

Background Briefing Democratic Republic of Vietnam (Vietminh)

The day of liberation for the Vietnamese people is finally here! After a century-long struggle, the Vietnamese people, led by the Vietminh, have defeated decisively the forces of colonialism and imperialism. Total military victory and national independence are within our reach.

For the past eight years, the Vietnamese people have been fighting single-handedly the French imperialists and their lackeys in Vietnam. Shortly after our leader, Ho Chi Minh, raised the banner of independence in September 1945, we requested that the United States and Britain support the idea of Vietnamese independence and “take steps necessary for the maintenance of world peace which is being endangered by French efforts to reconquer Indochina.” Our pleas for Western and United Nations’ assistance went unheeded. We were forced to fight on our own against an enemy with superior forces and superior weaponry. The courage of our men and women and the superior tactics of our leaders have turned the tide of battle and brought about the historically inevitable triumph of the people and the humiliation of the imperialists. Despite the huge amounts of money and war materials that the United States has sent the French and that were used to kill and maim the Vietnamese people and keep them in bondage, the imperialists are now on the run and know that their days are numbered.

Our objective is the total expulsion of the colonial forces and the establishment of communist governments in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In addition, steps must be taken to prevent the warmongering Americans from establishing counter-revolutionary bases in the area. Such provocative actions by the chief imperialist power would threaten the safety of the people’s governments and endanger world peace. While the French and British colonial

powers have reluctantly recognized the triumph of the people’s movements in Southeast Asia, the United States insists upon denying the justness and reality of the people’s victory. American obstructionism in Asia has prevented the Chinese People’s Republic from taking its rightful place among the sovereign nations of the world, and American threats have prevented Western nations from recognizing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam since it was proclaimed in 1950.

France must immediately recognize the full sovereignty and independence of Vietnam and the full sovereignty and independence of Pathet Lao [communist forces in Laos] and Khmer [communist forces in Cambodia]. All foreign troops must withdraw from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos immediately and free elections must be organized to form a democratic government in each country. Vietnam must not be divided. The Vietnamese people are one. Our Chinese brothers have been encouraging us to accept a temporary military settlement that would leave southern Vietnam still under the control of the imperialist lackeys. We object to such a resolution, but if necessary to bring about an end to the French presence in Indochina, we would reluctantly accept it. The Chinese People’s Republic has been our faithful ally throughout this long struggle and we must respect the opinions of its leaders. However, assurances must be given that elections will be held soon to provide for the unification of the Vietnamese people under a truly representative people’s government. While a military solution may precede a political settlement, the latter must not be put off indefinitely. The goal of a free, unified Vietnam that we are about to achieve on the battlefield must not be lost at the conference table in Geneva.

From the Historical Record

Speech by Ho Chi Minh declaring Vietnamese independence from the French, September 2, 1945

“We hold the truth that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’ This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America.... The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states ‘All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights...’ Nevertheless, for more than eight years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow-citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice. In the field of politics, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty.... For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government, representing the whole Vietnamese people, declare that from now on we break off all relations of a colonial character with France.... The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country. We are convinced that the Allied nations, which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam.”

Comments by Ho Chi Minh, fall of 1945

“[The Americans] are only interested in replacing the French.... They want to reorganize our economy in order to control it. They are capitalists to the core. All that counts for them is business.”

Press release by representatives of Vietminh, January 6, 1947

“THE VIETNAM STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE. At a time when the democratic powers have just emerged from a long war

against Fascism, Vietnam, victim of French colonial aggression, must still defend itself with arms. It is no longer necessary to emphasize the misdeeds and crimes of that particular form of colonialism, its constant and deliberate attempt to poison an entire people with alcohol and opium, its policy of exploitation, pressure, and obscurantism imposed upon Vietnam by a handful of colonialists and from which the French people themselves have derived no real benefit. Suffice it to recall that since the French conquest more than three-quarters of a century ago, the people of Vietnam have never ceased striving to regain their independence. The long list of uprisings and revolts, although harshly quelled, have marked this painful period with interruption and have demonstrated the invincible strength of our national spirit.... VIETNAM APPEALS TO THE WORLD. The era of colonial conquest and domination is over. Vietnam is firmly resolved to the very end in her struggle for her most sacred rights, viz., the territorial integrity of her country and her political independence.”

