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THE STAGES OF WAR AND DUPLICITY

EVIDENCE
OF THE PENTAGON SECRET PAPERS

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The Stages of War and Duplicity.
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On the basis of the Pentagon secret "Vietnam Archives" published in the United States, Soviet news analysts here recount the stages of US aggression in Indochina. They expose the duplicity, hypocrisy and cynicism which the American rulers use as a propaganda smoke screen for their aggressive policy.

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In early August 1964, the world was shocked by developments in Indochina: the US Air Force began the heinous bombing of civilians in the towns and villages of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. At the time, US spokesmen declared it had been done in "self-defence," in "response" to an attack by some patrol boats in the Gulf of Tonkin on US warships. From then on that continued to be the accepted version, although all fair-minded people realised that world public was being monstrously deceived, and that the war started by the US imperialists in Indochina had quite definite—aggressive and rapacious—purposes.

What Washington had so carefully kept secret came to light in June, 1971. Widespread publications in the press of secret papers from the Pentagon archives contain countless facts showing how, in deepest secrecy, the US aggression against the peoples of Indochina was contrived, launched and carried out step by step. The Pentagon papers also show that the propaganda screen, a tissue of lies and deceit, was being painstakingly woven along with the escalation of military operations.

It is not very often that the public has an opportunity to peer behind the political scenes in Washington, to glimpse the dirty methods used by the architects of US policy. Now that the opportunity has occurred we can see from the following pages the ugly picture that has come to light.

WHY THE TRUTH HAS COME OUT

1. Washington's Political Striptease

A veritable bombshell exploded when the Pentagon secret papers, published in June 1971, first in *The New York Times* and then in a number of other big US newspapers, shed light on the history of the US aggression in Indochina. The American people at large were shocked by what they learned. Deceit, hypocrisy and double-dealing were what was shown up in the glaring light cast on the secrets of the court in Washington.

Strictly speaking, there was nothing new in the published Pentagon "Vietnam Archives" that the world public had not been aware of long before the 47 volumes of "secret" and "top secret" documents hidden away in the Pentagon vaults were brought out into the light of day.

Thus, a TASS statement issued on August 6, 1964, defined the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the prelude to the sharp escalation of the US aggression in Vietnam, as a deliberate provocation. It said: "It is already becoming clear that the presence of US naval forces in the Gulf of Tonkin has helped to create a situation in the area which is fraught with dangerous complications. It is impossible to ignore the fact that fresh US mili-

tary action is being taken just when reactionary forces in the USA and the South-Vietnamese militarists, who are doing their bidding, are clamouring to have the sphere of the US intervention and armed operations extended to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam." Consequently, the Soviet Union and progressive international opinion learned of Washington's provocative schemes.

But what has been clear to many all along, was kept hidden from the public at large in the USA and other Western countries behind a thick smoke screen of lies and falsifications conceived by US ruling circles and their propaganda machine. Throughout the world, there is growing awareness that the Americans are being deceived, and increasingly so. But the latest revelations came as a complete and staggering surprise to the ordinary American who has it drummed into his head from childhood that his is a democratic country, that the government acts in accordance with the democratic Constitution and that the press, radio and television give an honest account of what is going on. Ordinary Americans refused to believe that they could be so grossly and shamelessly deceived.

Washington's political striptease astounded millions of Americans who not only saw it as a concrete instance of downright deceit but also had to face the fact that all along, and even now, their rulers have not hesitated to stoop to the most ignominious methods, and that the mass media have been covering up for them. Many US citizens—for most of them it was a complete shock—had to ask themselves if they could afford to believe what the top-ranking leaders in Washington, including the President himself, told

them, and if they could believe what was daily being fed to them by the press, radio and TV.

This has greatly undermined the prestige of the US Administration, the authority of the state as a whole. How, then, did such secret papers come to be published? Why did the editors of America's most influential paper—*The New York Times*—which represents the interests of powerful Big Business groupings, and the publishers of other US monopoly publications who have always done yesman service for their masters, take a step that brought them into open conflict with the Republican Administration? Propagandists of the "American way of life" hasten to assure us that the answer lies in freedom of the press. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Where, may one ask, was this much-vaunted freedom of the press throughout the long period of contriving and escalating the aggression against the Vietnamese people and against the peoples of Laos and Cambodia? After all, the very periodicals which subsequently published the Pentagon secret papers, had steadily supported those they now censure. Two years before the adoption of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution Mr. Sulzberger, a member of the family which owns *The New York Times*, wrote in his paper that the agreement on Laos neutrality was not satisfactory. If South Vietnam was worth saving, it was to be saved by stopping the breach through which supplies were conveyed from Laos.

James Reston, one of *The New York Times* policy makers, who now waxes indignant over the conspiracy against democracy, sang quite a different tune on the pages of *The New York Times*. Take his article, "The Undeclared War in

South Vietnam," which fully endorsed the US military intervention in South Vietnam "to prevent a communist takeover."¹ There are very many such statements.

Those who closely follow developments are aware that the "free" US press zealously supported the US actions in Indochina, until the Administration found itself up against a dead end and began to consider a "withdrawal" from that part of the world. For a long time, the escalation of the war had been accompanied by stepped-up militaristic propaganda in the press. Now, those who determine the mass media policy have found it necessary to pose as "champions of the truth" and muck-rakers. "Freedom" of the bourgeois press—a myth which has as much truth to it as Washington's credibility—is quite beside the point. It is all a matter of complex, political behind-the-scene fighting within the US ruling elite, which has recently become more acute in view of the impasse that US policy has led to in South-East Asia.

2. Calculations and Miscalculations

The aggressive war of US imperialism against the peoples of Indochina will go down in history as one of its blackest pages. The US militarists stop at nothing: genocide—the massive extermination of civilians in the Indochinese Peninsula, crimes against humanity, gross violation of international treaties and conventions governing the conduct of war, the use of chemical and bac-

¹ *The New York Times*, February 14, 1962.

teriological weapons, deceit of the world public—these are only some of the crimes the US reactionaries will have to answer for to contemporaries and coming generations.

However, none of these has helped the USA to escape the greatest defeat, both militarily and morally, in its history.

The fiasco of the US aggression in Indochina, and the impasse in which the USA has found itself there, those are the reasons for the intense political friction within the US ruling elite. There was almost unanimous support both in Congress and in the big press for the deplorable Tonkin Gulf Resolution, that same resolution which is now the object of such denunciation on the part of many influential Washington leaders: senators and publishers, professors and columnists. Some US politicians may now turn and twist, asserting that the Vietnam venture is a one party affair, but the record says that voting on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution had the solid support of both parties and was peppered with fervent chauvinistic speeches. In the House of Representatives this document, hypocritically designated a Resolution in Support of International Peace and Security in South-East Asia, was passed unanimously. In the Senate, there were 88 votes for it and only two against.

Hardly anyone would have the nerve now to say that the Senators who passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution by such a solid majority were so naive they didn't know what it was all about, or that they took the government's crude forgery at face value. Wayne Morse, one of the two Senators who voted against the Resolution, had made it quite clear to his colleagues that he

possessed enough evidence to show the true role played by the US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin. Morse declared that the United States had played "a provocative role" in the incident.¹

But his words fell on deaf ears. The Johnson Administration had no trouble getting a free hand to launch the long-planned overt aggression in Vietnam.

Why has a deaf ear been turned to the truth, why have the US Administration and the US legislators refused to reckon with the facts and to abide by international laws and treaties signed by the USA, including the UN Charter?

The answer to this question largely lies in the following: the earnings of five major Pentagon contractors, all billion-dollar corporations (Lockheed, General Electric, General Dynamics, McDonnell-Douglas and United Aircraft), went up from \$395 million in 1964 to \$587 million in 1968.² One mouthpiece of the monopolies made no secret of its delight when it wrote this in the autumn of 1966: "The nation's factories are already operating at practically full capacity—and at a rate even higher than during the first year of the Korean War. Heavy new demands on industry may force some companies to use obsolete, highcost facilities to meet war demand."³

It is scarcely accidental that the biggest share of the war profits pie went to the corporations closest to Washington politicians who were most active in escalating the "dirty war." Richard

¹ *The New York Times*, February 29, 1968.

² *The New Republic*, February 7, 1970.

³ *US News and World Report*, September 12, 1966, p. 36.

Barnet, a co-director of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, wrote: "...freshman Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson obtained a major defence contract for his principal financial backers, the Brown and Root construction firm. The same firm thirty years later was called upon to turn South Vietnam into a succession of military bases at considerable profit. In the Johnson years Texas moved ahead to become the third-ranking state in military contracts. Between 1962 and 1967 the value of prime contracts awarded to Texas firms increased by 350 per cent."¹

At first, a fairly large section of US business benefited from the boom resulting from the colossal military appropriations, and expected these benefits to keep on and to increase.

But it became clear after some time that what had looked like a political and economic bonanza was a major defeat for the United States, to say nothing of the lasting disgrace. Senator M. Mansfield, Democratic majority leader in the Senate, pointed out that US casualties exceeding 350,000 and the 115 thousand million dollars consumed by the Vietnam war had failed to bring victory in a war which is contrary to the national interest.

"This war cannot be won" is the conclusion drawn by Averell Harriman, well-known political and financial figure.

It is highly indicative that following the heavy defeats suffered by the US Army in Vietnam, many prominent army and navy men have also

¹ R. Barnet. *The Economy of Death*, New York, 1969, pp. 122, 123.

come to realise that nothing can be gained by carrying on this war.

Brigadier-General William Wallace Ford says: "One my hope (is) ... that we will act quickly to leave South-East Asia, serene in the knowledge that there is no greater courage than the courage to admit a mistake..."¹

In May 1971, General David Shoup, one-time Commandant of the US Marine Corps, urged the early withdrawal of all US forces from South Vietnam. In the spring of 1971, Vice-Admiral Elmor Zumwalt, Chief of Naval Operations, admitted that the war in Vietnam did not have the American people's support, adding that the nature of the war and the way it was being fought was the reason for it.

Consequently, there is the fact that the USA has suffered a military defeat in the Indochina theatre of military operations, a defeat which is so glaring that even US generals and admirals have been forced to say that it is futile to keep on fighting in the hopes of winning the war.

3. Cleavage in the Business Olympus

For the US economy, the war in Vietnam has also had an unfavourable facet. Whereas the Pentagon favourites, a group of military-industrial corporations, took in record profits, the US economy as a whole ran into many difficulties stemming from unbridled inflation and increasing disproportions in production, which accelerated the growth of crisis phenomena.

¹ *The New York Times*, March 2, 1971.

In the spring of 1966, one of the most influential mouthpieces of US monopolies, *Fortune*, sounded the alarm when it said: "... the Vietnam war would bring on economic strains beyond what most economic experts appear to foresee, and beyond what makers of public policy appear to be anticipating."¹

George F. Kennan, for many years closely connected with Wall Street bankers, wrote in one article: "Of course, it is little short of fantastic that a country facing such domestic problems as we now face, and one that stands virtually on the brink of a major international financial humiliation, should be continuing to pour its substance, to the tune of a full fourth of its budget and more than half a million of its young men, into a military adventure on the other side of the world, in an area to which its vital interests are only remotely related."²

This was written in mid-1968. Four years earlier, Kennan had apparently taken a different view of things. At any rate, this spokesman for the ruling class did not object to the Tonkin Gulf Resolution nor against the subsequent dispatch of "half a million of its young men, into a military adventure on the other side of the world."

The change of mood among some US businessmen is evident from the following: In the spring of 1967 an organisation called Business Executives Move for Vietnam Peace was set up in the USA. Among its leaders is Sinclair Armstrong, one-time prominent member of the Eisenhower

Administration and now Vice-President of the US Trust Company. Thousands of businessmen across the country belong to this organisation. If anyone had proposed setting up such an organisation in 1964, at the time the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was passed, it would have seemed a poor joke, but by 1967 the US political scene had changed to the point where it no longer surprised anyone. It showed that definite US business circles were disenchanted with Washington's policy in Indochina, and denoted their frustrated hopes and growing apprehension over the adverse effects of the Vietnam war on the economy.

Prominent Big Business spokesmen have demanded an end to the war in Vietnam, among them billionaire Marriner Eccles, Chairman of the Board of the First Security Corporation, one of the bigwigs who run the so-called "mountain states." In early 1971, a monthly Morgan's bank report noted that the war was a drain on the budget and a drag on research. It could be that the Morgan banking house statement is connected with the present *New York Times* stand since the two have had long-standing, close connections.

Thomas J. Watson, Chairman of the Board of International Business Machines, said at a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "The war in Vietnam is the major factor which has turned our healthy economy into an unhealthy one... The longer we continue, the more chaotic the nation will become. The damage we have already seen will take decades to repair."¹

All these statements are a reflection of the

¹ *Fortune*, April, 1966, p. 119.

² *US News and World Report*, June 17, 1968.

¹ *Congressional Record*, June 3, 1970, S. 8208-8209.

morning-after feeling among those who had hoped to reap the benefits of aggression, and who now have to face the grave difficulties and problems stemming from the war. Initially backed whole-heartedly by US Big Business, as military and political defeats and economic disruption made themselves felt in many spheres of business, the war in Indochina led to a deep split and serious contradictions in that part of US society which now shapes the country's future. The more aggressive-minded spokesmen of the military-industrial complex refuse to forgo their super-profits, whereas those who have been deprived of their cut of the war-profits pie, and have increasingly suffered from inflation and other adverse effects of the continuing war, are inclined to a belated sobriety.

There is also another demarcation line in the world of US Big Business. Some monopoly groups who have a stake in US penetration in the countries of South-East Asia have stubbornly urged continued aggression in Indochina for their own purposes; other groups with capital invested mainly in Western Europe or the Middle East have displayed growing apprehension over the fact that their interests in these areas are being jeopardized.

General Earle G. Wheeler, one-time Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, declared that the Middle East presented a much greater danger than the Far East. These statements are a reflection of the alarm among highly influential circles in the USA, who fear a weakening of their positions in areas of the globe where their interests predominate.

There seem to be various other reasons up-

permost in the minds of those who feel that they must now insist on substantial changes in Washington's policy. These reasons were fairly frankly spelled out by *The New York Times* shortly before its publication of the Pentagon secret papers. It wrote: "There can be little hope of rapprochement with China as long as Peking perceives an expanding American threat on its borders. An essential first step toward removing this obstacle would be a firm disavowal by Washington of any intention to invade the Chinese border state of North Vietnam, or to give military support to such an invasion by the South Vietnamese."¹

4. Political Crisis

Finally, there is another highly important factor influencing the alignment of political forces in the USA over the war in Indochina. It is the massive anti-war movement in the country, which includes various sections of the US public. In scale and scope the anti-Vietnam war protest movement goes far beyond anything that has occurred in the postwar history of the USA. It is no exaggeration to say that all sections of US society without exception have found themselves deeply divided. The conflict has shaken not only political parties and groupings, it has also divided social groups, caused the like-minded to differ, split families and alienated parents and children.

The massive demonstrations, in which millions of Americans have been taking part, the flood of

¹ *The New York Times*, March 11, 1971.

letters and wires received by legislators, and the various other forms of protest against the "dirty war" have become a permanent factor exerting a very marked influence on the political situation and, in particular, affecting the course and outcome of federal elections.

It was certainly no accident that President Johnson timed his order terminating US air-raids on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam for the 1968 Presidential elections. The US press now says that President Nixon's time-table for the partial withdrawal of US troops from the theatre of war operations in Indochina has been drawn up in strict accordance with the stages of the current electoral campaign, and one may well expect him to make Johnson-type gestures on the eve of the Presidential elections in the autumn of 1972. There is no doubt at all that each of the rival groupings, each of the two major parties of the US bourgeoisie, has been forced, in one way or another, to reckon with the mood of the electorate, and increasingly so as the fight for getting into the White House draws near.

We find therefore, that the sharpening conflicts within the US ruling elite are due to a number of causes—political, military, economic—above all the heavy defeat suffered by the USA in its aggressive war in the Indochinese Peninsula.

On the one hand, powerful forces in the USA, notably those designated the "military-industrial complex," are seeking, contrary to common sense, to continue the bankrupt political line, and there is every indication that they have sufficient means of influencing the Administration, which largely explains why the Nixon Administration, which on the eve of the 1968 Presidential elections had

promised the American people to take effective steps to pull out of the war, has essentially failed to honour its promises.

Moreover, by extending the area of military operations by the invasion of Cambodia and Laos, the Republican Administration has converted what the US press used to call the "Johnson war" into the "Nixon war." In his first period in office, President Nixon used to refer to the "burdensome legacy he had inherited from his predecessor," but having assumed responsibility for further steps in escalating the aggression, the Republican Administration has heavily underscored the bipartisan character of the policy of aggression in Indochina.

On the other hand, some sections of Big Business and the political groupings, periodicals and party politicians representing their interests, smarting from the adverse effects in many spheres of the US defeat in Indochina, appear to be inclined to take a more realistic view of the situation. They have come to realise not only the futility, but also the grave danger that continued attempts to ignore realities presents to the US ruling class. Hence, the feverish search for ways and means to extricate themselves from the bog of war and the far-reaching political crisis.

We find, therefore, a deep cleavage over the war among those who run the USA, and it is a reflection of this crisis, and not some sudden sense of "peace-making" or a craving for justice among the many Senators, party politicians, publishers and businessmen, that explains the growing opposition to the Administration in Congress and in the political and business world over the last two or three years.

Since the Second World War no US Administration has faced such strong opposition in the Senate as the Nixon Administration is now up against. At first, the Republican Party leadership tried to explain this opposition as coming from the democratic majority in both Houses of Congress. During the Congressional elections in November 1970, the Nixon-Agnew leadership sought to change the balance of forces in Congress. After the elections, the President said that the Administration had an "ideological majority" in the Senate.

However, it soon transpired that the opposition, far from being reduced, had in fact increased. Of the various resolutions, bills and amendments to bills, in one way or another designed to limit freedom of action for the US Administration in carrying on the war in Indochina or to put a stop to it—and there are now several score of them—each gets from between one-third to one-half of the Senatorial votes. In June 1971, after the publication of the Pentagon secret papers, the Mansfield Resolution, setting a nine-month deadline for the pull-out of US forces from Vietnam, under certain conditions, was passed by a majority.

It is significant that opponents of the Administration include not only Democratic Senators, but also prominent members of President Nixon's own party, including Senators Cooper, Hatfield, Percy and Goodell.

Senator Birch Bayh wrote in *The New York Times*: "Each day (of the continuing war—Ed.) means a further diversion of our energy, attention and resources from our own pressing needs here at home. Each day means \$ 27 million that could

otherwise help to provide better health care, better education, better housing, better transportation, and a better environment. Each day means continuation of the divisions within our own society, divisions that threaten to tear us apart."¹

This has become a fact of US life: the split from top to bottom has affected not only the masses of Americans, but also the country's ruling elite.

An outcome of this split is the stand taken by a number of influential US bourgeois periodicals which have dared, with the shadow support of mighty economic forces, to challenge the Administration by publishing the Pentagon secret papers. It is safe to say that if the editors of *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and other newspapers had not been backed by powerful and influential forces, and if these forces were not motivated by sufficiently weighty reasons for taking such an unusual step, the Pentagon secret papers would have never seen the light of day.

The sensational publications in June 1971 are striking evidence of the grave political crisis now facing US ruling circles, and their confusion over the major military and political defeats suffered by US imperialism.

5. Bipartisan Policy and Bipartisan Responsibility

There have been copious comments in the US and foreign press on the Nixon Administration's stand over the publication of the Pentagon secret papers from its Vietnam archives. Various assumptions have been made. Some have circulated the

¹ *The New York Times*, April 23, 1971, p. 6.

idea that men close to the Republican Administration may have had a hand in publishing the papers, seeking to create difficulties, on the eve of the coming Presidential elections, for the Democratic Party, the party of ex-President Johnson, and to compromise its leaders.

The first public comment by influential spokesmen for the Republican Party (Republican Senate leader H. Scott, Chairman of the Party's National Committee, R. Dole) tried to absolve the incumbent Administration from any responsibility regarding the published papers, since the events referred to took place under the Johnson Administration. Apparently the invasion of Laos and Cambodia, which was ordered by the Republican Nixon, is not to be regarded as a stage of escalation.

However, the steps taken by members of the Nixon Cabinet, and the Republican Administration's stand over the publication of the Pentagon secret papers show that the Administration has been highly alarmed and unhappy about the snowballing exposures. Despite public indignation, the Republican Administration applied the most vigorous pressure to stop the publication, including direct action by high-ranking members of the Cabinet, among them Secretary of Defence Melvyn K. Laird and Attorney-General J. N. Mitchell.

