

Hanoi Sees Conflict as Indochina War

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North Vietnam has announced that it will "fight shoulder to shoulder with the fraternal peoples of Laos and Cambodia." The pledge is being viewed here as a commitment by Hanoi to merge the hostilities in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia into a single integrated Indochina military theater.

The pledge was made by Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, North Vietnam's Defense Minister and chief strategist, who said Hanoi would lead all the "national liberation" movements of Indochina to "complete victory" over the United States and its allies.

General Giap's remarks constituted the first detailed high-level military-political analysis of the Indochina situation to come from Hanoi since United States and South Vietnamese forces entered Cambodia on April 30.

The general's observations were in two lengthy articles, entitled "President Ho, a strategist of genius and the beloved father of the Vietnamese people's armed forces," published May 31 and June 1 in the Hanoi newspaper Nhan Dan, organ of the North Vietnamese workers (Communist) party. An English translation of the articles was made available here today.

A Shift in Priorities

Until now, North Vietnam has depicted the war in South Vietnam as an absolute priority. Action in Laos by North Vietnamese troops and Pathet Lao guerrillas was regarded as a supporting operation, designed chiefly to protect the Ho Chi Minh supply route from North

Vietnam to South Vietnam through eastern Laos.

Areas in Cambodia near the South Vietnamese border served as sanctuaries for troops and for arms and food to supply operations in the Mekong Delta and in the III Corps area, which includes Saigon. Communist forces fighting in South Vietnam also received supplies over the Sihanouk Trail from the ports on the Gulf of Siam.

But so long as Prince Norodom Sihanouk was in power as Chief of State of Cambodia, there was no attempt by North Vietnam and the Vietcong and Cambodian Khmer Rouge guerrillas to challenge him seriously with the kind of "liberation war" being fought in South Vietnam and, to a certain extent, in Laos.

General Giap's comments, coinciding with the growing pattern of Communist offensive actions in Cambodia and Laos, tend to confirm the view held in much of the United States intelligence community that in the wake of the allied moves into Cambodia, Hanoi has decided on an Indochina-wide strategy.

Offensives Are Opened

The Communist offensives, starting early in May, concentrated on several goals—the conquest of southern Laos, allowing the opening of a river route over the Se Kong and Mekong from North Vietnam into Cambodia; the consolidation of control of Cambodia's northeastern provinces; the attempts to regain the gulf ports and restore the Sihanouk Trail, and attacks in western Cambodia, the area of the Angkor ruins.

The White House, according to informed officials, had as-

sumed that most of the enemy forces in Cambodia would be used to defend the supply lines and the border sanctuaries.

General Giap wrote that the North Vietnamese Army "is deeply imbued with internationalism, knows how to distinguish friends from foes and is determined to protect their militant solidarity with the other Indochinese peoples and with the peoples of socialist countries."

He also wrote that President Ho Chi Minh's "countenance has become more shiny before the revolutionary tide which is mounting everywhere on the Indochinese Peninsula, from the Plaines des Jarres to the ancient Angkor ruins. He is pleased to see that Indochina is no longer pitiable as it was several decades ago. The Indochinese people have 'returned to life' and bravely devoted their efforts and hearts to defeating the U. S. imperialists and their lackeys."

Retaken by Enemy

The Plaine des Jarres is in central Laos and most of it was reoccupied by the Communist forces last fall. Last summer, Royal Laotian troops supported by the United States-led clandestine army of Meo tribesmen had taken much of the Plain. The Angkor ruins, the ancient monuments of the Khmer civilization in western Cambodia, were occupied last week.

"We pledge to fight shoulder to shoulder with the fraternal peoples of Laos and Cambodia for genuine independence and freedom," General Giap wrote, "and to lead the national liberation undertaking of the Indochinese peoples to complete victory."