

# The Rising Risk of

By Stanley Karnow  
Washington Post Service

Despite President Nixon's efforts to assure the Red Chinese that he has no intention of threatening them, the risks of their involvement in the intensifying Indochina war seem to have increased significantly.

One important sign that Peking may be considering the idea of intervention is apparent in the fact that, for

**A  
News  
Analysis**

the first time since the conflict began, Hanoi spokesmen have been brandishing that specter in their propaganda.

To dismiss this as simply "psychological warfare," as the White House has done, overlooks two vital changes in Chinese and North Vietnamese attitudes.

For one thing, Hanoi has obviously been authorized by Peking to raise the scare of Chinese intervention. This suggests that the Chinese have shifted drastically from their position of caution.

At the same time, talk by

the North Vietnamese of Peking's possible participation in the war means that they are no longer as reluctant as they formerly were to have the Chinese intervene.

That they are turning more openly toward the Chinese for support also underlines evidence that Hanoi and Peking have drawn closer together since last year, when the United States invasion of Cambodia served to weaken the Soviet Union's countervailing influence in North Vietnam.

Although they traditionally distrust the Chinese, the

North Vietnamese have clearly been prompted to increase their dependence on them by the fear that the Saigon forces, backed by the United States, will cross the 17th parallel just as went into Cambodia and Laos.

This fear has been fueled by repeated South Vietnamese appeals for thrusts into the North. Even though he is supposed to be bluffing, President Nixon's refusal to rule out the prospect of such moves has frightened Hanoi. After all, Hanoi has no reason not to anticipate the worst from an administration that

MAR 9 1971

# Chinese Intervention

has widened the war.

Meanwhile, the chances of Chinese involvement have risen as a result of developments that have taken place in China in recent years.

When Lyndon Johnson was intensifying the Vietnam conflict in the mid-1960s, Mao Tse-tung could not have been more cooperative than if he had been on the White House payroll.

Mao's primary aim in those days was to avoid the war in order to use the Chinese army in the cultural revolution, his purge of al-

leged Communist party "revisionists." He was opposed by China's professional officers, who favored intervention in Vietnam.

Mao won the dispute. And from then on, he personified prudence.

Early in 1965, for instance, when Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin asked him twice how he would react to a U.S. invasion of North Vietnam, Mao remained silent.

But since then, Mao's authority has waned, and many of the Chinese military professionals he sought to neutralize have emerged more

powerful than ever.

The Chinese need not pour "human waves" into Indochina as they did in Korea. They could, for example, use the three divisions they have near northwestern Laos and thereby disrupt the fragile balance of forces in that sector of Indochina.

Such a foray would panic the Thais, who regard Laos as vital to their security. It might topple Prince Souvanna Phouma's government in Laos. And it would touch off a noisy ruckus on the domestic U.S. political scene.

To be sure, as White House

adviser Henry Kissinger has stressed, the Chinese are mainly preoccupied at the moment by their troubles with the Russians along the Sino-Soviet border. But limited involvement in Indochina would not necessarily deprive them of the resources they are committing to that.

In 1962, the Chinese invaded India, bolstered their defense against a potential attack by Chiang Kai-shek and handled a Soviet-inspired revolt in northwestern Sinkiang province — all without huge investments in manpower and equipment.