difficult to come to grips with the Viet Minh forces and win a decision. In addition, by then, the French began to lose their enthusiasm for the venture in Indochina. They were quite willing to end the war. They began to insist on placing the question of an armistice in Indochina on the agenda of the Geneva Conference.

CHAPTER III
THE SOVIET UNION AND THE GENEVA CONFERENCE ON INDOCHINA 1954

A. The Road to Geneva

Throughout this period Soviet involvement in the Indochinese debacle was rather limited. From 1945 to 1949, the Soviet Union had concentrated mainly on recovery at home and the consolidation of the Soviet empire in Europe. It was only following the sovietization of Eastern Europe, and the rise to power of the Chinese Communists that Soviet interests shifted markedly to the Far East and Southeast Asia. The communist victory in China raised Soviet hopes that the time for a Communist sweep of all Asia was near at hand.

The position of the Soviet Union in the Indochinese conflict was rather precarious. It played no significant part in it because the Viet Minh had come to power largely by their own military efforts. But because of the Vietnamese traditional distrust of the Chinese, Ho Chi Minh tended to seek Soviet advice in his conduct of affairs, rather than Chinese. Yet Ho Chi Minh met with Soviet disapproval when in 1953, in an attempt to unite all of Indochina under Vietnamese Communist control, he invaded Laos and set up the Communist Pathet Lao administration in two northeastern provinces. The Soviets "seemed anxious to avoid trouble that might lead to a major war in Indochina. On more than one occasion they showed themselves ready to override Vietnamese communist desires in the interest of peace."(1)

(1) Brian Crozier, The Morning After: A Study of Independence, (London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1963), p. 209.

This was clearly visible during the Geneva Conference when Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, forced the North Vietnamese to accept a settlement that fell far short of their wishes. The Soviets continually showed reluctance to be drawn into the war in Vietnam.

Nevertheless, as far as the Soviets were concerned, control of Vietnam by the Communists would mean not only additional territory added to their bloc, but also protection for China as well as a possible jumping-off point for additional expansion in Southeast Asia, not to mention a further diminution of Western prestige in the Far East and the world in general. Red China backed by the Soviet Union began to increase supplies to the Viet Minh while on the other side the United States, following the outbreak of the Korean War began to accelerate the supply of military assistance to the French. Consequently, the big Viet Minh offensive in Indochina in September 1950 is directly attributed to the increased supply of military materials by the Sino-Soviet bloc. Following a cease-fire in Korea, the United States increasingly directed its attention towards the conflict, while the Soviet Union in an attempt to counter-balance the Americans in this area did likewise. The more the Soviets exerted their influence the more the Americans counter-acted.

However, the new Soviet policy which came into existence after Stalin, stressing the necessity of peaceful coexistence, restrained the Soviets from getting involved in any way militarily. They were anxious to keep the war localized and limited and the last thing they wanted to see was an American military involvement in Indochina. Nevertheless, Indochina and Southeast Asia became just another area of conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. The withdrawal of the West from the area left a vacuum which the United States could not have afforded to ignore and which the Soviet Union attempted to exploit.

At the beginning of 1954 it became expedient that the Indochinese struggle should be settled peacefully as soon as possible. The basic thinking behind this was that unless something was done the conflict could spread to involve the United States, Red China and the Soviet Union. The United States Government became alarmed by the steadily deteriorating French military position and by the possibility of a Chinese intervention. Consequently, Secretary of State Dulles, issued a warning that the United States would retaliate instantly in case of such an eventuality. There were even strong indications that the United States was seriously contemplating a move to

help the French with American sea and air power in order to stem any further military deterioration. But the French, fearing that such a move might force the Chinese to intervene, were very reluctant to accept such offers. All that France wanted was to end the war by obtaining an honourable settlement. In addition, the Viet Minh invasions of Laos and Cambodia in 1953 and 1954 respectively, with the establishment of a Pathet Lao resistance government in opposition to the constitutional royal one of Laos and in the case of the latter of a Khmer resistance government taking a similar position in Cambodia, clearly indicated that the war in Indochina officially as well as unofficially was no longer restricted to Vietnam.(2)

The first major step in the direction of a possible settlement of the Indochinese war was made on February 21, 1954, when during the Berlin Conference, the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, Mr. Molotov, announced that the Soviet Union was ready to take part along with the Chinese Communist Government, France, Britain, the United States, and the Associated States of Indochina in a conference on Korea and Indochina. Several reasons

(2) Russell H. Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia: 1945-1958, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958), p. 274.

for this decision were presented, but none of them could be regarded as all conclusive. One of the more frequent ones expressed at the time was that by such an action Molotov might further delay the European Army treaty, which he said "would be ratified this year or not at all. Reaction of some opponents of the treaty..., who contend it should be postponed pending peace in Indo-China, conform to the above calculation."(3) This interpretation was further supported on March 4 in The New York Times editorial;

> "The possibility that the Geneva conference on Korea and Indo-China might be used as a lever by both Soviet Russia and French politicians to cause further delay in the ratification of the European Defence Community Treaty begins to assume concrete form."(4)

It was very possible that by continuing the Indo-chinese war the communists might have gained a larger territory and eventually might have overrun Laos and Cambodia. But Europe to the Soviets was still the most important issue, and the rejection of E.D.C. by France outweighed many other considerations. Soviet conduct during the conference might well have confirmed this theory. For several weeks the outcome of the Geneva conference on Indochina hung in the balance. The Soviet

(3) The New York Times, February 22, 1954.
(4) The New York Times, March 8, 1954.

Union, being the only power in a position to supply arms in quantity to the Viet Minh, could have made the decision as to whether there would be war or peace in Indochina, and after Molotov's trip to Moscow the Indochinese negotiations began to appear futile. When Pierre Mendès-France took over the government in France after the fall of the Laniel government, certain changes in Soviet attitude became noticeable. Mendès-France was very much against the European Defence Community, a stand which the Soviet Union considered as highly commendable. Immediately upon taking over the office of Prime Minister, Mendès-France promised that unless he could achieve a truce in Indochina within five weeks he would resign. This program was so attractive to the Soviet Union, that it found it imperative to keep Mendès-France in power at least until E.D.C. was destroyed. If it required, in order to accomplish this, a quick truce in Indochina, then the Viet Minh must compromise.(5)

Yet not all shared this view. Some claimed that the E.D.C. issue played practically no significant role

(5) David J. Dallin, Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin, (Philadelphia, Chicago, New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1961), p. 153.

in influencing the Soviet Union in one way or another. As expounded by Coral Bell;

> (there)...is no evidence that Mr. Molotov considered concessions in Indo-China necessary to secure the demise of the E.D.C., which was already in articulo mortis at this time. Nor if he had desired to make such a bargain, was there any sign during the negotiations that he was enough in control of the situation to do so. It would have involved his not only persuading Mr. Ho Chi Minh that Russian diplomatic interests in Europe justified the sacrifice of some part of the Viet Minh's nationalist aspirations, but also his persuading the Chinese that the advancing of the U.S.S.R.'s European policy should be accorded priority over their securing a comfortable buffer state, of maximum size and viability, for their southern border. One impression that emerges very strongly from any examination of Mr. Chou's part in the conference...is that the Chinese voice in the formulation of policy was by no means inferior to the Russian. (6)

Another reason for the Soviet Government's critical decision to assist in putting an end to the war in Indochina at a time when a complete military victory over the French seemed to be in sight for the Viet Minh, is that the Soviets quite possibly feared that the "prolongation of the war, ...was fraught with the danger of military intervention by the United States, as a result of which South Indochina might become an American military base."(7)

(6) Coral Bell, Survey of International Affairs, 1954, Royal Institute of International Affairs, (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 72.
(7) David J. Dallin, Op. cit., p. 153.

Such an interpretation was supported by the then Secretary of State, Dulles, who stated that United States' readiness to intervene in Indochina prevented war and convinced the communist powers of the need for a settlement. But even this interpretation cannot stand up in face of certain clear-cut facts.

The premise here is that, both the Soviet Union and China were willing to continue the war, and changed their attitude only when the United States publicized its intention to intervene. But this intention was first revealed by Mr. Dulles in his speech on 29 March 1954. Yet the Soviet government had agreed to attend a conference on Korea and Indochina as early as around the 20 February; that is, before the United States had officially announced its intention to intervene and at a time when American officials still optimistically viewed France's military prospects in Indo-China.(8) There seems to be some indication that the Soviet Union, carrying with it the Chinese Government, "may have taken the decision to stop the war in Indo-China at a time when American intervention seemed unlikely, because in these circumstances the creation of the new Communist State seemed to be a practical possibility."(9)

(8) J.M. Mackintosh, Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy, (London, Oxford University Press, New York, Toronto, 1962), p. 83.
(9) Ibid., p. 84.

This interpretation is rather well illustrated by J.M. Mackintosh in the following passage:

> "Now the situation of the Viet-Minh Communist forces in northern Indo-China probably suggested to the Soviet leaders that as soon as the last French outpost of Dien Bien Phu could be captured the whole area would be ripe for the establishment of an enclave bordering on Communist China. To extend Viet-Minh conquests northwards might increase the risk not so much of U.S. intervention, but of defeat by the French army, as it fell back on more secure bases, a defeat which might deprive the Viet-Minh of some of its existing achievements. A halt in February 1954 would enable a compact Communist State to be set up, which, in fulfilment of Stalin's strategy(10) could later perhaps, be used as a base for a further advance. It seems probable, therefore, that the motive behind the Soviet proposal for the Geneva Conference was one of timing: to choose the best moment in the development of the Viet-Minh movement to turn it from a partisan army into a Communist State. The subsequent American belligerency served no doubt, to hasten Soviet readiness to agree, but was not the prime motive behind the negotiations."(11)

Last, but not least, the changing attitude of Soviet thinkers and leaders towards the emerging under-developed countries also might have significantly influenced this decision. The old policies towards Asia were being discarded and new ones were being formulated. The Soviets came to realize that if there was to be any further extension of Communism, it would have to be achieved

(10) Stalin's strategy was based on the attempt to create a communist-controlled enclave in a country bordering on Soviet territory as a first stage to the ultimate absorption of the whole state by the Communist bloc.

(11) Ibid., p. 84.

by more subtle means. Possession of atomic weapons by the U.S.S.R. and U.S. made military adventures very risky. A new form of political warfare, to be known, as peaceful coexistence was being adopted. Communism had to become respectable, particularly in Asia. The first step was to put an end to the stalemate in Korea. After Stalin's death these policies were further pursued by Malenkov. "The next step in path to Communist respectability was to bring the civil war in Indochina to an end, the war which was the main expression of the armed insurrections in Southeast Asia."(12)

Since there isn't any one decisive reason for this Soviet action towards Indochina at this particular period, it would seem, that in varying degrees there were several reasons for the Soviet government's decision. The most significant of these was the change of attitude of the Soviet leaders towards the cold war, the West and the underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia. This served as a rationale for all Soviet policies during that period. The E.D.C. question certainly played an important role, closely followed by the prospect of securing a Communist state before the situation might worsen for the Viet-Minh; finally, there was the likelihood that the increasing U.S. support and involvement might lead to an American intervention.

(12) J.H. Brimmell, Communism in South East Asia, (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 283.

Since 1953 the Soviet government under the new leadership, had made a number of serious efforts to break the East-West stalemate. In so doing it had begun to show flexibility in utilizing the almost disused weapons of diplomacy. The Malenkov regime, in abandoning certain of Stalin's tactics in East-West relations, as I had already mentioned, adopted a more reasonable attitude towards the non-Communist world in diplomatic and social matters. Yet in agreeing to attend the two major conferences on Germany and on Korea-Indochina, the Soviet government "has chosen the terrain and the weapons far wreaking maximum damage against the vulnerable joints of the alliances which the West has shored up since 1948 against Soviet acts and threats of violence."(13) Although Malenkov's policies did not meet with great success in Europe, which put him under severe criticism from opponents, his actions in Asia with regard to the wars in Korea and Indochina took some stigma out of the failures in Europe. Under Malenkov, the Soviet Union used its influence to bring to an end hostilities in both these countries between Communist and non-Communist forces. In so doing it helped

(13) Philip E. Mosely, The Kremlin and World Politics, Studies in Soviet Policy and Action. (New York, Vintage Books, 1960), p. 363.

to restore political or diplomatic contact between the belligerents. Finally, for the first time since 1948 it added a new Communist State, North Vietnam, to the Sino-Soviet bloc.

1954 then, is regarded as a key year in the process of change in the Soviet Union. One of the most significant changes occurred in their military capability. Since 1945, the Soviet Union continuously relied on conventional warfare with mass infantry. During the period 1953-1954, it began to develop the ability to fight a war in the air-atomic manner. Thus in 1953 it exploded its first hydrogen bomb, while in 1954 for the first time it displayed its intercontinental bombers. Subsequently, in 1955 it began to reduce its mass infantry. This growth of the Soviet Union's air-atomic power represented therefore "a major shift in the military balance between the two camps, and its potential political implications were very great."(14) The Soviet Union had now the increasing ability to deliver this power against vital industrial and urban areas of the West. The implication of this was evident just prior

(14) Survey of International Affairs, p. 9

to the opening of the Geneva Conference on Indochina, when the Soviet Union, in reference to American attempts at setting up a Southeast Asian Pact, warned United States' allies "that if they follow Washington they will be led only to war and destruction."(15) The greater confidence visible in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union gave the impression that the Soviet leaders saw themselves negotiating from a position of strength.

B. Soviet Attitudes Towards the Conference

Once Molotov announced that the Soviet Union would participate in the international conference on Korea and Indochina, official Soviet reaction was one of cautious optimism. On February 22, Moscow Radio expressed the hope that the Geneva Conference could help pave the way to a Korean settlement and "the establishment of peace in Indo-China." Then on March 4th Molotov himself declared that success or failure in Geneva depended mostly on France and the United States. Thus, before the Conference even started, he shifted the entire blame and responsibility for the war on the United States and France; cleverly absolving the communist side of any "sins". He went on to say that;

(15) The New York Times, May 2, 1954.

> "...the key factor would be whether the participants at the meeting recognized the necessity 'of deciding questions aiming at the re-establishment of peace in Indo-China, not by any means of prolonging a hopeless war but along lines of agreement answering to the principles of freedom and the national independence of peoples'." (16)

In addition, he vigorously assailed the United States "position of strength" policy which he claimed led to no good and had suffered a reversal in Indo-China. The United States efforts to stem the tide in Indochina by possible intervention plus the attempt to guarantee the security of Southeast Asia by forming a collective Southeast Asian Pact aroused Soviet indignation and served as a useful propaganda weapon to discredit United States intentions in that part of the world. The Soviets also feared that additional military pacts aimed against the Sino-Soviet bloc meant a tighter encirclement of the communist camp, giving the United States access to build more military bases on the periphery of the bloc and at the same time giving the United States the opportunity to resist legally any further communist expansions. Thus, such a pact with the United States at the head would serve as a direct

(16) The New York Times, March 5, 1954

challenge to the Sino-Soviet bloc's aims and intentions in Southeast Asia because it would give moral support, if nothing else, to those nations resisting communist encroachments. The character of this pact at the time was not yet known and the Soviets feared that the pact might develop into a strong treaty on the lines of NATO. Only time revealed that this would not be the case. In his speech before the Supreme Soviet around the 27 April 1954, Malenkov referred to this situation as follows:

> A sober attitude toward evaluation of the international situation always has been characteristic of the Soviet people. And today they are on guard against overestimating the significance of the easing of international tension that has been achieved because the enemies of strengthening the peace have not given up aggressive aspirations, are continuing arms drives, provoking extension of the war in Indo-China and setting up new military bases and military blocs. (17)

Most of the Asian states outside the Communist bloc were opposed to the French and American policy in Indochina, thus creating an atmosphere in the greater part of Asia upon which the Soviets and their allies capitalized. Attacks upon the United States and Secretary of State Dulles became more frequent. Dulles was repeatedly accused of trying to undermine the Geneva Conference and seeking to block a negotiated peace in Indochina.

(17) The New York Times, April 27, 1954.

> Dulles is more outspoken when he substantiates the stepping up of U.S. intervention in the Indochina conflict by the fact that 'this region is rich in many types of raw materials, as for example, tin, oil, rubber and iron ore. This region has great strategic value'. Thus Dulles is coming out on behalf of American monopolies, as one who hates any national liberation movement since it jeopardizes the tremendous profits being received from colonial plunder by the Rockefellers, Morgans and Duponts. This is how U.S. "anti-colonialism", so noisily advertised, works in reality. The U.S. ruling circles are coming out at the head of all colonial powers against the aspiration of colonial and dependent peoples to acquire freedom and independence."(18)

Upon arriving at Geneva on April 24, Molotov again reiterated his stand that one of the most important tasks of the Geneva Conference was to re-establish peace in Indochina and assume the rights of the people of Indochina. Outside of this routine statement nothing more specific could be ascertained which would have indicated the course Molotov would follow throughout the Conference.

Many Western observers believed that both the Soviet Union and Red China would use the Geneva Conference "to propose a cease-fire in Indo-China and immediate negotiations between France and Ho Chi Minh."(19) It was also believed

(18) Izvestia, April 10, 1954 in "The Current Digest of the Soviet Press", Vol. 6, 1954, Part 2, No. 15, p. 17.
(19) The New York Times, April 25, 1954.

that the Soviet Union would suggest either the partition of Vietnam into two areas: one controlled by Ho Chi Minh and another controlled by Bao Dai and the French Union, or the creation of a coalition government in Vietnam including ministers from both sides. However, right at the beginning of the Conference it became clear that the Soviets were determined to achieve two objectives; (1) full great-power recognition for China's Communist regime, and (2) forestalling of the United States in what the Soviets referred to as an American effort to intensify and extend the war in Indochina. The Soviets claimed that the U.S. was working overtime diplomatically and militarily to intensify the Indochina war with a view to repeating the "Korean gambit" as a means of getting at China.

There is little doubt that in agreeing to the Conference the Soviet Union considered foremost its own global interests over the Viet-Minh's and China's local interests. Although never revealed, it is assumed that the Soviets applied tacit diplomatic pressure on the Viet-Minh and the Chinese to win approval of its decision. The predominant influence of the Communist party of the U.S.S.R. over the communist movements in this area plus the dominance of Soviet military power served as means by which the Soviets were able to exert pressure in order

to obtain favorable results. Both the Viet-Minh and the Red Chinese realized fully that the Soviet Union was the only one powerful enough to successfully counter-balance the power of the United States and its allies. Thus, the power position of the U.S.S.R. served as an important manipulating factor in favour of the Soviet Union vis-à-vis the Viet-Minh and the Chinese. Without this powerful backing neither of them could anticipate any remarkable successes either at the table or on the field.

C. The Conference

Meanwhile, certain preparations for the Indochina phase of the discussions began. On April 26, the French Foreign Minister, Georges Bidault, in an attempt to get the discussions started as soon as possible, sought a meeting with Dulles, Eden and Molotov. However, Molotov never accepted the invitation and did not appear. He refused to attend under the pretext of another engagement but in fact he boycotted the meeting because Chou En-lai had not been invited. Instead he conferred with the Foreign Ministers of North Korea and Communist China. But a meeting was finally arranged between Bidault and Molotov on April 27. The immediate evaluation of these

talks revealed that "neither the Communists nor the French had any desire to discuss the partition of Indo-China as a first basis for solution."(20) The Communists themselves, announced that a coalition government of anti-Communist and Vietminh elements was much more preferable to a partition. However, any such coalition must exclude Bao Dai. Bao Dai's association first with the Japanese and then with the French made him unpopular not only with the Vietminh but with most of the Vietnamese. His presence, therefore, would serve as an obstacle in the smooth operation of any coalition between anti-Communist and Vietminh elements. The communists felt that such a coalition government could conduct an election in the atmosphere of a Vietminh victory that would give Ho Chi Minh overwhelming support in all Vietnam. Eventually Vietnam would fall under communist control.