The reasons for official Washington's grave alarm are obvious. The publicity given to the papers makes it amply clear that the top-ranking leaders of the USA have not hesitated to stoop to outright hypocrisy and lies to cover up their actions, which run counter to the interests of the nation. A great credibility gap now yawns bet-

ween millions of Americans and the country's leaders. Every American now wonders: if we were so shamefully cheated before, what guarantee is there that we shall not be cheated again? What has been shaken is not confidence in certain individuals, but in the institutions of the US state, in the much-vaunted "American democracy."

An even greater source of alarm for Washington's leaders today is the fact that among the published papers and in the state archives there is extensive material to show that the same policy was continued by all the successive postwar Administrations, both Democratic or Republican. This fully applies to the incumbent leadership in Washington. "If the French withdraw Indochina would become communist-dominated within a month. The United States, as a leader of the free world cannot afford further retreat in Asia... the Administration must face up to the situation and dispatch forces."¹ This eloquent statement was made 17 years ago by none other than the present President Richard Nixon, then Vice-President in the Eisenhower Administration. What President Eisenhower himself thought on the subject, even after the action taken by President Johnson, is evident from statements like this one: "I would do anything that would bring the war to an honourable and successful conclusion as rapidly as I could... we should use whatever is necessary, not excluding nuclear weapon to end the fighting in Vietnam."²

He made this statement in the autumn of 1966. A year later the ex-President declared that the

¹ *The New York Times*, April 18, 1954.

² *Congressional Record*, October 7, 1966, p. 24669, 24670.

US Armed Forces should carry out raids on the territory of North Vietnam and pursue the enemy into the territory of Laos and Cambodia.¹

The stand taken by the Republican Party candidate Barry Goldwater during the 1964 Presidential elections, is sufficiently well known. Goldwater said that "Johnson should order air strikes against Hanoi itself if that were necessary"² for a victory in South Vietnam.

Could it be that the present Republican leaders did not, after all, share Goldwater's stand in that period, and did not support him? Not at all. Speaking in Chicago in January 1965, Richard Nixon stressed his solidarity with Goldwater, adding that he had more devotees in the Republican Party than any other Republican since the time of Theodore Roosevelt.³

Those who now claim they were in no way responsible for the Johnson Administration's acts and pretend an outraged innocence hope that the US and world public have a short memory.

Here are some of the many statements made in that period. In April 1964, Nixon declared: "Vietnam is the cork in the bottle; if it is lost the battle of South-East Asia is lost."⁴ A month later, the future President insisted that if the USA pulled out of the area South Vietnam and Laos were bound to be taken over by the Communists. He added that the US aim should be to "liberate" the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The lack of fundamental differences during the

1968 election campaign between President Johnson's line and that of his Republican rivals—now the chiefs of the present ruling Party—is borne out by the *World Journal Tribune*, which then wrote:

"The four Republicans who are the major contenders for President Johnson's job have now completely surrounded him on the issue of Vietnam. Gov. Ronald Reagan is far to his right, Richard Nixon somewhat to his right, Sen. Charles Percy to his left, and Gov. George Romney has just plopped into his lap."¹

In late June 1971, *The New York Times* said: "what the White House had feared might happen, did. The accounts began to include secrets of the Nixon Administration as well as those of its predecessors... But it soon became evident that the story of the Pentagon papers was going to change many things in Washington..."²

Is there need to say more? Only those who are prepared completely to ignore the historical facts still insist that the present Washington leadership does not bear any personal or political responsibility for contriving, launching and carrying out the aggression against the peoples of Indochina. It is truly naive and ridiculous to try to pretend that the blame for these foul deeds, for the aggression, deceit and hypocrisy, falls only on some particular political leader on a given Washington Administration. We are here dealing with the *gravest crime for which America's ruling class as a whole is responsible—the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon Admini-*

¹ *Congressional Record*, November 29, 1967, p. S. 17388.

² *The New York Times*, February 22, 1965.

³ *Ibid.*, January 22, 1965.

⁴ *The Japan Times*, April 15, 1964, p. 12.

¹ *World Journal Tribune*, April 11, 1967, p. 27.

² *The New York Times*, June 27, 1971.

nistrations, the command circles of US Big Business, the US Congress, the leadership of the Democratic and the Republican Parties, and the monopoly big press.

Abraham Lincoln used to say: "You can fool all the people, some of the time, and some of the people, all the time, but you cannot fool all the people, all of the time." US politicians have now had to learn this truth from bitter experience.

STAGE ONE

ARRIVING TO STAY

ON THE STAGE

President Eisenhower said he could conceive of no greater tragedy than for the United States to become involved in all-out war in Indochina. No one could be more bitterly opposed to such a development than he was.

*"The New York Times",
February 11,
1957*

BEHIND THE SCENES

In the spring of 1954, as the French military position in Indochina deteriorated rapidly and the date for the Geneva Conference approached, the Eisenhower Administration twice hinted to France that it was ready to intervene with American forces.

*The Pentagon
Papers*

In a speech made in Kentucky on October 9, 1964, US President Lyndon B. Johnson insisted: "I didn't get us into Vietnam. I didn't ring up out there and say, 'I want some trouble.'"

However, by then the USA was already deeply bogged down in Indochina. What was the exact date when the first US "aid" dollars and the first cases of weapons marked "Made in USA" started the lethal flow in the "dirty war" in Vietnam?

Not long ago, these were mysteries for many rank-and-file Americans who first learned to pronounce the word "Vietnam" only when the casualty reports of sons, brothers and husbands killed in battle in that remote country began to arrive by the packetful.

After all, in a speech at Memphis, Tennessee, on October 24, 1964, the US President had assured Americans: "I want the mothers who must supply the boys, and I want the boys who must die in the wars, to know that no impulsive act of mine, no beat of emotion, is ever going to cause me to do a rash, dangerous, adventurous thing..."

However, that "thing" had already been done. It had not been done a day or a week before these high-flown words were uttered. It had not been a single step, but a great many. It was not the first lie in the veil of secrecy behind which the war was engineered, nor was it the last.

Today, the conclusions drawn by the authors of the Pentagon report on Vietnam tell every American that "the Truman Administration's decision to give military aid to France in her colonial war against the communist-led Vietminh ¹ 'directly involved' the United States in Vietnam and 'set' the course of American policy."²

It was Truman, the head of the first postwar US Administration, who had the task of putting the country's policy on a new footing.

It was then that the Truman Administration

¹ Meaning the forces of the United National Front of Vietnam, which were in the vanguard of the national-liberation struggle.

² *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

sought to impress on its electorate the idea that victory in war had placed upon the American people the burden of responsibility for "world leadership."

It was this supreme "necessity," which US politicians insisted was their country's destiny, that generated among US ruling circles the burning urge to intervene in Vietnam's affairs and, as the young Senator and future US President, John F. Kennedy, put it, "to hang on to the remnants of the empire..."¹ This was the colonial empire which could no longer be maintained on West European bayonets and was about to collapse.

On the threshold of 1954, the French generals commanding the last expeditionary corps of the Fourth Republic in Asia were marching to their defeat which was inflicted on them at Dienbienphou in the spring of 1954. This was history's just sentence executed by the Vietnamese people. It had been long in the making. On September 2, 1945, following the victory of the August Revolution, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was set up as the first workers' and peasants' state in South-East Asia. The Vietnamese people rose to uphold their freedom and independence.

That is something the ruling circles of the USA could not stomach. By then US politicians and generals were moving to that point in the aggression at which the political lexicon was enriched with the new word "escalation," that is, a build-up of tensions in the rising stages of the war. This was an escalation of intervention in the

¹ A. Schlesinger Jr. *A Thousand Days*. Boston, 1965, p. 321.

affairs of another country, escalation of arbitrary acts using armed force. Beyond Vietnam lay the other countries of Indochina.

In June 1950, Truman issued a declaration ordering a speed-up in the supply of "military aid" to the area, and the dispatch of a military mission. President Eisenhower also made great pains to convince the American public that the allocation of \$ 400 million to help anti-communist forces in Indochina was "the cheapest way that we can prevent . . . a most terrible blow to American interests there." (So he told a Gubernatorial Congress at Seattle on August 4, 1953.) But for the broad public, the same man was uttering honeyed words about "the supreme duty" of establishing lasting peace in any honourable way. (President Eisenhower's State of the Union Message to Congress on January 6, 1955.)

Let us add, however, that for the Pentagon generals, who knew their own business and the real aims of the White House leadership, there was no such "supreme duty." This, too, is borne out by the Pentagon secret papers.

An aide memoire sent in March 1954 by Admiral Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to US Secretary of Defence Charles Wilson, said: "The acceptance of a settlement based upon the establishment of a coalition government in one or more of the associated states (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) would open the way for the ultimate seizure of control by the Communists under conditions which might preclude timely and effective external assistance in the prevention of such seizure."¹

¹ *Washington Post*, June 18, 1971.

Just then the world was looking forward to an international conference at Geneva which was to seek ways of letting the peoples of Indochina decide their own affairs. A totally different kind of activity was going on in Washington's military and political headquarters, where there were feverish preparations for direct armed intervention in Indochina's affairs.

The Pentagon secret papers make clear the following:

In January 1954, the President's Special Committee on Indochina discussed the dispatch of aircraft and 200 technical specialists to Vietnam. Deputy Secretary of Defence Roger Kyes expressed doubt about whether this would put the USA under an obligation to support the French to such an extent that with time the Americans would be involved in large-scale intervention, including the use of American combat units.

Deputy Secretary of State Smith made the rejoinder that "we were sending maintenance forces, not ground forces. . ." He felt, however, that the importance of winning in Indochina was so great that if the worst came to the worst he personally would favour intervention with US air and naval forces.

In this context, Senator Stennis drew the following conclusion: "I have been impressed for some time that we have been steadily moving closer and closer to participation in the war in Indochina."¹ This "impression" somewhat lagged behind the realities. In actual fact, the USA was already fighting. By early 1952, 100,000 tons of US equipment had been delivered to Saigon. In

¹ *Washington Post*, June 18, 1971.

1953-1954, "military aid to Saigon was running at \$ 1 billion a year."¹

The whole point now was merely to find moral and legal justification for overt aggression. The situation was somewhat compounded by President Eisenhower's being forced on February 10, 1954, to issue—again for the public at large—a misleading statement to the effect that no greater tragedy for the USA could be imagined than involvement in the war in Indochina, and that no one could object in stronger terms than he did to such a course of events. But the Republican President kept mum about the fact that he had long since authorised the military to decide on the course of events.

The secret Pentagon report makes it clear that back in January 1951 President Eisenhower had approved a policy-making statement made in the National Security Council on the "United States' objectives and courses of action with respect to South-East Asia." The *Washington Post* emphasises that it began with a sweeping statement of "general consideration," one foreshadowed in the Truman Administration and to be continued in one form or another, as the documents show, by the Johnson Administration.

The so-called "domino theory" was the central pillar of this bipartisan platform, to be relayed from one White House incumbent to another: if Vietnam went, the whole of Indochina would go, if Indochina went, the whole of South-East Asia would go.

Let us note that a policy-making statement by

¹ D. F. Fleming. *The Cold War and Its Origins*. New York, 1961, V. II, p. 674, 676.

the US Administration at the time said that "South-East Asia, especially Malaya and Indonesia, is the principal world source of natural rubber and tin, and a producer of petroleum and other strategically important commodities... Furthermore, this area has an important potential as a market for the industrialized countries of the free world."¹

Those were the real motives behind the imperialist conspiracy against the cause of peace and independence of the peoples of Indochina.

Before US soldiers set foot on Vietnamese soil, it had been considered possible to use the remnants of the old colonial regime for these purposes:

"a. An aggressive military, political and psychological program, including covert operations to eliminate organised Vietminh forces by mid-1955.

"b. Developing indigenous armed forces, including logistical and administrative services which will eventually be capable of maintaining internal security without assistance from French units."²

There we already find the main elements of the orientation on "special war" and "Vietnamisation," subsequently to be full-blown.

The army commanders were invited to submit their opinion. The "army's stand" was as follows:

"Seven US divisions or their equivalent, with appropriate naval and air support, would be required to win a victory in Indochina if the French withdrew and the Chinese Communists did not intervene."³

¹ *Washington Post*, June 18, 1971.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

The Pentagon did not consider this to be too hard a nut to crack. In fact, the prospect was tantalising, considering Indochina's wealth and strategic location. Was any account taken of the attendant risks? Yes, the National Security Council said in one report: "...the US should recognise that it may become involved in an all-out war with communist China, and possibly with the USSR and the rest of the Soviet bloc, and should therefore proceed to take large-scale mobilisation measures."¹

Evidence of the readiness to go all-out also came from the stand taken by the second man in the White House, then Vice-President Nixon, who on April 16, 1954, told the American Newspaper Editors' Association that the US Government was to take a "sober" view of the situation and send its armed forces to Indochina.

There is good reason to assume that the future President of the USA, who now complains of the burdensome legacy he had inherited in Vietnam, was taking even more vigorous action behind the scenes. But let the *Chicago Sun-Times* testify: "...The unpublished portion of the top secret Pentagon history of the Vietnam war covers the period in 1954 in which President Nixon played a key role in the debate over dropping the atomic bomb and committing US troops... It was during the Eisenhower Administration that the US moved to the verge of a major intervention, a full decade before Johnson took the fateful step.

"In the spring of 1954, as the French were being surrounded by the communist-led Vietminh at

¹ *Washington Post*, June 18, 1971.

Dienbienphou, Adm. Arthur W. Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reportedly sought authority to use tactical nuclear weapons to break the siege.

"It was widely assumed at the time that Nixon and the late Secretary of State John Foster Dulles supported Radford. ... During that period, US Navy planes, equipped with tactical atomic bombs were in the air off North Vietnam, poised to strike at the Vietminh.¹

"But President Eisenhower called them off at the last minute, reportedly after seeking the advice of General Matthew B. Ridgeway, the Army Chief of Staff, who warned that a successful military intervention might require several hundred thousand US troops."²

And this, let us add, required not just readiness to run the risk of a big war, but also duly to condition public opinion at home and in the allied camp.

One of Dulles's telegrams in April 1954 stressed that the USA was doing its utmost "to prepare a public, congressional and constitutional basis for united action in Indochina."³

The convocation of the Geneva Conference on Indochina proved to be the main stumbling block. Perhaps no other negotiations in the diplomatic history of the USA had so upset Washington as the forthcoming conference. US war planes were already on patrol in the skies of South-East Asia,

¹ An item in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on June 24, 1971, shows that Admiral Radford had also drawn up a plan for Operation Vulture, which provided for a strike by 60 B-29 bombers from a US base near Manila.

² *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 17, 1971.

³ *Washington Post*, June 18, 1971.

prepared to torment the body of Indochina, while preparations were being made in Geneva to talk of peace for the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

That is why the big-calibre diplomatic guns were aimed at torpedoing the conference and its decisions.

STAGE TWO

GENEVA AGREEMENTS VIOLATED AND "SPECIAL WAR" ORGANISED

WORDS

The Government of the United States... takes note of the agreements concluded at Geneva on July 20 and 21, 1954..., declares with regard to the aforesaid agreements... that (i) it will refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them...

*From the Statement
by the Under-
Secretary of State
at the Concluding
Plenary Session
of the Geneva
Conference,
July 21, 1954*

DEEDS

The President ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare "a long-range program for the organisation and training of free Viet forces."

*"Philadelphia
Inquirer",
June 24,
1971*

The Eisenhower Administration's decision to intervene in South Vietnam's affairs and to undermine the new, democratic system in North Viet-

nam led to the US Government's assuming a direct role in ultimately torpedoing the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indochina. This conclusion, long obvious to the world public was finally brought home to the Americans. This was done by *The New York Times* on June 13, 1971, on the strength of the Pentagon secret papers.

On June 18, 1971, the *Washington Post* carried a summary of the principal documentary evidence concerning US diplomatic activity during the Geneva Conference: April-June 1954.

It says that US Secretary of State Dulles was the chief architect of the policy to torpedo the Geneva Agreements. There is not much news in this discovery, but the clear-cut statement of the ugly role played by the architect of the "roll-back communism" policy and the "massive retaliation" strategy elucidates the hypocrisy of the heirs of the bipartisan US foreign policy, who subsequently vindicated almost every step in the escalation of the "dirty war" on the plea that the mechanism of the Geneva Agreements was "ineffective".

Dulles did his utmost to engage the attention of America's Western allies not in the preparations for the Geneva Conference, but in "new, joint" action in Indochina.

Just before the conference opened, and in view of the looming defeat of the French expeditionary corps at Dienbienphou, Dulles tried to induce London to mount an Anglo-American intervention. In his memoirs, Lord Avon (Anthony Eden), then Britain's Foreign Secretary, describes Dulles's vigorous activity at the time.

On April 11, 1954, Dulles informed Eden that US aircraft carriers had already left Manila and

were on their way to the shores of Indochina. This psychological pressure verged on downright provocation designed to stampede Britain into the gamble. However, Britain's ruling circles were clearly not disposed to undertake the burden of a dangerous colonial expedition in South-East Asia, because they had their hands full elsewhere. At the same time, London had undoubtedly received news from Washington of how badly Dulles and the Pentagon were in need of a show of "allied solidarity," in order to ensure US Congressional approval of overt war.

"But Dulles had trouble rounding up allies, especially the British," says the *Washington Post*. In his reports on his talks with Eden, Dulles did not consider it necessary to conceal his sarcasm over the fact that the UK stand was evidence of increasing weakness. Dulles summed it up as follows: "The British seem to feel that we are disposed to accept present risks of a Chinese war and this, coupled with their fear that we would start using atomic weapons, has badly frightened them."¹ In fact, Anthony Eden testifies, even an old imperialist like Churchill, who displayed craft and caution when the need arose, at the time drew the following conclusion: what Britain was in fact being required "to do was to assist in misleading Congress into approving a military operation, which would in itself be ineffective, and might well bring the world to the verge of a major war."²

But that was the whole point of the obsessive

¹ *Washington Post*, June 18, 1971.

² *The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden*. Full Circle. London, 1960, p. 105.

idea of the rabid anti-communist Dulles: to keep the world constantly "on the brink." Dulles and the apostles of the dollar's world domination who backed him were so obsessed with pathological hatred for the forces of progress and national liberation that they were ready to do anything to prevent popular governments from being installed in office. The Geneva Conference did not suit Dulles because he saw it only as a means of "opening the Communists' way to power" in Indochina through an expression of popular will.

Having failed to torpedo the Geneva Conference through "united military action," Dulles concentrated his efforts on trying to reduce the possibility of the conference calling for free elections.¹ But there again he failed. He then lost all interest in the conference and left Geneva.

Let us recall that the Geneva Conference ended with the signing of armistice agreements between the governments of France and the DRV and with a declaration affirming the commitment not to station foreign troops in Vietnam, and setting a date for general elections—July 1956—to allow the people of Vietnam to express their will within the framework of a single, peaceful and independent state.

At the time, Dulles expressed his unhappiness at the impending outcome of the Geneva Conference.² He sent a telegram to various American diplomats then struggling with the problem stressing that since it was undoubtedly true that "elections might eventually mean unification of Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh, this makes it all

the more important that they should be only held as long after a ceasefire agreement as possible." No special insight is required to see that these words added up to a policy designed to frustrate the Geneva Agreements.

US ruling circles took care to have an "alibi" for the operation to torpedo these agreements, which was started virtually the day after the delegates of nine countries left Geneva. Without giving long-winded explanations, the US representatives refused to sign the final declaration. The reason for their reservation was obscure. But a special declaration issued by the USA regarding the signing of the Geneva Agreements said that since these agreements had been signed the USA "will refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them."

That was another lie of the brand which helped to pave the way in escalating the "dirty war." The USA continued to step up its activity in Vietnam.

A few days after the signing of the Geneva Agreements, the National Security Council under President Eisenhower arrived at the conclusion that these agreements were a calamity. That is the evidence of the Pentagon papers published in *The New York Times* on July 5, 1971. They show that back in late summer 1954, the US President had approved a plan of action envisaging fresh steps in direct US intervention in Vietnam's internal affairs in violation of the Geneva Agreements. A group of saboteurs, led by a certain Colonel Landsdale, a CIA agent, was hastily sent to Vietnam to organise sabotage, acts of terrorism and subversion.

American diplomacy steadily implemented

¹ *Washington Post*, June 18, 1971.

² *Ibid.*

Dulles's idea of throwing a veil of "common Western interests" over the intervention in Indochina. In September 1954, Dulles's incipient plan for "united action" by America's partners led to the establishment of SEATO. In October, the authors of an analysis of the Pentagon secret papers say, the President ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to "prepare a long-range program for the organisation and training of free Viet forces."¹

At the same time, in face of French objections, the USA decided to install Ngo Dinh Diem as head of the Saigon regime, and to move "emperor" Bao Dai into the background.

