

On the Tonkin Crisis

In the background of the Tonkin crisis in 1964, this article exposed the capitulationist policy of the revisionist Soviet leadership under Khrushchev vis-a-vis the policy of piracy pursued by the US imperialists who took full advantage of the thermonuclear war phobia of the revisionists.

On the order of President Johnson of America, the US naval forces, on the 4th August last, sank two torpedo boats which belonged to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. On the next day, many jet planes taking off from the US Seventh Fleet violated the air space of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, strafed and bombed a number of places in Vinh-Ben Thuy area in the Gianh river mouth and close to Hong Gai town, causing huge destruction of its shore installations and loss of lives there. Of course, there is nothing new in the violation of the air space and bombing of the territories of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam by the USA. In the past, too, the US aggressors had done it. A few days before the aggression of 4th August, the US imperialists had strafed and bombed Nam Can and Noong De, two areas in the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam bordering Laos. Besides, the USA had despatched warships which illegally intruded into the territorial waters and strafed Hon Ngu and Hon Me Islands and other places in the coastal areas of North Vietnam. But the latest acts of aggression in August last by the USA have no parallel. By these acts the USA violated all canons of international law and civilization and endangered the sovereignty and independence of the weaker nations, peace in Asia in

particular and world peace in general. It is for this reason that the anti-imperialist and peace-loving forces and individuals all over the world cannot but raise their voice of protest against American imperialism and unite to oust it from the South-East Asian countries. We, on behalf of the Indian people, strongly condemn the US aggression on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and support the just stand taken by the latter in this regard.

The US story

The US aggressors, with a posture of injured innocence, have made the plea that while some of the ships of the US naval units in the Pacific were patrolling the international waters of the Gulf of Tonkin some North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked them; as a retaliatory measure the US warships were ordered by President Johnson “to attack and destroy any forces that attack them” and the jet planes belonging to the US Seventh Fleet strafed and bombed the coastal areas of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

How far believable is this story? Anyone having a modicum of grey matter in his head finds this cooked up story extremely difficult to swallow. For, even a child understands that to try to destroy a part of the US Seventh Fleet, perhaps the most powerful imperialist fleet in the world, with the help of a few small patrol boats is the height of madness and idiocy. Do not the rulers of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam who have established their political sagacity, matured power of cool judgement, even in the face of the gravest imperialist provocation, and revolutionary realism before the world, understand what even a child understands? Why then should they indulge in the adventurist act of attacking the US warships with a few tiny patrol boats? The story of attack on the US warships by the North Vietnamese patrol boats in the Gulf of Tonkin, as

made out by the Pentagon, is a cock and bull story unworthy of credence.

The world public also have taken the US story with a grain of salt. Prince Sihanouk, Head of the Cambodian State, rejected the US story as a blatant lie. A large section of the Western press, not excluding the American press, reacted in a similar manner. The reaction of the 92-year old British philosopher, Bertrand Russell, is indicative of the general feeling about the US stand on the Vietnamese question. Lord Russell is no advocate of communism. On the contrary, he considers himself an arch enemy of the communist ideas and the international communist movement. All through his life he has used his powerful pen as fiercely and ably as he could against communism. Even such an anti-communist personality could not help condemning the USA for its aggressive policy in Vietnam. In a letter published in *The Times*, he wrote: "The National Liberation Front has a non-communist majority and a programme of neutrality. The United States maintains the only foreign troops in Vietnam, refuses elections provided by the Geneva Agreements, has placed nearly eight million people in barbed wire camps with machine-gun turrets and patrolled by dogs, conducted 50,000 air attacks on the villages in 1962 alone, razed the country with chemicals and napalm, killed 1,60,000, maimed 7,00,000 and imprisoned 3,50,000. The South Vietnamese Government and army are American puppets financed by 15,00,000 dollars daily. When the United States ceases its war of atrocity against a popular national movement and accepts the neutrality agreed 10 years ago, the war will end. The United States should be condemned as an aggressor by the United Nations for its atrocity-ridden war of annihilation in Vietnam." The aggression by the USA on North Vietnam in August last is a continuation of its atrocity-ridden war of annihilation in South Vietnam.