But up till then the Vietminh were not invited to attend the Conference, and the Soviets began to pressure Bidault to agree to Vietminh participation. However, it was not actually France that prevented

(20) The New York Times, April 28, 1954.

Vietminh participation but Bao Dai, who threatened not to attend the Indochina discussion if Vietminh representatives were invited. France promptly sent a diplomatic mission to the Riviera, where Bao Dai was hard at work being Emperor of the State of Vietnam, and convinced him on April 29 to agree to admit Vietminh representatives to the Geneva Parley. The Conference on Indochina, then, became a nine-power conference: the five great powers, the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, France and the People's Republic of China; the three associated states, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam; and finally the Vietminh.

The actual negotiations, at Geneva on Indochina were protracted, complicated and acrimonious. Of importance was the fact that the military situation was unfavorable to the Western powers and that the Communist states were eager to take every advantage of it. In addition, there was frequent dissension between the Western states because they were not closely agreed on how to deal with the Indochina problem. Although there were some indications that "the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was not always in harmony with the policies of the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, the monolithic approach of the Communist powers toward Indochina was not impaired."(21)

(21) Russell H. Fifield, Op. cit., p. 275.

Throughout the Conference the Soviets attempted to attain a few basic objectives:

(1) to gain as much as possible through negotiations for the Viet-Minh, the Pathet Lao and the Khmer forces. This would lead to an inevitable communist takeover.

(2) to prevent a major war which could erupt if the conflict was not settled.

(3) to eliminate U.S. influence from Southeast Asia and to prevent the formation of SEATO.

(4) to portray the Soviet Union as a leader of peace and the bulwark against imperialism and colonialism.

(5) to prevent the realization of E.D.C. by using the Conference as a factor of influence in the internal difficulties and disputes within the French Government. Soviet support went to Mendès-France who finally opposed the formation of E.D.C.

With these objectives in mind, the Soviets manouvered skillfully throughout the negotiations in order to gain the maximum but always made concessions to prevent a collapse of the Conference.

One of the first potential sources of conflict which might have marred the opening of the Conference was eradicated when Anthony Eden and Molotov agreed to an arrangement by which the chairmanship in the Indochina

meeting would rotate between Britain and the Soviet Union. It had been feared that if the chairmanship rotated between the great powers, as at Berlin, an impasse would develop over China's right to share it. Once this was cleared out of the way the Conference settled down into formal session.

The two major issues which contributed a great deal to deadlocking the negotiations were: (1) the question of the separate status of Cambodia and Laos, (2) dispute over the composition of the international commission which was to supervise the armistice agreements. As soon as these obstacles were surmounted, the Conference progressively advanced towards its conclusive end.

On May 5, just four days before the formal session began, the British Foreign Minister, Anthony Eden consulted with Molotov and Gromyko. Both Molotov and Eden agreed that the first thing to work for was an armistice, but Molotov underlined that conditions must be attached to the armistice. During these talks Molotov also agreed that if negotiations failed at Geneva, there was great danger that the supporters of each side would be compelled to increase their participation, until finally there was a clash between them.

Accordingly, this might lead to a third world war.(22) This seemed to have set the tone for Soviet participation in the Conference; firm, yet conciliatory in order to bring about an agreement.

When negotiations finally began, quick agreement was reached on the principle that the Conference should work for a military armistice in Indochina before discussing the details of a political settlement. But the negotiations soon snarled on the issue of Laos and Cambodia.

At the opening of the Conference, the French Foreign Minister, M. Bidault, stated that he recognized the situation in Vietnam as one of civil war, while the situation in Laos and Cambodia was not one of civil war but clearly a Vietminh invasion. He further proposed that: (1) with respect only to Vietnam, regular troops be grouped in assembly areas established by the Geneva Conference; (2) all guerrillas and irregulars should be disarmed; (3) that civil internees and prisoners of war be released at once; (4) an international commission should supervise the proposed truce; (5) a cease-fire should come into effect as soon as an agreement for the foregoing provisions had been signed.

(22) Anthony Eden, Full Circle, (London, Cassell & Company Ltd., 1960), p. 117.

At the end he suggested that the agreement should be guaranteed by the nine Powers but left vague "the question of an ultimate political settlement in Viet Nam, merely suggesting 'progressive solution of political problems and ultimately free elections'."(23) As regards Cambodia and Laos, Bidault proposed that all Vietminh units be withdrawn with a subsequent procedure like that of Vietnam.

On May 10, Pham Van Dong presented the communist side of the issue. He demanded that the representatives of Khmer and Pathet Lao, both of whom were Vietminh sponsored "resistance governments" in Cambodia and Laos respectively, should be represented at the Conference. He then presented his proposal: (1) that France recognize the independence of Vietnam and of Pathet Lao and Khmer; (2) that all foreign troops be withdrawn from the three states with French forces temporarily in only a minimum of assembly areas; (3) that the Viet-Minh would make a declaration of willingness to consider the question of entrance into the French Union along with similar statements by the Pathet Lao and Khmer governments; (4) that the cultural and economic interests of France in the three states

(23) Coral Bell, Op. cit., p. 45.

would be recognized; (5) that free elections would be held in the three countries to set up a unified government in each instance, both sides in the three states participating in advisory conferences before the elections which would be held under conditions providing for "freedom of activity for the patriotic social parties, groups and organizations."(24); (6) that collaborators would not be prosecuted and prisoners of war would be exchanged; (7) that hostilities would end before the previously cited measures were carried out, the parties concerned agreeing to a cease-fire, to the termination of entry of arms and military units from the outside, and to the establishment of mixed commissions of the belligerents to supervise the settlement.(25)

Both Chou En-lai and Molotov supported the Vietminh proposals although the latter suggested that a neutral nations commission should supervise the armistice. Molotov believed that acceptance of this proposal would in one stroke give the Vietminh, the Pathet Lao and Khmer an upper hand in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia respectively, while at the same time reducing to a minimum French pressure and influence in these areas.

(24) Proposals by the North Viet Nam Delegation, Documents on International Affairs, 1954, p. 127, quoted in Russell H. Fifield Op. cit., p. 276.
(25) Russell H. Fifield, Op. cit., p. 276.

This would pave the way for a quick communist take over in these states because the proposed elections would pit the communists against the non-Communists who would be greatly weakened, as a result of the disappearance of a strong French backing.

At this stage in the Conference the negotiations appeared to have reached an impasse. Pham Van Dong's proposal made a cease-fire dependent on the acceptance of terms for a political settlement, while Bidault's proposal presented a single cease-fire without any very definite political conditions attached. However, the question of the status of Cambodia and Laos was the formidable obstacle to further progress. Anthony Eden explained the crux of the problem as follows:

> 'Chou En-lai and to a lesser degree Molotov, refused to acknowledge that the situation in these two Associated States was different in kind from that in Vietnam, and insisted on a blanket settlement for Indo-China as a whole. There was a plan behind this. The military situation might compel us to make concessions to the communists in Vietnam, and they wanted these to apply to Laos and Cambodia as well. We had at all costs to prevent this. The civil war in Vietnam on the one hand, and the direct invasion by the Vietminh of Laos and Cambodia on the other, would not be dealt with on the same basis.' (26)

(26) Eden, Op. cit., pp 118 & 119.

By having the situation in Laos and Cambodia recognized also as a civil war, both Molotov and Chou En-lai, hoped that this would greatly enhance the positions of the Pathet Lao and Khmer movements respectively. This would give the movements much greater say in the final settlement in Laos and Cambodia and would place them in such a position which would give them the opportunity of an eventual take over. The ultimate objective of such a strategy would be unification under Ho Chi Minh. However, dealing with Laos and Cambodia as separate independent entities and recognizing the situation there as aggression from Vietnam would definitely defeat the purpose.

Again on May 18, Molotov reiterated the position that the Indochina question be considered as a whole. He refused to acknowledge the fact that Laos and Cambodia already enjoyed independence under freely elected Governments and that their status was entirely different from that of Vietnam. Molotov contended that they were still members of the French Union and that their elections had not been fairly conducted.

Although this issue was left unresolved, a break in the impasse came on May 14 when the Soviet Union announced changes in the Communist positions with regard to the machinery for supervising and guaranteeing an armistice in Indochina.

> "Analyzing the French proposal and bringing out its short-comings, the delegate from the U.S.S.R. underlined that France has two courses in Indochina, - a course to continue and escalate the war, against her national interests, and a course to set up normal relationships with the nations of Indochina in conformity with the wishes of the French people. Striving to assist in the agreement, the Soviet delegation proposed on May 14 to accept in principle the French proposal for an armistice in Indochina and for the creation for that purpose of a commission made up of neutral states."(27)

Molotov's announcement of these concessions followed a caustic attack upon what he termed "American aggressive designs" in Southeast Asia, occasioned by Dulles's activities directed towards establishing a Southeast Asian Pact. It seems as if the "divergencies and uncertainties of the Western democracies perplexed and disquieted the Soviet representatives, who were inclined to suspect that some concerted plan of action must underlie such apparent incoherence."(28) Thus the fear that the deadlock, if not broken, would disrupt the Conference and prompt the U.S. in one way or another to take direct action in the Indochina conflict, pressured the Soviets

(27) V.P. Nichamin, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia i vneshniaia politika Sovetskogo Soiuza 1950-1959, (Moskva, Izdatel'stvo Instituta Mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii, 1960), Vol. 1, p. 199.

(28) Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina, (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 321.

to ease their position and make some concessions. The establishment of this Southeast Asian Pact would be a significant setback to the Soviets in that area of influence. It could also be argued that this change in the Soviet position was similarly directed at taking the sting or fire out of this Pact before it even got underway, by exhibiting to the Asian states Soviet good-will and peaceful intentions in an attempt to reach a settlement.

Although Molotov's speech did not alter the fundamental provisions of the Vietminh proposal, the position he assumed brought him somewhat closer to the proposal submitted by Georges Bidault. The following are the three modifications in the Communist position as announced by Molotov:

(1) The Soviet government does not believe that the Vietminh plan for supervision of the proposed armistice agreements in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia by joint commissions, composed of the belligerents in each state, provides for adequate supervision. Accordingly, Molotov suggested supervision by commissions composed of neutral countries.

(2) Molotov supported the French proposal for a guarantee of the armistice agreement by the nine states

participating in the Conference. However, he suggested they should consider collective action, not individual and collective action, as Bidault has specified; thus no action would be possible unless the Communist participants agreed to it.

(3) Molotov was less precise than the Vietminh had been about linking the armistice agreements with a political agreement. After declaring that the "drawback" to the French armistice proposal was that it did not deal at all with political problems, he added "but everybody can realize that it is impossible to separate the termination of the protracted war in Indo-China from the solution of at least some problems."(29)

Between 17-19 May the Conference went into restricted sessions. It was decided at these sessions that priority should be accorded to the military aspects of the settlement, while further recommendations were made that "private discussions should take place between the French and Viet-Minh delegations to solve the difficulties that had arisen over the evacuation of the French wounded from Dien Bien Phu."(30) During these discussions in

(29) The New York Times, May 15, 1954.
(30) Donald Lancaster, Op. cit., p. 322.

restricted session, Molotov showed himself unexpectedly co-operative in his approach to the problems confronting the Conference. It is not surprising then that Eden's impression was that Molotov was genuinely anxious to reach a settlement. However, the Communists' stubborn insistence that the Pathet Lao and Khmer should be recognized as de facto governments stopped all further progress in the discussions until Molotov proposed towards the end of the week that discussions should be confirmed to a five-point plan.

> "1) the cease-fire, 2) the allocation of zones in which the hostile forces should be grouped, 3) measures to prevent the arrival of reinforcements after the cease-fire, 4) the creation of a supervisory body to control the execution of these arrangements, and 5) the form of guarantee required to ensure the implementation of a settlement. (31)

The result appeared to be that Molotov had scored a tactical success by having induced the Conference to start any kind of discussions about an armistice without having defined whether only Vietnam or all of Indochina would be affected.(32) But in spite of Molotov's conciliatory attitude, relations between the Soviet and French delegations were strained as the

(31) The Manchester Guardian, May 22, 1954.
(32) The New York Times, May 22, 1954.

Soviets became perturbed by reports of Franco-American discussions on the Indochinese situation and resented Bidault's persistent refusal to contact the Vietminh delegation.

On May 25 Pham Van Dong introduced a plan which if put into effect would in fact have provided something like a de facto military partition of the country, and one that, with its provision that the two areas chosen should be economically viable, seemed to be envisaged as lasting for some time. Bidault, for France, objected to these proposals as amounting to partition.

However, the ensuing talks between Eden and Molotov on May 28 seemed to have been very fruitful, because the next day the deadlock was broken. On that day Eden presented a draft plan for the further progress of the negotiations. This plan, which was accepted by all members of the Conference, proposed that representatives of the two High Commands should meet immediately in Geneva and should also establish contact in Vietnam. They should study "the disposition of forces to be made upon the cessation of hostilities, beginning with the question of regrouping areas in Viet Nam."(33) This

(33) Coral Bell, Op. cit., p. 49.

enabled the question of the status of Laos and Cambodia to be ignored for the time being, and a start to be made on the more urgent question of Vietnam. In turn the Communist delegates waived their insistence on Pathet Lao and Khmer representation. It was generally believed that Chou En-lai and Pham Van Dong were persuaded with Molotov's help to accept this position.

Molotov finally realized that the West would never agree to the Pathet Lao and Khmer representation, and decided to eliminate this obstacle to allow the Conference to proceed with much more important matters. There were other issues of more importance which tended to impede the Conference. It was time that some of these were resolved. The Conference was dragging and there was the ever present fear and danger that it could terminate suddenly having failed to achieve some sort of a settlement. Dulles's impatience with the slow progress of the Conference disturbed the Soviets who feared that he might take action which could very well result in a clash between the Soviet Union and the United States. The fear of such an eventuality was clearly evident in the talks between Sir Anthony Eden and Molotov held on May 5. It was also present in the speeches delivered by Soviet military figures during

the May Day celebrations. These speeches demonstrated "a curious blend of truculence and apprehension over the damage that an atomic-hydrogen war would inflict upon the 'progressive' democracies before the capitalist 'aggressors' met their inevitable doom. This would seem to confirm the belief that the Soviet Union hoped to avoid another world war for some years."(34)

Negotiations on the military details of a settlement began at the beginning of June.

Meanwhile, the attention of the Conference turned to the question of the powers and membership of the international supervisory commission and its relationship to the mixed commission in the supervision of the armistice. The Communist side presented their proposal at the beginning of June, when Andrei A. Gromyko, the then Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, taking the place of Molotov, who had left for a brief visit to Moscow, proposed that Poland, Czechoslovakia, Pakistan and India be named to supervise an armistice in Indochina. This was to be named the Neutral National Supervisory Commission whose decisions would be collective; that is,

(34) The New York Times, May 16, 1954.

the communist members would have right of veto and would be in a position to block the activities of the Commission as they saw fit. The Western Powers categorically rejected this proposal. Bedell Smith, the U.S. delegate, maintained that representatives of communist nations could not be neutral, because of their ideological loyalty. He argued for an Indochinese Commission of a more international and impartial character than the kind proposed by the Communists. On the other hand, Chou En-lai claimed that a Communist nation could be neutral and defended the thesis of the Communist side that any nation that had not taken part in the Indochinese war could be considered neutral.

Upon his return from Moscow, Molotov supported Gromyko's proposal and said that without it, it would be difficult to get an agreement on a commission. He also rejected the claim of the Western delegates that the authority of the neutral commission should be superior to that of the Joint Commissions (made up of Vietminh and French representatives), and insisted that the neutral commission should be limited to supervising the prohibition on the introduction of additional forces and equipment, while the joint commissions carried the

principal responsibility. Molotov speculated that giving most of the powers to the joint commissions would place the Vietminh on an equal standing with the French and would thus force the French to deal directly and unilaterally with the Vietminh. Also, considering that the Vietminh held at that time a considerable military advantage over the French would understandably place them in a much more favorable position vis-à-vis the French. This development in return could very well give the Vietminh the opportunity to apply quite effectively a concentrated pressure upon the disadvantaged French to gain much more in Indochina through these joint commissions than could otherwise be hoped for at the Conference table in Geneva where France was flanked by powerful allies. The Western powers were aware of such a danger and emphatically rejected Molotov's demands. On June 7, Eden with Bidault's support urged that the work of supervising the truce be entrusted to the Colombo Powers, who were both Asian and neutral.

The next day a plenary session was held where Molotov delivered a major speech. Since it was Molotov who proposed such a plenary session, it was presumed that he intended to make an announcement to which he wished maximum publicity to be given. During the speech Molotov

made a bitter personal attack upon Bidault which was presumably designed "to assist Mendès-France to overthrow the Laniel Government by persuading hesitant deputies that under the leadership of Bidault the French delegation would be incapable of reaching a settlement."(35) Molotov was well aware that a vote of confidence in the Laniel government was impending; and that in the case that the government would fall, Mendès-France, who demanded a quick conclusion to the Indochina war, would be asked to head the new government. In addition, Molotov rejected Eden's Colombo Powers proposal and insisted that there must be a minimum of one Communist supervisor. He proposed that the Conference discuss political questions involving Indochina while considering the military aspects of an armistice there. He said that the Conference should examine "first of all the questions pertaining to granting sovereignty and independence in three Indochina states and to holding in those states free elections as well as to the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the territory of Indochina... He also wanted the Conference to ensure a direct contact between the representatives of both sides for the purpose of discussion of political questions."(36)

(35) Donald Lancaster, Op. cit, p. 325.
(36) The New York Times, June 9, 1954.

On June 10, as a chairman of the Conference, Anthony Eden summarized the state of negotiations:

> (1) It was agreed that a cease-fire should be simultaneous in all three states with the Vietnamese problem being examined first.
>
> (2) It was agreed that some kind of international supervision was necessary but wide differences existed on the composition, procedures, and powers of international armistice commission.
>
> (3) As far as the future of Laos and Cambodia was concerned, the Conference was still deadlocked on the question of the role of Pathet Lao and Khmer.(37)

From June 11 to June 15 attempts were made to find some ground for an agreement that would save the Conference from a complete breakdown. Molotov again charged that the Western powers were inventing "pretexts" to prove the "impossibility of agreement" and to gain time for the five-power negotiations on the defence of Southeast Asia in Washington "concerning the intervention of other countries in the Indochinese war."(38) This "thorn" in the side of Molotov, seems to have given him many sleepless nights. During this brief period Eden and Molotov met to confer for two days but there seemed to have been no basis for optimism at the conclusion of

(37) Russell H. Fifield, Op. cit., p. 277.
(38) The New York Times, June 11, 1954.

the talks. In the meantime, on June 12, the Laniel government in Paris fell when the National Assembly failed to carry a motion of confidence. This proved to be a major development which greatly affected the Conference.

Thus, perhaps as a result of Laniel's fall; the private consultations between Molotov and Eden and finally the fear that unless some progress is made the Western powers might discontinue the Conference, Molotov offered on June 14 a minor concession on the machinery for observing an armistice in Indochina. He agreed that certain decisions should be made by majority vote. According to this plan, decisions on investigations of charges of armistice violations, and on certain inspection functions would be made by majority vote. But he declared that a unanimous decision still would be necessary on violations of the armistice, or threatened violations, that could lead to a resumption of hostilities. However, this concession was not considered adequate by Western delegations even though some sort of concession was expected from the communists to keep the Conference going.