As the *Philadelphia Inquirer* pointed out, "Diem's rise with US help almost caused a break in American relations with France. But the American Secretary of State continued his support for Diem, which ultimately helped to drive France out of Vietnam altogether in 1955."²

That was precisely when Dulles and Diem formulated a common anti-communist action platform, according to which the Geneva decisions for a general election in Vietnam in July 1956 were absolutely incompatible with their line of keeping the country divided or turning it entirely into an American protectorate.

What impressed the Washington leaders most, say the authors of the publication in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, was the way Ngo Dinh Diem managed "with unexpected efficiency" to put down "a number of dissident Buddhist sects." The papers show that the CIA had warned Eisenhower in advance that Ngo Dinh Diem could not hope to

win the elections. The US Administration had no hesitation in approving Diem's decision to call off the "elections, which had been agreed upon in the 1954 Geneva accords."¹

The authors of the publication stressed that Eisenhower and Dulles were doing their utmost to support the Diem regime, despite the fact that the CIA assessment of the situation in South Vietnam led to the conclusion that the prospects of setting up a solid regime were insignificant, and that in the course of the year ahead the existing situation was more likely to worsen. National Security Council document "NSC-5809", dated April 2, 1958, contained Eisenhower's secret directive to "work" for an overthrow of the popular system in the DRV and the establishment of a single puppet state.

But what the US ruling circles tried to conceal from their own people (succeeding to a large extent) could not be concealed from world opinion. A note sent by the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Embassy of Great Britain in Moscow on March 30, 1956, drew attention to the unsatisfactory implementation of the Geneva Agreements, and emphasised: "The present threatening situation in South Vietnam could not, of course, have arisen but for the intervention on the part of a certain power which had taken part in the Geneva Conference and which although it did not sign the Geneva Agreements on Vietnam, had nevertheless undertaken the obligation not only to refrain from violating the Geneva Agreements, but also to regard any violation of the said Agreements as constituting a grave

¹ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 24, 1971.

² Ibid.

¹ *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 25, 1971.

threat to international peace and security. The acts of the South-Vietnamese authorities designed to prevent the holding of a general election in South Vietnam in July 1956 are being openly supported, weapons are being supplied and military personnel are being trained for a so-called 'campaign against the North' for the purpose of starting a new war in Indochina, encouragement is being given to such measures of the South-Vietnamese authorities designed to split the country, as separate elections to a constituent assembly, which the South-Vietnamese authorities held in March, and so on."

Subsequent events bore out that political analysis is and forecast.

The Soviet Government reminded all states which had participated in the Geneva Conference of their commitment to do their utmost to promote a settlement of the Indochina problem in accordance with the aspirations of its people and in the interests of peace.

Let us add that US moves designed to torpedo a peaceful settlement in Indochina were duly noted in the US political circles which kept tabs on international affairs. At the time, Senator Lyndon B. Johnson struck the attitude of a "fierce critic" of the Administration, and declared: "American foreign policy has never in all its history suffered such a stunning reversal. . . . We stand in clear danger of being left naked and alone in a hostile world."¹

Johnson was trying hard to pose as being against sending "American boys into the Indochina bog." This was naturally being done out

of purely short-term political considerations and in no sense out of a sincere desire to keep the country out of a disgraceful war. The full extent of Johnson's hypocrisy was revealed exactly ten years later, when he issued his orders sending tens of thousands of "American boys" into the war against the peoples of Indochina.

As soon as the baton of the bipartisan power relay passed from the Republicans to the Democrats, and Lyndon Johnson became the country's second man, he was ordered by President John F. Kennedy to go to South Vietnam to negotiate with Ngo Dinh Diem, then US henchman in Saigon. That was in 1961.

What was the state of the Vietnam business when John F. Kennedy moved into the White House? Here is what one paper says:

"Upon taking office in January 1961, Kennedy was confronted by reports from the US Embassy in Saigon that Diem was in danger of being overthrown because of his repressive policies and the toleration of corruption at the top of his government. . .

"In March 1961, the Central Intelligence Agency, in a national intelligence estimate warned that the Viet Cong were gaining 'control and influence over increasing areas of the countryside.' The CIA said Diem was growing progressively weaker."¹

What choice did Kennedy make? It was in no sense a way of reducing the US intervention or "preparing for a US withdrawal from Vietnam," as some historians and politicians in the American "liberal" camp subsequently insisted.

¹ *The New York Times*, May 7, 1954.

¹ *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 25, 1971.

"Kennedy sought to bolster the regime by authorising funds to increase the South-Vietnamese army by 20,000 men and the civil guard by 32,000," says the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

In March 1961, Kennedy approved a plan of the Joint Chiefs of Staff which gave the military command more leeway in dealing with the "hot war situation," bypassing the US Ambassador in Saigon, that is, it sanctioned direct military intervention in Vietnam's affairs.

In May 1961, Vice-President Johnson was sent to Vietnam to "encourage Diem to *request US ground troops* (emphasis added-Ed.)."¹ At first, Diem refused, but then went along and in October made the request suggested by Johnson.

The Pentagon papers make this quite clear: the "South-Vietnamese request" for US military intervention was the result of direct pressure from Washington.

At the time, General Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow also visited Saigon and returned with fully concrete plans.

The *Boston Globe* publication testifies that "as early as May 11, 1961, President Kennedy had approved programs for covert action which had been recommended by a Vietnam task force. Among the actions were:

"1. Dispatch of agents into North Vietnam.

"2. Aerial resupply of agents in North Vietnam through the use of civilian mercenary air crews.

"3. Infiltration of special South Vietnam forces into South-East Laos to locate and attack communist bases and lines of communication.

¹ *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 25, 1971.

"4. Formulation of 'networks of resistance, covert bases and teams for sabotage and light harassment' inside North Vietnam.

"5. Conduct of overflights of North Vietnam for the purpose of dropping leaflets."¹

The US President ordered "anti-guerrilla ground action, including the use of United States advisers, if necessary," against some strong points of the patriots. Let us note one particular fact: the term "adviser" is directly and immediately tied in with the execution of military orders, which makes it quite clear that it was used to designate US military personnel.

That was the start of the US "special war" against the Vietnamese people.

"During the period from the end of 1961 to the present time," the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam subsequently stressed in a statement on the 10th anniversary of the Geneva Accords, "the US Government took another step in its aggressive policy: it sent to South Vietnam tens of thousands of US military personnel, large quantities of modern weapons and military equipment, set up a US military command in Saigon, and started a 'special war' in South Vietnam." (DRV Government Statement on July 15, 1964.)

The *Boston Globe* publication makes it clear that by early 1961 there were 1,000 US soldiers in Vietnam. General Maxwell Taylor advised the President to send in US combat units numbering 8,000 men. The paper says that "Kennedy did not mention the Taylor recommendations for a US task force or whether the United States was

¹ *Boston Globe*, June 22, 1971.

considering one," but draws the conclusion that "President Kennedy stepped up covert actions against North Vietnam and increased the number of advisers to 16,000 men before he was assassinated in November 1963."¹

This apparent "contradiction" over the actual character and scale of the US military intervention in Indochina is due not only to the painstaking camouflage in terminology (soldier—"adviser"), but also to the US Administration's urge at the time to prevent the presence of regular US army units from exposing the fact that it was engaging in direct intervention.

On July 1, 1971, *The New York Times* published three of Taylor's reports on the results of his visits to Vietnam. These reports contain the flat recommendation to send US troops to South Vietnam, and support the need to use the threat of aerial attack to put pressure to bear on the DRV Government.

In its final form, the policy of intensifying the US intervention in South Vietnam's affairs was set out in a joint report submitted to President Kennedy on November 11, 1961, by Defence Secretary McNamara and State Secretary Rusk, both of whom argued that it could prove necessary to send in troops of the USA and other SEATO members. They insisted that the maximum numerical strength of the US forces required for use in South-East Asia did not exceed 6 divisions, that is, roughly 205,000 men. The report was submitted on the eve of the important National Security Council meeting at which, the *Washington Post* said on July 2, 1971, "Kennedy, in

essence, accepted the Rusk-McNamara recommendations for a fateful step into direct involvement in the war."

It was under the Kennedy Administration that the organisers of the Vietnam venture finally realised that it was no longer possible to maintain the flimsy Diem regime in Saigon. Many historians and eye-witnesses of these events had long since expressed the opinion that US intelligence under the Kennedy Administration had taken a hand in preparing the coup which led to Diem's overthrow and murder. This has now been finally confirmed by the secret papers published in the *Chicago Sun-Times* on June 23, 1971.

These papers say that in the summer of 1963 leading Washington official circles were sharply divided in their attitude towards Ngo Dinh Diem, "with the State Department urging his ouster and the Pentagon insisting that the United States stick with him." The newspaper wrote that a decision was finally adopted against Diem. The papers also showed that Kennedy and his chief advisers were closely connected with the moves which led to Diem's downfall on November 1, 1963.

These papers make it clear that at the National Security meeting in Washington on September 17, 1963, Kennedy decided to exert growing pressure on Diem.¹ To justify this attitude to the Saigon rulers, who were no longer in favour with their masters, a rumour was circulated to the effect that Diem's brother, Nhu, was inclined to negotiate with the DRV on "neutralising Vietnam." The same National Security Council sitting decid-

¹ *Boston Globe*, June 22, 1971.

¹ *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 23, 1971.

ed to send Defence Secretary McNamara and General Taylor to Saigon.

The two men reported to Washington on October 2, and soon Diem was removed and, like his brother Nhu, killed in the course of the military putsch.

It is indicative that the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, which published some of the Pentagon papers on June 24, 1971, relating to the period when the coup was being prepared, arrived at the conclusion that through that coup the Kennedy Administration had finally shelved plans for a cutback in the American military presence in Vietnam, although the paper's analysis suggests that President Kennedy had intended to use these plans for domestic political purposes in connection with the forthcoming 1964 Presidential campaign.

Consequently, towards the end of Kennedy's term in office, the continuity of the bipartisan US line in South-East Asia, designed to violate the 1954 Geneva Agreements and extend direct US military intervention in the affairs of Vietnam and other states in Indochina, had become most pronounced.

STAGE THREE

OPEN INTERVENTION PREPARED

DENIALS

Q. Mr. President... Representative Laird of Wisconsin declared that the Administration is preparing to move the Vietnam war into the North. Is there any substance to this claim?

A. I know of no plans that have been made to that effect.

*President Johnson's
news conference,
June 2, 1964*

ACTS

(The United States' policy is) to prepare immediately to be in a position on 72 hours' notice to initiate the (previously recommended) "Retaliatory Actions" against North Vietnam, and to be in a position on 30 days' notice to initiate the program of "Graduated Overt Military Pressure" against North Vietnam...

*National Security
Action Memorandum 288,
March 17,
1964*

In 1961, a Washington corporation, Helioaircraft, servicing airlines in South Vietnam, made a lucrative offer to an American pilot named Smith, which he accepted. Within a few months, Smith was passed on to another private company—

Aviation Investors—which was officially listed as being in the service of Saigon's civil airline. But Smith had earlier flown planes on airlines in the Congo, and his experienced eye at once noted that the corporation's "civilian" label was no more than camouflage.

What was it trying to hide?

Soon Smith learned that the business in which he was taking a hand was designated by the code name of Operation Haylift, and that it was being directed by the CIA. Its purpose, as Smith himself subsequently told, was to airlift South-Vietnamese agents to North Vietnam for subversive operations—blowing up railway lines, bridges, etc. "At first," says Smith, "they used a C-54 for runs over the North. When this was lost they switched to four C-123s, all unmarked, and used them for recon (reconnaissance) runs and drop missions over the North."

This was told in a book by a US journalist, Joseph C. Goulden,¹ which was published in 1969, under the highly significant title, "Truth is the First Casualty. The Gulf of Tonkin Affair—Illusion and Reality." (Chicago, 1969.)² It reveals that the US aggressive action against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has a longer history than many had imagined. The tissue of lies used to cover up the war was just as long.

The *Boston Globe* publication contains a telegram from General Taylor to President Kennedy

which is a glaring example of how insistently the architects of the intervention sought to conceal the truth from the American people and the world public. Sent from Saigon in November 1961, it said: "My view is that we should put in a task force consisting largely of logistical troops for the purpose of participating in flood relief and at the same time of providing a US military presence in Vietnam... *To relate the introduction of these troops to the needs of flood relief seems to me to offer considerable advantage in Vietnam and abroad. It gives a specific humanitarian task as the prime reason for the coming of our troops.*"¹ (Emphasis added-Ed.)

Subsequently, US politicians and generals invented many other pretexts and verbal screens for acts grossly violating the Geneva Agreements, the basic rules of international law and elementary humanitarian standards. General Taylor was neither the first nor the last to do so.

Still, in a telegram to Washington, Taylor found it necessary to inform the President about some of the inevitable consequences if his recommendations on the dispatch of 8,000 US ground troops to Vietnam were accepted. These included the danger of some of the US strategic reserves being pinned down "for an uncertain duration," and the impossibility of resisting fresh pressure to reinforce the task force, if it should prove to be inadequate; the unlimited nature of any possible new commitments, including an attack on Hanoi; growing tensions and the threat of "escalation into a major war in Asia."²

¹ Goulden says that "Smith" is a pseudonym for a man whom the author met through Senator E. Gruening in 1968.

² An allusion to the well-known statement by UN Secretary U Thant: "In times of war the first casualty is truth."

¹ *Boston Globe*, June 22, 1971.

² Ibid.

Nothing of these apprehensions and doubts was, of course, said to the American people. And the new man in the White House, who took the place of the assassinated John F. Kennedy, had good ground to assume that whatever new decisions and steps the Administration took in Indochina, he too could rely on the barrier of secrecy and official untruth. At the same time, Johnson took special care to present the Republican Party before the masses as being equally responsible for the Vietnam policy as his own, Democratic Party. That is why he never tired of repeating that his policy vis-a-vis South Vietnam accorded with the policy formulated by the Eisenhower Administration in 1954. (President Johnson's statements of April 23 and June 2, 1964.)

Characterising the bipartisan policy relay on Indochina, from one President to the next, the analyst of the Pentagon secret papers in *The New York Times* drew the following conclusions:

"That the Kennedy Administration, though ultimately spared from major escalation decisions by the death of its leader, transformed a policy of 'limited-risk gamble,' which it inherited, into a 'broad commitment' that left President Johnson with a choice between more war and withdrawal.

"That the Johnson Administration, though the President was reluctant and hesitant to take the final decisions, intensified the covert warfare against North Vietnam and began planning in the spring of 1964 to wage overt war, a full year before it publicly revealed the depth of its involvement and its fear of defeat."¹

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

The early stage of the Johnson Administration was marked by a fact which left its stamp on all the methods he used to camouflage the escalation of the war. The year Johnson took his first decisions on Vietnam was also an electoral one: the contest to decide which of the two parties had found the best political fencer to fight his way into the White House was again coming up in November 1964. Johnson must have realised that it would have been an unforgivable blunder to ignore the slogans of peace.

That is why, among the electoral catchwords churned out by the White House machine and designed for public consumption, Johnson found this formula highly attractive: "Our one desire—our one determination—is that the people of South-East Asia be left in peace to work out their own destinies in their own way." He would then repeat it again, word for word, on many occasions, as he did in Washington on August 10, 1964, and on March 13, 1965.

New catchwords would be invented and fresh efforts made to bring out the Administration's "peace-making" in contrast to the extremism of its rivals, among them Goldwater and Nixon. But the military intervention conveyer-line would continue to operate with inexorable momentum.

The secret papers of that period described the goings-on in the President's oval room at the White House and in the Pentagon staff rooms.

On December 21, 1963, Secretary of Defence McNamara's aide memoire "The Vietnam Situation" was placed on President Johnson's desk. It began with these words: "The situation is very disturbing. Current trends, unless reversed in the next 2-3 months, will lead to neutralisation at

best and more likely to a communist-controlled state. . .

"We should watch the situation very carefully, running scared, hoping for the best, but preparing for more forceful moves if the situation does not show early signs of improvement."¹

It is this aide memoire which first outlined the new plan for extending US military operations in Vietnam in every direction, including the escalation of subversive operations against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The latter are to be designated as Plan 34-A and to serve as the main script for the war up until August 1964, when the aggression would enter a new stage.

McNamara emphasised: "Plans for Covert Action into North Vietnam were prepared as we had requested and were an excellent job. They present a wide variety of sabotage and psychological operations against North Vietnam from which I believe we should aim to select those that provide maximum pressure with minimum risk."²

McNamara's aide memoire showed that when writing to each other US politicians have no use for the high-flown rhetoric to which they normally resort on television or on the stump, but call a spade a spade.

At the same time (January 1964), General Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recommended a number of measures for escalating the war, including the following:

"Advise and support the Government of Vietnam (that is the Saigon regime-Ed.) in its con-

duct of large-scale commando raids against critical targets in North Vietnam.

"Conduct aerial bombing of key North Vietnam targets, using US resources under Vietnamese cover, and with the Vietnamese openly assuming responsibility for the actions.

"Commit additional US forces, as necessary, in support of the combat action within South Vietnam.

"Commit US forces, as necessary, in direct actions against North Vietnam."¹

Was all of this in line with President Johnson's own thinking? The answer comes from General Taylor's aide memoire, which says:

"National Security Action Memorandum No. 273 makes clear the resolve of the President to ensure victory over the... communist insurgency in South Vietnam (emphasis added-Ed.). Joint Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion that the United States must be prepared to put aside many of the self-imposed restrictions which now limit our efforts, and to undertake bolder actions which may embody greater risks."

What were these restrictions that the US militarists sought to be rid of? They were these: not to carry the war beyond the boundaries of South Vietnam, "avoiding the direct use of US combat forces" and to limit US leadership to the action being taken.

Furthermore, the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff contained 10 points on escalating the intervention, which in his aide me-

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

² Ibid.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

moire to the President on March 16, 1964, Defence Secretary McNamara reduced to four main ones: 1) open reconnaissance sorties over North Vietnam (that is, invasion of the DRV's airspace); 2) aerial bombardments and Saigon regime commando raids "against critical targets in North Vietnam;" 3) aerial laying of mines in the main ports of North Vietnam; and 4) steadily growing open military pressure by the Saigon and US troops.

The analyst of the Pentagon papers in *The New York Times* wrote: "President Johnson approved Mr. McNamara's recommendations at a National Security Council Meeting on March 17, 1964, directing that planning 'proceed energetically.'"

And so the Johnson Administration, as early as the spring of 1964, had already started to plan overt war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It had further intensified the "special war," that is, acts of sabotage on DRV territory. In the White House this was called "military pressure," although it was quite clear that it amounted to direct military intervention in Vietnam. The justification for this line was the idea of "containing communism." However, the Pentagon was in no sense original in mustering its arguments. History, including US history, provides dozens of examples of imperialist plans, plans of aggression, being covered up with slogans of combating communism. But the Pentagon secret report says that the main aim of the USA was to safeguard the might, influence and prestige of the United States, which meant exercising the functions of world gendarme against the national-liberation movement, democracy and freedom.

The period from the beginning of 1964 to the Gulf of Tonkin provocation in August of that year was a crucial one, when plans for subsequent stages of escalation of the US war in Vietnam were being drawn up. No wonder the analysts of the Pentagon papers say this was a "critical period which laid the foundations for a large-scale war."

"An elaborate program of covert military operations against the state of North Vietnam," as it is designated in the Pentagon papers, was launched on February 1, 1964, under the code name of Operation Plan 34-A.

Throughout 1964, operations under Plan 34-A covered everything, ranging from overflights of DRV territory by U-2 spy planes and abduction of North-Vietnamese citizens to obtain intelligence data, to the dropping of groups of saboteurs, sea-borne commando raids on the coast of the DRV for the purpose, the paper says, of blowing up railway and highway bridges and shelling North-Vietnamese coastal installations by torpedo boats. These "destructive undertakings," as they were described in a report to the President from Maj. Gen. Victor H. Krulak of the Marine Corps, were designed "to result in substantial destruction, economic loss and harassment." The tempo and magnitude of the strikes were designed to rise in three phases through 1964 to "targets identified with North Vietnam's economic and industrial well-being."¹ These "covert operations" were directed on behalf of the President by McNamara through a special group under the Joint Chiefs of Staff designated as

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

"the Office of the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities."

These subversive operations, the Pentagon report says, were coordinated with the US State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, including advance monthly schedules of the raids. This inter-departmental coordination was carried out by Assistant Secretary of State for Far East Affairs William Bundy and John McNaughton, who had the remarkable title of Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs. In Saigon, operations under Plan 34-A were controlled by General P. Harkins.

