"PEOPLE’S DIPLOMACY" OF NORTH VIETNAM, 1965-1972
"PEOPLE'S DIPLOMACY":
THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT OF NORTH VIETNAM
DURING THE WAR AGAINST THE UNITED STATES, 1965-1972

By

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation investigates how the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV, or North Vietnam), under the leadership of President Ho Chi Minh, created a “diplomatic front” to implement “people’s diplomacy.” The main focus is on the period from 1965-1972 when the DRV needed these strategies to win worldwide support and sympathy for the Vietnamese Revolution. The diplomatic front consisted of Vietnamese writers, cartoonists, workers, women, students, artistic performers, filmmakers, architects, medical doctors and nurses, academics, lawyers, and sportspersons. Research in Vietnamese, American, and Canadian archives reveals that the front forged important links with antiwar activists abroad, thus lending greater credibility to their efforts to portray North Vietnam in a positive light. People’s diplomacy made it difficult for the United States to prolong the war because the North Vietnamese, together with the peace movement abroad, brought popular pressure on U.S. President Lyndon Johnson to end the war. People’s diplomacy was much more effective than traditional DRV diplomacy in gaining the support and sympathy of Westerners who were averse to communism. People’s diplomacy damaged the reputation of the United States by exposing U.S. war crimes and casting North Vietnam as a victim of American imperialism. As a result, many of America’s Western allies did not send troops or provide aid to South Vietnam. People’s diplomacy also helped North Vietnam gain crucial economic, military, and diplomatic support from the Soviet Union, China, Eastern Europe, Cuba and North Korea.
I dedicate this dissertation

to the memory of my parents,
Kanta and Daulat Ram Mehta,
who lived in, and loved,
colonial and postcolonial India
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Abbreviations

ACFTU       All-China Federation of Trade Unions
ARVN        Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BRA         Bertrand Russell Archive
BRPF        Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation
CCP         Chinese Communist Party
CIA         Central Intelligence Agency
COSTELPRO   Counter Intelligence Program
COSVN       Central Office of South Vietnam (*Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam*)
CPSU        Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CWHP        Cold War International History Project
DRV         Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FBIS        Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FCP         French Communist Party
FRUS        Foreign Relations of the United States
GDR         German Democratic Republic
IADL        International Association of Democratic Lawyers
ICP         Indochinese Communist Party
JUS         International Union of Students
IWCT        International War Crimes Tribunal
LBJ         Lyndon Baines Johnson
MACV        Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
NARA        National Archives and Records Administration
NCLS        *Nghien Cuu Lich Su* (Historical Research)
NCQT        *Nghien Cuu Quoc Te* (International Studies)
ND          *Nhan Dan* (*People's Daily*)
NLF         National Liberation Front (*Mat Tran Giai Phong Mien Nam*)
NNV         North Vietnam
PAVN        People's Army of Vietnam (*Quan Doi Nhan Dan Viet Nam*)
PQH         *Phong Quoc Hoi* (National Assembly)
PRC         People's Republic of China
PRG         Provisional Revolutionary Government (*Chinh Phu Cach Mang Lam Thoi*)
PPTT        *Phong Phu Thu Tuong* (Office of the Prime Minister)
QDND        *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* (*People's Army Daily*)
RVN         Republic of Vietnam
RKfV         Swedish-Vietnam Committee
SNCC        Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SRV         Socialist Republic of Vietnam (*Cong Hoa Xa Hoi Chu Nghia Viet Nam*)
TTLTQG      *Trung Tam Luu Tru Quoc gia* (National Archives Center)
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>USIA</td>
<td>United States Information Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCP</td>
<td>Vietnamese Communist Party (Dang Cong San Viet Nam)</td>
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<td>Vietminh</td>
<td>(Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi or League for the Independence of Vietnam)</td>
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<td>VOW</td>
<td>Voice of Women</td>
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<td>VSC</td>
<td>Vietnam Solidarity Campaign</td>
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<td>VWP</td>
<td>Vietnam Workers’ Party (Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam, abbreviated to Lao Dong.)</td>
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<td>VWU</td>
<td>Vietnam Women’s Union</td>
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<td>WFDY</td>
<td>World Federation of Democratic Youth</td>
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<td>WFTU</td>
<td>World Federation of Trade Unions</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIDF</td>
<td>Women’s International Democratic Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>WILPF</td>
<td>Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom</td>
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<tr>
<td>WPC</td>
<td>World Peace Council</td>
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<td>WSP</td>
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Introduction

Locating “People” in the Diplomacy of the Vietnam War

The Vietnamese revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh formulated the concept of “people’s diplomacy” during the First Indochina War against France (1946-1954). Starting in 1948, Ho began sending small groups of North Vietnamese mass organizations to France and China. Ho believed that the Vietnamese people would be more effective in establishing relations with people abroad because his fledgling state of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV, or North Vietnam) lacked a properly organized diplomatic service. In these circumstances North Vietnamese people’s groups began conducting people’s diplomacy overseas. They promoted the Vietnamese cause for independence and established enduring links with non-government entities and individuals abroad. People’s diplomacy played a relatively minor role then because the main goal of the Vietnamese revolutionaries was to achieve independence through military means.

During the Second Indochina War (from the late 1950s to 1975), also known as the Vietnam War, the leaders of the DRV created a “diplomatic front” (mat tran ngoai giao) to implement “people’s diplomacy” (ngoai giao nhan dan), a strategy designed to win worldwide support and sympathy (ung ho va cam tinh) for Vietnamese independence. Ho explained the concept of people’s diplomacy to North Vietnamese diplomats at a conference in January 1964. Ho argued that foreign affairs was “not only an area of concern for embassies and consulates-
general ... but also for such organized activities as foreign trade, culture, youth, women, and trade union agencies, all of which are equally responsible for diplomacy.’’¹ Under this definition, Ho excluded career diplomats from people’s diplomacy, but he did not exclude officials from other government departments, the communist party – or even himself – from interacting with foreign peace activists in the effort to win their support and sympathy. Ho stressed that the diplomacy practiced by mass organizations and individuals was equally important as the diplomacy of the state. Phan Anh, a close associate of Ho Chi Minh who participated in negotiations with France in 1946 and the Geneva Conference in 1954, has explained: “Diplomacy is not just the talks at the negotiation table to reach certain agreements. It is the occasion for us to propagate our just cause to the people of the other side and the peoples of the world.”² The diplomatic front included writers, cartoonists, workers, women, students, artistic performers, filmmakers, architects, medical doctors and nurses, academics, lawyers, and sportspersons. The extended diplomatic front encompassed overseas antiwar activists because they too opposed the American intervention.

Ho and senior DRV leaders set the example for people’s diplomacy by personally meeting and corresponding with foreign peace activists. In a communist state such as the DRV, distinguishing state actors from non-state actors is problematic because most organizations of workers, women, and artists

¹ Speech by President Ho Chi Minh, 14 Jan. 1965, quoted in Nguyen Dy Nien, Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy (Hanoi: The Gioi, 2004), 133.
² Nien, Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy, 136-137.
functioned directly or indirectly under the ruling communist party or an affiliate of the party. Sometimes the North Vietnamese initiated people’s diplomacy by traveling overseas in order to participate in antiwar events. At other times the North Vietnamese acted as a recipients and facilitators of antiwar support that developed abroad by the efforts of outsiders. In their role as facilitators of people’s diplomacy, the North Vietnamese invited Western antiwar activists to visit the DRV in order to see the human face of the Vietnamese people who were being demonized by U.S. officials. They also provided antiwar movements abroad with evidence of the effects of American bombardment on Vietnamese civilians.

The twin strategies of people’s diplomacy and the diplomatic front remained very much under government and party control. People’s diplomacy and the diplomatic front were creations of leaders of the DRV, and were orchestrated by the government and the communist party. North Vietnamese leaders used people’s diplomacy to supplement traditional state-to-state diplomacy with both communist and non-communist countries. Hanoi relied on people’s diplomacy in non-communist countries because it was more effective than traditional state diplomacy in gaining the moral support and sympathy of people who were otherwise averse to communism. People’s diplomacy enabled overseas peace activists to understand the nature of Vietnamese communism, which combined nationalism, anticolonialism, and internationalism. People’s diplomacy was also effective in creating goodwill among people in the communist bloc by generating

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3 Christopher Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution, 1885-1954* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999), 281.
a vast propaganda campaign that highlighted support for the Vietnamese Revolution. The close relationship the North Vietnamese people established with Chinese and Russians enabled the DRV to receive economic aid from the people of those countries, in addition to the official aid provided by China and the Soviet Union.

This dissertation explores the formation and evolution of the diplomatic front and the implementation of people's diplomacy in the 1960s and early-1970s, and evaluates their contribution to the defeat of the United States in Vietnam. People – including the citizens of North and South Vietnam, mass organizations in communist countries, and the antiwar movements abroad – formed an important element in the Vietnamese effort to publicize its demand for independence.

Ho Chi Minh began mobilizing the overseas Vietnamese community against French repression in Vietnam, which began when France embarked on the conquest of Indochina in 1859. The Vietnamese resistance received a setback when Japan invaded French Indochina during the Second World War, and Ho had to struggle to drive both the French and the Japanese from Vietnam. After Japan's defeat by the Western Allies, Ho announced the creation of the independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam in September 1945. The United States refused to recognize his government, and actually assisted France's effort to resume control over Vietnam. Undeterred, Vietnamese revolutionaries (the Vietminh) fought and expelled France in 1954. Washington refused to sign, or honor, the Geneva
Agreements, which ended the First Indochina War, and instead installed the dictator Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam.

After having conducted people’s diplomacy with a measure of success in the early 1960s – principally through the DRV’s efforts to organize face-to-face meetings between Western antiwar activists and the Vietnamese revolutionaries – the Hanoi leadership formally adopted the diplomatic front strategy in 1967 because they realized that they could not defeat the United States militarily, and that diplomacy offered a chance of ending the war. The North Vietnamese conducted people’s diplomacy in the early 1970s because the United States continued bombing the DRV even after the two sides began peace talks in Paris in 1968.

People’s diplomacy deserves recognition as a powerful force that played a significant part in forcing the United States to withdraw its forces and end the war in Vietnam. The failure of most accounts of the Vietnam War to include a discussion of the diplomatic front or people’s diplomacy reflects the ethnocentric tendency among Western scholars to rely almost exclusively on American sources. There can be little excuse for continuing to ignore these concepts given that both have appeared regularly in the documents of the Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam (Vietnam Workers’ Party, or the Lao Dong), historical accounts written by Vietnamese historians and diplomats, and North Vietnamese journals Nghien Cuu
The gap in the literature also exists on the Vietnamese side. Vietnamese historians have dealt cursorily with the theme of people’s diplomacy, and have not properly explored the functioning of the North Vietnamese diplomatic front. This lapse has occurred because Vietnamese scholars have been preoccupied with writing about the official diplomacy of North Vietnam. The former Vietnamese diplomat Luu Doan Huynh has acknowledged the important role of the American antiwar movement in supporting the Vietnamese. In a brief reflection on people’s diplomacy, Huynh applauds American Quakers for sending medical supplies to Vietnam, and argues that American priests and businessmen participated in a “spontaneous movement” that expressed “feelings coming from the heart.” Party histories authored by Vietnamese officials and scholars provide some insight into the inner workings of the DRV, but they have remained hampered by the obvious need to adhere to the government line.

A small but growing group of historians has been urging students of the Vietnam War to correct this imbalance by acquiring Vietnamese language skills. Before the Vietnamese archives were opened to outsiders in 1989, an earlier generation of scholars such as Carlyle Thayer, Ralph Smith, William Duiker, and

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William Turley began working with Vietnamese language sources such as official party histories; party journals and documents; Ho Chi Minh’s memoirs; *Nhan Dan (The People)*, published by the Communist Party of Vietnam; *Quan Doi Nhan Dan (People’s Army)*, published by the Military Central Commission and the Ministry of National Defense; and Voice of Vietnam broadcasts. Historians that pioneered the use of Vietnamese language sources also include David Marr, Hue-Tam Ho Tai, Peter Zinoman, Shawn McHale, Jeffrey Race, and David Elliott.

Vietnamese archives began to open in the late 1980s following government reforms known as *doi moi* (renovation). Scholars are indebted to historians Mark Bradley, Robert Brigham, Pierre Asselin, Matthew Masur, and Edward Miller for having published articles that explain how the archive system in Vietnam operates, how scholars can gain access to it, and the kind of materials it contains.

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Most of the first studies based on these materials focused on formal, state-to-state diplomacy between the United States and Vietnam, and indirect diplomacy through official intermediaries. These new works offer a glimpse into how the Vietnamese communists viewed the war, and how the war affected Vietnamese society. In 1999, the historian Robert Brigham published a pathbreaking study that demonstrated how the southern revolutionaries conducted international diplomacy to help the National Liberation Front (NLF) gain international respectability. In another important study that employed Vietnamese primary sources, Mark Bradley showed that “an imagined America” occupied a central place in Vietnamese political discourse because the Vietnamese leadership saw in America the noble qualities that could be used to rebuild Vietnamese society. On the theme of DRV diplomacy, Pierre Asselin has argued that North Vietnamese diplomats proved to be such astute negotiators that the outcome of the war was decided at the negotiating table, not on the battlefield. Likewise, Ang Cheng Guan has challenged the assumption that Hanoi was controlled by Moscow and Beijing. Most recently, Lien-Hang T. Nguyen has shown that a powerful “south-first” faction within the Lao Dong, Vietnam’s communist party, imposed its view on the party that the liberation of

the south must be the top national priority.\(^\text{15}\) Scholars such as Christopher Goscha, Patricia Pelley, Kim N. B. Ninh, and Ed Miller have also deepened our understanding of the Vietnamese Revolution in both the north and the south. In addition, Matthew Masur and Jessica Chapman have both employed South Vietnamese documents.\(^\text{16}\)

This new generation of scholars has produced excellent studies of the various stages of North Vietnam’s formal diplomacy with the United States, particularly landmark events such as the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and the Paris Peace Agreements of 1973. Their work has enhanced scholarly understanding of the diplomatic contacts between the DRV and the outside world. While these scholars have focused on elites, my investigation explores the kind of diplomacy that was conducted by non-government organizations and individuals who tried to forge a worldwide propaganda campaign aimed at forcing the United States to withdraw its forces from Vietnam.

This study also carefully documents the American response to people’s diplomacy. The perspectives of non-state actors such as antiwar activists in several countries are also presented. To locate the significance of the Vietnamese resistance in a global context, it should be acknowledged that Vietnam became a symbolic center of struggles around the world that had – until the outbreak of the

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\(^{15}\) Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, "Between the Storms": North Vietnam’s Strategy during the Second Indochina War, 1955-1973" (PhD. diss. , Yale University, 2008).
Vietnam War – been only loosely connected with one another. Peasants, industrial workers, and a new intellectual proletariat in several countries formed a common site of resistance against colonial exploitation.

This study shows that North Vietnam’s diplomatic front participated in the creation of an “international civil society” that came together to oppose the American intervention in Vietnam. The international relations scholar Richard Falk has argued that civil society not only exercised considerable agency during the American Revolution when Americans established overseas links with Europeans in order to fight the British Empire, but also organized international popular demonstrations against the American intervention in Vietnam. In the 1960s, influential peace movements in Europe were particularly active in arousing popular opinion against the American involvement in Vietnam. The diplomatic front attempted to unite the peoples of the world into a single world society that shared a common opposition to the American war in Vietnam.

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U.S. officials tried to thwart or subvert people’s diplomacy, which in their view jeopardized Washington’s ability to influence the DRV.\textsuperscript{21} People’s diplomacy also threatened to undermine Washington’s effort to demonize the enemy in Vietnam. As the North Vietnamese made important linkages with peace activists abroad, they succeeded in publicizing the American use of chemical weapons in Vietnam, and questioning the legitimacy of the American effort in Vietnam.

This study relies on documents from archives and libraries in Vietnam, the United States, and Canada. Especially important Vietnamese materials came from National Archives Centre No. 3 in Hanoi (Trung Tam Luu Tru Quoc Gia 3), and the National Library in Hanoi (Thu Vien Quoc Gia). The papers of President Lyndon Baines Johnson in Austin, Texas, proved revealing about the U.S. response to people’s diplomacy. Also of importance were documents from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, the Bertrand Russell Archive at McMaster University, the National Security Archive at George Washington University, and the Cold War International History Project.

Chapter One describes how the diplomatic front evolved gradually in response to foreign intervention in Vietnam. In particular, it discusses Ho Chi Minh’s early efforts to enlist Vietnamese living overseas to influence world opinion against French colonial rule in Vietnam. The chapter also discusses North

Vietnamese correctional campaigns to reeducate the party cadre and workers who would participate in the diplomatic effort.

Chapter Two examines the DRV’s efforts to mobilize opinion in the United States and among America’s Western allies such as Canada, Britain, West Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. It examines the Johnson administration’s response to people’s diplomacy as the DRV’s diplomatic front and foreign antiwar activists collaborated to criticize the American intervention.

Chapter Three describes how the governments – and people – of France, Sweden, and Cuba supported the DRV’s efforts to force the United States to withdraw from Vietnam. These countries were “not-aligned” with the United States because they officially opposed the American effort in Vietnam. The chapter also explores the connections American women made with women in the DRV and the NLF.

Chapter Four explores the communist side of people’s diplomacy by describing how North Vietnamese mass organizations tried to build solidarity with Chinese and Russians. People’s diplomacy created a bond of solidarity between DRV workers, women, writers, theater and film personalities, poets, ballet dancers, and cartoonists and their counterparts in China and the Soviet Union. The Vietnamese regularly visited China and the Soviet Union, and Chinese and Russians frequently traveled to the DRV. These encounters symbolized communist bloc support for North Vietnam. Chinese actors, ballet dancers, and opera singers produced works inspired by the Vietnamese
revolutionaries. Chinese poets produced moving images of Vietnamese heroism, and Soviet cartoonists exposed the imperialist self-interest that underlay the apparent U.S. mission to civilize and modernize South Vietnam.

Chapter Five explains how Ho Chi Minh, and several Vietnamese mass organizations, used people's diplomacy to develop important connections with the British philosopher Bertrand Russell, a leading antiwar activist who attempted to persuade the Lyndon Johnson administration to withdraw from Vietnam. The focus is on the International War Crimes Tribunal, organized by Russell and presided by the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, to publicize U.S. war crimes in Vietnam. The Johnson administration's attempts to undermine the tribunal are also evaluated.

This study makes a substantial contribution to the history of the Vietnam War by examining people's diplomacy, a topic that has been neglected in Western accounts of the war. Through people's diplomacy the embattled people of North Vietnam, in conjunction with the peace movement abroad, brought popular pressure on the White House to end the American intervention in Vietnam. These worldwide linkages, sustained by informal diplomacy, made it difficult for the United States to prolong the war.

Most studies have presented the conflict in Vietnam as an American tragedy, the consequence of imperial hubris and poor decision-making that led to a quagmire. They have not given sufficient credit to the Vietnamese revolutionaries for their success in building bridges to an international peace
movement that hemmed in Washington and exposed the ugly side of the American intervention. This dissertation explains the contribution of people’s diplomacy to the defeat of the United States in Vietnam.
Chapter One

Constructing the Diplomatic Front: “Peeling the Colonial Tangerine”

In 1967, the Lao Dong officially recognized the diplomatic front strategy in the war against the United States. The decision to assign a leading role to diplomacy followed the realization by the leaders in Hanoi that the DRV could not decisively defeat the United States by military force, and that Hanoi stood a better chance of achieving its objectives by using battlefield victories to improve its bargaining position in future negotiations with the United States. In this way, the diplomatic front and people’s diplomacy became a site to resist American hegemony in South Vietnam and the American use of military power in both halves of Vietnam.

According to Ho Chi Minh, foreign affairs should be the concern not only of embassies and consulates but also of civilian organizations representing foreign trade, culture, youth, women, and trade unions.¹ DRV officials reified the concept that diplomacy must extend beyond career diplomats, and spread it across the North Vietnamese government and society. Accordingly, North Vietnam’s diplomatic front included writers, artists, musicians, journalists, cartoonists, trade unionists, lawyers, doctors, engineers, architects, sportspersons, filmmakers, propagandists, women, and children.

¹ Nien, Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy, 133.
The DRV instructed the members of the diplomatic front to conduct a diplomatic and propaganda campaign aimed at globalizing the struggle for independence and winning worldwide support and sympathy for the Vietnamese Revolution. Propaganda activities included the creation of news and information depicting the American intervention in Vietnam as an illegal and unjust occupation, and the Vietnamese resistance as a righteous effort.

People’s diplomacy found natural allies among the antiwar movements of the West. Beginning in the mid-1960s peace activists in the United States and Western Europe began to demand that the United States withdraw its military forces from Vietnam. A few hundred Americans traveled to Vietnam as “amateur diplomats,” a term that the veteran peace activist Tom Hayden employed to describe Americans who defied the U.S. travel ban to North Vietnam.² People’s diplomacy and amateur diplomacy worked toward the same objective: to denounce the American intervention in Vietnam, and demand an immediate withdrawal of American forces. Some Americans went to North Vietnam to help secure the release of American prisoners of war. Others who went to witness the enormous scale of human suffering caused by American bombardment returned home determined to continue protesting Washington’s policy in Vietnam. Ho declared in 1966 that the people of Vietnam and the United States had formed an anti-imperialist front in an attempt to oppose the war.

To unify the cadre and the people under a common cause to gain independence, Ho urged his compatriots to adopt a distinctly Vietnamese communist identity by discarding bourgeois habits formed under French colonial rule and replacing them with the virtues of nationalism and Marxism-Leninism. The party and diplomatic cadre were instructed to embrace communist nations; they were told that capitalism would be destroyed eventually. When intellectuals, whose writings were critical of the disastrous land reforms and the failure to remove poverty, dissented from the party line because they wanted greater freedom to publish, the party conducted a series of thought control campaigns. The regime refused to tolerate such demands from writers and artists, who played a crucial role in the propaganda campaign. In the government’s eyes, the mere existence of dissent could endanger unity on the home front, and undermine the diplomatic front.

**The Origin of the Diplomatic Front**

The diplomatic front, created by the North Vietnamese leaders in 1967, grew out of bitter confrontations with the colonial powers in earlier decades. Ho sent the “Demands of the People of Annam” to the Versailles Peace Conference in June 1919 on behalf of the people of Vietnam. In this petition, Ho appealed for political autonomy for Vietnam in the name of the Vietnamese people because he hoped U.S. President Woodrow Wilson would advocate freeing the colonized countries. Ho carefully avoided antagonizing the great powers by not demanding
full independence, and instead called for political autonomy, and the freedom of religion and the press. The petition was submitted to the heads of various countries’ delegations to the Versailles talks, including President Wilson.\footnote{Bradley, \textit{Imagining Vietnam & America}, 10.} President Wilson’s advisor, Colonel Edward M. House, promised to show the petition to Wilson, but Wilson never responded because he faced strong opposition from the leaders of Britain, France, and Italy to his vision to create a world free of colonialism.\footnote{Ho Chi Minh bien nien tieu su, \textit{Tap 1} (Hanoi: Thong tin ly luan, 1992), 67.} Nevertheless, Ho printed the petition in the form of leaflets and delivered them to the delegations of the great powers at the Versailles conference, and to the deputies of the French National Assembly. He also circulated it among overseas Vietnamese resident in France, and to the French people.\footnote{Nien, \textit{Ho Chi Minh Thought On Diplomacy}, 22-23.} Ho ensured the petition received wide publicity, including publication in the French socialist newspaper, \textit{L'Humanité}. The petition aroused feelings of patriotism among the Vietnamese living in France, the colonial power that had dismembered Vietnam in 1867 by dividing it into three parts: Cochinchina (the south), Tonkin (the north), and Annam (the central region).\footnote{Duiker, \textit{Ho Chi Minh}, 61-62.}

The Western rejection of Ho Chi Minh’s request for autonomy for Vietnam taught Ho the importance of mobilizing Vietnamese workers and students living abroad. The Vietnamese community in France, numbering about 50,000, was the largest of all exile communities in the country at the end of the First World War. Most Vietnamese exiles living in France worked in factories and
restaurants, and a few hundred students had been sent to France by their parents for educational purposes. These exiles generally opposed colonialism, but they lacked the proper channels to promote Vietnamese independence. In 1919, Ho created the Association of Annamite Patriots in Paris, whose members included both Vietnamese intellectuals and workers. To avoid a confrontation with the French authorities, the association did not overtly champion the cause of independence. Its first action was to draft the petition that was sent to the Allied leaders at Versailles, urging them to implement President Wilson’s anti-colonial vision in Indochina.

Ho served on the French Communist Party’s (FCP) Colonial Study Commission, which advocated the creation of an organization called the Intercolonial Union to represent the colonial subjects living in France. The union, set up in 1921, brought Ho’s Association of Annamite Patriots together with other nationalist groups in France under a common cause. Comprised initially of about 200 members from Madagascar and Vietnam, the union informed colonial subjects of political and economic developments in France pertaining to the colonies. In 1922, Ho expanded the scope of his anti-colonial activities in France by starting *Le Paria (The Pariah)*, a newspaper espousing independence for all colonial people and partially funded by the Intercolonial Union. The French

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7 Other exile groups in France included nationalist associations from the African colonies, Tunisia, Korea, and the West Indies. See Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, 56.
8 Ibid, 57.
9 Ibid, 78.
authorities considered the paper subversive and frequently arrested those who read it.\(^\text{10}\)

In 1925, Ho set up the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League (Viet Nam Thanh Nien Cach Mang Dong Chi Hoi) in Canton (Guangdong province) in southern China, marking his first attempt to create an overseas revolutionary base in Asia that would be safe from French surveillance and repression. Initially, he used Bangkok as a transit point to send the “best and brightest” Vietnamese youth to the League’s general bureau in Canton, where he created an elite revolutionary cadre.\(^\text{11}\) In order to create awareness for the Vietnamese revolution among the overseas Vietnamese in Thailand and establish the foundation for Vietnamese communism, Ho set up Youth League branches in Thailand’s Phichit and Udon Thani provinces, with cells in Sakhon-Nakhon and Nakhon Phanom. Ho’s goal was to forge kinship ties among the overseas Vietnamese in order to build a large “anticolonial family.” Copies of Ho’s training manual Thanh Nien (Youth), published in Canton, were shipped to Thailand regularly.\(^\text{12}\) Ho’s two revolutionary bases in China and Thailand each trained students in cohorts of 200.

In Thailand, the Youth League organized the overseas Vietnamese by forming associations of women and peasants. In 1926, the Youth League established its first Viet Kieu Friendship Association in Udon, whose membership grew to about

\(^{10}\) Ibid, 79-80.

\(^{11}\) Goscha, Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution, 1885-1954, 67-68.

\(^{12}\) Ibid, 68.
600 within four years, while the association in Phicit had 100 members. But before the overseas Vietnamese in Thailand could be educated about Ho’s revolutionary plans, they had to be taught how to read. Youth League branches played an important role in providing basic and ideological education to the Vietnamese. In 1927, the Youth League spread into Laos, setting up branches and a Vietnamese Friendship Association among the overseas Vietnamese community in Savannakhet, Thakhek, and Vientiane.

Ho called for the establishment of “people’s associations” in foreign countries where his compatriots were living because he wanted them to improve their relations with the host communities. In 1929, he instructed the Vietnamese people living in Thailand (about 20,000) to establish a Thai-Vietnamese friendship group in the northeastern Khorat region of Thailand. Ho urged the Vietnamese who had been living in isolation from the Thai people to win the friendship of the Thai by learning the local language, digging wells, and building schools. Leading by example, Ho made an effort himself to learn Thai. Using the friendship group as a front, Ho set up communist cells in Thailand for the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League, whose responsibility was to develop nationalism among the people of Indochina, create conditions for social revolution, and keep alive the cause of liberation from France. As a result of Ho’s

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13 Ibid, 71-72.
14 Ibid, 74.
efforts, the Vietnamese residents of Thailand set up people’s diplomacy sub-committees at the grassroots’ level in Thailand, staffed by league members.\textsuperscript{15}

Ho helped create the Vietminh (\textit{Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi} or League for the Independence of Vietnam) in 1941 to fight the French and the Japanese who had occupied Vietnam during the Second World War. The Vietminh debated the most pressing tasks confronting North Vietnamese diplomacy at a national conference in August 1945 at a resistance base in Tan Trao, Tuyen Quang province, 200 kilometers from Hanoi. The party candidly admitted that the Vietnamese revolution had not succeeded in winning international support for independence. Party leaders formulated a strategy to capitalize on the differences between the European powers and the United States on the future of colonial empires.\textsuperscript{16}

The Vietminh mistakenly believed that the criticism by American officials of failed French economic, educational, and agricultural policies reflected anti-colonial sentiments. In fact, American officials believed that a Western power was needed to bring about improvements in Vietnamese society. Yet, Ho and his colleagues constructed an anti-colonial discourse in which an imagined America occupied a central role because of its alleged opposition to European colonialism.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} Nien, \textit{Ho Chi Minh Thought On Diplomacy}, 139, 152.
\textsuperscript{16} Duiker, \textit{Ho Chi Minh}, 328.
\textsuperscript{17} Bradley, \textit{Imagining Vietnam and America}, 108.
After World War II American officials initially appeared to favor Ho and the Vietminh. During his visit to Hanoi from August to December 1945 Brigadier-General Philip E. Gallagher said he was impressed by the ability of the Vietminh to run the country without the presence of French forces. Gallagher, a senior U.S. War Department official, said the Vietminh were “smart and successful and did not give the impression of being communist.”

Ho, too, liked the United States, which had assisted the Vietminh’s effort to establish a local intelligence network and a guerrilla army against the Japanese forces that had occupied Indochina. Ho envisioned a positive role for America in the economic development of Vietnam. In a meeting with American intelligence official Archimedes Patti, who headed the Office of Strategic Services in Indochina, Ho and Giap requested American economic assistance to support the future development of Vietnam.

When Ho announced the formation of an independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam in September 1945, he specifically drew upon the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Atlantic Charter issued by the Allies in 1941 to emphasize that all colonized people had the right to self-determination. During independence-day celebrations in Hanoi a Vietnamese band played the Star Spangled Banner, and Vietnamese leaders delivered speeches paying tribute to America’s anti-colonial past. Many North Vietnamese

19 Bradley, Imagining Vietnam and America, 126.
leaders had read history books that upheld American democracy as a model for the world to emulate.\textsuperscript{21} Ho also helped create overseas solidarity organizations such as the Vietnam-America Friendship Association, and the Vietnam-China Friendship Association.\textsuperscript{22}

In his speeches and writings Ho was careful to differentiate between French citizens and French colonizers. In October 1945, he publicly declared that he did not dislike or hate French people whom he respected greatly. The Vietnamese struggle was neither directed against France nor against honest Frenchmen, Ho insisted, but against the "cruel domination" of French colonialism in Indochina, which had led to ruthless economic exploitation, including forced labor, corvée (unpaid labor), salt tax, and the compulsory consumption of opium and alcohol.\textsuperscript{23} At a cabinet meeting the following month, Ho argued that because diplomacy and economics affected one another organically, the DRV should offer attractive investment opportunities in trade and industry to foreigners, both in communist and non-communist countries.\textsuperscript{24}

Ho appealed directly to Vietnamese living in France as part of a strategy to enlist them in anti-colonial activities.\textsuperscript{25} Ho also thanked them for organizing a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Nien, \textit{Ho Chi Minh Thought On Diplomacy}, 99.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Ho praised the Vietnamese people living in France for demanding that the British government withdraw 2,000 British and Indian troops from South Vietnam. These forces had
\end{itemize}
public meeting in Paris, which helped give the French people a clear idea of
events in Vietnam, such as the abdication of the Emperor Bao Dai, and the DRV’s
declaration of independence.\textsuperscript{26} Ho had succeeded in persuading Bao Dai to
abdicate on 25 August 1945 and hand over power to the Vietminh. He urged his
compatriots in France to inform the French people about the atrocities committed
by French officials in Vietnam such as the deaths of Vietminh fighters in
concentration camps which he said were “more horrible” than those set up by the
Nazis. French citizens, Ho declared, should not waste their lives fighting in
Vietnam to defend the interests of a handful of administrators, militarists, and
capitalists.\textsuperscript{27}

Alongside the campaign to publicize the DRV’s cause for independence
abroad, in October 1945 Ho used reeducation and detention to erase undesirable
bourgeois tendencies among state officials that might inhibit the formation of a
new communist identity. The DRV threw into detention camps those who
challenged the power of the state, particularly members of the Nationalist Party,
while others who did not threaten the government’s monopoly on power were
ideologically remolded.\textsuperscript{28}

In an October 1945 speech Ho insisted that all government organs were
the people’s servants and must not oppress the people as government organs had
done under French and Japanese rule. He warned that many DRV officials had

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ho Chi Minh On Revolution}, 150-151.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Marr, \textit{Vietnam 1945}, 550-551.
committed very serious mistakes, which must be corrected. Ho’s list of aberrations included corruption (use of government cars by the wives and children of the cadre), debauchery (cadre and committee members dressing in fine clothes, and indulging in wasteful expenditure and frivolous amusement), favoritism (appointing friends and relatives to positions for which they had no ability, and shoving aside competent people), sowing seeds of discord (not being evenhanded in making decisions), and arrogance (behaving like “mandarin revolutionaries” and looking down upon ordinary people). 29

School For Diplomats:

“The Bigger the Bell, the Louder the Sound”

Under Ho’s guidance, officials were required to study Vietnam’s traditional diplomacy dating back to the 11th century when the country was known by its Vietnamese name, Dai Viet. The kingdom of Dai Viet pursued a policy of peace toward its neighbors, even as it fought foreign invaders. In view of China’s larger size and wealth, Dai Viet accepted the hegemonic status of China, provided that China respected Dai Viet’s territorial integrity. Ho and DRV officials showed young diplomats evidence of the sophistication of Vietnamese diplomacy. For instance, when the invading Song dynasty forces ran out of food, General Ly Thuong Kiet started peace talks and offered the Chinese attractive terms to withdraw their troops in 1077. And, after the Tran king defeated the Chinese

Yuan dynasty army in 1258, the Tran king sent a reconciliation mission to China bearing tribute and accepting vassal status. This policy successfully kept the peace for 27 years. The Vietnamese historian and Confucian thinker Phan Huy Chu (1782-1840) wrote in his seminal work “The Classified Survey of the Institutions of Successive Courts” (Lich trieu hien chuong loai chi) that Vietnamese rulers referred to themselves as emperors at home and kings abroad. Traditional diplomacy emphasized humility, but advocated that foreign aggressors be resisted with military means.\(^{30}\)

Ho also based his diplomacy on the “five understandings” of Eastern philosophy: understanding oneself, others, timing, when to stop, and the nature of change.\(^{31}\) According to Nguyen Dy Nien, a Lao Dong veteran who joined the North Vietnamese revolution in 1950 and served as Vietnam’s foreign minister from 2000 to 2006, the Geneva Agreements of 1954 were an example of knowing when to stop fighting, and Ho’s immediate acceptance of French President Charles de Gaulle’s plan for the neutralization of Indochina was an example of good timing. Ho’s diplomacy demonstrated a thorough grasp not only of the five understandings, but also of the Marxist theory of dialectical materialism, which depicts history as a product of class struggle.

Ho discussed both Eastern and Western philosophy with DRV diplomats, and presented them with the teachings of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and

\(^{30}\) Nien, *Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy*, 45-48. The “Classified Survey,” published in 1819 in 49 volumes that consist of over 1,400 pages, contains important categories such as foreign relations and other aspects of government.

\(^{31}\) Nien, *Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy*, 208.
the ideas of the Chinese military strategist, Sun Tzu, and the Chinese revolutionary leader, Sun Yat-sen. Ho published several articles on Sun Tzu’s military strategies in 1945, arguing that whoever seized the diplomatic advantage would win. Ho studied Sun Yat-sen’s writings on independence, his policy of alliance with the Soviet Union, and his search for foreign allies.

Ho also lectured DRV diplomats about the Chinese Communist revolution and India’s resistance to colonialism, as well as the democratic and humanitarian principles of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the “American bourgeois revolution.” Even though revolutionary China had abandoned Confucian thought, DRV diplomats cited the continuing relevance of Confucius, especially his reference in the *Analects* to the qualities of a diplomat: “When on a mission to the countries of the four corners, one should not dishonor the order assigned by the king,” and “when a country sends an envoy without any negotiating talents to a country anywhere in the world, he would not succeed even with knowledge and education.” DRV diplomats received lessons on the incompleteness of the American and French revolutions. Although the American Revolution had succeeded, Ho explained, farmers and workers still faced crushing economic hardship. Despite five revolutions in France, French farmers and workers were contemplating yet another revolution to get rid of class oppression.

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32 *Ho Chi Minh Toan Tap, Tap 3*, 518, 527.
34 *Ho Chi Minh Toan Tap, Tap 2*, 270, 274.
Nguyen Dy Nien maintains that Ho’s diplomacy should be studied through a “culturally-centered approach” which focuses on the influence of the family, birthplace, and the country on the individual. According to this view, Ho imbibed traditional Vietnamese culture because he was raised in a home that practiced Confucian values of filial piety. His father, Nguyen Sinh Sac, was a scholar who had passed the royal examination, and Ho’s home in Nghe An province had a rich tradition of patriotism and education. Nien argues that Ho possessed the heroism and patriotism of past national heroes such as Ngo Quyen, Ly Thuong Kiet, Tran Hung Dao, Nguyen Trai, and Quang Trung, and that the “quintessential elements of our national culture and diplomatic tradition were codified and transmitted into an outstanding individual that the nation needed.” The transmission of these characteristics in Ho resulted in the “nationalization of an individual,” who would devote his life to the state. Ho employed diplomacy as a means of projecting power, and argued that a country’s diplomatic strength depended on its internal strength. In his collected works, he wrote: “The real strength is the bell, diplomacy is its sound. The bigger the bell, the louder the sound.”

The diplomatic front, as it gradually took shape, became synonymous with Ho whose ascetic image as a benevolent nationalist appealed to the Vietnamese people and his supporters abroad. With Ho’s concurrence, the party began using

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35 Nien, *Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy*, 151-152.  
36 Ibid, 154.  
37 *Ho Chi Minh Toan Tap, Tap 4*, 124.
Ho as a device to create unity within the party as early as 1945. On 1 January 1946 Ho announced that his government would try to induce other countries to recognize the DRV. He also sought to maintain friendly relations with foreign residents in Vietnam, particularly the Chinese; and he pledged to protect the lives and property of Frenchmen who did not oppose Vietnam’s independence.

Ho understood that the DRV lacked allies and the international support necessary to prevent the French from reasserting control over the south. One of Ho’s first diplomatic initiatives as foreign minister was to write to U.S. President Harry S. Truman in February 1946 asking him to intercede to preserve the independence of the DRV. Ho requested that the United States, as a member of the United Nations, support the idea of the DRV’s independence against French efforts to re-conquer Indochina. At the same time, Ho also sent a petition to the United Nations describing his government’s achievements, which included organizing popular elections, abolishing undesirable taxes, expanding education, and resuming normal economic activities. The petition urged the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and China to intervene in Indochina in order to mediate a fair settlement. Ho informed Truman on 28 February that the French negotiators in Hanoi had demanded the secession of Cochin China (the southern part of Vietnam), and the return of French troops to Hanoi. Ho asked Truman to ensure that the negotiations adhered to the principles of the Atlantic and San Francisco


39 Telegram, Assistant Chief of the Division of South East Asian Affairs to the Secretary of State, undated, Hanoi, received on 27 Feb. 1946, *FRUS*, 1946, Vol. 8, The Far East.
The Truman administration did not even acknowledge Ho’s letters and cables. President Truman and his advisors did not give serious consideration to diplomatic recognition or support for the DRV. Truman, who came to power following President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s death in April 1945, knew little about American postwar planning on Vietnam. More concerned with other pressing issues, Truman did not oppose the State Department’s assurances to France that the United States recognized French sovereignty over Indochina. As a result, the United States abandoned FDR’s policy of opposing the return of France to Indochina, as well as his plans to place Indochina under international trusteeship. Both FDR’s idea of trusteeship and Truman’s nod to France to resume control in Indochina were based on racialized cultural hierarchies that underpinned American encounters with nonwhite people. The assessment by American officials of nonwhite people as backward was based on a wider Orientalist discourse that depicted nonwhites as the “other.” Consequently, the United States recognized the right of France to reestablish control over Vietnam. In early 1947, U.S. policy toward Vietnam hardened, as Secretary of State George C. Marshall insisted that because Ho had direct connections with Moscow, the

40 Telegram, President Ho Chi Minh to President Harry S. Truman, 28 February 1946, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Office of Strategic Services (06/13/1942-10/01/1945), Records of the Office of Strategic Services, 1919 – 1948, Record Group 226, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.


42 Ibid, 131.

United States was not interested in seeing colonial administrations supplanted by North Vietnamese communists who were controlled by the Kremlin.\textsuperscript{44} The Truman administration did not raise questions about whether France should return to Vietnam, only whether it was capable of playing a responsible role in that colony.\textsuperscript{45}

Spurned by the United States, the DRV set up a small unofficial representative office in Paris after the Fontainebleau Conference in September 1946, headed by Hoang Minh Giam, who became the foreign minister the following year. In September, North Vietnam’s negotiations in Paris failed because French delegates refused to recognize Vietnamese independence. Despite this setback, Ho observed that international organizations such as the World Federation of Trade Unions, International Union of Students, Women’s International Democratic Federation, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, World Federation of Democratic Youth, and the World Peace Council had formed their counterpart organizations in the DRV.\textsuperscript{46} Ho also wrote to the Secretary-General of the United Nations as well as the leaders of Britain, China, the United States, and the Soviet Union, pledging economic openness and cooperation in the event of Vietnamese independence.\textsuperscript{47}

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\item \textsuperscript{44} Andrew J. Rotter, \textit{The Path to Vietnam: Origins of the American Commitment to Southeast Asia} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 100-101.
\item \textsuperscript{46} “Proclamation to the People upon return from France after Negotiations, 23 Oct. 1946,” \textit{Ho Chi Minh On Revolution}, 158-160.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Nien, \textit{Ho Chi Minh Thought On Diplomacy}, 99.
\end{itemize}
When Ho and the French government failed to reach agreement on the status of Cochin China in October 1946, fighting soon broke out between French forces and the Vietminh for the control of Vietnam. The DRV closed its office in Paris at the end of 1947 leaving the DRV isolated from the outside world. The Guomindang regime in China was hostile to the Vietnamese revolution, and it was difficult for the DRV to maintain contact with the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese People’s Liberation Army owing to the civil war in China.

The outbreak of the First Indochina War on 20 November 1946 between the French Far Eastern Expeditionary Force and the Vietminh threatened the existence of the DRV government which lost control of most provincial capitals in north and central Vietnam by early 1947.\(^{48}\) In the middle of the fighting, Ho informed the French government that the Vietnamese people were willing to accept independence within the French union.\(^{49}\) But the French government did not respond to Ho’s offer because it preferred to maintain colonial control over South Vietnam. Hanoi fell to the French in February, and under incessant French bombardment, the ministry of foreign affairs was forced to relocate repeatedly to safe areas in North Vietnam. The ministry moved to Hanoi after the First Indochina War ended. Even though they lacked proper offices, foreign ministry


officials were able to participate in the Asian Relations Conference held in New Delhi in April 1947, four months before India gained independence from Britain.