However on June 16 the pace of the Conference was suddenly accelerated by the communist delegations' yielding on two points on which it had been deadlocked.

Chou En-lai, after discussions with Eden on the future of Laos and Cambodia, made a series of proposals that suggested the Communists might agree to a withdrawal of some Vietminh forces in Cambodia and Laos and consider a settlement in these Indochinese states separate from that in the big state of Vietnam. These proposals appeared to represent "an effort on the Communist side to prevent a breakdown in the Indochina talks such as occurred ... in the Korea discussions."(39) Chou proposed that all foreign troops be withdrawn from Cambodia and Laos and that there should be military talks between the two sides in each case. It was generally believed, among Western delegates, that Chou's reference to foreign troops meant not only French troops but possibly Vietminh troops. He agreed that Laos and Cambodia should receive arms up to the level required for defence, but stipulated that they should not become bases for the United States. He also proposed that the international supervisory commission suggested for Vietnam should extend its functioning to Laos and Cambodia. Although emphasizing that the problems in the three Indochina states were linked, Chou, "conceded that conditions in Cambodia and Laos were different from those in Vietnam and that the Conference could therefore consider them separately."(40)

(39) The New York Times, June 17, 1954.
(40) The New York Times, June 17, 1954.

On the same day, Molotov modified his former stand on an armistice supervisory commission. He suggested that there be formed either a five-member commission composed of India, Pakistan, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Indonesia or a three-member commission of India, Poland and Indonesia or some other Colombo Power. The next day Bidault held important discussions with both Chou and Molotov and was convinced that both now wished a settlement in Laos and Cambodia. This amounted to the dropping of their sponsorship of the Pathet Lao and Khmer resistance movements and agreeing that the Vietminh should represent the communist side of the military talks. Chou was "reported to be willing to recognize the royal government in each case, if satisfactory arrangements could be made by them with the Pathet Lao and the Cambodian resistance movements."(41) The West's intransigence finally convinced both the Soviets and the Chinese that if the Conference is to proceed without a breakdown, they must modify and alter their stand on the supervisory commission and on Laos and Cambodia. Much to Soviet liking, Laniel's government in France fell and accordingly a new turn in the negotiations occurred.

(41) Coral Bell, Op. cit., p. 54.

The Soviets were well aware of the attitude towards the Conference of Mendès-France whose chances of becoming the Prime Minister of France were great. It was time, therefore, to settle some of the problems which were left unresolved and which continuously obstructed progress of the Conference. Such a step forward, the Soviets believed, would stimulate the Conference and raise hope for a speedy conclusion. It could also serve as a bait for Mendès-France, subtly letting him know that if he would cooperate with the Soviets in Europe, (the E.D.C. question) they will cooperate with him in Indochina.

Thus, one of the more important developments which affected the negotiations occurred in Paris. On June 17 Mendès-France became Prime Minister with a large majority. In his first speech delivered in the National Assembly as the new Prime Minister, he announced his intention of resigning if he should fail to conclude an honourable peace in Indochina by 20 July. His "confidence in his ability to secure an armistice must have been fortified, however by Molotov's timely attack on his predecessor and also by the revelation of Viet-Minh readiness to agree to acceptable armistice terms."(42) This led the communist side to believe that now the French would pursue in

(42) Donald Lancaster, Op. cit., p. 325.

earnest an agreement and were convinced that France wanted to conclude the war as soon as possible. For the Soviets it became expedient to see that Mendès-France remained in power as long as possible, at least until the E.D.C. question would be settled. Mendès-France's attitude towards the European Defence Community treaty was well-known to the Soviets and they hoped that he would be instrumental in destroying it before it really got off the ground. It is usually believed that as a result of this development within the French government, the communist side became more conciliatory during the negotiations. Subsequently, negotiations at Geneva took a turn for the better. Now it was the communist delegations that were the most eager to reach a solution that would be acceptable to the other side.

On June 19, the Conference reached agreement that representatives of the two commands in Laos and Cambodia should study the questions relating to the cessation of hostilities in their territories, beginning with the question concerning the withdrawal of all foreign troops. This agreement marked the end of the first stage of the Conference. The next day the Foreign Ministers left Geneva, leaving the Conference to be

carried on in four separate bodies, the three military committees and a political conference at the official level, which continued the general discussions.

The Foreign Ministers reassembled again in Geneva by July 12. However, there was some question as to whether the American delegation would return. After meeting on July 13 in Paris with Eden and Mendès-France, Dulles gave three reasons why he and Bedell Smith were unwilling to return to the Conference. First, Dulles regarded Mendès-France as a novice in foreign affairs, who was negotiating under military defeat and who was forced to seek a quick settlement. There was a likelihood that he would have to accept terms which the United States could never approve. Therefore, it would be easier to dissociate in a non-dramatic way from such a settlement if the United States was not represented by a senior official at Geneva. Second, there was apprehension that the United States would be urged both by the communists and by French leaders, although for totally different reasons, to guarantee a final settlement. An American failure to yield to France's wishes would embitter relations between France and the United States, while American acceptance of the communist

of the communist demands would mean that the United States had given its approval to the control of more territory by communism. The State Department was willing to accept a partition in Vietnam, but it would not give its approval to such a division. Third, there was a related anxiety that France might blame the United States for the failure to achieve peace and might ask them for American troops to win a war which American diplomacy had prevented from being settled. It seemed to Dulles that these dangers could be reduced if the United States made it clear that it was not going to play a decisive role at the Conference.(43) Nevertheless, it was finally agreed that Bedell Smith would return to the Conference for the last few days of its duration.

In the meantime, talks at Geneva went on. Hopes for an agreement were bright. On July 11 Moscow radio reported that much had been done at the Conference to prepare solid foundations for future agreement. It cited "the Vietminh delegates as authority for a statement that there was 'not much difference between the latest French proposals and the Soviet view'."(44)

(43) Coral Bell, Op. cit., p. 63.
(44) The New York Times, July 12, 1954.

But the Communist delegations showed marked annoyance over the Western Big Three talks in Paris on July 13. Much of this annoyance was directed at the United States, and according to Tass, the Soviet delegation circles said that the possibilities of an agreement "which are now on the horizon, and of reducing international tension, are contrary to the policy of the aggressive circles of the United States."(45) During this time the talks at Geneva were carried on privately among the delegates and the questions dealt with were: (1) the position of the demarcation line in Vietnam, (2) the date of the elections, (3) the regrouping area in Laos, (4) the question of guarantee. In addition, the question of the composition of the supervisory commission had not been settled yet.

On July 16 the French drew up the texts of the three proposed armistice agreements for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia together with a fourth document in which the nine participating states would guarantee the agreements. But this document proved to be a stumbling block because the United States refused to join in guaranteeing the gains made by the Communists. Consequently, the French were forced to drop this proposal. Nevertheless,

(45) The New York Times, July 14, 1954.

Molotov kept insisting that there must be a general guarantee. He presented his own version of this last requirement by stating, without mentioning the United States, that there must be a provision for a guarantee of an Indochina settlement by the nine participating states.

But the next day there was an indication that the Conference might at last be on the verge of success. On that day Chou En-lai proposed to Anthony Eden "that the supervisory commission should consist of India, Canada and Poland. After all the arguments, this was a definite step towards the Western powers and the proposal was accepted by all three Western powers."(46) It was also agreed that the international commission was to make most decisions by majority vote. Some decisions required unanimity (those dealing with issues that might lead to a resumption of hostilities), but if this was not attained the issue could be referred to the Conference Powers. Members would have the right to make majority and minority reports.

The armistice agreements on Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia were finally signed on July 21. The agreement

(46) Anthony Eden, Op. cit., p. 141.

provided that the demarcation line in Vietnam should run along the Song Ben Hai River, at approximately the 17th parallel, with a demilitarized zone on either side. This gave the Vietminh full control over northern Vietnam and also provided that the French must evacuate the Hanoi perimeter within 80 days, the Haiduong perimeter within 100 days and the Haiphong perimeter within 300 days of the armistice coming into effect. Subsequently, the Vietminh must evacuate areas south of the 17th parallel in periods varying from 80 to 300 days. All interned civilians and prisoners of war were to be repatriated. A Joint Commission with joint groups of Vietminh and Franco-Vietnamese representatives was to be established to supervise the technical carrying out of the cease-fire, which the International Commission made up of representatives of India, Canada and Poland was to supervise the points of entry and the "proper execution" of the cease-fire. Finally, national elections to unify Vietnam were to be held two years hence. The partition left Vietminh about twelve million people in the north and the Vietnamese government about eleven million in the south.

In the cease-fire agreement on Laos provision was made for the "withdrawal of the regular Viet-Minh and French forces within 120 days of the armistice coming into effect, but the fighting units of Pathet Lao were allowed to concentrate in a regroupment area involving two northeast provinces, Phang Saly and Sam Neua, with a corridor connecting them, 'pending a political settlement'."(47) The French were allowed to maintain a 1,500 men military mission to train the Laotian National Army and could have two military establishment one at Seno and the other in the Mekong Valley. Prisoners of war and civilian internees were to be exchanged. No armaments, except those necessary for defence were to be introduced into Laos. A Joint Commission and an International Commission, the same as in Vietnam, were to be established, to supervise the armistice.

Finally, the cease-fire agreement in Cambodia provided for the withdrawal of the French and Vietminh forces within 90 days of the armistice. Khmer Resistance Forces were to be immediately demobilized. Prisoners of war and civilian internees were to be released. Again a Joint Commission and an International Commission were

(47) Russell H. Fifield, Op. cit., p. 280.

to be established for the same purpose as in Vietnam and Laos.

But there was no formal guarantee of the agreements and the Conference Powers, except for the United States and Vietnam, issued a Final Declaration on the agreements; in which the Conference expressed satisfaction at the termination of hostilities; recognized that the military demarcation line in Vietnam is only provisional. Each participant of the Conference in its relations with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam undertook "to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity and the territorial integrity of the above mentioned States, and to refrain from interference in their internal affairs."(48) Finally, the members agreed to consult one another on any question which may be referred to them by the International Supervisory Commission, in order to study such measures as may prove necessary to insure that the agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet Nam are respected."(49) The United States, as was already mentioned, asserted that it would not join in such a declaration as submitted.

(48) Harold M. Maki, Conflict and Tension in the Far East, Key Documents, 1894-1960, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1961), p. 205.
(49) Ibid., p. 206.

The U.S. indicated that the Geneva settlement contained provisions that it did not like, and that it did not consider itself a party to or bound by them. However, it made a unilateral declaration, whereby it declared that; "(i) it will refrain from the threat or use of force and (ii) it would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."(50)

The Geneva Conference was one of the peaks of post-war communist successes. As a direct result of this the leading role of the Soviet Union in the "socialist camp" was enhanced and to both the Soviet Union and Communist China the Conference signified progress. It provided for the legal and open emergence in Asia of a new "people's democracy". The communists, therefore, (with the exception, perhaps, of the Vietminh who felt that they were forced to accept less than they really deserved) praised the outcome of the Conference, as a triumph of democratic forces of the world in their struggle against American imperialism. Pravda said the agreement banning foreign military bases in Vietnam

(50) Ibid., p. 207.

"deals a blow to the plans of American aggressive circles, which were counting on inclusion of South Vietnam plus Laos and Cambodia in an aggressive pact and creation there of military bases directed against the countries of the democratic camp."(51) Molotov in his official statement, delivered after the agreement was signed said that it was an important victory of peace and a big step towards the easing of international tensions.

> "The success attained by the Geneva Conference conforms to the interests of all peace-loving peoples, the interests of peace and the freedom of the nations. Allow me to express the confidence that these agreements and the important results of the Geneva Conference will fortify the will and the striving of the people for further relaxation of international tension and for further consolidation of peace."(52)

The Soviets placed a great amount of credit for the success of the Conference on the Soviet Union. They prided themselves that as a result, the world prestige of the Soviet Union reached an unprecedented high and that the Soviet Union was being considered a standard bearer of peace.

(51) The New York Times, July 22, 1954.
(52) The New York Times, July 22, 1954.

"A great merit in the establishment of peace in Indochina must be credited to the governments of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Peoples Republic. The delegation of the U.S.S.R. and C.P.R. in Geneva exhibited the maximum of good will in the attempts of reaching a settlement in the Indochinese conflict in conformity with the interests of the people of Indochina and in accordance with the interests of France. They in succession upheld the right of the people of Indochina of liberty and national independence. Against the plans put forth for the continuation and escalation of the war they set off a policy of peace and peaceful coexistence. Thanks to the stand of the Soviet Union and C.P.R. the aggressive forces were not able to entangle the people of Indochina with the danger of "internationalizing the Indochinese conflict. Namely the U.S.S.R. and C.P.R. broke up an attempt by colonizers to conduct the negotiations in Geneva from a 'power position'." (53)

(53) A.A. Lavryshchev, Indokitaiskii Vopros Posle Vtoroi Myrovoi Voiny, (Moskva; ~~Idatel'stvo~~ I.M.O., 1960), p. 119. Translated by writer.

CHAPTER IV
SOVIET STRATEGY AND TACTICS IN INDOCHINA: 1955-1961

The war in Indochina was over. Out of the chaos that lasted for about eight years emerged a situation which laid the groundwork for future disputes, crises and war. Peace is a short-lived thing in beleaguered Indochina. But what else could be expected when on July 22, 1954, the day after the signing of the Geneva Conference, Ho Chi Minh, the Vietminh leader, had pledged to "liberate" the southern part of Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh went on to say:

> "At the Geneva conference we gained a great victory with the full assistance of the Soviet Union and China. We must continue our outmost efforts during the peace to win the unification, independence and democracy of the whole nation (Vietnam)...
>
> The people of South Vietnam are those who dared to spearhead the 'patriotic war'. I assure those people that without fail we will struggle shoulder to shoulder to win peace, unification, independence and democracy for the whole of Vietnam." (1)

There is no doubt that the Soviet Union and the rest of the communist camp considered the Geneva Agreement a great success. A new communist ruled state, the first one since 1950, was incorporated into the Sino-Soviet bloc. On July 24, 1954, the Soviet Government sent a personal greeting to Ho Chi Minh;

(1) The New York Times, July 26, 1954.

> "The Geneva agreements mark an important victory for the forces of peace and at the same time a recognition of the selfless struggle of the Vietnamese people for their freedom and national independence.
>
> The Soviet people and the Soviet Government greet the heroic Vietnamese people and their government and send best wishes for the rapid rehabilitation of the country and success in economic and cultural life under peaceful conditions." (2)

The most important development affecting Indochina during 1955 was the evolution of the Soviet bloc's policy towards that area. The consolidation of the Diem regime in South Vietnam had helped not only to discourage Vietminh aggression but also to reconcile Moscow and Peking to a de facto set of circumstances which they found distasteful rather than intolerable. The implied threat of a military attack has been abandoned and replaced by a more supple policy of economic penetration and political subversion. War, as an instrument of policy, (as was already shown) had to be abandoned because the stalemate on nuclear weapons has made the "big war" suicidal and the "little war" more dangerous. The Soviets realized the advantages of economic and political penetration of an area where it was hoped in Moscow, nationalism could be influenced away from Western

(2) The New York Times, July 26, 1954.

ideas, and where offers of economic and technical aid could swing non-Communist governments round to accept at least some elements of the Soviet point of view. The social structure or internal policy of the regime had no bearing on the decision in Moscow. Consequently, Moscow made approaches to both Laos and Cambodia. In 1956 Cambodia and the Soviet Union exchanged Ambassadors and at the same time Cambodia accepted an offer of Soviet economic and technical aid.

The application of the new Communist policy reached its natural conclusion at the local level in September 1955, when the world Communist 'line' for divided countries was officially adopted for Vietnam as well. The governing "principle of the 'line' is that the reunification of a divided country is a matter to be decided between the governments of both sections of the country, - a policy which in Germany, the most important of the divided countries, offers the advantage of avoiding free general elections in which the Communist controlled section might lose its identity."(3) In Vietnam the fear of elections had always been a less important factor for the Communists, but the application

(3) Brian Crozier, "International Situation in Indochina", Pacific Affairs, Vol. 29, 1956, p. 310.

of the principle in that country nevertheless offered another advantage not to have been neglected; it provided ammunition for those who maintained that the provisions of the Geneva agreements for country-wide general elections in Vietnam in July 1956 were still binding on the Diem government (which had always denounced them) and had to be observed.

However, there was little doubt that the Soviet Union had strong hopes that the indigenous communist forces would be able to take over South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia by peaceful and gradual means. During the first year following the partition, the Soviets must have been extremely hopeful that South Vietnam would fail to achieve inner stability and external security and would fall sooner rather than later under Communist control. The Moscow-Peking axis has relentlessly pressed its political warfare against South Vietnam, ceaselessly denouncing United States military and economic aid as a new form of "colonization". Taking advantage of the frictions between South Vietnam and Cambodia, both Moscow and Peking showered attentions on the latter. In 1956 Prince Norodom Sihanouk paid visits to both Russia and China, both of whom extended aid to Cambodia in the form

of long-term credits and grants, technical assistance and scholarships. Isolated Laos, still partitioned since the abortive Geneva agreement, had also carried out exchanges of ceremonial visits and signed agreements with Peking, as gestures designed to assert its status of noncommitment.

In September 1955 a new body known as the Fatherland Front was formed in North Vietnam. It purported to unite various organizations which claimed to represent sectional interests in both North and South Vietnam. The proclaimed mission of the Fatherland Front was reunification of Vietnam. The Front set up a platform, claiming that the Government of North Vietnam was clearly the government for the whole of Vietnam, and which called for the unification of the country through general elections organized after consultations between representative bodies of North and South. Military attack as a means of reunifying Vietnam was ruled out for the time being. There remained, however, an element of doubt which arose from the basic conflict of interests between North Vietnam on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and China on the other.

Soviet policy "was aimed at a 'freezing' of the position in the divided countries, or rather, Russia was prepared to concede to the maintenance of the existing division in Vietnam and Korea as a tacit quid pro quo for the continued division of Germany. Above all, the Russians, conscious of the suicidal nature of a nuclear war, were anxious to avoid a major conflict."(4) Vietnam, in particular, apparently struck the Soviets as an undesirable issue for a major war, and the consequences of a Vietminh attack on the South were clearly unpredictable in view of the SEATO defensive umbrella over Indochina and of American support for the Diem regime.

The new Soviet attitude towards this area began to manifest itself clearly. Following the general shift in Soviet policy from a military challenge to the West, to a vaguely formulated and ill-defined economic competition, the territory of Indochina evolved into a significant factor in the global struggle against capitalism. Thus throughout 1955 and then on into 1956 the Soviet Union has evolved a new approach to the non-communist world which incorporated at least four innovations of importance to Indochina in particular and to

(4) Ibid., p. 311.

Southeast Asia in general.

> "First, the Soviet Union has placed new emphasis on normal and conciliatory diplomatic attitudes and techniques, in marked contrast to its suspicious, hostile, and intransigent approach of former years. Second, the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc have begun through programs of trade and aid to wield their economic power as a political weapon. Third, the Soviet Union and the communist bloc have started to export arms to certain non-communist governments. Fourth, the Soviet Union's leaders have initiated a vigorous program to repudiate Stalin and Stalinism..."(5)

This new approach was aimed to lend credence that close co-operation with the communist countries can be safe, feasible and profitable. The repudiation of Stalin and, by implication, Stalinist methods seemed to have marked the Soviet Union as less menacing than before. It was hoped that these factors would soften resistance to communism in Indochina and strengthen the hand of indigenous Communists. Equally important was the new Soviet effort to play down force, violence, and insurrection as the communist routes to power. As Khrushchev stated in his address to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1956:

(5) John Kerry King, Southeast Asia in Perspective, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), p. 277.