An important element of this plan of exerting covert military pressure on the DRV was the so-called "patrols" by US warships in the Gulf of Tonkin, this part of the plan being designated by the code name of De Soto Patrols. These were mainly "psychological, as a show of force" but the destroyers collected "intelligence on North-Vietnamese warning radars and coastal defences that would be useful to 34-A raiding parties or, in the event of a bombing campaign, to pilots."¹

Although the analysts of the Pentagon papers insist that the US Government had not planned "to use the ships as bait for North-Vietnamese retaliation" and that "a deliberate provocation was not intended," this is refuted by the whole subsequent course of operations in the Tonkin Straits.

The papers provide evidence that US intelligence circles and even the Joint Chiefs of Staff

felt that the whole 34-A program had little chance of intimidating the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and of breaking the Viet Cong's (that is, the patriotic forces of South Vietnam) resistance. Meanwhile, in the White House thought had already been given to the following stage in the escalation of the war, "a demand for more was stimulated and an expectation of more was aroused." The USA was moving to overt armed intervention and escalation of aggression. All of this was being concealed from the American public.

Walt Rostow, who had tremendous influence with President Johnson, met the President's mood by assuring him that "a credible threat to bomb the industry Hanoi had so painstakingly constructed out of the ruins of the French Indochina War would be enough to frighten the country's leaders into ordering the Viet Cong to halt their activities in the South."¹

This was truly a short-sighted analysis based on the Dulles "positions of strength" doctrine which had already proved to be unworkable in many international situations. Once again, the power politics confronted the American people with the grave consequences of the escalation of the Vietnam war.

It is true that some of the men around President Johnson at the time were coming to realise the hopelessness of supporting the puppet regime in South Vietnam, and of the US intervention in Vietnam's domestic affairs. One document reflected the view that "the government of Ge-

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

neral Khanh¹ was incapable of competing politically with the Communists."²

Another document, an intelligence report, says: "...the primary sources of communist strength in South Vietnam are indigenous, arising out of the revolutionary social aims of the Communists and their identification with the nationalist cause during the independence struggle against France in the nineteen-fifties."³

In a telegram of March 20, 1964, to US Ambassador in Saigon, Henry Cabot Lodge, President Johnson dealt with some problems arising from the political back-up of the plans for armed aggression against the DRV. Having said that he shared General Khanh's opinion that strengthening the southern base was the most immediate and important task, Johnson went on: "For this reason our planning for action against the North is on a contingency basis at present, and the immediate problem in this area is to develop the strongest possible military and political base for possible later action. There is additional international reason for avoiding immediate overt action in that we expect a showdown between the Chinese and Soviet communist parties soon and action against the North will be more practicable after than before a showdown. But if at any time you feel that more immediate action is urgent, I count on you to let me know specifically the reasons for such action, together with your recommendations for its size and shape."⁴

¹ The then head of the puppet regime in Saigon.

² *The Pentagon Papers*, Bantam Books, Inc., 1971, p. 243.

³ Ibid., p. 242.

⁴ Ibid., p. 285.

President Johnson also flatly rejected de Gaulle's proposal for "neutralising South Vietnam."

Johnson wrote to Lodge: "On dealing with de Gaulle, I continue to think it may be valuable for you to go to Paris after Bohlen has made his first try... It ought to be possible to explain in Saigon that your mission is precisely for the purpose of knocking down the idea of neutralization wherever it rears its ugly head, and on this point I think that nothing is more important than to stop neutralist talk wherever we can by whatever means we can."¹

Consequently, while continuing steadily to implement the policy mapped out by earlier Administrations for extending the aggression in Indochina, the Johnson Administration firmly clung to Dulles's well-known idea that "neutrality was immoral." Actually, however, the US rulers were preparing openly to trample on every principle of morality and rule of international law.

The analyst of the secret papers in *The New York Times*, describing the stand of the Johnson Administration on the Pentagon's Vietnam gamble, arrives at the conclusion that in the summer of 1964 the President was on the one hand, "pushing his Administration to plan energetically for escalation while, on the other, continually hesitating."²

But was this no more than hesitation? A more correct answer comes from McNamara's following remark concerning the ways of backing up these operations which he said were of a highly delicate character because "there would be the

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

² Ibid.



problem of marshalling the cause to justify such action" (emphasis added-Ed.).¹

That certainly let the cat out of the bag. The whole problem was to vindicate US acts and to deceive those on whose behalf thousands more lives were to be thrown into the cauldron of aggressive war, namely, the people of the United States.

The answers were supplied by the brain trust consisting of senior officials of the State Department and the Pentagon: William Bundy, John McNaughton and William Sullivan. On May 23, 1964, they proposed a "script" for stepping up the war within 30 days, which was to culminate in the "extensive bombing of the North." The main thing in the script was the measures to provide "moral and political" back-up for the aggression, including the idea of a joint resolution by both Houses of the US Congress, giving the President the go-ahead for the escalation.

The script included these steps, among others: "Stall off any conference on (Laos or) Vietnam until D-day;²

- "Presidential speech in general terms launching Joint Resolution. . .

- "Direct CINCPAC to take all prepositioning and logistic actions that can be taken 'quietly' for the D-Day forces. . .

- "Get Khanh's agreement to start overt South-Vietnamese air attacks against targets in the North. . .

- "Consult with Thailand and the Philippines to get permission for US deployments. . .

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

² D-day designating the start of overt aggression against the DRV.

- "Khanh makes speech demanding that North Vietnam stop aggression. . .

- "President informs US public (and thereby North Vietnam) that action may come, referring to Khanh's speech and declaring support for South Vietnam. . .

- "Khanh announces that all efforts have failed and that attacks are imminent. . .

- "Remove US dependents. . .

- "Launch first strikes. . .¹

The Pentagon papers quoted in the *Boston Globe* on June 22, 1971, show that at the next stage of the escalation of the aggression the US militarists were preparing to go to extremes, including the use of nuclear weapons, in their efforts to break the Vietnamese people's resistance. The *Boston Globe* quoted the Pentagon papers dealing with the Honolulu Conference on June 1-2, 1964, under the chairmanship of Secretary of State Dean Rusk. It was attended by Secretary of Defence McNamara, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Taylor, CIA Director McCone, Commander of the US Armed Forces in the Pacific Admiral H. Felt, and US Ambassador in Saigon Lodge.

They discussed aspects of the air war including all the details. The result was a "list of 94 targets," ranging from bridges to industrial enterprises.

The paper quotes this extract from the Pentagon report: "Secretary McNamara then went on to say that the possibility of major ground action also led to a series of questions of having to use nuclear weapons at some point.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

"Admiral Felt responded emphatically that there was no possible way to hold off the Communists on the ground without the use of tactical nuclear weapons and that it was essential that the commanders be given the freedom to use these as had been assumed under various plans."¹

Following the Honolulu Conference, "the President had also apparently approved continued work for the Congressional resolution," says an analyst of the Pentagon documents, "because planning for it continued apace."

The documents show that one of the main questions at the Honolulu Conference was how to get Congress to pass a resolution giving the go-ahead for aggression. The resolution had already been drafted, apparently by William Bundy, together with the May 23 script. The Pentagon document dates this project May 25, 1964. In November 1965, that is, 18 months later, the magazine *Esquire* would be the first to inform US readers that a few weeks before the notorious Tonkin incident, the pretext for escalating the war in Vietnam, President Johnson was carrying in his pocket a draft resolution of Congress, waiting for the right moment.

A closed hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on September 20, 1966, heard William Bundy himself admit that the State Department had prepared several draft resolutions, considering that "things might take a more drastic turn at any time."²

¹ *Boston Globe*, June 22, 1971.

² J. Goulden. *Truth is the First Casualty. The Gulf of Tonkin Affair—Illusion and Reality*. Chicago, 1969, p. 136.

One analyst of the secret papers wrote: "By June 10, there was 'firm support' from most of the foreign-policy-making machinery of the government for obtaining the resolution, although the account notes that at an inter-agency meeting that day five basic 'disagreeable questions' were identified for which the Administration would have to provide convincing answers to assure public support.

"These included: (1) Does this imply a blank check for the President to go to war in South-East Asia? (2) What kinds of force could he employ under this authorization? (3) What change in the situation (if any) requires the resolution now? (4) Can't our objectives be attained by means other than US military force? (5) Does South-East Asia mean enough to US national interests?"¹

Nevertheless, in an aide memoire for the second inter-departmental conference on June 12, William Bundy wrote that the Administration needed the immediate passage of the resolution by Congress as a continuing demonstration of US firmness and for complete flexibility in the hands of the executive bodies in the coming political months. While the USA did not expect "to move in the near future to military action against North Vietnam"² events in South Vietnam or Laos could force it to review its stand.

Let us bear in mind that in that period, the summer of 1964, the electoral campaign in the USA was in full swing and this necessarily had an effect on Johnson's stand.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

² *Ibid.*

The electoral battles called for the President's increasing attention and skill. A draft of one of his election speeches (delivered in New York on August 12, 1964) created the impression that the President was reasoning with restless military commanders. Here is what he said: "Some others are eager to enlarge the conflict. They call upon us to supply American boys to do the job that Asian boys should do. They ask us to take reckless action which might risk the lives of millions and engulf much of Asia and certainly threaten the peace of the entire world. Moreover, such action would offer no solution at all to the real problem of Vietnam."

But this was in no sense a statesman who had finally opted for peace and justice, but a politician who was seeking to present himself as a "dove" in contrast to the Republican candidate Barry Goldwater, the bellicose "hawk."

It was just another lie behind which lurked a truth that was more unpalatable than that in Goldwater's most sinister calls for war. Goldwater himself following the publication of the secret documents, declared on June 14, 1971, that a month before the Tonkin incident he had been aware of Johnson's plans to extend the war in Vietnam.

In a television interview, the Senator said: "I did not know the exact details, but I knew that a scenario was written that would give an excuse for war."¹ He added that during the election campaign he had known of the plans to bomb North Vietnam and to dispatch US troops for military operations in South Vietnam. He dec-

lared: "See, I was being called trigger-happy, warmonger, bomb-happy, and all the time Johnson was saying he'd never send American boys. I knew damn well he would."

For all the zigzagging in Johnson's official statements in the summer of 1964, the escalation machine had long been wound up and its mainspring was steadily unwinding. Analysts of the Pentagon papers stress that the Administration had gone so far in its planning of military measures that despite the delay in implementing the May script a number of steps provided by it were taken one by one in the course of June and July.

Almost at the same time, as the Washington script, Operation Plan 37-64 was made up in the Honolulu headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of the US Armed Forces in the Pacific, Harry Felt. "It tabulated how many planes and what bomb tonnages would be required for each phase of the strikes, listed the targets in North Vietnam with damage to be achieved, and programmed the necessary positioning of air forces for the raids."¹

All that was now required to put the escalation machine into high gear was a decisive pretext, and from the standpoint of those who up on top were seeking the final justifications to prevent loss of face and from the standpoint of those who had primed the fighting machine, there was an extreme and urgent need for such a pretext. Both the "men in uniform" and civilian CIA agents who were in charge of the airborne units,

¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

aircraft carriers, destroyers and squadrons of planes, and who directed the secret operations simultaneously in three areas—South Vietnam, in the frontier areas of Vietnam and Laos, and in the demilitarised zone along the border of the DRV—all had many opportunities for creating a suitable situation.

STAGE FOUR

TONKIN PROVOCATION: WHAT THE PENTAGON SECRET REPORT FAILS TO SAY

WORDS

Q. Mr. Secretary, can you give us the basic reasons for the Gulf of Tonkin patrol?

A. It is a routine patrol of the type we carry out in international waters all over the world.

*Secretary of Defence
McNamara's news
conference,
August 5,
1964*

DEEDS

While the purpose of the patrols was mainly psychological, as a show of force, the destroyers collected the kind of intelligence on North-Vietnamese warning radars and coastal defences that would be useful to 34-A raiding parties or, in the event of a bombing campaign, to pilots.

Pentagon Report

On July 23, 1964, the 2,200-ton US destroyer *Maddox* sailed from the Japanese port of Yokosuka to take part in Operation De Soto, whose official purpose, the US Naval Command in the Pacific later said, was normal patrolling of the coastal waters of Vietnam. In a Taiwan port, the destroyer took on board a container with electronic equipment and more than 10 specialist

operators. On August 2, 1964, carrying out its exercises in the area of Hon Me Island, which belongs to the DRV, the destroyer radioed the command that it was forced to open artillery fire on torpedo boats which were chasing it. President Johnson ordered the *Maddox* to continue the operation, and dispatched the destroyer *Turner Joy* as reinforcement, also promising cover from the aircraft carrier *Ticonderoga*.

On the night of July 30, 1964, the United States and the South Vietnam puppet authorities sent their warships into the territorial waters of the DRV, simultaneously shelling the islands of Hon Ngu and Hon Me, which belong to the DRV. On August 1, 1964, four American T-28 fighter-bombers, flying in from the direction of Laos, bombed and fired rockets at the frontier post of Nam Can which is situated about 7 kilometres from the Vietnam-Laotian border, and which was clearly seen flying the national flag of the DRV.

On August 2, 1964, seven American AD-6 and T-28 fighter-bombers, flying in from Laos, once again attacked Nam Can. At the same time, a section of the US Seventh Fleet, constantly patrolling along the Vietnam coast, repeatedly shelled coastal targets and populated localities on the territory of the DRV. On August 2, as has been said, a US destroyer entered the territorial waters of the DRV.

August 4, 1964, which according to the plans of US aggression was to become D-day, was fast approaching.

Early on August 4 (it was nightfall in the Gulf of Tonkin) telegrams began to arrive in Washington reporting that the radars of the US destroyers

(according to Secretary of Defence McNamara this was a very dark, moonless, inclement night) had detected a group of moving targets which were identified as torpedo boats and against which the two destroyers had opened fire. By noon of August 4, the Pentagon radio station in Washington was receiving a flood of contradictory messages from the Gulf of Tonkin, some reporting torpedo attacks against the destroyers, others casting doubt as to what had occurred, because it was impossible precisely to determine the situation in the darkness of the night and in view of the unreliable sonar evidence.

At noon on August 4, President Johnson called a meeting of the National Security Council in Washington and there and then ordered the military to take counter-measures and issued instructions to contact the leaders of both parties in Congress for the purpose of coordinating the decisions required by the situation.

But by nightfall of August 4 (that is, three days before the Congress decision), the "Ticonderoga" sent its bomb-laden planes up into the air. At midnight, US airforce planes dropped their bomb-load over the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, within four hours carrying out 64 sorties over their targets.

While President Johnson was preparing the "arguments" for Congressmen and the public in favour of his "counter measures," his military advisers had already launched Plan 37-64, worked out many weeks earlier, for the first airstrikes against the territory of the DRV and for alerting the ground forces and marine units.

At 13.25 hours on August 4, that is, two and a half hours after the radio report of the clash in

the Gulf of Tonkin, and while Rusk, McNamara and McCone were lunching with Johnson, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff telephoned McNamara informing him of a decision to carry out strikes from aircraft carriers against torpedo-boat bases and oil depots in the DRV by way of "retaliation" (the hypocritical name for it all).

The decisive step to extend military operations was being taken. That was the goal towards which the military-industrial complex of the USA had been moving. The US aggression against an independent sovereign state had become a patent and incontrovertible fact.

"At 4 p.m. McNamara learned from Admiral Sharp in a telephone conversation that there was now confusion over whether an attack on the destroyers had actually taken place. The Secretary told Admiral Sharp that the reprisal order would remain in effect."¹ The talk between McNamara and Sharp was held when the US war machine was going full speed ahead in unfolding the provocation planned by the White House.

President Johnson did not wait. He went on television to tell the nation that in view of the "unprovoked attack" on the US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin he had decided to retaliate with air-raids against North Vietnam. He described his actions as a "limited and fitting response." "We still seek no wider war," he said. Meanwhile, bombs were being dropped on civilians in Vietnamese towns and villages.

On the morning of August 5, the telephone rang in the office of Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon. "The man who called Morse on August 5

was one of the admirers." (It was said subsequently, that Senator Morse would "carry to his grave" the man's name.) "He suggested that Morse do two things: obtain the logbooks of the *Maddox*, which would detail its movements in the days immediately preceding the August 2 attack and put them definitely within North-Vietnamese 'territorial waters' of 12 miles; and ascertain the *Maddox's* actual mission in the Gulf of Tonkin. The caller said unequivocally that the *Maddox* was not on a routine patrol."¹

On August 5, the Johnson Administration introduced its draft resolution for preliminary consideration by Congressional committees, with Senator Fulbright as the one to put it across.

On August 7, both Houses of Congress voted for the resolution authorising the President to take "all necessary measures... to repel any armed attack" against US forces, and "all necessary steps, including the use of armed force" to help any nation that requested aid "in defence of its freedom under the South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty" (i.e., SEATO-Ed.).²

Subsequently, explaining the true meaning of these high-flown words, among which incidentally the only clear-cut formula was "to take all necessary measures," Deputy Secretary of State N. Katzenbach would say that the resolution was a functional equivalent of the Constitutional obligation expressed in the provision of the Constitution with respect to declaring war. In short, this was sanction to wage unlimited war which, for Americans and their representatives in Con-

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

¹ J. Goulden. Op. cit. p. 48.

² *Facts on File*, 1964, p. 259.

gress, was to remain an "undeclared war," that is, one in which the President's acts were beyond the control of Congress.

In the House of Representatives the resolution was passed unanimously, and in the Senate only two men voted against: L. Gruening of Alaska and Morse of Oregon. Senator Gruening condemned the steps taken in escalating the war as being a reflection of the one-sided aggressive US policy in South-East Asia, while Morse said the resolution was a historical mistake.

Such is the chronology of the main events in those critical days. Let us now turn to the Pentagon secret papers, where we at once discover a characteristic gap: *The New York Times* publications do not contain any full or textual documents relating to the period between July 25 and August 8, 1964. The paper itself has admitted the existence of this "gap" and has turned to other sources, notably an analysis made by a Pentagon division in 1965, that is, at the height of the chauvinistic hullabaloo in Washington, when the authors of these reports were not at all trying to show the truth about what was going on. Accordingly, they reproduced the official version of the events in the Gulf of Tonkin in early August 1964, with all the omissions and contradictory statements, which were built into this version from the outset. *The New York Times* has had to admit that a characteristic feature of the Pentagon material is the scarcity of any back-up documents, when dealing with the last few days of July 1964, that is, with the action which was then being carried forward under the direction of the Pentagon and the CIA,

and whose true nature is apparently only revealed in the papers hidden away at the CIA.

The fact is that on August 6, 1964, as the Congressional committees were considering the draft resolution, Senators Morse and Gruening tried to throw doubt on and to draw attention to the contradictions in the Pentagon's "explanations." But Senator Fulbright cut them short, inducing the Congressmen to take an early decision. Subsequently, Fulbright was to make a public confession. At a hearing held by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the Tonkin incident in February 1968, he said that if he had had the good sense to demand a complete assessment he would never have made that mistake (of approving the resolution—Ed.).

The fact is that the veil of lies, ambiguities and contradictory statements on the Tonkin incident was already stretched to breaking point under the pressure of the first few questions put by Senator Morse at a hastily organised inquiry into the situation by Congressional committees on August 6, 1964. These questions bore on the actual assignment the *Maddox* was fulfilling, the extent to which the Pentagon was sure that the territorial waters of the DRV had not been violated, and the connection between the *Maddox's* mission and the CIA's commando raids on the territory of the DRV then being carried out under Plan 34-A and behind a screen of "South-Vietnamese operations." Finally, his questions bore on the truth of the story about the "unprovoked attack by North-Vietnamese torpedo boats on US destroyers": were the military sure that such an attack had actually taken place?

How the resolution sanctioning the "undeclar-

ed war" was imposed on Congress is shown in an analysis of the Pentagon papers:

McNamara and State Secretary Rusk came out in support of this resolution at the closed hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Relations Committee on August 6. Meanwhile, "Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon had learned that boats manned by South-Vietnamese crews had attacked the two North-Vietnamese islands on July 30. Mr. Morse, one of the two Senators who were to vote against the Tonkin Gulf Resolution—the other was Ernest L. Gruening of Alaska—alleged during the secret hearing on Aug. 6 that Mr. McNamara had known about the raids and that the destroyers had been associated with it.

"First," Mr. McNamara replied, "our Navy played absolutely no part in, was not associated with, was not aware of, any South-Vietnamese actions, if there were any... The *Maddox* was operating in international waters, was carrying out a routine patrol of the type we carry out all over the world at all times.