Throughout this period Ho worried that many Vietminh members and state officials lacked a firm commitment to building a communist nation. North Vietnamese society appeared divided among peasants, workers, the national bourgeoisie, petty bourgeois intellectuals, feudal landlords, and the mandarinate (an elite group of government bureaucrats).50

Because many officials and cadres responsible for conducting people’s diplomacy had developed a fondness for French literature, language, and food, Ho attempted to remold their thinking. He instructed state officials and the people to be clear-sighted, clever, careful, resolute, industrious, and single-minded in devoting all their heart and strength to the primary goal of driving out the French. Ho identified serious shortcomings that he believed had to be removed from the character of the people, including “localism” (heeding only the interests of one’s own locality without considering the interest of the whole country), “sectarianism” (the tendency to reject constructive criticism), “militarism and bureaucracy” (behaving like a small king when in charge of a region, and acting arrogant and highhanded), “formalism” (prioritizing form over content), “paperwork” (excessive devotion to bureaucratic red-tape and a tendency to dispatch orders from an office instead of going out in the field to review the

work), “indiscipline” (walking off the job and desertion, revealing a weakness of spirit), “selfishness and debauchery” (aspiring for high office, megalomania, and fondness for fine food and good clothing), and “narrow-mindedness” (harshness toward non-party people, or an unwillingness to consult them). To eradicate these shortcomings, the DRV ran a series of thought reform campaigns. The first campaign, which ran from 1946 to 1954, aimed at creating a society of conformists who would adhere to the party line and reject French cultural influences such as “idealism, skepticism, romanticism, individualism, and the Western idea of art for art’s sake.”

To support the reform effort, North Vietnamese leaders opened 10 information offices between 1947 and 1949 in Paris, London, New York, Prague, New Delhi, Rangoon, Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong, and New Caledonia. Diplomatic channels with France remained open even though a war was going on. These offices operated with the assistance of local friendship associations and resident Vietnamese, and presented images of the DRV’s resistance war and the correctness of its cause. The DRV office in Thailand served as its main link to the outside world. The Thai government provided the DRV with money and weapons. In 1947, Ho sent Deputy Minister Pham Ngoc Thach to Bangkok to woo the Truman administration. During his meetings with U.S. officials from

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April to June, Thach repeatedly requested diplomatic recognition and economic aid to rebuild the economy. He also asked the United States to serve as a broker between the DRV and France. In return, Thach promised to provide economic concessions to U.S. companies in Bangkok, including tax-free imports. The initiative failed even though Thach tried to assure U.S. diplomats in Bangkok that the DRV government included persons who were not associated with any particular party. He emphasized that the government pursued a nationalist agenda rather than a communist revolution, and argued that communism was just a path leading to independence.

American officials rejected Thach’s proposals because they feared Chinese Communists might actually emerge as victors in the civil war against Guomindang forces, and because of their commitment to keep France economically and politically stable and free from communist influence. The U.S. State Department’s anticommunist attitude had hardened in 1946 after George F. Kennan sent his “Long Telegram” from Moscow recommending the “containment” of communism. During the early Cold War, Kennan, the deputy head of the U.S. mission in Moscow, had argued that if containment succeeded in Southeast Asia, it would be possible to develop an integrated counterforce to Stalinism in the Asian region. Kennan considered Ho and the DRV leaders as Kremlin puppets and agents of international communism, and he urged the

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55 Bradley, Imagining Vietnam and America, 149-150.
creation of an American foreign policy to contain and reduce Soviet influence in Southeast Asia in order to allow the region to develop "in harmony with the Atlantic community." America's support for France's attempts to re-conquer Vietnam was also driven by the Cold War mentality to safeguard the resources and markets of Southeast Asia, believed to be essential for the stability of Japan's economy. 57 France was determined to hold on to its colonies because they generated substantial revenues: the colonies sold raw materials to the United States and earned dollars which, in turn, flowed into France. 58

To bolster the Thach initiative, the DRV attempted to solicit support from Soviet officials, first from Bangkok, then at the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi from 23 March to 2 April 1947. Tran Van Giau, who had helped lead the August Revolution in South Vietnam, asked the Soviet delegates to provide North Vietnam with military assistance and diplomatic support at the United Nations. 59 Soviet officials rejected Giau's request because Moscow was more concerned with events in Europe after the Second World War than with the plight of Third World countries such as Vietnam. Stalin believed that China was better positioned to take the responsibility for developing revolutionary movements in Asia. He distrusted the Vietnamese revolution because of its reliance on peasants, and he regarded the views of Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionaries as

primitive. Ho appeared more committed to nationalism than communism because he had dissolved the Indochinese Communist Party in 1945 in order to gain broader support for Vietnam’s independence movement.\textsuperscript{60}

The DRV shifted its Bangkok office to Burma’s capital, Rangoon, following a Thai army coup in November 1947 that brought a pro-United States government to power in Thailand. A Burmese national liberation movement that had won independence from Britain provided support to the national liberation struggle in DRV. The Rangoon representative office was equipped with a wireless system that could access international news and help Vietnamese officials coordinate the arrivals and departures of foreign delegations to the DRV.\textsuperscript{61} The Burmese government, which recognized the DRV in February 1948, paid for the operation of the office and supplied weapons to North Vietnam via Laos. The DRV Embassy in China eclipsed the Rangoon office by 1950 because China was willing to provide much greater economic, military, and diplomatic support to the DRV.

In 1948, Ho selected 10 individuals from various government departments and mass organizations to travel abroad to solicit international support for the war of resistance against “neo-colonialism.” Ho admonished the delegates to conduct themselves correctly as representatives of Vietnam’s patriotic youth, which meant promoting the love of the fatherland among their compatriots abroad. These

\textsuperscript{61} Loi, \textit{Fifty Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy}, 98-99.
officials set up DRV representative offices and information bureaus in several European and Asian countries, and they participated in international conferences where they delivered speeches to highlight the "righteousness" of their cause and to denounce the exploitative nature of French colonialism.  

Formal diplomatic recognition of the DRV by the People's Republic of China on 18 January 1950, followed by recognition by the Soviet Union 12 days later, induced other communist countries to recognize the DRV, such as, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, North Korea, Poland, and Rumania. After Soviet recognition, Ho traveled to Moscow via Beijing in late-January 1950 to request substantial military aid. Stalin was not keen to meet Ho, but Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong, who was in Moscow at the time, asked Stalin to invite Ho to Moscow to discuss possible Soviet aid to the DRV.  

According to the Chinese ambassador to Moscow, Ngu Tu Quyen, the Soviet leader did not initially understand the nature of the Vietnamese revolution, but after listening to Ho's explanation about the determination of France to maintain colonial control over Vietnam, Stalin agreed with the DRV's strategy to prepare for military struggle. Stalin offered North Vietnam a battery of 37 mm anti-aircraft guns, several Molotova trucks, and

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62 Ho Chi Minh Toan Tap, Tap 5 (Hanoi: Su that, 1980-1989), 384. Examples of such meetings that took place in 1949 include the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which met in Bangkok; the World Peace Council in Paris, which marked the start of the postwar peace movement; and the Second World Trade Union Congress, organized by the World Federation of Trade Unions in Milan.

supplies of medicines, while China promised to arm one DRV infantry division, and one artillery unit. According to the Vietnamese diplomatic historian Luu Van Loi, these assurances spread the DRV’s support in an arc from China to the Baltic Sea. 64

The Idea of People’s Diplomacy

Several Western countries blocked the traditional forms of negotiation by refusing to offer diplomatic recognition to the DRV. In the absence of such linkages, it became necessary for Hanoi to resort to the practice of people’s diplomacy. People’s diplomacy meant that in addition to career diplomats, diplomacy would be conducted by officials from various government agencies, the communist party, the national assembly, and people’s organizations at the local level, such as the Vietnam Lawyers’ Association, the Vietnam Writers’ Association, the Vietnam Federation of Youth and Students, and the Vietnam Women’s Union.

North Vietnamese writers, journalists, cartoonists, musicians, sportsmen, photographers, workers, doctors, engineers, architects, women and children also conducted people’s diplomacy. Collectively, they comprised the diplomatic front, which describes the diplomatic and propaganda campaign of the Vietnamese people’s organizations aimed at Western audiences as well as the emerging national liberation movements in the Third World.

64 Loi, Fifty Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy, 101-102.
When the DRV was first established, Ho and his senior advisors believed that Vietnamese officials lacked the proper training to publicize the national cause. Impressed by the formal ideological training that the Chinese Communist Party gave to its members, the DRV launched a new campaign in 1950 to provide ideological training to its followers. The party told Vietnamese intellectuals who could read Chinese to work around the clock to translate Chinese tracts on Marxism-Leninism, the speeches and writings of Chairman Mao, texts on the Chinese revolution, and articles on thought reform written by Liu Shaoqi, the vice chairman of the Central People’s Government. The DRV government wanted Vietnamese officials to study these lessons in order to glean methods applicable to Vietnam. At a military conference in November 1950, Ho chastised North Vietnamese officials for producing ineffective propaganda. He complained that North Vietnamese officials did not know how to write summaries of enemy newspapers, some of which had expressed anger at the French colonialist military commanders, politicians, and administrative authorities who cared only about having a good time while young French soldiers died on the battlefield. According to Ho, the North Vietnamese officials had lost an opportunity to publicize the class divide within the French forces. Ho wanted DRV officials to use these differences to create agitation within the enemy’s ranks and conduct propaganda in enemy-held areas. As part of the continuing effort to draw on

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China’s revolutionary experience, the DRV sent a delegation to China the following year for further training in methods of reforming the thoughts, customs, and habits of the people.

The idea of “people’s diplomacy” first came up at the Second Congress of the party in February 1951. More than 200 delegates representing 500,000 party members attended the event in Tuyen Quang province just as the DRV began mobilizing its forces to confront the French Far East Expeditionary Corps on the battlefield. The party admitted at the Second Congress that because the cadre had failed to understand the concept of people’s diplomacy, the party had failed to develop an “effective and resolute plan” to conduct this novel form of diplomacy.67 The congress instructed that people’s diplomacy must be employed in order to tighten connections between mass organizations in Vietnam and people’s organizations abroad, and that people’s diplomats must participate in efforts to mobilize popular support around the world.

The Lao Dong, Vietnam’s communist party, was formally launched at this congress in order to carry on the unfinished task of seeking independence begun by the Vietnamese Communist Party in 1930, and continued by the Vietminh since 1941. At this congress the Lien Viet Front, created in 1946, merged with the overtly communist Vietminh Front in order to win wider support from non-communists within Vietnam for the liberation struggle.68

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Ho warned the congress that Britain and France had agreed to set up a united front at the end of 1950 to fight the communist resistance in Vietnam and Malaya, and that the United States had “openly intervened” in Vietnam just four days earlier by recognizing the French puppet, Bao Dai. He also reported that the French colonizers, now assisted by Britain and the United States, appeared to be stronger than the Vietnamese. “They are like a tangerine with a thick rind,” Ho told the delegates, “so we must have time to sharpen our fingernails in order to peel it.”

The Second Congress urged the people of the North Vietnam to unite with Russia, China, and the people of democratic nations in order to gain support for the liberation movements of the colonized people all over the world. The North Vietnamese were further instructed to maintain close ties with the people of Cambodia and Laos, and to develop friendly relations with countries whose governments respected the sovereignty of Vietnam. Toward these ends, the Congress adopted the “Thesis on the Revolution of Viet Nam,” which instructed the cadre to “expand people’s diplomacy.” The Congress acknowledged that the cadre had not fully grasped the concept of people’s diplomacy. It admitted that a severe shortage of diplomatic staff and inadequate training meant that the ministry could neither meet required staff levels at its few foreign missions, nor participate

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70 Ibid, 145.
71 Van Kien Dang Toan Tap, Tap 12, Chinh cuong Dang Lao dong Viet Nam, Chuong III, Dang Cong San Vietnam,
in diplomatic events. Facilities to train diplomats were limited and the diplomatic cadre lacked the expertise to deal with complex world issues. The thesis recommended the retraining of select cadre whose political views were “reliable” and “sensitive to the new policies and revolutionary ethics.” Representatives of people’s diplomacy needed to “avoid the tendency of bourgeois formalistic diplomacy.” This meant that diplomats should consider questions for their practical results and not “show off.” For instance, some officials believed that the best way to conduct propaganda was to hang flags and write slogans, while they neglected explaining state policies to the people in order to win their trust.

In his political report to the Second Party Congress, Ho instructed the party cadre to practice self-criticism in order to correct mistakes in their public behavior. Most party members were devoted and heroic, which was evident in their battlefield achievements, but he warned that they lacked proper ideological training. Because of a lack of understanding of Marxist theory, the cadre had committed either leftist or rightist errors, as seen in the implementation of land reforms. Among their many errors, Ho identified “commandism,” a tendency to force people to act in certain ways without taking care to explain to them or to allow them to take their own initiative. Another mistake was “subjectivism,” a mistaken belief that the long resistance war could become a short resistance war. Ho blamed the

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party's Central Committee for not providing proper supervision, which had allowed the mistakes to remain uncorrected.

In 1951, the people's diplomats of North Vietnam made important visits to China and North Korea under instructions to win international sympathy and support. The DRV also sent delegations to the Youth Festival in Berlin, the Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions in Warsaw, and the World Peace Conference in Vienna. 75 Each of the three entities lent tremendous moral support to the North Vietnamese people throughout the Vietnam War. According to an essay Ho wrote in 1952, a young North Vietnamese woman delegate to the Soviet Union had reported that young people in Moscow had received the visiting Vietnamese youths with great affection. 76 At the same time, the Helsinki-based World Peace Council ended its plenary session in Vienna with a resolution calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Vietnam. These gestures of moral and political support from people's organizations abroad were of great importance to a poor country's struggle against French colonialism. The fact that people abroad sympathized with the plight of the North Vietnamese helped stiffen their will to resist.

Despite Ho's insistence on the urgency of ideological reforms, the reeducation of the cadre progressed slowly. The Central Committee launched its first Ideological Remolding Course on 11 May 1952. In his opening speech, Ho

75 "The Imperialist Aggressors can Never Enslave the Heroic Vietnamese People," Ho Chi Minh On Revolution, 220.
76 Ibid, 220.
chastised the students that although the party had embraced the scientific ideology of Marxism-Leninism, many party members lacking the proper ideological training had committed mistakes and deviated from the party line. Others did not grasp the party’s strategy of a long-term resistance war, were unable to discriminate between enemies and friends, and appeared unconcerned about the prevalence of arrogance, bureaucracy, and corruption. Ideological remolding was intended to reform the cadre so they would work for the benefit of the workers and peasants, setting aside their personal interests.

The internal reforms paid rich dividends because the cadre participating in international events were suitably indoctrinated to adhere to the party line. North Vietnamese officials participated in the Asian and Pacific Peace Conference in Beijing in October 1952, an event attended by more than 400 delegates and observers from 37 countries that criticized the U.S. intervention in Asia. In October 1953, the Third World Congress of Trade Unions, representing 88 million workers in 79 countries, passed a resolution commemorating 19 December 1953 as a day of solidarity with the heroic Vietnamese people in their struggle to break free from French colonialism.77

The Lao Dong required party and diplomatic cadre to attend a specialized correctional training course on foreign relations that imposed a strictly communist worldview. The course, offered in 1953-54, began with the instructor appealing to the patriotism of the students by reviewing the latest military and diplomatic

successes such as victory in Laos and recognition of the DRV by communist countries. The instructor emphasized the economic wealth of the Soviet Union and China, and denigrated the economic power of the West, claiming that no British company was rich enough to buy even a small amount of the pig bristles produced in China. He predicted that capitalism would be destroyed eventually, and that France would be defeated in the near future despite massive American military aid.\textsuperscript{78} The defeat of French colonialism, however, required that the cadre embrace the communist countries. Many students challenged these guidelines, arguing that India and Indonesia had won their independence without siding with either of the superpowers, and that their foreign policy was stronger because of their neutralism. Ho personally intervened to chastise the stubborn students. He criticized neutralism as “political prostitution,” and urged them not to adopt a middle of the road attitude. To those who preferred living under French rule, he offered exit visas to go abroad. But he instructed them to make a clear choice between capitalism and communism.\textsuperscript{79}

Further correctional training of the party cadre was aimed at altering their perception of foreign affairs. Students were taught that colonialism was bad, and that the French had run Vietnam strictly for their own interest: they built schools to educate Vietnamese to serve the French administration, they built railways to

\textsuperscript{78} Hoang Van Chi, \textit{From Colonialism to Communism}, 140-141.  
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, 142.
transport goods in order to boost French commerce, and they set up the irrigation system to enable them to raise more taxes from Vietnamese farmers.  

The ideological remolding program ran into opposition from local writers who demanded greater freedom to publish. In 1955, poets, writers, and musicians belonging to the People's Army demanded that the party cease censorship and hand over the leadership of the arts to the writers and artists. Initially, Ho appeared to encourage the flowering of democracy. On 24 April 1956, Ho told the Ninth Session of the Central Committee that the party cadre was still weak in political theory, and that the party leaders had not developed the practice of criticism and self-criticism, especially criticism from below. Ho recognized the committee members' efforts not only to "sincerely criticize" themselves but also to criticize the Central Committee and the Politburo during the current session. Not only must criticism and self-criticism be practiced within the party and government, but frank criticism from the people must also be welcomed.

Taking Ho at his word, in 1956 two North Vietnamese publications, Nhan Van (Humanity) and Giai Pham (Literary Masterpieces) published essays and cartoons critical of the party for its disastrous land reforms and failure to remove poverty and hunger among the masses. The parallels to the Hundred Flowers campaign in China were obvious. However, unlike China, where Mao authorized the start of the Hundred Flowers campaign in the summer of 1956, in the DRV

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80 Ibid, 139.

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there was no clear promoter of the *Nhan Van-Giai Pham* campaign. Rather, the North Vietnamese writers were simply repeating the very same criticisms that party and military leaders had brought against the party in February 1956. In mid-December, the government closed down *Nhan Van*, and copies of *Giai Pham* were confiscated and its circulation banned. The government accused the authors of these publications of plotting to overthrow the popular democratic regime of the party. The allegations were grossly exaggerated because the journalists were merely agitating for freedom to publish without prior restraint and were not planning a coup. Because artists and writers played an important role in producing news and propaganda, their rebellion appeared to the government to endanger unity on the home front and imperil the efforts of the diplomatic front.

Ho admonished army officers on 16 May 1957 that they must embrace proletarian ideas and begin practicing criticism and self-criticism by the end of the year. On 7 September 1957, the Nguyen Ai Quoc School, patterned on the Lenin School in Moscow, started its first course on Marxist theory in order to raise the ideological consciousness of the cadre. At a ceremony to launch the new course to train high-ranking cadre, Ho gave professors and students his clearest explanation of ideological remolding. Ho said that in view of the changed regional

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environment (a reference to the fact that the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory
Group had assumed the responsibility from the French to train the South
Vietnamese forces in 1956), the party cadre must follow the proper line,
principles, and method of action. Quoting Lenin, Ho said that there “could not be
a revolutionary movement without a revolutionary theory.” Ho offered the
Chinese Communist Party, which emphasized theoretical learning, as a governing
model for a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country such as Vietnam. On 26
January 1958, the party began two reeducation campaigns for almost 500 writers
and artists, many of whom were thought to be hiding in the Art Associations,
Theatrical Workers’ Associations, and Musical Associations. Later, many of these
same organizations, suitably reformed, would be enlisted in the diplomatic front.87

In parallel with the reform program, the DRV unveiled its six foreign
policy goals at the Third Congress of the Lao Dong from 5-10 September 1960:
(1) Strengthen solidarity and unity between the DRV and other socialist countries;
(2) oppose, together with socialist countries, the American support for the Diem
regime in South Vietnam; (3) prohibit the development of nuclear weapons; (4)
oppose the creation of military blocs and bases in foreign countries; (5) support
nationalist movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America against colonialism;
and (6) develop economic and cultural relations with nationalist countries on the
basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence announced by Indian Prime
Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to guide Sino-Indian relations in 1954 (mutual respect

87 See Chapter Two.
for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in domestic affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence). The resolution welcomed Cambodia’s neutrality, gave moral support for the Laotian people’s struggle to implement a policy of peace, neutrality, and national unity, and called for implementing the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indochina in order to peacefully reunify Vietnam.

The establishment of the NLF in December 1960 broadened the appeal of the Vietnamese revolution and ensured that people’s diplomacy would now be conducted in all regions of Vietnam. In particular, the NLF had many non-communist members who could be more effective in the United States than the overtly communist DRV at gaining sympathy for the independence movement. Ho made clear to his diplomats that “the main front against the U.S. imperialists is in Viet Nam. The next in line is in the United States itself.”

The pressing demands of fighting a war meant that the Lao Dong could not hold a congress for nine years. The political report of the party’s central committee, delivered at the Third Party Congress on 5 September 1960, argued that the economy of North Vietnam formed an integral part of the world communist system, which meant that each communist country could, in principle at least, expect economic and military support from the more advanced

89 Ho Chi Minh Toan Tap, Tap 12, 123. [Ho Chi Minh, Collected Works, Vol. 12].
The report did not explicitly advocate launching a communist revolution in the south, but the agenda to spread communism south was implicit. In order to liberate the south, two basic contradictions needed to be resolved – the contradiction between the people of the south and the "aggressive imperialists," and the contradiction between southern peasants and feudal landlords. Only by correcting these contradictions could the people of the south be liberated from their "present state of misery," and both halves of Vietnam become a single entity. Because the north had completed the national democratic revolution, the report argued, it had become the base for revolution in the south.

The political report gave the south the political agency, and exhorted the southerners to play the main role in executing the task of liberating themselves from U.S. domination. Whereas in the north the Lao Dong and the Fatherland Front implemented the communist revolution, in the south revolutionaries belonging to the NLF marshaled non-communists, the minorities, and religious groups, under the worker-peasant alliance, to oppose the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), headed by President Ngo Dinh Diem, who was propped up by the United States.

At a series of 11 diplomatic conferences organized by the ministry of foreign affairs from 1954 to 1975, Ho and senior politburo members explained to DRV diplomats what was specifically required of them. At a diplomatic conference...
conference in 1962, Ho explained that the goal of North Vietnamese diplomacy was to intensify efforts to make friends and win sympathizers abroad. At the 1964 conference, he urged diplomats and the cadre to protect the honor of the fatherland, always work in the interest of the nation, develop friendship with people of other countries, and look after Vietnamese residing overseas, especially the Vietnamese students who considered DRV “embassies as their homes.”

In his view, the party sought diplomats who were reliable, adherents of Marxist ideology and revolutionary ethics, and would avoid the tendency of “bourgeois formalistic diplomacy.” Ho complained that “formalism” was a bourgeois tendency to approach problems not with the idea of obtaining urgent results, but for “showing off.”

In order to implement these tasks, Ho required that the diplomats adhere to the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint of the party and use those views as a compass for guiding diplomatic activities. They should develop a good command of foreign languages, protect state secrets, and understand that the DRV was self-reliant in all spheres. Avoiding waste and luxury, they were required to lead a moral life, and dress properly. Living abroad, diplomatic staff was required to be united, and strictly adhere to party and state regulations. The rules also encouraged the communist-style “democratic” practice of criticism and self-criticism. In a meeting with the DRV ambassador to Hungary, Ho admonished that if a staff

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member did not behave properly towards the local people, his entire country would be shamed. Ho advised diplomats to be quick-witted, articulate, and persuasive in order to protect the national interest. 94

The Lao Dong also attempted to liberate women from their status as housewives and petty businesswomen, and turn them into politically conscious citizens and active participants in the diplomatic front. 95 Both in North and South Vietnam women primarily served the war effort as fighters and in military support roles, and at the same time they were loyal wives and mothers. 96 One of the earliest Vietnamese women involved in people’s diplomacy was Minh Khai who traveled to China with Ho Chi Minh in 1930 when Ho was attempting to coordinate an Asia-wide campaign against colonialism. She represented the Indochinese Communist Party at the Congress of the Comintern in 1935, where she delivered a speech praising women’s contribution to the revolution and rebuking the revolutionary leaders for not concentrating on women’s emancipation. 97 Minh Khai participated in organizing an underground trade union movement in Saigon, but was arrested by the French authorities and sentenced to death in 1941.

In the 1950s, the party used the Vietnam Women’s Union as a vehicle to inform and educate women about the attributes of the socialist woman. In the

94 Nien, Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy, 144-145.
1960s, the women’s union developed important connections with women in the United States and Europe. The party tied a woman’s identity with national goals that required most women to work in defense factories and some to serve as propagandists. Most bourgeois women had fled to South Vietnam following the French defeat, and the party attempted to reeducate any bourgeois women who stayed behind to run small businesses. The women’s union tried to impart ideological training to make these women renounce their capitalist ways. Party officials attempted to eliminate prostitution by suitably remolding prostitutes into good workers at factories.

The party assigned members of the Vietnam Women’s Union the important role in the diplomatic front of establishing relations with American women peace activists. The Vietnam Women’s Union initiated the “Five Goods” campaign in 1961, in an attempt to get women to meet production goals, adhere to state policies, take part in management at their workplace, continue studying, and focus on raising families and educating children. Even though it was unrealistic to expect women to run their homes, study, work in farms or factories, and perform management duties, hundreds of northern Vietnamese women traveled abroad to develop connections with women from other countries. On their trips to Europe, North Vietnamese women met American women. The Vietnam Women’s Union also launched the “Three Responsibilities” movement in the north in 1965 to

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99 See Chapter Three for a detailed account of the close connections between American and Vietnamese women.
devote themselves to production, the family, and serving the war front.\textsuperscript{100} Women in the north and the south attended training sessions that educated them on international politics, and the tasks confronting the revolution.\textsuperscript{101}

North Vietnamese attempts at social engineering imitated a Chinese campaign to create a cult around a model soldier called Lei Feng, who epitomized the highest qualities of socialist man: devotion to Chairman Mao, performance of good deeds, and adoption of a frugal lifestyle. During the revolution, the Chinese Communist Party praised Lei Feng as a “rust-proof screw,” for his sheer grit and self-sacrifice. A “Learn from Lei Feng” campaign became a key element of Chinese military training after 1963.\textsuperscript{102} North Vietnamese communists adapted the training that they had received in China to suit local conditions. According to the historian Qiang Zhai, the Vietnamese traditionally looked to China for models and inspiration, and Vietnamese governments “copied and adapted” China’s methods and institutions for their own use. For instance, acting on advice offered by Chinese military officials, the General Department of the People’s Army of Viet Nam (PAVN) conducted classes to teach Marxist-Leninist principles to its officers in 1954-55.\textsuperscript{103}

After the North Vietnamese trainers completed their training program on thought reform in China in the early-1960s, the party began instructing the party

\textsuperscript{100} Bergman, \textit{Women of Vietnam}, 119.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid, 126.
cadre in Thai Binh province in mid-1962. The ministry of foreign affairs selected its staff from among workers, peasants, and revolutionary intelligentsia. Trainers criticized complacency, shyness, and fear of facing difficulties, as they urged students to develop a greater capacity for discipline and agricultural and industrial production. Trainees learned about the policies of Western governments toward North Vietnam, and they became aware of their responsibility to resist colonialism. The new officials fell short of expectations, prompting Ho to comment at a diplomatic conference in 1964 that the DRV was very young and inexperienced in the field of diplomacy.

In the early 1960s, the Vietnamese communist party was not confident that the masses would automatically support a long war of resistance. Hence the party emphasized the creation of a “new socialist man,” who would eschew bourgeois tendencies, live frugally, and be supremely patriotic. To counter war weariness among the Vietnamese population, the communist party’s theoretical journal *Hoc Tap* declared in its December 1964 issue that “new men must be comprehensively and harmoniously developed” in the new era. In addition to becoming knowledgeable about ethics, aesthetics, and cultural and technological matters based on Marxism-Leninism, the new man must possess a finely developed sense of morality which is reflected in his attitude to labor: “The new man must apply

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this cultural, technical, and scientific accumulation in the class struggle in a most profitable manner.”

The conduct of people’s diplomacy abroad was accompanied by a massive military mobilization effort at home. In August 1964, the DRV launched the “Three Readies” movement, which urged youth to become “ready to fight U.S. aggression and ready to join the armed forces; ready to overcome all difficulties to increase production work and studies under any circumstances whatsoever”; and “ready to perform any task, and go anywhere, when required by the motherland.” Within days, the “Three Readies” movement attracted more than 260,000 young men, and by 1966 it grew to 1.5 million youths who supported the regular army. PAVN soldiers and officers regularly traveled to Beijing and Moscow in order to demonstrate solidarity with Chinese and Russians, and participate in mass demonstrations against the U.S. intervention in Vietnam.

The DRV’s efforts to reach out to people abroad and open foreign missions paved the way for the creation and deployment of people’s diplomacy, a DRV strategy aimed at garnering international support for its war of liberation. Through these tactics, the DRV achieved the globalization of a local struggle for independence and reunification. In many countries the members of the diplomatic

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109 See Chapter Four for further details of the links forged by North Vietnamese military personnel with Chinese and Russians.
front succeeded in converting rudimentary support for North Vietnam and the NLF into a massive wave of sympathy among members of the antiwar movement in Western democracies. These strategies enabled Vietnamese revolutionaries to exercise international influence on a scale disproportionately larger than their meager economic and military capabilities would have otherwise allowed. Hanoi sought connections across the world because it needed greater political and economic resources to fight a much more powerful adversary.

Throughout the 1960s youth, women, and tradespersons from Vietnamese organizations attended international conferences and engaged in people-to-people dialogue. For example, the World Conference on Vietnam in Stockholm in March 1965 resulted in the formation of as many as 300 solidarity organizations that supported the Vietnamese cause in several countries.\(^{110}\) The DRV established diplomatic relations with 12 countries in Asia and Africa between 1954 and 1964, opening 12 embassies, five consulates, and two representative offices. The NLF also set up liaison offices in several countries.\(^{111}\)

The DRV leaders confronted the challenge of reeducating North Vietnamese students and Lao Dong cadre residing in the Soviet Union and East Germany. The students and the cadre were thought to be following Soviet “revisionist” policy that went against the policy advocated by the majority of North Vietnamese leaders. After the Ninth Plenum of the Lao Dong at the end of

\(^{110}\) Nien, *Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy*, 140.

\(^{111}\) Brigham, *Guerrilla Diplomacy: The NLF’s Foreign Relations and the Viet Nam War*, 2, 93.
1963, To Huu, the Director of the DRV’s Central Information Bureau, kept a close watch on Vietnamese students and the party cadre studying in communist countries that were considered “revisionist.” To ensure they would correctly follow a new pro-Chinese party line, they were ordered to return home to attend reeducation classes. Many students in the Soviet Union obeyed these instructions but several challenged the new line and applied for political asylum in the Soviet Union. North Vietnamese students in East Germany were made to attend reeducation classes organized by the DRV Embassy in a small town near Leipzig.\(^{112}\)

The DRV adopted a policy to use North Vietnamese youth as propagandists following important instructions issued by Ho. In a speech to a conference of DRV diplomats on 14 January 1964, Ho explained that people’s diplomacy represented an important component of the diplomatic front. Foreign affairs should concern not only embassies and consulates-general, but also youth, women, and trade unions, “all of which are equally responsible for diplomacy.”\(^{113}\) People’s diplomacy evolved as a dynamic and creative response of a poor country confronting a superpower, by seeking to mobilize world public opinion against the American intervention.

In 1964, the Central Information Bureau started classes for its first long-term program to create a corps of news and information cadre. The first cohort in


\(^{113}\) Nien, *Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy*, 133.
the two-year study program was composed of 356 students who took courses on Marxism-Leninism, policies and methods of the party, and practical experience in news gathering and writing. Visiting lecturers included Central Committee member Truong Chinh, and Director of the Central Information Bureau and Secretary of the Central Committee, To Huu.\footnote{Michael P. Mau, "The Training of Cadres in the Lao Dong Party of North Vietnam, 1960-1967," 290.} The cadre under training included the heads of provincial information centers, vice principals of party schools, and editors of provincial newspapers. Instructors told the cadre to report the news with sensitivity for the party’s line on domestic and foreign affairs. Trainers instructed the information cadre to urge the people to make sacrifices in preparation for a long war of resistance, and to strengthen solidarity with communist allies abroad.

In November 1964, the DRV organized an international solidarity conference in Hanoi attended by 64 delegations from 52 countries and 12 international organizations. Ho described the event as “the crystallization of the worldwide people’s front, united to fight against colonialism and imperialism, especially U.S. imperialism.”\footnote{Nien, \textit{Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy}, 139.}

During a meeting with DRV diplomats in 1966, Ho announced the formation “in spirit” of an “anti-imperialist united front” that would include the citizens of Vietnam and the United States. He said that because the Vietnamese people and the antiwar movement had demonstrated powerfully, the U.S. government would surely fail in its attempt to subjugate Vietnam, and the
Vietnamese and American people would triumph in their effort to end the war. Ho could not rely on Western governments that did not recognize the DRV, so he appealed instead to Western citizens, who could serve as allies by pressing the U.S. government to withdraw its support from South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{116} Phan Anh, who had participated in the 1954 Geneva Conference and served in Ho’s government, admonished the Vietnamese people to learn from Ho’s insistence on the distinction between governments and people.\textsuperscript{117} Vietnamese former diplomat Nguyen Dy Nien recalls that the DRV employed the diplomatic front to “bring into full play” the antiwar movement in American society in order to criticize the U.S. intervention in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{118}

At a conference attended by DRV diplomats in 1966, Ho linked diplomacy to military power, explaining that although diplomacy was very important, “we must gain military victory to facilitate diplomatic activities.”\textsuperscript{119} Ho devised this strategy as early as the eve of Vietnam’s declaration of independence in September 1945.\textsuperscript{120} Ho believed that for the diplomacy of a weak power to succeed it was necessary to demonstrate strength. North Vietnamese diplomat Luu Van Loi, a member of the DRV delegation to the Paris Peace Talks in 1972-1973, recalls the importance of coordinating military efforts with diplomacy

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\item \textsuperscript{116} Ho Chi Minh, Toan Tap, Tap 11 (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Trinh Tri Quoc Gia, 2000), 522-524. [Ho Chi Minh, Collected Works, Vol. 11].
\item \textsuperscript{117} Nien, Ho Chi Minh Thought On Diplomacy, 137.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid, 130.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Ibid, 130.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Ibid, 131.
\end{itemize}
because “[w]e can only seize on the negotiation table what we have seized on the battlefield.”

DRV officials frequently took an uncompromising stance in their official negotiations with the U.S. government because they did not believe they could trust Western diplomacy after years of fruitless talks with France. At the Geneva Conference of 1954 Pham Van Dong had complained that while the United States talked about peace and unity in Vietnam, the actions of the United States at Geneva were “merely a ruse” designed to slow progress and prevent a peaceful settlement. In 1966, the CIA regarded the North Vietnamese fear of being cheated as a major obstacle to a diplomatic resolution to the war, as the agency reported that DRV leaders had “lumped the Americans with the French as dishonest Westerners.”

After 1965, the politburo of the Lao Dong resolved to never repeat the mistake of betraying the revolution by again negotiating an end to the war, and instead aimed to win the war through a huge national military effort. As a result, the party did not rely on formal diplomacy to deal with the United States, and simply demanded the withdrawal of American forces.

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121 See Luu Van Loi, *Fifty Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy, 1945-1995*, 183-184. Loi’s views are significant because of his long association with DRV diplomacy. He served as an assistant to the Vietnamese foreign minister from 1970-1978, as a member of the DRV delegation to the Paris Peace Talks in 1972-1973, and as the deputy head of the DRV military delegation in the four-party joint commission (including the DRV, the United States, the Republic of Vietnam, and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam) in Saigon in 1973.


Nor was President Johnson interested in serious talks with the DRV because he feared that negotiations would antagonize Saigon. To force Hanoi to end its support of the NLF the U.S. military conducted Operation Rolling Thunder from February 1965 to November 1968. The aerial bombardment campaign was designed to destroy the infrastructure (railways, roads, bridges, water transport, petroleum storage, electrical plants, and radar and communications facilities) that enabled North Vietnam to send troops and supplies to South Vietnam. Rolling Thunder also targeted the DRV's only steel mill in Thai Nguyen, and a cement plant.\textsuperscript{124} The bombing campaign gave Hanoi an opportunity to seize the moral high ground by inviting teams of antiwar activists from the United States, Europe, Japan, and Asia to investigate instances of American war crimes against women and children, and schools and hospitals. The bombardment of North Vietnam shocked many Americans, and Hanoi gained political capital by pointing out that the Vietnamese could hardly be expected to take seriously President Johnson's offer to negotiate while he was bombing the DRV. Two months after the start of operation Rolling Thunder, criticism of the operation grew both at home and abroad, where U.S. allies urged negotiations.\textsuperscript{125} Travelers to North Vietnam such as the peace activist David Dellinger and Women Strike for Peace activists were dismayed by the huge toll the bombardment took on North Vietnamese women


\textsuperscript{125} Daniel C. Hallin, \textit{The "Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 93.
and children. North Vietnamese leaders offered such examples of destruction of civilians as evidence that Johnson’s peace offer was insincere.

The backlash against Rolling Thunder as well as the failure of other U.S. military operations, such as Cedar Falls and Junction City, provided the Lao Dong with an opportunity to reconsider its diplomatic options. The Thirteenth Plenum of the Central Committee, which met in Hanoi in late January 1967, set three foreign policy goals for the DRV: gain support from the international community in order to turn world opinion against the U.S. intervention in Vietnam; combine fighting with negotiation; and “bring into play our aggregate strength to defeat the United States.” More specifically, the communists wanted the United States to halt permanently and unconditionally the bombing of Vietnam, desist from all warlike activities against the DRV, negotiate with the NLF, and completely withdraw its troops from South Vietnam. DRV diplomat Luu Van Loi explains that the Thirteenth Plenum elevated the “diplomatic struggle” to the same level as the political and military struggle.

The new diplomatic strategy had the support of not only the Lao Dong, but also the People’s Army of Vietnam, which described the decision to create a

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129 See Luu Van Loi’s comments in Robert McNamara, et al., *Argument Without End* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), 287.
diplomatic front as “an accurate compass for all diplomatic activities.” Reeling under severe American bombardment the DRV realized that it could not defeat its powerful adversary by force in a conventional war, and that it needed to win small battlefield victories to bolster its position during peace talks with U.S. officials. The DRV also relied on the combined influence of the diplomatic front and the antiwar movement to publicize the righteousness of its cause and the brutality of the American bombardment. The adoption of such a policy meant that the diplomatic front was destined to play a vital role in the run-up to formal peace negotiations.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, the diplomatic front evolved gradually in response to foreign intervention in Vietnam. Soon after the First World War Ho realized that the Vietnamese nationalists would have to enlist the overseas Vietnamese in France and Thailand in order to influence world opinion against colonial rule in their country. Ho demanded that the diplomatic front be united, and toward this end the DRV launched a series of correctional programs to educate and reeducate the party cadre and the people who would participate in people’s diplomacy. The cadre was told to adhere to the party’s foreign policy

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line, which meant accepting the Soviet Union as the ideological leader of the communist world. The leaders in Hanoi attempted to create a “New Socialist Man”, and imposed enormous burdens and sacrifices on Vietnamese women who were required to maintain their responsibilities at home while dedicating themselves to fighting a long war of resistance.

The diplomatic front began operating overseas several years before it was officially sanctioned in 1967. For instance, Chinese and Russians began celebrating annual “solidarity months” in Beijing and Moscow in 1950 to support North Vietnam. And, in the early 1960s North Vietnamese journalists, trade unionists, students, sportsmen, and women traveled overseas to attend solidarity conferences in an attempt to win the sympathy of people abroad. The diplomatic front took shape gradually in the 1950s, based on the “fighting and talking” tradition of the first resistance war against France. Eventually, Hanoi’s leaders officially created a diplomatic front during the war against the United States in 1967, two years after U.S. ground troops arrived in Vietnam. The diplomatic front was formally announced at a time of heavy American bombardment of North Vietnam.

In a war between unequal adversaries Ho used the power of both official and unofficial diplomacy in communist and non-communist countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America in order to isolate the United States. DRV propagandists and the diplomatic front also established close linkages with the antiwar movements in the United States and Western Europe. The North Vietnamese
people and foreign peace activists espoused a common goal – that the United States government must end the war and withdraw American troops from Vietnam.
Chapter Two

Forging Links with the "Western Alliance":

"They are Winning the Propaganda War Against Us"

President Johnson worried that North Vietnamese propaganda was giving the United States a bad name. On 15 June 1965, he complained to Birch Bayh, Democratic senator from Indiana, that the Vietnamese revolutionaries "are winning the propaganda war against us." Johnson added: "They have Harold Wilson on the ropes and they have the Prime Minister of Canada dodging and ducking."\(^1\) Prime Minister Wilson had made it clear that Britain would not directly support the United States in Vietnam, and he had criticized Johnson’s Vietnam policy, particularly his decision to start regular bombardment of North Vietnam in January 1965.\(^2\) National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy warned the president that Wilson “won’t do anything on Vietnam – his peace people won’t let him.”\(^3\) Bundy was referring to the growing opposition in Britain led by dissident members of Wilson’s own Labour Party and peace activists who criticized the Wilson government for failing to stand up to the United States when it came to Vietnam. Some of America’s staunchest Cold War allies, including Britain, Canada, and West Germany declined to provide economic and military

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1 Telcon, President Lyndon Johnson and Senator Birch Bayh, 15 June 1965, 1:20 p.m., Recordings and Transcripts of Telephone Conversations and Meetings, WH Series, June 1965, Box 7, LBJ Library.
3 Meeting notes, 29 July 1965, Bator Papers, Box 23, LBJ Library.
support to the government of South Vietnam because of rising domestic
opposition to the war in Europe. The “Western Alliance” – traditionally a bastion
of support for the United States – proved unreliable on the Vietnam issue.

Although Britain, France, and the United States had collaborated in 1950
against the Vietnamese revolution, as the Cold War intensified powerful officials
in the bureaucracies in London, Paris, and Washington cautioned against hasty
military action that might permanently alienate the Vietnamese revolutionaries
and drive them into the arms of Moscow and Beijing. Most Western powers
aligned with the United States believed that communist insurgency must be
fought, but not in Vietnam.

The only Western European governments to provide economic aid to
South Vietnam were the Netherlands and West Germany. At the Kennedy
administration’s request, Bonn established diplomatic relations with the South
Vietnamese regime of General Duong Van Minh that had overthrown Ngo Dinh
Diem in 1963. Bonn increased its financial assistance to the Saigon regime, and
provided credits worth 15 million Deutsche marks (US$3.75 million) in 1963. The
Netherlands supported Johnson’s aid program in South Vietnam in 1965

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4 Mark Atwood Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment
5 Fredrik Logevall, “The American Effort to Draw European States into the War,” *La
(Brussels: Bruylant, 2003), 4.
For German exchange rates, see *International Financial Statistics* (Washington, DC: International
rate for the US Dollar was changed from 4.20 to 4 Deutsche Marks per US Dollar on 5 Mar. 1961.
Market rates for the US Dollar were free to fluctuate within a limit of about ½ of 1 per cent either
side of par. These rates were further revised to fluctuate ¾ of 1 per cent in Jan.-June 1963.
because the Dutch government feared that opposing Washington on Vietnam might jeopardize attempts to secure landing rights for the Dutch national airline in American cities.\(^7\) Johnson launched the “More Flags” program at a press conference in April 1964 in an attempt to achieve the symbolic purpose of underscoring the commitment of the non-communist world to the struggle against communism. The “More Flags” program became U.S. policy when Secretary of State Dean Rusk cabled American embassies around the world seeking non-military aid for South Vietnam.\(^8\) In spite of the appeals made by American officials, “More Flags” failed to find much support in Western Europe.