Statement of Vietminh strategy, issued during the early years of the war

“The general strategic line to be followed by our resistance is protracted warfare. An agricultural country, we are brought into conflict with an industrial country. With rudimentary weapons we are fighting an enemy equipped with aircraft, armour, warships.... We know how to preserve and increase our strength, season our army and give military training to our people, if we learn to wage war while carrying our combat operations, we shall obtain what we lacked at the beginning, and though weak at first, we shall become strong. By decimating, harassing, demoralizing the enemy, we shall turn the tide. Losing his initial superiority, the enemy, a victor at the start, will be vanquished in the end. If we prolong the war, our strength will increase; that of the enemy will dwindle, the poor morale of his troops will sink ever deeper, the serious financial problems saddled on him will be ever more aggravated. The

more we fight on, the closer national unity will grow and the stronger the support of the world democratic forces. On the other hand, in France itself, the enemy will be ever more hampered by the popular movement against war and for democracy; the revolutionary upsurge in his colonies will force him to scatter his forces; his isolation in the international arena will worsen. To get at this result, we need time. Time is for us.”

Statements by Pham Van Dong, head of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN) delegation, May 1954

“[The DRVN proposes] recognition by France of the sovereignty and independence of Viet-Nam over the whole territory of Viet-Nam.... Conclusion of an agreement on the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the territories of Viet-Nam, Khmer [Cambodia] and Pathet Lao [Laos].... Organization of free, general elections in Viet-Nam, in Khmer and Pathet Lao in order to form a single govern-

ment in each country.... Conferences will take all measures to guarantee the free activity of patriotic parties, groups, and social organizations. No foreign intervention will be allowed.... A complete and simultaneous cease-fire over all the territory of Indochina by all the armed forces—land, sea, and air—of the belligerent parties.... Complete cessation of all introduction into Indochina of new military units...of all kinds of arms and munitions... establishment of a control [commission] to assure the execution of the provisions of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities.... It is common knowledge that in order to reestablish peace in Indochina, it is necessary to put an end to the provision by the United States of arms and munitions to Indochina, to recall the American missions, advisers, and military instructors, and to cease all intervention by the United States, in whatever form, in the affairs of Indochina.”

Background Briefing—France

The political and economic survival of France are at risk because of the situation in Indochina. The economic costs of the war, which has been going on for eight years, have been draining the French treasury and preventing our full economic recovery from the ravages of the war against Germany. Nearly two trillion francs have been spent on this war. This is more than twice the amount of total aid received from the U.S. Marshall Plan. Our officer corps has been decimated, with more than 8,200 killed, and our military colleges cannot graduate enough officers to replace those killed and disabled. We are unable to fulfill our commitments to the defense of Europe because of the burdens of this war. Our political life has been disrupted and governments have fallen because of public discontent. Pierre Mendes-France, our new premier, has pledged to bring the war to a close within thirty days or he will resign. Only the sending of French draftees to Indochina can guarantee the security of our forces already there, and we know that the French people will not tolerate this. While the dangers of allowing this strategic area to fall under communist control are very great, and the loss of this valuable part of the French empire cannot help but inflict deep and lasting wounds, we can no longer continue the struggle. Our nation's future is at stake!

The century-long role of France in Indochina should never be a source of shame for our country. On the contrary, we have brought the blessings of modern administration, medicine, economic development, and, of course, French culture and values. All Vietnamese, not just those who have been enlightened by French education, have benefited from our guidance. Long before the Americans recognized the dangers of communist aggression in Asia, we were fighting to halt the encroachment of communism into Southeast Asia. Until 1950, we fought this battle alone, suffering the unjustified criticisms of our allies. Although the United States since June 1950 has contributed part of the costs of the war, the blood shed in Indochina has been French, not

American. Ambiguous, last-minute offers from the United States to send ships, warplanes, and perhaps even troops have come too late. Much earlier American attitudes fatally undermined French rule in Indochina, and we cannot but suspect that the United States intends to take our place in this resource-rich area of the world. The tragic outcome of this war cannot, however, dim the glory achieved by the French soldiers, administrators, and educators who have contributed so much to Indochina during the century of enlightened French guardianship.