Anyone who has not bartered away his conscience and intelligence to the dollar-god will subscribe to the above view of Russell. But a section of the Indian press and the right-wing social democrats, represented by J. B. Kripalani and his fellow-travellers, have accepted as gospel truth the US version of the case. In tune with the American war-lords, they are crying themselves hoarse on the so-called necessity of “unitedly fighting international communism” and “creating buffer States under US leadership in South-East Asia as a measure against the advance of communism in this part of the world”. This is an open support to the US imperialists in their attempts to crush the national liberation movements by the peoples of the South-East Asian countries for complete national independence and to establish American domination there for perpetuating neo-colonialist exploitation. It is characteristic of the right-wing social democrats in the present international situation. The Indian Government’s stand on this question is also no less pro-American. Continued dependence on American economic and military ‘aid’ has been gradually pushing India out of the Asian anti-imperialist camp and drawing it nearer to the USA and its puppet governments in Asia. Neither Burma nor Indonesia, nor even Cambodia, the one time closest friends of India and all of whom are still playing anti-imperialist roles in international politics, are India’s best friends now. Tunku Abdul Rahaman of Malaysia, a protege of imperialism, is now India’s only friend in South-East Asia. The result of this increasingly pro-American attitude has been that India has ceased to condemn even in words the acts of aggression and intrigues by imperialist powers in South-East Asia, and in this particular case it has aligned itself with the US line by accepting as true the US story of North Vietnamese attack on the US warships first. This is, no doubt, an open betrayal of the anti-imperialist aspiration of the toiling millions of our country.

Apart from the fact that the US plea of North Vietnamese attack on the US warships in the Gulf of Tonkin is a tissue of blatant lies, there is no justification for what the USA has been doing in South-East Asia since the end of the Second World War and has done in this particular case. Even if it is assumed for the sake of argument that the US warships were outside the territorial waters of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the question arises: why do the US warships appear in the Gulf of Tonkin and patrol the shores of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, thousands of miles off the American shores ? The Gulf of Tonkin washes the shores of only the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of China, cutting deep into the territories of these two countries. What business has the USA got to send its warships to the Gulf ? How would the USA feel and react if the naval and air force units of a powerful foreign country, say the USSR, appear in the Gulf of Mexico and keep on patrolling the American shores ? Would not the USA take it as a provocation and hostile act towards it, threatening its security ? Is it wrong then if North Vietnam and China react in a like manner to the appearance of and patrolling by the US warships in the Gulf of Tonkin ? Indeed, the absolutely unjustified presence of the US warships in the Gulf of Tonkin and the patrolling of the shores of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of China by them cannot be considered in itself otherwise than an openly hostile act by the USA towards these two countries, threatening their very security. It is, therefore, the USA that is guilty of provocation to and hostile acts against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and not the other way round.

In their attempts to mislead the peace-loving people of different countries, the US imperialists are loudly proclaiming their faith in peace. But do facts confirm it ? Has the Democratic Republic of Vietnam or China or any

other socialist country ever sent any of its naval or air force units to the American shores or surrounded America with military bases or threatened America with attack or violated the American air space or strafed and bombed the American territories ? No socialist country is guilty of any of these offences. It is the USA, on the contrary, that is guilty of all of these offences. Its warships have intruded into the territorial waters of North Vietnam; its planes have violated the air space of China, North Vietnam and other socialist countries, including the Soviet Union and strafed and bombed the territories of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam; its warships patrol the shores of not only North Vietnam and China but also the newly independent countries in Asia and Africa; it has sunk two patrol boats belonging to North Vietnam; it has formed aggressive military blocs like the SEATO, CENTO, NATO, etc., as means to conduct military adventure, subversion and imperialist intrigues in Asia, Africa and Europe; it has built innumerable military bases encircling the socialist camp to use them as spring-board of aggression; it has been threatening Cuba since its independence, it is now threatening North Vietnam with a massive attack, so on and so forth. Are all these the signs of peaceful policy or do they indicate a policy of brinkmanship, cold war, provocation, military adventurism and aggression ? It attacked the Democratic Republic of Vietnam without being at all provoked, carried through its premeditated plan, ravaged the coastal area of that country and, after doing all that it wanted to, went to the UNO with an air of injured innocence and a fabricated charge against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam of attack on its warships.