> "In view of the fundamental changes that have taken place in the world arena, new prospects have also opened up with regard to the transition of countries and nations to socialism.
>
> It is quite likely that the form of the transition to socialism will become more and more variegated. Moreover, it is not obligatory for the implementation of these forms to be connected with civil war in all circumstances... But there are different forms of social revolution and the allegation that we recognize force and civil war as the only way of transforming society does not correspond to reality...
>
> In this connection the question arises of the possibility of employing the parliamentary form for the transition to socialism."(6)

Thus Soviet propaganda output during this period sought to alter the image of local communists from one of violent revulsion against everything non-communist to one of critical, but ostensibly constructive, opposition. It characterized all Western-sponsored activities in the area as "aggressive", "interventionist", and "imperialistically-inspired" and shrouded the Communist Bloc in "aura of 'peace and friendliness'; and fostered the concept of a community of interests between Asia and the 'socialist camp of peace'."(7) This propaganda sought to convince the people of Indochina

(6) The New York Times, February 15, 1956.
(7) Evron M. Kirkpatrick (ed), Target: the World, "Communist Propaganda Activities in 1955", (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), p. 176.

and Southeast Asia, that the United States was following a policy of "positions of strength" which sought to prevent the recurrence of a major depression at home through a program for the development of more destructive weapons that could only lead to war and sought to extend American control and influence in this area through "imperialistically motivated" programs of economic aid and technical assistance. On the other hand, the Soviet Union abhors war and seeks only the extension of friendly relations with other countries. The propaganda further stressed that the "socialist camp" was willing to give concrete aid to Asian countries with no political strings attached. The SEATO bloc was attacked as a weapon of the cold war and of the "policy of strength" whereby the West, "interested in the maintenance of the colonial system, (strove) to cause a split among the countries of Asia and to encroach upon their national sovereignty and independence."(8)

The change in the attitudes towards international affairs by Soviet leaders, a development which had been going on for some time now, culminated in the promulgations made by Nikita S. Khrushchev at the 20th Congress

(8) Ibid., p. 178.

of the Soviet Communist Party in February of 1956. At this Congress Khrushchev firmly announced the modification in Communist precepts and spelled out all the shortcomings and negative traits of Stalin and his policies. Subsequently, the Congress adopted the following resolutions:

(1) Wars are not inevitable. It was clearly contrary to the Leninist-Stalinist conception that wars are inevitable as long as capitalism remained. Khrushchev now maintained that there exist powerful social and political forces which are capable of preventing the unleashing of war by the imperialists. Subsequently the concept of "peaceful coexistence" among countries with different social systems was proclaimed as one of the pillars of Soviet foreign policy.

(2) Violent revolutions are not inevitable. This concept overshadowed a previous belief that violent revolutions were the only road to socialism. Now the Soviets were ready to accept parliamentary processes as a substitute for violence and to consider non-violent forms of social revolutions as possible.

(3) Overtures to the Socialist Parties of the West.

(4) America is the enemy. For the Soviets the United States continued to be the bulwark of reaction, exploitation, belligerency. The U.S. international networks were the greatest evil of the times.

(5) Partial Revision of Stalinism in Foreign Affairs. Stalin's division of the world into two camps was rejected by Khrushchev. The new concept divided the world into five sections. At the extreme right was the United States at the extreme left was the Soviet Union. Close to the U.S. would be found the members of NATO, Baghdad Pact and SEATO. Close to the Soviet Union would be found her allies and satellites in Europe and Asia. At the center would be found a group of neutral nations.*

The first object of Soviet policy during the months following the 20th Party Congress was, therefore, to ensure that internal relaxation and recognition of national difference between the communist states did not break up the international solidarity of the communist bloc. Hence, Soviet policy during the first half of 1956 was subdued and on the whole, distinctly conciliatory.

* David J. Dallin, Op. cit., pp 322-330.

This "change in the tone and temper of Soviet foreign policy was registered in two particularly striking acts: first, the dissolution of the Cominform on 17 April, and secondly the replacement of Mr. Molotov by Mr. Shepilov as foreign minister on 1 June."(9) The dissolution of the former, as the instrument of communist propaganda, made possible better relations with non-communist countries particularly in Asia. Shepilov's elevation to the ministry of foreign affairs thus seemed to reflect the new tendency of Soviet foreign policy to concentrate on an economic drive in the uncommitted and underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa, coupled with an easing of tensions in the rest of the world. Thus, Soviet policy in this period had three main aspects: "(i) co-ordination of the economic activities of the people's democracies with a view to increased efficiency; (ii) the building up of connexions with the uncommitted world; (iii) the maintenance and extension of state visits, missions, and delegations, which the Bulganin-Khrushchev tour of Asia had shown to be so effective a psychological weapon."(10)

(9) Geoffrey Barraclough and Rachel F. Wall, Survey of International Affairs, 1955-1956, (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 242.
(10) Ibid., p. 243.

In accordance with these aspects, the Soviet Union put forward a general project for aid to the underdeveloped countries; but more immediately significant, both in numbers and in geographical distribution, was the long list of new connections Moscow now formed. Among others, diplomatic relations were established with Cambodia on May 18. Then on July 2 Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia paid a visit to Moscow where he showed his friendly sentiments and determination never to join a hostile bloc directed against the Soviet Union and on July 7, the Soviets made an offer of unconditional aid to Cambodia.

In the meantime Red China, whose prestige and popularity was on the rise since the Geneva Conference began to come into its own in the affairs of Asia. In power, the Chinese communists have attached great importance to developing policies of their own in Asia and to achieving a co-equal status with Moscow in the world of international communism. It was at this time that the balance of communist influence and operational responsibility in Southeast Asia in general and Indochina in particular, seemed to have been undergoing an interesting and potentially very important change. As far as the

strategic and tactical guidance of the communist movements in this area were concerned, the relative influence of Peking had increased greatly. Peking had become the focal point for communist conferences, rallies, good-will missions, social and cultural exchanges, and economic negotiations in Asia. In the realm of general communist strategy, Peking's increased prestige and influence in Southeast Asia was also discernible.

> Briefly, according to the Peking or Maoist revolutionary strategies, the peasantry plays the leading role, the armed struggle being conceived as a long-term effort in which the country-side is captured and organized first and the urban centers last. In the Moscow ... strategies it is the proletariat which plays the leading role, and the first objective is to seize the urban centers before control is expanded gradually to the country-side.(11)

In Southeast Asia the Peking strategy had increased markedly in popularity despite Soviet doubts about its suitability as a revolutionary mode for other Asian countries. However, as far as the changed balance of communist influence did exist, it seemed to represent Soviet acquiescence to the realities of the Asian

(11) John Kerry King, Op. cit., p. 99.

situation rather than to any independent tactical decision to use China as the Soviet tool in Asia. It would also be safe to assume that the Soviet Union no longer was an absolute and independent authority, at this time, on communist strategy in Asia nor the sole source of communist inspiration in the area.(12) Consequently, the strategy of Communist parties in Southeast Asia began to be more coordinated with Chinese objectives. This was in marked contrast to the situation when Moscow determined communist strategy in Asia on the basis of Soviet objectives in Europe. It was not surprising then that by 1959 communist activities in Indochina, as well as elsewhere, became more reckless, aggressive and militaristic, reflecting the mood of Peking.

Getting back to the specific developments in Indochina, 1956 saw the first stirrings of trouble which eventually developed into crisis proportions. The cause of the troubles stemmed from the Geneva Agreement itself, because the parties involved were either unable or unwilling to carry out some of the provisions of the agreement.

(12) Ibid., p. 100.

In Vietnam the question revolved around the general elections which were supposed to be held in July 1956; in Laos it was the inability of the Royal Government and the Pathet Lao to reach agreement for the incorporation of the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua under the royal administration. This latter problem will be dealt with separately in detail.

As was already mentioned, in accordance with the terms of the decision of the Geneva Conference of 1954, free general elections by secret ballot were to be held in Vietnam under the supervision of an international commission in July 1956. It was also stipulated in the "final declaration" of the 1954 Conference, that representatives of North and South Vietnam should consult from July 20, 1955, onwards to settle between them the manner in which the elections would be conducted. In June 1955 Pham Van Dong declared the government of North Vietnam to be ready for consultations. In July, however, Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam turned down the idea of consultations in a "cryptic statement pointing out that the Vietnamese government had not signed the Geneva agreements and arguing that country-wide elections could not be held since conditions for free elections did not exist in the North."(13) The Soviet Union, nevertheless,

(13) Brian Crozier, Op. cit., p. 313.

was clearly interested in the implementation of the decision of the Conference, knowing very well that Ho's chances of victory were quite good. The Soviet press and radio rigorously denounced both the United States and Diem's government for their obvious unwillingness to have South Vietnam participate in some sort of elections to "reunify" the country. The Soviet Union with Red China had gone to great lengths to secure from many other governments endorsements of their claim that elections must be held at once throughout Vietnam to elect an all-Vietnamese government. Thus "during their visit to India and Burma, Khrushchev and Bulganin succeeded in pocketing joint declarations in support of elections, without any hint that genuinely free elections, if difficult in South Vietnam, would be entirely out of the question in North Vietnam under the control of the Vietminh."(14)

In the meantime, Foreign Minister Molotov raised the question of elections in Vietnam with Eden at the conference of heads of governments at Geneva in July 1955.

(14) Philip E. Mosely, The Kremlin and World Politics; "Studies in Soviet Policy and Action", (New York; Vintage Books, 1960), p. 488.

At his insistence the Big Four powers, (including the United States) sent messages to Diem asking him to comply with the provisions of the 1954 Conference. Simultaneously, Molotov revealed the new Communist international approach to the Vietnamese problem when, in private conversation with Eden, he is reported to have suggested that the Far East conference of 1954 be re-convened. He did not, however, insist on this when the British Prime Minister opposed the suggestion. The western powers were anxious in view of the consolidation of Diem's position in Vietnam, to do nothing to disturb him, and therefore wished the elections to be postponed. By the spring of 1956, however, conditions were changing. The unexpected vitality of the Diem regime reduced communist hopes of securing control of the whole of Vietnam.

Finally, on March 9, 1956, the British government suggested to Moscow that the two governments, as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, should seek a solution through bilateral talks. Although it was generally agreed that complete fulfilment of the original agreements would be to the advantage of Moscow's allies, the Soviet government readily accepted the proposal and discussions were held in London in April and May between Lord Reading, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Gromyko,

Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister. The chairmen agreed co-chairmen to send three messages. The first, to the governments of North and South Vietnam, invited both governments to submit "their views about the time required for the opening of consultations on the organisation of nation-wide elections in Vietnam and the time required for the holding of elections as a means of achieving the unification of Vietnam"; they also appealed for the co-operation of both governments with the International Supervisory Commission following the dissolution of the French Union High Command on 28 April. A second message was sent to the International Supervisory Commission expressing the hope that it would continue its efforts to maintain and strengthen peace in Vietnam. A third was sent to the French government asking it to make its good offices available to the Commission after obtaining the agreement of the South Vietnamese authorities.

Together, these letters were evidence of considerable concessions by the Soviet government to the western point of view. This, as expressed in the British note of 9 April, was that the talks should aim in the first place at preserving peace, and should be directed only

"secondly towards the eventual achievement of a political settlement in Vietnam". This "conception Moscow endorsed, since the communications to the governments of South and North Vietnam implied recognition, both by Moscow and by London, of the fact that the elections would not be held as originally provided for."(15) In their replies both governments undertook not to have recourse to solutions of violence and to co-operate with the commission; although the government of North Vietnam added that it still looked forward to consultative meetings to consider reunification through free elections. The chairman of the International Commission replied on 29 May giving an undertaking that its work would continue; and the French government, although emphasizing that it had no responsibility for the implementation of the Geneva agreements, offered to continue its assistance. However, despite these attempts the elections were never held.

While the situation within Laos and Vietnam was causing a considerable amount of trouble in Southeast Asia, Cambodia was striving to maintain its isolation and independence through neutrality. In 1956 Prince

(15) Geoffrey Barraclough and Rachel F. Wall, Op. cit., p.274.

Sihanouk made a formal declaration of the neutrality of Cambodia and explained this policy by a statement made during his visit to Moscow in 1956 in an interview with the New Times;

> Ours is a policy of active neutrality, that is, of cooperation with all nations, regardless of their political or social regimes, who abide by the same principles in relations to us and are motivated by the same ideal, namely universal well being and sincere friendship.(16)

Both the Soviet Union and China signed joint declarations with Cambodia recognizing her neutrality but others had not, and in order to strengthen Cambodia's security through a more firmly rooted policy of neutrality, Sihanouk had the constitution amended to include a neutrality act. The act passed by the National assembly on September 11, 1957, declared neutrality to be the law of the land and required Cambodia to abstain from all military or ideological alliances.

To the Soviets this policy by Cambodia fell in line with their own thinking. The Soviet Union was seeking primarily to weaken the Western world by detaching and making less dependable as many countries as possible. The Soviet focus on the border nations was simply the

(16) New Times, No. 29, 1956, pp. 9-10.

product of Moscow's belief that the border nations are most open to detachment from the West because they are most vulnerable to the potential application of communist military power. Consequently, the Soviet Union praised Cambodia's declaration of neutrality by saying that it understood and appreciated Cambodia's foreign policy, which was finding understanding and broad support in Asia.

> It is having a certain influence on those countries in Southeast Asia that for one reason or another, have been drawn into aggressive military blocs and that do not have an independent foreign policy. This is clearly not to the liking of the colonial powers because Cambodia's policy makes it difficult for them to carry out their plans for strengthening and maintaining their positions in Asia and for enlisting the countries of this region in aggressive military and political groupings such as SEATO.
>
> The Soviet Government nurtures feelings of steadfast friendship toward Cambodia and is convinced that the Cambodian people and government, supported by other peace-loving countries, will overcome the temporary difficulties created by foreign powers and their agents within the country and will achieve new successes in strengthening the political and economic independence of their state.(17)

Because Soviet support of Cambodia's neutrality was based strictly on the convenience of the Soviet Union, it was not surprising that when there was anything serious

(17) Text in Pravda, November 27, 1959.

at stake it did not pay much attention to Cambodia's views. This became particularly clear in the course of the civil war in Laos. Cambodia's traditional apprehension of Thailand and Vietnam was increased by the continuing disturbances in Laos. It was feared that the fighting might erupt into Cambodian territory, or that either side might violate Cambodia's neutrality in order to aid its protege. By September 1960 when Sihanouk elaborated on his proposal for a neutral bloc of Laos and Cambodia before the General Assembly, the situation was even more confused. But at that time neither the Soviets nor the Americans appeared interested in Sihanouk's suggestions, and a memorandum to the Secretary-General giving further details on how the neutrality of both states might be guaranteed and how differences between the two countries and their neighbours might be resolved was also ignored. However, when the crisis in Laos threatened to erupt into a major conflict, Sihanouk proposed that a conference be called to restore peace. This proposal was immediately supported by the Soviet Union because as far as the Soviets were concerned, the communist forces in Laos held the upper hand in the struggle thus enabling the communist side to negotiate from a position of strength.

CHAPTER V
SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON SOVIET POLICIES TOWARDS INDOCHINA

From the very beginning of the Sino-Soviet rift, differences have existed concerning national interests, strategy, foreign and domestic policies, and the organization and control of the international Communist movement. All these factors "were integral parts of the dispute, and as it developed, its various components became more difficult to compromise because, given the ideological element in Marxism-Leninism, any dispute over strategy or tactics must be, and is, immediately transferred to the ideological level."(1)

The Soviets maintained that the world socialist system "is becoming", but the Chinese maintained that it "has become", the fundamental factor of the present epoch. In terms of Communist strategy, this meant that Khrushchev felt he could afford to take fewer risks against the West than Mao thought the Russians should take - for Chinese goals. The Soviet Union maintains that the present epoch is primarily one of a largely nonviolent forthcoming world-wide victory of socialism; Red China insists that ours is primarily an epoch of wars and revolution.

(1) Adam Bromke (ed), The Communist States at the Crossroads, Between Moscow and Peking, Article by William E. Griffith, "The Sino-Soviet Split: A Reconstructed History 1956-64", (New York, Washington, London; Frederick H. Praeger Publishers, 1965), p. 45.

The Chinese continually accuse the Soviets of trying to bring about a Soviet-American détente and therefore of not running sufficient risks on behalf of the Chinese. They also accused the Soviets of promising to give them atomic weapons and then of reneging on the promise. They charged the Russians with taking an anti-Chinese attitude on various Sino-Soviet border questions - in particular, Sinkiang and the Amur River area. In addition the Chinese generally emphasize the importance of supporting Communist parties and extreme radicals in the underdeveloped areas while the Soviets tend to stress the importance of supporting, all the national democratic elements - as in India. Finally, - and this is perhaps the most complete of the Chinese challenges and the one to which the Soviets can least afford to accede - the Chinese have challenged Soviet leadership and control of the international Communist movement with the intent of ultimately replacing it by their own.

One of the great turning points in Sino-Soviet relations came with the death of Stalin. Then Khrushchev's visit to Peking in the fall of 1954 inaugurated what in retrospect can be regarded as the warmest period of Sino-Soviet relations. The Soviets completely liquidated

their "special rights" in China, offered new material assistance, and expressed unqualified support for China's foreign-policy goals. The Chinese reciprocated with full support for Soviet policies and unreserved recognition of the Soviet Union as the leader of the socialist camp.

With the liquidation of Soviet "special rights" in China an important "qualitative change came about in the state-to-state relations between the two countries: henceforth they were to deal with each other as two sovereign and equal nations."(2)

Nevertheless, this cordiality did not last very long. Differences between the two communist states soon began to emerge. These differences first became serious in the spring of 1956, immediately after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. At that time, "Peking objected to Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, to what it considered his overemphasis on peaceful coexistence (that is, to his policy of détente with the United States), to his unwillingness to give more military (atomic) and economic aid to China, to his expansion of Soviet political influence in underdeveloped areas (particularly India), and to his insistence on carrying out such drastic moves as de-Stalinization without consulting Mao."(3) The Chinese

(2) Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell (eds), Communist China, (Random House; New York, 1967), p. 244.
(3) Adam Bromke, Op. cit., p. 47.

Communists were, in a sense, at the time, passing through a Stalinist stage of their own. They had explicitly modeled many of their policies on Stalin's, and an outright repudiation of Stalin could have led to the questioning of many of their own current policies. Peking may also have feared that the attack on Stalin could have repercussions affecting Mao's position within China, since for many years Mao had played a comparable, although by no means identical, role as the foremost Party leader.

The Chinese Communists held that Stalin indeed committed serious mistakes, but that his merits were more important; that "his errors had reflected contradictions 'between the individual and the collective in a socialist society'; and that such contradictions, although they might recur, could be minimized, and mistakes averted, if the 'leaders of Communist Parties' and 'socialist states' exercised sufficient prudence."(4)

However, the conflict was coming to be increasingly public. By the end of 1956 the Soviet Union was deeply in trouble in Eastern Europe while the Chinese communists charged the Soviet Union with committing "the error

(4) Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell (eds), Op. cit., pp. 268-269.

of great power chauvinism" by moving and using troops against rebellious satellites. The Communist Chinese's suspicions of Soviet intentions stemed from China's experience with Russian imperialism a century ago. In addition there was the question between the two countries as to who should be dominant in the neighboring satellite areas such as the Mongolian People's Republic and North Korea. Finally, there was jockeying and manoeuvring between Moscow and Peking over who shall be the leader of the world communist forces.