Our objectives are to end the financial and human costs of the war, to limit the gains of the communists, and to retain as much French influence in the area as possible. We fear that if the communists at this conference achieve the total victory they have been unable to gain on the battlefield, then all of Southeast Asia will be lost to communism. The smaller states will be unable to resist the pressure from their communist neighbors. French economic and political interests can be protected by limiting the area ceded to communist control and by strengthening those areas that can be denied to the communists. The conference in Geneva should limit itself to the resolution of the military situation and defer to the future the resolution of the more difficult political issues.

The aggressive appetites of the Vietminh and the Chinese communists who have supported them will not be satisfied for long with a partial victory. Now that the eyes of the British and Americans have been opened to this threat, we hope that collective actions can be taken to check the spread of communist influence. In particular, it is necessary that the United States, which has made no secret of its reluctance to attend this conference and participate in its deliberations, commit itself to guaranteeing the settlement which is achieved here. Only the Americans have the resources to stabilize the situation.

An immediate cease-fire and regrouping of the respective forces is necessary, followed by

the exchange of prisoners of war. A temporary military division of Vietnam along the 18th parallel could be made. We wish, in addition, to preserve an enclave in the Red River delta, near Hanoi. Vietnamese who wish to relocate south and thus avoid being subjected

to communist control should have that right. Elections to settle the political future of all of Vietnam should be held no sooner than eighteen months after the cease-fire to allow the ravages of war to heal.

From the Historical Record

Article by Jacques Soustelle, a leading spokesman for the French Gaullist party, October 1950

“The United States has been fighting in Korea since June 26, 1950, and France has been fighting in Indochina since December 19, 1946. The two conflicts differ from each other in many ways. However, each clearly has a place in the same strategic and political complex. They share a common factor. Each results from the expansion of Soviet power toward the sea, pushing its satellites ahead, and exploiting against the West the nationalism, even xenophobia of the Asiatic masses.... When the Japanese themselves were forced to acknowledge their defeat, there were no more French cadres, no organized French force, either in Asia (near Indochina) or in the interior of Indochina itself. This combination of circumstances accounts for the importance suddenly assumed by the Viet Minh.... The Viet Minh also received arms, and in large quantities, from the Japanese when the latter realized that they had lost.... The Viet Minh made its appearance, proclaimed the ‘Democratic Republic of Viet Nam’ and set about entrenching itself and digging in at Tonkin before the French could return.... Too often there is a tendency to believe that France had done little or nothing for Indochina and the Indochinese. In fact, the economic development of Indochina had made great progress since the beginning of this century.... It cannot fairly be denied that this progress has benefited the many, and not only an oligarchy of French origin.... France did not neglect her duties towards the Indochinese in the cultural field.... And it is to be remarked that these French educational activities gave large scope to primarily Indochinese subjects.... France did all that was in her power for the people of Indochina...except to open

to them the road to self government...[because] the French carried their respect for the historical and local structure to excess.... I believe that no one, even the Indochinese themselves, could have done for Indochina what France has done. But a tragic inadequacy in the growth of the political structure of the country created discontent within the new native elite. This Communism has been able to exploit.... The Viet Minh is the pawn which the Kremlin [Soviet leaders] is moving up on the Indochinese chessboard.... Ho Chi Minh [has] acted as an agent of a global policy, the double purpose of which was and remains, first, to weaken France in Europe by forcing her to deflect a large part of her forces and resources to the Asian theatre; and second, to open a first breach in the Pacific front.... The war in Vietnam has cost France considerable losses in manpower and an enormous financial burden.... This unsettles French public opinion and seriously undermines the country’s strength and influence in Europe.... If the front held by France in Indochina were destroyed, the position of opponents of Communism in Malaya [Malaysia] and the Philippines would quickly become untenable.... It would be an Asiatic Munich. The conflict in Indochina is only a local manifestation of the resistance of peoples on the periphery of Asia to the Soviet expansion from the heart of the continent.”

Remarks made by French President Vincent Auriol, May 6 and October 25, 1952

“We are the supporting pillar of the defense of the West in Southeast Asia; if this pillar crumbles, Singapore, Malaysia and India will soon fall prey to Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong].... The defense of freedom in Indochina has practically cost us twice what we received

under that [Marshall] plan and in the form of military aid, 1,600 billion francs as compared to 800 billion.... And for what did our officers, our non-commissioned officers and our soldiers sacrifice themselves? For our interests? No, but for a cause which is not ours alone: for the defense of the young, associated and friendly states [Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia] to which we brought prosperity and to which we gave independence in order to defend freedom in Asia and thereby to defend freedom and security in Europe and the world.... In view of this, who can still be surprised about the reactions of this country when it is treated unjustly, when one overlooks its sacrifices or seems to minimize them, when its warnings are clearly ignored?"