The US move, from the beginning to the end, shows that the whole thing was pre-planned. Quoting *The Guardian*, a mouthpiece of British imperialism, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, a pro-US daily of Calcutta, wrote :

“American air attacks on North Vietnam and the great movement, now proceeding, of military power into South-East Asia had long been planned and required only a suitable occasion”. The fact that the US attack on North Vietnam in August last was planned much earlier exposes the mendacious character of the US plea that the act was a retaliatory measure against North Vietnamese attack on US warships in the Gulf of Tonkin.

US motive

There is no denying that the USA, by attacking the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, a socialist country, took a calculated risk. The risk was that the socialist camp might have taken concrete military steps to effectively resist the wanton US attack on a socialist country, which would have foiled the whole game of the US imperialists and put the USA in a straitjacket. But the calculation of the USA on the possible Soviet move was that the Soviet Union and, for that matter, the socialist camp would not come forward to effectively retaliate for the US aggression on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, a calculation which was mainly based on its recent experience of the Soviet stand at the time of the Cuban crisis. Subsequent facts proved that the US calculation on the possible Soviet move was correct. The calculation might also have proved incorrect had the CPSU leadership not been caught by nuclear blackmailing of the USA. So, the USA undoubtedly took a great risk in attacking a socialist country. But the point is : why did the USA take the risk ? In other words, what was the purpose of the USA behind this attack ?

We all know that the Presidential election in the USA is near at hand and Goldwater, the Republican Party candidate for Presidentship, in course of his election campaign, has held Johnson guilty of following a weak-kneed policy in South-East Asia, especially in Vietnam, for

which, in the opinion of Goldwater and his supporters, the USA and its allies in South-East Asia are facing military defeats, one after another, at the hands of the forces of national liberation movement, resulting in further strengthening of the anti-imperialist forces fighting for complete national independence and national integration and reunification, as the case may be, in Laos and Vietnam, the falling of morale of a section of US monopolists and the reactionary forces in South-East Asia, who see no ray of hope of ultimate victory in the US sponsored war of annihilation now going on in Laos and Vietnam and the lowering of US prestige in the estimation of the world reactionary forces who look upon the USA as their ultimate saviour against popular uprising. The more bellicose circles and the military in the USA, as a mouthpiece of whom Goldwater and his supporters are moving about, are demanding of Johnson and his Administration a tough policy in South-East Asia, particularly in Vietnam and Laos. By tough policy they mean extension of the US intervention and military operation, now limited to South Vietnam, to North Vietnam. For success of the Democratic Party in the coming election, Johnson has to show the US voters that his policy on South-East Asia, especially on Vietnam, is anything but soft and weak-kneed. Had the US voters been sufficiently conscious politically, they would have long discovered that the Johnson Administration “had no different policy from the old imperialist trick of sending a gunboat up the river” and attacking a foreign land in order to perpetuate the imperialist interests of the American monopolists. But since the majority of American voters are not politically conscious, as is the case in all the capitalist countries, and are ignorant of the neo-colonialist and aggressive policy which their country follows in Asia, Africa and Latin America, both the monopolist groups, one represented by the Democratic Party of Johnson and the

other by the Republican Party of Goldwater that rule the USA by turn, find it easy to mislead the ordinary US voters, foment war-psychosis and continue their policy of exporting counter-revolution, provocation, brinkmanship, war and aggression on the plea of defence of the so-called "free world". So, the present rulers of the USA thought it expedient, in the interest of victory in the coming election, to take some military action in South-East Asia. However much Johnson and his Democratic Party may like to extend the war to North Vietnam, since they are in the government, they can ill-afford to ignore or overlook the serious consequences which may follow such an adventurist act. The present rulers of the USA know that in Vietnam the USA is facing at present the military might of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam alone, and yet the result has been that this army, poorly equipped militarily, has wrought havoc on the combined military might of the USA and its puppet, the South Vietnam Government, and liberated three-fourths of the total area of South Vietnam. In the circumstances, should the US imperialists extend the war to North Vietnam, they know that they would have to face the additional military might of not only North Vietnam but also of China — which has categorically declared that any war with North Vietnam would be considered a war against China and properly met —and, eventually, of the socialist camp; since, whatever may be the ideological differences and the degree of strained relationship between them, the socialist countries cannot but unitedly resist an all-out aggression by the USA on another socialist country, namely the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Johnson and his Ministers know what the result of such a war would be. They still remember what happened in Korea. If the North Korean army and Chinese volunteers (not regular army) alone could throw back the armies of not only the USA but also several, dozens of other imperialist-capitalist countries