The Moscow International Communist conference in November 1957, was generally regarded as an agreement between Moscow and Peking against revisionism and specifically against Yugoslavia.

> After all, at this meeting Mao said that the camp of socialism must have a leader, which must be the Soviet Union. This is one of the more striking examples of how the interpretation of communist terminology can be changed, for looking at it from an historical perspective this formulation must now be considered to have been an anti-Khrushchev one - a formulation deliberately used by Mao to block Khrushchev's rapprochment with Yugoslavia, thereby to weaken the general Soviet foreign policy of an international détente and thus to increase Chinese influence. The Chinese have now revealed that shortly before this meeting, on Oct. 15, 1957, Moscow had promised Peking some form of atomic aid. Without such a move, it is doubtful whether the November, 1957, meeting would have resulted in any Sino-Soviet agreement.(5)

(5) Adam Bromke (ed), Op. cit., p. 48.

In 1958 the Sino-Soviet struggle took on broader dimensions. The three most important matters at issue were the military relationship between the two powers, the related question of Soviet conduct during the Taiwan Straits crisis and Peking's radical new economic programs and the claims associated with them.

Although the Soviets promised to give Communist China atomic aid in Oct. 1957, this aid was never given. In any event, the absence of any Soviet agreement to supply nuclear weapons to China was suggested shortly after Khrushchev's visit to Peking in the summer of 1958, by an article in the CCP organ Hung Ch'i (August 16) prominently reasserting Mao's dictum that "the atomic bomb is a paper tiger". This bitterness against the Soviets because of their break of promise was further intensified by the hesitant backing China received from Moscow in the ensuing crisis in the Taiwan Straits. Confronted by American nuclear power, Peking apparently sought to obtain an early public commitment by the Soviet Union that would enable it to face down the United States and thus would make feasible Chinese military action to "liberate" the offshore islands. The slow and deliberate course taken by the Soviet Union in the Taiwan Straits crisis does suggest that the Soviet leadership feared

the possibility of being dragged into a nuclear conflict with the United States as a result of precipitate Chinese action taken in pursuit of interests not shared by the U.S.S.R.

A third new area of friction developed in connection with the radical turn in Chinese domestic policy during 1958, manifested in the launching of the communes program and the economic Great Leap Forward.

> Chinese spokesmen exuberantly claimed that the communes, with their system of partial distribution according to need, contained "shoots" of Communism, signifying that the final attainment of communism in China was no longer far off; that they represented an unprecedented achievement as well as a useful model for other countries. In these claims and the policies of the Great Leap as a whole, the CPSU saw a new and dangerous Chinese challenge to its leadership of the Communist world. As a Soviet comment stated in 1963, "things were depicted as though only they (the Chinese) were really engaged in communist construction, leaving other countries behind", and the Chinese leader tried to present their "totally unsound and harmful policy ... as an objective law" and "as a prescription or recipe for other countries".(6)

There were also indications that Peking was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the course of Soviet foreign policy and attempted to influence it in its own favour. The Chinese felt that Soviet policy was too cautious at a time when they wished to aggravate

(6) Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell (eds), Op. cit., p. 274.

the international situation. Subsequently, the Chinese began to pressure for changes in Soviet foreign policy. They demanded an all-out Soviet campaign aimed at getting for Communist China Nationalist China's place in all international bodies, including the Security Council. Peking wanted the Soviet Union to go all out against Yugoslav revisionism. Peking also appeared to have wanted a much bolder policy by the Communist bloc in the period during which it believed the Communists held a military advantage over the United States because of the Soviet Union's intercontinental ballistic missile.

Communist China's ability to put pressure on the Soviet Union for its point of view and, conversely, Moscow's need to pay at least some attention to Peking demands derived from the levers Mao and his colleagues possessed. (1) Peking knew that its adherance to the Communist bloc represented a major source of additional political, economic, and military power for the Soviet Union vis-à-vis the West, while Chinese acceptance of the Soviet Union as head of the Communist bloc sets an example that makes possible the cohesion of the bloc as a whole.

(2) The Soviet rulers know that hundreds of millions of people in Asia and Africa whom it is wooing are instinctively more sympathetic to Communist China

than to the Soviet Union, whose ruling group, the Russians, are white. Therefore, it knows that its ability to get along with the Communist Chinese is necessary if communism is to make further progress in Asia and Africa.(7)

It is 1959, at least, that must be considered to have been the "year of no return" in Sino-Soviet relations. The accelerating deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations was characterized primarily by a constantly intensifying Chinese offensive against Soviet influence in communist parties and international communist front organizations. This, in turn, resulted in continually intensifying Soviet countermoves in order to block, reverse, and eventually render ineffective this Chinese offensive.

In June 1959 Khrushchev formally withdrew the Soviet offer of atomic aid to China. He also apparently "unsuccessfully attempted to intrigue with dissidents in the Chinese leadership, headed by the Minister of Defense, Marshal P'eng Teh-huai, who tried either to force Mao to change his anti-Soviet and domestically extremist line or, failing that, perhaps even to replace him."(8) P'eng's attempt was crushed by Mao at the

(7) Harry Schwartz, The Red Phoenix, Russia Since World War II, (New York; Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1961), pp. 376-377.
(8) Adam Bromke, Op. cit., p. 48.

Lushan Plenum in July and August, 1959. Finally, in September 1959, when the Chinese initiated the first major border incident against the Indians, the Soviets, disregarding Chinese attempts to dissuade them, publicly declared themselves neutral on this issue. This move by the Soviet Union was viewed by China as an outright betrayal of the obligations of "proletarian internationalism".

The Chinese tactic has never been the initiation of a total rupture; on the contrary, Peking wished to remain nominally within the international communist movement, to use its veto against any hostile Soviet actions, to increase factional activities with the ultimate aim of obtaining a majority, to split individual Communist parties as well as new front organizations under Chinese control. To foil these moves, the Soviets have been continually driven toward initiating a formal split. In June 1960 at a Rumanian Party Congress at Bucharest, Khrushchev launched his first overt attack against the Chinese, which resulted in violent verbal polemics between him and the Chinese delegate P'eng Ch'en. The Soviets also began extensive economic pressure against China; they cut off economic aid and withdrew all their specialists.

The violent Sino-Soviet polemics in Bucharest were followed by even more violent ones in Moscow in November. There "the Chinese flatly refused to accept a Soviet-sponsored ban on factional activity within the international Communist movement. The Soviets rejected a Chinese proposal for a joint Sino-Soviet directorate of the movement which would have institutionalized the Chinese veto."(9)

From the end of 1960 to about the spring of 1962 there were relatively few Sino-Soviet polemics, but on the other hand there was no improvement in the relations between the Soviet Union and Communist China.

When looking at this conflict in the perspective of Indochina and of all South Asia, the entire situation can be analysed as follows: The end of World War II left the Soviet Union as the one and only continental Asian power. This power was unchallenged except by the presence of American power on the periphery of Asia. The Soviets enjoyed this predominance for about 10 years, and within that time they controlled, in varying degrees, all communist movements within Asia. The only area where they exercised the least control and where they were involved the least was Indochina.

(9) Ibid., p. 50.

The communist movement within Indochina was largely self-conceived, receiving only token material aid from the Soviet Union. The distance and the inaccessibility of the area prevented the Soviet Union from doing much more. Being at the time the leader of world communism they did not fear that the Vietnamese Communist would deviate from line. The Vietnamese Communists were too preoccupied with their struggle against the French to concern themselves with revisionism and Ho Chi Minh was, after all, an old Moscow follower.

Not as strong in earlier chapter

However, with the rise of Communist China the situation began to take on a different perspective. Although, between 1955 and 1958, China followed a relatively soft-sell approach to Afro-Asian countries, by 1959 the Chinese reversed this and adopted a hard-line policy towards building communism by force not only in Asia but the whole world. They increasingly objected against the Soviet policies of peaceful co-existence and de-Stalinization and this objection quickly transformed itself into a direct Chinese challenge to Soviet influence and dominance in Asia and the rest of the world. For the Chinese this action was not so striking since for a number of years now Communist China was systematically diminishing its dependence on the

Soviet Union. However, for the Soviets, Chinese reaction to the proclamations made at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, meant that, for the first time, Communist China challenged the position of the Soviet Union as a leader. The Soviets immediately recognized the gravity of this challenge because to them this action meant that their predominance in Asia was in danger. What further disturbed them was the realization that the Communist Chinese would certainly attempt to extend their influence over all the communist movements in Asia.

Thus the rising developments in Indochina after the Geneva Conference in 1954, began to draw greater attention on the part of the Soviets. It became clear that now the Soviets had to make their presence felt in Indochina lest their influence be supplanted by the Chinese. There was no real fear that at the time North Vietnam would not withstand Chinese pressure, yet such an assurance was lacking with respect to Laos.

As the situation in Laos reached a critical stage new developments brought on a change. Increasing American preoccupation with communist pressures upon Laos and South Vietnam forced North Vietnam to ensure itself the backing of both the Soviet Union and Communist China. The Soviets realized that unless they provided

North Vietnam with aid, it would be forced under the circumstances to rely entirely upon Communist China. As it was, Communist China had in the past provided greater quantities of aid than the Soviet Union. The Soviets reasoned that should this occur they would lose all their influence in Indochina.

Contradiction

For North Vietnam the Sino-Soviet confrontation caused serious problems. As the interests and strategies of China and the Soviet Union had been diverging increasingly, Ho Chi Minh had been compelled to engage in a delicate balancing act - pleasing Moscow on one issue without displeasing Peking, or the reverse, or, if necessary, taking a middle position. Yet Ho needed Chinese backing if he was to attain his goals - an economically stable North Vietnam, reunification of the divided country under communism, and communist control over the neighboring non-Vietnamese areas. Since Peking viewed Southeast Asia as being in the Chinese sphere of influence, and since the insurrectionary wars in South Vietnam and Laos impinged not only on local but also on great power interests and had world-wide implications, Ho's task became a difficult one, for he had to reconcile his own interests with those of Communist China and Soviet Union.

The Soviets began to fear that excessive Chinese pressures and interference in Indochina might lead to an all out war should the U.S. retaliate. Subsequently, they found themselves in a precarious position. If they carried their policy of peaceful coexistence and their pronouncement that wars are not inevitable to the fullest, then they would have to abandon their support of the communist struggle in Indochina. The consequence of this would have been a great victory for Communist China, who would accuse the Soviets of abandoning the Communist struggle against capitalism. Such a development would automatically mean the ascendancy of Communist China as the world communist leader. In order to prevent this from happening, Khrushchev quickly announced that although the Soviets believe in peaceful coexistence and maintain that wars are not inevitable, wars of national liberation are justified and should be supported. This pronouncement unshackled the Soviets and freed them to grant the Vietnamese Communists all the support required. It also enabled them to maintain their dominant position vis-à-vis the Asian communists. Moscow was definitely reluctant to take any step which could have been interpreted as

showing less enthusiasm than Peking for North Vietnam's cause. Likewise, Soviet interest increased towards Cambodia and her efforts to establish her neutrality and towards Laos which was on the verge of another crisis.

By 1960 Chinese Communist actions in South Asia greatly disturbed the Soviets. The image in this area of Peking, and therefore to some extent of the Communist world as a whole, had altered radically in the wake of the suppression of the revolt in Tibet, the forced flight of the Dalai Lama, the fighting on the Indian-Chinese border, and the harsh line Communist China had taken against Jakarta's efforts to end Chinese economic influence in rural Indonesian areas. Although both the Soviet Union and Communist China wanted to see the nations within this area come under the control of their communist parties, they did not agree on the means with which this should occur. Communist China was flexing its muscles and testing its power to intimidate its neighbors while the Soviets viewed these actions with alarm. One of the purposes of Khrushchev's visit to South Asia at this time was to undo the damage to Communist prestige that had resulted from Chinese Communist actions.

As far as the Soviets were concerned one thing was clear; the Soviet Union was not going to be dragged into a nuclear conflict with the United States as a result of precipitate Chinese action taken in pursuit of interests not shared by the U.S.S.R. And as the situation in Laos developed into a serious crisis in 1960, the Soviet Union found itself increasingly involved in the crisis; much more deeply than was warranted by its responsibility in the area stemming from its co-chairmanship with Britain of the 1954 Geneva Conference. The Soviets became apprehensive of the danger of an all out war should the crisis be mishandled. Fearful of excessive Chinese interference which could precipitate such a clash, the Soviets deemed it essential to maintain control, advocate caution and minimize Chinese influence. Simultaneously, however, it had to show the indigenous communist forces in the area that it is ready and willing to render them aid in their struggle. Failing this the Soviets would quickly be replaced by the Chinese Communists. Subsequently, the Soviet Union began to airlift supplies to the communist and neutralist forces. As long as the Soviets were in control, and not the Chinese, the situation, although of a grave nature, would always be cooled if there was a clear indication that it could erupt into a clash.

As long as a maximum advantage could be gained by fermenting the crisis the Soviets stood firm but as soon as there appeared signs of a more dangerous development, they settled for a compromise.

CHAPTER VI
CONFLICT IN LAOS
AND SOVIET INVOLVEMENT

Implementation of the Geneva Agreement in Laos proved difficult in the face of continuous obstruction on the part of the Pathet Lao. Attempts to integrate the Pathet Lao politically and militarily with the Royal Laotian administration were only partially successful. On January 7, 1955 the International Commission passed a strongly worded resolution calling for the "integration of the Pathet Lao into the national community as envisaged in the Geneva settlement". The Pathet Lao refused to accept this resolution.

The matter was then raised in London between British and Soviet officials. Although the evidence is not definite, it would appear that the Soviet government again used its influence in the area in favour of a settlement. At all events, contact between the two half-brothers, Princes Souvanna Phouma and Souvannavong, respectively Prime Minister and leader of the Pathet Lao - was resumed from June onwards and a settlement bearing every appearance of finality was reached on August 7. This provided "that the province of Phong Saly and Sam Neua would be administered by the royal government and that the Pathet Lao troops would in future take their orders from the Laotian high command... A not insignificant point was that the two sides formally subscribed to the ritual 'five principles' of co-existence and affirmed Laotian neutrality."(1)

(1) Brian Crozier, "The International Situation in Indochina", Pacific Affairs, Vol. 29, 1956, p. 317.

The determinative fact in South-East Asia was that, for different reasons, Sino-Soviet and western policies were moving at this stage in the same direction, and consequently practical measures of agreement were possible. Neither side had any reason to wish to disturb the status quo which had been established in 1954, and so the area settled down to an unforeseen period of stability and economic development. In this situation both China and the Soviet Union naturally consulted their own interests, as they saw them at the time; but the Soviet willingness to make concessions when it might have made difficulties with a good show of reason, was an encouraging feature. One reason, no doubt, was that Indochina was no longer in the forefront of international affairs, and that the issues had shifted elsewhere.

Nevertheless, between September 1954, and the summer of 1959, when a new communist offensive began to take shape, the Pathet Lao agreed - and backed out - at least four times to integrate its armed forces and the administration of the two provinces under the central government's authority. Fighting was resumed in July 1959 between the Laotian Army and Pathet Lao forces which received encouragement and support from North Vietnam.

However, on February 11, 1959, the new Laotian government under Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone announced that it considered that the obligations undertaken under the Geneva agreements of 1954 had been completely fulfilled. Sananikone also rejected any suggestion of a revival of the international control commission in Laos or any other form of intervention in its internal affairs. On the following day, the United States immediately announced its support for the action of the Laotian government, and American officials expressed the view that the United States was now entitled to establish a military mission in the country. Taken together, the statements of the two governments "aroused widespread anxiety among neighboring states, and although in subsequent Lao statements of 16 and 17 February the royal government disclaimed any intention of denouncing the Geneva agreements, other signatories could not but be apprehensive. The governments of North Vietnam and China issued protests, and a Russian note to the British embassy in Moscow stated that the Soviet Union shared their fears."(2)

The Soviet Union criticized the actions and methods of the Laotian government in finalizing the arrangement of November 1957 by which the two remaining Pathet Lao

(2) S. Barraclough, Survey of International Affairs 1959-1960, (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1964)

battalions would be reintegrated into the royal army. The whole issue was discussed in June 1959 between Selwyn Lloyd and Gromyko when they met at Geneva. Britain rejected the suggestion that the international commission should be reconvened, a proposal made by the Soviet Union.

In the meantime the internal situation deteriorated rapidly. On July 4 a state of emergency was declared in the five northern provinces, but once again trouble was confined mainly to Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces. Vientiane claimed to have secured written proof of intervention by north Vietnamese troops. The Laotian government directly appealed to the United Nations for the prompt dispatch of an emergency force to halt "this flagrant aggression for which the Democratic Republic of Vietnam must bear the entire responsibility".

This appeal to the United Nations created considerable difficulties. The royal government appeared no more ready than it had previously been to accuse North Vietnam of sending regular army units to fight alongside the Pathet Lao, but it claimed that foreign troops had been crossing the frontier, and that North Vietnam had also sent political officers and had provided equipment and supplies. It was believed in London that what was required in the circumstance was a fact-finding mission. This suggestion does not appear to have been welcomed either in Washington or in Moscow.

> The Soviet Union which had a special responsibility in the area as a co-chairman with Britain of the 1954 Geneva conference, was averse to the extension of the United Nations' responsibilities - which, rightly, or wrongly, it regarded as serving too often as a cloak for American action - and was believed to favour the re-establishment of the international supervisory commission. None of the powers apparently envisaged the dispatch of a United Nations' expeditionary force, such as the Laotian government had asked for. Nevertheless, since Laos was a member of the United Nations, it would have been difficult if not impossible, to have met Vientiane's request with a flat refusal.(3)

This was the position when Mr. Hammarskjold summoned the Security Council for an emergency session. It was decided by what one observer called "a device of questionable legality" to send a sub-committee composed of representatives from Italy, Tunisia, Argentina and Japan to find out more of the facts surrounding the Laotian government's complaint. The Soviet delegate's opposition to this method of handling the issue was overruled, and the impartiality of the mission was impugned before it had even set off.

The matter was raised in the Security Council not by a member but by the secretary-general. When Mr. Sobolev of the Soviet Union challenged this procedure, Mr. Hammarskjold claimed that the Council had been constitutionally called together under rule 6 of its rules of

(3) Ibid., p. 291.

procedure. Mr. Sobolev's argument that the matter was not one for the Security Council agenda was defeated by ten votes to one. The wording of the resolution made by the U.K., France and the U.S., setting up the sub-committee was unusually vague. The west claimed that the body set up was a "subsidiary organ" of the Security Council and that its creation was therefore a procedural question; the Soviet Union held that it was in fact a committee of inquiry, and as such a substantive measure which required the agreement of all the permanent members. The Soviet delegate supported his point of view by quoting the San Francisco declaration which provides that any proposal for an investigation whose findings could lead to enforcement action or even to a United Nations recommendation of policy was to be deemed substantive. But on this occasion the president of the Security Council overruled Mr. Sobolev's objections, and the issue was decided by a majority vote.

Subsequently, while the mission attempted to unravel the tangled evidence on the spot, the Soviet Union made a further offer to discuss the Laos problem with the west. In a note to the British government on 15 September, Moscow proposed that a conference composed of the nine nations which had taken part in the 1954 conference should

be convened. But even before the text of the proposal had been received in London - let alone communicated to the relevant parties - a state department spokesman described it as unnecessary and disruptive.