The Johnson administration could not find more support for its Vietnam policies because opposition parties and antiwar movements in Western Europe made it politically costly to back Washington. Although much of this sentiment emerged organically, Hanoi jumped at the opportunity to invite the leaders of various Western antiwar groups to visit the DRV to witness the commitment of the Vietnamese people to the revolution and to show the suffering they were forced to endure from intense American bombardment. Hanoi hoped the activists would return home with a more sympathetic image of the Vietnamese, and increase the antiwar effort. Visits generated by people’s diplomacy enabled the antiwar movement to gain a first-hand understanding of Vietnamese society, unfiltered by television and newspapers. As LBJ’s Vietnam policy faced growing


opposition at home, a steady stream of American antiwar activists continued traveling to North Vietnam to see the “human face” of the enemy, and some of them provided humanitarian assistance to the DRV and the NLF. In their interactions with Canadians, Americans, Europeans, Australians, and New Zealanders, the North Vietnamese acted both as initiators of people’s diplomacy, and recipients of external support from antiwar movements abroad.

Foreign Travelers to North Vietnam: Canadians

In the 1950s, Canadian minister of external affairs Lester Pearson opposed Vietnamese communists’ efforts to challenge French power in Vietnam, which he denounced as an example of worldwide communist aggression. By mid-1964, however, Pearson faced increasing opposition within Canada to the Vietnam War. In a speech at Temple University, Philadelphia, in April 1965, Prime Minister Lester Pearson urged the United States to stop bombing North Vietnam in order to provide Hanoi with an opportunity to negotiate. Pearson suggested that a ceasefire could lead to political settlement granting the Indochinese countries an international guarantee of neutrality and assurance of economic aid for peaceful development. Over lunch at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Johnson scolded Pearson for giving a “bad” speech on Vietnam. At one point, Johnson grabbed Pearson by the shirtfront, and yelled at him for coming into his

backyard and telling him how to run the war.\textsuperscript{12} Undeterred, Pearson wrote to Johnson after returning home to emphasize that he had to support negotiations because so many Canadians genuinely opposed U.S. policy in Vietnam. Pearson had good reason to fear that his government would be criticized for kowtowing to the Americans on Vietnam. As Canadian outrage against LBJ’s Vietnam policy escalated in 1967 and 1968, Canadian citizens wrote angry letters to the Johnson administration to protest the unrelenting American bombardment of North Vietnam. A Toronto university student asked Johnson’s press secretary Bill Moyers: “Can you rest easily being a part of the brutal machine that America has unleashed...in Southeast Asia?” The Pearson government regularly received petitions from Canadian antiwar groups urging Canada to stop supporting the American effort in Vietnam.

To keep up the pressure on the Pearson government, the leaders of North Vietnam invited prominent Canadian antiwar activists to visit the DRV in December 1965. President Ho, Prime Minister Dong, Defense Minister Giap, and Lao Dong first secretary Le Duan met a delegation of Canadian leftists, including Tim Buck of the Canadian Communist Party, \textit{Scan} editor Rae Murphy, and \textit{Pacific Tribune} associate editor Maurice Rush. Vietnamese revolutionaries did not seem to mind that the Canadian Communist Party did not enjoy a large following at home; they were eager to receive any Canadian who was willing to

visit their embattled country. In a report describing its impressions of the DRV, the December delegation urged the Canadian government to condemn publicly the American attempt to prevent the implementation of the Geneva Agreements of 1954. Contrary to the provisions of those agreements, critics pointed out, the United States had perpetuated the division of Vietnam by encouraging the South Vietnamese regime to reject free elections.

Canadian antiwar organizations that tried to influence the Canadian government included pacifists, liberals, and leftwing radicals. The Canadian Communist Party, for example, urged Pearson to persuade Johnson that it was impossible to destroy the independence of Vietnam by force. The party wanted the Canadian government to establish diplomatic relations with the DRV, China, and North Korea, and it recommended providing medical aid for Vietnamese civilians.

From 1959 to 1966, Canada exported arms worth $1.3 billion to the United States. The Pearson government prohibited the direct export of arms to Vietnam, but said nothing about its shipment of napalm and other chemical weapons to the United States from Canadian factories in Sarnia and Valleyfield.

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even though it was clear that these weapons were being used in Vietnam. The Canadian antiwar organization, Voice of Women (VOW), publicized the use of chemical weapons by American forces. In May 1965, a VOW delegation presented a statement of protest to the House of Commons in Ottawa, demanding that the Canadian government publicly object to the American war in Vietnam because it had caused unimaginable suffering and violated the principles of the UN Charter. VOW informed the head office of Dow Chemical and its Canadian branch in Sarnia that the victims of napalm were Vietnamese women and babies, and warned that it would urge North American mothers and housewives to refuse to buy Dow Chemical products until the company manufactured “life-giving, not death-dealing products.” Following the VOW ultimatum, other Canadian peace groups took up the campaign to boycott Dow products.

As peace activism gained momentum in Canada, President Ho wrote to Prime Minister Pearson in February 1966, explaining the DRV standpoint. In the letter, Ho mentioned that Washington must show proof of its goodwill in seeking peace in Vietnam. Ho reiterated that peace depended on the United States accepting the DRV’s Four Points: (1) Withdrawal of American troops, equipment, and bases; (2) no outside alliances by North or South Vietnam; (3) South Vietnam’s affairs to be settled under the NLF’s program; and (4) Vietnamese

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reunification be achieved without outside interference. Ho called on Canada to fulfill its obligations under the Geneva Agreements in its capacity as a member – with India and Poland – of the International Supervisory and Control Commission in Vietnam.

Ho also encouraged Canadian peace activists to visit his country. A Canadian religious leader, Rabbi Abraham Feinberg of the Holy Blossom Temple of Toronto, visited Hanoi for 10 days in January 1967 where he issued a joint statement with the American Presbyterian minister Abraham Muste, and South African Bishop Ambrose Reeves. They insisted that the American bombing of Vietnam was a violation of international law under the Geneva Agreements and the U.N. Charter, and fruitless because the Vietnamese people “could not be terrorized” into submission by any foreign power. Feinberg, a resident of Canada who retained his American citizenship, brought back with him a message for President Johnson from President Ho to come to Hanoi for peace talks, “but without a gun on his hip.” The clergymen announced the news of the invitation at a press conference in London on their way back home, and released to the press a photograph of their meeting with Ho at the presidential palace in Hanoi. The New York Times reported the invitation on its front page, alongside a large three-column photograph of Ho greeting Feinberg, Muste, and Reeves. In an attempt at informal diplomacy, Feinberg briefed State Department official William Smyser

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18 Agence France-Presse, 10 Feb. 1966.
in Washington, and also phoned U.S. ambassador to the UN, Arthur Goldberg on 26 January 1967. Goldberg told Feinberg that he disapproved of releasing Ho’s invitation to the press before communicating it to LBJ himself. Goldberg was scheduled to have lunch with the president that day, and Feinberg requested Goldberg to convey Ho’s invitation personally. In order to convey to President Johnson the exact words contained in Ho’s invitation, Goldberg instructed Feinberg to read Ho’s message to a secretary. Feinberg “recited Ho’s words” to the secretary, who confirmed she was “taking them down word for word.” Feinberg requested Goldberg to apologize to President Johnson on his behalf for having breached protocol by releasing President Ho’s message to the press.21

Another initiative was taken by the Canadian-born businessman Cyrus Eaton, a graduate of McMaster University, who went on to become the chairman of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company. Eaton maintained close links with the DRV and traveled to Hanoi in December 1969 and February 1970 to show his opposition to the American intervention in Vietnam. Eaton, a self-made millionaire, had acquired American citizenship in 1913, and financed the operation of the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs, which held its first meeting at his Canadian estate in Pugwash, Nova Scotia in 1957. The scientist Albert Einstein and the philosopher Bertrand Russell had conceived the Pugwash Conferences in 1955 to reduce the threat of a nuclear war and armed conflict. Eaton was instrumental in influencing Western opinion through the

21 Feinberg, Hanoi Diary, 256-257.
Pugwash Workshops on Conflict and Regional Security that aimed to end the war in Vietnam. It was at the 16th Pugwash Conference in September 1966 that Henry Kissinger, then a professor of government at Harvard and a consultant to the State Department in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, embarked on his first venture into Vietnam peace-making. Kissinger attended four Pugwash sessions, which he used to develop contacts with French interlocutors, who could carry American messages to Ho. Although the conference was supposed to discuss “disarmament and world security” in Europe, the Vietnam War was the subject of formal debates and resolutions, and cocktail party conversation. The Pugwash plenary debates featured lengthy and “intemperate, highly emotional harangues” by Soviet delegates against the American intervention in Vietnam.

Eaton, who was convinced that President Nixon did not want to end the war, discussed peace plans with Vietnamese officials during his eight-day visit to Hanoi in December 1969. In February 1970, Eaton met again with North Vietnam representatives, who were demanding a scheduled U.S. departure from Vietnam. Early that year, Eaton invited the Hanoi-based Committee for Solidarity with the American People to visit Canada in order to put them in touch with the Canadian antiwar movement. Eaton told a U.S. congressional committee in 1970 that he was shocked at the reckless spending by American officials in Indochina. “Here

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23 Ibid, 295.
we would call it bribery. Over there they call it efforts in behalf of democracy."

He characterized the American bombardment of Vietnam as “a giant and brutal
destruction, a great departure from normal warfare.” Buoyed by Eaton’s efforts,
the Hanoi-based Vietnam Peace Committee invited Canadian lawyer and
university lecturer Clive Ansley to visit North Vietnam in August 1971. Ansley
visited Thanh Hoa province, small businesses, and historic sites, and he met with
Vietnamese writers, journalists, and professors.

By visiting North Vietnam, Canadian activists were able to not only
witness the traumatic effects of American bombardment, but also to gain an
understanding of North Vietnamese nationalism that underlay the communist
struggle. Canadian activists then used this information in pressing the Canadian
government to distance itself from American policy. Canadian informal
diplomacy coincided with Ottawa’s advice to Washington to enter into peace talks
with Hanoi. Canadian activists successfully publicized the horrors of the Vietnam
War and tried to assist a diplomatic settlement. Tim Buck, Rae Murphy and
Maurice Rush, for example, collaborated to publish an impassioned monograph,
*Vietnam: Eyewitness Report*, based on their trip to Hanoi. Although few in
Canada sympathized with communism, Buck’s views on Vietnam resonated with
most Canadians who wanted a quick settlement to end the war. Rabbi Feinberg
wrote an important account of his journey, *Hanoi Diary*. His foray into informal

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diplomacy – trying to bring LBJ and Ho together – did not bear fruit, but he did succeed in relaying Ho’s desire for peace to American officials. The Cyrus Eaton-funded Pugwash Conferences pressed Washington to make peace with North Vietnam. Through his leadership of the conferences, which provided a venue to scientists and academics to criticize American policy in Vietnam, Eaton kept the international spotlight on the plight of the North Vietnamese.

**U.S. Antiwar Activists**

American peace activists traveling to North Vietnam developed a lasting relationship with several little-known actors in the Vietnamese diplomatic front. The previous chapter has shown that the North Vietnamese began conducting people’s diplomacy even before the diplomatic front was formally created in 1967. In December 1965, American Communist Party member and historian Herbert Aptheker, Yale University historian Staughton Lynd, and Students for a Democratic Society leader Tom Hayden visited Hanoi under the guidance of Do Xuan Oanh, the permanent secretary of the North Vietnam Peace Committee. Lynd and Hayden claimed that the main purpose of their trip was to learn about the DRV’s terms for ending the war. The trip also offered an opportunity for American peace activists to meet some of the very Vietnamese whom the U.S. government had so often denounced as a vicious enemy.26

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Conversations with Oanh convinced Lynd and Hayden that the Vietnamese revolutionaries sought to create a humane socialism, not a ruthless communist dictatorship. Oanh also explained that he wanted to educate the people of North Vietnam about American dissidents in order to “reduce hatred” against the Americans. Lynd and Hayden discovered that that the DRV was not insisting on a U.S. troop withdrawal before peace talks could begin, as the Johnson administration had claimed. North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong told them that a withdrawal of some American units and some signs of American recognition of the NLF would suffice for negotiations to begin.

After returning home, Lynd and Hayden tried in vain to convince State Department officials that the Vietnamese were ready to negotiate. Instead of listening to their pleas, U.S. officials threatened to withdraw their passports on the grounds that they had violated the Logan Act, which prohibited American civilians from conducting diplomacy outside official U.S. government channels.

In September 1966, the American peace activist David Dellinger traveled to Hanoi, where Do Xuan Oanh arranged meetings with Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong. Ho, in particular, made a deep impression on Dellinger who found him gentle and sincere. Although Dellinger was a dedicated pacifist, he excused revolutionary violence in this case as necessary for the defense of Vietnam against foreign aggression. The North Vietnamese people who were engaged in violent

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27 Ibid, 58.
resistance to “tyranny and aggression,” he observed, “were not automatically
corrupted, hardened, and desensitized by the struggle.” 31 Like many American
peace activists, Dellinger regarded the movement for social justice in the United
States as inseparable from Third World national liberation struggles. In his view,
“Self determination in the countries presently occupied by the American military-
industrial complex and self-determination within the United States go hand in
hand.” 32

The North Vietnamese found a natural ally in African-American
community leaders. Several leading black activists visited North Vietnam to give
assurances of their community’s support for the Vietnamese revolution. In
November 1965, Robert Franklin Williams, a former branch president of the
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Monroe, North
Carolina, attended a conference for solidarity with the North Vietnamese people
in Hanoi. In remarks to his Vietnamese hosts, Williams said: “Our enemy is the
common enemy, the same man who blows the heads off poor black girls in
Sunday schools in Birmingham, the same man who blows the heads off poor girls
of Vietnam in the paddy fields.” 33 President Ho told Williams about his stay in
Harlem, and his views on American race relations. Ho Chi Minh’s visit to Harlem

31 Revolutionary Nonviolence, Essays by Dave Dellinger (New York: Anchor, 1972),
xxvi.
32 Andrew E. Hunt, David Dellinger: The Life and Times of a Nonviolent Revolutionary
1965, RG 263, CIA, FBIS, 3.1.65-3.31.65, Far East, Box 3, NARA.
in 1914 had left a lasting impression on him. In his collected works, Ho argued that the struggle of African-Americans against racial discrimination in the United States had a strong ally in the broader antiwar movement in the United States. Ho wrote two articles on the plight of African-Americans, one entitled “Lynching,” and the other “The Ku Klux Klan.”

The communist party newspaper in Vietnam, Nhan Dan, gave wide coverage to the affairs of the African-American community in the United States. In an obituary marking the murder of the African-American leader Malcolm X in February 1965, the newspaper argued that world public opinion, while condemning the murder of Malcolm X, pointed to the close relationship between the “extremely reactionary home policy of the U.S. imperialists and their warlike, aggressive foreign policy; between their suppression of American negroes and their massacre of the South Vietnamese people.” Hanoi-based print and broadcast media widely publicized African-American leader Stokely Carmichael’s visit to North Vietnam. African-American support for the DRV ran the entire Black antiwar spectrum, from the moderate Martin Luther King, Jr. to

the more militant Carmichael. On 30 August 1967, Truong Chinh, the chairman of the DRV National Assembly, met Carmichael in Hanoi. Chinh praised the bravery of the African-American community in America, and expressed his country’s support for their resistance which he said was righteous. Carmichael thanked the Vietnamese people and assured Chinh that the African-American community would unite with the Vietnamese people in combat against the common enemy, American imperialism. On his return, Carmichael relinquished ties with the SNCC, and became “prime minister” of the radical Black Panther Party. He began advocating a more militant approach to solving the problem of racial inequality. Carmichael argued that the United States “exploits all other, non-white countries,” and was prepared to “kill for freedom, democracy, and peace” the Chinese and Vietnamese people who could not manage their own affairs.

In 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr. proposed a five-point plan to enable the United States “to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam,” and halt the tragic war: (1) End all bombing in North and South Vietnam; (2) declare a unilateral ceasefire in the hope it will create an atmosphere for negotiations; (3) curtail American military build-up in Thailand, and interference in Laos in order to

prevent other battlegrounds in Southeast Asia; (4) realistically accept the fact that
the NLF has substantial support in South Vietnam and must play a role in
negotiations and in any future Vietnamese government; and (5) set a date for the
United States to remove all foreign troops from Vietnam in accordance with the
Geneva Agreements.41

In July 1971, a delegation of African-American workers led by James
Forman visited North Vietnam at the invitation of the Vietnam Committee for
Solidarity with the American People. The African-Americans met members of the
DRV Commission to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists in Vietnam,
the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions, the Vietnam Women’s Union, and
common North Vietnamese people.42

The scholar Simon Hall has shown that the American civil rights
movement’s response to the Vietnam War and its relationship with the peace
movement was shaped by the historic links between the black movement and
American pacifism. Although not all black critics of the war were pacifists, some
of the earliest and most prominent figures adhered to the philosophy of non-
violence.43 An important link between the black movement and pacifism was
Liberation Magazine, edited by David Dellinger, which published the writings of
Martin Luther King, Jr., who openly counseled young black men to avoid

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41 "Beyond Vietnam, Martin Luther King, Jr.,” Vietnam and Black America: An
Anthology of Protest and Resistance, 91.
42 "U.S. Black Workers’ Delegation Concludes DRV Visit,” 22 July 1971, CIA, FBIS,
RG 263, Box 193, NARA.
43 Simon Hall, Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the
military service. Most black military recruits felt isolated and threatened in an institution almost totally controlled by whites.44

The African-American writer Eldridge Cleaver argued that the “most critical tests facing Johnson are the war in Vietnam and the Negro revolution at home.”45 In his 1968 book, Soul on Ice, Cleaver insisted that the racial problem could not be solved in isolation because there was a relationship between the “genocide” in Vietnam and the plight of African-Americans at home. Cleaver warned that once the “white man solves his problem in the East he will then turn his fury again on the black people of America.”

The U.S. government frowned upon the increasing linkages between Americans and the North Vietnamese, in particular the frequent visits to Vietnam by the activist Tom Hayden. Undeterred by the State Department’s threat to impound his passport, Hayden visited Hanoi again in October 1967, where he learned that the NLF was ready to release several American prisoners held in the south as a goodwill gesture.46 The NLF and the Cambodian government had made arrangements for Hayden to receive three American prisoners of war in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, in November. In a demonstration of solidarity with the American people, the NLF foreign minister Nguyen Thi Binh had told Hayden that the NLF did not wish to hand over the prisoners to the American


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government because the United States refused to recognize the NLF as a legitimate South Vietnamese political entity. The three soldiers – James Jackson, Dan Pitzer, and Edward Johnson – were released to Hayden, who arranged for them to be flown home from Phnom Penh.47

Following the early visits to the DRV by Lynd, Hayden, and Women Strike for Peace, the DRV government decided to implement a system of hospitality based on the seniority and importance of the visitors. The government grouped foreign visitors into two levels based on their power to influence public opinion in the West, and their importance to the needs of Hanoi’s wartime diplomacy. Nobel Prize winners, well-known university professors, famous writers, and filmmakers were identified as A-level guests, while rank-and-file antiwar activists were considered B-level guests.48 A-level guests were accommodated at the best hotels and ate at the best restaurants that war-ravaged North Vietnam could offer. B-level guests were put up at various government guesthouses and ordinary hotels. Usually foreign visitors paid for their own air tickets, and the North Vietnamese extended local hospitality including hotel accommodation, meals, local transportation, and the cost of an accompanying translator. For instance, in March 1970 the DRV agreed to sponsor a visit by three

47 Hayden, Reunion, 220-241.

Ahead of his visit to Vietnam, Harvard University biotechnologist Professor George Wald delivered an important speech at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in March 1969 as part of the “May Fourth Movement” protesting the “misuse of science” by the U.S. government: “I think the Vietnam War is the most shameful episode in the whole of American history.”\footnote{\textit{The World’s Great Speeches: 292 Speeches from Pericles to Nelson Mandela}, ed. Lewis Copeland, Lawrence W. Lamm, and Stephen J. McKenna (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999), 771.}
adopted an evenhanded approach by visiting South Vietnam in August 1971 and North Vietnam the following year. In Saigon, he met Buddhists, Catholics, students and women’s groups, all of whom wanted “an end to the war, an end to the American presence, to get rid of [South Vietnamese President] Thieu, and to try the democracy promised in their constitution.”

The North Vietnamese honored Wald with A-level treatment during his visit to Hanoi in February 1972 because he had won the Nobel Prize in medicine and was a vocal participant in the antiwar movement. The DRV hoped that Wald’s visit would “create a division between the American government and society, and promote the youth movement which gave Nixon many difficulties in 1972.”

After his return from North Vietnam, Wald continued his criticism of American policy in an important lecture delivered at Kent State University in May 1972. Wald said he was impressed by North Vietnamese religious secularism: “It will surprise many Americans to learn that although only about one-tenth of the Vietnamese are Christian, the red Communist government of North Vietnam observes Christmas as a national holiday.” Wald expressed dismay that a U.S. aircraft had bombed a North Vietnamese hospital on Christmas day in December 1971. Wald considered President Nixon an “altogether amoral president” who

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52 George Wald, To Re-possess America (Kent, OH: Kent State University Center of Peaceful Change, 1972), 12.
53 Thu tu Uy ban doan ket voi nhan My, den Phong Phu Thu Tuong, 8.1.1972, thu so 19/VM, Phong Phu Thu Tuong, 8807, Ho so xet duyet doan ra doan vao cho Uy ban Doan Ket A Phi Viet Nam va Uy ban Doan Ket voi nhan dan My nam 1972, PPTT, TTLTQG 3, Hanoi. [Letter, Committee of Unity with the American People to Prime Minister’s Office, 8.1.1972, letter no. 19/VM, Prime Minister’s Office, 8807, Profile of entry and exit of the Committee of Asian and African Unity in Vietnam, and Committee of Vietnamese and American People’s Unity in 1972].
54 Wald, To Re-possess America, 14.
intended to keep the United States in Southeast Asia “at all costs.” He argued:

“There was no civil war [in Vietnam] until we produced one. It has been our war
from the very beginning. We designed it and paid for it; and most of the
Vietnamese on our side fight as mercenaries.”55 Having seen North Vietnam first
hand, Wald argued: “Vietnamese Communism is much more Vietnamese than
Communist. It is highly nationalistic. A Vietnamese Communist is a patriot who
has particular ideas about organizing production and distribution so as to provide
for the needs of the many, rather than for the greed of the few.”56 Wald came to
understand the true nature of Vietnamese communism through his conversations
in Saigon with anti-communists, Buddhists, and Catholics who did not “feel
threatened by communism, either in South Vietnam or the north.”57 Wald
concluded that it was the Thieu government that constantly harassed the
Catholics.

The North Vietnamese established several organizations, large and small,
to serve as vehicles of people’s diplomacy. For example, to promote favorable
images of the Vietnamese Revolution, some 120 North Vietnamese photographers
held a conference of photographers and photojournalists in Hanoi on 4 January
1965. To Huu, secretary of the Lao Dong Central Committee and chairman of the
party’s Central Propaganda and Education Board, told the conference that each
photographer must be a revolutionary fighter. To Huu argued that photography

55 Ibid, 12.
56 Ibid, 13.
57 Ibid, 14.
must be used as a weapon in the class struggle against bourgeois tendencies in Vietnamese society, and in the military effort to defeat the United States.58 Photographs of North Vietnam provided foreign audiences a rare glimpse of the North Vietnamese people and their heroic wartime sacrifices. The north’s premier illustrated magazine, *Viet-Nam Pictorial*, published in English, French, German, Russian, and Japanese, was employed to spread the message worldwide.59

The severity of American bombardment made it fairly easy for the North Vietnamese to publicize American atrocities. For example, in March 1965 David Kinzie, an American doctor who had worked for six months in Quang Ngai province in South Vietnam for the humanitarian organization CARE, published a letter in the Moscow-based *Progressive Review*, describing the violence inflicted on innocent civilians by the U.S. forces and South Vietnamese troops. Kinzie gave the example of a pregnant woman whose belly was riddled with shrapnel, and a fifty-year-old woman who had been beaten and tortured with electric shocks for three consecutive days.60 The DRV “Committee of Struggle Against U.S. Imperialism and its Henchmen’s Persecution of Intellectuals” described the U.S. bombing of a school near Danang city as “utter cowardice and barbarity.”61 An attack on a church in Nghe An province received widespread attention when thirty

58 “Photographers Meet to Prepare for Conference,” 4 Jan 1965, CIA, RG 263, FBIS Daily Reports, 1/3/65-1/29/65, Far East, Box 1, NARA.
American Catholic priests appealed to Catholics across the world to condemn these American acts of war.\(^{62}\)

People’s diplomacy also attempted to reach out to the labor movement, as in the “Second Conference of the International Trade Union Committee for Solidarity with the Workers and People of Vietnam against the U.S. Imperialist Aggressors,” which was held in Hanoi on 1 June 1965. At a reception, Prime Minister Dong welcomed the delegation of the World Federation of Trade Unions led by its President Renato Bitossi, and the delegations of the International Transport, Port, and Fishery Workers’ Trade Union, the International Building and Wood Workers Trade Union, the All-Africa Trade Unions Federation, and trade unions from several other countries.\(^{63}\) The conference attracted important representatives of the labor movement, such as Anna Louise Strong, an American journalist and member of the Seattle Central Labor Council, who lived in China and monitored closely the official line of the Chinese Communist Party; and Jorge Lezcano Perez, secretary-general of the Cuban Confederation of Revolutionary Workers.\(^{64}\) The conference adopted a resolution stating that American workers and people were engaged in a struggle against the war of the Johnson administration in Vietnam. The resolution urged workers to demand that the U.S. government withdraw its troops from South Vietnam and recognize the NLF as

\(^{62}\) “Protest On Church Bombing,” 5 Apr. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 4/1/65-4/30/65, Far East, Box 4, NARA.

\(^{63}\) “Reportage on International TU Congress,” 1 June 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 6/1/65-6/30/65, Far East, Box 6, NARA.

\(^{64}\) “U.S. Delegates,” and “Cuban, Indonesian Delegates,” 1 June 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 6/1/65-6/30/65, Far East, Box 6, NARA.
the only genuine representative of the South Vietnamese population; end the naval blockade against North Vietnam; and fulfill the 1954 Geneva Agreements by allowing Vietnam to achieve peaceful unification. The conference also urged young Americans to resist the draft, and to withdraw their support from weapons research as well as the manufacture and transport of arms bound for Vietnam.\textsuperscript{65}

The fruits of people’s diplomacy could be seen in the increasing numbers of letters written to LBJ protesting his escalation of the Vietnam War. For example, nearly 600 American artists and writers declared in June 1965 that they could not remain silent about a foreign policy that had “grown more nakedly inhuman with each passing day.” They observed that a decade ago, when the people of Vietnam were fighting for independence from French colonialism, many prominent artists and intellectuals, ranging from Jean-Paul Sartre to Francois Mauriac and from Pablo Picasso to Albert Camus, had urged the French people to “protest their leaders’ policy as immoral and demand an end to that dirty war – \textit{la sale guerre}.\textsuperscript{66} In August 1965, the North Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce praised the American Businessmen’s Committee on Vietnam, for publishing a letter to the \textit{New York Times} demanding that the Johnson administration cease destroying Vietnamese lives and property.\textsuperscript{67} Other examples of American resistance to the war included protest letters written to LBJ by the

\textsuperscript{65} “Appeals, Messages, Stemming from TU Conference,” 8 June 1965, \textit{Nhan Dan}, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 6/1/65-6/30/65, Far East, Box 6, NARA.

\textsuperscript{66} “U.S. Artists, Writers Condemn Johnson Policy,” 13 Aug. 1965, \textit{Nhan Dan}, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 8/2/65-8/31/65, Far East, Box 8, NARA.


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U.S. Clergymen’s Emergency Committee on Vietnam, the Ad Hoc Physicians Committee on Vietnam, and the Teachers’ Committee for Peace in Vietnam.  

Informal DRV diplomacy surely contributed to the shift in Western public opinion against the Vietnam War by 1966. One USIA study, for example, concluded that most citizens in “free world” countries such as Britain, France, and Germany, regarded the South Vietnamese government as a puppet regime that was unable to motivate Southerners to fight the NLF.  

According to surveys most people in the Western democracies believed that the South Vietnamese supported the NLF as a genuine nationalist movement based in South Vietnam that was bound eventually to win the war. The more economically advanced a European country, the more likely its citizens were to believe that the U.S. intervention in Vietnam represented a threat to world peace, that U.S. forces committed atrocities daily by using chemical weapons, that the United States supported an unpopular and undemocratic regime in the south, and that the U.S. public did not support the war. Moreover, to the majority of the people in Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Cambodia, the Vietnam War reflected American racism against Asians.

When the United States committed ground troops to Vietnam in 1965, the CIA started monitoring connections between the DRV and the American antiwar movement. An October 1966 study described the cultivation of opposition to the war by the American people as an element in the DRV’s strategy of protracted

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68 “Letters to Johnson,” 29 Aug. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 8/2/65-8/31/65, Far East, Box 8, NARA.
war. According to the study, the DRV did not believe that American domestic opposition to the war would remain restricted to a few selected intellectuals and leftists. The DRV also predicted that wider opposition would result from the climbing economic costs of the war and from growing American casualties in Vietnam. The CIA discounted this analysis because of the DRV’s excessive optimism and its tendency to seize on isolated antiwar demonstrations as evidence that the American government’s will was weakening. For example, the DRV interpreted U.S. student protests in the fall of 1965 to mean that a united front of the Vietnamese and American people had taken shape.

Several American antiwar activists in the mid-1960s had repeatedly warned the North Vietnamese leaders that they should not rely on the antiwar movement to influence U.S. policy in Vietnam because the movement was still relatively small and as yet no match for the size and authority of the U.S. government. Still, leaders in Hanoi continued to predict that the antiwar movement would eventually force the U.S. government to withdraw from Vietnam. In fact, Ho had said in December 1965 that the people of America and Vietnam would certainly defeat U.S. imperialism, which was their common enemy.

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71 Hershberger, Traveling to Vietnam, xviii, xix.
72 “Let the U.S. Imperialists Withdraw their Troops from South Vietnam and Peace will be Immediately Restored,” Ho Chi Minh On Revolution, 335
According to a 1967 White House study, the DRV had successfully conducted a massive political and psychological campaign in the "free world" to persuade the United States to cease bombing North Vietnam unconditionally and to withdraw its economic and military support from South Vietnam.\(^73\) In early 1967, Pope Paul IV (Giovanni Battista Enrico Antonio Maria Montini) warned U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge "how badly" the American government had presented its case on Vietnam. The Pope, who was obviously not sympathetic to communism, still opposed the American bombardment of North Vietnam and wanted the two sides to reach a negotiated settlement.\(^74\)

President Johnson worried that American bombardment of Vietnam was damaging the public image of his administration. Johnson told a National Security Council meeting attended by Rusk, Robert McNamara, and General Maxwell Taylor in August 1965: "We are only getting bad things from the press."\(^75\) On 17 December Johnson told his advisers: "They [communist bloc] do a far better propaganda job than we do."\(^76\)

The apparent success of DRV propaganda also worried Rostow no end. In July 1967, he recommended to President Johnson bombing three Hanoi radio stations that he considered "the source of vicious propaganda" in Southeast


\(^75\) Summary notes, 554th NSC Meeting, 5 Aug. 1965, National Security File, Box 2, LBJ Library.

\(^76\) Meeting, 17 Dec. 1965, Meeting Notes File, Box 1, LBJ Library.
Asia.\textsuperscript{77} The Johnson administration was obviously deluded in thinking that the destruction of the radio stations would somehow undercut the American antiwar movement, which continued to grow as the war widened and American casualties rose.

The Johnson administration tried to prevent antiwar activists from providing charity to the DRV and the NLF. The Treasury Department announced on 27 February 1967 that it was denying all requests from Americans for licenses to send funds to relief agencies abroad to purchase medical supplies for shipment to the DRV and the NLF because the DRV had refused to permit impartial observers from any relief agency to witness the distribution of supplies.\textsuperscript{78} Despite the ban, a group of eight Yale University students and their wives, known as the New Haven Young Friends Committee for Vietnam Relief, said they would practice civil disobedience by providing medical aid to all areas of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{79} The committee circumvented the ban by sending supplies to the DRV and the NLF through International Red Cross representatives. The Quaker Action Group in Philadelphia also provided funds for medicines to Vietnam. Although these attempts to send aid to the DRV and NLF were never of the magnitude to cause a real concern to the U.S. government, the authorities viewed these relief efforts as bad publicity that might expand if left unchecked.

\textsuperscript{77} Memorandum, Rostow to Johnson, 31 July 1967, National Security File, Files of Walt Whitman Rostow, Box 4, LBJ Library.


\textsuperscript{79} Stephen Hand, "8 Quakers to Ignore Viet Aid Fund Ban," 1 Mar. 1967, \textit{New Haven Register}. 

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In retrospect, the Johnson administration’s fears of a pro-Hanoi slant in the American media appear to have been highly exaggerated. Statistical evidence shows that television coverage (including film clips of press conferences, speeches and interviews) was more favorable to the U.S. government than to the DRV and the NLF. According to one study, between August 1965 and January 1968, the U.S. government received 65 favorable statements on American television and 31 unfavorable ones. The DRV received two favorable statements and eight unfavorable ones, in the same period.\(^80\) However, American television coverage did suggest that U.S. forces were responsible for a greater number of massacres of Vietnamese civilians, destruction of homes, and abuse and torture of prisoners than the North Vietnamese forces.\(^81\) Given the bias of the American mainstream media against the Vietnamese revolution, people’s diplomacy appears to have been all the more important in helping to challenge stereotypes of the enemy.

**British support**

In order to present to the British people the North Vietnamese viewpoint, Tran Xuan Bach, secretary-general of the Fatherland Front, invited the British Labour Party MP William Warbey and his wife to Hanoi in January 1965.\(^82\) William Warbey met Ho and Dong at the presidential palace on 11 January, and

\(^{80}\) Hallin, "The Uncensored War," 148-149.

\(^{81}\) Ibid, 153.

proposed that the DRV formally ask Britain and the Soviet Union to reconvene the Geneva Conference in order to properly implement the provisions of the 1954 agreements. Dong agreed but insisted on three conditions: an assurance of American participation, that the United States respect the Geneva Agreements and withdraw its forces from South Vietnam, and that the NLF be accepted as an equal participant at the conference.\(^83\) Warbey conveyed Dong’s proposals to British Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart on 9 February, arguing that it was crucially important for Washington to hold negotiations with Hanoi. Stewart rejected Warbey’s advice and issued a press statement the following day calling upon the NLF to declare a unilateral ceasefire. The next day, more than fifty British MPs signed a motion calling on their government not to support the American war in Vietnam because the United States refused to accept the principles of the 1954 Geneva Agreements.\(^84\)

After returning to Britain, Warbey wrote a book on Vietnam, arguing that the United States, with the help of the leaders of Britain, was using brute force to destroy Asian communism – a political system that offered a better answer to the aspirations of Southeast Asians than what the militarized West had to offer. Worse, by intervening in Vietnam, the United States was destroying all that really mattered in Western philosophy, culture and civilization.\(^85\) In March 1965, 40 British MPs protested the use of poisonous gases by American forces in South


\(^{85}\) Ibid, 10.
Vietnam. The MPs introduced a motion in the House of Commons criticizing American chemical warfare, signed by Nobel Peace Prize winner Philip Noel-Baker, and MPs John Mendelson, Michael Foot, and Sidney Silverman. They also cabled Foreign Secretary Stewart, who was visiting Washington, to urge him to convey to the U.S. government their horror and indignation over the use of poisonous gases.

To challenge the British government, which sided with the South Vietnamese government, several students at Oxford University wrote to the NLF representative office in Czechoslovakia in July, to explain that they had raised funds to help arm the NLF. In one letter the British Communist Youth Federation regretted the “shameful collusion” between the U.S. government and the ruling British Labour government, and pledged that it was “determined to use every possible means to mobilize the British people’s opinion” against the war. The letter added that the British government should honor the Geneva Agreements that it had helped arrange in 1954 by striving to bring about an immediate ceasefire in Vietnam.

British antiwar activists made London the hub of their efforts to help the DRV. A British-made film, “A Message from Vietnam,” produced by the Medical Aid for Vietnam Committee, was screened on 17 September at the Crown Theater. A member of the committee, Dr. David Kerr, introduced the film, whose

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87 “Soviet, British students support Vietnam,” 6 Aug. 1965, Vietnam News Agency, CIA, FBIS, RG 263, 8.2.65-8.31.65, Far East, Box 8, NARA.
production involved a number of British stage personalities. Scripted by playwright Stewart Douglass and narrated by television actor David Wymark, the film ended with an appeal for funds needed to buy medical supplies for the Vietnamese people. 88

The Labour government faced increasing pressure from its followers to oppose the war in Vietnam. In October 1965, the annual conference of the Labour Party in Blackpool fell into turmoil as delegates representing the party's 2.2 million members protested Prime Minister Wilson's support for the American war in Vietnam. Although Wilson had called for a ceasefire and the convening of a conference on Vietnam, he did not ask that the United States withdraw its troops. The Labour Party's rank and file became greatly disappointed that Wilson did not distance Britain even more from the American intervention in Vietnam. 89

As the chasm widened between British citizens and their government on the issue of Vietnam, the British-Vietnam Committee, a London-based antiwar organization, issued a statement in August 1966 protesting the U.S. bombing of the demilitarized zone that divided North from South Vietnam. The committee pointed out that the bombing was a "gross violation" of the 1954 Geneva Agreements and a "new dangerous step of war escalation." It criticized the subservient attitude of the Wilson government to U.S. policy in Vietnam, and argued that the recognition of the aspirations of the South Vietnamese people as

88 "Film on Vietnam," 22 Sep. 1965, *Nhan Dan*, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 9/1/65-9/30/65, Far East, Box 9, NARA.
represented by the NLF had “become more and more a life and death question for the British people and world peace.”

Against this background, a visit by a group of British, American, French, and Canadian antiwar activists to Hanoi paved the way for the creation of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC) in London. In January 1967, the Scottish mineworkers’ leader Lawrence Daly, the editor of the American journal *Viet-Report* Carol Brightman, the French Socialist Party member Abraham Behar, a Canadian medical doctor Gustavo Tolentino, and a recent Oxford university graduate, Tariq Ali, traveled to North Vietnam on a fact-finding mission. They witnessed villages, schools, and hospitals destroyed by the American bombardment of the provinces surrounding Hanoi. Premier Dong told them that if the United States could be isolated globally it would shorten the war: “Your struggle is very important to us. It is our second front.”

Following their trip, the VSC was founded in mid-1967 in order to unite all those in Britain who were prepared to declare their support for Vietnam in public. Its founding members included Tariq Ali, the poets Adrian Mitchell and Christopher Logue, and the playwrights David Mercer and Roger Smith. The VSC maintained offices in many British cities, and organized massive rallies in London in 1967 and 1968.

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90 “British-Vietnam Committee Scores DMZ Bombing,” 10 Aug. 1966, CIA, FBIS, Microfilm, RG 263, Box 90, NARA.
In response to the intense opposition to the war in Britain, Prime Minister Wilson made an attempt to break the impasse between the United States and the DRV. Wilson persuaded Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin to visit London in February 1967. The Johnson administration had authorized Wilson to give Kosygin a generous proposal to end the war and open negotiations with the DRV. At a reception, Wilson handed Kosygin a written offer from the State Department, which Kosygin was to pass to the DRV. Later in the evening, Wilson received a message from the White House saying that the United States had hardened its offer. The North Vietnamese never responded, in effect killing the negotiations. Wilson viewed his failed mission as a missed opportunity to achieve peace in Vietnam, but the potential for the proposed negotiations to succeed remains unclear. North Vietnamese leaders were not Soviet puppets just because they received Soviet aid.

As diplomatic efforts floundered, a Gallup poll in November 1967 confirmed the British public’s desire to avoid involvement in Vietnam, with 82 percent disapproving of British troops fighting alongside South Vietnamese troops, up 7 percent from July 1966. At a massive rally of 20,000 people in London in March 1968, the British actress Vanessa Redgrave told U.S. Embassy officials that the only way to achieve peace in Vietnam was for the Americans to withdraw. The Associated Press described the March demonstration as the biggest

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93 Ibid.
anti-American rally ever staged in London. A three-member delegation of British trade unions visited the DRV in October 1972 at the invitation of the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions. Representatives of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, Trade Union Congress, and the Fire Brigade Union visited sites in Hanoi and Nam Ha province that had been bombed by American jets. In meetings with Vietnamese workers the British unionists pledged to do their utmost to promote the movement of British workers against the American aggression in Vietnam.

Despite its slow start, North Vietnamese people's diplomacy proved remarkably effective in Britain. Some British travelers to Vietnam returned to write books and produce films about the effects of American bombardment. Others collected funds to help the NLF continue armed struggle. Thousands protested British policy at massive public demonstrations. LBJ knew that Wilson could not support Washington on the Vietnam issue because of the opposition he faced from British citizens. During his visit to Washington in December 1964, Wilson had told Johnson that he could not send British troops to Vietnam because Britain was already overstretched in the Malayan struggle against Indonesia. As co-chairman of the Geneva Conferences of 1954 and 1962, Britain had to play the role of peacemaker.

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95 "British Demonstrations," 20 Mar. 1968, Vietnam News Agency, CIA, FBIS, RG 263, Microfilm, Box 145, NARA.
West German Opposition to the U.S. Intervention

North Vietnamese people’s diplomacy succeeded in making strong connections with antiwar activists in many European countries that had for several years been clamoring against the American intervention. The United States, unable to convince its European allies to give direct aid to its effort in Vietnam, also found it difficult to obtain diplomatic support.98 In the 1960s, West German students protested against war and nuclear weapons. Many of the protests, organized by the Campaign for Disarmament, criticized American policy in Vietnam after the start of Operation Rolling Thunder in mid-February 1965, which appeared to signal the initiation of a wider war. West German activists urged Americans to end the war in Vietnam “before its rubble buries us all.”99 The West German Socialist Students’ League warned that the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident, which the Johnson administration had exploited to escalate the war, jeopardized peace not only in Asia but also in Central Europe. In West Berlin, a leaflet distributed by the Vietnam Solidarity Committee compared Germans who accepted the U.S. war in Vietnam to those Germans living in the 1930s and 1940s who had kept silent about the crimes of Adolf Hitler.100

Whatever West German support existed at the outset of the American escalation in Vietnam evaporated rapidly in the mid-1960s. An opinion poll

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98 Ellis, Britain, America, and the Vietnam War, xv.
conducted in West Germany by the *Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach* in February 1965 showed that half the respondents believed that the communists were to blame for an increase in tensions that had led to the American bombardment of North Vietnam, and only 10 percent blamed America.\(^{101}\) This lukewarm support for the American war in Vietnam shifted dramatically the following year. A July 1966 poll showed 51 percent disapproving of the American escalation of bombardment of the DRV’s petroleum facilities.\(^{102}\)

President Johnson pressed the West German government of Chancellor Ludwig Erhard to provide financial and military support in Vietnam, and to share the cost of stationing U.S. troops in West Germany. During a meeting in Washington in December 1965, LBJ gave Erhard “the Johnson treatment,” as he towered over Erhard and yelled at the chancellor to pay West Germany’s dues.\(^{103}\) Erhard left the meeting “shaken and near despair.” Yet, Washington’s threat to reduce its troops in West Germany if Bonn did not support the Johnson administration in Vietnam proved ineffective. Bowing to local and regional opposition to the war, Erhard decided in January 1966 not to send West German troops to Vietnam. Such a deployment, he argued, would alienate the majority of Germans, and most of Western Europe.\(^{104}\)


\(^{102}\) *Ibid*, 234.