Speech by French Premier Pierre Mendes-France on July 22, 1954, the last day of the Geneva Conference, in which he explains the position his government took at the conference

"The nightmare is over.... I do not want anyone to have illusions concerning the contents of the agreements.... The text is sometimes cruel, because it sanctions facts which are cruel; it was no longer possible that it should be otherwise.... If the war were to continue our [forces] would be placed in a perilous position unless it received substantial reinforcements within a short time; the dispatch of conscripts [draftees] then became a pressing necessity unless an armistice could be very rapidly concluded.... [The] results are without a doubt the best that could be hoped for in the present state of things.... The liberation of prisoners was the subject of special provisions, and I do not have to tell you how much importance the French delegation attached to them. A right of option was proclaimed and organized, so that all Vietnamese, regardless of their permanent or present residence, would be able freely to return to the zone of their choice. It was provided...by a unanimous decision of the nine participants, that the settlement would

have only a temporary character, and that the unity of the country would be reestablished as quickly as possible through general elections under international control.... The situation has on the administrative and territorial level the advantage of being clear. The evacuation by our forces of certain zones in the North has its exact counterpart in the evacuation of the Central and Southern zones occupied by the Viet Minh. The obstacles to a good administration of the country south of the 17th parallel are thus removed. Vietnam [the southern zone] can now look forward to prompt economic revival.... North of the demarcation line we face a new situation which is not without difficulties and risks. It seems to me, however, that our adversaries of yesterday, introduced in our schools to our way of thinking, could not remain insensitive to it [French ideas and culture].... The Geneva agreements obviously sanction losses already suffered or losses made inevitable by the deterioration of the military situation.... But they leave intact the possibilities which exist for France to remain in the Far East and to play her role there.... Our mission in Indochina is thus not over, but will undoubtedly take on new aspects.... It [the settlement] will be evident in an inestimable gain—by sparing the lives of our young men—and it will enable us to reinforce our military positions in Europe and in Africa.... Too long indeed were our Allies kept under illusions with regard to the potentialities of our military actions and the objectives we were able to attain. No doubt since the beginning of the year, the realities, the sad realities, have contributed to enlighten them.... Even among the Americans who were not inclined *a priori* to approve our policies, a realistic view of things prevailed. They realized that not only had the worst been avoided, but that waging war in the Far East was a heavy liability for European policy and in a more general manner for all Western policy."

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."

Background Briefing—The United States

The survival of the free nations of Southeast Asia is endangered today. The United States will not allow another nation to fall under the control of international communism. Should part of Indochina be placed permanently under communist control, such a regime, taking its directions from the Soviets and China, will seek to subvert its neighbors. Just as a row of dominos will topple if one is knocked down, so the young and vulnerable free nations of Southeast Asia will fall to the communists. The security of the United States and its vital interests in this area require that this be prevented. Should we fail, the free world would suffer a major blow and the forces of communist aggression would be strengthened.

The United States is deeply sympathetic to the attempts by people who have been ruled by European colonial powers to achieve their national independence. Because of our own heritage, we can identify with their aspirations. However, in Southeast Asia the forces of nationalism have been subverted by international communism. The Vietminh are not fighting for Vietnamese freedom and independence; they are merely pawns of Soviet and Chinese communists. No matter how hard they may attempt to conceal it, they are aided and directed by Moscow and Beijing. North Korea's unprovoked invasion of South Korea revealed the ugly face of communist aggression in Asia. At that time, the United States took a firm stand to halt the spread of communism in Asia, and we strongly urge that the Western powers take a firm stand in Indochina today to halt communist aggression there. Since 1950, we have been supplying the French with economic and military aid to fight the communists. We have spent nearly \$3 billion of our taxpayers' money to finance this war. Unfortunately, France's reluctance to pledge full independence for the people of Indochina has been an obstacle in its struggle to defeat the Vietminh. More than 150,000 Vietnamese were drafted to fight with the French forces, and all but nine thousand successfully avoided the

call to service, an indicator of the weakness of native loyalties for the French.