The mission reported back that they found no evidence to support the view that North Vietnamese forces had invaded Laos or otherwise committed direct aggression, although varying degrees and kinds of support appeared to have been accorded to dissident Lao elements by North Vietnam. Soon after, the secretary-general proposed to leave for Laos shortly himself. The Soviet delegate stated that, since the western charges had been disproved and the case for the establishment of a United Nations' police force invalidated, the Soviet Union regarded the incident as closed. But he "strongly disapproved of the projected visit by the secretary-general and declared that his government opposed 'United Nations intervention in the internal affairs of Laos in any form'."(4) Nevertheless Mr. Hammarskjold decided to go ahead with his plans, and it may well be that he assured Mr. Kuznetsov privately that his visit was "intended to presage a reduction, not an increase, in interference by the west."(5)

(4) Ibid., p. 294.
(5) Ibid.

Following these actions there was a marked reduction of international anxiety about the situation in Laos. But in August 1960, Captain Kong Le's coup against the central government which led to a civil war between the right-wing and Kong's "neutralist" forces, further complicated the situation. The new government was both anti-American and anti-Pathet Lao in their alignment. Prince Souvanna Phouma was invited to head the new government which was dedicated to the re-establishment of national unity and the maintenance of the neutrality of Laos and of friendly relations with countries which respected its internal agreements. However, he failed to secure the co-operation of the extreme right-wing and he thus turned to the left to broaden his ministry. By October 1960, however, Souvanna Phouma was confronted by hostile actions of the Pathet Lao and by a right-wing insurgency. By the second week of November, the right-wing insurgents, receiving increasing support from the United States, had seized Luang Prabang.

Souvanna Phouma found himself in a precarious situation, but his bargaining position was bolstered by the arrival in Vientiane on October 13 of a Soviet ambassador named Aleksandr N. Abramov. He was the first ambassador of a Communist country to enter Laos. On

October 28 an agreement "in principle" was announced between Souvanna Phouma and Abramov for Soviet aid to his government, but there was no evidence that the Soviets could establish a large-scale aid program on short order. In fact, the first shipment of petroleum supplies from the Soviet Union did not arrive in Vientiane until December 3. The Soviet aid program, moreover, did not include cash grants. Thus the Soviets, in undertaking to supply one of the belligerents in Laos, were simply following the precedent set by the United States.

On the morning of December 10, Quinim Pholsena, Souvanna Phouma's senior remaining Cabinet minister, shipped out of Vientiane aboard a Soviet Ilyushin transport bound for Hanoi. In twenty-four hours in the North Vietnamese capital, he made a firm deal with the Russians. In exchange for a formal alliance between Kong Le's troops and the Pathet Lao, the Russians would airlift in Laos arms and supplies for the resistance against General Phoumi's American-supplied troops. The Soviets, "seeing the opportunity afforded them by the possibility of supporting Souvanna Phouma and his able military commander, Kong Le, against the imminent attack of the Phoumist rebels, apparently arrived at their decision in a week of urgent consultations in Moscow at the beginning of December. Quinim's signature merely formalized the bargain."(6)

(6) Arthur J. Dommen, Conflict in Laos. The Politics of Neutralization, (New York, Washington, London; Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1965), p. 167.

The alliance with the Pathet Lao would permit Kong Le to withdraw his men, with their jeeps, trucks, and armored cars, safely into the hinterland should the Phoumists capture Vientiane. The airlift of Soviet supplies, especially food and gasoline, would permit Kong Le's men to continue operating as a fighting force even though they were cut off from American supplies, and the provision of heavy weapons would give them a capability equal to that of the Phoumists. For the Pathet Lao, the airlift meant a share in Soviet weapons and ammunition, enabling Prince Souphanouvong to re-equip his guerrillas for regular combat operations. The entire complexion of the Laos confrontation had changed.

In the meantime, General Phoumi began a march on Vientiane. As the rebels neared Vientiane the prime minister fled to Cambodia and after several days of fighting the shattered capital fell to the right-wing. Almost immediately the government of Prince Boun Oum was set up. The Soviets were apparently taken aback by Souvanna Phouma's departure from Vientiane on December 9. Now their claim that their actions were in support of the legitimate government was being jeopardized by the distinct possibility that Souvanna Phouma, who was tentatively staying in Phnom Penh, might resign, which he could do with a simple message to the King.

The Soviets, aware that their best interests lay in persuading Souvanna Phouma to remain as Prime Minister despite the loss of Vientiane to the Phoumist rebels, acted with dispatch. A Soviet note on December 13 assailed the United States for backing General Phoumi, declaring that:

> ...if two or three months ago the Government of the United States made some effort to camouflage its unlawful actions in Laos, lately the United States has in effect become a party to military operations on the side of the rebels against the lawful government of Laos and the Laotian people.
>
> Flouting the sovereign rights of the Laotian Government headed by Prince Souvanna Phouma, the United States now openly supports the rebel group of Nofavan, supplying it with arms, military equipment, ammunition and money...
>
> United States military advisers and instructors not only train the rebels but also directly supervise their military operations against the troops of the legitimate Laotian Government. The United States Government also makes extensive use of Thailand, its ally in the military SEATO pact, which makes the territory of its country available for active military operations against the Government units and effects a brutal economic blockade of Laos.
>
> All this is a glaring violation by the Government of the United States of Article 12 of the Final Declaration of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina which contains an undertaking by every participant in the aforsaid Conference, including the United States to respect the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Laos and to refrain from any interference in its internal affairs.(7)

(7) Ibid., pp. 172-173.

Soviet Ambassador Abramov, who was now also in Phnom Penh, quickly gave Souvanna Phouma assurances that the Soviets would continue to regard him as the legal Prime Minister unless he resigned. On December 22, in Moscow, First Deputy Foreign Minister, V. V. Kuznetsov handed the British Ambassador a second Soviet note on Laos. It contained these two important paragraphs:

> In conformity with universally recognized international standards, only the legitimate Lao Government is entitled to request any assistance from other states and to receive such assistance from them. In the light of this, the actions of the U.S. Government in rendering active military, material-technical and financial assistance to the rebels - actions which go to the length of the actual participation of servicemen of the United States and its allies in the military operations of the rebels against the legitimate Lao Government - are nothing but a flagrant violation of international law and the Geneva agreements on Laos under which the participants of the Geneva Conference of 1954 pledged themselves not to interfere in the internal affairs of Laos.
>
> The Soviet Government believes that the Government of Great Britain is aware of the fact that the national Lao Government headed by Prince Souvanna Phouma has announced that it is continuing to function, that it is the legitimate government of Laos and that it regards the formation of a "government" led by Boum Oum as an act against the constitution.(8)

This Soviet involvement in the Laotian crisis raises a lot of questions. What were the reasons behind the Soviet Union's sudden commitment to supply, openly and

(8) Ibid., pp. 173-174.

directly, the Kong Le-Pathet Lao alliance with aid in such immense quantities as to enable the Pathet Lao forces to make the basic transformation from guerrillas to regular forces? Why did the Soviet Union involve itself in such a distant battle? Why did the Soviets undertake to resuce Souvanna Phouma from the dire straits in which U.S. pressure had placed him? There are several answers to these questions. Some saw the major role played by the U.S.S.R. as part of a deliberate policy designed to confuse the adversaries of Communism. But others interpreted it as a further illustration of the emerging serious differences between the two major Communist states. The Soviet Union, they said, was seeking to regain control of the Laotian situation in order to keep the more belligerent Chinese from plunging the world into a full scale war. Some viewed the actions of the Soviet Union as a deliberate move to convince Peking that it had not gone soft as a revolutionary power and to maintain its position as leader of the world-wide Communist movement. Finally, the Soviet Union was acting out of the imperative need to retain the allegiance of North Vietnam in the developing quarrel with China.

Although relatively weak at the start, the Vietnamese Communists had gained strength by adroitly shifting their deciding weight in disputes between the Soviet Union and China.

The Soviet Union had usually shown little concern about North Vietnam. It lagged behind China in recognizing Ho's government in 1950. Stalin was deeply involved in European political maneuvers, and these sometimes worked to the detriment of the Vietminh struggle against the French. Such Soviet moves as its proposal on January 24, 1957, to seat both North and South Vietnam in the United Nations prolonged the coolness between Hanoi and Moscow and, conversely strengthened the solidarity between Ho and Mao. However, the turning point in Hanoi-Peking relations occurred in 1956 after North Vietnam suffered a disastrous economic failure in its attempt to carry out a Chinese-style land reform directly supervised by Chinese cadres. As Chinese influence decreased, Moscow's increased amid promises of Soviet largesse for North Vietnam's industrial rebuilding program.

Nevertheless, by 1960 the North Vietnamese embarked on an armed struggle to reunify North and South Vietnam and consequently had more sympathy for Mao's militant arguments for communist guerrilla warfare against the American presence in Asia, Africa, and Latin America than they had for Khrushchev's efforts to reach a <u>détente</u> with the West. The Soviet Union aware of this advantage held

by the Red Chinese, acted to offset it by granting North Vietnam, in August, 1960, large credits to finance an ambitious expansion of industry. In December, "the U.S.S.R. capped its persuasive efforts by initiating the airlift from North Vietnam to the pro-Communist forces fighting the 'imperialists' in Laos. The Soviet Union had calculated that this move would preclude accusations by Lao Dong Party (Communist Party in North Vietnam) militants that the U.S.S.R.'s conciliatory policy was betraying the Communist cause, and would prevent the Lao Dong Party from throwing its entire support to the Chinese Communist Party."(9)

In the meantime, on January 1, 1961, Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia proposed a fourteen-nation Conference to deal with the crisis in Laos. His proposal evoked interest from the Soviet Union, China, India, and France, but the U.S. and Britain were lukewarm in their enthusiasm, the latter considering it more urgent to reconvene the I.C.C. With this end in view, Britain, backed by the U.S. suggested in a Note to the Soviet Union on 21 January that the International Control Commission should be accredited to the King of Laos, Savang Vathana, rather than to either of the rival prime ministers. This, it was thought, would

(9) Ibid., p. 181.

avoid the difficulties which had risen through Great Power recognition of rival factions. The Russian reply to this Note was not published, but Pravda printed an article by their semi-official correspondent which indicated the Soviet attitude. The writer pointed out that;

> ...the revived Commission...would first of all come up against the fact that there is a war going on in Laos, and would be forced with the problem of halting military operations and ensuring a peaceful settlement. It would discover that it has neither the appropriate instructions nor the necessary powers to accomplish this task, and that they are not to be found in the Geneva agreements on Laos either.(10)

Though not opposing the revival of the I.C.C., the Soviets believed that it would be more effective if it was answerable to an international conference of the kind proposed by Sihanouk.

On the first day of March the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese launched an offensive and by the end of the month, the pro-Communist forces controlled portions of six provinces; Phong Saly, Sam Neua, Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang, Vientiane and Khammonane. On March 23 the British sent off a new Note to the Russians appealing for a cease-fire and the reconvening of the I.C.C. as soon

(10) D. C. Watt, Survey of International Affairs 1961 (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 331. Taken from Soviet News, 27 Feb. 1961.

possible to verify its effectiveness. But the Russians did not reply immediately. They faced the very real prospect of being dragged willy-nilly into a most unprofitable confrontation far from home. Supporting their Asian allies in a war against the United States would produce serious risks and would limit their ability to exploit issues much closer to home and of much greater interest, such as Berlin. Khrushchev had to explain to the North Vietnamese the precise degree of American firmness as he understood it from Kennedy himself. Moreover, he had to do this without appearing as an appeaser to the North Vietnamese. He was compelled to weigh his moves against his American policy and against his Communist-bloc policy. He could agree to a cease-fire in Laos with little sacrifice to himself. His reasoning with the North Vietnamese probably ran like this: In order to prevent the Americans from intervening in Laos, "it is necessary to agree to a cease-fire; we are supporting Souvanna Phouma, who is the legal Prime Minister of Laos, and in the long run this policy will achieve the same ends as a military victory by the Pathet Lao."(11) However, the North Vietnamese were in no mood to follow Khrushchev's advice

(11) Arthur J. Dommen, Op. cit., p. 193.

blindly. The Vietnamese Communists harbored a deep-rooted suspicion of the Russians, the origin of which went back to Ho Chi Minh's days in the Comintern. Stalin had been dead wrong in the 1920's, in advising the Chinese Communists to cooperate with Chiang Kai-shek. Why should he now place any greater stock in Khrushchev's advice?

Caught between considerations of Communist solidarity and the desire to avoid entanglement in a thoroughly unprofitable situation, Khrushchev temporized. Days went by, and Moscow made no response to the British proposal for a joint British-Soviet appeal for a cease-fire and the convening of a conference. Khrushchev was careful not to identify himself too closely with the drive forward of the Communist-supported forces in Laos; the Soviet press did not accord prominent attention to the Pathet Lao advances and made no mention of the Soviet airlift.

At long last, near the end of March, Pravda dropped a hint that the Soviet Union would agree to call for a cease-fire in Laos before an international conference.

> It is quite evident that the realistic way to the solution of the Laos problem lies not in aggravating the situation in the area of Laos, not in preparing military intervention, but in peace talks and in calling of an international conference and the renewal of the work of the I.C.C.(12)

(12) Pravda, March 27, 1961.

Then on April 4, the Soviets beamed a program in the Vietnamese language only - declaring that the Soviet Union did not demand a cease-fire in Laos as a "precondition" to an international conference and that the conference was the "main point" of the Soviet plan. However, the broadcast added, "a cease-fire in Laos will help to create a favorable atmosphere for negotiations". This was tantamount to a direct appeal to North Vietnam, and to an admission that the Soviets recognized that only the North Vietnamese had the power to control the ground fighting in Laos, and thus to call a cease-fire. The Americans saw in these statements a hope that a way could be found to establish a neutral and independent Laos through negotiations. Prince Souvannouvong, however, was by no means so anxious to take up the proposal for a cease-fire. He described it as a device of the American imperialists to save the administration of Boum Oum from collapse. He insisted that the recall of the I.C.C. and the holding of a conference should precede a cease-fire. Consequently, a deadlock had been reached.

The military situation had seriously deteriorated by the 25 April. Fortunately, diplomatic activity had kept pace with the deterioration of the military situation. On April 16 the Soviets sent a note to Washington on the timing and verification of the cease-fire. But it did not satisfy the Americans. Meanwhile, diplomatic interchanges had

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resulted in a compromise formula that would preserve "face" for Khrushchev among his Asian allies and that would ensure a cease-fire before the conference met, as the Western powers insisted. The international conference had been agreed to before a cease-fire prevailed in Laos, but would not meet until after the cease-fire took effect. The withdrawal of American troops and cessation of the Russian airlift operations were temporarily left unsettled.

On April 24, three separate messages went out from London and Moscow.

> The first informed the military authorities, parties and organizations in Laos that an international conference would convene at Geneva on May 12, and called upon them to cease firing before then and to send 'appropriate representatives' to negotiate a cease-fire agreement. The second invited to the conference the governments of the thirteen nations originally suggested by Prince Sihanouk - all the countries that had participated in the 1954 conference, plus the three I.C.C. countries and Laos' neighbors Burma and Thailand - in addition to Laos (if and when the two rival governments led by Souvanna Phouma and General Phoumi once again merged). The third, addressed to India, with copies to Canada and Poland, sought reactivation of the I.C.C. in Laos.(13)

The Americans, as personified by Mr. Lincoln White of the State Department, received these proposals without enthusiasm: "Unless there is a verified cease-fire there is no conference as far as we are concerned."(14) The

(13) Arthur J. Dommen, Op. cit., p. 197.
(14) D. C. Watt, Op. cit., p. 336.

proposals, however, were welcomed by the Laotian government and by Souvannouvong, and on 25 April India reconvened the I.C.C. Plans went ahead for organizing an international conference in Geneva. Consequently, the military commanders on both sides in Laos issued cease-fire orders to take effect May 3 at 8 A.M. But it did not go into effect until after several days. In the meantime, Britain and the Soviet Union sent a message to New Delhi on 5 May requesting the I.C.C. to proceed to Laos in order to verify the operation of the cease-fire.

Soviet aid to the Souvanna Phouma government in Khang Khay gave the Soviet Union leverage on the pro-communist forces. The Soviet airlift had enabled the Pathet Lao to upgrade themselves from a motley guerrilla band to a regular armed force of considerable weight. Soviet military supplies were being flown into Laos under an agreement with the Khong Khay government. If the Pathet Lao received a large share of these supplies, it was because of their alliance with Kong Le, which permitted them to claim that they supported this government. Officially, Soviet aid was helping the Royal Lao Army commanded by Kong Le, not the Pathet Lao, and the Royal Government headed by Souvanna Phouma, not the NLHS headed by Souvanouvong. There was no indication that if the United States abandoned the Phoumists and threw its support to Souvanna Phouma, the Soviet Union

would hold out for more than a government headed by Souvanna Phouma in which the NLHS had representation. Pathet Lao military gains threatened to involve the Soviets in a confrontation with the United States and the Soviet Union had other interests that weighed more heavily than Laos.

This Soviet reluctance to become embroiled with the U.S. in a revolutionary war in small faraway Laos had become, by 1961, a major point of contention between Khrushchev and Mao Tse-tung. The Red Chinese were seriously displeased by the Soviet feelers for a détente with the incoming Kennedy Administration.

> In a speech on Jan. 6, Khrushchev specified his interpretation of the obligation to aid revolutions in the underdeveloped countries. He argued that the Communist bloc must provide aid to 'national liberation movements' fighting 'wars of liberation', which originate as popular insurrections, not wars between states. However, Communist bloc countries should not internationalize 'wars of liberation', for this would lead to dangerous escalation. Instead, they should prevent the foreign 'imperialist' powers from intervening by threatening to intervene in turn. In this way, they would ensure the victory of 'the people'. In terms of Laos, this meant that the Soviets favored supporting the Pathet Lao in a 'war of liberation', but did not favor support so extensive as that of North Vietnam, a Communist-bloc country that was taking the initiative in driving the 'imperialists' out of Laos.(15)

(15) Arthur J. Dommen, Op. cit., p. 202.

This was an important distinction. It explained how the Soviet Union could maintain good relations with nationalists like Souvanna Phouma and Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia. Eventually, their countries might become "people's democracies", but for the time being the first objective of the Communist bloc should be to hasten the elimination of foreign 'imperialists' from these countries.(16)

The I.C.C. reported back on May 13. It expressed its belief that there is a de facto cease-fire. This gave the Western delegations the green light to open the international conference on Laos. Before the opening, however, there had to be a general agreement on the hitherto unsolved problem of which Laotian faction constituted the legal government of Laos, and who was to represent the country of Geneva. The Soviets wanted Souvanna Phouma to attend and also a delegation from the Pathet Lao. The Americans objected but finally agreed on a compromise solution.

Lord Home of the U.K. and Mr. Gromyko of the U.S.S.R., in their capacity as co-chairman, agreed that the representatives of any Laotian group should be allowed to sit at the conference if their presence was requested by any of the fourteen nations at the conference. This enabled representatives of Souvanna Phouma and of Souvanouvong to be present, and so enraged Boum Oum's delegation that they refused to participate.

(16) Ibid., p. 202.