"I did not have knowledge at the time of the attack on the island," he said. "There is no connection between this patrol and any action of South Vietnam."¹

Subsequent events and the testimony of eyewitnesses showed that McNamara's story gave something of the gist of the official lie, which had paralysed the Congressmen, or at any rate had supplied them with the "arguments" in favour of escalation they had wanted to hear, and had enabled the Administration over a period of

¹ *The New York Times*, June 18, 1971.

several years steadily to raise the stakes in the dangerous game of escalation with something like impunity. The material of additional inquiries, notably that carried out by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 1968, makes it possible to reproduce a part of the picture of the military-political provocation, and the untruth that went with it.

Lie One: The "Maddox" was carrying out a routine patrol.

Here is an extract from the verbatim report of this sitting of the Senate Committee:

"FULBRIGHT: ...The *Maddox* was authorized in its missions, and I quote from the orders, 'to stimulate Chicom-North-Vietnamese electronic reaction.' What does that language mean?

"McNAMARA: It means that they turn on certain kind of equipment on board the *Maddox* which in turn leads the Chicom or the North-Vietnamese to turn on the radar frequencies; that was clearly one of their objectives.

"FULBRIGHT: That is what I meant. That is what I meant by electronic spy mission."¹

The Pentagon papers published by *The New York Times* on June 13, 1971, also admit that patrolling was an element in the overt military pressure on North Vietnam, and that the destroyers collected intelligence information which "would be useful to 34-A raiding parties or, in the event of a bombing campaign, to pilots." This admission is added truth that the provocative US actions against the DRV in late July and early August were part of an overall plan.

¹ *The New York Times*, February 25, 1968.

Lie Two: The "Maddox" was operating in international waters.

"FULBRIGHT: And the *Maddox* was given orders to penetrate the territorial waters of North Vietnam and stimulate their electronic networks assuming their territorial water was 12 miles.

"McNAMARA: Absolutely not. The *Maddox* was specifically instructed to stay out, to go no closer than eight miles to the coastal area.

"FULBRIGHT: I said assuming their territorial water 12 miles."¹

Lie Three: ...Our Navy played absolutely no part in... was not aware of any South Vietnamese action (i.e. the 34-A operations directed by the CIA).

Here is an extract from a directive issued by Commander of the US Naval Forces in the Pacific, Admiral Sharp:

"US has stepped up assistance to RVN (Republic of Vietnam) including stationing of CVA TG (the task group including the carrier *Ticonderoga*) at mouth of Gulf of Tonkin"... "Activity in 34-A operations has increased."² On July 10, Admiral Sharp's command authorized his fleet units involved in De Soto patrols to "contact COMUSMACV (Commander, United States Military Assistance, Vietnam) for any additional intelligence required for prevention of mutual interference with 34-A operations and such communications arrangements as may be desired."³

A message sent by Captain Herrick, commander

of Operation De Soto, at 6.30 a.m. on August 4 said: "Evaluation of info from various sources indicates that DRV considers patrol directly involved with 34-A ops."¹

Here is an extract from the verbatim report of the Senate Committee hearings:

FULBRIGHT: "I quote from a cable to the *Maddox*: 'The above patrol will: a) clearly demonstrate our determination to continue these operations; b) possibly draw NVN (North-Vietnamese Navy) PGMS (patrol boats) to northward away from area of 34-A operations.'"

Lie Four: We were fully confident that an unprovoked attack on American vessels had taken place.

In its report in February 1968, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said that only a few hours before the President ordered the "retaliatory air strike" against North Vietnam, the commander of the US Forces, Pacific, continued to cable his ships: "Can you confirm absolutely that you were attacked? Can you confirm sinking of PT boats?"

The *Maddox* telegraphed back: "Much is not clear as to what has taken place... Suggest thorough day-time air reconnaissance" (retranslated from Russian).

In his testimony, a member of the *Maddox* crew, Park, said: "It seemed like he (sonar operator) was hollering all the time. I said to myself: Aw God, if there are that many torpedoes in the water the whole Seventh Fleet would be blown up by now. I had an idea what was happening. At 30 knots there is a big pie-wedge of

¹ *The New York Times*, February 25, 1968.

² J. Goulden. Op. cit., p. 125.

³ Ibid.

¹ J. Goulden. Op. cit., p. 141.

dead space behind the ship, with so much noise in it—a rear roar—that an operator can't even keep his phones on it. Also when you are making sharp turns, the effect on the hydrophone is exactly what a torpedo sounds like when it is passing you. I noticed the sequence would never vary: we'd make a turn, and Dave would call 'Torpedo' and give a range. So we would turn again, and sure enough, up would come another call, 'Torpedo.'"¹

Captain Herrick cabled: "*Maddox* scored no known hits and never positively identified a boat as such."

It is not at all surprising that even the censored publication of the Senate inquiry into the Tonkin incident is replete with contradictory evidence by those who were taking part in the US subversive operations against the DRV in early August 1964, causing broad sections of the public in the USA and throughout the world to ask themselves: What is the Tonkin incident if not a fake dramatisation of a battle between a group of De Soto ships and torpedo boats of the 34-A subversion group directed by special CIA agents?

The Pentagon papers do not answer this question, but the provocative design behind the simultaneous and combined operations on land, in the air and at sea can no longer be denied either by those who are writing a "top secret" history of the "dirty war," or by those who are trying publicly to vindicate it.

J. Goulden, the author of the book, "The Truth is the First Casualty. The Gulf of Tonkin

¹ J. Goulden. Op. cit., p. 145.

Affair—Illusion and Reality," likewise hands down the following verdict: The Johnson Administration anticipated—perhaps even subconsciously desired—one set of facts on August 4, 1964, when a flash report from the *Maddox* said she was under attack. "The Administration seized upon this report, clung to it despite subsequent cables from the *Maddox* saying the whole episode could have been a mistake, and proceeded to bomb a foreign country without Congressional authorization... The weight of the evidence presented in these pages is that the Administration acted hastily, upon incomplete and misleading information, and then refused to admit error."¹

On August 4, a spokesman of the Supreme Command of the Vietnamese People's Army issued the following statement:

"On July 30, the imperialists of the United States and their puppets sent their warships to invade the territorial waters of North Vietnam... On the night of July 31, the imperialists of the United States once again sent their destroyer to invade the territorial waters of North Vietnam in Quang Binh Province. On August 2 it met our patrol boats in our territorial waters in the area between Hon Me and Lach Truong. In face of these piratical provocations, our patrol boats took steps to defend our territorial waters and fishermen and pursued the warship of the enemy until it left our territorial waters... The above-mentioned acts by the US Navy in the territorial waters of North Vietnam coincided with the acts of US planes, which, taking off from bases in

¹ J. Goulden. Op. cit., p. 19.

Thailand and Laos, bombed the frontier post of Nam Can and fired rockets at the village of Nuong De in the Cu Son District (Nghe An Province)."

A report issued by the Vietnamese Information Agency on August 5, 1964, said: "The Pentagon asserts that last night (August 4-Ed.) DRV torpedo boats attacked two US warships in international waters. The VIA is authorised to declare that this is a pure invention by the American imperialists designed to cover up their unlawful acts, which have brazenly violated the security of the DRV and have further aggravated the situation in South-East Asia."

The provocateurs and slanderers have, as the saying goes, been caught red-handed. No wonder lies, innuendo and fabrication were adopted in that period as weapons not only by the generals but also by the leading US politicians.

The publication in *The New York Times*, in particular, calls attention to the fact that "the Pentagon study gives no indication that Mr. Johnson informed the Congressional leaders of United States responsibility for and command of the covert 34-A raids on July 30 and Aug. 3.

"Nor does the history give any indication that Mr. Johnson told the Congressional leaders of what the historian describes as 'the broader purpose of the deployments' under Operation Plan 37-64. . ."¹

Summing up the August 1964 events, the analysts of the Pentagon papers insist that at the time Johnson managed to stage three important acts from his "scenario," which had been drawn

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

up as early as May 23, 1964: to deploy a large US air force in South-East Asia; to secure Congressional approval for more extensive military operations, that is, escalation of the war; and to start large-scale bombing operations against the DRV. Moreover they assert that "in the heat of the Tonkin clash, the Administration had also accomplished one of the major recommendations of the June strategy conference in Honolulu—preparing the American public for escalation."

That is what Johnson and his entourage thought in claiming that the new stage in the US aggression had been a victory. Very soon this "victory" boomeranged against Johnson himself, against his Administration and the whole of US foreign and domestic policy.

As for the Vietnamese people and their heroic struggle, the Pentagon papers contain a highly eloquent entry following the visit to Hanoi of an American emissary, the Canadian diplomat Seaborn: "Pham Van Dong showed himself utterly unintimidated and calmly resolved to pursue the course upon which the DRV was embarked to what he confidently expected would be its successful conclusion."

Indeed, the Vietnamese people are not to be intimidated. They courageously faced the US aggression, and are just as courageously continuing the struggle against US imperialism.

A TASS statement, issued on August 6, 1964, said that the US military action in early August 1964 had been taken at a time when the reactionary forces in the USA and the South-Vietnamese militarists doing their bidding were clamouring to extend the sphere of US intervention and military operations to the Democratic Re-

public of Vietnam, and added: "There is resolute condemnation in authoritative Soviet circles of the USA's aggressive actions in the Gulf of Tonkin, which lead to a dangerous inflaming of the already tense situation in South-East Asia. Such action, further rash steps or provocations in this area may cause events capable of turning the incidents that have taken place into a large-scale armed conflict with all the ensuing dangerous consequences. Responsibility for such consequences will naturally fall on the United States."

The Soviet Government, concerned over the provocative action of the US militarists, declared through its representative in the Security Council that it condemned the US Armed Forces' bombings of the territory of the DRV and qualified them as aggressive action. At a sitting of the Security Council, the Soviet Government demanded that the most urgent steps should be taken to immediately terminate these dangerous provocative acts against the DRV and the other states of South-East Asia, and that the Geneva Agreements be strictly observed.

The US ruling circles' full responsibility for the aggression and the gravity of their crimes have been confirmed by the whole subsequent course of the Pentagon's Vietnam gamble.

STAGE FIVE

AIR WAR AGAINST THE DRV

WORDS

...We have taken the actions that we think are best calculated to protect the national interest of this country, freedom in the world and humanity everywhere.

*Statement by President
Johnson
on February 27,
1967*

AND BOMBS

Of the nearly 6 million tons of bombs used in Indochina, nearly half have fallen during the last two years alone—a tonnage equal to the explosive force of more than 100 Hiroshima-type atomic bombs.

*Sen. Edward M. Kennedy,
"The Nation",
June 28, 1971,
p. 808*

President Johnson decided to celebrate his 56th birthday at his ranch in Texas. Aside from the two tons of beef that were served to the guests rancher Johnson also regaled them with the following statement which he later repeated on numerous occasions in his electoral speeches:

"I have had advice to load our planes with bombs and to drop them on certain areas that I think would enlarge the war and escalate the

war, and result in our committing a good many American boys to fighting a war that I think ought to be fought by the boys of Asia to help protect their own land."

That was on August 29, 1964, at the height of the electoral campaign, when Johnson was trying hard to prove that he was the candidate epitomising the "forces of reason and restraint" in contrast to his rival, Barry Goldwater, who was clamouring for blanket bombings of North Vietnam.

Now let us see what exactly was going on at this time behind the scenes. On August 26, that is, three days before the President's birthday party in Texas, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent Defence Secretary McNamara a memorandum, entitled "Recommended Courses of Action-South-East Asia." It stated that the air war against the DRV was necessary to "prevent a complete collapse of the US position in South-East Asia." It added that it did not agree "that we should be slow to get deeply involved until we have a better feel for the quality of our ally. The United States is already deeply involved. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that only significantly stronger military pressures on the DRV are likely to provide the relief and psychological boost necessary for attainment of the requisite governmental stability and viability (in Saigon-Ed.)."¹

It went on: "We should therefore maintain our prompt readiness to execute a range of selected responses, tailored to the developing circumstances and reflecting the principles in the Gulf of Tonkin actions, that such counter-operations will

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

result in clear military disadvantage to the DRV. *These responses, therefore, must be greater than the provocation in degree, and not necessarily limited to response in kind against similar targets.* Air strikes in response might be purely VNAF; VNAF with US escort to provide protection from possible employment of MIG's; VNAF with US escort support in the offensive as well as the defensive role; or entirely US. The precise combination should be determined by the effect we wish to produce and the assets available. Targets for attack by air or other forces may be selected from appropriate plans including the Target Study for North Vietnam consisting of 94 targets, recently forwarded to you by the Joint Chiefs of Staff."¹

In other words, the memorandum recommended to the President and the Secretary of Defence that bombings should be carried out and military operations against the DRV sharply extended as a means of preventing the collapse of the Saigon puppet regime. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommendations are also characteristic in another sense: they contain a direct recommendation once again to resort to the "principles" of the Tonkin provocation as a pretext for escalating the war in Indochina.

Another important document was drawn up in that period on orders from President Johnson. It was called "Plan of Action for South Vietnam", and was authored by Assistant Secretary of Defence McNaughton.

Here are some extracts from this long document, which is dated September 3, 1964:

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

"1. Analysis of the present situation. The situation in South Vietnam is deteriorating. Even before the government sank into confusion last week, the course of the war in South Vietnam had been downward, with Viet Cong (Patriotic forces of South Vietnam-Ed.) incidents increasing in number and intensity and military actions becoming larger and more successful, and with less and less territory meaningfully under the control of the government (South Vietnam-Ed.). Successful ambushes had demonstrated an unwillingness of the population even in what were thought to be pacified areas to run the risk of informing on the Viet Cong. War weariness was apparent. The crisis of the end of August-especially since the competing forces have left the government largely faceless and have damaged the government's ability to manage the pacification program-promises to lead to further and more rapid deterioration... the objective of the United States is to reverse the present downward trend....

"2. A separate analysis is being made of a proposal: to enlarge significantly the US military role in the pacification program inside South Vietnam-e.g., large numbers of US special forces, divisions of regular combat troops, US air, etc., to 'interlard' with or to take over functions of geographical areas from the South-Vietnamese Armed Forces....

"3. Outside the borders of South Vietnam. There is a chance that the downward trend can be reversed-or a new situation created offering new opportunities, or at least a convincing demonstration.... The course of action is made up of actions outside the borders of South Vietnam

designed to put increasing pressure on North Vietnam but designed also both to create as little risk as possible of the kind of military action which would be difficult to justify to the American public and to preserve where possible the option to have no US military action at all....

"Actions. The actions, in addition to present continuing 'extra-territorial' actions (US U-2 recce of DRV, US jet recce of Laos, T-28 activity in Laos), would be by way of an orchestration of three classes of actions, all designed to meet these five desiderata-(1) from the US, GVN and hopefully allied points of view, they should be legitimate things to do under the circumstances, (2) they should cause apprehension, ideally increasing apprehension, in the DRV, (3) they should be likely at some point to provoke a military DRV response, (4) the provoked response should be likely to provide good grounds for us to escalate if we wished, and (5) the timing and crescendo should be under our control, with the scenario capable of being turned off at any time....

"4. Actions of opportunity. While the above course of action is being pursued, we should watch for other DRV actions which would justify... (words illegible). Among such DRV actions might be the following:

"a) Downing of US recce or US rescue aircraft in Laos (likely by AA, unlikely by MIG).

"b) MIG action in Laos or South Vietnam (unlikely).

"c) Mining of Saigon Harbor (unlikely).

"d) VC attacks on South-Vietnamese POL storage, RR bridge, etc. (dramatic incident required).

"e) VC attacks (e.g., by mortars) on, or take-

over of, air fields on which US aircraft are deployed (likely).

"f) Some barbaric act of terrorism which inflames US and world opinion (unlikely)...

6) Chances to resolve the situation. Throughout the scenario, we should be alert to chances to resolve the situation:

"a) To back the DRV down, so South Vietnam can be pacified.

"b) To evolve a tolerable settlement:

"I. Explicit settlement (e.g., via a bargaining-from-strength conference, etc.).

"II. Tacit settlement (e.g., via piecemeal live-and-let-live Vietnamese 'settlements,' a de facto 'writing off' of indefensible portions of SVN, etc.).

"c) If worst comes and South Vietnam disintegrates or their behavior becomes abominable, to 'disown' South Vietnam, hopefully leaving the image of 'a patient who died despite the extraordinary efforts of a good doctor.'

"7. Special considerations during next two months. ...

"During the next two months, because of the lack of 'rebuttal time' before election to justify particular actions which may be distorted to the US public, we must act with special care-signalling to the DRV that initiatives are being taken, to the GVN that we are behaving energetically despite the restraints of our political season, and to the US public that we are behaving with good purpose and restraint."¹

This document makes it quite clear that the Pentagon invited the US President to consider several ways of staging provocations against the

DRV, all of which could lead to a big war. The saving clause at the end left a loophole for putting off any decision on further escalation of the aggression until November or December 1964, that is, until the outcome of the Presidential election early in November. At the same time, the memorandum quite explicitly stressed the need "to provoke a military DRV response," in order to justify the planned escalation of the aggression for US and world opinion.

A memorandum which Assistant Secretary of State for Far-Eastern Affairs, William Bundy, sent to President Johnson on September 8 goes even further in dotting all the i's. It says:

"We should be prepared to respond on a tit-for-tat basis against the DRV in the event of any attack on US units or any special DRV/VC action against SVN. The response for an attack on US units should be along the lines of the Gulf of Tonkin attacks, against specific and related targets. The response to special action against SVN should likewise be aimed at specific and comparable targets.

"The main further question is the extent to which we should add elements to the above actions that would tend deliberately to provoke a DRV reaction, and consequent retaliation by us. Example of actions to be considered would be running US naval patrols increasingly close to the North-Vietnamese coast and/or associating them with 34-A operations."¹

A meeting at the White House on September 7, chaired by President Johnson, was attended by Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defence

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

McNamara, General Wheeler, the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CIA Director McCone, and US Ambassador to South Vietnam Taylor, and also Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy, the author of the above-mentioned memorandum to the President.

The official minutes of the meeting registered the decision to resume Gulf of Tonkin patrols by US destroyers under the code name of De Soto Patrols. It added: "By early October, however, we may recommend such actions depending on GVN progress and communist reaction in the meantime, especially to US naval patrols."¹

The Pentagon report drew the conclusion, on the strength of the discussions at the White House on September 7, 1964, that in view of the weakness of the Khanh regime, the strategy of provocations in the form of an air war against the DRV was unacceptable.

There is an entry in the Pentagon papers made by one of the participants in the September 7 meeting which says that the President put this question: "Can we really strengthen the GVN?" Elsewhere we find McNamara's answer. He urged that "the way be kept open for stronger actions even if the GVN did not improve."

On September 10, therefore, the President ordered a number of "interim measures" in National Security Action Memorandum 314, which included resumption of US naval patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin, and a build-up of 34-A commando operations with inclusion of South-Vietnamese groups.

The Pentagon report explained this as follows:

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

"It was believed (at the Johnson meeting—Ed.) that this step would be useful in establishing a climate of opinion more receptive to expanded (air) operations against North Vietnam when they became necessary."

The President also ordered that the USA should be prepared to launch punitive operations—"reprisal air strikes like those during the Tonkin Gulf incident as appropriate against the DRV in the event of any attack on US units."¹

This made Washington's tactics quite clear: deliberate provocations, including commando raids, while presenting the DRV's legitimate measures of self-defence and protection of its sovereignty as being attacks against US military units allegedly giving the US Government the right to take "retaliatory measures." Very soon this policy of blackmail was put into effect.

Two days after Johnson's order (September 12) two US destroyers, the *Morton* and the *Edwards*, resumed their patrols of the Gulf of Tonkin, thereby provoking what the US press called the "third Tonkin incident," which was, to be more exact, a fresh dangerous act of aggression.

On October 4, 1964, Johnson issued a secret order to resume commando raids on coastal installations in the DRV, each such operation being "approved in advance" by Deputy Secretary of Defence Cyrus R. Vance for Secretary McNamara, Llewellyn A. Thompson, Acting Deputy Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, for Secretary Rusk, and McGeorge Bundy at the White House for the President.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

At the same time, the US air operations in Laos were stepped up. "A Laotian cease-fire was not compatible with current perceptions of US interest."

The analysis in *The New York Times* brings out what the President feared in this respect. "The Administration also believed that even the convening of a conference on Laos might create the impression in Saigon that Washington was going to seek a negotiated withdrawal from South Vietnam and set off a political collapse there and the emergence of a neutralist coalition regime that would ask the United States to leave."¹

Secret raids were being carried out against Laos by planes of the US Air Force and the Navy, under the code name of Yankee Team. The Pentagon papers make it clear that a decision was taken at the time to have Saigon troops, accompanied by US advisers, "also make ground forays into Laos up to a depth of 20 kilometres."²

On October 6, the State Department cabled the US Embassy in Vientiane (with a copy to the Commander of the US Armed Forces in the Pacific), virtually ordering extensive air strikes against a part of the territory of Laos "as soon as possible." This is evidence that the overt intervention in Laos, launched by the Nixon Administration in 1970, had its roots in 1964, when the Democrats were in office.

