The Soviet Drive for World Domination

On February 17, 90,000 troops of the Chinese People's Liberation Army crossed the Vietnamese border. The assault, which pushed up to 55 miles into Vietnam's border provinces, was aimed at punishing Vietnam for its covert attacks on China's border and for its aggressive efforts to control all of South East Asia. Additionally, the Chinese military action was intended to demonstrate to the world that it is possible and necessary to resist the expansion of the Soviet Union and its allies.

The battle of the campaign took place in the first week of March. The Vietnamese sent crack main force troops to defend the contested city of Lang Son. After several days of combat, Vietnam's decision not to control the town. With this overwhelming blow to the Vietnamese army, China's leadership ordered the complete withdrawal of troops from Vietnam and warned that attacks on units pulling out would only prolong the conflict.

Why China Struck

The Chinese move was not much of a surprise. For over a year, Vietnam had been encroaching on China's southern border, acting as the leading edge in Soviet efforts to encircle China. Even since the massive Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia last December, Vice premier Deng Xiaoping (Teng Hsiao-Ping) and other leaders have been warning that Vietnam should be punished for its actions.

In early February, when Vietnam was preparing to legitimize its conquest and occupation of Cambodia by signing a "friendship treaty" with the puppet government it had just installed, China made a final appeal. Vietnam, said, "stop on the precipice, retreat from the wrong path and not go any further.''

At that point, China launched its limited attack, which had three main objectives.

1) It was punitive, to make clear to Vietnam that actions like the overthrow of Democratic Kampuchea (Cambodia) and raids on China's border cannot be undertaken without heavy consequences. This was why it was limited in space and time, with the Chinese making it very clear that they "do not want an inch of Vietnam's territory."

2) It was aimed at confronting the Soviet Union, which is Vietnam's sponsor, while the ink was still wet on a USSR–Vietnam treaty pledging "mutual defense." China wanted to strike back at Soviet encroachment efforts and to show other countries that the Soviets are not as powerful a backer as they seem.

3) It was a warning to the Cambodian people in their guerrilla war against the Vietnamese occupation, forcing Vietnam to shift troops and attention away from Vietnam to Cambodia for a full-fledged, traditional, bad war for several months, beginning in April.

Both Vietnam and its Soviet backers admitted, in deed if not in word, that the attack was limited and thus very different from the Soviet–Vietnamese assault on Kampuchea (Cambodia). The Vietnamese didn't even move to transfer main force troops from Laos and Cam to the border area until two weeks into the fighting – instead leaving the full-action of their border divisions to deal with the Chinese. The USSR, bound by treaty to defend Vietnam from attack, restricted itself to frantic efforts on the borders it shares with China, and swearing and bellowing about how China was trying to conquer Vietnam.

The USSR is on the move around the world. Using Cuba and more recently Vietnam as the hitmen, the capitalist rulers of the non-socialist Soviet Union are challenging the US ruling class's everywhere. They are seeking to replace us as the dominant power exploiting the wealth of other lands.

In the last year, Vietnam invaded Cambodia and added the savage Ethiopian dictatorship in an all-out offensive against the Eritrean liberation forces. The Pro-Soviet elements staged a coup in Afghanistan, Soviet-armed and Cuban-trained mercenaries invaded Zaire, and North and South Yemen plunged into a bloody border war engineered by the USSR.

Since the massive Cuban intervention in the Angolan civil war in 1976, the tempo of Soviet-backed aggression has stepped up year by year. At the same time, the USSR has kept up its talk of detente and World peace, and continued to push for arms limitation deals with the US.

These are the two legs of an overall strategy the Stalinists call "the two line approach." The goal is to get in the best possible position, politically, economically, and militarily, to divide the US and Europe from the US–a new world war.

The Soviet Union has targeted three critical areas for increasing their influence in the present period.

* Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese are in desperate need of allies and Vietnam has enough armed forces to attack any of the most valuable allies for the US. The goal of this is to entice China and isolate Japan by bullying Southeast Asian states into the Soviet camp or at least paralysing them.

* Southern Africa. Harried by US European imperialism, China gives the USSR the chance to pose as the revolutionary ally of people struggling to throw off the yoke of imperialism.

* Middle East. The USSR has the best possible allies in the region: the rulers of the once-socialist Soviet Union as their hitmen, the capitalist United States, and the Western imperialists. The USSR has done nothing to curb the invasion of Cambodia in South East Asia, the Middle East, or Asia. The USSR is on the move around the world.