into the Pacific Ocean, then the military involvement of the USA with the socialist camp over extension of war to North Vietnam would dig the grave of the US imperialism in South-East Asia, ensuring complete victory of national liberation movement in the different South-East Asian countries, great advancement of national liberation movement elsewhere and revolutionary struggle in the metropolitan capitalist countries. The myth of superiority of the US military might, which the USA has been able to create among a large section of the politically unconscious masses after the Caribbean crisis because of the incorrect stand of the Soviet Union, would be completely shattered. It would, at the same time, wreck the morale of the world reactionary forces that count on the US military might as the ultimate guarantee for their existence against future popular upsurge, a morale which had sunk to the bottom at the US military reverses in the Korean war but has gone up much after the US success in the Caribbean crisis due to the faulty Soviet stand. So, the present rulers of the USA cannot stake their future on the Asian soil by their adventurist act of extending the war to North Vietnam. But something had got to be done to take the wind out of the sail of Goldwater and his supporters and win the coming Presidential election — this was the internal problem of Johnson and the ruling Democratic Party.

And what is the external problem which the Johnson Administration is confronted with ? The present rulers of the USA are finding it increasingly difficult to keep up and sustain the fast falling morale of the reactionary pro-US forces, in South-East Asia in general and in Vietnam and Laos in particular, who are now collaborating with the USA as anti-nationalist forces against the national liberation movements there. For safeguarding the interests of the American monopolists, particularly of a few US death-merchants, this fall in morale has got to be checked and the

pro-US anti-nationalist forces are to be revitalized. Because, without doing it, the war of annihilation, which the USA is now carrying on in South Vietnam and Laos in alliance with the reactionary forces there, cannot be continued. And if the civil wars in these countries cannot be kept going, if these end to the advantage of the forces fighting for complete national independence and national re-unification or national integration, the USA would have to leave South-East Asia for good. So, to secure American presence and influence for perpetuating the US neo-colonial interests in South-East Asia, the war of aggression, which it is conducting in this part of the globe, has to be kept ablaze, for which it is essential to achieve unity between the mutually warring Generals who rule unliberated South Vietnam and a part of Laos, revitalize the pro-US anti-nationalist forces, check the fall in their morale consequent upon the US military reverses at the hands of the forces fighting for national independence and then boost their morale. But how it can be done is the problem of the US rulers.

Besides, the USA naturally wants to know beforehand the reaction of the Soviet Union in case it extends the war to North Vietnam. Would the USSR, in case of an all-out US attack on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, simply use the UNO as a forum for condemning the attack or would it positively retaliate for the aggression on a socialist country by suitable military action? The reply to this question is of paramount importance to the present rulers of the USA for the purpose of chalking out their future course of action in Vietnam. But how to know it? That was also a problem to Johnson and his military advisers.

What Johnson did in the Gulf of Tonkin was aimed at solving these problems of his Administration. Since the present rulers of the USA can ill-afford to take the risk of being involved in a total warfare with China or the Soviet

Union or the socialist camp in South-East Asia for reasons discussed earlier, the only course left open to them was to utilize the American superiority in naval and air force over China and North Vietnam in South-East Asia for an extremely short-period attack on North Vietnam, not with the help of land army as that would involve the USA in a land-war with China which the former could not but avoid, but with naval and air force, keeping the door of retreat and withdrawal from the field of operation always open so as to enable the USA to retreat as and when that would be felt necessary for the purpose of avoiding involvement in an all-out clash with China or the socialist camp and to make a show of temporary military success as American military supremacy to the world at large. In fact, the so-called American superiority in naval and air force in South-East Asia would not have remained, had the Soviet Union appeared on the scene and used its superior military might in defence of the fraternal socialist country of North Vietnam against the US aggression. But the US rulers banked on their experience at the time of the Cuban crisis and assumed that the Soviet Union would not resist militarily any such US attack on North Vietnam. This assumption proved correct and made the USA do what it intended to by attacking the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in utter disregard of all civilized codes and in violation of all international laws and conventions. Thus, by taking a calculated risk, Johnson has been able to silence Goldwater and his supporters and to demonstrate to the US voters that he is in no way less tough or stern than the Republican Party candidate in dealing hard blows to North Vietnam and, for that matter, to any socialist country. Johnson has also succeeded in capitalizing on the temporary military success and pass it off as a proof of the US power and courage to ravage with impunity any socialist country and further create the illusion among the politically