While the recent French loss of the garrison at Dienbienphu is a serious blow to the anti-communist struggle, its impact should not be overestimated. To defeat the communists, the United States is willing to send American planes, ships, and ground troops to Indochina, provided the British and French agree to a joint effort. The Republican Party's platform in 1952 pledged that the United States would not sanction any further territorial gains through communist aggression. This administration intends to stand by that commitment. We hope that our allies in London and Paris share these sentiments.

The real evil force behind communist aggression in Southeast Asia is Red China. This bandit regime, imposed by force of arms on the Chinese people, is a puppet government, responding to its master in Moscow. We refuse to recognize the legitimacy of this illegal regime and we will not deal with it in any manner that would imply approval or acceptance. Its treachery and aggressive designs were revealed to the world in Korea. We will continue to support the legitimate government of China, currently in temporary exile in Taiwan, and we will block any attempt by the Soviets to give Red China a seat in the United Nations. After all, only three years ago the United Nations branded Red China as the aggressor in Korea.

If we cannot persuade our allies to join us in a united defense against the present communist aggression in Indochina, we will seek to minimize the territorial gains that the Vietminh will achieve at this conference. The principles that we insist upon are: that the Vietminh withdraw their forces from Cambodia and Laos and the independence of these countries be preserved; that at least the southern half of Vietnam remain free; that there be no provisions which would restrict the right of southern Vietnam to defend itself by obtaining military material and advisers

from foreign countries; that there be no political provisions which would risk the loss of southern Vietnam to communist control; and finally, that the eventual unification of a free Vietnam by peaceful means not be precluded. If the negotiated settlement does not conform to these basic principles, we shall disassociate ourselves from this conference and return

to Washington. In addition, we intend to take immediate steps to construct a mutual security defense organization (South East Asia Treaty Organization) which will halt further communist aggression in Asia just as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has halted further communist aggression in Europe.

From the Historical Record

Testimony of Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk before Congress, June 1950

“This [the Indochina war] is a civil war that has been in effect captured by the [Soviet] Politburo and, besides, has been turned into a tool of the Politburo. So it isn’t a civil war in the usual sense. It is part of an international war.”

Speech by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, March 29, 1954

“Under the conditions of today, the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Chinese Communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community. The United States feels that that possibility should not be passively accepted, but should be met by united action. This might involve serious risks. But these risks are far less than those that will face us a few years from now, if we dare not to be resolute today.”

Letter by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to President Dwight Eisenhower, April 22, 1954

“The situation here [Paris] is tragic.... There is, of course, no military or logical reason why loss of Dien Bien Phu [Dienbienphu] should lead to collapse of French will.... It seems to me that Dien Bien Phu has become a symbol out of all proportion to its military importance.”

Remarks by Vice President Richard Nixon to reporters, April 17, 1954

“More men are needed and the question is where to get them. They will not come from France, for France is tired of the war.... The

French, however, while slow in training the native soldiers, resent the idea that the United States or others should send men to do the job. More difficult is the job of spirit. Encouragement must be given to fight and resist. Some say if the French get out, the Vietnamese will fight with more spirit, because they would be fighting for their independence. But the Vietnamese lack the ability to conduct a war by themselves or govern themselves. If the French withdrew, Indochina would become Communist-dominated within a month. The United States as a leader of the free world cannot afford further retreat in Asia. It is hoped that the United States will not have to send troops there, but if this government cannot avoid it, the Administration must face up to the situation and dispatch troops. Therefore, the United States must go to Geneva and take a positive stand for united action by the free world.... This country is the only nation politically strong enough at home to take a position that will save Asia. Negotiations with the Communists to divide the territory would result in Communist domination of a vital new area.... It should be emphasized that if Indochina went Communist, Red pressure would increase on Malaya [Malaysia], Thailand, and Indonesia and other Asian nations. The main target of the Communists in Indochina, as it was in Korea, is Japan. Conquest of areas so vital to Japan’s economy would reduce Japan to an economic satellite of the Soviet Union.”

Memorandum summarizing discussion between President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles regarding situation in Indochina, May 7, 1954

“The U.S. should (as a last act to save Indochina) propose to France that if the following five conditions are met, the U.S. will go to Congress for authority to intervene with combat forces: a) grant of genuine freedom for Associated States; b) U.S. take major responsibility for training indigenous forces; c) U.S. share responsibility for military planning; d) French forces to stay in the fight and no requirement of replacement of U.S. forces; e) action under UN auspices.”

