

Background Briefing—The People’s Republic of China

The hopeless situation of the French in Indochina clearly indicates that Western imperialism is dead in Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese people are about to join their Chinese brothers in establishing a true people’s democracy led by the Communist Party. To protect their hard-won triumph and to ensure that the security of the People’s Republic of China is not endangered, the war in Indochina should be brought to an end. The People’s Republic of China strongly supports the idea of peaceful coexistence in Asia.

The leaders of the Vietnamese people’s democratic forces have correctly looked to the experience of the Chinese people who, led by the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Ze-dong, achieved victory over the forces of Western imperialism and their puppets just five years ago. The strategists of the Vietminh have followed the tactics developed by Chairman Mao to combat the better-armed and often larger forces of colonialism. By cleverly luring the enemy to extend its operations beyond its central lines, then quickly surrounding it with superior forces and cutting off its lines of retreat, the inspired and valiant people of Vietnam have recently achieved long-deserved victories in their eight-year struggle. The fate of the colonial aggressors at Dienbienphu has shown that the historically inevitable triumph over imperialism is now within reach. Since late 1949, when the People’s Republic of China was established, we have supported the struggle of our Vietnamese brothers with encouragement, tactical advice, supplies, and, most recently, with military equipment. We extended diplomatic recognition to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in early 1950. While our level of aid has not approached the huge amounts of military equipment that the American warmongers have supplied to the French imperialists, our aid has made possible the recent victories of the Vietminh. We have not committed troops from the Chinese People’s Army to the struggle because they have not been needed.

It is now time to end the struggle against the forces of imperialism in Asia. As Chairman Mao has taught, it is proper and necessary in the long struggle against imperialism to conclude temporary peace agreements with the enemy. Such a peace will enable the democratic forces to consolidate their gains and to prepare for the next phase. The forces of imperialism must permanently evacuate the northern part of Vietnam and recognize the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as the legitimate government there. The establishment of a democratic communist government will increase the security of the Chinese people by pushing the forces of the warmongering Americans and their lackeys further away from the territory of China.

Although the French apparently have recognized that their colonial adventure in Southeast Asia has ended, the American government continues to pursue its reactionary, aggressive policies against the peoples of Asia. Recent hints that the United States may send aircraft, ships, and armies to continue the fruitless war against the people in Vietnam—a war the United States has financed for the past few years—demonstrate how dangerous and irrational the imperialists can be when they sense that the people are on the verge of triumph. Fortunately, the French and British imperialists have shown no interest in these U.S. threats. While the Vietminh can justify the liberation of all of Vietnam, for tactical reasons it is necessary that they accept for the moment control only over the northern half of their country. Unification with the people of southern Vietnam can be accomplished by peaceful means within a short period of time. Above all, care must be taken not to provoke the Americans to dangerous, irresponsible actions, such as their invasion of the Democratic Republic of Korea four years ago.

The People’s Republic of China calls for an immediate cease-fire in Indochina, the return of all prisoners of war, and the immediate withdrawal of French forces from Indochina.

Guarantees that would prevent the Americans from establishing a counter-revolutionary, colonial outpost in southern Vietnam are necessary. While we believe that the conflicts in Laos and Cambodia, and the legitimacy of the Pathet Lao [communist forces in Laos] and Khmer Issarak [communist forces in Cambodia], should be addressed at the conference in Geneva, in the interests of achieving peace

we will encourage our Vietnamese brothers to withdraw their forces from Laos and Cambodia. Since future problems in Asia cannot be resolved without the rightful participation of the Chinese people, the U.S. government must recognize the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of China and allow us to take our seat rightfully in the United Nations.

From the Historical Record

Book by Chairman Mao Ze-dong, On the Protracted War, written in 1938 and republished in 1951

"Because the enemy force, though small, is strong (in equipment and the training of officers and men) while our own force, though big, is weak (only in equipment and the training of officers and men but not in morale), we should, in campaign and battle operations, not only employ a big force to attack from an exterior line a small force on the interior line, but also adopt the aim of quick decision. To achieve quick decision we should generally attack, not an enemy force holding a position, but one on the move. We should have concentrated, beforehand and under cover, a big force along the route through which the enemy is sure to pass, suddenly descend on him while he is moving, encircle and attack him before he knows what is happening, and conclude the fighting with all speed. If the battle is well fought, we may annihilate the entire enemy force or the greater part or a part of it. Even if the battle is not well fought, we may still inflict heavy casualties."