unconscious that no socialist country, including the USSR, has the power and courage to resist any military action which the USA may have the pleasure to take any time it likes, and thereby also boost the falling morale of a section of the US monopolists and the reactionary forces in South Vietnam and Laos who are seeing more and more the futility of continuing the war in these countries, enthruse them to carry on the war more determinedly and give a fillip to the reactionary forces all over the world in carrying out their crusade against peace, democracy and socialism. The present militarized economy of the USA requires, as temporary means to tide over its crisis of over-production, constant release and replenishment of arms and military equipment stockpiled by it. The US death-merchants are, therefore, vitally interested in intensifying international tension and the atmosphere of cold war and starting, wherever and whenever possible, localized limited wars. The US attack on North Vietnam has also served this interest of a few American death-merchants. Judged in the light of our above-mentioned analysis, it becomes perfectly clear that the US attack on North Vietnam did not aim at starting an all-out war with China or the Soviet Union, far less a world war with the socialist camp. It was nothing but an extension of the US diplomacy into the field of military operation in the form of a wanton aggression on North Vietnam, aiming at achieving certain limited military and political objectives.

Role of Soviet Union

Let us now see how the Soviet Union under the leadership of Khrushchev behaved and examine if it moved correctly. The Soviet Union did practically nothing except make a formal protest against the US attack on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and move the UNO. Even its move in the UNO was most perfunctory. *The Statesman*,

a mouthpiece of British capital and a section of Indian monopolists in our country, while commenting on the role of the USSR wrote: “The assumption of the operation was that the Soviet Union would not respond. The Soviet performance in the UN Security Council has been true to American expectations in its perfunctoriness”. Johnson expected that the Soviet Union would protest but would not move to effectively retaliate. At best she might come out with typical ‘Khrushchevite aid programme’ of supplying certain military equipment. The Soviet behaviour confirmed this expectation of the USA. It is because of this that President Johnson and the Western press in general, which serves as the watchdog of imperialism-capitalism, praised the Soviet Union for following a “realistic policy expected of it”.

How is it that the Soviet Union behaved just according to the expectations of the US imperialists ? We think that the revisionist line of the CPSU is solely responsible for this weak-kneed policy of the USSR. Could not the Soviet Union take retaliatory military measures against the USA ? What did prevent the Khrushchev leadership from adopting such a measure if it was not its wrong approach to major international questions largely due to its thermonuclear war-phobia ? Otherwise, a few Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), in which the USSR is superior to all the imperialist powers put together, would have been sufficient for the purpose. After destroying with the help of Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles the US warships and planes engaged in attacking North Vietnam and putting an end to the US aggression, the Soviet Union could go to the UNO and explain to the peoples of the whole world that it had been forced to retaliate since the US imperialists dared attack a peaceful socialist country in violation of all international laws and that it had no intention of carrying on the retaliatory measures further if the imperialists did not

continue their aggression. It could hold a threat to the US aggressors that any fresh attack on North Vietnam would be firmly resisted by suitable military measures and at the same time could add to the strength of the peace-loving people to thrust peace on the imperialist warmongers. If the USSR had taken this correct stand, what would have been the result of it? The myth of the US superiority in military might over the socialist camp, which the USA has been able to create amongst the world reactionary forces because of the wrong stand of the Soviet Union in the face of nuclear blackmailing by the USA since the Cuban crisis, would have been exploded, as a result of which the morale of the world reactionary forces would have fallen and their aggressiveness, which has increased since the Cuban crisis, would have been dampened and the recent shift in the foreign policy of some of the non-aligned Afro-Asian countries more towards the United States reversed. Besides the reactionary forces, there are politically unconscious men who honestly, though wrongly, believe that the unwillingness of the Soviet Union to resist militarily any US attack on a foreign land is not so much for the former's desire for peace as for its military weakness. In other words, these people take the Khrushchevite way of approach to the peace policy of the Soviet Union as a 'retreat before the tough policy and superior military might of the USA'. Had the USSR effectively resisted the US attack by strong military measures, this section of the ignorant masses of people would have been convinced beyond all doubt that the desire for peace on the part of the USSR was not due to its weakness and that notwithstanding its superior military might the Soviet Union was a genuinely peace-loving country, as they themselves would have seen that in spite of possessing the military might to defeat the USA, the Soviet Union had not gone an inch further than what was militarily needed only to resist an unjust aggression on the Democratic