The USA was suffering one defeat after another in its military gamble in South Vietnam, and the Pentagon was working overtime to

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

² Ibid.

extend military operations to the neighbouring countries, including Laos. At the same time, US diplomacy was trying hard to involve as many of its aggressive-bloc allies in the gamble as possible. This was the outline of a dangerous scheme to fan the flames of war throughout the entire Indochina Peninsula.

The US policy, which trampled on the sovereign rights of states and grossly violated international agreements and the principles of the UN Charter, aroused wrath and indignation all over the world.

On November 18, 1964, the DRV Foreign Ministry said that a group of US war planes—F-100s and T-28s—again invaded the air space of the DRV from the direction of Laos. Units of the Vietnamese People's Army, in defence of their territory, shot down three and damaged two US military planes.

The Soviet Government issued a resolute condemnation of the piratical raids on the territory of the DRV and stressed that these acts had been planned in advance for the express purpose of extending the military operations on the Indochina Peninsula. An official TASS statement on November 27 said: "Those who are hatching adventurist plans on the Indochina Peninsula must realise that the Soviet Union cannot remain indifferent to the fate of a fraternal socialist country and is prepared to give it the necessary assistance."

This was a weighty warning which had to be reckoned with by those who were planning Washington's risky policy. This warning was backed up by effective fraternal assistance to a country which had fallen victim to aggression.

The powerful political campaign in defence of the Vietnamese people which swept across the world, and the numerous exposures of the US aggression forced the White House hastily to work out fresh propaganda measures in an effort to whitewash the policy of the Johnson Administration.

One document, written by Assistant Secretary of State, William Bundy, is characteristic in this respect. It is dated November 5, 1964, and carries this rather cynical caption: "Conditions for Action and Key Actions Surrounding Any Decision." It says: "The President is clearly thinking in terms of maximum use of a Gulf of Tonkin rationale, either for an action that would show toughness and hold the line till we can decide the big issue, or as a basis for starting a clear course of action under the broad options.

"2. Congress must be consulted before any major action, perhaps only by notification if we do a reprisal against another Bien Hoa, but preferably by careful talks with such key leaders as Mansfield, Dirksen, the Speaker, Albert, Halleck, Fulbright, Hickenlooper, Morgan, Mrs. Bolton, Russell, Saltonstall, Rivers, (Vinson?), Arends, Ford, etc. He probably should wait till his mind is moving clearly in one direction before such a consultation, which would point to some time next week. Query if it should be combined with other topics (budget?) to lessen the heat.

"3. We probably do not need additional Congressional authority, even if we decide on very strong action. A session of this rump Congress might well be the scene of a messy Republican effort. . .

"5. A Presidential statement with the rationale

for action is high on any check list. An intervening fairly strong Presidential noise to prepare a climate for an action statement is probably indicated and would be important in any event to counter any SVN fears of a softening in our policy. We should decide the latter today too if possible. . .

"7. Our international soundings appear to divide as follows:

"a) We should probably consult with the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and possibly Thailand before we reach a decision. We would hope for firm moral support from the UK and for participation in at least token form from the others.

"b) SEATO as a body should be consulted concurrently with stronger action. We should consult the Philippines a day or so before such action but not necessarily before we have made up our minds.

"c) The NATO Council should be notified on the Cuban model, i. e., concurrently, by a distinguished representative.

"d) For negative reasons, France probably deserves VIP treatment also.

"e) In the UN, we must be ready with an immediate affirmative presentation of our rationale to proceed concurrently either with a single reprisal action or with the initiation of a broader course of action.

"f) World-wide, we should select reasonably friendly chiefs of state for special treatment seeking their sympathy and support, and should arm all our representatives with the rationale and defence of our action whether individual reprisal or broader.

"8. USIA must be brought into the planning

process not later than early next week, so that it is getting the right kind of materials ready for all our information media, on a contingency basis. The same (word illegible) true of CIA's outlets." ¹

The new year was at hand, and the vast majority of men looked to 1965 with hopes of peace and happiness. But the new year stirred some very different emotions among the men in the Pentagon and Washington politicians. They hankered for new provocations and, as one of their documents said, expected the new year to provide the opportunity for launching overt military operations against North Vietnam.

The projected air war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was code-named Operation Rolling Thunder. The Pentagon papers make it clear that a memorandum from President Johnson's special assistant for national security, McGeorge Bundy, greatly influenced President Johnson's decision to carry out these aggressive operations. Returning from Saigon "on the President's personal Boeing 707, Air Force One," Bundy drafted a letter to the President under the impression of the vigorous and large-scale action by the patriotic forces of South Vietnam. He wrote that "the political values of reprisal require a continuous operation... Episodic responses geared on a one-for-one basis to 'spectacular' outrages would lack the persuasive force of sustained pressure." ²

Even a Pentagon specialist said that Bundy's memorandum of February 7, 1965, was a "unique

articulation of a rationale for the Rolling Thunder policy."

In summary conclusions to his memorandum, Bundy wrote: "Once such a policy is put in force we shall be able to speak in Vietnam on many topics and in many ways, with growing force and effectiveness."

These words of Bundy's are shot through with the nostalgia the US militarists have felt all along for Dulles's "positions of strength" policy. The swift strike by the patriotic forces against the US base at Pleiku on February 7, when Bundy and McNaughton were in Saigon, appears to have rocked the cock-sure militarists.

On February 8, 1965, the US bomber force carried out another piratical raid on the territory of the DRV. While issuing the order for this raid, the White House presented it to the public as a "separate retaliatory measure;" actually, "the drastic US action, long on the military planners' drawing boards under the operational code name Flaming Dart, precipitated a rapidly moving sequence of events..." ¹

On February 13, Johnson cabled Ambassador Taylor his decision to carry out Operation Rolling Thunder. His message said: "Our current expectation is that these attacks might come about once or twice a week and involve two or three targets on each day of operation." ²

In that period, the US State Department cabled London and eight US Embassies in the Far East instructing them to "inform head of

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

² *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

² *Ibid.*

government or state (as appropriate) of above in strictest confidence and report reactions."¹

The President ordered the first of the approved large raids to be staged on February 20. But, says *The New York Times*, five hours after the State Department transmitted this order to the men responsible in Saigon, another coup was staged against General Khanh, and the situation became more complicated. Ambassador Taylor, who was delighted at President Johnson's order to start air operations, was forced to request permission to cancel the air raids set for February 20. Somehow the Americans managed to "calm down" the squabbling puppets.

However, the coup in Saigon was not the main reason for Johnson's decision to postpone the air strikes against North Vietnam.

The Pentagon papers contain a number of references showing that the Johnson Administration, in planning its escalation of the war in Vietnam, was keeping a close watch on the reaction in other countries, the Soviet Union above all. Special attention was being given to a study of the splitting activity of the Peking leadership, which was undermining the united front of the socialist countries' struggle in this area. Above we quoted Johnson's cable to Lodge on March 20, 1964, which said that Washington expected a sharp aggravation of Sino-Soviet relations, and "action against the North would be more practicable after than before a showdown."

The Soviet Union's firm stand over the imperialist moves, and the fraternal assistance to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the whole

Vietnamese people constituted great support in its struggle. Relying on the Soviet Union's moral support and substantial material and military assistance, the Vietnamese people stoutly resisted the aggressor, displaying remarkable steadfastness and heroism.

In early February 1965, as the US politicians and generals were framing their plans for extending the US aggression, a Soviet Government delegation arrived in Hanoi. All-round talks were held, and the situation which had taken shape as a result of the ceaseless provocations and acts of overt aggression on the part of the USA was examined.

In a joint statement, signed on February 10, 1965, by Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, A. N. Kosygin, and Prime Minister of the DRV Government, Pham Van Dong, the USSR Government reaffirmed that "abiding by the principles of socialist internationalism, it will not remain indifferent to ensuring the security of a fraternal socialist country, and will give the DRV the necessary assistance and support. The governments of the two countries have reached an appropriate understanding on the measures to be taken for the purpose of strengthening the DRV's defence capability, and have agreed to hold regular consultations on these matters."

This understanding is being implemented throughout the whole period of the Vietnamese people's heroic struggle against the aggressor. As for effectiveness of Soviet assistance, the Pentagon papers show that Washington had no illusions on this score.

Still, the militaristic fever in the White House and the Pentagon prevailed over common sense.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

Operation Rolling Thunder, repeatedly put off, was started on March 2, 1965, when dozens of US jet planes struck at several targets in the DRV. On March 9, the White House took another monstrous decision: President Johnson gave the US Air Force permission to use napalm to destroy non-military targets—villages and towns—on the territory of the DRV. The heaviest bombings in the air war were carried out on March 14 and 15. The Pentagon papers say that over 100 US planes took part. Subsequently, the raids were to be extended, using heavy B-52 bombers. Johnson and McNamara personally selected the targets for these bombings.

Ambassador Taylor demanded that the White House should draw up a more dynamic timetable for these strikes, a program for steadily extending the action to the North. He cabled the President as follows: "It appears to me evident that to date DRV leaders believe air strikes at present levels on their territory are meaningless and that we (the USA-Ed.) are more susceptible to international pressure for negotiations than they are."¹

And so, the massive bombings of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam were started on March 2, 1965.

The Johnson Administration expected that the systematic air attacks on DRV territory would break the Vietnamese people's will to resist the US aggression. An important aspect of this operation was the hoped-for psychological effect on the puppet army of South Vietnam, its generals above all, for the Americans realised that they

were unable to withstand the national-liberation movement in the country. The squabbles in the Saigon ruling clique are well illustrated by one document in the Pentagon "Vietnam Archives." It is a radiogram sent from Saigon to the US State Department on December 24, 1964 about a meeting Ambassador Taylor and his Deputy, Alexis Johnson, had with those who now constitute South Vietnam's ruling clique (Generals Nguyen Cao Ky, Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Chanh Thi).

This verbatim report is here quoted in part.

"...TAYLOR: Do all of you understand English? (Vietnamese officers indicated they did, although the understanding of General Thi was known to be weak.) I told you all clearly at General Westmoreland's dinner we Americans were tired of coups. Apparently I wasted my words. Maybe this is because something is wrong with my French because you evidently didn't understand. I made it clear that all the military plans which I know you would like to carry out are dependent on governmental stability. Now you have made a real mess. We cannot carry you forever if you do things like this. Who speaks for this group: Do you have a spokesman?

"GENERAL KY: I am not the spokesman for the group but I do speak English. I will explain why the Armed Forces took this action last night.

"We understand English very well. We are aware of our responsibilities... We know you want stability, but you cannot have stability until you have unity... But still there are rumors of coups and doubts among groups. We think these rumors come from the HNC, not as an organisa-

¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

tion but from some of its members. Both military and civilian leaders regard the presence of these people in the HNC as divisive of the Armed Forces due to their influence.

"Recently the Prime Minister showed us a letter he had received from the Chairman of the HNC. This letter told the Prime Minister to beware of the military, and said that maybe the military would want to come back to power. Also the HNC illegally sought to block the retirement of the generals that the Armed Forces Council unanimously recommended be retired in order to improve unity in the Armed Forces.

"GENERAL THIEU: The HNC cannot be bosses because of the Constitution. Its members must prove that they want to fight.

"GENERAL KY: It looks as though the HNC does not want unity. It does not want to fight the Communists.

"It has been rumored that our action of last night was an intrigue of Khanh against Minh, who must be retired. Why do we seek to retire these generals? Because they had their chance and did badly...

"Yesterday we met, twenty of us, from 1430 to 2030. We reached agreement that we must take some action. We decided to arrest the bad members of the HNC, bad politicians, bad student leaders, and the leaders of the Committee of National Salvation, which is a communist organization...

"AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: ...Now I would like to talk to you about the consequences of what you have done...

Who commands the Armed Forces? General Khanh?

"GENERAL THIEU: Yes, sir...

"AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: You have destroyed the Charter. The Chief of State will still have to prepare for elections. Nobody believes that the Chief of State has either the power or the ability to do this without the HNC or some other advisory body. If I were the Prime Minister, I would simply overlook the destruction of the HNC. But we are preserving the HNC itself. You need a legislative branch and you need this particular step in the formation of a government with National Assembly...

"GENERAL THIEU: After all, we did not arrest all the members of the HNC. Of nine members we detained only five. These people are not under arrest. They are simply under controlled residence...

"AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: Our problem now, gentlemen, is to organise our work for the rest of the day. For one thing, the government will have to issue a communique.

"GENERAL THIEU: We will still have a press conference this afternoon but only to say why we acted as we did...

"AMBASSADOR TAYLOR: ...You people have broken a lot of dishes and now we have to see how we can straighten out this mess."¹

This conversation shows that the military rulers of Saigon, who are hated by the people, were taken severely to task.

On the other hand, the Pentagon secret papers contain an admission of the strength and unity of the patriotic South Vietnam National Liberation Front and the high state of organisa-

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

tion and courage of the people in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, who boldly faced the massive raids by US bombers. Virtually every part of Vietnamese soil was bombed: peaceful towns, ports, ships carrying cargoes of food, ships at their moorings, groups of fishing junks, factories and workshops. However, the US aggressors were unable to break the Vietnamese people's spirit and courage. The Pentagon report says that the bombings appear to have merely stiffened their determination.

STAGE SIX

ESCALATION OF MILITARY ACTION ON THE GROUND

WORDS

Q. Mr. President, General Taylor said yesterday he would be bringing you some definitive proposals (on Vietnam) today. Do you envision anything very dramatic in those proposals?

A. ...I know of no far-reaching strategy that is being suggested or promulgated...

*President Johnson's
news conference,
April 1,
1965*

DEEDS

The President approved an 18-20,000 man increase in US military support forces and ... approved the change of mission for all Marine Battalions to permit their more active use...

*National Security
Action
Memorandum 328,
April 6,
1965*

In early October 1966, when President Johnson was paying an official visit to the UN Secretary General at the UN Headquarters in New York, U Thant recalled the following episode which had occurred in the autumn of 1964. At the time, U Thant called on President Johnson at the White

House and accepted his assurances that „the United States had no desire to extend the war or to bring about the destruction of North Vietnam,” and that President Johnson desired “to begin meaningful negotiations as quickly as possible.” Three weeks later, U Thant received a reply to his message to President Ho Chi Minh of the DRV expressing a positive attitude to the proposal for negotiations. U Thant at once notified the then US Ambassador to the UN, Adlai Stevenson. He had to wait for Washington’s reply for over four months. Finally, in late January 1965, Stevenson informed U Thant that “the State Department was reluctant to enter into negotiations at that time, because it feared the talks might result in the collapse of the South-Vietnamese Government.” A few days later, in early February 1965, the USA made fresh air strikes against the DRV, and these soon became systematic.

Having heard U Thant’s account, President Johnson expressed surprise.¹ He turned to Rusk and asked him whether he knew anything about this. Rusk replied that Stevenson had not been authorised to reject the negotiations, but he did not say whether Stevenson had been authorised to accept them. Nor did he say why the US State Department had failed to make a positive response to the UN initiative regarding negotiations.

What were the motives behind these clumsy moves by US diplomacy, which made the White House incumbent look like a man whose right hand did not know what his left hand was do-

¹ This episode is here reproduced as told by Norman Cousins, US publisher and public figure, in an article carried by *Look* magazine on July 29, 1969, p. 45.

ing? The publication of the Pentagon papers makes it quite clear why the architects of US policy needed to stage such an unseemly show on the eve of 1965. At the time, they were fully engrossed with their plans to escalate the war. The spring of 1965 was to be the starting point of a large-scale ground war in Vietnam, with the involvement of regular US military units.

At the time, the Pentagon report says, Rusk’s lack of interest in negotiations with Hanoi fully accorded with the views held by the President’s chief aides, who believed that for the time being the way to negotiations was closed. Why? The answer is also provided by the Pentagon papers: the South Vietnam Government was seen to be literally falling apart. The Pentagon strategists held that so long as US military pressure on the DRV failed to tilt the balance in favour of the USA, it was futile to talk of negotiation. That is exactly what they wrote for their own circle, while telling the public something quite different. They insisted that the DRV Government was allegedly taking an intractable attitude, etc.

By then, the Pentagon report says, President Johnson had received from his military leaders a series of recommendations which boiled down to the idea that it was hardly possible for the situation inside South Vietnam to be “bottomed out (a) without extreme measures against the DRV and/or (b) without deployment of large numbers of US (and other) combat troops inside SVN.”¹ The South Vietnam puppet army was falling apart under the blows of the patriotic forces, and the resistance to the US aggression was gaining in

¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

strength. From the outset, the piratical bombings of North Vietnam showed the interventionists' failure to break the fighting spirit of a people which had risen in defence of its freedom and independence.

On his desk, President Johnson had reports from the US generals in South Vietnam, repeating their demands for committing regular US Army units. Simultaneously with the start of regular air raids on the DRV, that is, in early March 1965, says the Pentagon report, the US leadership took the crucial decision "to put the two Marine battalions already in South Vietnam on the offensive. The 3,500 marines had landed at Danang on March 8—bringing the total United States force in South Vietnam to 27,000." ¹

These measures were being presented as "restricted" and as designed to ensure the "static defence of the Danang airfield," thereby "blurring the shift from defensive to offensive action on the ground during the spring and summer of 1965."

The fact is that a day before the marines landed at Danang, State Secretary Rusk insisted on television that the task was exclusively to ensure the security of the air base and not to destroy the Viet Cong. Later on this hypocritical reference by the aggressor to the need to assure the security of US military personnel was repeatedly used by the architects of escalation for more and more arbitrary military acts in Vietnam, and intervention in Cambodia and Laos.

The Pentagon secret report speaks of a marathon campaign "to inform the public" (to "misin-

form" the public would be a much apter term in this case—*Ed.*), which Secretary of State Rusk mounted at the end of February and in early March 1965. The US Administration was preparing a propaganda smoke screen for the imminent decisions on extensive ground operations involving more and more US Army units.

On March 26, 1965, General Westmoreland, the US Commander in Saigon, completed his voluminous report on the situation in South Vietnam, which was submitted to the White House. It contained a final formulation of the conclusion in favour of carrying on an extensive ground war in South Vietnam with the involvement of US and other SEATO forces. Westmoreland demanded reinforcements amounting to two US divisions. Together with the US forces already in South Vietnam the interventionist army was to be increased to 70,000 men.

The extensive use of US forces in South Vietnam was finally decided upon at a White House conference on April 1 and 2, 1965. The main meaning of President Johnson's decision was that henceforth US troops were to take part in offensive military operations.

This meant a sharp extension of the US aggression in Vietnam.

National Security Action Memorandum No. 328, drawn up on April 6 in pursuance of the President's directives, said:

"5. The President approved an 18-20,000 man increase in US military support forces to fill out existing units and supply needed logistic personnel.

"6. The President approved the deployment of two additional Marine Battalions and one Marine

¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

Air Squadron and associated headquarters and support elements.

"7. The President approved a *change of mission for all Marine Battalions deployed to Vietnam to permit their more active use under conditions to be established and approved by the Secretary of Defence in consultation with the Secretary of State.*¹ (Emphasis added-Ed.)

Meanwhile, here is what President Johnson said on the eve of these decisions in reply to questions from pressmen hinting at "new dramatic developments" in the war: "I know of no far-reaching strategy that is being suggested or promulgated."

The Pentagon report admitted that "the change in ground rules... posed serious public-information and stage-managing problems for the President."

Although the decision on the participation of US ground forces in offensive counter-insurgency operations was a serious and far-reaching change of policy, President Johnson took great care that this step was not widely publicised.

The Pentagon report also stressed that the problem of escalating the ground war pushed into the background all the other Vietnam problems then under consideration. This produced something like a mutual guarantee arrangement between the accomplices in the fresh military venture. They ceased heeding the voice of reason and the warning notes sounded, in particular, in statements by the then Deputy Secretary of State, George Ball, and reports from US Ambassador in Saigon, General Taylor. The organisers of the escalation ap-

peared to be egging each other on in mounting the stages of the war.

A meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff held in Honolulu from April 10 to 12, 1965, recommended a redeployment of the 173rd Airborne Brigade in the Bienhoa-Vungtau area, a decision so hastily taken that, if we are to believe the analysts of the Pentagon papers, it astounded even Ambassador Taylor. But Taylor received a cablegram from McNaughton which said: "Highest authority (the President) believes the situation in South Vietnam has been deteriorating and that, in addition to actions against the North, something new must be added in the South to achieve victory." It then went on to list seven proposed measures, including some which provided for the involvement of air force and civilian personnel for conducting the air war and redeploying the 173rd Airborne Brigade in the Bienhoa-Vungtau area, where according to General Westmoreland's plans it was to act "as a security force for our installations and also to participate in counter-insurgency combat operations."¹

Of course, Taylor was not at all worried about the fact that the aggression was being extended, but he was irritated at not having been informed in advance of the White House decision.