\(^{104}\) *Intense U.S. pressure and the failure of Erhard’s foreign policy contributed to the collapse of the coalition government in November 1966. Ibid*, 341-360.
Capitalizing on the growing antiwar sentiment among West Germans, the North Vietnamese conducted people’s diplomacy with West German religious leader Reverend Martin Niemoeller. In his capacity as President of the World Council of Churches, Niemoeller traveled to Hanoi to deliver West German aid to local Vietnamese charities in January 1967. President Ho told Niemoeller: “We do not hate Americans, and we are ready to discuss peace right away.” After talks with Ho, Niemoeller announced to the press that Hanoi was ready for peace talks provided Washington halted its bombardment.\textsuperscript{105} However, Niemoeller was skeptical about the prospects of peace because Ho had told him that peace could be achieved only after the United States withdrew its troops and accepted the terms of the Geneva Agreements.\textsuperscript{106} Niemoeller was so committed to helping the Vietnamese that he joined American artist Rockwell Kent, Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Italian sculptor Giacomo Manzu in donating their International Lenin Peace Prize money to them.\textsuperscript{107} DRV ambassador to Moscow Nguyen Tho Chan received the funds.

By September 1967 West Germans began to question the legitimacy of the American involvement in the war. According to one poll, 37 percent believed that the United States had no right to fight in Vietnam, a 12 percent increase over March 1966; only 33 percent still saw a need for America to defend “freedom” in

\textsuperscript{105} Agence France-Presse, 27 Jan. 1967.
\textsuperscript{106} Feinberg, \textit{Hanoi Diary}, 82.
The West German government of Chancellor Willy Brandt dismissed as "oversimplified and unfounded" the argument American officials made that the containment of communism in Asia was necessary for the defense of Europe.\textsuperscript{109}

West German visits to the DRV, though not as numerous as those by American and British antiwar activists, did encourage opposition to the Vietnam War. A poll conducted at the same time as the Tet Offensive in February 1968 showed that although more West Germans rallied to support America's need to defend "freedom" in Vietnam (38 percent, up 5 percent from September 1967), there was growing pessimism about the United States' chances of winning the war. Even after three years of escalation and official U.S. propaganda to sell the idea that the United States was making progress in Vietnam, 36 percent of West Germans believed that the United States could not win the war and that Vietnam was "hopeless" for the Americans – an increase of 13 percent since 1966.\textsuperscript{110}

Following the Tet Offensive, in the first two weeks of February 1968 antiwar protestors picketed and attacked United States Information Service (USIS) libraries and cultural centers in West Germany, France, Spain, Austria, and the Scandinavian countries.\textsuperscript{111}


\textsuperscript{110} Page, \textit{U.S. Official Propaganda During the Vietnam War}, 235-236.

Australia and New Zealand

People’s diplomacy appears to have reached its limits in Australia and New Zealand, both supporters of the American effort in Vietnam. The foreign policy of those two countries was based on the belief that international communism, having been contained in Europe, was gearing for expansion in Southeast Asia. Because the leaders in Canberra and Auckland readily subscribed to the domino theory, they willingly supported the U.S. intervention in Vietnam under the Australia-New Zealand-United States (ANZUS) Treaty of 1951. The treaty called for consultations among the three countries if the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of any of the three was threatened in the Pacific area. Both Australia and New Zealand decided that they would have to bear their share of the cost of the defense burden, so they dispatched troops to fight communist forces in Malaya and Vietnam. They were also committed under the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization of 1954 to prevent communist gains in Southeast Asia.

In reaction to the American bombardment of Vietnam, Australian peace activists protested outside the U.S. consulates in Sydney and Melbourne in the latter half of 1964, about two years before major Australian troop commitment in mid-1966. The communist Eureka Youth League organized the early protests. The Australian Congress for International Cooperation and Disarmament and the

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Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom passed resolutions in support of the NLF, and condemned U.S. policy. Their protests became sharper when the Liberal-Country Party coalition government revived conscription in November 1964 specifically for Vietnam.\textsuperscript{113} However the Australian government was fairly immune to domestic pressure groups because of its close ties to the United States.\textsuperscript{114}

The Australian journalist and writer Wilfred G. Burchett deeply sympathized with the NLF, and he made clear as early as 1965 that the NLF was a powerful entity in its own right and could not be eliminated by bombing North Vietnam.\textsuperscript{115} Burchett gave ample coverage to the DRV’s claim that captured American pilots were “common criminals,” not prisoners of war because the United States had never declared war against the DRV. Burchett’s interview with Pham Van Bach, the President of the Supreme Court of the DRV, was broadcast over world television networks. Burchett reported that North Vietnam considered itself the victim of “piratical” air attacks similar to those waged from the sea by the Barbary Corsairs and others like them.\textsuperscript{116}

Opposition to the American involvement in Vietnam also developed in New Zealand. The national vice president of the New Zealand Peace Council, Harry Slingsby, visited Hanoi in November 1964 to represent the council at an

\textsuperscript{113} Jeffrey Grey, “Protest and Dissent: Anti-Vietnam War Activism in Australia,” in \textit{Australia's Vietnam War} (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 59.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, 62.

On 27 May 1966, the New Zealand government announced it was sending an artillery battery to Vietnam. Obviously, the antiwar movement was not gaining much headway because most New Zealanders suspected the motives and character of the peace movement. New Zealand government officials routinely red-baited antiwar organizations, such as the New Zealand Medical Aid Committee for South Vietnamese Peoples, which they claimed was a communist front organization. In March 1966, *Truth* newspaper alleged that the sending of medical supplies could be treasonable because the aid might have gone to those NLF fighters who had killed three New Zealand soldiers. Despite government restrictions, the committee managed to send medical supplies worth 880 British Pounds to the NLF via the British Medical Aid Committee.

At the very least, people's diplomacy in Australia and New Zealand produced influential antiwar literature that had some impact on the fledgling

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118 Ibid, 114.
119 Ibid, 181.
120 Ibid, 183.
peace movements in those countries. The journalist Wilfred Burchett, for example, traveled widely with North Vietnamese regular forces and NLF guerrillas. His accounts and those of other activists who visited Vietnam provided valuable portraits of the Vietnamese revolution to Western audiences starved for information about the other side. 121

Conclusion

The DRV’s effort to mobilize world public opinion against the American intervention Vietnam was a mixed success. The diplomatic front’s greatest accomplishment was in enabling antiwar activists in the West to cut through U.S. government propaganda that demonized the North Vietnamese. The DRV benefited from the support of antiwar movements in Canada, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand that operated independently of Hanoi but sought to press their individual governments into withdrawing support for the U.S. troops in South Vietnam and the bombing of North Vietnam. The North Vietnamese managed to reach out to foreign antiwar groups by arranging their visits to Vietnam to learn about the effects of the war on the Vietnamese population.

But the diplomatic front had its limitations. Aside from expressions of sympathy and the provision of humanitarian aid by some antiwar groups, it did not result in any large military or economic advantages for the Vietnamese

revolutionaries. Public opposition to the Vietnam War took many years to develop in the West and governments were not always responsive to the demands of the antiwar movement. In Australia and New Zealand antiwar activists found it difficult to reach mass audiences because the mainstream media ignored or red-baited opponents of the war, and rarely provided a sympathetic portrait of the North Vietnamese.

On the whole, however, people’s diplomacy derailed the American “More Flags” campaign, as antiwar banners protesting the American intervention fluttered across most major Western capital cities. Not only did LBJ fail to convince Britain, Canada, and West Germany to provide military and economic assistance to the American effort in Vietnam, the United States faced even greater opposition in other parts of the world. The following chapter explores Hanoi’s important linkages with several countries – such as France, Sweden, Cuba, and some Latin American states – some of which vehemently opposed the American war in Vietnam, and others chose not to align themselves to the U.S. effort. It also examines the significant part played by women peace activists that attempted to force LBJ to stop bombing and withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam.
Chapter Three

Coordinating Diplomatic Strategy with "Non-Aligned" Countries:

"We, too, have Husbands and Children"

Many countries that might normally be counted as American allies in the Cold War era did not side with the United States when it came to the Vietnam War. Peace movements and leftist parties in France, Belgium, Italy, Greece, and Sweden made it nearly impossible for Washington to gain West European support for South Vietnam. These countries were "not aligned" with the United States on the issue of Vietnam, and they publicly opposed the U.S. intervention in Vietnam.

The problem was exacerbated by Ho’s growing popularity, especially among advocates of national liberation struggles. Ho had cultivated personal relationships with French politicians and intellectuals when he had lived in France and served as editor of the anti-colonial journal *Le Paria* (The Outcast). Ho also befriended the leaders of the Soviet Union and China, as well as government officials and peace movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America who saw Ho as an important ally in the struggle against colonialism. Governments and mass organizations in these countries sympathized with the North Vietnamese, and denounced the American intervention. Many American antiwar activists admired Ho’s simple lifestyle and sincerity. Western women sympathized with North Vietnamese women that lost husbands, children, brothers, and sisters in the war.
The importance of people's diplomacy in these cases is not so much that it forced governments to abandon support for America's Vietnam policy, as was the case in the previous chapter. It is not surprising that leftist regimes in France and Italy opposed Washington; rather these settings provided an atmosphere in which people's diplomacy could flourish. Communist parties in the non-communist world performed an important role in support of North Vietnam: these parties automatically stepped into line with the antiwar movement. They did not need to be convinced to support the DRV's cause. North Vietnamese people's diplomacy naturally established links with them, and reaped the benefits of overseas communist support.

This chapter presents two principal arguments about North Vietnamese people's diplomacy: first, that people's diplomacy played the role of facilitator with the left wing in non-communist countries: North Vietnamese film studios cooperated with well-known Dutch and French filmmakers to produce documentary films about North Vietnam that publicized the effects of American bombardment on civilians. These films were regularly shown at antiwar events abroad, and screened commercially in New York City. People's diplomacy also helped win economic support from antiwar movements and communist parties in Western Europe. In particular, French and Italian citizens provided economic and humanitarian aid to the Vietnamese revolutionaries. The French Communist Party encouraged French citizens to forge closer commercial and cultural relations
between France and the DRV, and urged the French government to recognize the NLF.

Secondly, people’s diplomacy similarly facilitated greater interaction with the communist bloc in Latin America: Cubans helped the DRV in its propaganda effort. A Cuban artist visited North Vietnam in 1969 to produce artworks expressing solidarity, and a Cuban filmmaker made antiwar documentaries in the DRV the following year. Hanoi’s leaders enthusiastically reciprocated the moral support they received. The DRV publicized its support for the Latin American struggle against imperialism. In 1965, *Nhan Dan* argued that the United States must withdraw its troops from the Dominican Republic. In the same year, Ho voiced moral support for Uruguayans in their struggle against American interference in Uruguay’s internal affairs. Although the economic and humanitarian assistance given by people in the “non-aligned” countries was modest in monetary value, it was rich in symbolic value and represented widespread sympathy for the Vietnamese people.

**Hanoi’s Links with Western Europe**

The American intervention in Vietnam was highly unpopular with most Western European governments, leftist parties, and peace activists. State- and non-state actors in Italy, France, Greece, and Belgium frequently challenged American policy in Vietnam. For example, many Italian socialists publicly demonstrated their opposition to Washington by participating in the Bertrand
Russell War Crimes Tribunal.\textsuperscript{1} By the end of the 1960s, the United States had squandered much of the goodwill it had built up among the Italian people since the Second World War due to its participation in the war in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{2} In May 1965, a delegation of the Italian Communist Party presented Ho with a Garibaldi Gold Medal, an honor usually reserved for the veteran soldiers in the Garibaldi Brigade that had fought against German Nazis and Italian fascists. The Italian communists held talks with North Vietnamese leaders and visited an antiwar exhibition in Hanoi, which presented evidence of the use of chemical weapons by U.S. forces in Vietnam. During the same month, the secretary of the Italian Communist Party, Giancarlo Pajetta, reiterated his party’s support for the Vietnamese people’s struggle against the United States.\textsuperscript{3} An Italian communist campaign to help North Vietnam resulted in several thousand Italians donating 100 million lira, which was used to set up a field hospital in North Vietnam.\textsuperscript{4}

In an effort to reach out to Italians, Ho extended an invitation to Giorgio La Pira, the leader of Italy’s Christian Democratic Party, to visit Hanoi. La Pira went to Hanoi in November 1965 where he was feted by the ruling party and the local media. He returned to Italy insisting that the DRV was ready to talk to the United States without preconditions. La Pira misrepresented the DRV because Ho

\textsuperscript{1} See Chapter Five for a full account of Russell’s efforts to initiate a global campaign to oppose the American intervention in Vietnam.


\textsuperscript{3} “Visit to Exhibition,” 7 May 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 5/3/65-5/28/65, Far East, Box 5, NARA.

\textsuperscript{4} “Medal for Ho Chi Minh,” 10 May 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 5/3/65-5/28/65, Far East, Box 5, NARA.
stuck to his condition that U.S. forces be withdrawn before negotiations could begin. La Pira’s bungled diplomacy nonetheless coincided with the Vatican publicly stating its preference for a negotiated peace in Vietnam instead of prolonged warfare. The Pope criticized American liberal economic and political values in a published commentary in 1967 that urged the United States to stop bombing North Vietnam. The ruling Christian Democratic Party also adhered to the positions taken by the Pope, as Italy distanced itself from U.S. policy on Vietnam.⁵

Not surprisingly, the DRV gained the support of communist parties based in other West European countries such as Belgium, France, and Greece. These parties voiced strong support to the people of North Vietnam in their struggle, and provided humanitarian assistance to them. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece called upon the Greek people to provide moral support to the Vietnamese people.⁶ The Belgian Communist Party sent a message to the Lao Dong affirming solidarity with the DRV. The secretary-general of the Belgian party’s central committee, Jacques Grippa, proclaimed: “The evil doings of the Yankee beasts showed once again that the United States has stepped into the shoes of Hitler’s Germany and outdone it.”⁷

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⁵ James Edward Miller, “Ambivalent about America: Giorgio La Pira and the Catholic Left in Italy from NATO Ratification to the Vietnam War,” *The United States and the European Alliance since 1945*, eds. Kathleen Burk and Melvyn Stokes (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 140-143.
DRV filmmakers established a close relationship with their European counterparts. Joris Ivens, a well-known Dutch documentary filmmaker, began work on a documentary film in North Vietnam, *The Threatening Sky*, in collaboration with two Vietnamese cameramen, Thu Van and Tran Duc Hoa in June and July 1965.\(^8\) In early 1967, DRV officials invited Ivens to teach at a film school in Hanoi. During his stay in Hanoi, DRV government officials asked him to make a new film on the Vietnam War. They suggested he make a bigger film, on the scale of *The Spanish Earth* that Ivens had made in the 1930s during the Spanish Civil War with the help of American writer Ernest Hemingway. The result was the documentary feature *17th Parallel: Vietnam in War* (*17\(^{th}\) Parallel: Vietnam in War*), produced in collaboration with the Hanoi Documentary Studio. *17\(^{th}\) Parallel* was screened at the Bleecker Street Cinema in New York in September 1968. According to the *New York Times* the “eloquence and power” of the film lay in its “on-the-spot crudeness and unquestionable authenticity.” The “highly respected Dutch filmmaker” had “captured a close quarter camera record of the war as weathered by determined peasants and their families.”\(^9\) In 1967, Ivens made the film *Far From Vietnam* in collaboration with directors Chris Marker, Jean-Luc Godard, William Klein, Claude Lelouch, Alain Resnais, and Agnes Varda. Ivens received the Lenin Peace Prize in 1967 for his

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8 In the film, Ivens interviews President Ho. “Departure From Hanoi,” 2 July 1965, *Nhan Dan*, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 7/1/65-7/30/65, Far East, Box 7, NARA.


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films on Vietnam that were screened regularly at antiwar seminars in France, Italy, West Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands.¹⁰

In early October, a delegation of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) visited Hanoi at the invitation of Phan Anh, president of the Vietnam Lawyers’ Association. Led by its secretary-general Joe Nordmann, who worked as a lawyer in France, the delegation was composed of lawyers and judges from Azerbaijan, Mali, and Lebanon. The IADL, founded in Paris in 1946 to struggle against colonialism, racism, and the violation of human rights, compiled a list of human rights’ violations committed by American forces during the war.¹¹

French citizens strongly protested the American intervention in Vietnam. In the mid-1960s the North Vietnamese began making durable connections with the French people against a backdrop of criticism of U.S. policy in Vietnam by the French government, and by growing numbers of French people, mobilized largely through left-wing organizations. President Charles de Gaulle’s criticism of American policy in Vietnam served his larger objective of opposing American global hegemony.¹² As Franco-American relations worsened, French officials expressed sympathy for Hanoi in public statements and in direct communication

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¹¹ “International Lawyers Delegation Visits DRV,” 1 Oct. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 10/1/65-10/29/65, Far East, Box 10, NARA.

between officials of both countries. The French Communist Party adopted a resolution at its plenary session in 1965 condemning the use of poisonous gases by American forces. Ho wrote to de Gaulle in January 1966, urging him to use his influence to bring an end to the "new perfidious American schemes in Vietnam." When President Johnson resumed bombing raids of North Vietnam in January 1966, de Gaulle sent him a protest note. In September 1966, de Gaulle called for America to withdraw from Vietnam unilaterally so peace talks could begin. He warned that American "illusions about the use of force" in Vietnam risked provoking China and the Soviet Union, and had alienated millions of Europeans, Africans, and Latin Americans. Ambassador-at-Large Averell Harriman and Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy decided to avoid arguing publicly with de Gaulle. Instead they discussed the possibility of starting a dialogue with Hanoi about both sides withdrawing their forces from South Vietnam.

By the mid-1960s, most French citizens opposed the American intervention in Vietnam. An opinion poll conducted in France by the Institut d'Opinion Publique in March 1965 showed only 10 percent of the people of

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14 "French Communist Party Resolutions," 2 Apr. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 4/1/65-4/30/65, Far East, Box 4, NARA.
15 Le Monde, 1 Feb. 1966, p. 5.
France approved of American policy in Vietnam. Another opinion poll in September 1966 revealed that 68 percent of respondents favored an American withdrawal from Vietnam. The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre presided over Le Comité Vietnam National that spearheaded the peace movement. In October, a group of engineers formed Le Millard pour le Vietnam in order to raise a million francs to help the people of Vietnam. A boycott of American products was organized by Le Comité français pour le soutien du peuple vietnamien, and Le Mouvement contre l'armement atomique. In addition, Le Mouvement de la paix organized hundreds of petitions and mass demonstrations against the United States. De Gaulle withdrew his country from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1966, and when Vice President Hubert Humphrey visited Paris in April 1967 he faced hostile demonstrators everywhere.

The writings of the French academic and critic of the Vietnam War, Bernard Fall, influenced a worldwide audience. Within the United States his readers included U.S. Foreign Service officers, journalists, congressional and White House advisors, and some congressmen. Unlike the Australian communist Wilfred Burchett who sympathized with the DRV, Fall initially believed that massive American aid could swing the DRV away from the communist powers, and that a separate South Vietnamese state was indeed viable.

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But Fall grew critical of American policy when U.S. intervention in Vietnam deepened. Fall, who lived in the United States and taught international relations at Howard University, urgently wanted to go to North Vietnam because no foreign journalist had been there since the departure of the French eight years earlier. He had written to the Foreign Ministry in Hanoi in early 1962 requesting permission to visit, to interview the communist leaders, and to see how the country had changed under their rule since his last visit in 1953. North Vietnamese officials, who seldom missed an opportunity to get coverage in the American press, eagerly arranged the visit. Fall’s interview with Ho, which later appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, described a “quality of candor in Ho,” which is “Gandhi-like.” Fall grouped Ho along with Louis XIV, Josip Broz Tito, and Lyndon Johnson as men of action.

The French Communist Party encouraged direct linkages between the people of France and the DRV. The party wrote to President Ho in January 1967 assuring him that the party would strive to unite French opinion and that it would create peace committees for Vietnam under the French antiwar movement. These committees aimed to develop diplomatic, commercial, and cultural relations

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between France and the DRV, and worked toward the recognition of the NLF by
the French government. 25

French activists who spoke out against the Vietnam War include the
socialist Raymond Aubrac, and professor Herbert Macovich. At the request of the
Johnson administration, Aubrac and Macovich carried out a secret mission to
Hanoi in July 1967 to bring Premier Dong an offer from the White House on a
two-phase formula for peace: the United States would halt bombing if the DRV
kept its aid to the south at the current level. Dong insisted that the bombing must
end without conditions. Because Washington would not accept these terms, the
Aubrac-Macovich mission ended in failure. The French duo told Kissinger that
the Johnson administration had made a “serious mistake” by continuing the
bombing. 26

As Franco-DRV relations improved, the two countries began an exchange
program for medical research in January 1968. Four North Vietnamese doctors
and researchers from various hospitals in Hanoi began working at the Pasteur
Institute and other medical facilities in Paris. Two French doctors arrived in
Hanoi to conduct research for several weeks. 27 In the same month, the French
National Committee of Action for Support and Victory of the Vietnamese People,
chaired by Waldeck Rochet, secretary general of the French Communist Party,
organized Vietnam solidarity meetings in some 100 major French cities. The

CIA, FBIS, RG 263, Microfilm, Box 90, NARA.
26 Vu Son Thuy, “The French Role in Finding a Peaceful Solution to the Vietnam War,”
La Guerre Du Vietnam Et L'Europe, 419-420.
27 Agence France-Presse, 26 Jan. 1968.
committee also published five million copies of a paper outlining its antiwar objectives and activities in early February 1968. By appointing the revered French poet Louis Aragon as the committee's president, the organizers hoped to attract French followers in large numbers to join the committee.

The French Communist Party was a useful conduit to publicize the Vietnamese cause espoused by people's diplomacy. With a nationwide membership of 260,000 in the early 1960s, the French Communist Party had considerable electoral support and influence within the French National Assembly where it held 34 seats in 1968. These statistics show that people's diplomacy with the people of France and the French Communist Party paid rich dividends in terms of generating publicity and significant food and humanitarian aid from the people of France.

Jacques Duclos, politburo member of the French Communist Party, delivered a speech to a mass rally in Hanoi in March 1968, during a visit of his party's delegation to the DRV. Duclos reminded his audience that just as the French Communist Party had sided with the Vietminh when it fought against French colonialists, the party now sided with the DRV in its struggle against the United States. Duclos highlighted the contributions of the French antiwar movement: 70,000 French youth demonstrated against the United States on the

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streets of Paris in November 1967, and in the same month the party launched its
“Shipment for Solidarity” program, which collected more than 400 million francs
from French donors. The party attempted to match these funds, and collected
another 216 million francs by its own efforts. Additional relief efforts resulted in
the collection of 55 tons of goods such as 70 electricity generators, 3,000 bicycles,
a 10-ton truck, several ambulances, clothes, surgical equipment, blankets,
condensed milk, and school supplies, collectively worth 121 million francs. Two
Soviet ships loaded the goods at the French ports of Havre and Marseille, and
agreed to transport them to the DRV free of charge. Committees to support
Vietnam were established in every French province, and the French Communist
Party’s 19,000 branches set up grassroots committees in factories and schools
with the objective of an immediate and unconditional halt to the bombing of the
DRV, and the recognition of the NLF as the sole genuine representative of the
people of South Vietnam.30

In March 1968, more than 1,700 French intellectuals including Pablo
Picasso, Jean-Paul Sartre, Francois Mauriac, and Joliot Langevin signed an appeal
condemning the American intervention in Vietnam. Sartre criticized the United
States for committing genocide in Vietnam.31 After the Paris peace talks began in
mid-1968, French activists maintained contact with the DRV’s negotiator Xuan
Thuy in Paris. Francois Hilsum, secretary general of the French Communist

30 “Duclos Speech,” 17 Mar. 1968, Vietnam News Agency, CIA, FBIS, RG 263,
Microfilm, Box 145, NARA.
Microfilm, Box 145, NARA.
Youth, informed Xuan Thuy about the demonstration and fundraising campaigns conducted by the 60,000 members of the French people’s movement in support of Vietnam.\(^{32}\)

These gestures paved the way to closer links between the citizens of both countries. The DRV Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists invited the French filmmaker Roger Pic to visit North Vietnam in February 1972 for three weeks to shoot a film on “the new war crimes of the Nixon administration.”\(^{33}\) Pic had visited the DRV in 1967 as part of a group of international investigators to probe the effects of American bombardment, and again in 1968 to shoot the film *Echec a l’escalade* in Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces.\(^{34}\) A dedicated activist, Pic lived for months with NLF guerrillas in the south, and produced the first documentary film on the lives of guerrillas at a clandestine NLF camp. His body of work on Vietnam includes six major television films and a book.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{32}\) “Xuan Thuy Receives French Youth Delegation,” 30 June 1968, Vietnam News Agency, CIA, FBIS, RG 263, Microfilm, Box 146, NARA.

\(^{33}\) Thu, Uy ban Dieu tra loi ac chien tranh cua de quoc My o Viet Nam, den Phong Phu Thu Tuong, 29.1.1972, so 30/UBDT, ho so xet duyet doan ra, doan vao cho Uy ban Dieu tra loi ac chien tranh cua de quoc My o Viet Nam, 8806, trang 1, PPTT, TTLTQG3. [Letter, Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists in Vietnam to Prime Minister’s Office, 29.1 1972, no. 30/UBDT, Examine entry and exit of the Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists in Vietnam in 1972, 8806, page 1].


The DRV Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists sent two victims of American bombardment to participate in an antiwar conference in Paris in June 1972. Committee member Mai Lam accompanied the two female victims, 28-year-old Hoang Thi Hoan, and 14-year-old Bui Thi Bich, both of whom sustained serious injuries in American bombardment of Haiphong on 15 April 1972. On the recommendation of the committee, the DRV government paid for the trip because they considered it important that the victims give public testimony in France.36

In response to Nixon’s continuing heavy bombardment of North Vietnam, in December 1972 the Committee invited Pic to make a new film.37 Pic assured the committee that if the war continued, he would collect more material about war crimes, and if there was a ceasefire he would make another film like Echec a l’escalade. The committee informed the prime minister’s office that Pic had produced many films about U.S. war crimes such as Vivre sous les bombes, and Pour un Viet Nam vietnamien. The prime minister’s office granted permission to

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Pie to make the film from 20 December to mid-January 1973. Pie’s films had an important influence within the Western antiwar movement, and many were screened at antiwar events and film festivals.

Owing to the efforts of filmmakers such as Pie and other intellectuals, the French peace movement was larger and better organized than similar movements in other European countries. As a result, French activism contributed significantly to the global peace movement that opposed the American intervention in Vietnam. In an effort to support the DRV, the French Communist Party brought together mass organizations such as the French General Labor Confederation, the French Women’s Union, and the French Communist Youth Confederation. The French Movement for Peace brought together more than fifty organizations in support of the Vietnamese revolution. The Vietnamese-French Friendship Association condemned the American intervention, and the French-Vietnamese Medical Association mobilized a medicine donation drive across Europe from 1967 till the end of the war.

People’s diplomacy also operated through the 10,000 French citizens of Vietnamese descent. These workers, intellectuals, civil servants, and small

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38 Thu, Phong Phu Thu Tuong, den Uy ban Dieu tra loi ac chien tranh cua de quoc My o Viet Nam, 18.12.1972, so 2973/VPG, ho so xet duyet doan ra, doan vao cho Uy ban Dieu tra loi ac chien tranh cua de quoc My o Viet Nam, 8806, trang 33, PPTT, TTLTQG3. [Letter, Prime Minister’s Office to Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists in Vietnam, 18.12.1972, No. 2973/VPG, Examine entry and exit of the Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists in Vietnam in 1972, 8806, p 33].


businessmen made contributions to help the DRV.\textsuperscript{41} Nguyen Thi Binh, who led the delegation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam at the Paris peace talks, later acknowledged that her French compatriots had "participated directly in the diplomatic struggle" and had served as the rear area of the delegations of the DRV and NLF at the peace talks.\textsuperscript{42} The Vietnamese community in France contributed cash and medicines to the DRV and the NLF, and produced a variety of magazines and journals to publicize the Vietnamese cause. French newspapers such as \textit{L' Humanité, Le Monde, La Nation}, and \textit{Le Figaro} were instrumental in shaping public opinion against the American intervention. They demanded that the United States withdraw because, in their view, the Vietnam problem was essentially a civil war. As a result of these influences, an opinion poll in August 1967 showed that 72 percent of the French population wanted the United States to start removing its troops.\textsuperscript{43} For these reasons France stood out within Europe as an important ally of North Vietnam, and the French public as partners in people's diplomacy.

Like the French, the Swedish provided strong moral support to the North Vietnamese. In October 1965, the acclaimed writer Sara Lidman, who represented the Swedish left wing, visited Hanoi at the invitation of the Vietnam Writers'
Association. While the Swedish left opposed the U.S. intervention in Vietnam, not all Swedish leftists wished to be associated with the communists in North Vietnam. Lidman was not one of them. She grew interested in Vietnam because she believed that most of the Western media were portraying Vietnam untruthfully, and she studied Vietnamese history and politics ahead of her trip. She was welcomed at Hanoi railway station by the poets Te Hanh, Nguyen Xuan Sanh, and Anh Tho, all members of the association’s standing committee. Lidman, who expressed sympathy for the peasants of Vietnam, wrote Conversations in Hanoi in 1966 to serve as a record of her visit. Lidman described Vietnam as “the university of our time,” and due to her intimate knowledge of Vietnam she became a figurehead of the Swedish antiwar movement. In Conversations she celebrates the “dignity and pride” of the Vietnamese in the face of American aggression, and the role of their strong rural communities. She highlights their inspired ingenuity in coping with increasing U.S. attacks with devastating weapons. In 1974, Lidman published The Birds of Nam Dinh, a second collection of pieces on Vietnam based on her close observation of Vietnamese rural communities.

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44 The Swedish left wing is an umbrella term describing the Swedish Social Democratic Youth League, the Swedish Social Democratic Party, and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation.
46 “Swedish Writer Arrives for Visit to the DRV,” 21 Oct. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 10/1/65-10/29/65, Far East, Box 10, NARA.
47 Forsas-Scott, Swedish Women’s Writing, 1850-1995, 205, 207.
48 Ibid, 205, 207.
The Swedish Social Democratic Party established its own anti-Vietnam War organization, the Swedish-Vietnam Committee (SKfV) in 1967, drawing its members from trade unions and voluntary organizations. During a major demonstration in Sweden in 1968, Minister of Education Olof Palme marched alongside the DRV ambassador to Moscow, Nguyen Tho Chan, with torches in their hands.49 A Swedish antiwar organization, the NLF-Movement – named after the National Liberation Front – offered to enlist a unit of Swedish volunteers to fight in Vietnam. Although the DRV politely declined the offer, the NLF-Movement continued recruiting fighters in case the Vietnamese changed their minds.50 On becoming prime minister, Palme remained extremely outspoken in his criticism of the United States.

The DRV achieved a diplomatic breakthrough in January 1969 when Sweden became the first Western democracy to establish diplomatic relations with the DRV. Swedish foreign minister Torsten Nilsson proposed to his DRV counterpart, Nguyen Duy Trinh, on 10 January that the time had come for the two countries to establish diplomatic relations because negotiations between the United States and the DRV in Paris were entering a decisive stage that, he hoped, would result in peace in Vietnam.51

50 Ibid, 334.
51 Cable, American Embassy Stockholm to Secretary of State, 10 Jan. 1969, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, Aid to NVN, [CIA Intelligence Memos], 3M[37], 1/68-1/69, Box 87, LBJ Library.
Over in the Norwegian capital of Oslo, a DRV delegation testified publicly at an international conference on American war crimes in June 1971. The delegation, sent by the DRV Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists, consisted of three young victims of American bombardment and five committee officials. The victims were ten-year-old Hoang Thi The, fourteen-year-old Nguyen Vinh, and twenty-one-year-old Pham Thi Thiem. The North Vietnamese delegates showed films of American aircraft dropping bombs.  

Using funds provided by the Soviet Union, the DRV Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists organized a seminar in Stockholm on 2-3 June 1972 to broadcast the intensification of the war. A four-member DRV delegation traveled to Sweden, carrying films, photographs, and printed materials that documented the U.S. bombardment of North Vietnamese civilians.  

In the same month, DRV committee paid expenses for two Swedish television journalists to visit Vietnam to collect evidence of "Nixon's war crimes."
In July 1972, a multinational delegation visiting North Vietnam donated 30,000 dongs to a North Vietnamese filmmaker to make a film on U.S. war crimes. The delegation consisting of the former head of the Danish parliament Frode Jacobsen, former head of the U.S. Justice Department Ramsey Clark, a Swedish lawyer, two Swedish television journalists, a French academic, and a Russian doctor, publicly announced their support of the North Vietnamese struggle.

In Sweden, people’s diplomacy played a supporting role to formal diplomacy because the ruling Swedish Social Democratic Party consistently expressed solidarity with Third World nationalist struggles for independence. Swedish antiwar activists established close links with the North Vietnamese, and the Swedish government turned moral support for North Vietnam into formal diplomatic recognition in 1969.

Women

North Vietnamese women initially began exploring connections with women’s organizations abroad so that they could bring the suffering of Vietnamese women and children to the attention of audiences in their countries. The effort initially had modest aims to win the support and sympathy of women.

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55 Thu, Phong Phu Thu Tuong, den Uy ban Dieu tra loi ac chien tranh cua de quoc My o Viet Nam, 28.7.1972, so 1892/VPG, ho so xet duyet doan ra, doan vao cho Uy ban Dieu tra loi ac chien tranh cua de quoc My o Viet Nam nam 1972, 8806, trang 19, PPTT, TTLTQG3. [Letter, Prime Minister’s Office to Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists in Vietnam, 28.7.1972, No. 1892/VPG, Documents examining entry and exit of the Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists in Vietnam in 1972, 8806, p. 19].
abroad, but as Vietnamese and foreign women developed close contacts, they conducted informal diplomacy aimed at influencing public opinion abroad against the American intervention and bombardment of North Vietnam. The connections forged by women are important because until recently women have been largely neglected in diplomatic history. In most historical accounts of the Vietnam War the main actors have been male politicians, combatants, and antiwar activists.

American women’s struggle for gender equality coincided with their struggle against war. Despite divisions of nationality, American women began forming transnational women’s organizations and “constructing an international collective identity” after the First World War, a process they continued in the 1960s. American women in the twentieth century strove to attain some semblance of power by working within exclusively women’s organizations in order to realize their goal of achieving world peace. The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) leader Annalee Stewart, for example, insisted in 1962 that the Kennedy administration was conducting an “undeclared war” in South Vietnam. Women Strike for Peace (WSP), a splinter faction of WILPF, performed a variety of tasks: conducting propaganda against the American intervention in Vietnam, lobbying Congress, working for the election of peace candidates, planning massive antiwar demonstrations in major American

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cities, supporting draft-counseling centers, and assisting conscientious objectors.\(^{59}\) Many women's groups expressed outrage at the wrongs of Western imperialism. In its 1923 manifesto, the WILPF argued that the great powers had pursued "imperialist interests" to the "detriment of their neighbors," and had "imposed their domination on peoples desiring independence."\(^{60}\)

Female members of the diplomatic front tried to gain sympathy for North Vietnam by appealing to foreign women on terms that they imagined would be familiar to them. The Vietnam Women's Union, for example, wrote a series of open letters to American women, many of whom were protesting the American war in Vietnam. \textit{Nhan Dan} ran a report on a protest by more than 500 American women, including mothers with babies, against American atrocities in Vietnam in front of the White House on 10 February 1965.\(^{61}\) The following month, sixteen North Vietnamese women published a letter in \textit{Nhan Dan}, urging American women to take "prompt and vigorous action" to stop the U.S. bombardment of Vietnam.\(^{62}\) In a joint letter to American mothers, vice-president of the Vietnam Women’s Union Professor Nguyen Thi Thuc Vien, actress Ai Len, gynecologist Dr. Tran Thi Ngoc, and several other women expressed sorrow at the senseless deaths of American pilots in Vietnam. Referring to one particular pilot, the

women wrote: "We felt a pang when thinking of his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers and sisters... We, too, have husbands, children, brothers and sisters..."  

Professor Nguyen Thi Thuc Vien also wrote to American mothers expressing the deep-felt sorrow of Vietnamese mothers over the death of Alice Herz, an 82-year-old American peace activist who set herself on fire in Detroit, Michigan in March 1965, after declaring that all other methods of appealing to the U.S government had failed. Vietnamese mothers, they wrote, were deeply moved upon learning that hundreds of American women, wearing mourning bands, had demonstrated at the United Nations Square in New York City to protest the U.S. government’s policy of sending their husbands, sons, and brothers "to die for the benefit of the warmongers." The Vietnam Women's Union published an open letter to American mothers in Nhan Dan, and also wrote to the Paris-based Women's International Democratic Federation calling on women all over the world to stop the United States from bombing and killing Vietnamese civilians.  

The first American peace activists to meet North Vietnamese officials were the members of Women Strike for Peace, a peace organization created in 1961 to protest nuclear testing. These women first contacted North Vietnamese and NLF officials in Moscow in May 1965 following the death of Alice Herz, whose sacrifice in imitation of the Buddhist monks of Vietnam captured the hearts...
of the people of North Vietnam. During their visit to Moscow to attend an anniversary marking the end of the Second World War, WSP activists Mary Clarke and Lorraine Gordon asked Vietnamese officials to arrange a meeting with women of the DRV to help American women gain a better appreciation of the conditions in Vietnam. In July 1965, Mary Clarke, black civil rights activist Esther Jackson, former Voice of America news editor Aline Berman, WSP liaison to the United Nations Bernice Steele, and six other women peace activists met with nine Vietnamese women from the Vietnam Women’s Union and the NLF in Jakarta, Indonesia. The U.S. delegation explained that most American citizens presently supported their government’s war effort, but it hoped that bringing home the reality of the war would induce many Americans to change their minds. The Vietnamese women gave vivid descriptions of American bombardment of villages, and inquired about the Civil Rights movement in the United States and the struggle for racial equality. Both groups issued a signed agreement stating that the implementation of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 would be an honorable way to end the war. After returning to the United States, the WSP held press conferences to announce that the Vietnamese struggle was primarily nationalistic and posed no threat to the world. When mainstream American newspapers ridiculed the women as communist dupes who were

66 Ibid, 8.
67 Ibid, 9.
spreading North Vietnamese propaganda, the WSP tried propagating their message at universities, churches, and town hall meetings. 68

The Women’s Union of Nghe An province sent an open letter to American mothers in July 1965 denouncing the bombing of Nghia Dan Hospital, the Quynh Lap leprosy sanatorium, and many populated areas. The letter urged American women to call on their husbands and sons serving in Vietnam to return home, and refuse to be drafted. 69 The Lao Dong also encouraged North Vietnamese children to appeal to American mothers by writing letters. For example, a thirteen-year-old schoolboy from Dong Hoi in Quang Binh province, whose parents were killed in an American bombing raid, wrote to American mothers asking them to “stop American planes from bombing villages and killing people, so that we children would be able to study and play in peace.” 70 The daughter of a South Vietnamese opponent of the Saigon regime, Hoang Le Kha wrote to Ann Morrison, the wife of Norman Morrison, who had immolated himself to protest the Johnson’s administration’s policies in Vietnam: “Uncle Morrison’s self-sacrifice reminds us of our father, a patriot killed by the U.S. puppets a few years ago because of his protest against their aggressive acts.” 71

In December 1966, Liberation magazine editor Barbara Deming, antiwar activist Grace Mora Newman, WSP member Patricia Griffith, and Student

68 Ibid, 11.
70 “Letter to American Mothers,” 24 July 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 7/1/65-7/30/65, Far East, Box 7, NARA.
Nonviolent Coordinating Committee activist Diane Nash traveled to Hanoi for 11 days at the invitation of the Vietnam Women’s Union. Prior to departure for Hanoi, the women promised to describe the effects of an “illegal and immoral war” that was not being covered accurately in the mainstream media. Each morning they visited villages around Hanoi to see the destruction caused by American bombing, and hear stories of horror from the victims. They saw populous residential areas, pagodas, schools, and hospitals destroyed by American aircraft. The women met two American prisoners of war, who urged them to help end the war. President Ho told the visitors that if the American forces did not leave Vietnam, the Vietnamese would continue the war of resistance because each generation of Vietnamese had grown more resolved to fight foreign domination.

Not all the women who visited North Vietnam became enamored with the revolution. Carol McEldowney, an activist who had helped form the Students for a Democratic Society, visited North Vietnam for 19 days in September and October 1967 along with peace activists Tom Hayden, Vivian Rothstein, and Rennie Davis. After listening to presentation after presentation on the effects of the American bombardment on agricultural and industrial production, McEldowney wrote in her diary that she feared that Americans back home would...
not take her seriously because she would seem to have been brainwashed by DRV propaganda.\textsuperscript{76}

Following a meeting with officials of the Committee on Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, McEldowney and her American colleagues were shown a film which celebrated the life of Nguyen Van Troi, the teenage NLF guerrilla who was sentenced to death following his attempt to assassinate Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge who were visiting South Vietnam in May 1963.\textsuperscript{77} Prime Minister Dong told the visiting American activists that they must increase the solidarity between American and Vietnamese women. However, McEldowney was appalled at the “double standards” of DRV health officials toward single mothers, who were denied information on birth control because the officials claimed they “have no right” to such information. Officials informed her about the “Three Postponements” drive for the youth: (1) When studying, postpone love; (2) when loving, postpone marriage; and (3) when marrying, postpone having family.\textsuperscript{78} She discounted as DRV propaganda claims that sixteen percent of National Assembly members were women and that women served on many committees. She observed that not a single woman chaired a National Assembly committee.\textsuperscript{79}

Like McEldowney, the American writer Susan Sontag became somewhat disenchanted with the rigidity of the Vietnamese revolution. When Sontag visited

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 79.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 47.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, 69.
North Vietnam in May 1968, she complained that North Vietnamese propaganda conveyed poorly, insensitively, and unconvincingly the most admirable features of communist society that the DRV had developed since 1954. North Vietnamese publications, she argued, were written in a bombastic and shrill tone which masked the delicate texture of North Vietnamese society. She informed several DRV officials that foreigners reading these books and pamphlets could not possibly form an accurate idea of what North Vietnam was like. She warned them that their "revolution was being betrayed by its language." Sontag had hit a sore point. In a speech three years earlier, Prime Minister Dong had criticized the "disease of rhetoric" that he said existed among the political cadre, and appealed for an improvement in the use of the Vietnamese language.

A Women Strike for Peace delegation consisting of Cora Weiss, Ethel Taylor, and Madeline Duckles arrived in Hanoi in December 1969 at the invitation of the Vietnam Women's Union. The Americans traveled to small towns and villages to see for themselves the impact of American bombardment.  