Republic of Vietnam by the USA. It would have objectively demonstrated to the world that whatever may be the ideological differences between the different communist parties and the extent of strained relation between the different socialist countries, the imperialist powers had no opportunity to speculate on the differences, far less to take advantage of them and that the socialist camp would act unitedly as a monolithic unit against any imperialist attack on any foreign land, not to speak of an attack on a socialist country. This demonstration would have taught the US warmaniacs that they would burn their fingers if they touched any socialist country and also might have had a sobering effect on them. This step by the USSR would, furthermore, have released a huge force in favour of national liberation movement in dependent and colonial countries throughout the world, tremendously helped the peoples in Vietnam and Laos in particular and other countries in South-East Asia to complete their national democratic revolution and given a fillip to the revolutionary struggles in the imperialist-capitalist countries. The USSR would then have been hailed as the real defender of world peace and independence of weaker nations and an active helper of the peoples in dependent and colonial countries fighting for national independence. The USSR did not avail itself of these opportunities opened up by the US military aggression on North Vietnam. It merely went to the UNO to lodge just a protest and that also perfunctorily, as per the American expectation.

We know what plea the Khrushchev leadership of the Soviet Union will advance against the above mentioned suggestion of ours. This leadership put forward before and will in this case also put forward the same argument that, had the Soviet Union retaliated a thermonuclear war would have started between the USA and the USSR, to the danger of which no sane man, let alone a socialist country, can

remain blind. Since the Soviet Union is against thermonuclear war and will never be the first to start it, how could it start if the USA did not start it first? Does it ever occur to the Khrushchev leadership how contradictory its stand is? On the one hand, while discussing the question of war and peace, it is saying that in the present-day changed international situation the imperialists are incapable of starting a war while, on the other, to defend its wrong stand on the Cuban crisis or on the Tonkin incident, it is saying that had the Soviet Union militarily resisted the US aggression, the imperialists would have started a thermonuclear war.

Then again, is the reading of the Khrushchev leadership correct that had the USSR adopted firm military measures to resist the US aggression on North Vietnam there would have been a thermonuclear war between the USA and the USSR? We hold that this reading is grossly erroneous. We have already shown while discussing the US motive, that the US attack on North Vietnam did not aim at an all-out trial of military strength between the USA and the USSR or China, far less a thermonuclear war or a world war with the socialist camp. It was just an extension of the US diplomacy into the field of military operation aiming at achieving certain limited military and political objectives. So had the Soviet Union destroyed, with the help of Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles, the US warships and planes engaged in attacking North Vietnam and effectively resisted the US aggression on a socialist country, there would have been no large-scale and prolonged war between the USA and the USSR, not to speak of a thermonuclear war as apprehended by the Soviet leaders. Moreover, the Soviet Union could foil the US design and also turn the table in favour of peace, national liberation movements in the dependent and colonial countries and revolutionary struggles in the metropolitan capitalist countries.

But failure to study correctly the aim of this limited military adventure and other localized and partial wars by the USA has led the Soviet leaders to be ever haunted by the danger of a thermonuclear war between the USA and the USSR or a world war between the imperialist camp and the socialist camp. And this unreal and exaggerated sense of fear of a thermonuclear war or a world war on the part of the Khrushchevite leaders is making them fall victim to the US nuclear blackmailing and give unnecessary and unilateral concessions to the US imperialists. This is an objective reality which no amount of revolutionary phrasemongering can refute. We explained in an article in February 1963 issue of the *Socialist Unity* how the Soviet leaders had failed to assess correctly the motive with which the US imperialists created the Caribbean crisis. There also the Soviet leaders saw the danger of a thermonuclear war leading to a world war, though there was no such danger and they gave unnecessary and unilateral concessions to the USA. The US rulers have since then correctly read how the mind of the Soviet leadership works and are convinced that the USSR is not going to resist effectively by firm military measures any such US attack or aggression on any country except the Soviet Union. This reading has emboldened the US imperialists to constantly hold out the threat of starting a nuclear war in case the US interferences, attacks or aggression are militarily resisted by the USSR and taking advantage of the Soviet passivity, almost amounting to surrender, to carry through their policy of interference in the domestic affairs of other countries and attack or aggression on foreign lands through localized and partial wars in areas where American naval and air forces are in a relatively advantageous position. The attack on North Vietnam by the USA is the natural corollary of the correct reading by the US rulers of the working of the mind of the Soviet leaders. The Soviet leaders should realize that if they cannot understand