CHAPTER VII
THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LAOS, 1961-1962

The second international conference at Geneva on the Laotain problem, which opened on 16 May 1961, was more concerned with ventilating international grievances than with solving the internal differences in Laos itself. In any case a solution to the problem was not going to be arrived at solely through the activities of the conference at Geneva. Other arrangements, of necessity, were being made. In Laos itself, representatives of the three warring factions held truce talks at Ban Na Mone throughout the summer. Their deliberations were as slow and as fruitless as those in Geneva.

The relative ground positions in Laos were reflected in the attitudes of the various delegations who gathered at Geneva. The North Vietnamese and Chinese delegations, bolstered by the military advantage gained by the Pathet Lao, anticipated squeezing the maximum political concessions from the frustrated supporters of General Phoumi. The United States on the other hand were mostly concerned with Laotian neutrality. The conference had to agree on "the development of effective international machinery for maintaining and safeguarding that neutrality against threats to it from within as well as without."(1)

(1) D. C. Watt, Op. cit., p. 338.

The Soviets showed signs of being prepared to consent to the removal of foreign troops from Laotian soil. The exit of North Vietnamese technicians from the Pathet Lao and American advisers from the Royal Army would be a good preliminary step towards leaving the Laotians to their own devices. This, the Soviets reasoned would leave the Pathet Lao with the initiative to gain control of the country in the not too distant future. Mr. Gromyko, while agreeing that the presence of the International Control Commission was essential to ensure the withdrawal of foreign troops, was very anxious that it should not be given excessive powers which could thwart future Pathet Lao initiatives.

In the draft agreement which the Soviets presented on May 17, it was stipulated that Laos was a sovereign state and that "international control should not be made an instrument of foreign interference in that country."(2) The Soviet agreement was in three sections: the first part was a simple "Declaration of Neutrality which reaffirmed the position of Laos as it had been established under the 1954 agreements."(3) The contracting parties were to agree not to draw Laos into any military or other alliances

(2) Soviet News, 19 May 1961.
(3) D. C. Watt, Op. cit., p. 339.

incompatible with the status of neutrality. They were also to agree that the protocol in the S.E.A.T.O. treaty was invalid. The second section contained an agreement on the withdrawal of foreign troops. All foreign military personnel and units were to be withdrawn within thirty days. The term "foreign military personnel" was defined to include all foreign military missions, military advisers, instructors, consultants, observers, and any other foreign servicemen, including those serving with the armed forces of Laos, as well as all foreign civilians who are connected with the delivery, servicing, storing and utilisation of military equipment. Finally "the International Control Commission was to supervise the military withdrawals, and decisions on all questions were to be taken unanimously with the exceptions of decisions on purely procedural questions which could be taken on a majority vote."(4)

In addition the draft agreement also stressed that matters "which deal with Laotian internal problems; the formation of the government, holding of election etc., that, according to the Soviet Government, must be the business of the Laotian people themselves and must not come under the competence of the conference."(5)

(4) Ibid., p. 339.
(5) Istoria Mezhdunarodnych Otnoshenii i Vneshnei Politiky SSSR TOM III, 1945-1963 ga., (Moskva: Isdatel'stvo "Meshdunarodnyie Otnoshennya, 1964), p. 621.

The United States delegation at once charged that Articles 7 and 9 of the draft provided the communist bloc with veto powers since Poland was a member of the Commission. Thus under Article 7, "Soviet agreement would be required if the co-chairmen of this conference, the Soviet Union and Britain, were to instruct the International Control Commission to investigate violations of Laotian neutrality... Article 9 ...declares that all decisions of the Control Commission should be unanimous."(6)

Thus the conference, from the beginning was running into snags. The cease-fire talks in Laos were proceeding at a slow pace, while one side accused the other of flagrant violations. Efforts to set up a Laotian coalition government seemed to be frustrated at every turn. Everyone was prepared for a long verbal stalemate at Geneva. The Red Chinese, foreseeing accurately the future of the talks, rented cars and made arrangements for accommodations in Geneva for a period of six months. Nevertheless, the forthcoming meeting between President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev at the beginning of June in Vienna, offered hopes of removal of obstacles blocking agreement on the creation

(6) The New York Times, May 18, 1961, p. 1.

of a unified and neutral Laos. "This was the view expressed by diplomats of the Western, neutral and communist delegations to the fourteen-nation conference on Laos."(7)

By May 21, the United States became adamant towards the cease-fire violations. The U.S. urged decisive action to curb violations of the cease-fire by pro-Communist forces. The Soviet and the Chinese, on the other hand, claimed that a satisfactory cease-fire had been established and that the work of the conference should go forward on that assumption. Rusk warned Gromyko that "his delegation would not negotiate under military pressure in Laos."(8) Furthermore, the United States accused the Soviets of continuing to airlift supplies to the Pathet Lao. The Soviets countered these charges by contending that these flights were delivering only medical supplies and economic aid, and not arms.

On May 23, France presented its own proposals which were accepted by the Western powers. The proposals contained the following points.

(7) The New York Times, May 20, 1961, p. 2.
(8) The New York Times, May 21, 1961, p. 3.

1) A declaration to be signed by the Royal Laotian government that the Laotian people wanted to live in a sovereign and independent state and to have their territorial integrity respected in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

2) The Laotian government was to pursue a policy of neutrality and to refrain from entering military alliances.

3) The presence or passage of foreign troops was to be forbidden, as was the setting up of military bases. Foreign military instructors were to be limited to those provided for under the 1954 agreement.

4) A second draft declaration, to be signed by the conference powers, was to announce their respect for the independence of neutrality of Laos, and included an undertaking not to interfere directly or indirectly in its internal affairs.(9)

Briefly, what France proposed was that East and West accept an international charter for Laotian neutrality as an essential requirement for peace in Laos.

The day after the French had tabled their proposals, the conference received a report from the International Control Commission in Laos detailing its immediate technical and manpower requirements and asking for further instructions. The Soviets refused, however, to allow a reply to be sent. In their view a de facto cease-fire existed in Laos. Further investigation into the matter by the I.C.C. would constitute an undue interference into the internal affairs of Laos.

(9) D. C. Watt, Op. cit., p. 340.

In other words, the Soviets were reluctant to have the I.C.C. interfere with the Soviet build-up of the pro-Communist forces in Laos and with the attempt of the Pathet Lao to gain on the field in Laos what they cannot gain at the conference table in Geneva. Thus, the Soviet refusal to allow a reply and its demand for a veto power on the I.C.C. proved to be the chief stumbling block to East-West agreement at Geneva. Pravda's Geneva correspondent summarized the Soviet stand towards the I.C.C. by writing that

> the peace-loving forces cannot and will not allow the I.C.C. to become a state within a state, an organ that would cramp the social development of Laos.(10)

On May 26, Gromyko returned to Moscow to confer with Premier Khrushchev who was preparing for his meeting with President Kennedy in Vienna. It was not expected that Gromyko would be back in Geneva till after the Vienna talks. In the meantime, the conference, after four days of recess, failed to reopen after the Soviet Union refused to implement what the United States source called "primary conditions of the conference". The Western powers warned the Soviet delegation that the meeting could not proceed without new instructions to the I.C.C. to verify the cease-fire in Laos and to prevent its further violation by forces

(10) Soviet News, 30 May 1961.

of the pro-Communist Pathet Lao movement. Until these conditions were met the Western powers were unwilling to continue talks.

Mr. Pushkin of the Soviet Union, from his side insisted, on May 31, that the conference should reopen to discuss the original draft proposals that Mr. Gromyko had put forward in his opening speech, and that they should not waste time discussing the American allegations about the breaking of the cease-fire agreements. "The argument over what was to be discussed was paralleled by a disagreement over what procedure should be adopted to discuss it."(11) The Soviets were in favour of discussion taking place at plenary sessions whereas the Western powers believed that it would be much more effective if the delegates were split up into working groups to discuss various problems. The Soviets, furthermore, made it clear that they will not agree to reconvoke the conference except on their own terms, as outlined above.

Nevertheless, hopes were raised that perhaps the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting in Vienna would help to break this stalemate. But the persistent intransigence of the Soviets aroused suspicions in the West as to the true nature

(11) C. D. Watt, Op. cit., p. 341.

of Soviet tactics at the conference. An editorial in The New York Times of June 1, 1961 expressed these sentiments.

> It has now become clear that the Communist-led troops have violated the cease-fire agreement and are engaged in a methodical effort to wipe out elements loyal to the Laotian Government within the area under general communist domination. While talking peace and neutrality in Geneva they are in short consolidating their grip on northern Laos and strengthening their whole military and political position in relation to opposition forces.
>
> Russian tactics at Geneva are making Moscow an accessory in this operation. Russian spokesmen have belittled the cease-fire violations, have refused to agree to enlarged activities and powers for the truce commission and have insisted on 'neutrality' arrangements for Laos that would facilitate a Communist take over.(12)

But now, all attention was being diverted to the up-coming summit meeting in Vienna. More specifically, as far as the Geneva conference was concerned, all interest focused on the discussion of the Laos problem between the two leaders. It was expected that Khrushchev would assume the following position on Laos:

1) Laos is not essential to the Soviet Union or to the United States, but both nations must face the facts that the Pathet Lao and the neutralist elements headed by Prince Souvanna Phouma control most of the country and that the Royal Laotian Government, backed by the United States, has not offered really effective opposition.

(12) The New York Times, June 1, 1961, p. 34.

2) If the talks on Laos break down, the pro-Communists and neutralists will overrun the rest of the country and the United States will lose Laos immediately and completely.

3) Both sides should accept the cease-fire and negotiate a neutral Laos for the future. The Soviet Union is certain that communism will triumph eventually in Laos, but it would prefer that triumph to be a result of competition between communism and capitalism rather than war.(13)

The essence of this position was to belittle the problem of Laos, to present it as a hopeless adventure which will result in Western defeat, no matter what the outcome of the conference will be. In short, it was a position of intimidation and blackmail against the Western powers, in an effort to demoralize and weaken American will to oppose communist pressures to take over the country.

The talks between the two leaders, which took place on June 3 and June 4, did not yield any significant developments apropos Laos. The following joint statement was issued at the closing of the discussions:

> The President and the Chairman reaffirmed their support of a neutral and independent Laos under a government chosen by the Laotians themselves, and of international agreements for ensuring that neutrality and independence, and in this connection they have recognized the importance of an effective cease-fire.(14)

(13) The New York Times, June 3, 1961, p. 3.
(14) Arthur J. Dommen, Op. cit., p. 210.

This joint statement merely reiterated the well-worn platitudes concerning support for a neutral and independent Laos and the importance of an effective cease-fire. Clearly the Soviets were prepared to continue negotiating, but there were to be no concessions. Khrushchev did not yield on the basic issue before the Geneva conference - Soviet insistence that a Communist member hold veto rights in the control commission.

On June 5 the conference resumed its work. The Soviet delegate, Mr. G. M. Pushkin again insisted that the conference should discuss the Soviet draft proposals and not waste time arguing about the rights and wrongs of the cease-fire. On June 7 reports reached Geneva from Laos that Rebel forces had captured the town of Padong. Immediately the United States, France and Britan boycotted the conference because of what the American delegation called "blatant violations of the cease-fire by pro-Communist forces". Possible breakdown, however, was averted by the return of Mr. Gromyko to Geneva on the same day, and of Lord Home on June 11. Upon his arrival, Gromyko rejected the idea of Soviet concessions to restart the conference.

Nevertheless, after a forty-five-minute talk between W. Averell Harriman and Andrei A. Gromyko on June 9, a break appeared in the deadlock. Gromyko "indicated that with goodwill on both sides the fighting in Laos would stop, a de facto cease-fire would be established and the International Control Commission be given more scope, if not more authority, to investigate violations of the cease-fire."(15) The decisive factor in the change in the Soviet position appears to have been a remark by Khrushchev to Gromyko, which he reported to Harriman, that the Soviet Union was eager to proceed to the negotiation of substantive issues.(16) Gromyko, however, told Harriman that the cease-fire could be firmly established only if military supplies by air to both sides in the Padong area ended. The Western interpretation of the change in the situation was that the Soviet Union was ready, now that the rebels have driven Royal Laotian forces from the key mountain ridge at Padong, to negotiate from what it considered to have been a stronger position.

On June 12 Gromyko and Lord Home sent a joint message to the International Control Commission in Laos, reiterating the appeal of April 24 to the parties in the

(15) The New York Times, June 10, 1961, p. 1.
(16) Ibid.

civil war to cooperate with the commission and to observe the cease-fire. The demand by the West that fresh instructions be also sent to the Control Commission was abandoned at Soviet insistence. In the meantime around the middle of June the three Laotian princes arrived at Zurich for a conference.

It was clear that the conference was marking time while awaiting the outcome of the meeting of the three princes. Mr. Krishna Menon, the Indian delegate, indicated a number of compromises that were possible between the Russian and the French proposals, and Mr. Gromyko did not seem anxious to reject them out of hand. His remark that "one cannot sit indefinitely on the shores of Lake Geneva counting the swans", seemed to suggest that the Soviets were prepared to get down to business. The Soviets expected to get a neutral Laotian Government in which effective power would be held by communist and pro-communist forces to set the stage within a short time for a peaceful transformation into a "people's democracy".

On June 22 the three princes reached an agreement and issued a communiqué announcing that they had agreed to

form a "Provisional Government of National Union". Following this, the conference continued its monotonous sessions. By July 11 a deadlock was reached as to how the talks should proceed. The British suggested that the conference should discuss the position of the control commission and the neutrality of Laos on alternate days. But even this compromise proposal was unacceptable to the Soviets. Mr. Pushkin, filling in for the absent Mr. Gromyko, asserted that the only true order and approach, to the conference's further work, was Communist China's proposal that detailed discussion begin on the neutrality declaration because this would be the basis for any accord reached. Once agreement is reached on the declaration, he said, the conference then could consider the text of an accord on the withdrawal of foreign troops and military personnel from the territory of Laos and on the terms of reference of the International Control Commission.(17)

However, the deadlock in the conference was soon broken when the conference adopted a nine point plan offered by its British and Soviet co-chairmen to remove procedural obstacles. The new procedure enabled the conference to move on the detailed consideration of proposals for the settlement of the Laotian question and to the preparation of agreed documents. Thus by July 26 the

(17) The New York Times, July 11, 1961.

conference agreed on the substance of a general international undertaking to respect the independence and neutrality of Laos. In addition, the Soviet Union demanded that a general undertaking on the withdrawal of foreign military personnel be included in the neutrality declaration. But when the United States and other Western countries asked that the undertaking be accompanied by a reference to the controls that are to be specified in a separate conference document, the Soviets held back on the demand. Pushkin of the Soviet Union "said he preferred to postpone the withdrawal issue rather than accept the control link at this stage..."(18)

The actual snags holding up the conference at this stage centered round the presence of French troops in Laos and the question of the SEATO guarantee. Under the 1954 Geneva agreements, 5,000 French troops and instructors had been left in Laos. The Soviets and the Chinese were anxious to see them go, but all Western proposals excluded them from consideration on the grounds that their position was a matter for discussion between the French and the Laotians themselves. The three princes had agreed to this at Zurich. The SEATO guarantee, which the Sino-Soviet side regarded with such dislike, was considered by the Western delegates to be irrelevant to the purposes of

(18) The New York Times, August 31, 1961.

the conference. The Soviet Union together with Communist China warned that the outlook for the conference was dimmed by a stalemate over the withdrawal of foreign troops from Laos. The Soviets asserted that the withdrawal of foreign troops must be immediate and not linked to the international control arrangements demanded by the West to guarantee that the departure is effective. The West insisted that all foreign troops be identified because of the refusal of the communist powers to admit that any of their forces are serving with the pro-Communist Pathet Lao rebels in Laos.

It was the Laotian truce talks at Na Man that first achieved a breakthrough. On October 1 "it was agreed that the three princes should meet at Ban Hin Heup to discuss a government of national union within a week. On 6 October new talks began, and two days later the princes had agreed that Souvanna Phouma should be the next premier."(19) But the conference itself produced no substantial results for the next few months. By January 15, 1962 the United States and the Soviet Union agreed that two key posts - the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior - in any new coalition government in Laos should be held by neutralists.

(19) D. C. Watt, Op. cit., p. 348.

However, by spring the situation in Laos deteriorated considerably. Heavy fighting again broke out between the Royal Laotian army and the pro-communist forces with the result that the forces of the Royal Laotian army were pushed out into Thailand by the Pathet Lao. In response President Kennedy ordered that the United States naval, air and land forces, including a battle group of 1,800 marines move toward the Indochinese peninsula. This was aimed to be not just a "show of force" but an effort to get into position for more direct action should it be required. Immediately following this move, on May 13, Premier Khrushchev reiterated to Western diplomats his promise made to President Kennedy in Vienna in June 1961 to do everything possible to help establish a neutral and independent Laos governed by a coalition of pro-Communists, neutralists and right-wing leaders. The Soviet Union made it known that it would cooperate in political moves towards this end as soon as the Rightists demonstrated acceptance of the agreement on neutral coalition.

In the meantime the Soviet press agency Tass warned that any United States military intervention in Laos would create a new dangerous seat of war. What was striking about Soviet reactions to the United States naval and troop movements, was its remarkably moderate nature in both private

diplomatic conversations and public propaganda pronouncements. There was little doubt that the U.S.S.R. was desirous of a peaceful and political settlement. Soviet leaders realized how easy it would be to plunge that area, and perhaps the whole world, into war if the situation persists to sustain itself. In talks with Secretary of State Rusk, Ambassador Dobrynin again emphasized the need to maintain a cease-fire and to establish the neutral coalition government for Laos. Dobrynin told Rusk that there has been no change in the Soviet position on a neutral Laos.

The reason why the Soviets cooperated in the big-power negotiations of the previous year for a neutral Laos, was its desire to contain Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. Sino-Soviet relations, which had been on the wane since 1956, reached its culminating point in 1959 when the Soviets toreup the October 1957 nuclear sharing agreement. In addition in October of that year, during his last visit to Peking, Khrushchev hinted that Peking ought to accept a "two-China" solution to the Taiwan problem. The Soviet Union was reluctant to give China full backing during the Quemoy crisis of August 1958 for fear of being dragged into a nuclear conflict with the United States over a foreign-plicy issue not directly related to its national interests. "By the spring of 1960 the inter-Party split began to be made public when

the Chinese indirectly criticized the Soviets in an article praising 'Leninism', and then more openly criticized them in international meetings at Peking and Bucharest..."(20)

August 1960 constitutes another turning point in Sino-Soviet relations. Two-way trade fell drastically late in 1960 and has continued to decline. Soviet military assistance practically ended, which of course put into question the Soviet nuclear shield guaranteed by the thirty-year pact of 1950. The split worsened through 1961. Early in 1962, apparently at the urging of the North Vietnamese, there was a temporary lull in the dispute but it became heated again in the summer of 1962. Khrushchev's ambivalent attitude during the Sino-Indian border dispute intensified the quarrel. Thus by 1962 the conflict spread into a struggle to gain followers among the communist parties of the world and the underdeveloped states. It became imperative to the Soviets that for the CPSU to remain as the leader of the communist world movement it must maintain its influence over all the communist parties. The Communist Chinese, in challenging this dominance, strove to build the CCP and China as the world leader by

(20) Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell (eds.), Communist China, (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 247.

gaining influence among the numerous parties and states especially in Asia. Consequently, a desire to contain Chinese influence seemed the only plausible explanation for the avowed Soviet willingness to settle by negotiation a situation in Laos in which pro-Communists held a decided military advantage. The Soviets were particularly interested in having communist activity in Southeast Asia respond to Moscow's leadership, not Pekings's. Fearing a full scale war, it is believed that the Soviets warned the Chinese and North Vietnamese against aggressions that would provoke direct United States intervention. The American military moves in Southeast Asia at that time was looked upon by the Soviets as not entirely displeasing support for these warnings.