Taylor's cynical reply to McNaughton indicates the ethical standards of this US general turned diplomatist: "Mac, can't we be better protected from our friends? I know that everyone wants to help, but there's such a thing as killing with kindness."²

¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

² *Ibid.*

One analyst of the Pentagon papers says: "A high-level meeting began in Honolulu on April 20 to 'sanctify' and 'structure' an expanded enclave strategy." This meeting was attended by Secretary of Defence McNamara, Assistant Secretary of State for Far-Eastern Affairs, William Bundy, Assistant Secretary of Defence, McNaughton, Ambassador Taylor, Admiral Sharp, General Wheeler, and General Westmoreland.

This meeting marked the final step that was at once followed by resolute measures, which Westmoreland for his part approved, says the report. "Taylor was not opposed to the US build-up *per se*, but rather was concerned to move slowly with combat troop deployments."

A record of the April 20 meeting, taken by McNaughton, arrived at the following conclusion:

"The current lull in Viet Cong activity was merely the quiet before a storm. The victory strategy was to break the will of the DRV/VC by denying them victory.

"To accomplish the 'victory strategy' described above, the conferees agreed that US ground forces should be increased from 4 to 13 maneuver battalions and to 82,000 men."¹

But while the US strategists were mulling things over, the South Vietnam patriots took vigorous combat action which had a sobering effect on those who were going uninvited into war-torn Vietnam.

On May 11, the Pentagon papers say, "when the Viet Cong attacked Songbe, the capital of Phuoclog Province, using more than a regiment of troops, the storm broke in earnest. The enemy

overran the town and the American advisers' compound, causing heavy casualties. After holding the town for a day, the Viet Cong withdrew.

"Later in May, in Quangngai Province in the northern part of South Vietnam, a battalion of government troops—the Army of the Republic of Vietnam—was ambushed and overrun near Bagia, west of Quangngai. Reinforcements were also ambushed.

"The battle dragged on for several days and ended in total defeat for the ARVN. Two battalions were completely decimated."

Such was the patriots' response.

By mid-June 1965, the report says, "the Viet Cong offensive was in full stride." The patriots "systematically forced the GVN to yield what little control it still exercised in rural areas outside the Mekong Delta.

"On June 7, after the attack on Bagia, General Westmoreland sent a long message on the military situation and his needs to the Pacific Commander for relay to the Joint Chiefs.

"In pressing their campaign," the general said, "the Viet Cong are capable of mounting regimental-size operation in all four ARVN corps areas, and at least battalion-sized attack in virtually all provinces. . . ARVN forces on the other hand are already experiencing difficulty in coping with this increased VC capability. Desertion rates are inordinately high. Battle losses have been higher than expected; in fact, four ARVN battalions have been rendered ineffective by VC action in the I and II Corps zones. . . Thus, the GVN/VC force ratios upon which we based our estimate of the situation in March have taken an adverse trend. You will recall that I recommended the deployment of a

¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

US division in II Corps to cover the period of the RVNAF build-up and to weight the force ratios in that important area. We assumed at that time that the ARVN battalions would be brought to full strength by now and that the force build-up would proceed on schedule. Neither of these assumptions have materialized... In order to cope with the situation outlined above, I see no course of action open to us except to reinforce our efforts in SVN with additional US or third country forces as rapidly as is practical during the critical weeks ahead."¹

General Westmoreland asked President Johnson to increase the total numerical strength of the US forces in Vietnam to 44 battalions, or 200,000 men.

This demand marked a new stage in the escalation, implying not merely an involvement of regular US Army units in ground operations in Vietnam, but the start of a big land war in Asia with the use of strategic forces of the US Army.

According to the Pentagon report, President Johnson complied with Westmoreland's demand swiftly and in an atmosphere of crisis (produced by US aggressive policy—*Ed.*). Again, as the report says, he concealed his decision from the public. The doubts which some US political leaders expressed were essentially ignored because the man in the White House was prepared to hear only opinion which endorsed his idea of a victorious war. The Pentagon report stresses that "there is no question that the key figure in the early 1965 build-up was the President." No wonder that President Johnson now (in June 1965)

¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

lent an ear to General Westmoreland's opinion concerning the switch to a general ground war.¹

Meanwhile, not all was going smoothly with Operation Deception. In the spring of 1965, US opinion was agitated by reports that the Administration had not told the people about a decision taken in March 1965 to send the US marines into action. The report says: "The Commandant of the Marine Corps raised the tempo of speculation by saying to the press during an inspection trip to Vietnam in April that the marines were not in Vietnam to 'sit on their dittyboxes'—and they were there to 'kill Viet Cong.'"

"The long official silence between the sanction for US offensive operations contained in NSAM 328 and the final approval (in negotiations with Saigon) of the conditions under which US troops could be committed was not without cost," the study asserts. "The President had admonished each of the NSC members not to allow release of provisions of the NSAM, but the unduly long interregnum inevitably led to leaks." In addition, the marines had 200 casualties, including 18 killed, as they went about tidying up their newly assigned area in April and May.

World opinion was outraged by the statement issued on June 8, by Robert McCloskey, Department of State Press officer, that US troops would give Vietnamese units combat support whenever necessary. Washington's secret machinations were coming to light.

"The White House was hoisted by its own petard. In an attempt to quell the outcry, a statement was issued on the 9th of June which, because

¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

of its ambiguity, only served to exacerbate the situation and to widen what was being described as 'the credibility gap'. The White House statement said: "There has been no change in the mission of United States ground combat units in Vietnam in recent days or weeks. The President has issued no order of any kind in this regard to General Westmoreland recently or at any other time. The primary mission of these troops is to secure and safeguard important military installations like the air base at Danang. They have the associated mission of . . . patrolling and securing actions in and near the areas thus safeguarded."

Consequently, US policy leaders were repeating the same false version Secretary of State Rusk had used as a cover in March of that year. While concealing the truth about the decision taken three months earlier, they were preparing directives in pursuance of this very decision, new directives concerning a large-scale land war.

Although the term "credibility gap" was becoming a part of the US political lexicon, Americans were as yet unaware of the real scale of the fraud.

On June 26, the White House gave General Westmoreland new powers for extensive combat operations by US troops on the territory of South Vietnam since this was "necessary to strengthen the relative position to GVN forces."

On May 4, 1965, the President asked the Congress for a \$700-million supplemental appropriation "to meet mounting military requirements in Vietnam." In a message he said: "Nor can I guarantee this will be the last request. If our need expands I will turn again to the Congress. For we will do whatever must be done to insure the safety of South Vietnam from aggression."

Less than three months later (July 28), Johnson held a press conference at which he issued a statement concerning the growing numerical strength of the US forces in Vietnam.

"I have asked the commanding general, General Westmoreland, what more he needs to meet this mounting aggression. He has told me. We will meet his needs.

"I have today ordered to Vietnam the Airmobile Division and certain other forces which will raise our fighting strength from 75,000 to 125,000 men almost immediately. Additional forces will be needed later, and they will be sent as requested."¹

It was no longer possible to keep secret the scale on which US troops were being sent to Vietnam, but the Administration continued to use the same cover.

At the same press conference on July 28, President Johnson was asked whether the fact that he was sending additional forces to Vietnam implied any "change in the existing policy of relying mainly on the South Vietnamese (puppets-Ed.) to carry out offensive operations and using American forces to guard installations and to act as emergency back-up."

His reply was as short as it was insincere: "It does not imply any change in policy whatever."

Here is what the analysts of the Pentagon secret report believed this actually meant: the mid-June decision to assign 44 battalions for combat operations in South Vietnam was seen as something of a turning point signifying involvement in a land war in Asia. . . "The acceptance of the

¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

search-and-destroy strategy... left the US commitment to Vietnam open-ended. The implications in terms of manpower and money are inescapable."¹

With the 44 battalions, the US troops in Vietnam now totalled 184,000.

General Westmoreland reported from Saigon that if the USA wished to pre-empt the enemy initiative, supplemental forces would be required in the future as well. This was a straightforward demand for the smooth flow of cannon fodder.

In November 1965, Westmoreland asked for another 154,000 men. On December 16, he demanded that the numerical strength of his troops be raised to 443,000 men.²

Here are the dry statistical figures: by the end of 1965, the strength of US forces in South Vietnam reached 200,000 officers and men.

In October 1967, the figure had gone up to more than 525,000.

In early 1966, the dean of US columnists, Walter Lippmann, was saying that the USA had made an "historical blunder" by becoming involved in a big land war in Asia, and recalled the warning issued by General McArthur, Commander of the US forces in the Far East during the Second World War and the US aggression in Korea, that any President that would send US troops to wage a land war in Asia should "have his brain examined."³

Meanwhile, General Westmoreland continued to raise the stakes in the "dirty war." In February 1968, he declared that, in order to win, the White

¹ *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

² *Ibid*, July 2, 1971.

³ *Newsweek*, March 14, 1966.

House would have to send him another 200,000 men over and above the 525,000-strong army he already had at his disposal.

On February 12, former Vice-President Nixon told a Republican Party caucus that the USA must win at any cost. At the same time, the 1971 publications show that as early as 1967 Defence Secretary McNamara was disappointed with the way the war was running and had secretly informed President Johnson about his doubts that victory could be gained through escalation. These documents also show that "the President adopted a course that differed markedly from the strategy of deescalation that Secretary McNamara had urged on him."¹

Very soon Clifford took over as Secretary of Defence, but official Washington continued to conceal from the people the true picture of the war crimes, which were revealed only in part following the exposure of the bloody massacre of civilians at the Vietnamese village of Song My.

The war continued to escalate just as the propaganda machine went on churning out its lies.

One thing was lacking—victory. The victory that, according to the Pentagon report, General Westmoreland had promised to win "before the end of 1967." The victory for whose sake the Republican Nixon had urged as early as April 16, 1954, the risk of sending in the US armed forces. For the 525,000 American soldiers, sent to Vietnam by the Democrat Johnson, the venture did not bring any laurels but the ignominy of murder. For tens of thousands of American families it did not mean the fanfare of victory but the strains of funeral marches.

¹ *The New York Times*, July 3, 1971.

From the very start of the Pentagon escalation of the big land war the DRV Government and the NLF leadership exposed to the world every fresh step in the criminal aggression. A statement issued by the DRV Foreign Ministry on June 16, 1966, said: "The dispatch of military reinforcements (USA) does not in any way testify to strength; on the contrary, it shows that the US imperialists are inextricably bogged down in South Vietnam. In view of the heavy military and political defeats of the United States and their agents in South Vietnam any further increase in the numerical strength of the aggressive armed forces creates for the United States nothing but fresh difficulties and complications... The US Government's decision to send in more troops is a brazen challenge to the Vietnamese, American and all the peace-loving peoples of the world, and is a gross violation of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam."

The 23rd Congress of the CPSU held in the spring of 1966, urged all men of good will to take a more vigorous stand against the aggressive actions of US imperialism. The statement issued by the Congress concerning the US aggression in Vietnam stressed:

"Trampling upon the elementary standards of international law, the US militarists are using most savage and inhuman means of warfare. US planes raid North-Vietnamese towns and villages, destroying factories, dwellings, schools and hospitals and sowing death among the civilian population. Nearly a quarter of a million US troops are taking part in the criminal war... the United States has covered itself with shame which it will never be able to live down."

STAGE SEVEN

"PAUSES" IN THE BOMBINGS OF THE DRV

ON THE STAGE

We must employ every opportunity to arrive at a peaceful settlement in Vietnam.

*An official statement
of Defence Secretary
R. McNamara made
on November 16,
1965 (retranslated
from Russian)*

BEHIND THE SCENES

It is my belief that there should be a three-or four-week pause in the program of bombing the North before we either greatly increase our troop deployments to VN or intensify our strikes against the North.

*A Memorandum
for President L. Johnson
from Secretary
McNamara,
November 30,
1965*

Important propaganda manoeuvring in backing up the US aggression in Vietnam were the "pauses" in the bombings of the DRV from 1965 to 1968, which went hand in hand with numerous calls for peace (on US terms, of course), statements about "Hanoi's intransigence," etc. The Pentagon secret papers give an idea of what lay

behind these "pauses," and how they were connected with the propaganda campaigns.

The first "pause" was called on May 12, 1965.

It may be called a "pause" only in relative terms, because sporadic raids on the DRV continued, and the bombings of the liberated areas of South Vietnam were even intensified. Nevertheless, there was much noise over the "suspension" of the bombings of the DRV, which continued until May 18, when the USA resumed its massive raids on the DRV. State Department Press Officer Robert McCloskey said the official reason was the absence of any response on the part of the DRV, meaning a response to the "brazen demand that the South-Vietnamese people end their just struggle as a condition for the US giving up bombing and shelling North Vietnam," as the DRV Foreign Ministry stressed in a statement on May 18, 1965. From then on, Washington's presentation of absurd demands became a component part of the propaganda campaigns over the bombing "pauses."

Washington propaganda made the greatest to-do over the second and longest (37-day) "pause"—from December 24, 1965 to January 31, 1966. This "pause" was caused by the need somehow to pacify world and US opinion, angrily protesting against the continued barbarous US aggression in Indochina. It was during this "pause," on January 7, 1966, that the US State Department issued its "fourteen points" which subsequently became the basis for the Johnson Administration's official program for imposing on the people of Vietnam its own solution of the Vietnam problem. It was in this period that prominent US leaders toured a number of capitals actively proclaiming

Washington's "peaceableness." Then, on January 31, 1966, the "pause" was suddenly broken, despite countless demands at home and in the allied countries that it be prolonged.

The world was swept by a tide of indignation over the resumption of the bombings of the DRV. A statement issued by the Soviet Government in that period stressed:

"On January 31, the US Air Force resumed its barbarous bombings of the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Bombs had been dropped on the towns of Dong Hoi and Vinh, and on other populated localities.

"The resumption of US air raids on the towns and villages of North Vietnam, together with the spread of large-scale military operations in South Vietnam has further aggravated the international situation.

"The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, seeking to end the war in Vietnam, recently demonstrated its readiness to secure a just settlement of the Vietnam problem, in the interests of the people of Vietnam. In late January, President Ho Chi Minh of the DRV sent the heads of state and governments of many countries of the world a message stating that if the US Government really wanted a peaceful settlement it must recognise the four-point stand of the DRV Government¹ and confirm this with concrete steps; it must stop, for good and without any conditions, its bombings and all other military acts against

¹ That is, above all, to recognise the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people: the right to peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, and to pull out all US troops from South Vietnam.

the DRV. That is the only way to provide for a political settlement of the Vietnam issue.

"The resumption of US air raids on the territory of the DRV within two days after the fresh initiative by the head of this state is an indication that the USA does not in fact want to end the war in Vietnam, and that its so-called "peace initiative" was a diplomatic move designed to distract world opinion and to pave the way for a further extension of the aggression against the Vietnamese people.

"In effect, if the USA wanted peace, as it has been saying all along, was the resumption of the bombings the way to create an atmosphere favouring a political settlement in Vietnam? Whatever the US Government's view of the DRV stand, there is no justification for the fresh acts of aggression trampling on the principles of international law and the elementary rules of morality."¹

Finally, another bombing "pause" was called by Washington in mid-February 1967, and it, too, was staged in accordance with the well-rehearsed scenario and was accompanied by a spate of statements about the US Government's readiness for "peace" and "a settlement," provided the people of South Vietnam wound up their liberation struggle. Once again, the massive bombings of the DRV were soon resumed.

A statement issued by the DRV Foreign Ministry concerning this "pause" said that the USA had confronted the Vietnamese people with a brazen ultimatum demanding that it should consent to negotiations on US terms. But the US aggressors have badly miscalculated. The statement stressed that this "pause" was a "fraudulent

¹ *Pravda*, Feb. 1, 1966.

farce staged by the USA for the purpose of further misleading world public opinion."

Consequently, the US ruling circles' manipulation of "pauses" and "temporary suspensions of the bombings" had long since been exposed in the eyes of the peoples of the world. Nevertheless, a section of the American people regarded these pauses as evidence (however forced) that the US Administration was seeking a way out of the impasse in which it found itself in Vietnam. Some people may have assumed that, all things considered, the suspension of the bombings, however short-lived, was better than their continuation, and were not prepared to accept the charges made by the world public against Washington.

The Pentagon's secret papers, which have now been published, show that all these charges were well-grounded. Summing up the available material, *Washington Post* analyst, Murrey Marder, wrote on June 19, 1971: "Johnson Administration strategists had almost no expectation that the many pauses in the bombing of North Vietnam between 1965 and 1968 would produce peace talks but believed they would help placate domestic and world opinion, according to the Defence Department's study of those war years.

"The Pentagon study discloses that some strategists planned to use unproductive bombing pauses as a justification for escalating the war. This idea was first outlined privately by US officials soon after the bombing of the North began in 1965. These planners regarded the lulls in bombing as a 'ratchet' to reduce tension and then intensify it, to produce 'one more turn of the screw' in order to 'crack the enemy's resistance to negotiations,' the

report states."¹ "...The pause would be used as a kind of 'ratchet'—which the analyst likens to 'the device which raises the net on a tennis court, backing off tension between each phase of increasing it!'"

The proposal for a 37-day suspension of the bombing of North Vietnam, put forward in July 1965, is ascribed by the Pentagon report to McNamara and Assistant Defence Secretary McNaughton. The report says that in taking this step, the President expected to find out whether the DRV Government would alter its stand, considering that it had earlier declared that no settlement was possible so long as the territory of the North Vietnam was being subjected to the bombings.

Further, the Pentagon report says that this step was designed "as a means of clearing the way for an increase in the tempo of the air war..."² This is fully borne out by the papers.

McNamara's Memorandum to the President dated November 30, 1965, said: "It is my belief that there should be a three- or four-week pause in the program of bombing the North before we either greatly increase our troop deployments to Vietnam or intensify our strikes against the North.

"The reasons for this belief are, first, that we must lay a foundation in the minds of the American public and in world opinion for such an enlarged phase of the war."³

The *Washington Post* said that John McNaughton had perfectly encapsulated the Washington establishment's view of a bombing pause the previous July, when he had noted in pencil in the

¹ *Washington Post*, June 19, 1971.

² *The New York Times*, June 15, 1971.

³ *Washington Post*, June 19, 1971.

margin of a draft memorandum the words "RT (i.e., Rolling Thunder) (including pause), ratchet."

That was the signal for a continuation of the bombings.

The only danger was, as McNamara put it in his memorandum of November 3, "being trapped in a status quo ceasefire or in negotiations which, though unaccompanied by real concessions by the V.C., made it politically costly for us to terminate the pause. . . . The study states that 'McNamara and McNaughton were optimistic that, by skillful diplomacy,' it would be possible to avoid getting 'trapped' in such a way."¹

The State Department, through Secretary of State Rusk, came out against any "pause" in the air raids. The Pentagon report contains a State Department memorandum which said: "On balance, the arguments against the pause are convincing to the Secretary of State, who recommends that it not be undertaken at the present time."

As for the military, they did not very much trust the Washington politicians' diplomatic ploys, and in general objected to any measures which would "even momentarily reduce the pressure on North Vietnam." That was the stand taken by General Westmoreland, Commander of the US Armed Forces in South Vietnam, Admiral Sharp, Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific, and others.

The military leaders "pressed throughout the autumn and winter of 1965-1966 for permission to expand the bombing virtually into a program of strategic bombing aimed at all industrial and economic resources as well as at all interdiction targets."

¹ *Washington Post*, June 19, 1971.

Washington Post analyst, Marder, concludes: "This then was the tenor of much of the debate behind the scenes while US Ambassador Averell Harriman... and other US envoys were circling the globe for 37 days in a spectacular search for negotiations."¹

Summing up the results of the actual facts concerning the "pauses" in the bombings of the DRV contained in the Pentagon report, it may be said that these pauses in the barbarous raids on peaceful towns and cities of a sovereign country had at least three main purposes.

Washington expected:

first, to neutralise the broad campaign protesting against the piratical raids and to deceive world public opinion;

second, to probe the steadfastness of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front; to find out if any possibility had arisen to make them change their principled positions;

third, to use the "pauses" as an important psychological instrument for ensuring the further escalation of the aggression: the pauses were designed to make even more painful for the Vietnamese the subsequent US air strikes at civilian targets.

