

China, Vietnam And The Soviet Union

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TWO questions are baffling the minds of honest people about Vietnam. Why are the socialist countries not directly intervening? Why China and the Soviet Union are not acting unitedly? Naturally, there is widespread despondency and distrust. Some people even say that after all, socialist States care more for their national interests than internationalism. To this widespread, honest confusion, the CPM at its 9th Congress at Madurai has added more grist.

It is better to face the questions squarely.

The Chinese revolution so far as the seizure of nationwide power was concerned, was completed in October, 1949. China did not hesitate for a moment to intervene in Korea in October, 1950, at a time when she could not consolidate her power. Why could China afford to risk such a form of help in 1950? And why can't she do it today? Possibly, this is the crux of the thing which may solve the baffling puzzle. China could afford to risk that form of help in 1950 in Korea only because the socialist camp under the leadership of the mighty Soviet Union was

solidly behind China and in case of necessity the Soviet Union would have come to her aid against the U.S. and other imperialist powers. China cannot afford to risk that form of help today because more than 40 divisions of the Russian Army are poised on the Sino-Soviet border and a few border clashes of serious military nature have already occurred. One should not forget, even for a moment, this fundamental change in the situation. The change is not the "disunity" in the socialist camp, as the CPM wants us to believe. It is a simple case of the

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Soviet Union going over to the imperialist camp. The form of help China rendered to Korea was commensurate with her position then and the strength of the socialist camp. The form of China's help to Vietnam is also commensurate with her position now and the present strength of the socialist world.

How is the form of help by a socialist country determined? It is not determined abstractly or on subjective desire but by the actual strength of the socialist country. When the "Left" Communists, Trotsky, Bukharin etc. of the Russian Communist Party, were demanding immediate intervention in Germany in 1918 to make the German revolution a success, Lenin said, "Actually, however, the interests of the world revolution demand that Soviet power, having overthrown the bourgeoisie in our country, should help that revolution, but it should choose a form of help which is commensurate with its own strength. To help the socialist revolution on an international scale by accepting the possibility of defeat of that revolution in *one's own* country is a view that does not follow even from the "pushing" theory." (Lenin's italics; "Strange and Monstrous"). The "Left" Communists, Trotskyites, accused Lenin as "narrow nationalist". One need not be surprised or shocked when the CPM Central Committee, dancing in the same old tune of Trotsky, accuses China as "nationalist". If China renders such help "accepting the possibility of defeat in" her country that will surely help neither Vietnam nor world socialist revolution. This is the stark reality of the situation. Call it nationalism, but that will not succeed in provoking China and entrapping her in the name of the high-sounding, abstract phrase of proletarian internationalism.

As to the form of help China is giving Vietnam, there is one most important political aspect that should not be overlooked. China cannot send even volunteers, let alone stage direct military intervention if Hanoi does not want it.

Hanoi has more than once declared in unambiguous terms that she does not require any volunteers from China or the Soviet Union. One must read not only the events but between the events. It is not at all a secret that there are advocates of both Peking and Moscow lines in the Vietnamese Communist Party. The Vietnam communists have kept these important questions in the Party postponed for discussion and decision in view of the paramount importance of the war of liberation. When they are all fighting a life-and-death battle, those issues may be kept in abeyance. As such Hanoi does not want to jeopardise her internal unity by appealing for volunteers or other forms of help either from China or from the Soviet Union.

Had China been nationalist or imperialist she would not have cared whether the country concerned wants help or not. She would have intervened for national security, as national security even by domination over the neighbouring countries is permissible in nationalist or imperialist politics. The common border of China with Vietnam runs along the provinces of Yunnan and Kwangsi. Vietnam's defeat and occupation by the U.S. Army would endanger the Chinese position most seriously. As nationalists the Chinese should be more sensitive today to events in Vietnam. As nationalists they were always highly sensitive to events in adjacent States, particularly Korea, Laos, Vietnam and Burma. These countries allow access into China. In 1873, for example, the Chinese fought the French in Tonkin (the north-east region of Vietnam) and gave active support to Annamite troops opposing the French. In 1882, 1884 and 1895, the Chinese intervened in Korea, in each case attempting to restore a status quo favouring Chinese influence and indirect domination. Had China been nationalist she would have intervened for her national security, whether Hanoi wanted it or not. But as China is a socialist country she cannot undertake forms of help

other than what she is giving now. If other forms are undertaken that will surely jeopardise the interests of the Vietnamese liberation war. Here lies the limitation of China, set by history, which is not her creation.

Perhaps, it is now clear that what is embarrassing for Hanoi and what jeopardises the interests of the liberation struggle are being demanded by others. Aunties who show more concern than mothers are undoubtedly dangerous.

United Action?

Next comes the question of unity between China and the Soviet Union, so far as the question of sending help is concerned in spite of differences in other spheres. One should try to be reasonable and objective, and not air "pure" and abstract sentiments. Throughout the bitter polemics with the CPSU, China continued to co-operate with the Soviet Union in delivering arms to Vietnam over the Chinese railroads. At no time did China engage in public polemics against Soviet aid. It was only when the Soviet Government insisted that (perhaps in 1963) high-ranking Soviet army personnel should be stationed on the Sino-Vietnamese border at the railheads with their staff to supervise and inspect the delivery of Soviet arms, that China imposed restrictions and a system of checking the Soviet personnel. The Soviet and the bourgeois press made a great fuss over it and the Soviet Union considered it not only an affront and insult, but also an obstacle to the efficient performance of the task of arms delivery to Vietnam. Though historical parallels may not always be sound logic, one can be cited. During the Second World War, British Service personnel and seamen were stationed in North Russia, mainly to bring Allied supplies to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union imposed certain restrictions over their movements and introduced certain formalities. Churchill asked Stalin to withdraw the restrictions. Stalin in his

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reply wrote to Churchill: "With regard to the formalities and certain restrictions imposed in our northern ports, mentioned by you, it should be borne in mind that in a zone adjoining the front these formalities and restrictions are inevitable in view of the military situation in which the U.S.S.R. now finds itself." (Correspondence, Vol. I, FLPH, Moscow, 1957).

Was and is China wrong in imposing formalities and restrictions on Soviet personnel "in a zone adjoining the front in view of the military situation" there? It should not be missed that Britain was an ally of the Soviet Union, while the Soviet Union now is not an ally of China. If it was 'inevitable' in dealing with the Allied personnel in the Second World War by a socialist country, it

is doubly inevitable today in dealing with the Soviet personnel by a socialist country.

The question of united action does not arise at all as the aims of the Soviet Union and China are quite different and contradictory. There might be some understanding and co-operation where both the Soviet Union and China may meet each other half-way, so far as the Vietnam question is concerned, and this is being done. Some people unfortunately do not at all understand the significance of united action and understanding and co-operation. Throughout the period of the war against fascism there was mutual help, mutual exchange of opinions etc., but at no time was there any united action, joint command and

inspection of each other's territories. Once Roosevelt proposed a joint command for each of the Far East regions. Stalin rejected the proposal outright. How could there be united action and joint command where the war aim of the Soviet Union was the liberation of the countries from fascist aggression and the war aim of the Anglo-American powers was the defeat of adversaries and stepping into their shoes? How can there be united action and joint command between the present Soviet Union and China where the aim of China is to help the Vietnamese liberate their country, whereas the aim of the Soviet Union is to re-divide the country in her favour in place of America? There should be no lack of clarity on this matter.