The Committee of Vietnamese and American People's Solidarity helped arrange visits of many Americans, including the actress Jane Fonda who traveled to North Vietnam in July 1972. The committee hoped to use Fonda's visit to

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promote the antiwar movement. During her visit to North Vietnam, Fonda delivered several broadcasts over Radio Hanoi condemning American pilots for using chemical weapons. Vietnamese fighters were her friends, she proclaimed, many of whom were peasants living a peaceful life before the Americans came to destroy Vietnam.

According to one scholar, the women's missions to North Vietnam "had indeed affected U.S. government policy in Vietnam and contributed to the termination of the war." While this claim is perhaps an exaggeration, the missions did show Americans that the Vietnamese were human, and that they were losing husbands and sons in the war, just like the American women. The WILPF and WSP joined forces under the name of the "Jeanette Rankin Brigade" – a reference to Rankin, a member of Congress who voted against the U.S. participation in the First World War, and against the U.S. declaration of war in 1941. The brigade confronted Congress on its opening day on 15 January 1968 with a powerful display of female opposition to the war in Vietnam. On that
day, Rankin and Coretta Scott King, the wife of the African-American leader Martin Luther King, Jr., entered the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., at the head of 5,000 women, and presented a petition to the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader, stating that American women were “outraged by the ruthless slaughter in Vietnam,” and demanding an end to the Vietnam War, and the beginning of the healing process at home. 88

North Vietnamese women also made connections with women in Latin America. In September 1965, Elisabeth Tortosa de Faria, wife of Jesus Faria, secretary-general of the Communist Party of Venezuela, arrived in Hanoi at the invitation of the Lao Dong. Le Duan, the first secretary of the party, hosted a dinner reception in her honor, and she toured a textile factory staffed mainly by women. She hugged a woman comrade and told the gathering: “although very far from each other, our two countries are very close by their militant friendship.” 89

On 14 November 1965, Yvonne Dumont, secretary-general of the Union of French Women, said in her closing speech at Ninth Congress of the union in Paris that French women were determined to live up to their promise to wholeheartedly support the struggle of their Vietnamese sisters until complete liberation was achieved and peace restored in their country. 90 Nguyen Thi Binh, the vice chair of South Vietnam’s Women’s Liberation Association, who was present at the congress, thanked the women of France for their support.

88 Ibid.
89 “Wife of Jesus Faria Pays Visit to the DRV,” 6 Sep. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 9/1/65-9/30/65, Far East, Box 9, NARA.
90 “Women’s Union Congress Closes in Paris,” 16 Nov. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 11/1/65-1/30/65, Far East, Box 11, NARA.
**Cuban and Latin American Solidarity**

Many Latin Americans opposed American policy in Vietnam because they had faced similar military interventions in their own countries. Some dissidents even viewed the Vietnamese revolution as a possible model for other liberation struggles in the Third World. The rebel leader Ernesto Che Guevara, for example, called Vietnam “the great laboratory of Yankee imperialism,” and urged Latin American revolutionaries to “follow the Vietnamese road” to create “a second or a third Vietnam” that would deliver “repeated blows against imperialism.”

As Cuba’s Minister of Industry, Che tried to present the North Vietnamese standpoint at international forums. In March 1964, in an address to a United Nations’ Conference on Trade and Development in Geneva, Che complained that because a DRV representative had not been invited, the conference could not be considered a forum of the world’s people. In an address to the UN General Assembly in New York in December, Che questioned the basis of Moscow’s peaceful coexistence policy that aimed to lower tensions between the two superpowers while countries such as Vietnam were denied any right to exist.

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peacefully. He argued that peaceful coexistence could not be limited to the powerful countries if world peace was to be ensured.93

Cuba, the DRV, and North Korea were worried about the efforts of the Soviet Union to normalize relations with the United States while ignoring the interests of the smaller countries. They also worried that because of the Sino-Soviet split, Moscow and Beijing could not agree on a common policy to support the DRV.94 In order to address these concerns, a “Third Communist Front” consisting of Cuba, the DRV, and North Korea was formed in the early 1960s with strong support from students and independent leftists in the West. Cuba and North Korea chastised Soviet and Chinese leaders for failing to agree on a common war aim in Vietnam and to trust each other enough to coordinate their material and diplomatic support for North Vietnam. Castro condemned the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence with the United States as a betrayal of the revolution in Vietnam and other countries. Castro also castigated China’s leaders as “senile old idiots fit to be kept in an old folks’ home.” Because of his outspokenness, Soviet officials described Castro as “that Caribbean viper in our bosom.”95 The “Third Communist Front” collapsed in the late-1960s, however,

93 Ernesto Che Guevara, “Cuba’s example shows that the peoples of the world can liberate themselves,” Address to the General Assembly, 11 Dec. 1964, To Speak the Truth: Why Washington’s ‘Cold War’ against Cuba Doesn’t End, 125.
because Cuba was so dependent on Soviet economic support for its survival. 96

Nevertheless, Havana continued to pour economic aid into the DRV.

The DRV accorded greater importance to relations with Cuba than other Latin American states because Cuba was the only country in the Western hemisphere that provided economic and military support to North Vietnam. Cuban leaders considered the North Vietnamese struggle as the main battlefield in the global fight against American imperialism, so they kept in close contact with their DRV counterparts. In February 1965, Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticos Torrado and Prime Minister Fidel Castro expressed their sympathy and support for the heroic struggle of the DRV. 97 Castro offered to send volunteers from the Cuban regular army to fight alongside the North Vietnamese. 98 The Cuban ambassador to the DRV, Mauro Garcia Triana, warned that should the United States expand the war to North Vietnam, his embassy staff would join forces with the Vietnamese to fight the Americans. Triana drew a parallel for the Hanoi weekly Cuu Quoc (National Salvation) between the centuries old Vietnamese tradition of resisting foreign aggression, and Cuba’s successful overthrow of the Fulgencio Batista puppet clique “who had the U.S. as adviser.” 99 The following month Castro explained his offer of Cuban troops and weapons: “We are in favor

97 “GDR Reception,” 15 Feb. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, RG 263, Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports, 2/1/65-2/26/65, Far East, Box 2, NARA.
99 “Cuban Ambassador Condemns U.S. Provocations,” 23 Feb 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS daily reports, RG 263, 2/1/65-2/26/65, Far East, Box 2, NARA.
of sending arms and men to Vietnam to help defeat imperialism. We are in favor of running the risks necessary in order to defend Vietnam.” Cuba became the first communist country to make such an offer; eleven days later China offered to send its own forces, and the Soviet Union followed a day later. In the end, Cuban combat troops did not go to Vietnam. The Vietnamese revolutionaries turned down the offer because they could not ask the United States to withdraw its forces from Vietnam if they invited foreign forces to fight on their behalf.

Cuban government leaders did, however, visit North Vietnam to see how Cuba could help specific sectors of the DRV economy. For instance, the Cuban Vice-Minister of Communications, M.A. Dalsana arrived in Hanoi on 31 March 1965 at the invitation of the DRV Communications and Transport Ministry to explore Cuban assistance in those areas. The following month, thirty workers of a Cuban factory sent a petition to Prime Minister Castro, expressing their intention to help the Vietnamese people to defeat the United States. Soon both the Cuban government was helping the DRV build its transport sector, and the Cuban people were donating what little money they could afford to send humanitarian aid.

Using the Vietnam issue, the Cuban government dramatically increased its propaganda against the United States in early July 1965. Cuban broadcasting and television stations exhorted Cubans to reaffirm their unshakeable friendship with

101 “GDR University Delegation,” and “Cuban Guest,” 2 Apr. 1965, *Nhan Dan*, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 4/1/65-4/30/65, Far East, Box 4, NARA.
Vietnam, and several rallies were staged in Havana and other Cuban cities. The Committee for Solidarity with the Vietnamese People organized a debate in Havana on the Geneva Agreements. Cuban communist party cadre and professors of Havana University attended the event where scholars Juan Benitez and Miguel d’Estefani presented a forty-six-point paper on the violations of the Geneva Agreements.\(^{103}\) The Cuban Institute of Friendship Among Nations invited a delegation led by Dang Gia Tat, a representative of the Fatherland Front of Quang Binh province, to attend the anniversary of the Cuban revolution on 26 July.\(^{104}\)

The People’s Army of Viet Nam befriended Cuban militias. A Cuban military delegation led by Capt. Manuel Bravo visited Thanh Hoa and Nam Ha in mid-September where they met officials of the people’s army. Capt. Bravo praised the effort of the Vietnamese people to boost war production, and predicted that they would be victorious.\(^{105}\) Castro ensured that the last bag of Cuban sugar – part of a gift of six million tons of sugar – was delivered to the DRV in early October.\(^{106}\)

In early January 1966, the Cuban government helped organize the Tricontinental Conference of Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin

\(^{103}\) "Cuban Support," 16 July 1965, *Nhan Dan*, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 7/1/65-7/30/65, Far East, Box 7, NARA.

\(^{104}\) "Delegation to Mark 26 July Cuban Anniversary," 13 July 1965, *Nhan Dan*, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 6/1/65-6/30/65, Far East, Box 6, NARA.


In his keynote speech to the conference Cuban President Dorticos reaffirmed his country’s unconditional support for the DRV. Delegates from more than seventy countries attending the conference also expressed solidarity with Vietnam. In October 1966, Prime Minister Dong hosted Alejo Carpentier, the president of the Cuban Writers’ and Artists’ Union, who traveled to Vietnam to investigate U.S. war crimes. North Vietnamese propaganda widely publicized the visit of Carpentier, a critically acclaimed writer, who was reportedly under consideration for a Nobel Prize in literature in the mid-1960s.

The DRV’s campaign to publicize its cause was buoyed by the visit to Hanoi by Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticos, and Fidel Castro’s brother Raul Castro, who served as Minister of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces, in November 1966. In a speech to welcome the Cuban leaders, Ho paid tributes to Cuban resistance against the United States, and thanked Cuba for its moral and material support to the DRV.

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Cuba generously gave financial grants to the DRV worth more than three million rubles in 1967, and more than seven million rubles the following year.\(^{112}\) Ho declared that Castro and other Cuban leaders had said on several occasions that the Cuban people were “ready to give even their blood” to help the North Vietnamese. In return, Ho affirmed the DRV’s unreserved support of the five-point stand of the Cuban government in the struggle against the United States.\(^{113}\) Cuba sent personnel to set up antiaircraft and anti-missile batteries in North Vietnam, and Cuban medical personnel helped build hospitals and trained North Vietnamese public health staff. Cubans also trained the Vietnamese in hotel and restaurant management, and in construction.\(^{114}\)

As part of the cooperation between the armed forces of Cuba and the DRV, General Vo Nguyen Giap visited Havana in September 1967 and toured the Guerrilla Warfare School in Arroyo Arena. Although they exchanged their experiences and training in guerrilla warfare, Giap insisted that there would be no need for Cuban volunteers from the warfare school to fight in North Vietnam because the North Vietnamese had enough recruits for their armed forces.\(^{115}\) The two countries maintained their solidarity as the DRV made preparations to stage spectacular military campaigns such as the Tet Offensive in early 1968.

\(^{112}\) Table, p. 91, folder 8306, PPTT, TTLTQG3, Hanoi.

\(^{113}\) “Speech in Honor of Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticos, Ho Chi Minh on Revolution, 346-349.


Vietnamese officials and Cuban diplomats in Hanoi celebrated the 7th anniversary of Cuba’s Bay of Pigs victory on 20 April 1968, and a meeting of the Vietnam-Cuban Friendship Association was held at the Hanoi Postal Equipment and Repair Factory.\textsuperscript{116}

An important dimension to the Cuban-North Vietnamese relationship was the collaboration between artists of both countries. The Cuban artist Rene Mederos visited North Vietnam in February 1969 under a cultural exchange program. Mederos lived with the Vietnamese for two months and grew to deeply sympathize with them. Although he expected to find a very sad and desolate people, he saw “vivacity, determination, and hope,” and was inspired to produce a series of posters in vibrant colors. Following his trip to the DRV, Mederos created a series of 32 silkscreen poster paintings in 1969 and 1971.\textsuperscript{117} Cuban artists produced a whole range of posters supporting North Vietnam under the auspices of Cuba’s Organization of Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and the Continental Latin American Students’ Organization.

Cuba staged a massive solidarity rally during the visit to Havana of Tran Buu Kiem, member of the NLF’s Central Committee and president of its Foreign Relations Commission, in June 1969. In a speech marking Kiem’s visit, Fidel Castro argued that Vietnam was “a great bastion of anti-imperialist struggle” because no other country had made greater sacrifices in the struggle as the people


\textsuperscript{117}David Kunzle, “Cuba’s Art of Solidarity,” \textit{Decade of Protest: Political Posters from the United States, Viet Nam, and Cuba, 1965-1975} (Santa Monica, CA: Smart Art Press, 1996), 76.
of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{118} During Kiem's visit the Cuban Foreign Minister Raul Roa revealed that Cuba maintained a "roving diplomatic mission" to the NLF somewhere in the liberated areas of South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{119} This disclosure showed the deep commitment of Cuba to assist the Vietnamese revolutionaries.

The North Vietnamese collaborated with a prominent Cuban filmmaker to produce antiwar documentaries. In January 1970, the Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists in Vietnam invited the Cuban filmmaker Julio Garcia Espinosa to visit North Vietnam to make a film on the bombardment of civilians and ethnic minorities.\textsuperscript{120} Espinosa, whose 1955 short film \textit{El Mégano} about the miserable existence of Cuban coal miners had been banned by the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship, strongly supported the DRV. During his trip to North Vietnam, Espinosa shot the feature-length documentary \textit{Tercer mundo, tercera guerra mundial} about the war in Vietnam from the Cuban perspective. The film used the issue of the Vietnam War to advocate resistance by the Third World against the military-industrial complex of the capitalist world.\textsuperscript{121}

The Cubans lent moral support to a North Vietnamese war crimes investigation that operated independently from the Bertrand Russell war crimes tribunal. The Havana-based Committee of Cuban Solidarity with Vietnam, Laos,
and Cambodia invited the DRV Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists to send a delegation to Cuba to participate in a conference on U.S. war crimes from 19-22 May 1972.\textsuperscript{122}

Cuba’s economic, military, and diplomatic support to North Vietnam formed part of a global Cuban strategy called “integral coexistence.” Cuba developed this strategy because of its geographic isolation from the major European communist powers, continuing subversion of Cuba by the CIA, and the American escalation in Vietnam. “Integral coexistence” argued that the struggle of developing countries against colonialism and neo-colonialism should not be sacrificed to achieve peaceful coexistence between the great powers. Revolutionary countries must also urge capitalist countries to establish peaceful coexistence policies with the Third World as well, and that aggression against the developing countries must not be allowed.\textsuperscript{123} Cuba became very important to the Vietnamese struggle as a symbol of international revolutionary solidarity.

Ho pursued a carefully calibrated strategy to build close ties with other Latin American countries. Eduardo Gallegos Mancera, a senior member of the Venezuelan Communist Party, wrote to North Vietnamese leaders in April 1965, following his visit to the DRV in August 1964, saying that Venezuelans were

\textsuperscript{122} Thu, Uy ban Dieu tra toi ac chien tranh cua de quoc My o Viet, den Phong Phu Thu Tuong, 11.4.1972, so 105/UBDT, ho so xet duyet doan ra, doan vao cho Uy ban Dieu tra loi ac chien tranh cua de quoc My o Viet Nam nam 1972, 8806, trang 5-7, PPTT, TTLTQG3. [Letter, Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists in Vietnam to Prime Minister’s Office, 11.4.1972, No 105/UBDT, Examine entry and exit of the Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists in Vietnam in 1972, 8806, pp, 5-7].

\textsuperscript{123} Nelson P. Valdes, ”Revolutionary Solidarity in Angola,” \textit{Cuba in the World}, 88.
willing to volunteer to fight against U.S. aggression in Vietnam. 

In June 1965, the Venezuelan Communist Party sent Ho greetings on his 75th birthday, declaring that the Venezuelan people not only considered Ho a teacher but also one of the best representatives of the fight against U.S. imperialism. The message proclaimed that the Venezuelan fighters, inspired by Che Guevara to wage guerrilla war, were celebrating Ho’s birthday in the jungles of Venezuela. In return, the DRV expressed solidarity with the Venezuelan communists. Nhan Dan said in an editorial in July that the Vietnamese people wholeheartedly supported the Venezuelan people’s struggle against the United States that had brought the country under its sphere of influence by implementing economic reforms under the Alliance for Progress development program.

DRV officials and media took every opportunity to criticize the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic. An editorial in Nhan Dan in early May 1965 argued that the U.S. government must withdraw its troops from the Dominican Republic and let the Dominican people decide their own affairs. The paper criticized the Johnson administration’s dispatch to Santo Domingo of more than 6,000 American marines to suppress the Dominican people in 1965. Dr. Nguyen Van Huong, Vice-Chairman of the Vietnam Asian-African Solidarity

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124 "Venezuelan Communist Party," 16 Apr. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 4/1/65-4/30/65, Far East, Box 4, NARA.
125 "Venezuelan CP Greets Ho’s 75th Birthday," 14 June 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 6/1/65-6/30/65, Far East, Box 6, NARA.
126 "Nhan Dan Hails Armed Struggle of Venezuelans," 5 July 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, FBIS Daily Reports, RG 263, 7/1/65-7/30/65, Far East, Box 7, NARA.
Committee, told a mass meeting in Hanoi on the night of 6 May that the struggle of the Vietnamese people and the Dominican people were integral parts of a worldwide movement for national independence and peace.\textsuperscript{128} The arrival of American forces in the Dominican Republic in April signaled the start of the first major American military intervention in the Western Hemisphere since President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s proclamation of the “Good Neighbor Policy” in 1933. Under this policy the U.S. relinquished military intervention in Latin American nations, unless requested to do so, and U.S. officials agreed not to offer advice, exert economic pressure, or display force to influence local political issues.\textsuperscript{129} In order to ensure that Juan Bosch’s left-leaning regime did not return to power, President Johnson dispatched 23,000 troops to the island.\textsuperscript{130}

The DRV also developed important connections with revolutionaries in Uruguay. In December 1965, Ho thanked Uruguayans for their support, and wished them success in their struggle for freedom against the “infiltration and exploitation by U.S. imperialism.” Ho made these remarks in an interview with Salomon Schvarz Alexandro, an alternate member of the Central Committee of the Uruguayan Communist Party and editor-in-chief of the party’s organ, \textit{El}

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\textsuperscript{129} See Piero Gleijeses, \textit{The Dominican Crisis: The 1965 Constitutionalist Revolt and American Intervention} (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), xi, 256; and Bryce Wood, \textit{The Dismantling of the Good Neighbor Policy} (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1985), x, xi.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid, 258.
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Ho was referring to the fact that U.S. officials trained Uruguayan police in intelligence and interrogation techniques in order to fight Uruguay’s urban guerrillas who had rebelled because of mass unemployment and falling living standards. Uruguay faced economic trouble since the 1950s because international prices for its agricultural products fell and the land-owning elite resisted modernization of agriculture. Washington interfered in Uruguay’s internal affairs to reduce the threat of internal revolt from urban guerrillas, and to eliminate the risk of the left gaining power through elections. The CIA played a significant role in organizing the system of state-sponsored repression, and laid the foundation of the oppressive system. The United States was repeatedly denounced in the Uruguayan parliament not only for training the police and military forces, but also for organizing the paramilitary Escuadron de le Muerte (Death Squad).
Conclusion

The principal contribution of people’s diplomacy is that it initiated – and facilitated – contacts with people and governments abroad. The North Vietnamese representatives of people’s diplomacy capitalized on pre-existing support among the left wing in non-communist countries in Western Europe. As a result, people’s diplomacy generated economic and humanitarian aid from Europeans. The North Vietnamese also strengthened their linkages with people in Latin America who traveled to North Vietnam to produce films and propaganda posters.

The NLF leader Nguyen Thi Binh has argued that an “important element” in the eventual victory of the Vietnamese revolutionaries was the “strong world support” for the Vietnamese people’s struggle. In France, dozens of organizations “stood up” for Vietnam. Italians sent medical equipment and dry blood to the rebels in South Vietnam. In Sweden, Olof Palme’s government, young people, women, and workers showed their solidarity by raising funds and agitating for an end to the war. Certain European governments, she observed, also supported the Vietnamese struggle. 134

The connections forged by American and European women with North Vietnamese women exposed the impact of the war on families, a dimension of the conflict that was all too easy to ignore. Western women who traveled to Vietnam returned home to inform domestic audiences that the Vietnamese were human.

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beings too who were suffering from indiscriminate American chemical weapons attacks.

Cuba played a significant role because it was the first communist country to offer to send troops to North Vietnam. Despite the risk of losing Soviet economic aid and Chinese support, Castro criticized both those powers for failing to create a coordinated strategy to assist the DRV. Cuba’s key contribution was its consistent effort to publicize and champion the Vietnamese cause among Latin American countries.

Mobilizing Western public opinion against American war crimes was one of the goals of North Vietnamese people’s diplomacy. An equally important objective was to strengthen “brotherly ties” with Chinese and Russians. People’s diplomacy resulted in Chinese and Russians providing economic and humanitarian assistance – in addition to the official government aid delivered by Beijing and Moscow that helped the DRV survive the American bombardment.
Chapter Four

Communist Camaraderie:
Sustaining the Resistance War with “Sympathy” and “Symphony”

The DRV orchestrated a two-track diplomatic strategy consisting of formal government diplomacy and people’s diplomacy with its communist allies in order to obtain both economic aid and popular support. To achieve these goals, North Vietnamese people’s committees and industry groups began conducting people’s diplomacy in the Soviet Union and China soon after those countries established diplomatic relations with the DRV in 1950, and DRV officials concluded economic aid agreements with Moscow and Beijing during the same period.

This chapter focuses exclusively on the role of people’s diplomacy in securing economic and humanitarian aid, as well as moral and propaganda support, both from people’s organizations and governments in China and the Soviet Union. These important functions of people’s diplomacy have not been covered in the literature. There are, of course, many excellent studies that have greatly enhanced scholarly understanding of communist bloc aid to North

* All Chinese place names and names of well known Chinese figures (e.g. Guo Moruo [Kuo Mo-juo], and Mao Dun [Mao Tun]) are put into pinyin wherever possible, and the remaining names are left in their original English rendering. This is because some of the names taken from English language materials published in China in the 1950s and 1960s use a system that cannot be readily transliterated into pinyin without knowing the Chinese characters.

The symbolic support of the Vietnamese revolution by communist bloc populations underscored the warning by Chinese leaders that China would intervene if American troops invaded North Vietnam. American officials were aware of people’s diplomacy through reports written by the CIA and U.S. embassies in Saigon and Hong Kong, which monitored communist bloc media.
People’s diplomacy generated an enthusiastic response from Russians and Chinese who provided economic aid to the Vietnamese, apart from the official Soviet and Chinese aid to the DRV and the NLF. People’s diplomacy matters because it enabled the North Vietnamese and their communist allies to develop a range of cultural exchanges: people’s diplomacy enabled North Vietnamese and Chinese book publishers and film studio executives to meet and sign business agreements. It enabled trade unions from China, the DRV, and the NLF to sign an important agreement under which Chinese workers promised all possible assistance. Without people’s diplomacy Chinese and Soviet writers, workers, women, and students would never have met their North Vietnamese counterparts, and would not have understood their suffering and their needs.

The encounters with the Vietnamese revolutionaries inspired Chinese theater directors, film producers, ballet dancers, and opera singers to produce works depicting their brave resistance. Chinese poets produced stirring verse on Vietnamese heroism, and Soviet women who traveled to Vietnam returned home to write articles in Soviet newspapers about their impressions of North Vietnam. These works informed ordinary Chinese and Russians about the bravery of the Vietnamese resistance in the face of American bombardment. Soviet women, in fact, set up a medical center in Hanoi for women and children.

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3 The section on Soviet assistance below shows that Russian people’s organizations donated at least 5 million rubles worth of economic aid to the DRV in 1966-1967. Chinese mass organizations also contributed much food and medicines, but it is difficult to assess its monetary value.
These wide-ranging and frequent contacts were possible because the governments in Beijing and Moscow approved of mass organizations demonstrating support within their countries. Because many Chinese officials also headed Chinese people’s organizations, they were able to tell the people’s organizations that the Chinese government approved of their efforts to help the Vietnamese. This meant that the Chinese people were allowed to send economic and humanitarian aid to the North Vietnamese, and they could maintain direct connections with them through mail and personal visits to North Vietnam. Representatives of Chinese mass organizations and the Chinese government frequently appeared together at public rallies in China in support of the Vietnamese struggle. On many such occasions, the heads of DRV and NLF people’s organizations made special appearances alongside the Chinese leaders.

Similarly, the Soviet government approved of the effort of Soviet mass organizations to assist the Vietnamese. There was a close connection between the Soviet government and Soviet mass organizations because the heads of Soviet mass organizations also served on government-affiliated committees. For instance, Pyotr Pimenov – who held two positions as Chairman of the Soviet Support for Vietnam Committee and Secretary of the Soviet Central Council of Trade Unions – encouraged Soviet people’s groups to provide economic assistance the Vietnamese.⁴

The DRV both initiated and facilitated contacts between its people’s organizations and Chinese and Russians. It was possible to conduct people’s diplomacy because the Chinese and Soviet state encouraged their mass organizations to establish connections with the Vietnamese. For their part, the DRV capitalized on the goodwill among Chinese and Russians by sending a stream of North Vietnamese to strengthen linkages. The North Vietnamese devised a strategy to build a direct connection with Chinese helpers by awarding them medals for participating in the economic construction of the DRV. Hanoi gave service awards to Chinese workers, women, and educators who had worked on development projects in North Vietnam. In return, people from several Chinese provinces donated agricultural equipment to DRV farmers.\(^5\)

The North Vietnamese also conducted informal, or amateur, diplomacy by maintaining links with the Chinese leadership. For instance, DRV workers and members of agricultural cooperatives wrote to Chinese leaders to thank them for their material and moral support.\(^6\) On their visits to China, North Vietnamese writers, performing artists, workers, and women met China’s top leaders. Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai frequently received delegations of Vietnamese people’s organizations at their offices, and sometimes dined with them.\(^7\) Chinese


government leaders visited DRV factories in order to show solidarity. The purpose of these meetings was to publicly demonstrate the Chinese government’s support for the people of Vietnam who were struggling against the United States.

People's diplomacy in communist bloc countries served a very different function than in the Western democracies. In the West, the point of people's diplomacy was to build solidarity with sympathizers, who would then build new social movements – or expand existing ones – that would press their governments into rejecting the American intervention in Vietnam. In the East, there was no need to convince communist governments to support the Vietnamese revolution; they would all do that on the basis of a shared communist ideology.

Yet, the goal of people’s diplomacy was to build closer people-to-people relations with Chinese and Russians because they were providers of substantial aid to the Vietnamese revolutionaries. President Ho worried that the Sino-Soviet ideological split might damage the flow of aid from the communist bloc. Ho was concerned about the existence of a pro-China and pro-Soviet faction within the Lao Dong, and he feared that internecine rivalry could damage the DRV’s goal of obtaining economic aid from the two major communist allies. Ho instructed his diplomats not to take sides in the dispute, and to maintain a harmonious relationship with both allies. DRV people’s diplomats also functioned under similar instructions to demonstrate solidarity with the Chinese and the Soviet people, and maintain a façade of harmony within the Lao Dong.

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**Hanoi’s Strategy to Balance Relations with Moscow and Beijing**

The leaders of the DRV used people’s diplomacy in order to maintain cordial relations with the ideological rivals, the Soviet Union and China. They achieved their goal of maintaining solidarity with both allies by regularly sending North Vietnamese people’s groups to China and the Soviet Union, and welcoming delegations of Chinese and Russians to North Vietnam. The North Vietnamese attempted to prevent the Sino-Soviet rivalry from adversely affecting communist economic and political support for the DRV because it would hinder their goal of reunification.

The outbreak of the ideological dispute between Moscow and Beijing in the 1960s placed Ho in a difficult position. Taking sides in the Sino-Soviet dispute risked jeopardizing the flow of aid from one or the other, so Ho attempted to straddle the middle most of the time. Ho needed the assistance of his communist allies as the DRV confronted the daunting task of reconstructing the north and unifying the south following the Geneva Conference in July 1954.

By 1956, Ho believed that his country could only make progress through industrialization, and that in order to earn hard currency it must export what was produced by the domestic industry. Because China alone could not meet the DRV’s massive needs for technical aid, Ho turned to the Soviet Union for additional assistance. When the Lao Dong discussed the shift, sharp differences erupted between pro-Soviet and pro-China factions within the party.9 At the head

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of the pro-China faction was the secretary general of the party, Truong Chinh, a fervent Maoist who had organized the disastrous land reform program. The leader of the pro-Soviet faction, General Vo Nguyen Giap, did not conceal his distrust of China. The Lao Dong was in turmoil not just over ideological and policy-oriented disputes, but the factional leaders also clashed as the party tilted ever so slightly toward the Soviet Union, and the DRV came to rely more on Moscow than on Beijing for aid by 1957.

A moderate “North-first” group advocated strengthening communism in the north as the proper way to peacefully unify the country. A radical “South-first” faction demanded that the country be unified using military force combined with a “fight and negotiate” strategy.” The “South-first” group, and many southerners, believed that Hanoi officials prioritized the long-term interests of the north ahead of the liberation of the south.\textsuperscript{10} The “South-firsters” led by Le Duan believed that for the “fight and negotiate” strategy to succeed, the fighting must be sustained for the DRV to improve its position at negotiations. The “South-first” group supported China’s view that the DRV should pursue a military

strategy against the United States, as opposed to Soviet advice to negotiate a settlement.\(^\text{11}\)

In the early years of the DRV factional divide, when he still exercised authority, Ho lectured DRV diplomats that they must not get drawn into the Sino-Soviet dispute. As Ho’s influence lessened, however, DRV leaders began to speak out. For instance, in 1962, Defense Minister Giap praised the Soviet Union for resolving the Cuban missile crisis, and even though he had no love lost for China, he praised Beijing for solving the border dispute with India in the same year.\(^\text{12}\) At the Ninth Plenary Session of the Lao Dong’s Third Central Committee in 1963, Ho stressed the importance of solidarity, and to not “pass on blame,” and to “ensure that within the party and the people, everyone will preserve the love and gratitude of our fraternal countries.” At the same time, he added: “we must not consider that disharmony is something unusual.”\(^\text{13}\)

Ho attempted to prevent the Sino-Soviet rivalry from adversely affecting communist economic and political support for the DRV, which would hinder his goal of reunification. According to an official diplomatic history of Vietnam published in 2005, an axiom of North Vietnamese diplomacy was that in order to fight against a “powerful imperialist power” such as the United States, Vietnam needed the economic aid and political support of communist countries. To maintain solidarity between the Soviet Union and China, Ho directed his

\(^{11}\) "The militant and moderate elements in the North Vietnamese Communist Party," CIA memorandum, 1 Dec. 1965, NARA. [These declassified CIA documents are available at online databases at NARA, College Park, MD].


\(^{13}\) Nien, *Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy*, 123.
ambassadors posted in foreign countries to “talk to the Soviet diplomats but absolutely not make any negative comments about China.” At the same time “when talking with Chinese diplomats our ambassadors absolutely must not make any negative comments about the Soviet Union. They should talk about North Vietnam’s contribution to strengthen the solidarity of the Soviet Union and China.” Ho even instructed DRV diplomatic personnel on how they should behave in the presence of Soviet and Chinese diplomats. The Vietnamese diplomats, Ho insisted, “should be calm and not have an unfavorable attitude [toward China and the Soviet Union].”¹⁴ North Vietnamese leaders ensured that their people’s diplomats adhered to Ho’s guidelines in their dealings with the people of China and the Soviet Union.

As long as Ho played an active role in the party, the internal divisions rarely threatened the stability of the party, government, or the military, largely because Ho refused to identify himself with any political faction and personally remained neutral in the Sino-Soviet dispute. Ho achieved party stability by exploiting his immense personal popularity, and carefully balancing one group against the other. After Ho’s death 1969, his successor Le Duan continued Ho’s tradition of pursuing a foreign policy line independent of Moscow and Beijing, while attempting to maintain good relations with both. Regardless of the improvement in U.S. relations with Beijing and Moscow, the DRV leaders were


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able to maintain their autonomy, and avoid manipulation by the two major communist powers.

**People’s Diplomacy with the Chinese**

The North Vietnamese began conducting people’s diplomacy with the Chinese in July 1951 when a 14-member DRV delegation arrived in Beijing.\(^{15}\) The encounter was the first effort of DRV people’s diplomacy to secure economic and humanitarian aid for the resistance war against France. The DRV group consisted of a Catholic priest, a professor, journalists, a medical doctor, a worker, a farmer, resistance fighters, and party men. An editorial in the Chinese daily *Jen min jih pao* warmly welcomed the group, and hailed the signing of a Sino-Vietnamese Friendship Agreement by Chinese Prime Minister Zhou, under which China provided technicians and workers in exchange for Vietnamese agricultural products and minerals. The signing of the Sino-Vietnamese Postal Agreement in November 1952 – the first postal service that the Vietminh established with another country—allowed people in both countries to develop closer relations.\(^{16}\)

The initial agreements paved the way for a DRV workers’ delegation to visit China in April 1954 just when the Vietminh was on the verge of defeating French forces at Dien Bien Phu. A five-member delegation of the DRV General Confederation of Labor arrived in Beijing at the invitation of the All-China

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\(^{16}\) Ibid, 256.
Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU). The Vietnamese told their hosts about their economic needs, and the Chinese government began providing economic aid. In addition to the official Chinese aid, the Chinese people donated 10,000 tons of rice, and five million meters of cotton cloth to North Vietnam in December 1954, through the People's Relief Administration of China.

North Vietnamese businessmen were quick to develop important linkages with their Chinese counterparts. Chen Shudong, chairman of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, gave a banquet for a group of Vietnamese businessmen in Beijing in August 1956. Bui Duc Mi, head of the Vietnamese delegation, explained that Vietnamese businessmen hoped to learn strategies for operating a successful business from the Chinese. The following year, North Vietnamese initiated an effort to develop connections with senior Chinese leaders. A five-member delegation of Vietnamese Supply and Marketing Cooperatives led by Nguyen An visited Beijing in November 1957 at the invitation of the All-China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives. Nguyen An discussed North Vietnam's economic needs during a meeting with Chinese Finance Minister Li Xiannian and Chinese cooperative officials.

Chinese youth began exploring ways of helping Vietnamese youth in a variety of ways in mid-1958. More than 350 representatives of youth organizations of Yunnan and Guangxi provinces crossed the border and held a series of meetings with youth organizations of Lao Ky province of North Vietnam in May that year. They broke into six groups and discussed how the Chinese youth could help in industry, agriculture, military, schools, literature, and sports. The Vietnam-China Friendship Association thanked the Chinese people at a mass rally in Hanoi in March 1959 for providing economic assistance. The meeting celebrated the signing of the China-Vietnam Mutual Economic Cooperation Agreements in March that year. Lao Dong politburo member Le Thanh Nhi told the rally that the agreement aimed to strengthen the DRV’s economy.

Delegations of North Vietnamese trade unions, teachers, and photographers visited China in June and July 1959 to share wartime experiences with their Chinese counterparts. When it became clear that the Western powers would not ensure that the Geneva Agreements were implemented, the Chinese People’s Committee for World Peace, and the China-Vietnam Friendship Association, organized a mass rally of 10,000 people in Beijing. Liu Ningyi, the vice-chairman of the Chinese Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity, pledged “all-out support of Vietnam by 650 million Chinese people” in a speech at the July 21 "Youth Meeting at Sino-Vietnamese Border Ends," Survey of China Mainland Press, no. 1766 (May 1958).

rally. Because Liu was also a member of the central committee of the CCP, he had the authority to encourage the Chinese friendship association to provide massive assistance to the Vietnamese.24

DRV people’s organizations wrote letters to China’s top political leaders, thanking them for their official assistance, and acknowledging the help they received from the Chinese people. Hoang Quoc Viet, president of the Vietnam General Federation of Trade Unions, wrote to Chinese president Liu Shaoqi in May 1963, thanking him for agreeing to visit North Vietnam that month. In his letter, Viet mentioned the “fraternal, invaluable, and consistent support” that the Chinese workers had given to the North Vietnamese. Viet wrote that even though China had suffered natural disasters in 1959 and 1961, the Chinese people had “persisted in extending assistance” to North Vietnam.25 In the same month, workers at the Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel Complex in North Vietnam wrote to Liu, stating that his visit had “inspired” them to launch a “vigorous campaign” to learn from Chinese technical experts working as advisors at their factory. Cao Luc, chairman of the Ba Duc Agricultural Production Cooperative, thanked Liu for extending assistance to the Vietnamese.26 Chinese leaders, for their part, made a concerted effort to publicly demonstrate their support for Vietnamese workers.

During a visit to the Tran Hung Dao Engineering Works in Hanoi in May 1963,

Chinese foreign minister Chen Yi praised workers’ efforts “to build the factory from scratch.”

People’s diplomacy served as a channel for Chinese people to offer aid through their mass organizations, apart from official Chinese assistance to North Vietnam and the NLF. In July 1963, six Chinese mass organizations (the Chinese Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity, the China Peace Committee, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the National Women’s Federation, the All-China Youth Federation, and the All-China Students’ Federation) sent food and household goods to the people of South Vietnam. The Chinese Red Cross gave medicines and medical equipment worth 100,000 yuan to the Liberation Red Cross Society of South Vietnam. North Vietnamese diplomacy often made reciprocal gestures by giving gifts to the Chinese. People in North Vietnam’s northern Lang Son province delivered more than 100 cubic meters of timber to the people of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of southern China in August 1963. The supply of 100 cubic meters of timber for the approximately 15 million people of the area was not much, but it was all that the embattled Vietnamese could offer.

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North Vietnam initiated a new strategy to win the support of the Chinese by giving service awards to Chinese workers and technicians who helped build the North Vietnamese economy. Hoang Bae, Charge d'Affaires in the DRV Embassy in Beijing, gave "medals for meritorious labor, and medals of friendship" to Chinese educators and specialists who had participated in the DRV's socialist economic construction. Twenty-two Chinese were given the awards at a ceremony held at the DRV Embassy in March 1964 in the presence of senior Chinese education ministry officials.31

Chinese workers worked longer hours in order to meet DRV orders for goods. In China's renowned porcelain-producing area of Jingdezhen, about 20,000 potters protested the American intervention in Vietnam in August 1964. The potters pledged that they would fulfill orders from the DRV ahead of time.32 Chinese factories launched a "Support Vietnam Campaign" in an attempt to both increase production and hasten deliveries to the DRV. Workers at the Beijing Crane Factory said they would send their best products to North Vietnam. The Beijing Switch Factory started production of switches for the DRV three months ahead of schedule. Beijing printing presses produced propaganda posters in support of North Vietnam. The Beijing Lantern Slide Workshop produced 4,000 colored lantern slides entitled "Oppose the U.S. Aggression Against the

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Democratic Republic of Vietnam" that were rushed to the Chinese countryside to publicize U.S. war crimes.33

Because the heads of Chinese people's organizations were, first of all, officials of the Chinese state, they were able to ensure that economic aid commitments made by Chinese mass organizations to their Vietnamese counterparts were fulfilled. For instance, following the military encounter between American and DRV ships at the Gulf of Tonkin in August 1964, Guo Moruo, chairman of the China Peace Committee, denounced the American intervention at a public rally in the presence of Premier Zhou. At the same event the Chinese Federation of Industry and Commerce pledged material assistance to the Vietnamese people.34 Tran Hoai Nam, head of the delegation of the South Vietnam Labor Association for Liberation, and Do Dai Tiem, head of the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions, denounced the U.S. escalation in their speeches. These gestures of solidarity paved the way for a visit to Shanghai by a 15-member Vietnamese industry delegation in February 1965. Led by Nguyen Tuan, deputy secretary of the Hanoi Municipal Committee of the Lao Dong, the group visited factories in Shanghai. The Vietnamese industry representatives explained to Chinese factory managers the challenges facing the DRV industrial sector, such as shortages of raw materials and qualified technicians.35

Hoang Quoc Viet, Chairman of the Hanoi-based Vietnamese-Chinese Friendship Association, thanked the Chinese for “unceasingly” assisting the Vietnamese with technical expertise, fuel, materials, machines, equipment, and commodities ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1950. In a speech marking the association’s 15th anniversary in February 1965, Viet praised the Chinese for having “rushed noisily into the streets to demonstrate and oppose vehemently” the attacks on North Vietnam by U.S. armed forces on 7 and 8 February 1965. The Vietnamese were deeply touched, he explained, when Mao, Zhou, and Liu Shaoqi participated in a huge rally of 800,000 people in Beijing on 10 February 1965 to support the Vietnamese struggle against the United States.

As President Johnson began the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign of North Vietnam in March 1965, the Chinese workers’ organization, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, intensified the effort to send economic aid to the DRV and NLF. Because the president of the ACFTU, Liu Ningyi, also served as a vice-chairman of the standing committee of the National People’s Congress, he represented both the workers and a state institution. By playing a dual role, he ensured that the ACFTU’s pledge to provide assistance to the Vietnamese people would be fulfilled. The ACFTU invited Do Dao Tiem, the head of the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions, and Tran Hoai Nam, the president of the South Vietnam Labor Association for Liberation, to sign a landmark agreement in

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36 Hoang Quoc Viet Hails DRV-CPR Friendship, 11 Feb. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, RG 263, FBIS Daily Reports, 2/1/65-2/26/65, Far East, Box 2, NARA.
Beijing. On 30 April 1965, the ACFTU issued a joint statement with the two Vietnamese unions, in which the ACFTU pledged that Chinese mass movements would aid the Vietnamese people in every way.\(^{37}\)

The joint statement was a formal contractual agreement under which Chinese workers provided economic assistance to the Vietnamese. In the statement, the three unions agreed that (1) U.S. imperialists' aggression was the "sole root cause" of the grave situation in Vietnam, and that the United States had violated the 1954 Geneva Agreements; (2) as a result, the people of Vietnam were struggling against U.S. imperialism; (3) President Johnson's offer of peace talks was aimed at "forcing the people of Vietnam to recognize that the United States had a right to scrap the Geneva Agreement," and to "slaughter" the people of Vietnam. On the same day, an editorial in the newspaper of the ACFTU, *Gongren Ribao* (Workers' Daily), explained the rationale underlying its support of the Vietnamese revolution: the Chinese workers' movement had always received moral support from revolutionary movements in several countries such as those in Vietnam, Africa, and Latin America, and in turn Chinese workers supported the revolutionary movements abroad.\(^{38}\)

The presence of Prime Minister Zhou and senior Chinese leaders at a rally of 10,000 Chinese workers and unionists at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on 4 May 1965, and at several other mass rallies, provides strong evidence of the


ability of Chinese leaders to mobilize popular support for the North Vietnamese people. In a speech on this occasion, Liu Ningyi reiterated that Chinese workers would “provide all aid to the Vietnamese people.” Vietnamese union leaders Tran Hoai Nam and Do Dao Tiem denounced the U.S. escalation of war in Vietnam in their speeches.  

Mao extended massive Chinese aid to North Vietnam, and made public appearances in support of the Vietnamese revolutionaries, in order to serve four purposes: counter American threats to China’s security, demonstrate Beijing’s commitment to support national liberation movements, allow Beijing to compete with Moscow for leadership of the communist world and sphere of influence in Vietnam, and secure domestic support for Mao’s continuing revolution to reshape Chinese society.  