Instructions sent by President Dwight Eisenhower to the U.S. delegation at the Geneva Conference

“You will not deal with the delegates of the Chinese Communist regime, or any other regime not now diplomatically recognized by the United States, on any terms which imply political recognition or which concede to that regime any status other than that of a regime with which it is necessary to deal on a de facto basis in order to end aggression or the threat of aggression.... The position of the United States...is that of an interested nation which, however, is neither a belligerent nor a principal in the negotiations. The United States is not prepared to give its express or implied approval to any cease-fire, armistice, or other settlement which would have the effect of subverting the existing lawful governments... or which otherwise contravened the principles stated in (4) above [these people should not be amalgamated into the Communist bloc of imperialistic dictatorship].”

Joint letter sent by President Eisenhower and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to French government, June 29, 1954

“The United States Government/His Majesty’s Government would be willing to respect an agreement which 1) Preserves the integrity and independence of Laos and Cambodia and assures the withdrawal of Vietminh forces therefrom. 2) Preserves at least the southern half of Vietnam.... 3) Does not impose on Laos, Cambodia, or retained Vietnam [South Vietnam] any restrictions materially impairing their capacity to maintain stable non-Communist regimes; and especially restrictions impairing their right to maintain adequate forces for internal security, to import arms and to employ foreign advisers. 4) Does not contain political provisions which would risk loss of the retained area to Communist control. 5) Does not exclude the possibility of the ultimate reunification of Vietnam by peaceful means... 6) Provides effective machinery for international supervision of the agreement.”

Statement issued by a U.S. State Department spokesman, July 11, 1954

“The United States will not become a party to any agreement which smacks of appeasement. Nor will we acknowledge the legitimacy of Communist control of any segment of Southeast Asia.”

Statement by the spokesman of the U.S. delegation at the Geneva Conference, July 18, 1954

“If the agreements arrived at here are of a character which my government is able to respect, the United States is prepared to declare unilaterally that...it will refrain from the threat or use of force to disturb them, and would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the agreements with grave concern.”

Background Briefing—Britain

It is the view of His Majesty's Government that two major issues are at stake in South-east Asia today. First, the war in Indochina must be halted before it ignites a larger conflict, potentially engulfing much of East Asia. Second, the tide of communist aggression in Southeast Asia must be turned back. If the war is not brought to a close, the British colonies of Malaysia and Hong Kong, as well as the states of the British Commonwealth of Nations in the area (Australia, New Zealand, and India) could be affected. The British government has neither the resources nor the desire to become involved in a land war in Asia. Nevertheless, it is necessary that concerted actions be taken to halt the spread of communism in Asia.

Great Britain has had vital national interests in Asia for more than one hundred years. Unlike our French allies, who seem incapable of shedding their outmoded colonial mindset, the British government has adjusted to the rising tide of genuine nationalism in Asia. India, the crown jewel of the British empire, gained its independence shortly after the last war. Where clear-cut aggression has taken place, as in Korea, the British people have taken their place alongside their American allies in defeating the forces of aggression. To protect and maintain its interests in the area, His Majesty's Government has recognized the necessity of dealing with governments with whom we do not share fundamental values. Unlike the Americans, we see no value in ignoring the obvious existence and power of the People's Republic of China and we have opened diplomatic relations with Beijing. We believe that conflicts between governments can best be resolved when the parties speak to one another. Thus, we have agreed to chair, with the Soviet Union, this conference in Geneva in the hopes that a settlement acceptable to the parties involved can be reached. We would like to see the U.S. government adopt a more constructive attitude in participating in the deliberations of the conference and in seeking a reasonable resolution to the crisis. We must all be willing to compromise for the cause of world peace.

U.S. attempts to continue the war and to expand its scope are, in the opinion of our government, unwise and dangerous. We will not join any military efforts to expand the war by sending British forces into the area, and we strongly urge the United States not to embark upon this road. The Vietminh, fighting under the banner of Vietnamese nationalism, have enjoyed widespread support among the people of Vietnam. Moreover, the Vietminh army has shown on the battlefield that it is a formidable opponent. On the other hand, the gains which the communists have achieved on the battlefield should, to the extent possible, be limited in the settlement to be negotiated. His Majesty's Government and the U.S. agree that an acceptable settlement should conform to the following principles: that the Vietminh forces evacuate Laos and Cambodia and that these countries be guaranteed their independence; that at least the southern part of Vietnam be kept non-communist; that no provisions be accepted that would substantially impair the ability of southern non-communist Vietnam to obtain military supplies and foreign advisers for its defense; that no political provisions permitting the extension of communist control over the southern part of Vietnam be included; and finally, that the possibility of eventual peaceful reunification of a free Vietnam be recognized. While we wish to see the temporary demarcation line dividing Vietnam be placed as far north as possible, we would agree to the 17th parallel. Elections should be held at least eighteen months in the future to allow the situation to stabilize.