correctly the US tactics of nuclear blackmailing and get over their unreal and exaggerated fear of a world war or thermonuclear war-phobia, the US attack on North Vietnam may not be the last one and the US imperialists, holding a threat of a nuclear war, would continue to carry on interference in the domestic affairs of other countries and even aggress on them, to the detriment of national liberation movements in colonies and semi-colonies and revolutionary struggles in imperialist-capitalist countries. The fresh provocations which the US imperialists have started in the Gulf of Tonkin by attacking and sinking two unknown patrol boats (as reported in the Western press) indicates the possibility of more US adventures in South-East Asia. Would it be correct then to characterize the Soviet stand on the US attack on North Vietnam as an example of their struggle for “imposition of peace on the exponents of war by the forces of peace and socialism”, as claimed by the Khrushchev leadership ? It would not be correct to do so. Because, any imposition of peace on the exponents of war by the forces of peace and socialism cannot but strengthen the struggle for peace, national liberation movements in dependent and colonial countries and revolutionary battles by the workers and other exploited masses of the peoples in the capitalist countries for socialism by restraining the imperialist powers from indulging in adventurist acts and interference in the domestic affairs of other countries. But has the Soviet stand on either the Cuban crisis or the US attack on North Vietnam reduced even by a whit the aggressiveness of the US imperialists ? It has not; rather, it has made the bellicose circles of the USA more reckless in their adventurist acts.

Apart from committing mistakes, one after another, on specific issues relating to a particular war and preservation of a particular peace due to the thermonuclear war-phobia which has developed in their minds precisely because of

their incorrect study of the US tactics of nuclear blackmailing, the Soviet leaders are further guilty of making an invidious distinction between the USSR and other socialist countries. How would the Soviet Union have acted, if the USA had launched an attack on it ? Would it have merely gone to the UNO and lodged a formal protest against the USA and scrupulously avoided all military actions against the aggressor, as it has done in the case of the US attack on North Vietnam, or would it have first taken military actions against the USA as a retaliatory measure, forced the aggressor to stop the attack and then gone to the UNO to expose the US policy of brinkmanship, war and aggression ? We have no doubt that the Soviet Union would certainly have taken the latter course, which it actually took a few years back when the US plane violated its air space. The apprehension that a retaliatory military action against the USA may lead to a thermonuclear war or a world war, a plea now being advanced by the Soviet leaders to defend their stand on the US attack on North Vietnam, would not have prevented the USSR from taking retaliatory measures to put down the US attack and aggression, had the USA attacked, bombed and strafed its own territories as had been done in case of Democratic Republic of Vietnam, another socialist country. Why then has an invidious distinction been made between the Soviet Union and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the matter of taking retaliatory measures against a wanton imperialist attack and aggression ? Is it because the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is not the USSR, that the US aggression on it is of no concern to the Soviet Union ? Or, is it because it is a small country that no action need be taken ? Or, is it because the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has generally supported the Chinese stand in the present ideological struggle, now going on between the different communist parties, that it should be taught a lesson by not resisting the

US aggression on it ? Had the Soviet leaders been actuated by the first two considerations, then by their behaviour they have proved that to them the defence of the Soviet Union stands at a much higher level than that of any other socialist country. This is a non-communist outlook. To anyone imbued with and guided by the spirit of proletarian internationalism, all socialist countries, big or small, stand on equal footing and belong to the same family of socialist brotherhood. So, an attack on any socialist country is to be considered an attack on one's own country, requiring collective action of all the socialist countries to resist effectively and foil the aggression. To deny it, as the Soviet leaders have denied in practice by making an invidious distinction between two socialist countries in the matter of resisting the US aggression, is to suffer, may be unknowingly, from reactionary nationalism, incompatible with the spirit of proletarian internationalism. But if the Soviet leaders have been prompted by the third consideration, that is, if they thought of teaching North Vietnam a lesson for not supporting the ideological line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the ideological struggle between different communist parties, by not resisting the imperialist aggression, then the less said the better. Because, in that case the Soviet leadership is guilty of complete betrayal of proletarian internationalism and socialist fraternity and of an act befitting only an enemy of socialism and communism.