The North Vietnamese continued making gestures of reciprocity by sending gifts to the Chinese that did not have much monetary value but were rich in symbolism. The people of North Vietnam’s Lao Cai province delivered thousands of banana saplings to Chinese farmers, and the people of Quang Ninh province taught Chinese peasants in Dongxing town in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region to make boats from banana splints. The people of southern China and North Vietnam devised inventive barter strategies that benefited both

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39 *Peking Review (Beijing Zhoubao)* 8, no. 19 (May 1965).
sides: in mid-1965, North Vietnamese farmers sent 100 buffaloes to Yunnan, and Chinese peasants delivered 200 oxen to Vietnam.41

President Ho, despite his busy schedule, made an effort to meet ordinary Chinese people, and even found the time to correspond with them because he aimed to build a direct connection with them. Members of China’s National Revolutionary Committee, the National Reconstruction Democratic Association, the Fujian Democratic Association, and the Industrial-Commercial Union of China, wrote to Ho in February 1965 expressing their support for the North Vietnamese. Ho replied that the timely support of the “brother Chinese people” was the noblest mark of the solidarity of fellow combatants against the aggressive acts committed by American armed forces against the DRV in early February.42

Young Chinese school children, known as the Young Pioneers of Liang School in Lianhua District of Changsha Country in Hunan province, wrote to Ho offering their sympathy. Ho replied promptly: “Dear Little Chinese Friends … may you work well, study well, and keep fit. Redouble your efforts to be good students of Uncle Mao Zedong.”43 Ho held talks with a Chinese trade union delegation led by Zhang Dianmin, and Chinese writers Ba Jin and Wei Wei in July 1965.44

As a result of the growing closeness between the two countries, the people of Guangdong, Guangxi, Hunan, and Yunnan provinces, and the China-Vietnam

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Commune on Beijing’s outskirts, donated agricultural equipment to the Vietnam-China Friendship Agricultural Cooperative in North Vietnam in September 1965. They sent transport vehicles, tractors, power generators, and husking and slicing machines to North Vietnam.45

The Chinese government encouraged the Chinese people to do all they could to help their Vietnamese comrades. The heads of Chinese mass organizations were well placed to ensure that their organizations fulfilled their aid commitments to the DRV because they held important positions in the party or the national government. China’s top political leaders such as Mao, Zhou, and Liu regularly appeared at mass public rallies, and confirmed that China would provide the requested aid.

**Soviet People’s Support for the Vietnamese Revolution**

Soviet-DRV relations took longer to develop than Sino-DRV relations because Chinese and Soviet leaders had agreed in 1949 that it was primarily the responsibility of the Chinese to support Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh.46 Before 1964 the Soviet Union did not involve itself in the DRV’s struggle because this policy position enabled CPSU General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev to pursue peaceful coexistence with the United States, and avoid a conflict similar to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.47 Soviet policy toward the DRV began warming

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after the removal of Khrushchev and the rise to power of Leonid Brezhnev as the party’s general secretary in October 1964. The leaders of the DRV were pleased with the leadership change in the Soviet Union because it cleared the way for people in both countries to develop close social, political, and economic links.

Following the change of leadership in Moscow, representatives of Soviet people’s organizations began traveling to North Vietnam. A Soviet art troupe led by O.A. Brykin, the head of the Committee for Socialist Countries under the Soviet Ministry of Culture, arrived in Hanoi in January 1965 to perform in various North Vietnamese towns. The Soviet troupe was given a warm welcome at Hanoi’s Gia Lam Airport by Pham Hong, vice chairman of the DRV Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, and DRV musicians and dancers.48

Newly appointed Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin visited Hanoi from 6 to 10 February 1965 to affirm the new direction in Soviet policy toward Vietnam.49 His visit signaled to the North Vietnamese and the Soviet people that they should start cooperating with each other. Khrushchev had been pursuing peaceful coexistence with the United States, and therefore had advised Hanoi to negotiate with Washington.50 During Kosygin’s visit, NLF forces attacked an American military base at Pleiku in Central Vietnam. U.S. forces retaliated by bombing the North Vietnamese port city of Dong Hoi even while Kosygin was in

Hanoi. As a result, Kosygin provided much greater support to the DRV than any other Soviet leader had done before.\textsuperscript{51} Signaling a shift in Soviet policy, Kosygin promised Ho that Moscow would provide advanced surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft equipment to the PAVN. However, Moscow still preferred Hanoi to negotiate peace instead of fighting the United States.

The Soviet leaders competed with the Chinese to gain the allegiance of the DRV leaders.\textsuperscript{52} Kosygin and Premier Dong signed an economic agreement on 10 February 1965, integrating three previous Soviet loans extended under separate agreements in 1960 and 1962. The Soviet Union aimed to use these funds to help the DRV expand existing electricity generating plants, build coalmines and a diesel motor factory, and develop farms and other industrial and agricultural projects. Moscow also promised to provide the Vietnamese with six fishing boats, and equipment for hospitals.\textsuperscript{53} In return, the Vietnamese leaders offered to seriously consider a negotiated solution to the war.\textsuperscript{54} China frowned upon the improvement in relations between Moscow and Hanoi. During his visit to Hanoi in early March, Chinese Premier Zhou pointedly told the DRV leaders that they should refuse Soviet military aid because a larger Russian presence in the DRV would damage Beijing-Hanoi relations.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} Qiang Zhai, \textit{China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975}, 149.
\textsuperscript{54} Duiker, \textit{Ho Chi Minh}, 544.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, 544.
Not to be outdone by their ideological rivals, the Chinese maintained close contact with the North Vietnamese. A few days before the arrival of the Soviet art troupe, a Chinese football team from Tianjin spent twenty-one days in North Vietnam playing matches with local teams, and making arrangements to organize sports events with the DRV Physical Culture and Sports Commission, and the Vietnam Football Association. A team of Chinese gymnasts gave several performances during their twenty-day tour of the DRV. Attempting to balance relations with both allies, North Vietnam’s Central People’s Circus Troupe led by Nguyen Hoai traveled to the Soviet Union in April to stage a series of performances at an international circus festival.

Moscow and Beijing competed in demonstrating support for North Vietnam. The anti-America mass demonstrations in China and the Soviet Union were aimed at improving Vietnamese morale in their struggle against a much more powerful adversary. Soon after Kosygin’s visit, Soviet people’s organizations such as the Leninist Young Communist League, the Soviet War Veterans’ Association, and the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee issued a flurry of statements in support of the DRV.

Soviet people’s organizations observed an International Solidarity Week with the people of Vietnam in May 1965 under the auspices of the World Peace

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57 “DRV Circus Delegation,” 6 Apr. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, RG 263, FBIS Daily Reports, 4/1/65-4/30/65, Far East, Box 4, NARA.
Council. According to Boris Leontyev, a member of the Soviet Peace Committee and one of the participants in the solidarity week, the peace committee every day received letters donating money and expressing solidarity with the Vietnamese from people from all regions of the Soviet Union. People from the ancient city of Novgorod, who remembered the Nazi bombardment in the Second World War, denounced the “barbarous air attacks on North Vietnam.” The Soviet Peace Committee sent medical aid to the DRV, and dispatched investigators to Hanoi to probe instances of U.S. war crimes.

The Soviet Peace Committee collected donations from individuals and organizations. Russian workers sent their earnings, valuables, and government bonds; writers donated their royalties; and funds were raised through music concerts. Collective farms and trade unions were regular contributors. In June 1965, Moscow’s Hall of Columns filled to capacity with more than 500 delegates who gathered to discuss “next tasks in the struggle against U.S. imperialism.” Vietnam figured in several speeches. Kamran Guseinov, secretary of the Soviet Central Trade Union Congress, argued that the Soviet people “were in the van of the solidarity movement with Vietnam.” Alexei Danilin, a mechanic at the First Moscow Watch Factory, told the conference: “I want the world to hear the voice of Moscow’s workers. On their behalf I say that the people of Moscow are with you, our Vietnamese brothers.” On 8 and 9 December 1965, more than 350,000

61 Ibid.
people in Moscow staged demonstrations denouncing the American aggression in Vietnam.62

The Soviet people did much more than raise slogans. They delivered important economic aid to the Vietnamese. According to Pyotr Pimenov, chairman of the Soviet Support for Vietnam Committee, and Secretary of the Soviet Central Council of Trade Unions, Russians were making voluntary donations to the Soviet Peace Fund, which purchased items for dispatch to the DRV. Factory workers and students regularly sent cash to the Soviet Support for Vietnam Committee, requesting the committee to use their donations to buy food, clothing, and medicines for the Vietnamese people. In 1966, Soviet trade unions shipped medicines, foodstuff, and clothes worth 1.5 million rubles to the Vietnamese people. In October 1966, Soviet industrial cooperatives sent supplies worth 1.3 million rubles to North Vietnam. The following year, the Soviet Support for Vietnam Committee, the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, and the Soviet Peace Committee collectively shipped ambulances, medical equipment, medicines, food, and clothes worth 1.3 million rubles from the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk to the DRV. In 1967, Soviet women collected clothes and medicines worth more than 500,000 rubles for Vietnamese women and children. The Soviet Red Cross and Red Crescent Society delivered bandages and surgical equipment worth 400,000 rubles to the DRV.63 People in

62 “Moscow Anti-U.S. Meetings,” 11 Dec. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, RG 263, FBIS Daily Reports, 12/1/65-12/30/1965, Far East, Box 12, NARA.
various parts of the Soviet Union observed Moscow-Hanoi Friendship Day on 17 October 1967 by holding rallies and collecting funds for Vietnamese relief. Soviet people’s organizations prepared parcels of medicines, food, clothing, school supplies, and toys for the Vietnamese.\(^{64}\) Moreover, workers at a factory in Zhdanov speeded up delivery of medical equipment to the DRV. Several factories began shipping consignments to the DRV ahead of schedule: an engineering factory in the Donets Basin delivered several consignments of mine winches, electrical engineering workers at Novosibirsk shipped electric motors, and blast furnace workers at Magnitogorsk sent thousands of tons of rolled metal.\(^{65}\)

The DRV Committee to Investigate the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialists in Vietnam – established in 1966 – collaborated with Soviet scientists and scholars to gather evidence on the war crimes of the United States.\(^{66}\) In this regard, the committee invited Soviet scientists to visit North Vietnam in order to collect evidence of the toxic effects of American chemical weapons among the Vietnamese population.\(^{67}\)

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\(^{66}\) “Ha Van Lau discusses War Crimes Committee,” 6 Aug. 1966, CIA, RG 263, FBIS Daily Reports, Far East, Box 90, NARA.

People’s Diplomacy by the Creative Community

The North Vietnamese produced a vast repertoire of artistic works such as novels, poems, dance and theater, and films and photographs to present their perspective to the outside world. In order to ensure that these works were distributed overseas, the DRV signed cultural agreements with its communist allies. In a parallel effort, writers, poets, filmmakers, and performing artists from communist countries, principally China and the Soviet Union, traveled to Vietnam in order to get a first-hand experience of the war. Based on their visit they wrote novels and poems, and produced films, theatrical plays, and dances depicting their solidarity with the DRV, and denouncing the American intervention in Vietnam.

At the apogee of the resistance war against the French, the DRV held a Friendship Month jointly with the people of China and the Soviet Union in various cities, towns, villages, and hamlets of North Vietnam from 18 January to 18 February 1954. North Vietnam issued three million “friendship stamps,” and eighteen delegations from China and the Soviet Union visited liberated areas in North Vietnam, giving talks to the Vietnamese on life in their countries. More than 2.4 million Vietnamese in various parts of the country saw 2,600 photo exhibitions celebrating life and society in China and the Soviet Union, and 500 screenings of films on the success of their respective revolutions.68 The signing of a film distribution contract in July 1955 gave a concrete basis to cultural relations between China and the DRV. Pham Van Khoa, director of the Film Studio of the

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DRV and Ying Shaoren, vice manager of the China Film Distribution Corporation, inked the agreement that enabled both sides to exchange films.  

President Ho, as the architect of people’s diplomacy, personally established a direct connection with Chinese visitors to Hanoi. He appeared on stage to introduce the actors of a Chinese opera troupe visiting Hanoi in February 1957. After the show Ho talked to the performers and thanked them for coming to the North Vietnamese Spring Festival celebrations. Ho also received a troupe of Chinese acrobatic performers at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi in March 1958. He embraced them warmly, and spoke to them about Chinese shadow boxing which he had begun studying the previous year. The acrobats presented Ho with a chart explaining the boxing techniques.

Chinese mass organizations orchestrated a nationwide cultural program to celebrate the DRV’s national day in September 1960. A Sino-Vietnam Friendship Week was held in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Xian, Nanjing, Zhengzhou, Nanning, and Kunming. Local branches of the China-Vietnam Friendship Association were set up in Kunming and Nanning. The North Vietnamese took the initiative of sending a large delegation to participate in the celebrations: DRV delegations of the Vietnam-China Friendship Association consisting of writers and performers arrived in China to celebrate the event. The

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Shaho People's Commune on the outskirts of Beijing renamed itself the China-Vietnam Friendship Commune in honor of the DRV's national day. Workers at the Beijing Glass Factory entertained the North Vietnamese visitors with "colorful performances" at the factory where many young Vietnamese were undergoing training under Chinese engineers and workers. Beijing University faculty and students joined Vietnamese students, who were taking courses at the university, in a rousing rally. North Vietnamese performers presented traditional Vietnamese hat cheo opera, and Chinese audiences saw the Vietnamese feature film, "Along the Same River," and the documentaries "Episodes from the Revolutionary Activities of Ho Chi Minh," and "Bac Hung Hai." Members of the Union of Chinese Writers and the Union of Chinese Musicians presented revolutionary Vietnamese songs and poems, including two by President Ho. Beijing Review commented that Friendship Week "greatly reinforced" Sino-Vietnam solidarity.72

The Song and Dance Ensemble of the PAVN presented three shows depicting the life and struggle of North Vietnamese soldiers at the People's Theater in Beijing in January 1961. They exchanged wartime experiences with Chinese theatrical performers, who gave a reception at the Great Hall of the People to honor the visiting ensemble. The Vietnamese troupe also performed in Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Nanjing. Beijing Review commented: "Their art, deeply rooted in the life and struggles of the people and vibrant with militancy, is

characterized by a highly distinctive national flavor.” The Chinese language press described them as “emissaries of art from the Red River.”

Chinese poets began holding poetry readings in support of the Vietnamese. Some of them visited Vietnam to get a first-hand impression of the country, and Vietnamese poets traveled to China to participate in poetry festivals. At a gathering of poets in Beijing in mid-1963, the Chinese actress Zhao Yunru recited a poem by Guang Weiran entitled “Along the Bianhai River,” which depicted the sorrow of South Vietnamese people torn asunder by war. The poem gave a graphic account of the “plundering forays of U.S.-Diem troops, and heroic people’s resistance.” Chinese political satirist Chin Pei-ngou recited his new poem, “Kennedy Lays the Trap,” on President John F. Kennedy’s peace strategy.

North Vietnamese filmmakers and mass organizations succeeded in establishing a direct connection with Prime Minister Zhou. In August 1963, Zhou received a delegation of North Vietnamese film workers led by Phan Tuan Khanh, director of the Cinema Bureau of Vietnam, in Beijing. The following month, Zhou had lunch with Ton Quang Phiet of the Vietnam-China Friendship Association, and Vietnamese members of the association who were visiting Beijing.

Chairman Mao and senior Chinese leaders publicly exhibited their solidarity with North Vietnamese performers. Mao and Zhu De, the commander-in-chief of the People’s Liberation Army, saw a ballet performance by the Song and Dance Ensemble of the PAVN in Beijing in June 1964. After watching the troupe perform the three-act ballet, “The Flames of Nghe An and Ha Tinh Provinces,” Mao went on stage and shook hands with the Vietnamese dancers.77

An important initiative of people’s diplomacy occurred when Chinese and North Vietnamese publishing houses agreed to start releasing works by writers of both countries in mid-1964. The Writers’ Publishing House in Beijing released a Chinese translation of Letters from South Vietnam, first published in Vietnamese and English by the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Hanoi. The volume, a compilation of twenty-two letters from the people of South Vietnam to the people of China, became an instant bestseller in China. Mao Dun, chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers, described the book as “embodying revolutionary heroism and revolutionary optimism.” Chang Kuang-nien, editor of Wenyi Bao (Literary Gazette), said that the book “touched the heart of every Chinese reader.” Chinese playwright Chen Chi-tung said the people of South Vietnam had “interwoven their hatred and joy, their heroic battles and glorious victories.” More than 300,000 copies of the book were sold within three days of release, and sales crossed one million in a few weeks.78

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Chinese actors, artists, writers, poets, and educators began “mobilizing their talents and energies” behind Vietnam in 1964, and “poured their feelings into letters, articles, cartoons, and poems in the press.” Actress Xie Fang from Wuhan said her entire film studio “rose in angry uproar” when they heard the news of the U.S. naval attack on North Vietnamese ships in the Gulf of Tonkin in August that year. Students and teachers at Beijing’s Central Art Institute produced hundreds of posters, and Beijing theater groups set up makeshift stages in front of the DRV Embassy in Beijing where they performed skits. Chinese poets Guo Moruo, Yuan Shui-po, and Tien Chien produced new works. Guo, recently returned from Hanoi where he joined DRV poets in celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the signing of the Geneva Agreements, published his new poem, “Saigon will yet be your Dien Bien Phu,” in Renmin Ribao (People’s Daily). North Vietnamese visitors participated in many of these events. The Song and Dance Ensemble of the PAVN returned to put on several shows of its historical dance-drama on Vietnam’s anti-imperialist struggle, “The Flames of Nghe Tinh.” Chinese translations of Vietnamese literature sold out as fast as they could be published, and songs about Vietnam became favorites with Chinese school children.

A poetry recital held in Beijing in August 1964 attracted more than 2,000 people, including noted poets and musicians. Chang Kuang-mein, member of the secretariat of the Union of Chinese Writers, commented that the revolutionary

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poems “originated from revolutionary wrath.” Some of the poems read were Guo Moruo’s “A Warning to the Aggressors,” Yuan Shui-pai’s “Braving the Scorching Sun, Braving the Rainstorm,” and Ho Ching-chih’s “Victory is with us.”

The celebrated North Vietnamese poet Nong Quoc Chan, a member of the minority Tay community, visited several places in China including remote Inner Mongolia and the Chinese communist revolutionary base in Yan’an, where he shared his wartime experiences with the local people. On his return to Hanoi, Chan, a member of the standing committee of the Vietnam Writers’ and Artists’ Union, reported to his union that Chinese cultural and art workers had shown “militant friendship by practical deeds.” Chan was referring to the effort of the Chinese to produce art works reflecting the Vietnamese revolutionaries’ struggle. The China Federation of Literary and Art Circles affirmed that Chinese literary and art workers would continue using their skills to extend firm support to their Vietnamese brothers. In another gesture of solidarity, the Chinese Commission for Cultural Relations With Foreign Countries donated cinematographic equipment to the DRV Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

Ordinary Chinese people established direct links with DRV diplomats during mass demonstrations in Beijing. On 8 February 1965, as thousands filed past the DRV Embassy in Beijing, DRV Charge d'affaires Hoang Bac emerged from his office to join the crowds in shouting slogans. *Beijing Review* reported that Chinese protestors staged anti-American street theater performances: they put on skits depicting “U.S. imperialists and South Vietnamese puppets trembling before the onward march of the people of the world.” A Chinese actor playing the role of President Johnson was seen “frantically hugging a globe,” while the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America dropped nooses around his neck. Leaders of Chinese mass organizations handed letters to Hoang Bac, pledging solidarity with the Vietnamese people. Representative of Chinese trade unions pledged that the “Chinese people were duty bound” to give “all necessary concrete support and assistance” to the Vietnamese people.

At a banquet on 29 April 1965 for visiting Ghanaian foreign minister Kojo Botsio, Prime Minister Zhou declared that the Vietnamese and the Congolese, who were both fighting against U.S. imperialism, were entitled to the support of all countries. Botsio replied: “To the imperialists we say: Hands off Asia! Hands off Africa!” On the same day, a photo exhibition entitled “U.S. Aggressors, Get Out of Vietnam” opened in Beijing under the auspices of the Commission for

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Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, the Peace Committee, and the China-Vietnam Friendship Association of China.\textsuperscript{86}

Chinese theater groups, cinemas, and publishing houses launched a campaign in May 1965 to show solidarity with the Vietnamese. Twelve major theater companies in Beijing collaborated to produce a program entitled “Support Vietnam” featuring Chinese-style operas, modern plays, \textit{quyi} ballads (folk-style singing), ballets, and radio and television performances on Vietnamese resistance. The show attracted thousands of viewers during May Day celebrations.\textsuperscript{87} In another presentation, 400 Chinese dancers and actors staged a dance-drama entitled “Flames Over the Coconut Groves.” The first scene depicted Vietnamese villagers in a Strategic Hamlet rising up against their oppressors and freeing themselves. The second scene recounted the life of the South Vietnamese worker Nguyen Van Troi, who was executed by the South Vietnamese authorities after he attempted to assassinate U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. who were visiting South Vietnam in May 1963. Sixty cinemas in Beijing showed documentaries on Vietnam produced by the NLF and Chinese film studios. Chinese publishers released a new edition of \textit{Letters from the South} that sold more than a million copies in China.

Artists in Guangdong, Guangxi, Hubei, and Hunan collaborated to stage an exhibition on the theme of the “crimes of U.S. imperialists,” and “the heroic


people of Vietnam," at Beijing’s Museum of Chinese Art in June 1965. The following month, Ho received a Chinese delegation of writers led by Ba Jin and Wei Wei, and trade unionists led by Chang Tien-min. In the same month, Ho met a Chinese drama and film study group traveling in Vietnam to gather material for their scripts.

A Chinese translation of *As He Was*, a biography of South Vietnamese war hero Nguyen Van Troi, sold more than 10,000 copies on the day it went on sale in Beijing bookstores in August 1965. The biography, written by Troi’s widow, gave a personal glimpse into his life, and execution by the Saigon regime. The People’s Literary Publishing House announced that it would print 1.5 million copies of *As He Was* in addition to the first print run of 500,000 copies. After reading the book, Xi Wenbao, a worker at the Beijing No. 1 Machine Tools Factory, commented: “When I close my eyes, I can see Nguyen Van Troi who at his last moment [before execution] pulled off the black cloth covering his eyes, and denounced the U.S. imperialists.”

Vietnamese literature enjoyed a surge of popularity among Chinese readers. The New China News Agency reported that Chinese readers who wished to emulate the “valiant, tenacious spirit of the Vietnamese heroes” considered Vietnamese revolutionary literature as “textbooks of revolution.” Librarians in

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Beijing said Chinese readers welcomed the new Vietnamese revolutionary works. 
A blind reader came to a library to ask for a copy of *Letters from South Vietnam* in Braille. School children were fond of *A Little Hero of Vietnam*, and *Selected Children’s Stories of Vietnam*. Workers at the Beijing No. 1 Machine Tools Factory regularly recited passages from *Storm over the South*, a volume of short stories by northern and southern Vietnamese writers, and *Militant Youth of South Vietnam*, a collection of reports from South Vietnam. The factory’s in-house drama company adapted episodes from these books into plays.\(^\text{91}\)

Peasants living in the China-Vietnam Friendship Commune in the Beijing suburbs published a collection of essays celebrating their friendship with the Vietnamese. The essays, released in August 1965, described the atmosphere at mass rallies, and pledged support to the Vietnamese by producing more grain, cotton, milk, and meat in order “to assist them with anything they need.”\(^\text{92}\) In the same month, more than 120,000 Vietnamese viewed a Chinese photo and art exhibition in Hanoi depicting the wholehearted support of the Chinese people for Vietnam’s independence.\(^\text{93}\)

Senior DRV officials occasionally made special appearances at performances in Beijing. Vice premier Le Thanh Nghi attended an operatic performance on the life of Nguyen Van Troi presented by the China Pingchu


\(^{93}\) "Exhibition of CPR Aid Arouses Keen Interest," 2 Aug. 1965, *Nhan Dan*, CIA, RG 263, FBIS Daily Reports, 7/1/65-7/30/65, Far East, Box 7, NARA.
Opera Company in Beijing in December 1965. Sidney Rittenberg, a member of the American Communist Party, who joined the Chinese Communist Party and worked closely with Mao and Zhou, told a mass rally in Beijing in the same month: “We, the people who truly revere the memory of Nguyen Van Troi, seek no compromise, no friendship or cooperation with the U.S. imperialists who murdered him.” Rittenberg told the Vietnamese: “Your fight is our fight, your victory is our hope.”

The North Vietnamese poet, Cu Huy Can, revered in Vietnam for his romantic and melancholic verse, brought a DRV dance troupe to Beijing in March 1966. The troupe staged several performances that included dance items such as: “Under the Great Banner of the Liberation Front,” “The Wooden Hand Grenade,” “Wasp Warfare,” “With Fishing Net in One Hand and Gun in the Other,” “Meeting at the AA Gunsite,” and “On the Demarcation Line.” Premier Zhou and head of state Liu saw the show, and Zhou met the performers during the interval. The North Vietnamese choreographer Tran Minh presented Chinese dancers a model of an aircraft crafted from a piece of an American military jet shot down in Vietnam.

Chinese dancers traveled to North Vietnam to perform at the frontlines of the PAVN. The Tung Fang Song and Dance Ensemble staged dances entitled:

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“Smash the Strategic Hamlets,” “Go Home Yankee!” and “Liberate the South” before large audiences of North Vietnamese troops. A PAVN soldier commented: “These are not simply performances of plays, they are portrayals of real life. Seeing them people would want to take up their guns to fight.” Another soldier described the songs and dances as “shells fired at the U.S. bandits.”

The NLF maintained links with senior Chinese government officials as well as the Chinese people. In June 1967, China’s Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries gave a banquet in Beijing in honor of the visiting South Vietnam Liberation Song and Dance Ensemble. In January 1968, Prime Minister Zhou talked with members of the same dance ensemble, led by Nguyen Xuan Hong, that was again touring China. Zhou presented a rifle to all the members of the ensemble, and instructed them to fight on “the art front.” Zhou exhorted them to “kill more U.S. aggressors on their return home.” Hong pledged that the ensemble would do so, “holding a musical instrument in one hand, and rifle in the other.”

The efforts of North Vietnamese performing artists to use their shows as a vehicle to reach out to people abroad were successful. Premier Zhou, Mao’s secretary Chen Boda, and Lao Dong politburo member Hoang Van Hoan, saw a North Vietnamese troupe of acrobats perform in front of 10,000 people at the

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Great Hall of the People in Beijing in October 1967. *Beijing Review* commented that the acrobatic performance showed how “heroically the Vietnamese people fight, and how hard they work.” A performance entitled “Cheerful at work, ready to fight” depicted the life of a Vietnamese militiaman who did his daily chores as a farmer plowing the land, rifle slung over the shoulder, ready to fight the enemy at any moment. Another performance entitled “Escalation” ridiculed the U.S. escalation of the war, which “led to an escalation in the number of U.S. planes shot down.” After the performance, the troupe traveled to the China-Vietnam Friendship Commune, and performed before an audience of poor- and lower middle-peasants.100

Chinese film studios produced special documentaries in early 1971 to demonstrate their support for the NLF. The Central Newsreels and Documentary Film Studio produced two documentaries – “Welcome to South Vietnamese Comrades-in-Arms,” and “We Pledge to be Powerful Backing for the Three Indochinese Peoples.” *Beijing Review* commented that the films were “permeated with the militant unity between the Chinese people and the three Indochinese peoples,” and “the moving scenes reflect the iron will and firm determination of the 700 million Chinese people armed with Mao Zedong Thought to be powerful backing for the Indochinese peoples.”101 Through these means, the Chinese people showed their support and sympathy for the NLF.

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The Diplomacy of Communist Bloc Women

Vietnamese women made enduring connections with Chinese and Soviet women. The women of China and the Soviet Union shared wartime experiences with Vietnamese women, and sent economic and humanitarian aid to them.

A Chinese women’s delegation led by Chang Chien met the South Vietnamese resistance fighter Tran Thi Ly, who was recovering from injuries at the Vietnam-Soviet Hospital in Hanoi in December 1958. Ly, described in the Chinese press as a “war heroine,” was one of thousands of members of the South Vietnamese resistance to be tortured by the South Vietnamese regime of Ngo Dinh Diem. Chang presented Ly a photograph of the Chinese “war heroine” Liu Hulan, a communist operative who spied on the Guomindang and was executed at the age of 15. The Chinese women pledged support to the Vietnamese women.

A larger delegation of Chinese women visited North Vietnam in 1961. The vice-president of the National Women’s Federation of China, Deng Yingchao (Prime Minister Zhou Enlai’s wife) told a mass meeting of the Vietnam Women’s Union in Hanoi in March 1961 that unity between the women of China and Vietnam was “evergreen as the pine, and everlasting as the Red and Yangtze Rivers” that flowed through North Vietnam and China, respectively. The National Women’s Federation of China cabled the Vietnam Women’s Union in

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March 1963, condemning the United States and the Ngo Dinh Diem regime for “using chemical weapons to murder women and children in South Vietnam.”

Vietnamese women met Chinese and Soviet women at the World Congress of Women in Moscow in June 1963, where they attempted to persuade the congress to adopt a policy uniting women in all countries against imperialism and colonialism. However, the congress ended in bitter divisions among Chinese and Soviet women who quarreled publicly about the proper line they should follow. The leader of the Chinese women’s delegation, Yang Yunyu, blamed the Soviet delegation for harming the women’s movement by approving an action plan that “ran completely counter” to the aspirations and interests of the world’s women. The Soviet women had “destroyed the essence of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist tasks of the movement and tampered with its revolutionary and progressive line.” Yang argued that the organizers of the congress pursued a pro-U.S. and anti-China line at the congress by “bowing to the will of the imperialists and particularly [President] Kennedy, the common enemy of the people of the world.” Yang further argued that the Soviet women’s delegation had “refrained from condemning imperialism” and instead “did their utmost to prettify imperialism” in their speeches. Interestingly, while the NLF women’s delegation appealed to the Moscow congress to harden its line against American imperialism by adopting a separate resolution in support of the South Vietnamese

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105 The Struggle Between Two Lines at the Moscow World Congress of Women (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1963), 20-21.
struggle, the North Vietnamese women remained silent so that the DRV would not have to take sides in the Sino-Soviet dispute.\textsuperscript{106} After the congress, many women's delegations traveled to Beijing to formulate a stronger policy for the women's movement. This strategy was based on the Chinese women's standpoint that the "struggle of the women of the world to win their rights is closely linked with the struggle of the people of the world against imperialism and colonialism."\textsuperscript{107} According to Yang, women from South Vietnam, Brazil, Venezuela, Indonesia, and Mozambique "strongly criticized" the Moscow congress for "casting aside the anti-imperialist banner." The North Vietnamese women were conspicuously absent from Yang's report on what transpired in Beijing. For her part, NLF central executive member Nguyen Thi Binh urged the world movement of women to unite in the fight against U.S. imperialism. The NLF women met Prime Minister Zhou, whose wife, Deng Yingchao, pledged the "deep support" of Chinese women for the struggle of women in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{108}

These assurances paved the way for Vietnamese women to visit China more frequently. Nguyen Thi Thap, president of the Vietnam Women's Union, briefed more than 1,000 Chinese women on the "Three Responsibilities" movement in Beijing in August 1965. Thap explained that Vietnamese women took responsibility for production and the home front so that their men could fight on the war front. She characterized women as "the main force in agricultural

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, 35.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, 17.
\textsuperscript{108} "Beijing Acclaims Women's Delegates from Asia, Africa, and Latin America," \textit{Peking Review [Beijing Zhoubao]} 6, no. 29 (June 1963).
production," and proudly explained that they had harvested bumper crops. Zhang Yun, the vice chair of the All China Women's Federation, affirmed that Chinese women stood firmly in support of Vietnamese women.  

During the same month, a Vietnam Women's Union delegation led by Ha Giang visited the Soviet Union at the invitation of the Committee for Soviet Women. As a result of this visit, Soviet women began sending food and medicines to the DRV. The Soviet peace activist Irina Levchenko participated in a Moscow-Hanoi Friendship Day in October 1967, and published an article in the New Times of Moscow about her recent visit to the DRV. Among her many photographs of life in the DRV were two images of North Vietnamese girls in helmets with rifles slung over their shoulders. One of them held a rose in her hand. Levchenko wrote: "Today, they have to shoot in order that roses might bloom again in the peaceful gardens of victorious Vietnam."

A Soviet women's delegation led by Valentina Nikolayeva-Tereshkova, the world's first woman cosmonaut to orbit in space in 1963, traveled to the DRV in 1971. Nikolayeva-Tereshkova, the chair of the Soviet Women's Committee and member of the central committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, delivered gifts from Soviet women to Vietnamese children, such as sugar, rice, condensed milk, flour, clothes, and toys. The Soviet women held talks with

110 "Women's Delegation Departs for Visit to USSR," 21 Aug. 1965, Nhan Dan, CIA, RG 263, FBIS Daily Reports, 8/2/65-8/31/65, Far East, Box 8, NARA.
111 Ibid.
Nguyen Thi Thap of the Vietnam Women’s Union, and set up a medical center for women and children in Hanoi.\textsuperscript{112}

The significance of the wartime collaboration between communist bloc women lies not just in their moral and material support for Vietnamese women, but also their effort to use women’s conferences in Moscow and Beijing as a platform to draw attention to the American intervention in Vietnam.

\textbf{Conclusion}

People’s diplomacy significantly boosted the morale of the Vietnamese revolutionaries, and generated a wave of sympathy among people in the communist bloc. It assisted the DRV in receiving the aid it needed from the people of China and the Soviet Union. Not only did DRV people’s organizations play an important role in this effort, they received strong support from Soviet people’s organizations such as art troupes, the Leninist Young Communist League, the Soviet War Veterans’ Association, and the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. In equal measure, the DRV cause was championed both by Chinese footballers and gymnasts, and Chinese mass organizations such as the All-China Students Federation, China’s National Revolutionary Committee, the National Reconstruction Democratic Association, the Industrial-Commercial Union of China, and the Chinese Commission for Cultural Relations With Foreign Countries. As a result, the DRV and the NLF received economic aid from

communist bloc people’s organizations. Governments in China and the Soviet Union actively encouraged their mass organizations to assist the Vietnamese revolutionaries in what way they could.

The fact that the Soviet and Chinese state was able to mobilize so much public support sent a powerful message to Washington. Frequent pledges by Chinese and Soviet workers, youth, and intellectuals that they were willing to go to Vietnam to fight the United States were intended to bolster the confidence of the Vietnamese, and restrain American leaders. The massive show of support by the people of China served as a useful device to reiterate the warning by Chinese leaders that China would intervene if the United States invaded North Vietnam. Accordingly, the DRV calculated that “if U.S. ground forces do not cross the 17th Parallel to invade North Vietnam, the Soviet Union and China will not bring their forces into Vietnam.”

The North Vietnamese consciously used people’s diplomacy to demonstrate to the United States the massive support Hanoi received from the communist bloc. The CIA and U.S. embassies in Saigon and Hong Kong kept American officials informed about the outpouring of sympathy for the North Vietnamese. However, DRV diplomats realized that Moscow was improving its relationship with Washington, and that China was preoccupied with its cultural revolution. Nonetheless, Hanoi officials were counting on communist bloc support.

An important reason for the success of people's diplomacy was the international outlook of Ho Chi Minh, who had developed personal connections with foreign governments, both inside and outside the communist bloc. To these were added personal relationships with antiwar activists, such as the British philosopher Bertrand Russell, a dedicated peace activist who opposed the U.S. intervention in Vietnam. The following chapter traces the remarkable relationship that developed between Russell and the North Vietnamese, which led to the formation of a U.S. war crimes tribunal.
Chapter Five

Conducting Informal Diplomacy with Bertrand Russell:

"We Sympathize with North Vietnam, but we are not Hanoi's Propagandists"

The British philosopher, mathematician, and peace activist Bertrand Russell aided the opposition to the intervention of the United States in Vietnam in two ways: first by his leadership of the peace movement in Britain, and his moral and financial support of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign; and second by his efforts to establish the International War Crimes Tribunal (IWCT) that put the United States on trial for committing war crimes in Vietnam. Russell hoped that the evidence generated by the tribunal could help the American antiwar movement persuade the U.S. government to stop bombarding the North Vietnamese and withdraw U.S. forces from Vietnam. The tribunal, created by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation (BRPF) in 1966, achieved an important status in the world peace movement because it was driven by influential citizens in the West who opposed the aggressive policies of the United States.¹ To organize a war crimes tribunal, Russell secured the cooperation of President Ho. As the two men began communicating with each other through letters and cables, their relationship came to represent a site of resistance to the United States' efforts in

Vietnam. Russell and Ho benefited from the assistance of people’s organizations representing the DRV and NLF who performed an important function: they frequently met BRPF officials and wrote to them in order to coordinate antiwar activities in Britain and Vietnam.

This chapter presents four principal arguments concerning both people’s diplomacy with the Russell foundation, and informal diplomacy between Russell and Ho. First, because Russell had infrequent contact with Ho, North Vietnamese newsmen based in London – as well as DRV and NLF people’s organizations – performed an important function in coordinating antiwar events with Russell foundation staff. All of Ho’s communications with Russell occurred through the post, which took almost a month. Because letters and cables were lost so often, Russell suspected that the British postal authorities were intercepting them. The London-based representatives of the Cuu Quoc Weekly participated in discussions with BRPF officials to organize the structure of an investigation commission that would send medical doctors and scholars to North Vietnam to gather evidence of war crimes. The staff of Cuu Quoc, published in Hanoi, also provided Russell with news and information about the war in Vietnam. People’s organizations in Hanoi sent Russell regular updates on the devastation caused by the American bombardment of Vietnam. In return, Russell supplied them with evidence of his antiwar activism on behalf of the North Vietnamese, such as

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2 Letter, Russell to Nguyen Xien, 8 Jan. 1964, Bertrand Russell Archive (BRA) II, 640, World Affairs, Box 1.55.
copies of his letters to the British and American press, letters to heads of
government, and his speeches at schools, universities, and libraries in Britain.

Second, the North Vietnamese played an important, though largely
unacknowledged, role in the creation of the war crimes tribunal. In February
1966, prior to the establishment of the tribunal, BRPF officials held talks in Hanoi
with Ho and Dong to determine the nature of the tribunal and to persuade the
North Vietnamese to provide evidence regarding the American use of chemical
weapons, and to grant access and hospitality to tribunal investigating teams.
People’s organizations in Hanoi agreed not only to give visiting investigators
access, but also to accompany them in their travels throughout North Vietnam to
witness the effects of American bombardment.

Third, the IWCT urgently needed funds so it could continue its ambitious
campaign to oppose nuclear war and thwart the hegemonic ambitions of the great
powers in colonized countries. Russell sought foreign sponsors, chiefly among
newly independent countries, to finance his global peace activism. North Vietnam
played an important role in support of the BRPF because Ho was a major foreign
contributor of funds to the running of the foundation. North Vietnamese funds
helped Russell publish the foundation’s journal and newsletter, and they paid for
visits to North Vietnam. The DRV helped Russell’s foundation by generously
extending hospitality (free hotel stay, food, local transport, and translation
service) to teams of IWCT investigators visiting Vietnam to gather evidence
about the effects of chemical weapons used by the United States. Russell also
asked North Vietnamese journalists living in London to make financial contributions to his foundation. They passed on the requests to the government in Hanoi.

Biographers of Russell have not probed Russell’s requests for financial assistance from Ho.\(^4\) Ronald Clark devotes only one sentence to the matter, and Ray Monk ignores Russell’s lengthy correspondence with Ho, including financial assistance.\(^5\) The one major study of the IWCT does not discuss funding issues or provide the details of Russell’s relationship with Ho and other DRV leaders.\(^6\) These omissions have obscured the DRV’s important assistance to Russell’s efforts to draw public attention to U.S. aggression in Vietnam.

The DRV’s relationship with the BRPF was not always cordial. The two sides differed over the composition and functions of the tribunal, and the foundation’s staff accused DRV officials of attempting to seize control of the tribunal. Russell cautioned Ho that the tribunal must remain independent in order to maintain its credibility with the people in the West. Russell closely coordinated


antiwar events and policies with North Vietnam’s diplomatic front and the NLF. Russell even complained to the NLF President Nguyen Huu Tho about the failure of NLF officials to honor their commitment to provide the tribunal’s investigative teams access to liberated areas in South Vietnam.

Finally, despite what some scholars have said about the ineffectiveness of the tribunal, it had considerable impact on the U.S. government. Previous accounts of the tribunal have been limited to discussing the tribunal’s proceedings and have ignored the Johnson administration’s worries about the influence the tribunal could have in Europe and America. They have also overlooked the administration’s proposal to draw attention away from the IWCT by holding its own “counter seminar.”

Russell’s Alliance with Ho

Although Russell was already 91 when he first corresponded with Ho in 1963, he still conducted vigorous international diplomacy with the foreign heads of governments in Asia, Africa, and, Latin America to build an international movement against U.S. intervention in Vietnam. And although they never met,

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7 Hunt, David Dellinger: The Life and Times of a Nonviolent Revolutionary, 167. Also see Klinghoffer, International Citizens’ Tribunals: Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights, 120; and Hershberger, Traveling to Vietnam, 92. The Klinghoffers reveal that some Americans viewed the tribunal as “immature, superficial and antagonistic.” Hershberger argues that the one-sidedness of the tribunal made many American activists uneasy.


Russell and Ho established warm personal relations. Every year both men cabled birthday greetings to each other, and Ho unfailingly sent Russell a birthday gift, usually an item of Vietnamese handicraft. These exchanges took place through the London office of North Vietnamese journalists representing the Cuu Quoc Weekly.

Russell did not visit Vietnam during the American war years, although in 1920 he had passed through Saigon, a city he described as a “nightmarish place” populated by Europeans who were “enormously rich & very ill.” From Saigon, Russell traveled to China at the invitation of the reformist scholar Liang Qichao to deliver five lectures at Beijing University on mathematical logic and the problems of philosophy. In contrast to the Chinese reformers, the North Vietnamese were not interested in Russell’s philosophy. Instead, they sought to use his influence in the West against the American intervention in Vietnam.

Ho and Russell did become strong allies, but the relationship got off to a rocky start when Russell criticized the DRV’s attempt to curtail press freedom. A non-communist who espoused humanist causes, Russell supported the independence of Vietnam, but he was critical of the DRV’s suppression of political and human rights. In his letter to Ho on 17 August 1963, Russell expressed sympathy for the people of the DRV and South Vietnam who were suffering a brutal “war of suppression and annihilation.” But he did not shrink

10 Letter, Russell to Ho, 5 June 1965, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61, McMaster University.
11 Clark, The Life of Bertrand Russell, 386, 389
from requesting that Ho release the North Vietnamese journalists and writers of *Nhan Van* who had been imprisoned since 1956 for having demanded the right to publish without prior restraint, and for criticizing the government’s mishandling of land reforms and poverty.\(^\text{12}\)

Although many of Russell’s young friends and collaborators were mostly left-leaning activists, Russell did not accept that class struggle was the only way to achieve social change. Even though the BRPF was under the control of Trotskyists such as Ralph Schoenman, Pat Jordan, Robin Blackburn, Quentin Hoare, and Ken Coates, Russell despised communism.\(^\text{13}\) He only supported the DRV government because the North Vietnamese revolutionaries were engaged in a nationalistic struggle for Vietnam’s very survival. The DRV, he believed, enjoyed the overwhelming support of its people, and had implemented certain elements of participatory democracy. Like many antiwar activists, Russell maintained that an authoritarian strain had developed within the DRV due to the pressures and exigencies of the war.\(^\text{14}\)

Russell was apparently willing to overlook DRV censorship (Ho never did reply to his plea to release the writers) because he campaigned against the U.S. intervention in Vietnam at a time when few dared speak out against the war. In September 1963, Russell announced the creation of two foundations for peace:

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\(^\text{12}\) See, Chapter One for a full account of the DRV government’s action against *Nhan Van*: Letter, Russell to Ho, 17 Aug. 1963, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.