What the outcome of this piratical game was is well known. Washington failed to achieve its ends. The halt to the massive bombings of the DRV, which it had to order on November 1, 1968, was essentially acknowledgement of the fact that the US gamble in Vietnam held for the aggressor nothing but defeat.

¹ *Washington Post*, June 19, 1971.

STAGE EIGHT

AGGRESSION IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA

AN ASSERTION...

Whatever may be said in reports with regard to ground fighting the truth is that American participation in the war is diminishing, and we intend to continue to do so.

*From a statement
made by Defence
Secretary M. Laird
in February 1971
(retranslated
from Russian)*

...AND A QUESTION

Where is the logic of a policy which demands the bombing of three countries (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) and the invasion of two of them (Cambodia and Laos—Ed.) in order to leave one (South Vietnam)?

*"The New York
Times", January 31,
1971 (retranslated
from Russian)*

When one morning in February 1971, Saigon troops supported by Americans, invaded Laos, they moved along roads laid in 1964, that is, before the start of the massive escalation of the US aggression in Vietnam. The US analysts of the Pentagon secret papers have not yet noticed this important fact, but it is undoubtedly one of the important conclusions that have to be made from the available materials.

Calls for an invasion of Laos, including an invasion with extensive use of Saigon units, were repeatedly made in many documents produced at various levels in Washington in 1964.

A memorandum from General Maxwell D. Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to Secretary of Defence McNamara, on January 22, 1964, entitled "Vietnam and South-East Asia," said: "In order to achieve that victory, the Joint Chiefs of Staff are of the opinion that the United States must be prepared... to undertake bolder actions which may embody greater risks." It proposed that the Government of South Vietnam should be induced "to conduct overt ground operations in Laos of sufficient scope."¹ Consequently, as early as January 1964, the various aspects of the invasion of Laos by Washington's Saigon mercenaries were already being worked out.

The Johnson Administration was planning such an invasion. The Nixon Administration brought it about.

A cablegram from the United States mission in Saigon to the State Department on August 18, 1964, made this proposal: "Initiate air and ground strikes in Laos against infiltration targets as soon as joint plans now being worked out with the Khanh Government are ready. Such plans will have to be related to the situation in Laos. It appears to US that Souvanna Phouma should be informed at an appropriate time of the full scope of our plans."²

A National Security Action Memorandum from McGeorge Bundy, Adviser to the President on Na-

tional Security, to Secretary of Defence McNamara and Secretary of State Rusk on September 10, 1964, said that President Johnson himself had taken a hand in drawing up these plans. "The President has now reviewed the situation in South Vietnam with Ambassador Taylor and with other advisers and has approved the following actions..."

"3) We should promptly discuss with the Government of Laos plans for limited GVN air and ground operations into the corridor areas of Laos, together with Lao air strikes and possible use of US armed aerial reconnaissance."¹

A cablegram, signed by Ambassador Taylor, from the United States Embassy in Saigon to the State Department, Defence Department and the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, on September 19, 1964, first specified the main objective of an invasion by Saigon or American troops in Laos, namely the control of Route 9.² Let us recall that Route 9 was the main objective of the invasion of Laos carried out on President Nixon's orders in January 1971.

The Pentagon papers make it clear that the independent states of South-East Asia—Laos and Cambodia—were seen by Washington as targets of aggression. Dozens of times the word "Laos" occurs in these papers alongside the word "South Vietnam." The architects of the aggression were not at all worried by the fact that the invasion of Laos they were planning meant a gross violation of international law, a problem not consider-

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

² *Ibid.*, June 14, 1971.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

² *Ibid.*

ed anywhere on the hundreds of pages of the publicised secret papers.

The aggression in Laos was carried out along the same lines as the intervention in Vietnam. At first there were secret air raids. The papers describe in detail the mechanism behind such operations. *The New York Times* analyst Neil Sheehan wrote in this connection:

"The second major segment of the Administration's covert war against North Vietnam consisted of air operations in Laos. A force of propeller-driven T-28 fighter-bombers, varying from about 25 to 40 aircraft, had been organised there. The planes bore Laotian Air Force markings, but only some belonged to that air force. The rest were manned by pilots of Air America (a pseudo-private airline run by the C.I.A.) and by Thai pilots under the control of Ambassador Leonard Unger (to Thailand-Ed.).

"Reconnaissance flights by regular United States Air Force and Navy jets, code-named Yankee Team, gathered photographic intelligence for bombing raids by the T-28's against North-Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops in Laos.

"The Johnson Administration gradually stepped up these air operations in Laos through the spring and summer of 1964 in what became a kind of preview of the bombing of the North...

"As the intensity of the T-28 strikes rose, they crept closer to the North-Vietnamese border. The United States Yankee Team jets moved from high-altitude reconnaissance at the beginning of the year to low-altitude reconnaissance in May. In June, armed escort jets were added to the reconnaissance missions. The escort jets began to bomb and strafe North-Vietnamese and Pathet Lao

troops and installations whenever the reconnaissance planes were fired upon."¹

Let us note that Sheehan's commentaries tone down Washington's actions in Laos. World opinion is well aware that beginning from May 17, 1964, the US Air Force began massive and systematic raids on Laos, and these raids were condemned, in particular, in a message from the Central Committee of the Neo Lao Hak Sat Party to the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee and the World Peace Council on June 17, 1964, and its Statement issued on June 25, 1964.

Nevertheless, the published Pentagon papers give an idea of many important details bearing on the organisation of aggressive US action against Laos. *The New York Times* published, among other papers, a report drafted by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Marshall Green for Assistant Secretary Bundy on November 7, 1964. One section of this report deserves to be quoted in full (Green is now Assistant Secretary of State for South-East Asian and Pacific Affairs):

"C. T-28 OPERATIONS.

"There are now 27 T-28 (including three RT-28) aircraft in Laos, of which 22 are in operation. CINCPAC has taken action, in response to Ambassador Unger's request to build this inventory back up to 40 aircraft for which a pilot capability, including Thai, is present in Laos.

"The T-28's are conducting the following operations:

"1. General harassing activities against Pathet Lao military installations and movement, primarily in Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua Provin-

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

ces. This also includes efforts to interdict Route 7.

"2. Tactical support missions for Operation Anniversary Victory No. 2 (Saleumsay), the FAR-Meo clearing operation up Route 4 and north of Tha Thom.

"3. Tactical support for Operation Victorious Arrow (Sone Sai), a FAR clearing operation in southern Laos.

"4. Strikes on targets of opportunity, including in support of FAR defensive actions such as at Ban Khen northwest Thakhek.

"5. Corridor interdiction program. The original targets under this program have been hit and plans are now underway to hit four additional targets (including in the Tchepone area), plus restriking some of the original 13 targets."¹

At the time, Washington flatly denied that US combat planes were in any way involved in action against the patriotic forces of Laos. The Pentagon secret papers show all these statements have been deliberate lies designed to cover up US aggressive action against Laos and the DRV. The cynical admissions we find in Green's report are highly curious:

"4. Hanoi claims to have shot down a T-28 over DRV territory on August 18 and to have captured the Thai pilot flying the plane. The information the North-Vietnamese have used in connection with this case seems to be accurate. . .

"5. The DRV claims T-28's have violated North-Vietnamese airspace and bombed/strafed NVN villages on August 1 and 2, and on October 16 and 17 and again on October 28. The charges are

probably accurate with respect to the first two dates (along Route 7) and the last one (Mu Gia Pass area). . .

"6. The Pathet Lao has called to the attention of the ICC T-28 strikes in the corridor area and called for the ICC to stop them and inform the Co-Chairmen. The ICC has already agreed to investigate another PL charge concerning alleged US/SVN activities in the corridor area in violation of the Geneva Agreements."¹

Along with the covert and overt air war against Laos, large-scale US and Saigon commando raids were mounted against the territory of Laos, and these were carried out extensively in 1964 under various code names like Leaping Lena, Hardnose, etc. with which the published documents deal in detail.

As already noted, the USA began active bombings of Laos on May 17, 1964. From February 1965, these became a component part of the massive US air aggression in Indochina. Following the halt to the massive bombings of the DRV on November 1, 1968, the raids on Laos were continued and even intensified. The bombings of Laos and other hostile action by the USA against this country are being continued to this very day. Senator Edward Kennedy has remarked that the US Government cannot escape responsibility for the fact that there are 30,000 killed and wounded civilians and 700,000 refugees in Laos.

While the secret Pentagon report admits the fact of the air raids on Laos it attempts to obscure the question of direct US responsibility for the piratical air raids on this independent state. At

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

the same time, the authors of the report have to admit that the conduct of these raids was thoroughly camouflaged.

Thus, describing the results of a meeting in Saigon on September 11, 1964, of representatives of US missions in Bangkok, Vientiane and Saigon, which was chaired by Ambassador Taylor, the report says that when considering the question of mounting raids on the territory of Laos, "the mission representatives agreed that, once the (air and ground) operations began, they should not be acknowledged publicly."¹

The cynicism there is patent. Let us note, however, that the report was not quite "accurate": such air and ground operations against Laos had already been going on for several months. And this is indirectly admitted even by those who wrote the report when they speak of "intensifying" the raids. One can only intensify what had already been started.

The aggressive US action against Laos provides glaring proof of the continuity between the various US Administrations and Presidents. The covert and overt air and ground actions against Laos, which were continued throughout the 1960s, were taken up and continued by the Nixon Administration from 1969 to 1971, culminating in the criminal invasion by the US-Saigon armed forces of Laos in January and February of 1971 that ended in fiasco. However, bandit commando raids on the Laotian territory are being carried on to this very day.

The Pentagon published papers say relatively little about US aggressive action against Cambo-

¹ *The New York Times*, June 14, 1971.

dia, and this is easily understood. The Pentagon strategists have been preoccupied with Vietnam and Laos. Their stake was on a swift defeat of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the South-Vietnamese patriots. That is why the Washington planners of aggression concentrated on the areas adjacent to the DRV.

Still, the papers do say something about action against Cambodia. In particular, a memorandum entitled "South Vietnam," from Secretary of Defence McNamara to President Johnson on March 16, 1964, says in the section "Recommendations," that "operations across the Cambodian border should depend on the state of relations with Cambodia."¹ Let us recall that some raids on the territory of Cambodia were repeatedly carried out by South-Vietnamese and by American troops.

However, only President Nixon has risked overt aggression against Cambodia, for the purpose of establishing control over another independent state in South-East Asia. On April 30, 1971, US-Saigon troops crossed Cambodia's border, thereby committing another crime on Indochina soil.

Unfortunately, the secret papers of the Nixon Administration bearing on the escalation of the US aggression in Indochina from 1969 to 1971 have not yet been published. But even without them the continuity of the aggressive policy carried on by Washington over the last two decades in that part of the world can be easily seen.

At the same time, some of the reports that have leaked into the US press about the secret documents of the present Administration add up to an equally ugly picture of duplicity practised

¹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971.

against the American people. On June 28, 1971, the *Washington Post* carried an article by Jack Anderson on the results of his analysis of "current secret documents" which had fallen into his hands. Anderson says that just as "the Johnson Administration wasn't always (!) honest with the public about what was happening in Vietnam, the deception, dismayingly, is still going on.

"Despite President Nixon's assertions that he is winding down the war, the 'secret documents show, that he has been under pressure from the military chiefs to expand the war just as President Johnson was.'"¹

Anderson says, in particular, that following the withdrawal of the US troops from Cambodia in 1970, official spokesmen insisted that the US troops had not crossed the border of Cambodia or Laos. "The truth is that teams composed of US special forces and South Vietnamese rangers continued to make raids into both countries." In the secret reports these raids on the territory of Cambodia and Laos were code-named. "Unhappily, the raiders often found the enemy waiting for them and suffered severe casualties. None of the Americans killed in these raids was included in the official casualty lists."

Anderson testifies that the Nixon Administration's secret papers also expose the official statement about the invasion of Laos in January and February 1971, which was presented to the American people as a restricted South-Vietnamese action. Actually, it was the very opposite.

"It was part of coordinated military operations,

involving several hundred thousand men, throughout Indochina.

"American-led Kha tribesmen drove through Southern Laos to help the South-Vietnamese cut off the supply lines. Meo tribesmen, also under US direction, opened an attack upon North-Vietnamese positions in Northern Laos, even the royal Lao forces took the offensive in some areas.

"In Cambodia, both South-Vietnamese and Cambodian troops stepped up their operations. And in South Vietnam, government troops opened a general offensive against known guerrilla strongholds.

"President Nixon was kept fully informed of the coordinated offensive. Sometimes Adm. Thomas Moorer, the Joint Chief's Chairman, would stop by the White House and point out on classified maps with reddish arrows where the fighting was taking place."¹

The aggressive action mounted on orders from the Nixon Administration against Laos and Cambodia in 1970 and 1971 was a direct continuation of the earlier interventionist line, with the leaders of the United States going well beyond their predecessors in the escalation in Indochina.

In good time, light will also be thrown on the now secret details of the piratical plans worked out and carried out by the Pentagon against the Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian peoples. The USA is still pursuing its aggressive line in Indochina, but it is sure to fail. The address, *Freedom and Peace to the Peoples of Indochina!* adopted by the 24th Congress of the CPSU, says:

¹ *Washington Post*, June 28, 1971.

¹ *Washington Post*, June 28, 1971.

"The reckless designs of the US aggressors have turned into an endless chain of ignominious failures. Neither bombs and shells, nor cunning political intrigues could break the will of the people of the socialist country, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the patriots of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. And this will hold true in the future as well."

CONCLUSION

Those have been the stages of aggression and duplicity which US imperialism has ascended one by one. They provide evidence that the men who conceived, organised and started one of the most heinous crimes of US imperialism—the dirty war against the peoples of Indochina—have not shunned lying, falsification, fact-juggling and double-dealing. They have trampled on international laws and agreements, the Charter of the United Nations, the US Constitution and the elementary standards of human ethics. Bourgeois "democracy", with its much-publicized "freedoms"—freedom of the press, the electoral system and other magnified attributes—has appeared before the whole world in its true, ugly light.

The Charter of the United Nations, which bears, among others, the signature of the United States says: "All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any member or state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations." Compare this solemn declaration, these lofty commitments, undertaken before the peoples of the world by the founder-members of the United Nations, with what the facts on the pages of this book show, and it will become

clear that the US rulers have high-handedly discarded the obligations which they undertook to fulfil by signing the UN Charter.

Take the piratical actions by US aircraft in Indochina, considered with cynical equanimity in the Pentagon papers, which deal with the expediency of the action by US aircraft with false markings, as if these were match-box or beer-bottle labels.

The road of the "dirty war" is paved with the big lie. This big lie is made up of a series of falsehoods.

First, that the USA intended to bring peace to Asia, and that it would respect the Geneva Agreements.

Second, that it would not send its ground troops to Vietnam.

Third, that it would not start an air war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Fourth, that the Tonkin incident was an "unprovoked communist attack."

Fifth, that the Pentagon chief was not aware of the "secret operations" carried on by the CIA and units under General Westmoreland.

Sixth, that the "pauses" in the bombings of the DRV were motivated by a US desire to find a way to peace.

Seventh, that the USA would not invade Cambodia.

Eighth, that the USA would respect the neutrality of Laos.

Ninth, that the USA was dedicated to the "free expression of popular will."

It is, in fact, hard even to list all the agreements, and international and other laws which

have been trampled by those who organised the aggression in Indochina.

"A reasonable argument can be made that the President's recent decision to employ American airpower in support of South-Vietnamese and Cambodian forces in the neutral countries of Laos and Cambodia exceeds his constitutional powers, and is, at best, a deliberate flouting of the will of the Congress."¹ That is not "communist propaganda," but a statement made by Congressman Paul McCloskey, member of the ruling Republican Party, on the floor of the Congress on February 18, 1971. A special report issued by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in May 1970 accused the Nixon Administration of sending American troops into Cambodia without the consent or knowledge of the Congress, thereby usurping the war-making power of the Congress.

A Committee to Safeguard the Constitution, specially set up for that purpose, requested the US Supreme Court to look into the question of the illegal war the USA had been waging for seven years in Indochina without sanction of the Congress, in violation of the Constitution. This appeal was signed by prominent scientists and lawyers, including one-time Attorney-General Clark, Professor J.K. Galbraith, and also one-time US Ambassador to the United Nations, Arthur Goldberg, who had earlier used his gift of rhetoric in the United Nations to justify the US aggression.

Indeed, when the bourgeois legislative framework becomes too narrow for bourgeois rulers

¹ *Congressional Record*, February 18, 1971, H 794.

they never hesitate to discard it, treating the Constitution as a scrap of paper.

And what about the famous "freedom of the press"? No sooner had press action gone against the grain, than the Republican Administration leaders resorted to the mechanism of the bourgeois courts. The US Administration, through its Attorney-General, started proceedings against the press under Article 593 of the Criminal Code, which carries for each offender the penalty of a 10-year prison term and a fine of \$10,000. If the Republican Administration has had to backtrack, it was by no means because its members had suddenly been put in mind of the "freedom of the press," but merely because they had no other way out, for in this case the Washington bureaucracy ran up against sufficiently influential and powerful forces in the United States with whom the members of the Cabinet had to reckon.

The amount of paper bourgeois propaganda has used up in its transports over "free elections" defies estimation. But the chain of lies and deceits arising from the "dirty war" also gives food for thought on this subject. In effect, the Tonkin Resolution was adopted in August 1964 by 88 votes in the Senate against two. Only two members of the US Congress out of 506 then taking part in the voting in its two Houses found the courage to say no. They were Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon, and Senator Ernest Gruening of Alaska. At the next election, both found themselves thrown out of the Senate. Concerning the methods used in dealing with the recalcitrants, let us recall that just after the votes were counted, Morse declared that the results of the polling in his state had clearly been rigged, and

demanding an official recount, but this was denied.

In October 1969, Senator Charles Goodell of New York put before Congress a bill providing for the withdrawal of all US troops from Vietnam by December 1, 1970. While the withdrawal never took place, in November 1970 the author of the bill lost his seat in the Senate. Among those who campaigned against the Republican Goodell were leaders of his own party, Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew, who in this case ignored party solidarity and backed the candidate of the other party. Such are the realities of electoral "freedom" under US democracy.

The Pentagon secret papers shed light on what could be called the "price of American democracy." The whole world has seen it to be a democracy of lies and deception.

Indeed, even by US political standards, the Administration's hypocrisy and duplicity over the war against the peoples of Indochina appeared to be unprecedented.

Addressing the anniversary session of the United Nations in San Francisco on June 25, 1965, the US President spoke at length about the need to enhance the UN role in the maintenance of international peace and security. A fortnight later, the President announced a new step in the infamous escalation of the war in Vietnam, arising from his order dispatching tens of thousands of US soldiers to the Vietnam theatre of military operations.

At a press conference in May 1967, replying to a question as to how he viewed UN General Secretary U Thant's statement that mankind was moving towards a third world war, the President said: "I don't think it would serve any purpose to

speculate about that." ¹ A few days earlier, the President had told his daughter: "Your Daddy may go down in history as having started World War III." ²

Hypocrisy and deceit have ceased to be the prerogative of any Washington leader or any one Administration, and have become part and parcel of the policy pursued by US ruling circles in general.

Soon after President Nixon took over at the White House he told the governors of 50 states that he had found a yawning credibility gap between the people, and the government and all echelons of authority.

This bitter and fairly unusual admission was made soon after Nixon took office. Three years later the gap, far from being narrowed, has in fact grown even wider. During the 1968 electoral campaign, the Republicans had promised to end the deadlock in Vietnam. Instead, the Americans were faced with an extension of the aggression and the invasion of Laos and Cambodia.

The whole world has seen the great gap that lies between the words and the deeds of the US leaders. This gives rise to the question—a question not only for millions of US citizens—of whether the assurances and professions of peace made by some Washington leaders can be trusted. How can one deal with politicians who say one thing and do another, with men who refuse to recognise international law or the treaties they have signed, and who cynically trample on their own commitments?

If these men have deceived their own people and the world public in starting the aggressive war in Indochina, where is the guarantee that they will not do so again in the future? Where is the guarantee that behind the backs of their own people, in secret from them, they will not push the world to the brink of a world thermonuclear conflict?

The published secret documents from the Pentagon archives expose imperialism's sinister plot against peace. But they also expose those who have made lying and hypocrisy government policy, and reveal the depth of the moral degradation of those who hold forth about democracy, peace and justice, but stop at nothing to achieve their sinister ends.

There is a real danger that US reaction may perpetrate any crime and fraud. Many people throughout the world find nothing novel in this fact. But that does not make it any less alarming. However that may be, the truth about the US aggression in Indochina is bound to arouse universal indignation all over the world against militarism, against the US war criminals.

¹ *The New York Times*, May 19, 1967, p. 18.

² *Washington Post*, May 12, 1967.