Furthermore, the Khrushchevite leaders have been persistently saying that no socialist country other than the Soviet Union need develop and possess any nuclear weapon as it has sufficient numbers of nuclear weapons to protect all the socialist countries from imperialist attacks and stands as the guarantor of the prestige and defence of all the socialist countries. Though we believe that the USSR possesses a sufficient number of nuclear armaments to protect the

socialist countries from any possible imperialist attack on them, yet we consider as incorrect the Soviet stand that no other socialist country should develop and possess nuclear weapons. We are of the opinion that so long as the imperialists go on developing and stockpiling nuclear weapons and until complete banning of nuclear tests and destruction of all nuclear weapons take place, other socialist countries, especially those who can undertake the burden to produce them, should develop and possess nuclear weapons. Besides, has the assurance given by the Soviet Union, judged in the context of its behaviour in regard to the US attack on North Vietnam, any real value? Furthermore, is the superior military might of a socialist country to be used only as a show, or, for its own defence only, or has it any revolutionary significance and for that matter any international obligation to weaker nations and other socialist countries in case they are attacked by the imperialists? It goes without saying that a socialist country never uses its superior military might in inflicting military defeat on a capitalist country by first attacking it for the purpose of overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism there. Nor does a socialist country ever threaten the independence or sovereignty of any other country. The idea of export of revolution is alien to Marxism-Leninism. But should an imperialist power attack a socialist country militarily or threaten the security and independence of any weak nation by military intervention and aggression or try to destroy the national liberation struggles of the peoples of dependent and colonial countries by the force of arms, then must not the superior military might of the socialist country be applied effectively to thwart these imperialist machinations? The changed international situation of today has given the opportunity to and imposed the responsibility on the socialist camp of foiling such adventurist acts by the imperialists and thrusting peace on them. Not to do it means

to refuse to carry out the historic task the socialist camp is called upon to perform.

So, by remaining a silent spectator, when the US warships and planes were engaged in a savage attack on a socialist country, the Soviet Union miserably failed to discharge its duty as the leader of the socialist camp. Not only this, the USSR has also failed to move correctly in the United Nations. Apart from the half-heartedness and perfunctoriness of the Soviet move in the UNO, how could the Soviet representative agree to the US proposal to call South Vietnam along with North Vietnam to the United Nations? The USA launched attack on North Vietnam — this was the fact, though the USA brought the charge of North Vietnamese attack on the US warships first. But in any case how does South Vietnam come into the picture in a dispute between the USA and North Vietnam? The USA wanted to use the UNO as a forum for carrying on a false and vile propaganda against North Vietnam, using South Vietnam as a cat's paw. Why would the Soviet Union acquiesce in this US game by agreeing to call the American puppet, South Vietnam, to the UNO? This is not all. Not to speak of taking military actions in order to effectively resist the US aggression on North Vietnam and correctly moving in the UNO, the Khrushchev leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union did not even organize any demonstration in its own country to protest against the US attack on a socialist country, let alone the storm of protest which ought to have been organized by it throughout the world. Instead of making a serious effort to expose, isolate and corner the US imperialists in the international arena, the Khrushchev leadership, on the contrary, most irresponsibly made an appeal to both the parties not to indulge in provocation, as if, somebody else but the USA has also indulged in provocation. Does not this appeal, by implication, place the aggressor and the aggressed on a par?

When the fact is that the US imperialists launched an attack on North Vietnam without any provocation from the latter, what purpose does this appeal serve other than attempting to smear the critics of the Khrushchev leadership with the false charge of provocation to war, thereby isolating them in the world communist forum ? Is it not treason against proletarian internationalism to place the aggressor imperialist country and the aggressed socialist country on the same footing ? The Soviet leaders ought to answer these questions to the satisfaction of the communists at large.

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