The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and the Atlantic Peace Foundation.\textsuperscript{15} The latter, a registered charity, was to conduct research necessary for the work of the BRPF, which was a limited company.\textsuperscript{16} Russell explained that these foundations were necessary because antiwar movements had “lived from hand to mouth” and had to beg “the press and film media for a crumb of publicity.” The BRPF aimed to investigate the causes of the Cold War, and pursue measures to diminish and eliminate the risk of nuclear and conventional war. UN Secretary-General U Thant endorsed the effort, which appeared to institutionalize the crusade for peace that Russell had been conducting for many decades.\textsuperscript{17}

Russell’s antiwar activities increased in response to intensified U.S. bombardment of Vietnam. In the early-1960s, Russell headed the Committee of 100, a group of British liberals, anarchists, and Soviet-style communists that demanded nuclear disarmament. By 1966, as North Vietnam faced heavy American bombardment, Russell began to uphold the communist viewpoint in his speeches. As a result many British antiwar activists left the BRPF to be replaced by young leftists such as Pat Jordan, Robin Blackburn, Quentin Hoare, and Ken Coates, who admired the Argentine Marxist revolutionary Ernesto “Che” Guevara and his efforts to encourage revolution in South America. Russell aimed to spread

\textsuperscript{15} Statement by Bertrand Russell at Television Interview and Press Conference on Launching of Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and Atlantic Peace Foundation, 29 Sep. 1963, Peace (Bertrand Russell), Box 3, LBJ Library.


\textsuperscript{17} Statement by Bertrand Russell at Television Interview and Press Conference on Launching of Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and Atlantic Peace Foundation, 29 Sep. 1963, Peace (Bertrand Russell), Box 3, LBJ Library.
the message that world peace could only be secured through the defeat of U.S. imperialism by supporting guerrilla movements throughout the world.18

Soon after the formation of the two foundations, Russell began looking for funding. In January 1964, he wrote to Tran Viet Dung, the London-based representative of the Hanoi weekly Cuu Quoc, requesting money to help run the foundations, and asking him to suggest the names of others who might support the foundations financially.19 Dung, and the publication’s other representatives Tran Trong Quat and Nguyen Van Sao, translated and delivered statements and letters from Ho and the DRV government to Russell and other antiwar organizations in Britain. The Cuu Quoc staff represented the DRV at antiwar events where they delivered speeches.

Deeply committed to world peace, Russell initially advised Ho not to respond with military force to U.S. attacks on North Vietnam because it would give the United States a pretext to extend the war.20 Ho did not accept the advice, and argued that the Vietnamese had been compelled to defend themselves against American attacks.21 Russell did not press the point because he believed that the DRV was exercising its legitimate right of self-defense against American attack. Russell assured Ho that he would raise his voice against the war and advocate a settlement along the lines of the Geneva Agreements, which called for

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18 Monk, Bertrand Russell, 1921-70: The Ghost of Madness, 468, 481.
19 Letter, Russell to Tran Viet Dung, 3 Jan. 1964, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.
20 Telegram, Russell to Ho, 5 Aug. 1964, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.
21 Telegram, Ho to Russell, 10 Aug. 1964, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.
internationally supervised elections that would unify the two halves of Vietnam. Russell opposed the motives that underlay the American intervention in Vietnam. He argued that President Dwight D. Eisenhower had admitted that the U.S. intervention in Vietnam was aimed at protecting its economic interests. During the U.S. Governor’s Conference in 1953, Eisenhower revealed America’s real motives in helping France maintain its hold over Indochina. Eisenhower warned that if the United States lost control over Indochina it would lose access to “the tin and tungsten we so greatly value.” By losing control over Indochina, the United States would no longer possess the ability and “power to get certain things we need from the riches of the Indochinese territory and from Southeast Asia.”

In November 1964, Russell asked Ho to become a financial sponsor of the BRPF, explaining that the funds would help the foundation to influence public opinion in the West, particularly in the United States. Ho argued that it would be inappropriate to have his name advertised on the foundation’s letterhead as an official sponsor because the DRV’s communism could become a liability in the foundation’s work in the West. Russell replied that he recognized these dangers, and he assured Ho that he would defend the DRV’s right to struggle against the American intervention publicly against any criticism. Russell admitted that the

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22 Letter, Russell to Ho, 15 Aug. 1964, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.
25 Letter, Russell to Ho, Nov. 1964, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61; and Letter, Russell to Ho, 30 Dec. 1964, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.
fear of communism in the United States was irrational and dangerous, but that made it all the more important to challenge those misconceptions openly.\(^{26}\)

Ho still declined to become an official sponsor of the foundation, but at the very least, Russell managed to secure Ho’s financial support.\(^{27}\) Ho initially gave 20,000 NF (New Francs) to support the foundation’s efforts to urge President Johnson to negotiate a settlement to end the war.\(^{28}\) In addition, Ho contributed 30,000 NF to help organize the war crimes tribunal.\(^{29}\) In total, Ho contributed 50,000 NF (equivalent to US$10,200), and more than double that amount on financing the visits of the IWCT’s investigators to Vietnam, which makes the DRV a significant contributor to the foundation and the tribunal.\(^{30}\) In comparison, Pakistan’s President Ayub Khan contributed a total of 7,750 British pounds (equivalent to US$21,700 at prevailing exchange rates in 1964-66), to help Russell run the foundation’s peace activism, and to publish its journal, \textit{The Spokesman}.\(^{31}\) King Faisal Al Saud of Saudi Arabia made a one-time contribution

\(^{26}\) Letter, Russell to Ho, 12 Jan. 1965, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.

\(^{27}\) Letter, Russell to Ho, 8 Feb. 1965, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.

\(^{28}\) Letter, Russell to Ho, 3 Mar. 1965, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.

\(^{29}\) Telegram, Ho to Russell, 2 Aug. 1966, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5; and Letter, Russell to Ho, 12 Aug. 1966, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.


of 1,000 British pounds in July 1965 to help the BRPF.\textsuperscript{32} The ruler of Bahrain, Shaikh Isa bin Sulman al Khalifah, and President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia made small financial contributions in August and November 1964, respectively.\textsuperscript{33}

As financial pressures mounted, Russell appealed to more world leaders for money, but he often came up short. Because of a lack of foreign exchange Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Ceylon turned down Russell’s request to provide air passage for BRPF officials to visit Ceylon to coordinate antiwar activities.\textsuperscript{34} President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania bluntly told Russell that he should send one, not two, foundation representatives to Tanzania because his country, facing a “problem of finance,” could only afford to pay a single airfare.\textsuperscript{35} In these circumstances, the BRPF relied on small contributions ranging from $1 to $100 from individuals in the United States, Canada, Australia, Western Europe, Japan, India, and the Philippines. The foundation also attempted to raise money by announcing plans to hold a performance of the Bolshoi Ballet in London in August 1965. Unfortunately for the foundation, the British Culture Minister, Jenny Lee, denied permission to the Soviet ballet troupe on the grounds that artists who perform in the United Kingdom should not support any movement

\textsuperscript{33} Russell’s papers do not mention the amounts contributed by Bahrain and Zambia. Letter, Personal Secretary, Ruler of Bahrain to Russell, 4 Aug. 1964 to Russell, BRA, 650, Heads of State Box 1.57; and Letter Schoenman to President Kenneth Kaunda, 17 Nov. 1964, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Box 1.61.
\textsuperscript{34} Letter, Sirimavo Bandaranaike to Schoenman, 1 Sep. 1964, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Box 1.57.
\textsuperscript{35} Letter, Julius Nyerere to Russell, 21 Jan. 1965, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Box 1.57.
involved in controversy of an international political nature. The foundation also devised profit-making schemes such as setting up a small business to produce greeting cards, birthday cards, postcards, calendars, notepaper, badges, records, and tapes using photographs of Russell, and cables to him from Khrushchev and Zhou Enlai, and a photograph of a Vietnamese child.

Russell failed in realizing his dream of turning the tribunal into a permanent court because he lacked funds. In order to keep the IWCT going the foundation took out burdensome bank loans in 1964 that became overdue in the mid-1960s. Russell hastened the publication of his autobiography, originally slated for release after his death, in order to use royalties to rescue the foundation and IWCT from financial crisis. In addition to the foreign contributions, Russell plowed much of his personal wealth from book royalties worth an estimated 40,000 British pounds a year into the BRPF, which in turn lent funds to the IWCT. The big earner was Russell’s autobiography that was purchased in the United States by Little, Brown for $202,000 in early 1967. Most of this money went into the foundation. Russell also attempted to raise funds by arranging the sale of his collection of papers to McMaster University. McMaster paid a first installment of US$480,000 in March 1968, and a second installment of

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38 Moorehead, *Bertrand Russell: A Life*, 529.
40 Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell*, 626.
US$90,000 in October 1972.\textsuperscript{42} Even though these funds arrived too late to save the foundation, they helped pay for the tribunal’s hearings in Sweden and Denmark.\textsuperscript{43}

The foundation had exhausted the advance from Russell’s biography by May 1967. The following month, British Inland Revenue sent a second reminder to the IWCT to pay its income tax dues for 1967-68.\textsuperscript{44} Russell found it necessary to tap Ho Chi Minh and others for more financial contributions.\textsuperscript{45} Ho provided financial assistance that enabled the foundation to arrange meetings of DRV and NLF diplomats in Europe, and sponsor fact-finding missions to Vietnam. Russell’s wealthy benefactors included a mélange of royal family members in Europe who were appalled by the massacre of Vietnamese civilians. Some potential supporters declined Russell’s requests because they worried that they would be identified with left wing causes. Others, more sympathetic to the communist left, refused because Russell had criticized Soviet communism during his visit to Soviet Union in 1920.\textsuperscript{46} Nonetheless, Russell’s prominent intellectual stature drew many world leaders to his side, some of whom lent their name and others who contributed funds. In the mid-1960s, sponsors appearing on the

\textsuperscript{42} Contracts between McMaster University and the BRPF, BRA. On signing the agreement on 28 Mar. 1968, McMaster paid US$150,000 as down payment for Russell Archives I. This was followed by payments of US$75,000 on 1 June 1968; US$100,000 on 1 Jan. 1969; US$80,000 on 1 June 1969; and US$75,000 on 20 Jan. 1970. On signing the agreement to buy Russell Archives II on 14 Oct. 1972, McMaster paid US$60,000; and made a second payment of US$30,000 on 1 May 1973.

\textsuperscript{43} The Periscope, 17 Apr. 1967, Newsweek; and Letters, 24 Apr. 1967, Newsweek.

\textsuperscript{44} Letter, Inland Revenue to IWCT, 6 June 1967, BRA II, 316, Financial Correspondence, Abbott-Oyler, Box 9.40.


\textsuperscript{46} Horowitz, \textit{Radical Son: A Journey Through Our Times}, 374-375.
BRPF’s letterhead included the Duke of Bedford, Nobel Prize winners Max Born, Linus Pauling, Albert Schweitzer, and Lord Boyd Orr, Spanish cellist Pablo Casals, Queen Elizabeth of Belgium, Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I, Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, Pakistani President Ayub Khan, the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Ghana’s President Kwame Nkrumah, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, Indian President Sarvpalli Radhakrishnan, British actress Vanessa Redgrave, and Cambodian Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

Russell and Ho closely coordinated their informal diplomacy. In February 1965, Russell reported to Ho that Prime Minister Wilson was worried about British Labour Party opposition to the Vietnam War.47 To get Wilson to question American policy and advocate the reconvening of the Geneva Conference, Russell urged Ho to send a statement listing all the concessions and peace proposals that Ho and the NLF had offered the United States over the past decade.48 Russell also recommended to Ho three initiatives that would show Wilson that the Vietnamese revolutionaries were willing to negotiate: first, the NLF should announce a temporary ceasefire for a fortnight in the near future; second, the DRV, NLF, and Moscow should pursue a rapid settlement along the lines of the Geneva Agreements; third, should the United States not accept the temporary ceasefire, the NLF should publicly proclaim its right to use force to defend the Vietnamese people against atrocities. Russell was confident that during

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48 See Chapter Two for details on Labour Party demands to reconvene the Geneva Conference.
the fortnight-long ceasefire, public opinion could be mobilized to oblige the
United States to come to the conference table.49 Ho replied that the NLF could not
endorse Russell’s recommendations because the Vietnamese revolutionaries
needed more time to gain the upper hand in the battlefield before they could
negotiate. In Ho’s view, the United States was stepping up its “special war” in
South Vietnam to spread the war into Laos and take provocative actions against
Cambodia.50 In March 1965, Ho told Russell that the United States was
undermining the effort to resurrect the Geneva Agreements by bringing more
troops to South Vietnam in order to intensify the war.51

Russell first broached the idea of a tribunal, not with the DRV as one
might expect, but with the NLF because the South Vietnamese revolutionaries
were the principal combatants in the struggle to liberate their homeland. In July
and September of 1965, members of the NLF central committee Ma Thi Chu and
Dinh Ba Thi, and South Vietnamese journalist Pham Van Chuong, met several
times with Russell’s representative Ralph Schoenman, a leftist American, who
was educated at Princeton University and the London School of Economics.52 At
these meetings Schoenman conveyed Russell’s idea of a war crimes tribunal, and
the NLF agreed to cooperate and assist in the tribunal.

49 Ibid.
50 Letter, Ho to Russell, 2 Apr. 1965, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic
Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.
51 Telegram, Ho to Russell, 18 Mar. 1965, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam
(Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.
52 Summary Report of Series of Meetings, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with
Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.
Not all of Russell’s initiatives were so successful. For instance, in July 1965 Russell asked Ho, NLF President Tho, Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, and the NLF representative in Helsinki to send representatives to participate in a “landmark meeting” in London, where Vietnamese and Chinese would speak at a Russell foundation event for the first time. Russell urged them to grasp the opportunity to turn public opinion in Britain and the United States against the U.S. intervention in Vietnam. The BRPF extended invitations to three South Vietnamese – NLF central committee member Nguyen Van Hieu, South Vietnam Peace Committee member Dinh Ba Thi, and journalist Pham Van Chuong – to travel to London to deliver public lectures and participate in teach-ins. In order to persuade the British government to allow the three to come to Britain, the BRPF began a campaign to mobilize British public opinion. Russell was instrumental in getting important public personalities to send a letter to the *New Statesman* urging the government to provide the visas. The letter writers included Field Marshal Claude Auchinleck, who commanded the British Eighth Army in Africa during the Second World War, Bishop of Southwark Mervyn Stockwood, former Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bombay Thomas Roberts, London School of Economics professors K.W. Wedderburn and Ralph Miliband, University of Sussex professor Asa Briggs, former *New Statesman* editor Kingsley Martin, and novelist Iris Murdoch. Unfortunately for Russell, the British Home Secretary refused to grant

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53 Letter, Russell to Ho, 5 July 1965, BRA II, 378, Visa Campaign for Vietnamese, Box 10.2.
visas to the South Vietnamese invitees, claiming it was not in the British national interest to have them visit London at a time when the United States was attempting to contain communism in North Vietnam.\textsuperscript{55}

The British novelist Graham Greene also declined Russell’s request to sign a declaration opposing the American intervention. Greene explained that although he shared Russell’s views “about the senselessness of the war in South Vietnam, having experienced it during four winters when the French section of the war was still in progress,” he opposed signing declarations because the names of the same signatories appeared repeatedly and lost their effect.\textsuperscript{56}

Toward the end of 1965, Russell seized a new opportunity to generate publicity for the foundation’s peace campaigns. When the U.S. District Court of Connecticut sentenced David Mitchell, an American conscientious objector, to five years in prison for resisting the draft, the Russell Foundation hired Mark Lane to defend him. The foundation attempted to use the trial of David Mitchell to publicize evidence of American war crimes. In January 1966, Russell explained to Prime Minister Dong that the Mitchell case had the potential to “frustrate the U.S. Government’s war plans.”\textsuperscript{57} Russell told Ho that he was confident of mobilizing public opinion in the United States through Mitchell’s trial.\textsuperscript{58} Even though Mitchell lost, the favorable publicity generated by the trial proceedings

\textsuperscript{58} Letter, Russell to Ho, 12 Mar. 1966, BRA I, 650, Box 1.61.

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convinced Russell and Schoenman to use Mitchell’s testimony in an inquiry into war crimes committed by the United States in Vietnam on the basis that Mitchell had refused to serve in the army because the United States was “engaged in war crimes.” Russell informed Dong that Schoenman and Lane had begun to lay the foundation for a war crimes’ tribunal, and that they had gained the support of antiwar organizers in the United States, including the leadership of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, one of the leading organizations of the American civil rights movement.

The NLF and the DRV welcomed the plan to form a tribunal. In February 1966, Schoenman met with Ho and Dong in Hanoi. They agreed that the foundation would create the International War Crimes Tribunal, and that the DRV would make available evidence in its possession, including exhibits of weapons used against the people of Vietnam. Witnesses and victims would also testify before the tribunal. Ho agreed to host investigating teams and furnish the necessary facilities in North Vietnam.

At the end of his stay in Hanoi in March, Schoenman wrote to Prime Minister Dong that the BRPF planned to publish a news journal entitled The Spokesman to serve as a “voice for the anti-imperialist forces” in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The journal would specifically be devoted to promoting the

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61 “Summary Report of Meeting between Ho, Pham Van Dong and Russell’s representatives,” BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.
victory of the people’s struggle in Vietnam. In addition, the foundation intended to publish a book about American war crimes in Vietnam. In order to produce these materials, the foundation urgently needed reliable access to data and evidence in Vietnam, the ability to visit Vietnam rapidly, and financial assistance for the war crimes tribunal and the two publications, *Vietnam Bulletin* and *The Spokesman*. Schoenman asked Dong for financial assistance, explaining that *The Spokesman* had a “modest budget” of 30,000 British pounds a year, only half of which had been raised.\(^62\) Schoenman estimated that the war crimes tribunal would cost 50,000 British pounds for transport and accommodation for witnesses, office supplies, and publicity.

In May 1966, Ho and NLF President Tho sent Russell separate statements to be read at the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign’s national conference under the auspices of the BRPF.\(^63\) The following month, Russell requested further financial support for the foundation’s efforts.\(^64\) He explained that the foundation had been distributing antiwar leaflets among U.S. troops, raising Vietnamese flags in public places, and participating in large marches with the people of Vietnam. The foundation held its annual conference in June, and gathered more than 13,000 signatures in Japan, where a branch of the BRPF was to be established in October.

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\(^{62}\) Letter, Ralph Schoenman to Pham Van Dong, 3 Mar. 1966, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.

\(^{63}\) Telegram, Russell to Ho and Nguyen Huu Tho, 23 May 1966, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.

\(^{64}\) Letter, Russell to Ho, 9 June 1966, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.
1966. The Japanese government supported American policy in Vietnam, even though the Japanese people were divided over the war. Most of the major Japanese newspapers opposed the U.S. intervention and supported an important Japanese antiwar organization, Beheiren (Citizens’ Federation for Peace in Vietnam). Like the antiwar movement in Europe and the United States, Beheiren conducted daily activities against the war such as letter-writing campaigns and meetings at community centers, and college campuses.

In order to conduct a global campaign against both conventional and nuclear war, and the American intervention in Vietnam, the BRPF established branch offices in New York and the U.S. West Coast, Argentina, Australia, India, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, and the Philippines. The London head office told the branches to generate their own funds through local membership drives, and contribute surplus funds to enable the head office to finance the operation of the war crimes tribunal.

When Dr Le Dinh Tham, chairman of the Vietnam Committee for the Defense of World Peace, learned about Russell’s initiative to form the IWCT, he wrote to Russell welcoming the forthcoming trial. Tham assured Russell that the Vietnamese people would provide witnesses and evidence to the tribunal’s

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65 Letter, Russell to Ho, 1 Apr. 1966, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.
investigating teams. In reply, Russell wrote: “The gas, chemicals, napalm, and scorched earth policy require the most solemn and esteemed assessment by an international body such as the tribunal,” adding that he “would spare no effort to bring the tribunal to fruition with the most extensive impact possible on world opinion.”

The Hanoi-based Committee for Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity sent Russell a statement issued by the South Vietnam Peace Committee welcoming the initiative to set up the IWCT. Inspired by Russell’s initiative, the NLF created its own commission to probe American war crimes. South Vietnamese journalist Pham Van Chuong informed BRPF official Ralph Schoenman that he would soon be able to provide substantial evidence of American war crimes because the NLF was meticulously documenting war crimes under the auspices of its own war crimes commission.

In July 1966, Russell informed Ho that the IWCT would hold hearings in Paris the following year to put the United States on trial for the war crimes it had committed in Vietnam. Prominent personalities who had agreed to serve on the tribunal included the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, French feminist Simone de Beauvoir, former Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas, Italian social

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70 Letter, Russell to Le Dinh Tham, 20 July 1966, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.
73 Moorehead, *Bertrand Russell: A Life*, 529.
activist Danilo Dolci (the "Gandhi of Sicily"), Italian communist Lelio Basso, German playwright Peter Weiss, British historian Isaac Deutscher, and the American antiwar activist David Dellinger. Stokely Carmichael pledged to hold a meeting of the national council of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to support the tribunal. 74

Russell wanted Che Guevara to join the tribunal, and Che looked to the Russell foundation for funds to support his Bolivian revolution. Neither objective was attained because it was difficult to maintain regular contact with Che who was located at an undisclosed guerrilla base in rural Bolivia. In June 1966, Russell wrote to Che that he would "consider it of the greatest importance" if Che would "participate as a member of the tribunal." 75 Che declined because he was consumed with organizing the Bolivian revolution. 76 In May-June 1967, Russell foundation activists Schoenman, Blackburn, Tariq Ali, and New Left Review editor Perry Anderson traveled to Bolivia to attend the trial of the French academic Regis Debray, an associate of Che who was interrogated by the Bolivian authorities on Che's whereabouts. 77 Schoenman devised a plan to take food and medicines to Che, but did not succeed in finding him. 78 Nonetheless, Russell used Che's name in an appeal to drum up support for a new World

74 Letter, Russell to Ho, 20 July 1966, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.
77 Ali, Street Fighting Years, 137-138.
Committee to help the people of Vietnam. The appeal, issued in May 1967, declared that the initiative had the "full and ardent support of Prime Minister Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara."  

Although Ho and Russell worked well together most of the time, friction occasionally developed between the foundation and the DRV over the organization of the tribunal. Russell proposed putting on trial the U.S. pilots held in the DRV. The pilots would remain in custody, but their statements would be read into the record, and their defense lawyers would have access to them. Ho rejected this idea because he did not want to antagonize U.S. leaders. In October 1966, Russell complained to Ho about the DRV’s efforts to select the members of an international commission to coordinate the dispatch of investigating teams to North Vietnam. Russell especially resented how the DRV diplomat Mai Van Bo and the Cuu Quoc London representative Nguyen Van Sao tried to dominate discussions with BRPF officials. DRV interference risked undermining the tribunal’s credibility. Russell pointed out that in order to convince Western opinion that the United States had committed war crimes in Vietnam the tribunal "must be exact and unimpeachable" and the "broad base required [by the tribunal] cannot be a mask for external control."

80 Telegram, Ho to Russell, 2 Aug. 1966, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5; and Letter, Russell to Ho, 12 Aug. 1966, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.  
The tribunal’s organizers agreed to create five separate commissions to investigate the various legal and humanitarian dimensions of the war crimes: (1) Violation of international agreements; (2) use of experimental weapons such as toxic gas and chemicals; (3) bombardment of civilian areas such as sanatoria, schools, hospitals, and dykes; (4) torture and mutilation of prisoners; and (5) use of forced labor camps, mass executions, and genocidal actions against the population of the south. The commissions were to report to the tribunal until the war crimes hearings began in March 1967.

The disputes regarding the formation and functioning of the tribunal revolved around four major issues.83 The first dispute arose when DRV officials sought to create an additional international commission that would dispatch an investigating team to Vietnam. Russell complained to Ho that any commission controlled by the DRY would undermine the legitimacy of the tribunal. A second dispute emerged when the DRY proposed names of officials who would serve on the investigating commission under the auspices of the tribunal. Russell explained to Ho that the tribunal “cannot be a spokesman for the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, however sympathetic it may be and however willing to cooperate in practical ways.” Moreover, DRV officials proposed that the investigative commission would spend just ten days in Vietnam. Russell argued that the team could not gather sufficient incriminating evidence in such a

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83 “Confidential Memorandum to President Ho Chi Minh from Bertrand Russell on the Subject of the International War Crimes Tribunal,” BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.
short time, and warned that the tribunal would be justifiably accused of not
witnessing or assimilating the evidence, and of merely receiving the evidence as a
messenger service that could just as easily be facilitated through the post. A third
argument arose when Minister Mai Van Bo advocated organizing massive
demonstrations in the West to support the tribunal. Russell warned Ho that the
tribunal must not become a vehicle for political propaganda because it was a
juridical body that must carry the authority of such an entity. A fourth point of
contention focused on who would control the tribunal. Mai Van Bo proposed
putting himself (along with two foundation officials) in control of the tribunal.
Russell advised Ho that the tribunal must remain independent of the foundation
and the DRV.

Ho intervened personally in October to resolve these disputes by inviting
Schoenman to visit Hanoi in November before the opening meetings of the
tribunal in London. Ho agreed to receive six investigative teams composed of four
members each to gather data in North Vietnam between November and March.84
Despite personnel shortages, Ho promised to send someone to Paris to testify. All
the disputes were resolved because Ho assured Russell that DRV officials and
Cuu Quoc representatives based in London would no longer intervene in matters
pertaining to the tribunal.

Consequently, Ho and Russell worked together to gain the tribunal
favorable publicity. For example, Russell used his friendship with Ho to help

84" Summary Report of Meeting between Ho, Pham Van Dong and Russell's
representatives," BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.
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American television networks get access to North Vietnam in 1967.\textsuperscript{85} Columbia Broadcasting System was especially keen to travel with the investigating teams of the tribunal. Russell explained to Ho that articles by \textit{New York Times} correspondent Harrison Salisbury, who had traveled to North Vietnam in 1966, had induced the American mass media to broaden its coverage of the war. Ho responded quickly and with enthusiasm. In a letter on 27 January 1967, he agreed to allow some CBS reporters to visit the DRV, provided that the journalists abided by the wartime regulations of North Vietnam.\textsuperscript{86}

**Russell and the Diplomatic Front**

Russell maintained close and regular contact not just with members of North Vietnam’s diplomatic front but also with the NLF in order to coordinate policies and antiwar events. Russell believed the NLF was a non-communist, neutralist, and popular front that supported the terms of the Geneva Agreements.\textsuperscript{87} As part of this effort, Russell took it upon himself to defend the NLF’s policy to militarily confront the United States and the government of the Republic of South Vietnam.

Although Russell was fairly successful in getting American and British newspapers to publish his letters criticizing the American intervention, editors occasionally declined to print certain letters. In March 1963, the \textit{Washington Post}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{85} Letter, Russell to Ho, 9 Jan. 1967, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Jan. 1967), Box 10.6.
  \item\textsuperscript{86} Letter, Ho to Russell, 27 Jan. 1967, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Jan. 1967), Box 10.6.
  \item\textsuperscript{87} Alan Ryan, \textit{Bertrand Russell: A Political Life}, 176.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
refused to publish his letter castigating the United States for using chemical
weapons to defend a "brutal and feudal regime" in South Vietnam. 88 The Post
explained that it could not publish the letter because it had a longstanding rule that
limited the frequency with which the paper could accept letters from any writer. 89
The Vietnamese press published in full Russell's letters that were edited by the
Post. Cuu Quoc Weekly's London representative Tran Trong Quat told Russell
that the Vietnam News Agency had released to the Vietnamese press the text of
Russell's letter to the Washington Post dated 22 March 1963. 90 Russell requested
Quat to provide him with more information on the war in Vietnam. 91

Russell appears to have given the editors the impression that he was
monopolizing the letters' page. In a two-year period the Post had published only
two letters by Russell, in November 1962 and February 1963. 92 In May 1963,
Russell complained to the New York Times, which deleted all reference to
American chemical warfare from his letter allegedly in order to reduce its length.
The newspaper also informed Russell that it would not allow him to monopolize
its editorial pages. 93

91 Letter, Russell to Tran Trong Quat, 16 Apr. 1963, BRA II, 640, World Affairs, Box 6.
92 See, "Bertrand Russell, Letters to the Editor," 29 Nov. 1962, Washington Post. Russell argued that the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba amounted to the "grossest imperialism." Also see, "Bertrand Russell, Letters to the Editor," 5 Feb. 1963, Washington Post. In this letter, Russell registered his "disgust at the unmitigated persecution" of organizations such as the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, Women Strike for Peace, and Pacifica Foundation by the United States government which he said was creating a "general atmosphere of hysterical intolerance."
In his autobiography, Russell explained his difficulties with the *New York Times*: early in 1963, Russell wrote to the newspaper describing “American conduct in the war as barbarism reminiscent of warfare practiced by the Germans in Eastern Europe and the Japanese in Southeast Asia.” Russell argued that his views “seemed too strong for the *New York Times*,” adding that the newspaper “first attacked me editorially, then cut my reply, and finally denied me any access to its letters columns.”

Undaunted by the failure of these efforts, NLF President Tho cabled Russell in early March urging him to continue protesting the large-scale use of chemical weapons by American and South Vietnamese forces.

DRV people’s organizations made very specific requests on Russell to influence British and Soviet policy. Nguyen Xien, an engineer who chaired the Hanoi-based Committee of Struggle Against U.S. Imperialists and Henchmen’s Persecution of Intellectuals in South Vietnam, asked Russell to urge the governments of Britain and the Soviet Union, in their capacity as co-chairs of the Geneva Conference, to prevail upon the Kennedy administration and the Ngo Dinh Diem regime to “stop at once the chemical war” and “all acts of repression and murder in South Vietnam.” Russell replied that he was “appalled” at the information Xien had sent him because it revealed the “barbarism of the war now being conducted by the U.S. and its creature government of South Vietnam.”

(The DRV government formally appealed to the co-chairs of the Geneva

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95 Telegram, Nguyen Huu Tho to Russell, 8 Mar. 1964, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5
97 Letter, Russell to Nguyen Xien, 30 May 1963, BRA II, 640, World Affairs, Box 1.55.
Conference in December 1964, urging them to “take effective measures” to get the United States to withdraw its troops from Vietnam, allow the people of Vietnam to determine their future without interference, and ensure the “correct implementation” of the Geneva Agreements.”

Dr Le Dinh Tham, who also headed the Vietnam Peace Committee, informed Russell about the kind of warfare being waged by the United States and the Diem regime. Tham said that American and Diem forces were making “continual raids to herd people into concentration camps dubbed Strategic Hamlets,” and that they “used inhuman tortures of a medieval type” such as “beheading,” “disemboweling,” and “plucking out the liver.” They had dropped napalm bombs on villages, and sprayed poisonous chemicals on large and densely populated areas. Tham argued that although the United States claimed these products “were common chemicals to kill weeds,” in reality they destroyed crops and vegetation, and killed cattle and people. He added that U.S. and Diem forces “mixed poison with water while carrying out raids,” and that the United States was using Vietnam as a “testing ground for their special war.” Russell told Tham that it was a “difficult task to gain publicity for opposition to American policy, but nonetheless we are keeping up the effort.” Russell also corresponded with Professor Truong Cong Quyen, vice-dean of the Faculty of


100 Letter, Russell to Le Dinh Tham, 29 May 1963, BRA II, 640, World Affairs, Box 1.55.

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Medicine and Pharmacology in Hanoi, and sent him BRPF publications in support of Vietnam. Russell told Quyen: “I am appalled by the conduct of war by the United States in Vietnam, and am raising my voice against it wherever possible.”

The NLF found it difficult to correspond with Russell due to the war raging in the south. Nguyen Van Tien, who had recently arrived in Cairo to assume his duties as the South Vietnamese Secretary-Member of the Permanent Secretariat of the Organization of Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity, wrote to Russell in June 1963, explaining that he could not convey President Tho’s message of thanks to Russell for his support because the war created “many difficulties in communication.” Now that he was based in Cairo, communicating with Russell would be much easier, Tien wrote.

Russell requested Xien, who was also the vice-president of the Vietnam Association for the Popularization of Science and Technology, to keep him informed about the latest developments in Vietnam. In response, Xien wrote that the coup that removed Diem from power on 1 November 1963 had “brought no change” in South Vietnam because the military junta that replaced him was continuing the “Diemist policy of enslavement to the USA, and of war against the South Vietnamese people.” The following day, American and South Vietnamese forces bombed civilians in the south, and on 3 November they sprayed toxic

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101 Letter, Russell to Truong Cong Quyen, 6 June 1963, BRA II, 640, World Affairs, Box 1.55.
chemicals in Cai Lai district, and My Tho province, Xien reported. Due to military violence against civilians, Xien requested Russell to “grant greater attention to the question of South Vietnam.” Russell assured Xien that he would “take this matter up in every way available to us” because the war being waged in Vietnam was “atrocious” and “all pressure ought to be brought to bear to halt it.” Russell requested Xien to acknowledge receipt of his letter because he did not want the letter “interfered with by the British postal authorities.” Xien again wrote to Russell in February 1964, urging him to raise an “alarm” to stir world opinion because military violence against civilians had increased after a second military coup in Saigon had “put a new puppet, Nguyen Khanh, in power.”

In order to develop a close working relationship with the North Vietnamese diplomatic front, Russell thought it necessary to inform front officials about his antiwar activities in the United States. In March 1964, Russell told Xien that he had contacted student organizations at more than 200 universities in the United States that had begun a campaign against the war in Vietnam. Students of Stanford University requested Russell to send a taped message that was heard by about 1,000 students at a rally at Stanford in the same month. According to the Palo Alto Times, Russell warned the students that World War III could begin if

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104 Letter, Russell to Nguyen Xien, 8 Jan. 1964, BRA II, 640, World Affairs, Box 1.55.
the United States extended its intervention in North Vietnam. ¹⁰⁷ The Stanford Peace Caucus sent Russell’s statement to 225 American colleges, and 25 newspapers, wire services, and radio stations. ¹⁰⁸

Nguyen Xien replied to Russell the following month, thanking him for sending him a copy of Russell’s letter dated 25 February 1964 to the Washington Post, and the text of Russell’s broadcast to Stanford University students on 1 March 1964. In order to publish Russell’s statements in the committee’s journal, Xien requested Russell to provide more information about Russell’s peace activism at American university campuses. ¹⁰⁹ Xien enclosed an English edition of a special bulletin produced by his committee in April 1964 that carried Xien’s “Appeal to the Intellectuals of All Lands,” an article celebrating the third anniversary of the NLF by professor Tran Van Giau, statistics on the numbers of South Vietnamese killed, tortured, and imprisoned, and criticism of American policy by a member of the DRV National Assembly. ¹¹⁰ Russell replied promptly, informing Xien that the 200 American universities to which the BRPF had sent antiwar materials had held major demonstrations under the auspices of the May 2nd Committee. In addition, the Citizens Committee of San Francisco and the

Student Peace Caucus of Stanford University had been "most active" in their protests.\textsuperscript{111}

In July 1964, Nguyen Van Hieu, the Prague-based representative of the NLF, supplied Russell with information about the increased use of chemical weapons by American forces in South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{112} In the same month NLF Central Committee Member Nguyen Thi Binh sent Russell a print of an NLF film of journalist Wilfred Burchett's visit to South Vietnam that criticized the American nation-building effort in the south.\textsuperscript{113}

BRPF officials gave the North Vietnamese advance notice of antiwar events. In January 1965, Schoenman alerted Cuu Quoc Weekly's London representative Nguyen Van Sao that Russell would soon deliver a public speech in London in which he would make "a serious and dramatic condemnation of U.S. policy." Schoenman urged Sao to treat the matter "confidentially" because the speech had not yet been announced publicly.\textsuperscript{114}

Both DRV people's organizations and North Vietnamese newsmen stationed in London regularly sent DRV government statements to Russell. The London representatives of Cuu Quoc Weekly received letters and statements from Hanoi written in Vietnamese; they translated them into English and sent them on

\textsuperscript{114} Letter, Ralph Schoenman to Nguyen Van Sao, 10 Jan. 1965, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese, (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.
to British antiwar organizations. In January 1965, Hoang Quoc Viet, who was organizing an international solidarity conference in Hanoi, told Russell that he admired him because despite Russell’s “old age” he provided constant support to the Vietnamese revolutionaries.\footnote{Letter, Hoang Quoc Viet to Russell, 21 Jan. 1965, BRA II, 376, IWCT, General Correspondence with Vietnamese, Box 10.7.}

In order to keep the North Vietnamese informed about his peace activism, Russell sent copies of his letters and speeches to them. Russell sent an urgent appeal to the commander-in-chief of the South Vietnamese army General Nguyen Khanh in February 1965: “Strongly urge end to executions of demonstrators. Firing squads will never bring peace or justice.” Russell sent a copy of the appeal to Xien in Hanoi, informing him that the statement was released to the press in London.\footnote{Letter, Russell to Nguyen Xien, 2 Feb. 1965, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.} The Hanoi-based Committee for the Defense of World Peace sent Russell a DRV government statement condemning U.S. bombardment of North Vietnamese hospitals and schools in Quang Binh, Vinh Linh, and Dong Hoi in February 1965, and urging Russell to “take immediate measures” to condemn the bombardment, demand an end to the war against North Vietnam, and ensure strict observance of the Geneva Agreements.\footnote{Letter, Committee for the Defense of World Peace to Russell, 9 Feb. 1965, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese, (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.}

Although Russell could not travel to Vietnam due to his age, BRPF officials Schoenman and Christopher Farley did visit in order to attend antiwar events, deliver requests for financial assistance, and gather evidence of war
crimes. Russell thanked Hoang Quoc Viet, who also served as chairman of the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions, for helping Farley collect important evidence of war crimes during his visit to the DRV.

The major North Vietnamese book distributor Xunhasaba requested Russell to put them in touch with British booksellers so that they could find international readers for their books such as *Facing the Skyhawks*, *Letters from South Vietnam*, *Special War and National Liberation War in Vietnam*, *Indomitable South Vietnam*, *On the Problem of War and Peace*, and *My Visit to the Liberated Areas of South Vietnam*. Farley advised Xunhasaba managers to contact three London bookstores: Collett’s, Central Books, and Better Books. Xunhasaba also requested Russell to send some of his books so that they could be published in Vietnam: in particular, they requested copies of *Negotiations or Withdrawal: Which Way to Peace in Vietnam*, *Postscript: To the Conscience of Mankind*, and *Civilization at the Bar*. Xunhasaba also asked for a copy of Ralph Schoenman’s *Eichmann and Everyman: The Moral Challenge of Vietnam*, and the BRPF’s *Petition in Support of the International War Crimes Tribunal*.

The DRV’s newly appointed foreign minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, who also served as general secretary of the Bureau of the International Conference for
Solidarity with the People of Vietnam Against U.S. Imperialist Aggression and for the Defense of Peace, sent Russell a copy of a book the bureau published with a preface by Russell. Russell assured Trinh that he would continue to “alert public opinion in the West” against American aggression in Vietnam.

To combat Western skepticism over the use of poisonous gases, Russell asked Nguyen Xien to send more details about the nature of the chemicals that American warplanes were spraying over Vietnamese forests and fields. Russell said that precise information would help expose the claim of the United States government that the gases it was using in Vietnam were non-toxic, and that the American bombardment in the north was only directed at military installations. Xien provided the information, which IWCT investigators incorporated into their reports.

Although Russell fully supported the DRV, he did not want to be seen as a communist puppet. For example, he declined to sign a letter that Nguyen Xien’s Committee of Struggle proposed to send to intellectuals all over the world protesting American war atrocities and the intervention in Vietnam. Russell explained that while he sympathized with the petition, he preferred to act

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124 Letter, Russell to Nguyen Duy Trinh, 18 May 1965, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese. (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.
126 Letter, Russell to Nguyen Xien, 30 June 1964, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1966) Box 10.5.
independently because it allowed him to reach a wider audience in the West that
might be turned off by his association with a communist-initiated campaign.

When President Johnson committed the United States to a major war in
Vietnam in late July 1965, the Vietnam Peace Committee contacted Russell,
voicing deep concern that the dispatch of “another 50,000 troops” to Vietnam was
aimed at intensifying the war.127 And when the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam
increased to more than 200,000, the Vietnam Committee for the Defense of World
Peace informed the BRPF that U.S. and allied troops were conducting a policy of
“burning all, killing all, and destroying all.” The committee urged the foundation
to raise its voice against American and allied aggression in Vietnam.128

Russell’s peace activism went beyond organizing the war crimes trial. In
June 1966, the Russell foundation formed the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign,
which sought to end the British government’s “collusion” with the United States
in its aggression in Vietnam, establish closer relations between the British people
and all other oppressed people, and achieve an understanding of the common
interests of the British people and the oppressed peoples of Asia, Latin America,
and Africa in their struggle against American imperialism and neocolonialism.129
Despite his stature and fame, Russell could not persuade donors to rescue the
Vietnam Solidarity Campaign from a crippling financial crisis. By January 1967,

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Correspondence with Vietnamese, (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.
128 Circular, Vietnam Committee for the Defense of World Peace, 29 Mar. 1966, BRA II,
375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese, (Dec. 1966), Box 10.5.
129 “Aims of Solidarity with Vietnam Campaign,” BRA II, 379, Vietnam Solidarity
Campaign, (Statements, etc 2), Box 10.2.
its bank balance had sunk to 32 British pounds. Campaign organizers decided to make a concerted effort to persuade sympathizers to become members, and to hold a folk music concert in July in order to raise funds.\textsuperscript{130}

Occasionally, the NLF fell short of Russell’s high expectations. Russell complained to NLF President Tho that the Front had failed to honor the promises it had made at a meeting in October 1966 to provide the investigative teams of the tribunal access to liberated areas in South Vietnam. Moreover, the Front had suggested that the BRPF might be able to rescue certain American deserters from South Vietnam who could then testify at the tribunal. Russell had made the necessary diplomatic arrangements in early 1967 to enable the deserters and other witnesses from the liberated areas of South Vietnam to cross over into Cambodia to give testimony to the tribunal’s investigating team present in Phnom Penh. Unfortunately, the scheme collapsed because the NLF’s office in Phnom Penh failed to deliver the deserters to Russell foundation officials.\textsuperscript{131}

Russell and his colleagues often used their connections with the Vietnam Peace Committee in Hanoi to arrange the visits of Western journalists and writers to North Vietnam. For example, Russell helped arrange an interview between the Australian writer Christopher Koch and Ho Chi Minh, which appeared in \textit{Playboy} magazine.\textsuperscript{132} Russell also helped the journalist Harrison Salisbury gain permission

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{130} “Minutes of National Executive Meeting,” Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, 3 Jan. 1967, BRA II, 379, Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, (Statements, etc 3), Box 10.2.
  \item \textsuperscript{131} “Confidential Memorandum,” Russell to Nguyen Huu Tho, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Jan. 1967), Box 10.6.
  \item \textsuperscript{132} Letter, Russell to Nguyen Duy Tinh, 14 Feb. 1967, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Mar. 1967), Box 10.6.
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to visit North Vietnam even though he had been critical of Russell in his columns.\textsuperscript{133} The foundation was careful, however, not to recommend Western journalists who worked for publications openly hostile to the DRV. Christopher Farley told Nguyen Van Sao of the \textit{Cuu Quoc} Weekly that the \textit{Economist} had approached the foundation with a request to be permitted to travel to North Vietnam. Farley warned Sao that “we do not in any way recommend the \textit{Economist} and are not trying to encourage you to permit that journal to go to your country.”\textsuperscript{134}

Russell also coordinated his activism in consultation with Chinese and Russian peace committees. He corresponded with Chinese Premier Zhou, informing him about the work of the Russell foundation.\textsuperscript{135} Li Chu-wen, vice chairman of the Beijing-based Chinese People’s Committee for World Peace wrote to Russell in September 1965, recalling their meeting at the World Peace Congress in Helsinki in July that year. Li applauded Russell’s efforts to “arouse public opinion in the West” against the American war in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{136} The chairman of the Moscow-based Soviet Peace Committee, Nikolai Tikhonov, wrote to Russell, requesting him to forge a common front with the peace


\textsuperscript{134} For an example, see Russell’s warning about a news correspondent from the \textit{Economist}. Letter, Christopher Farley to Nguyen Van Sao, 3 Feb. 1967, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Mar. 1967), Box 10.6.