Articles by Chairman Mao Ze-dong, January and April, 1940

"In the international situation the 'heroes' in the colonies and semi-colonies must either stand on the side of the imperialist front and become part of the force of world counter-revolution or stand on the side of the anti-imperialist front and become part of the force of world revolution. They must stand either on this side or on the other, for there is no third choice.... After we have repulsed the attack...and before a new one [begins], we

should stop at the proper moment and bring that particular fight to a close.... Then we should on our own initiative seek unity with the [enemy] and, upon his consent conclude a peace agreement.... Herein lies the temporary nature of every particular struggle."

Remarks by Chairman Mao Ze-dong, August 11, 1949

"Disrupt, fail, disrupt again, fail again, till their doom—that is the logic of imperialism and all reactionaries in the world. They will certainly not go against this logic. This is a Marxist law. We say: 'Imperialism is very vicious.' That means that its fundamental nature cannot be changed. Till their doom, the imperialist elements will not lay down the butcher's knife, nor will they ever turn into Buddhas..."

Speeches by Communist Party spokesman Liu Shao-ch'i, November 3, 16, and 23, 1949

"[The Chinese working class needs] to shoulder the grave responsibility of assisting the working class and working people of capitalist countries and especially of colonial and semi-colonial countries in Asia and Australia. The victorious Chinese working class cannot and must not evade this honorable international responsibility.... The path taken by the Chinese people in defeating imperialism and its lackeys and in founding the People's Republic of China is the path that should be taken by the peoples of the various colonial and semi-colonial countries in their fight for national independence and people's democracy.... The war of national liberation in Viet

Nam has liberated 90 percent of her territory.... The national liberation movement and the people's democratic movement in the colonies and semi-colonies will never stop short of complete victory. Their struggles are entirely righteous.... The great victory of the Chinese people has set them the best example."

Official Chinese publications, August 26 and September 25, 1950 (Note: While these articles refer specifically to the situation in Korea, Vietnam is also on China's border and has traditionally been a focus of Chinese security concerns.)

"The barbarous action of American imperialism and its hangers-on in invading Korea not only menaces peace in Asia and the world in general but seriously threatens the security of China in particular. The Chinese people cannot allow such aggressive acts of American imperialism in Korea. To settle the Korean question peacefully, first the opinions of the Korean people and next the opinions of the Chinese people must be heard.... No Asian affairs can be solved without the participation of the Chinese people. It is impossible to solve the Korean problem without the participation of its closest neighbor, China...North Korea's friends are our friends. North Korea's enemy is our enemy. North Korea's defense is our defense. North Korea's victory is our victory ...We Chinese people are against the American imperialists because they are against us. They

have openly become the arch enemy of the People's Republic of China by supporting the people's enemy, the Chiang Kai-shek clique, by sending a huge fleet to prevent the liberation of the Chinese territory of Taiwan, by repeated air intrusions and strafing and bombing of the Chinese people, by refusing new China a seat in the U.N., through intrigues with their satellite nations, by rearing up a fascist power in Japan, and by rearming Japan for the purpose of expanding aggressive war. Is it not just for us to support our friend and neighbor against our enemy? The American warmongers are mistaken in thinking that their accusations and threats will intimidate the people of China."

Articles in People's Daily, April 21 and May 9, 1954

"We do not commit aggression against others and [we] are firmly opposed to aggressive action by anyone else.... We advocate peace and oppose war. But we certainly will not take it lying down if someone else's armed aggression is directed against us.... [The American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] has proposed sending aircraft carriers and planes to participate directly in the Indochina war, and [Vice President Nixon] has actually shouted about dispatching American ground forces to Indochina.... The time is ripe for ending the war in Indochina."