The creation of a unified neutral Laos was considered by the Soviets as serving Soviet purposes for the time being. It would permit Moscow to get on with what it regarded as more urgent business. For Khrushchev, "one of the irritating aspects of the uproar over Laos was that it had Kennedy worried about the wrong crisis."(21) The Soviet leader had managed pretty well to keep the President's attention fixed on the need to obtain some

(21) The New York Times, May 20, 1962.

kind of Berlin settlement. In order of priorities, as stated by Khrushchev, the German question took precedence over disarmament and problems of what Moscow called the national liberation movement in such former colonies as Laos.

Khrushchev seemed intent on two foreign policy objectives. One was to obtain an understanding on Germany with the Western powers. The other was to arrange subsequently a detente in relations with the United States that would permit him to divert more capital resources to lagging sectors of the Soviet economy. These aims would only be prejudiced by any perilous adventure in Laos.

One of the chief factors which had inhibited Moscow in pursuing its policy in Southeast Asia had been the contention of the Chinese Communists that Khrushchev had subordinated the interests of revolutionary movements. "Moscow has proclaimed its support of these movements frequently but the strategy dictated by the Khrushchev thesis of 'peaceful coexistence' requires that revolutionary pressure in a local war shall be slackened when the danger arises of a general conflict..."(22)

(22) The New York Times, May 20, 1962.

On June 11 agreement was reached between the princes on the division of powers in the coalition, which had been the main stumbling block. Souvanna Phouma was to be Prime Minister, something that was agreed upon previously. General Phoumi Nosovan was to be Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance and Souvonouvong was to be Deputy Premier and Economics Minister. It was also agreed that Souvanna Phouma hold the key Ministries of Defense and Interior. The Cabinet was to be made up of 19 members; 11 neutrals, 4 rightists, 4 Pathet Lao.

In response to this development Moscow radio hailed the agreement on a Laotian coalition government as "a great success" achieved through "the patience shown by the patriotic forces and the moral support given by the great socialist camp led by the Soviet Union."(23)

Izvestia on June 13 printed an article by V. Kudryavtsev which reflected official Soviet position on this development.

> The Soviet Union sincerely welcomes the formation of the coalition government in Laos, a reflection of the fact that the forces of progress and neutralism in this country have achieved success in the difficult and complicated circumstances of internal struggle and external political pressure from imperialism...
>
> All efforts must be bent toward creating for the new coalition government in Laos the foreign policy conditions that will help it to pursue a neutral policy.(24)

(23) The New York Times, June 12, 1962.
(24) Izvestia, June 13, 1962, p. 2. Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XIV, No. 24.

Khrushchev took this opportunity to declare that the agreement could serve as a guide to the solution of other problems between the West and the Soviet Union. It seems that Moscow actively supported the diplomatic moves to bring about a cease-fire in Laos and the formation of a coalition government for two main reasons. First, the military superiority of the pro-Communist Pathet Lao forces would insure that any coalition government would be respectful of the wishes of the Communist bloc. Second, a political agreement would avert the danger of United States military intervention in Laos, which might precipitate a clash with Communist China.

For Khrushchev this agreement had an even more important meaning. Basically it had strengthened his position within the Communist bloc. In reply to the criticism of the Chinese Communists and the conservatives in the Soviet leadership, Khrushchev was now able to point to the Laotian accord as a victory for his strategy of 'peaceful coexistence'. For some time now Khrushchev was under attack because of failure to achieve any gains on the issues of Berlin, disarmament, nuclear testing and Southeast Asia.

Now that the agreement on the coalition government was reached the conference at Geneva resumed its sessions.

However, two points remained to be settled to complete the draft agreements designed to assure a unified, neutral Laos. One, was the future of the guarantee by the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization to protect Laos. Communist powers were insisting that such a guarantee would be incompatible with the neutrality of Laos and should be dropped. A more difficult problem was posed by the terms for integration of the military forces of the former Right-Wing Vientiane Government with the troops of the neutralist and pro-Communist Pathet Lao forces into a single national army. But a week before the sessions resumed, the Soviet Union had proposed that a final accord on Laos be concluded in Geneva by the foreign ministers of the fourteen nations. The Soviets wanted to take this opportunity to discuss the question of Berlin with Dean Rusk, Earl of Home, and Maurice Couve de Murville at Geneva.

By July 9 some of the remaining difficulties faced by the conference were eliminated. The Western powers gave way on the issue of including in the declaration of neutrality the necessity of integrating the rival Laotian armies into a small national force of 12,000 to 15,000 men. The West accepted Prince Souvanna Phouma's argument that the army's organization was a technical internal matter not in the scope of the declaration. At about the same

time the Laotian Government submitted a statement of neutrality which received a warm welcome from the major Western and Communist nations. In the statement,

> ...the Laotian Government pledges not to 'enter into any military alliance' that violates the country's neutrality and declares that 'it will not allow the establishment of any foreign military base on Laotian territory'.(25)

A compromise was also reached on the "protective umbrella" of SEATO. The declaration stated that Laos would not recognize the protection of any alliance or military coalition (including SEATO).

The stage was now set for the formal signing of the accord guaranteeing the independence and neutrality of Laos. For this occasion both Gromyko and Rusk arrived at Geneva. At his arrival Gromyko said that the importance of the agreements went beyond Laos and even beyond the cause of peace in Southeast Asia. They proved, he added, that "if interested states want to reach understanding on the questions which divide them it is possible for agreement to be reached."(26) Final approval to the agreements was given by the participants of the conference on July 21 and on July 23 a formal signing ceremony was held.

(25) The New York Times, July 10, 1962.
(26) The New York Times, July 21, 1962.

The draft agreements came in two parts: a declaration on the neutrality of Laos and a protocol seconding various undertakings by the interested powers to respect this neutrality. The protocol also set out the terms of reference for the International Control Commission that would oversee the withdrawal of foreign troops and other measures to establish Laotian neutrality. North Vietnam and Red China never admitted that Viet Minh troops were ever in Laos. Only towards the end the Soviet (in private only) started admitting that there might be a few North Vietnamese in Laos. This hypocrisy made nonsense of the guarantees written into the protocol, in particular the provision that all foreign regular and irregular troops, foreign para-military formations, and foreign military personnel were to be withdrawn from Laos within a stated time.

In fact, the North Vietnamese had not left at all; they had merely withdrawn a token number of their men to conform with the reluctant admission that there might have been a few of them in Laos, almost, as it were, by inadvertence. For the rest, they simply continued to use Laos as and when they pleased, mainly for the purpose of supplying the Communist Viet Cong guerrillas in South Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh trail.

However, at the moment of the signing of the agreements, the official Soviet reaction was that this conclusion of so many months' ardent bargaining proved once again that negotiations could settle even the thorniest international issues dividing the socialist world and the capitalist world. Gromyko's statement clearly echoed this sentiment:

> The Soviet government welcomes the agreements reached on the Laotian question. As we express today our satisfaction with this momentous event, ... it must be recalled that the favorable turn toward businesslike negotiations at the conference on Laos is connected first of all to the results of the meeting of N. S. Khrushchev, Chairman of the U.S.S.R., Council of Ministers, and U.S. President J. Kennedy in June 1961... The example of Laos, as N. S. Khrushchev, head of the Soviet government, recently said, shows that where the desire for agreement exists, ways for the peaceful settlement of complex international problems can be found.(27)

One of the most important facts deduced from this complex settlement was that the Soviet Union was moving into a predominant position in Laos. Until October 1960 no Russian had ever set foot on Laotian soil in all history. Yet, once involved, Moscow mounted its swiftest, most effective foreign aid program there. The reasons were dual. The Soviet Union "saw the value of prising another piece of Southeast Asia away from Western influence, and it saw the value of registering communist gains in the name of Moscow, not Peiping."(28)

(27) Pravda, July 22, 1962, p. 4, Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XIV, No. 29.
(28) Commentary by C. L. Sulzberger in The New York Times, July 23, 1962.

The Soviet Union had always been at an advantage in Laos, ever since American's ill-advised support of Phoumi Nosovan had toppled Souvanna Phouma from power in the autumn of 1960. The Soviets had placed themselves in the happy propaganda position of supporting a nationalist movement against a reactionary, albeit American-backed, régime. Their position was impregnable.

The 1961-62 Geneva conference did little to improve Laos' position. As in 1954, the Communist governments did not sign the agreements in good faith. An internal agreement reached in November, 1962, by the three groups of the coalition government to merge their military forces was never implemented, and they continued to occupy separate areas. At the end of 1962, Kong Le's neutralist troops began to split, some of them defecting to the Communists. The Pathet Lao resumed fighting in the spring of 1963 both against the neutralists and the right-wing forces. But by then these developments were quickly being overshadowed by a more serious situation occurring in South Vietnam.

CONCLUSION

Because of problems at home and in Europe, the Soviet Union displayed little direct interest in South and Southeast Asia during the initial postwar period. However, by 1947 as rivalry with the U.S. increased in the Southeast Asia area, the Soviets found themselves increasingly more preoccupied with Asia. The Soviet Union launched a policy of instigating direct socialist revolutions in the Southeast Asian countries. The practice of cooperation with the non-communist Left was abandoned and terrorism and insurrections began in India, Pakistan, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, Indochina and the Philippines.

The emergence of Communist China in 1949, consequently brought about another change in Soviet policies towards Asia. The Soviets were no more the sole source of communist strength in Asia. Increasingly the communist policy in the area began to be directed by Peking as well as Moscow. During the Korean War, Moscow began to perceive that the interests of the new Asian countries were the same as those shared by the Soviet Union. The Soviets realized that these states were not irrevocably tied to the West on all issues, and they could not be lumped with the capitalist camp. This realization was followed by a move to foster good relations with some of the Asian states.

However, because of the geographical location of Southeast Asia, the Soviet Union had found it difficult to implement directly some of its policies in that area. Although the Soviets have taken no direct role in subversive activity in the area, still they were very much concerned with the developments in Southeast Asia. The political-military vacuum, which had come into existence in the area after the withdrawal of the Western colonial powers, presented the Soviet Union with an opportunity to enhance its position and extend its influence there.

The Soviets considered control of Vietnam by the communists not only as additional territory added to their bloc, but also as protection for China as well as a possible jumping-off point for additional expansion in Southeast Asia. Likewise this would mean a further dimunition of Western prestige in the Far East and the world in general. Consequently together with China, the Soviet Union increasingly supplied the Viet Minh with military materials. As the U.S. began to preoccupy itself more with the conflict, the Soviet Union counter-reacted.

Nevertheless the post-Stalin Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence restrained the Soviets from getting involved in any way militarily. They were anxious to keep the war localized and limited and the last thing they wanted was

an American military intervention in Indochina. Such an intervention could precipitate a major conflict involving also China and the Soviet Union. American indications that such an intervention was contemplated prompted the U.S.S.R. to take part in a conference to settle the war in Indochina peacefully. Furthermore, the Soviets were influenced also by the possibility that the conference might be used as a lever to cause further delay in the ratification of the European Defense Community Treaty. Finally, the Soviets became convinced somewhat, that if there was to be any further extension of communism, it would have to be achieved by more subtle means. Possession of atomic weapons by both the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. made military adventures very risky. Communism had to become respectable, particularly in Asia. Gains by violence had to be supplanted by gains through peaceful coexistence.

It seems, however, that the most important factor which influenced the Soviets to participate in the conference was the change of attitude on the part of the Soviet leaders towards the cold war, the West and the underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia.

Since 1953 the Soviet government under the new leadership, had made a number of serious efforts to break the East-West stalemate. In so doing it had begun to show

flexibility in utilizing the almost disused weapons of diplomacy. The Malenkov regime, in abandoning certain of Stalin's tactics in East-West relations, adopted a more reasonable attitude towards the non-Communist world in diplomatic and social matters. Although Malenkov's policies did not meet with great success in Europe, his actions in Asia with regard to the wars in Korea and Indochina took some stigma out of the failures in Europe. The Soviet Union then exerted its influence to bring to an end hostilities in both these countries between the Communist and the non-Communist forces.

By 1954 Soviet military capability included the ability to fight a war in the air-atomic manner which shifted its previous reliance on conventional warfare with mass infantry. It also resulted in a major shift in the military balance between the East and West, by enabling the Soviets to threaten vital industrial and urban areas of the West. This increased military capability added greater confidence to the Soviet leaders in international affairs and gave the impression that they saw themselves as negotiating from a position of strength. This served as an advantage not only in Soviet relations vis-à-vis the West but also in its relations vis-à-vis China and the Viet Minh because the latter two had to rely on Soviet

military power in the hope of achieving any remarkable success either at the conference table or on the battlefield.

As a direct result of the Geneva Conference the leading role of the Soviet Union in the "socialist camp" was enhanced. The Soviets prided themselves that the Soviet Union was being considered a standard bearer of peace.

The most important development affecting Indochina during 1955 was the evolution of the Soviet bloc's policy towards that area. The implied threat of a military attack has been abandoned and replaced by a more supple policy of economic penetration and political subversion. War, as an instrument of policy had to be abandoned because the stalemate on nuclear weapons has made the "big war" suicidal and the "little war" more dangerous. The Soviets realized the advantages of economic and political penetration of an area where it was hoped nationalism could be influenced away from Western ideas, and where offers of economic and technical aid could swing non-Communist governments round to accept at least some elements of the Soviet point of view.

For the time being the Soviets looked at the case for reunification of Vietnam as a matter to be decided between the governments of both sections of the country.

Nevertheless the Soviets must have been extremely hopeful that South Vietnam would fail to achieve inner stability and external security and would fall sooner rather than later under Communist control. They attempted to take advantage of any dispute between South Vietnam and Cambodia by supporting Cambodia against the former. Vietnam apparently struck the Soviets as an undesirable issue for a major war; and the consequences of a Viet Minh attack on the South were clearly unpredictable in view of the SEATO defensive umbrella over Indochina and of American support for the Diem régime.

The new Soviet approach towards Indochina was aimed to lend credence that close cooperation with communist countries can be safe, feasible and profitable. The repudiation of Stalin and, by implication, Stalinist methods seemed to have marked the Soviet Union as less menacing than before. It was hoped that these factors would soften resistence to communism in Indochina and strengthen the hand of indigenous communists. The Soviet propaganda output in Indochina stressed these points while at the same time attempted to discredit any American interests in the area.

The first object of Soviet policy during the months following the 20th Party Congress was to ensure that internal relaxation and recognition of national differences between

the Communist states did not break up the international solidarity of the communist bloc.

The implementation of the decision of the conference to hold an election in Vietnam to reunify the country became a matter of immediate importance to the Soviet Union. Knowing very well that Ho's chances of victory were quite good, the Soviets launched an intensive campaign to force Diem of South Vietnam to reverse his decision not to participate in these elections. However, the unexpected vitality of the Diem regime reduced communist hopes of securing control of the whole of Vietnam. Despite all the efforts by the Soviet Union, in the final run the elections were never held.

The Soviets also directed their attention to Cambodia, where Prince Sihanouk declared its neutrality. To the Soviets this policy by Cambodia fell in line with their own thinking. The Soviet Union was primarily seeking to weaken the Western world by detaching and making less dependable as many countries as possible. The Soviet focus on the border nations was simply the product of Moscow's belief that the border nations are most open to detachment from the West because they are most vulnerable to the potential application of Communist military power. Because Soviet support of Cambodia's neutrality was based strictly

on the convenience of the Soviet Union, it was not surprising that when there was anything serious at stake it did not pay much attention to Cambodia's views.

However, with the rise of China the entire role of the Soviet Union in Asia came under scrutiny. For about 10 years since the end of World War II the Soviet Union enjoyed predominance in Asia and was the only continental Asian power. This power was unchallenged except by the presence of American power on the periphery of Asia. The Soviets controlled in varying degrees, all communist movements within Asia. But the only area where they exercised the least control and where they were involved the least was Indochina. With the emergence of China on the scene, this predominance was challenged. The Chinese communists in their attempt to gain increasing independence from Moscow, came into conflict with the Soviets. This conflict was further accentuated by Chinese objections to the new Soviet policy of peaceful co-existence and de-Stalinization. The Soviets recognized the gravity of the Chinese challenge and realized that the Communist Chinese were attempting to extend their influence over all the communist movements in Asia.

Thus the increasing developments in Indochina after the Geneva Conference in 1954, heightened Soviet interest in that area. It became clear that now the Soviets had to make their presence felt in Indochina lest their influence be supplanted by the Chinese. They realized that unless they provided North Vietnam with aid, it would be forced under the circumstances to rely entirely upon Communist China. The Soviets began to fear that excessive Chinese pressures and interference in Indochina might lead to an all out war should the U.S. retaliate.

Subsequently, the Soviets found themselves in a precarious position. If they carried their policy of peaceful co-existence and their pronouncement that wars are not inevitable to the fullest, then they would have to abandon their support of the communist struggle in Indochina. Such a development would automatically mean the ascendancy of Communist China as the world communist leader. In order to prevent this from happening, Khrushchev quickly announced that wars of national liberation are justified and should be supported. This pronouncement unshackled the Soviets and freed them to grant the Vietnamese Communists all the support required.

By 1960 Chinese Communist actions in South Asia greatly disturbed the Soviets. Communist China was flexing its muscles and testing its power to intimidate its neighbors and these actions radically altered the image in this area not only of Peking but the communist world as a whole. As far as the Soviets were concerned, the Soviet Union was not going to be dragged into a nuclear conflict with the U.S. as a result of precipitate Chinese action taken in pursuit of interests not shared by the U.S.S.R. Fearful of excessive Chinese interference in Laos, which could precipitate such a clash, the Soviets deemed it essential to maintain control, advocate caution and minimize Chinese influence. Simultaneously, it had to show the indigenous communist forces in the area that it is ready and willing to render them aid in their struggle.

Thus one of the major reasons why the Soviet Union involved itself in the Laotian crisis during this period was to convince Peking that it had not gone soft as a revolutionary power and to maintain its position as leader of the world wide Communist movement. In addition it was acting out of imperative need to retain the allegiance of North Vietnam in the developing quarrel with China.

This was intended to preclude accusations by the Lao Dong Party (Communist Party in North Vietnam) militants that the U.S.S.R.'s conciliatory policy was betraying the Communist cause, and to prevent the Lao Dong Party from throwing its entire support to the Chinese Communist Party.

However, as the Laotian crisis escalated the Soviets became increasingly more cautious. Supporting their Asian allies in a war against the U.S. would produce serious risks and would limit their ability to exploit issues much closer to home and of much greater interest, such as Berlin. They could agree to a cease-fire in Laos with little sacrifice to themselves. Their reasoning with the North Vietnamese ran as follows: In order to prevent the Americans from intervening in Laos, it is necessary to agree to a cease-fire; we are supporting Souvanna Phouma, who is the legal Prime Minister of Laos, and in the long run this policy will achieve the same ends as a military victory by the Pathet Lao.

With this in mind the Soviets entered the negotiations at Geneva to bring about a settlement of the Laotian crisis. Nevertheless, one of the most important outcomes of this complex settlement was the ascendancy of the Soviet Union

into a predominant position in Laos. The Soviet Union had always been at an advantage in Laos, ever since America's ill-advised support of Phoumi Nosovan had toppled Souvanna Phouma from power in the autumn of 1960. The Soviets had placed themselves in the happy propaganda position of supporting a nationalist movement against a reactionary régime. Their position was impregnable.

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