\textsuperscript{135} Letter, Russell to Zhou Enlai, 8 July 1965, BRA II, 378, Visa Campaign for Vietnamese, Box 10.2.

committee to support the struggle of the Vietnamese people. Russell responded to the Soviet appeal in June 1964 in a letter to the Soviet Peace Committee, and soon afterwards they issued a joint declaration in support of North Vietnam.

Russell, Ho, and the United States

Russell’s opposition to the U.S. intervention in Vietnam formed part of Russell’s broader opposition to similar interventions in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Worried that the antiwar movement was becoming more influential in Europe and the United States, the Johnson administration rebutted Russell’s letters and telegrams, and tried to subvert the International War Crimes Tribunal by preparing to launch a rival seminar that would highlight the American and South Vietnamese viewpoint. Johnson administration officials were alarmed about the potential of the IWCT to generate negative publicity that would undermine the U.S. effort in Vietnam.

Russell’s frequent letters irritated the Johnson administration in part because Russell did not restrict his complaints to the sole issue of Vietnam. In a letter to LBJ in December 1963, Russell urged the United States to improve relations with Cuba. He informed Johnson about the formation of his two peace foundations and asked the president to support them. Johnson’s national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, brushed Russell off with the comment that

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137 Letter, Soviet Peace Committee, Undated, BRA II, 376, IWCT, General Correspondence with Vietnamese; and Letter, Russell to Soviet Peace Committee, 16 June 1964, BRA II, 376, IWCT, General Correspondence with Vietnamese.
138 Letter, Russell to Johnson, 21 Dec. 1963, Peace (Bertrand Russell), Box 3, LBJ Library.
surely he would have seen from the president’s public statements the strength and depth of his commitment to building peace. On 6 January 1964, Russell complained to Johnson about rumors in the *New York Herald Tribune* that the United States was planning to invade Cuba. The White House denied these allegations.

Nonetheless, Russell concentrated his efforts in trying to persuade the United States to seek a peaceful solution to the Vietnam question. Russell met and corresponded with David Bruce, the American Ambassador to Britain, in order to impress upon him the urgency of reconvening the fourteen-nation Geneva Conference on Vietnam. During their meeting in London on 20 July, Russell complained that the United States was thwarting efforts to reconvene the conference. The majority of the people of South Vietnam wanted to remain neutral and not aligned to either the United States or the Soviet Union, Russell insisted, but they were being blocked by the United States. Russell believed that “the destruction of the Geneva Agreements, the support of a dictatorship [in

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139 Letter, McGeorge Bundy to Russell, 8 Jan. 1964, Peace (Bertrand Russell), Box 3, LBJ Library.
140 Letter, Russell to Johnson, 6 Jan. 1984, White House Central File, Name File, Russell, Bertrand, Box R 339, LBJ Library.
143 Secretary of Defense McNamara believed that the NLF’s “public pronouncements of a neutral solution” were “pure propaganda.” He argued that American officials did not take “neutrality” seriously because Hanoi and the NLF would not permit a neutral South Vietnam to exist. See Robert S. McNamara, James G. Blight, Robert Kendall Brigham, Thomas J. Biersteker, and Herbert Y. Schandler, *Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), 101.
South Vietnam], the establishment of a police state, and the destruction of all its opponents were intolerable crimes."¹⁴⁴ British MP Warbey, who was present at the meeting, claimed that civilians in South Vietnam disliked the Diem regime and its successor. Ambassador Bruce reported these comments to the State Department, in keeping with his practice to routinely keep Washington informed about Russell’s activities.¹⁴⁵

In order to deny Russell publicity, the State Department advised the White House not to respond to Russell’s cables and letters to President Johnson. Though he rarely received a reply, Russell continued writing to the White House. In August 1964, Russell requested that the United States halt further attacks on North Vietnam because world opinion backed U.N. Secretary General U Thant’s request to reconvene the Geneva Conference.¹⁴⁶ The State Department advised McGeorge Bundy not to reply to Russell’s cables of October 1964 calling for amnesty for three South Vietnamese high school students who faced the death penalty for attempting to kill American officials. The department reminded Bundy that British professor P. J. Honey had already successfully countered Russell’s earlier attacks on U.S. policy in Vietnam, which was much more effective in

¹⁴⁵ Cable, David Bruce to State Department, 16 July 1961, Berlin Crisis, Item No: BC02178, Digital National Security Archive; David Bruce Diaries, 28 Oct. 1962, Cuban Missile Crisis, CC01623, Digital National Security Archive.
¹⁴⁶ Telegram, Russell to Johnson, 6 Aug. 1964, National Security-Defense (EX ND 19/CO 230), Box 214, LBJ Library.
“deflating Russell’s line” than official American statements. Russell again wrote in November 1964, imploring Johnson to show compassion for the Vietnamese people. In a strongly worded letter to President Johnson in February 1965, Russell warned that the American bombardment of North Vietnam would be condemned at the United Nations, and would trigger worldwide protests. The White House replied that his letter had been added to many other opinions received at the White House, obviously a snub implying that Russell was going to be ignored.

The effort to deny Russell publicity was only partially successful because the war crimes tribunal proved to be an irresistible topic for the mainstream media. On 3 August 1966, newspapers announced that a tribunal headed by Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre would try President Johnson, Secretary of State Rusk, and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara as “war criminals” for their policies toward Vietnam. The judges would make their decision based on the testimony of hundreds of witnesses and complete scientific data on chemicals used in U.S. military operations.

147 Telegram, Russell to Johnson, 29 Oct. 1964, GEN CO 312, 9.1.64, Box 83, LBJ Library; and Memo, Benjamin H. Read to McGeorge Bundy, 21 Jan. 1965, National Security-Defense (EX ND 19/CO 230), Box 214, LBJ Library.
148 Telegram, Russell to Johnson, 27 Nov. 1964, National Security-Defense (EX ND 19/CO 230), Box 214, LBJ Library.
152 The tribunal included Russell as Honorary President, Sartre as Executive President, and historian Vladimir Dedijer as Chairman of Sessions. After dropouts and new additions, the tribunal members included: political scientist Wolfgang Abendroth, writer Gunther Anders,
On 25 August, Russell wrote a long and strongly worded letter to Johnson, arguing for the validity and credibility of the war crimes tribunal. By McNamara’s own admission, he pointed out, the United States had dropped more bombs on Vietnam than in Korea and the Second World War. Russell charged that the United States had used chemical weapons, poison gas, napalm, phosphorus, and fragmentation bombs against hospitals, schools, villages, and sanatoria. He remonstrated that the North Vietnamese had not bombed one school or village in the United States, or occupied any part of the United States. Because the Vietnamese air force could not possibly check the American bombardment of agricultural land, villages, and towns, the Vietnam War was beginning to resemble the fascist aggression in the Second World War. Consequently, solemn proceedings were needed to weigh evidence of crimes committed by the United States against the Vietnamese people. Russell cited U.S. Justice Robert Jackson's comment at Nuremberg that crimes of such magnitude required the application of international law against the aggressor.

Russell invited Johnson to appear before the tribunal in his own defense to answer the evidence and eyewitness testimony concerning the atrocities carried out in Vietnam.
out on Johnson’s instructions. Should Johnson be unwilling to appear personally, Russell requested him to appoint persons who would defend the actions of the U.S. government. Russell maintained that the tribunal drew legitimacy not only from its public mandate, and the eminence and international character of its members, but also from its solemn antecedent in the Nuremberg trials. Russell again quoted Justice Jackson: “If certain acts and violation of treaties are crimes, they are crimes whether the United States does them or whether Germany does them.”

Not surprisingly, the Johnson administration ignored these demands as it considered the tribunal a farce on par with the Soviet “show trials” of 1936. Nonetheless, U.S. officials worried about the trial’s impact. Beginning in July 1966, the U.S. government organized an extensive intelligence and diplomatic program to discredit Russell, the tribunal, and its staff, and to persuade tribunal officials to withdraw from the proceedings. The disinformation campaign was conducted by an interagency group headed by Undersecretary of State George Ball, and composed of officials from the CIA, State Department, USIA, and Department of Defense. The government also explored legal avenues but


decided that defamation action should not be attempted because any suit against those involved in the “mock trial would itself result in very unfavorable publicity” for the United States at home and abroad. This disinformation campaign, which was conducted overseas, does not appear to be connected to COINTELPRO, a domestic surveillance campaign designed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to neutralize the American antiwar movement. But the spirit of the effort was the same, namely to discredit critics of America’s effort in Vietnam.

In early August 1966, George Ball met with McNamara’s assistant Adam Yarmolinsky, to discuss what to do about the tribunal. Yarmolinsky, who agreed that the tribunal “could hurt us a good deal in Europe and Asia,” suggested that a private U.S. lawyer defend the Johnson administration. Ball, however, did not want to dignify the tribunal with official American participation. He recommended that the U.S. government promote a “competing trial” through the International Committee of Jurists at the Hague. U.S. Embassy officials in Stockholm began exploring a plan to conduct a rival trial. Meanwhile, the interagency group directed the CIA to prepare dossiers on the various persons involved in the trial, as well as members and staff of the Russell foundation.


157 For more on COINTELPRO (or Counter Intelligence Program), see, Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, Cointelpro Papers: Documents from the FBI’S Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990); James Kirkpatrick Davis, Assault on the Left: The FBI and the Sixties Antiwar Movement (Westport, CT.: Praeger, 1997); and James Kirkpatrick Davis, Spying on America: The FBI’s Domestic Counterintelligence Program (New York: Praeger, 1992).

158 Telcon, Ball and Yarmolinsky, Ball Telcons, 5 Aug. 1966, LBJ Library.
In late August, Ball told President Johnson that the interagency group was “quietly exploring” with British and French government officials what legal steps could be taken to “forestall this spectacle.” He added that the interagency group also planned to “stimulate press articles criticizing the ‘trials’ and detailing the unsavory and leftwing background of the organizers and judges.”

The State Department instructed U.S. ambassadors in Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zambia to warn the leaders of each country that “his name is being misused to circulate pro-communist, anti-American propaganda.” The ambassadors were also directed to explain that the Russell foundation “has been captured by a group of extreme left wingers of the pro-Chicom [Chinese communist] stripe,” including “American citizens who are using the ninety-four-year old Russell’s name, perhaps without his full comprehension.” Ball told Johnson that he would speak to the British Home Secretary about this issue. Ball also promised to ask Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas to press his friend, the cellist Pablo Casals, into withdrawing from the tribunal. Although Casals did not participate in the tribunal, it remains unclear whether he withdrew because of American pressure.

The announcement of the tribunal alerted defenders of Johnson’s Vietnam policies. Morris I. Leibman, a senior partner in the Chicago law firm Leibman, Williams, Bennett, Baird, and Minow, who also served as a civilian aide-at-large

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160 Ibid, 434.
to the Secretary of the Army, offered to defend the administration.\footnote{Letter, Morris I. Leibman to Walt W. Rostow, 16 Aug. 1966, White House Central File, Name File, Russell, Bertrand, Box R 339, LBJ Library.} Dan B. Jacobs, a speechwriter to the Democratic candidate for governor of New York, feared that the Russell trial would become “a propaganda circus” that could have a negative impact in Europe, particularly among intellectuals. Jacobs and CIA official Cord Meyer proposed setting up a “small private project” to present the other side of the story. Under this plan, a small non-governmental project would be established to bring politicians from South Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and a few dissidents from North Vietnam to present the war from their perspective. The Russell tribunal, he argued, would be reluctant to refuse them the right to testify. If they were denied entrance to the proceedings, they could stand outside in the corridors talking to television reporters, or they could hold daily press conferences.\footnote{Letter, Dan B. Jacobs to William Connell, 19 Nov. 1966, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell “Trial,” Box 191, LBJ Library; and Memo, William Connell to Rostow, 2 Dec. 1966, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell “Trial,” Box 191, LBJ Library.} The NSC rejected this proposal as ineffective. NSC official D.W. Ropa told Rostow in December 1966 that bringing politicians from South Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand to testify at the Russell tribunal would not be sufficient to counter the damaging impact of the IWCT. The plan to provide alternative witnesses would be ineffective, in Ropa’s view, because the tribunal would be stacked with Russell’s supporters. Instead, Ropa proposed that a seminar be held in the same city where the tribunal would be located, to bring together prominent Vietnamese officials who supported the United States’
objectives in Vietnam. This seminar could “hopefully blunt the tribunal’s propaganda edge.” 163 Ropa urged Rostow to request the CIA to develop a broader range of options using the expertise of the 303 Committee, a special interagency body created in 1964 to oversee covert operations. Most of the documents pertaining to the countermeasures against the IWCT have not yet been declassified, so the details of this project are unclear. The circumstantial evidence, however, suggests that the plan was somewhat successful.

In November 1966, three African presidents and a monarch who had been the sponsors of the BRPF resigned from the war crimes trial: Senegal’s Leopold Senghor, Zambia’s Kenneth Kaunda, Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere, and Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie. Russell complained that these leaders had withdrawn because of “intolerable pressure” from the United States. 164 Russell claimed that one of the African leaders who had resigned had sent him a photocopy of a letter that Russell had sent to President Johnson at the White House, inviting him to appear before the tribunal, thereby establishing a connection between LBJ and the African leader. Russell argued this was “a piece of clumsiness which even the Central Intelligence Agency must have deplored.” 165 At this time, Russell considered the CIA “a vast international agency of subversion.” 166

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Other signs point to White House interference in the establishment of the tribunal. The Pakistan government of Ayub Khan publicly condemned the war crimes tribunal, and the Indian President Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan disassociated himself from the campaign.\(^{167}\) The Sicilian social reformer Danilo Dolci also withdrew as one of the 12 judges on the tribunal in November 1966, saying he would be busy with his work at home.\(^{168}\)

U.S. efforts to undermine the tribunal included attempts to influence the press. In August 1966, a State Department official approached a *New York Times* reporter to suggest running a story on Ralph Schoenman, an American citizen, in the hope of discrediting the foundation’s staff. Schoenman’s activism annoyed U.S. officials because he openly espoused anti-American and pro-communist views. Schoenman’s activities were regularly reported in the American press: British authorities frequently arrested him for unlawful assembly, and the United States placed travel restrictions on him following his visit to China in July 1963 to discuss Russell’s plans to mediate the Sino-Indian border dispute.\(^{169}\) In a colorful piece, the *New York Times* alleged that Schoenman harbored a “deeply neurotic hatred of his native land,” and charged that his “controversial style may be classified as the Extreme Hysterical.”\(^{170}\) Alleging that Russell had fallen under the influence of Schoenman, the article argued that Russell must be held responsible


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for his words and deeds because Russell did believe Schoenman’s views, and was not just “a mindless puppet.”

Judging by the regular appearance of newspaper stories criticizing Russell, the Johnson administration’s character assassination campaign appears to have partially succeeded. In January 1967, Joseph Califano, the special presidential assistant, sent Johnson a poem by Ogden Nash, “You are Old, Father Bertrand,” in which the poet condemned Russell for the trial. The poem echoed the pejorative comments in many American newspaper editorials that Russell was both judge and jury even though the tribunal and its investigative teams were drawn from Nobel Prize winners as well as prominent literary figures, scholars, medical doctors, and chemists. A *New York Times Magazine* article by British journalist Bernard Levin, which severely criticized Russell, also appears suspicious. Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach sent President Johnson a copy of the article with the gleeful comment that the administration had provided the background. In his article, Levin criticized Russell for having “turned into a full-time purveyor of political garbage indistinguishable from the routine products of the Soviet machine.” Russell had allegedly “sunk to defending – not just denying or minimizing, but actively defending – the atrocities of the

171 Ibid.
Viet Cong in Vietnam." 174 Many American journalists enjoyed making fun of Russell. Writing in the *New York Times Magazine*, Levin denigrated Russell as “an old man in a hurry, who had left judgment, his reputation, and his usefulness behind.” 175 C.L. Sulzberger ridiculed Russell soon after the opening session of the tribunal in Stockholm: “If a medieval Moorish king died on the eve of battle, retainers would dress up his stiffened corpse, bind it astride a warhorse, and lead it against the enemy to encourage the troops.” Sulzberger asserted that “the relic of Bertrand Russell” was “led into battle as a totem from the extreme Left.” 176

Washington’s hand also appeared in the difficulties that Russell experienced in trying to find a location for the tribunal. The tribunal sessions could not be held in Paris, as originally planned, because the French government denied permission. President de Gaulle told Sartre that the tribunal would not be allowed to meet in Paris because justice could only be dispensed by the state, and the IWCT intended to usurp that authority by issuing a verdict. Though de Gaulle did not mention it, it was clear that he did not wish to risk further deterioration of Franco-U.S. relations by offering Paris as a pulpit to the tribunal. 177 Next, Russell approached the British government about his plan to hold the tribunal in London, and to provide visas to North Vietnamese witnesses. Prime Minister Wilson, unwilling to cause offense to Washington, told Russell that not only would the

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one-sided character of the tribunal make peace-making efforts in Vietnam more difficult, but it was also not in the national interest to hold the tribunal in London.  

The trial organizers finally turned to Stockholm, the Swedish capital, even though the Swedish government had indicated it was likely to refuse. U.S. Embassy diplomats in Stockholm had warned Swedish officials that the tribunal would have an adverse effect on U.S.-Sweden relations and serve to harden Hanoi's position toward negotiations. Despite these pressures, Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander agreed to allow the tribunal to be held in Stockholm after its organizers promised that the mock trial would be restricted to presenting the facts about American activities in Vietnam, and would neither assume the character of a courtroom nor accuse any private person of a crime.

The head of the tribunal, Jean-Paul Sartre, wrote to Secretary of State Rusk in May 1967 to remind him that Russell had not received a reply to his invitation to President Johnson and other U.S. officials to attend the hearings. Sartre invited Rusk, or his designated representatives, to testify because it would help the tribunal in arriving at the truth about the charges of war crimes in

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178 Ibid.
Vietnam.\textsuperscript{182} Rusk rejected these invitations with the sarcastic comment that he had no intention of "playing games with a ninety-four year old Briton." Sartre shot back that Rusk's effort to "ridicule a great old man" did no honor to the United States.\textsuperscript{183}

To counter the negative publicity generated by the Russell tribunal, the Swedish Free Asia Committee, a non-government organization, tried to organize a rival hearing in Stockholm on 10 May that would include the testimony of ten to fifteen defectors from North Vietnam.\textsuperscript{184} The U.S. Embassy in Stockholm aborted the plan, however, because it believed that the antiwar tribunal was already floundering and being ignored by the press. Any attempt to hold a counter-tribunal risked drawing more attention to the Russell tribunal. Also, U.S. officials did not believe that the Free Asia Committee had the ability to carry off the stunt in time. Instead of organizing a risky alternative tribunal, U.S. officials decided it would be better to ridicule the IWCT's proceedings.

As the war crimes tribunal got underway, the State Department directed all diplomatic missions to portray the IWCT as a communist front. U.S. officials were also instructed to point out that many heads of state had severed their connection with the tribunal. In any case, the United States was not using any


\textsuperscript{184} Cable, American Embassy Stockholm to Secretary of State, 5 May 1967, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell 'Trial,' Box 191, LBJ Library.
experimental weapons, including poison gas forbidden by international law.\textsuperscript{185} Defoliating chemicals sprayed in Vietnam, the State Department claimed, were the same as conventional, commercially available herbicides and had no harmful effects on humans or animals. Napalm had been using sparingly in North Vietnam, and U.S. air strikes against North Vietnam were carefully restricted to military targets. Moreover, there had been no genocide by U.S. or other "free world" forces as the United States had not tried to exterminate the Vietnamese population or destroy the communist regime in Hanoi.

The Johnson administration’s propaganda campaign was fairly successful in the United States where many daily newspapers questioned the one-sidedness of the IWCT and the integrity of the witnesses. Time magazine, for example, alleged that the tribunal members were not impartial because Russell had handpicked them.\textsuperscript{186} While it is true that invitations to serve on the tribunal were sent out either by Russell or by the Russell foundation, tribunal members were fiercely independent and many had serious differences of opinion with key Russell foundation officials. They were not puppets whom Russell could manipulate. Moreover, Schoenman argued that “the demand for impartiality or objectivity in the sense of tabula rasa does not exist . . . The only impartiality

\textsuperscript{185} Cable, State Department and USIA to various U.S. Government agencies, 8 May 1967, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell ‘Trial,’ Box 191, LBJ Library.

\textsuperscript{186} “Trial’s End,” 19 May 1967, Time.
which has any meaning in an inquiry or a trial is to be found in the evidence: how massive it is, how verifiable, and how accessible to others.”  

Although some Americans spoke out against attempts to smear the tribunal, their messages were confined to less prestigious media outlets. For example, J. B. Neilands, professor of Biotechnology at the University of California, Berkeley, tried in vain to get mainstream newspapers to print his article criticizing the American press for distorting and manipulating the news about the proceedings of the tribunal. His article finally appeared in the Daily Californian magazine in December 1967. International views were more mixed. The British press, like its American counterpart, was critical of the tribunal, but French and Italian press coverage was more positive. Most Western media, except the Scandinavians, denounced Russell and Sartre as “well-intentioned dupes of Hanoi.” While the two philosophers were caricatured in the Western press, they were portrayed as intellectual giants by Third World media. The French daily Le Monde carried the entire text of Sartre’s closing remarks at the Stockholm session, but most Western mainstream dailies ignored it. Media in India, Pakistan, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, Algeria, and Egypt published lengthy extracts.

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190 Ali, Street Fighting Years, 124-125.
191 Ibid, 126.
Recognizing that the tribunal lacked the power to impose sanctions, the organizers decided that the tribunal would try to answer the following questions:

1. Have the United States government and the governments of Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea committed acts of aggression under international law by sending their troops to fight in Vietnam?
2. Has the U.S. Army used or experimented with new weapons, or weapons banned by law in Vietnam?
3. Have these foreign forces bombed civilian targets such as hospitals, schools, sanatoria, and dykes?
4. Have Vietnamese prisoners been subjected to inhumane treatment forbidden by law, and have there been unjustified reprisals against civilian populations?
5. Have forced labor camps been created, and has there been deportation of the population, or other acts tending to the extermination of the population?

In his statement at the tribunal’s session in Stockholm, Russell insisted that the tribunal would function impeccably, its investigations would be thorough, and its evidence undeniable. U.S. civil rights attorney Stanley Faulkner argued that the United States Army had breached its own Law of Land Warfare, issued by the U.S. War Department in 1956, which defined war crimes and the culpability of individuals who participate in them. Faulkner claimed that the United States military was also in breach of the Hague Convention of 1907 which

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192 "Aims and objectives of the International War Crimes Tribunal," Against the Crime of Silence: Proceedings of the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal, 15. Also see, Laurent Schwartz, A Mathematician Grappling with His Century (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 2001), 407. Schwartz, a French mathematician, argues that "the tribunal proved clearly that the American objective was to kill as much of the civilian population as possible."
forbade the use of weapons calculated to cause unnecessary suffering.\textsuperscript{193}

Journalists such as Wilfred Burchett, Bernard Couret, and Tariq Ali, and medical doctors such as Abraham Behar, John Takman, Axel Hojer, Jean Michel Krivine, and Francis Kahn explained how aerial bombardment and chemical weapons had damaged the Vietnamese population. Investigators who testified at the tribunal included surgeons, biochemists, radiologists, doctors, agronomists, lawyers, sociologists, physicists, chemists, and historians. Their medical, scientific, and historical findings filled many trunks and filing cabinets.\textsuperscript{194} The findings consisted of hundreds of thousands of feet of film showing the bombings and the use of chemical weapons, whose properties were revealed in meticulous detail.

Despite the outward show of unity, the IWCT came close to splitting up as a result of a clash of egos between its top officials. Schoenman, the principal organizer of the Stockholm session, did not think it necessary to inform his tribunal colleagues about its developments. He usurped the authority of the tribunal’s executive president Sartre, and its chairman Vladimir Dedijer, by addressing press conferences before the tribunal’s opening. At those events, Schoenman hurt the tribunal’s credibility by calling for the United States to be indicted even before evidence had been presented, and misrepresented the tribunal as a court of law that would pass judgment rather than act as a commission of inquiry. The tribunal members thought it wise to replace Schoenman with their


\textsuperscript{194} Ibid, 10.
own media spokesperson. Following their quarrel with Schoenman, Sartre and Dedijer removed the name of Bertrand Russell from tribunal’s title and shifted its headquarters from London to Paris. The BRPF splintered into a London and Paris faction, with the Paris group of Sartre, Dedijer, and de Beauvoir running the second session in Denmark, and leaving Russell responsible for paying their hotel, food, and transport bills.

Tribunal President Sartre announced the verdict of the Stockholm Tribunal on 10 May 1967. First, the United States was found to have resorted to force in international relations that had been prohibited by various international agreements such as the Pact of Paris of 1928, the United Nations Charter, the Statute of Nuremberg, and the United Nations resolution of 1960. The United States had plunged Vietnam into a state of war by bringing foreign troops and weapons into Vietnam and setting up military bases there in violation of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 that had called for internationally-supervised general elections in Vietnam in 1956. Second, the United States was found to have conducted deliberate, systematic, and large-scale bombardment of civilian populations and areas. The United States had repeatedly violated the sovereignty, neutrality, and territorial integrity of Cambodia. Third, the governments of Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea were found to be accomplices of the United States in the aggression against Vietnam in violation of international law.

After the Stockholm session of the tribunal, the Japanese branch of the 
BRPF conducted hearings in Tokyo from 28-30 August. A twenty-eight member 
Japanese tribunal heard testimonies from thirty-six witnesses. It found that the 
United States had breached international law by attacking Vietnam with chemical 
weapons. It also found the Japanese government and Japanese business 
corporations guilty of acting as accomplices of the United States. 197

The second session was held in November 1967 in Denmark. Russell’s 
supporters in Denmark were keen to host a session of the tribunal because they 
wanted to mobilize Danish citizens around a major human rights issue. Danish 
antiwar activists reasoned that the Stockholm tribunal had contributed to 
transforming Sweden into a humane society. Moreover, it was high time for 
Denmark to follow Sweden’s example of acting independently of the United 
States. 198 The Danish government approved the tribunal, but shifted its location 
from Copenhagen to Roskilde, a small town outside the capital city, to keep it low 
key and to avoid embarrassing publicity.

At the second session at Roskilde, American soldiers David Tuck, Peter 
Martinsen, and Donald Duncan testified that they went to Vietnam to fight 
communists, but became disillusioned when they discovered that Vietnamese

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197 “Findings of the Tokyo Tribunal,” BRA II, 376, IWCT, General Correspondence with Vietnamese.
civilians were the enemy. At Roskilde, Russell’s opening statement drew attention to the Stockholm findings, and asked that the Roskilde participants acknowledge that the concept of aggression covered all of America’s crimes in Vietnam. Sartre observed that despite several invitations the U.S. government had refused to send a representative to the session. The American playwright Carl Oglesby, a former president of Students for a Democratic Society, and a member of the IWCT, told the session that the Stockholm tribunal had played an important role in developing militancy among American youth. The tribunal, he believed, had shown Americans that their refusal to be inducted into the U.S. military was based on sound legal arguments because the American intervention in Vietnam violated international law. More important, the tribunal had served as a clearing-house of information on the war, which gave Americans a clear idea about the use of anti-personnel bombs used by U.S. forces.

The Roskilde session found Japan, Thailand, and the Philippines guilty of complicity in the aggression committed by the United States against Vietnam. By using Japan’s land, naval, and air bases at Okinawa, and using Japanese technical facilities to repair U.S. air, land, and naval equipment, the United States had turned Japan, with the complicity of its government, into an essential element in


the war against Vietnam. Out of eleven tribunal members, eight found Japan guilty of complicity, and three agreed that Japan provided substantial aid to the United States government, even though they did not regard Japan as an accomplice in the crime of aggression. The complicity of Thailand was established by documents presented to the tribunal showing that the Thai government gave diplomatic help to the United States, and sent an expeditionary corps to Vietnam to fight alongside American forces. The use of Thai military bases made it easier and less expensive to launch air attacks against Vietnam. The government of the Philippines also gave access to military bases to U.S. forces, and sent troops to South Vietnam. By unanimous vote the tribunal concluded that the United States had committed aggression against Laos. It found that the United States had used and experimented with weapons prohibited both by the Hague Conventions of 1907, and the U.S. Law of Land Warfare of 1956 which obliges armies not to use unnecessary violence for military objectives. The tribunal observed that U.S. forces had repeatedly breached the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which stipulate that prisoners of war must receive humane treatment. Even though the United States had signed this agreement, numerous American and Vietnamese soldiers testified that summary executions and torture were common, prisoners were thrown out of flying helicopters, and medical care was systematically refused to the wounded and ill who refused to provide information. In further violation of the Geneva Convention prohibition against rendition,

prisoners held by the United States were handed over to the Saigon regime, which was known to conduct torture. The tribunal unanimously found the United States guilty of subjecting civilians to inhuman treatment prohibited by international law. The tribunal heard the testimony of three American veterans, some Vietnamese victims, and a report of the tribunal’s investigative team in NLF areas that showed that in the course of American raiding operations thousands of inhabitants were massacred, villages were leveled, fields devastated, and livestock killed. The tribunal cited American journalist Jonathan Schell’s report about the extermination by American forces of the population of the village of Ben Suc, and its complete destruction. 203

At the end of the session, the American activist David Dellinger emphasized that the United States had deliberately expanded its intervention in Vietnam beginning with “diplomatic warfare” at the Geneva Conference, conducting political infiltration, training puppets, organizing the counter-insurgency, training and leading Saigon troops, and finally sending American troops. 204 Citing the extermination of American Indians and African-Americans as a precedent, Dellinger insisted that a democratic society such as the United States was capable of committing genocide. Dellinger defended the legitimacy of the tribunal, and urged the United States to withdraw its forces from Vietnam. 205

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Conclusion

Russell expressed satisfaction at the outcome of the tribunal, but he conceded that it had not been as big a success as it could have been primarily because the more prominent members of the tribunal were either unwilling or unable to devote much time and effort to it, and some of them even vacillated in their support. Russell appeared to be referring to Stokely Carmichael, who was invited to serve on the tribunal but excused himself saying he did not have enough time. Nevertheless, Carmichael made a brief appearance at the Stockholm session. Moreover, Russell was not pleased with Sartre’s initial reticence to get involved owing to his own work in Paris, even though Sartre later took full control of the tribunal as its executive president.

Russell did not attend the tribunal’s sessions that were held in Stockholm and Denmark in 1967, because he was too old to travel, leaving it to Schoenman to read his address at the opening session. Despite the support of Ho and others, the tribunal did not have sufficient funding. U.S. Embassy officials in Stockholm learned that many delegates had given up hotel rooms, and some were commuting from thirty miles outside Stockholm. Despite these minor internal troubles, the peace foundation succeeded in drawing attention to the horrors of the American intervention in Vietnam.

The DRV played a crucial role by actively supporting, guiding, and financing the activities of both the IWCT and the BRPF. Russell was greatly assisted by Ho, who helped organize the visits of the tribunal’s fact- and evidence-gathering teams to North Vietnam and the liberated areas of the south. Equally important were the efforts of the London-based representatives of *Cuu Quoc* Weekly, who helped Russell organize an international commission to investigate war crimes in Vietnam, and enabled Ho to maintain close contact with Russell. Moreover, the heads of various DRV people’s organizations coordinated anti-U.S. events with Russell and his staff. In these ways, Russell became one of Ho’s closest allies in the West. Russell genuinely shared with Ho the belief that the United States was a threat to world peace. However, the North Vietnamese did not exercise any influence over the tribunal, and their only attempt to control the tribunal ended in failure.

Because Russell’s efforts to convince the Johnson administration to withdraw from Vietnam fell on deaf ears, the tribunal became an important vehicle to publicize the damage the United States had inflicted on Vietnamese society. The Johnson administration’s efforts to thwart the IWCT mostly failed, although U.S. officials did manage to persuade some foreign heads of government to withdraw their support from the tribunal, and the U.S. mainstream media did raise questions about the tribunal’s credibility.
Conclusion

Recognizing the Diplomatic Front in the History of the Vietnam War

This study enhances scholarly understanding of the Vietnam War by examining people’s diplomacy, a topic that has been neglected in Western accounts of the war. People’s diplomacy deserves recognition as a powerful force that played a significant part in forcing the United States to withdraw its forces and end the war in Vietnam. Through people’s diplomacy the embattled people of North Vietnam, in conjunction with the peace movement abroad, brought popular pressure on President Johnson to end the war. By restoring people to the history of the war, this study has shown that people’s diplomacy mattered even though it lacked the power to directly influence the U.S. government.

The principal finding of this dissertation is that the twin strategies of the diplomatic front and people’s diplomacy, combined with the support of antiwar activists overseas, produced a vast propaganda campaign that damaged the image of the United States and cast North Vietnam as a victim of imperialism. These worldwide linkages, sustained by informal diplomacy, made it difficult for the United States to prolong the war. Put another way, without people’s diplomacy U.S. leaders would have been less restrained and they might have tried to prolong the war until American power prevailed. People’s diplomacy was more effective than traditional DRV diplomacy in gaining the support and sympathy of Westerners who were averse to communism. Testimonies of Western
eyewitnesses criticizing the effects of American bombardment on Vietnamese civilians helped legitimize the Vietnamese communist cause.

People's diplomacy was deliberately conceived and implemented by North Vietnam. The DRV turned to people's diplomacy because it lacked embassies and consulates abroad until 1950, and had to enlist the overseas North Vietnamese community to publicize the Vietnamese independence struggle against France. When DRV leaders observed the fluency with which the North Vietnamese began forging linkages with Western peace activists to resist the American intervention, they encouraged it even more. President Ho exhibited remarkable foresight about the power of people's diplomacy when he instructed the party cadre that the conduct of foreign affairs should not be confined to DRV embassies and consulates, but must also include non-governmental entities such as unions of workers, women, youth, trade, and culture.

People's diplomacy became much broader and stronger in the 1960s after earlier efforts to mobilize world opinion against France fell short in the 1940s and 1950s. The DRV responded to the escalating U.S. involvement in Vietnam by increasing people's diplomacy, which is evident in the formal announcement by the Lao Dong of the diplomatic front as a strategy in 1967. The growth of Western antiwar movements also encouraged the North Vietnamese to step up their efforts to make important connections with those movements that genuinely sympathized with the suffering of the Vietnamese. The first Americans to visit the DRV made clear to their North Vietnamese hosts that the U.S. antiwar movement
could not force the Johnson administration to end the war in the short term. Nonetheless, the North Vietnamese hoped that their revolution would eventually benefit from the antiwar propaganda campaign of American peace activists. Consequently, North Vietnamese writers, artists, musicians, filmmakers, architects, doctors, and women and children used the media, public meetings, film screenings, and photo and poster exhibitions at home and abroad to denounce the American intervention in Vietnam as an illegal occupation, and to portray the Vietnamese resistance as a righteous effort.

People's diplomacy proved so effective by the mid-1960s that President Johnson began to fear that North Vietnamese officials could no longer be cast convincingly as Soviet and Chinese stooges. Many of America's Western allies did not send troops or provide aid to South Vietnam because people's diplomacy enabled antiwar movements to offer alternative perspectives on the DRV which made the enemy seem less threatening. People's diplomacy also reduced support for the U.S. intervention in Vietnam by exposing the American role in the destruction of Vietnamese society. The International War Crimes Tribunal, founded by the British philosopher-activist Bertrand Russell, exposed U.S. war crimes, thereby causing many Westerners to question America's motives in Vietnam.

When the DRV began conducting people's diplomacy, many Americans opposed the U.S. bombardment but did not approve of North Vietnamese communism. In their encounters with Western peace activists, the North
Vietnamese presented themselves as nationalists and downplayed communism. After antiwar activists who visited the DRV saw the human face of the “enemy,” they returned home determined to continue to demand a halt to the American bombardment and withdrawal of U.S. troops. People's diplomacy with the antiwar movements succeeded in presenting the human side of the North Vietnamese in order to extract maximum sympathy and propaganda.

The DRV paid special attention to making linkages with Americans who were already protesting their government’s intervention in Vietnam. Although there was very little direct contact between State Department and DRV government officials in the mid-1960s, the North Vietnamese representatives of people’s diplomacy frequently met Americans. People’s diplomacy allowed Hanoi to bypass the U.S. government, and establish a direct relationship with American peace activists. Washington attempted to curb these contacts through temporary seizures of U.S. activists’ passports, but it proved impossible to halt the flow of information and people between North Vietnam and their sympathizers abroad.

Many Western antiwar activists worried that the shrill tone of DRV propaganda – especially its hectoring denunciations of the United States and

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1 See George C. Herring, The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1983), xxiii, xxiv, 116-118, 373, 519. The first direct U.S.-DRV contact was between Ambassador Henry Byroade and DRV Consul General Vu Huu Binh in Rangoon in January 1966. The next contact took place a year later in Moscow between the U.S. charge d'affaires John Guthrie and his DRV counterpart Le Chang, who met on six separate occasions in January-February 1967. Like the Rangoon effort, the Moscow contacts led nowhere. Lacking direct contact with the DRV, the United States conducted indirect diplomacy with the DRV through Canadian, Polish, Rumanian, Italian, French, Norwegian, and Swedish intermediaries, between 1964 and the Tet Offensive in 1968.
Authoritarian domestic reeducation campaigns – obscured the human face of the Vietnamese people who were making enormous sacrifices for the revolution and suffering unspeakable atrocities from the American attack. Naturally, activists found much to criticize in the DRV, such as sexist policies under which men occupied most senior government and party positions, while women were relegated to middle-management posts. Yet Western women who visited the DRV often connected with Vietnamese women on other levels, such as motherhood and the family. Inevitably, when they returned home it was to publicize how the war was disrupting Vietnamese social life. Western antiwar activists sometimes became so overcome with sympathy for the Vietnamese people and the righteousness of their cause that they overlooked the lack of democracy and personal freedom in North Vietnam.

People’s diplomacy helped solidify the enormous commitment of the communist bloc to help the DRV. President Ho worried about the potential of the Sino-Soviet split to result in a reduction of military and economic aid to the DRV. The leaders in Hanoi feared that if they were forced to choose between Moscow’s advice to negotiate with Washington, and Beijing’s pressure to continue fighting, the side that was rejected might impose conditions on aid, or even cut off aid. North Vietnamese mass organizations established strong linkages with their counterparts in the communist world in order to demonstrate the necessity for the entire bloc to stay united in their economic, military, and diplomatic support of the DRV.
The significance of the economic and humanitarian assistance extended by Chinese and Russian mass organizations to North Vietnam – although fairly modest in monetary value compared to the massive aid provided by the governments of China and the Soviet Union – lies in its symbolism. Equally, the encounters between the Chinese creative community and the Vietnamese revolutionaries were rich in symbolic value because they inspired Chinese theater directors, film producers, ballet dancers, and opera singers to produce works celebrating their brave resistance.

North Vietnam both initiated and facilitated contacts between its mass organizations and people in China and the Soviet Union. Hanoi could conduct people’s diplomacy because the Chinese and Soviet governments encouraged their mass organizations to assist the Vietnamese. Massive demonstrations in Beijing in support of the Vietnamese revolution served to reiterate the warning by Chinese leaders that China would intervene if American troops invaded North Vietnam. The CIA and U.S. embassies in Saigon and Hong Kong kept Washington officials informed about people’s diplomacy in the communist bloc.

Russian and Chinese people’s organizations had much in common with the American antiwar movement: All three groups opposed the American intervention in Vietnam, and sent their activists on friendship visits to North Vietnam. They also attempted to influence their governments in different ways: The American activists urged Washington to end its war and withdraw, and mass demonstrations by Russians and Chinese signaled their commitment keep the
DRV well provisioned so it could achieve its goal of defeating the United States, and reunify the divided country.

The withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam in 1973 appeared to Hanoi’s leaders as a vindication of the North Vietnamese strategy of the diplomatic front and people’s diplomacy. At the Fourth Congress of the Lao Dong in December 1976, party leaders claimed that the American attempt to “crush and rollback socialism” in Southeast Asia had failed. The party could boast that the victorious Vietnamese people in fact had “rolled back the forward positions of imperialism, advanced those of socialism, breached an important defense line of the U.S. imperialists in Southeast Asia, [and] upset their counterrevolutionary global strategy.” The victory vindicated the DRV’s diplomatic strategy of “winning the support, sympathy, and assistance of the socialist countries, revolutionary forces and progressive people the world over.”

The leaders in Hanoi claimed that the intensive American bombardment of North Vietnam with conventional and chemical weapons targeted schools and hospitals, killing thousands of civilians. But there were limits as to how far Washington was willing to go in attacking North Vietnam. No American president wanted to invade North Vietnam for fear of provoking China as had

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2 At the Fourth Congress, the Lao Dong (Workers’ Party) was renamed the Communist Party of Vietnam. See, 75 Years of the Communist Party of Vietnam (1930-2000): A Selection of Party Documents from Nine Party Congresses, 340, 1286.
3 Ibid, 334.
occurred in the Korean War. Implementing “rollback” in Vietnam would have also jeopardized détente with the Soviet Union and China, further alienated America’s allies, and stoked worldwide protest.

In 1976, the Fourth Party Congress claimed that victory over the United States was the result of DRV diplomacy: Victory belonged not just to Vietnam, the congress maintained, but also to the forces of socialism represented by the Soviet Union, China, and other communist countries that assisted the DRV during the war. In the end, it was a victory of “revolutionary methods”: the combination of military, political, and diplomatic struggle. The Ninth Party Congress in 2001 suggested that the diplomatic front was still relevant even in times of peace. The Communist Party of Vietnam confirmed that Vietnam remained committed to the diplomatic line laid down by Ho Chi Minh. It cited the continuing need for coordination between the state’s diplomatic activity, the party’s external activities, and the people-to-people contacts, even in a time of peace. From the Vietnamese perspective, the diplomatic front and people’s diplomacy still have a future.

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8 Ibid, 478-479.
9 Ibid, 1119.
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