The British government has already begun preliminary discussions with the Americans for the purpose of establishing a South East Asia Treaty Organization to act as an Asian counterpart of NATO in halting the expansion of communism. We intend to commit our military resources to this effort and to encourage the participation of Commonwealth states in the area. While a line must be drawn in Asia, it is too late to include all of Indochina on the side of the non-communist countries.

From the Historical Record

Memorandum by British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, April 30, 1954

“While we do not believe that a French collapse in Indo-China could come about as rapidly as the Americans appear to envisage, this danger reinforces the need to lay the foundations of a wider and viable defense organization for South-East Asia. We propose therefore that the United States and the United Kingdom should begin an immediate and secret joint examination of the political and military problems in creating a collective defense for South-East Asia.”

Letter by Prime Minister Winston Churchill to President Dwight Eisenhower, June 21, 1954

“I have always thought that if the French meant to fight for their empire in Indochina instead of clearing out as we did of our far greater inheritance in India, they should at least have introduced two years’ [compulsory military] service, which would have made it possible for them to use the military power of their nation. They did not do this, but fought on for eight years with untrustworthy local troops, with French cadre [officers] elements important to the structure of their home army, and with the Foreign Legion, a very large proportion of whom are Germans. The result has been thus inevitable, and personally I think Mendes-France [the French premier], whom I do not know, has made up his mind to clear out on the best terms available. If that is so, I think he is right. I have thought continually about what we ought to do in the circumstances. Here it is. There is all the more need to discuss ways and means of establishing a firm front against Communism in the Pacific sphere. We should certainly have a S.E.A.T.O. [South East Asia Treaty Organization], corresponding to N.A.T.O. [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] in the Atlantic and European sphere. In this it is important to have the support of the Asian countries. This raises the question of timing in relation to Geneva. In no foreseeable circumstances, except possibly a local rescue, could British troops be used in

Indo-China, and if we were asked our opinion we should advise against United States local intervention except for local rescue.”

Joint letter sent by Prime Minister Churchill and President Eisenhower to the French government, June 29, 1954

“The United States Government/His Majesty’s Government would be willing to respect an agreement which 1) Preserves the integrity and independence of Laos and Cambodia and assures the withdrawal of Vietminh forces therefrom. 2) Preserves at least the southern half of Vietnam.... 3) Does not impose on Laos, Cambodia, or retained Vietnam [South Vietnam] any restrictions materially impairing their capacity to maintain stable non-Communist regimes; and especially restrictions impairing their right to maintain adequate forces for internal security, to import arms and to employ foreign advisers. 4) Does not contain political provisions which would risk loss of the retained area to Communist control. 5) Does not exclude the possibility of the ultimate reunification of Vietnam by peaceful means... 6) Provides effective machinery for international supervision of the agreement.”

Joint declaration issued by the British and American governments, June 30, 1954

“We uphold the principle of self-government and will earnestly strive by every peaceful means to secure the independence of all countries whose peoples desire and are capable of sustaining an independent existence. We welcome the processes of development, where still needed, that lead to that goal. As regards formerly sovereign states now in bondage, we will not be party to any arrangement or treaty which would confirm or prolong their unwilling subordination. In the case of nations now divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections supervised by the United Nations to insure that they are conducted fairly.”

Speech by Prime Minister Winston Churchill to Parliament, July 12, 1954

“It is hoped that should an acceptable settlement be reached on the Indo-China problem, means may be found of getting the countries which participated at the conference to underwrite it. We hope, too, that other countries with interest in the area might also subscribe to such an undertaking. This was

the basis on which the idea was put to the Americans and it is one of the problems to be examined in Washington by the Anglo-United States Study Group set up as the result of our talks.... The arrangements for collective defense in Southeast Asia will proceed whether or not agreement is reached at Geneva, though their nature will depend on the result of the conference.”