This made the fascist powers bolder. In 1940, they bashed General Franco who launched a civil war to overthrow the Republican government of Spain. The US, the USSR, and Britain, France and the US refused to honor their commitments to the democratically elected government of Spain and declared Spanish Fascist Francisco Franco's provisional government to be the real government of Spain.

The Soviet Union, at this time a developing socialist country, time and again supported the non-fascist imperialist countries the need for joint action to check fascist aggression. But Britain and France refused, and appeaser Neville Chamberlain indicated the USSR would support them. After Chamberlain was overthrown by a coup in 1940, the USSR came to Franco's aid.

The last act in the pre-war drama began that fall. Hitler demanded control of part of Czechoslovakia, at a conference in Munich, Britain, France and Britain agreed.

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The betrayal made the immediate advent of World War II inevitable. Germany's military strategy was based on the concept of Blitzkrieg, a lightning war intended to overwhelm the West. The German army, known as the Wehrmacht, launched a surprise attack on Poland on September 1, 1939.

Less than a year later, the invasion of Poland kicked off World War II.
Vietnam blitzkrieg bogs down in Kampuchea (Cambodia)

First hand report from S.E. Asia

Following is a Workers Voice interview with George C. Hildebrand, a Southeast Asia scholar and journalist, who is co-author of one of the few books in the English language on Kampuchea today, "Cambodia: Sacrilege and Revolution." Some commentaries are adapted by Margaret Hildebrand, a writer for Time magazine from Cambodia from 1973-75, and currently a student of Southeast Asian affairs. Hildebrand and Heder were in Asia in January and February where they spoke with Kampuchans and visited China, Thailand, and the Thai-Kampuchean border region.

Since the Vietnamese invaded Kampuchea December 25 and marched into the capital, Phnom Penh, January 7, how much do they control?

They hold the cities and the major highways - not the people. At first the western press was impressed by the Vietnamese attack. But we don't want to be misled by this blitzkrieg. The Kampuchans chose not to fight where they were weak, they evacuated the cities and fell back on the countryside, where they can organize people's war. The Kampuchean military, largely intact, regrouped in the countryside, making into battalion-sized units.

There's a pretty high level of very heavy, organized resistance going on. The Kampuchean Revolutionary Army forces have been able to launch attacks in all major parts of the country. They occupied the city of Saigon - very close to Vietnam - for almost a week. They attacked the port of Klong Moung on the sea, and downtown Phnom Penh, right in the middle of the country. At this going on, people's war means you fight everywhere the enemy comes. There are people's militias throughout the country supporting the larger military units.

What do these civilians do?

Heder: Everybody is organized to do something for the front. The millitary conscription-age men are all at the front lines. And everybody else is back behind them. They're all armed. The women and the old people make bamboo traps and package rice in banana leaves. And then the children load the rice packets on the trucks to be driven off to the front. The children go out and put the bamboo spikes in place. Everybody is busy. Everybody seems to have their own task.

If the Kampuchans are waging a peoples' war, how would you describe what the Vietnamese are doing?

The Vietnamese launched a massive invasion on a number of different fronts in armoured columns with heavy air support. It was very much like an American-style attack - an extremely heavy, modernized conventional war approach. The Vietnamese describe it as a "blooming lotus" approach. You hit hard at the center and then fan out and try to mop up opposition in columns. It's a full transition from peoples' war to conventional war, which mirrors the political transition from being a nation fighting for its independence against U.S. imperialism, to being an aggressor nation trying to attack a neighbor state and take it over.

Who is leading the Kampuchean resistance now?

It's a standing military committee of the political committee of the Kampuchean Communist Party. It's under the direction of the Prime Minister and Party Secretary Pol Pot.

So politically and militarily this is a continuation of the Democratic Kampuchean government?

It is Democratic Kampuchea. My guess is they've been prepared for an invasion for quite a long time.

What do you know about how Kampuchans lived under the Pol Pot government from 1975 when it liberated the country from the U.S. and the Lon Nol regime until the Vietnamese invasion?

American journalists (in the Washington Post and the Philadelphia Daily News) (cont. on page 10)
Kampuchea interview (cont. from page 9)

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China-Vietnam

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PAPER POLAR BEAR

China's leaders speak and act from long years of experience. In the war against Japan, the Chinese learned the importance of taking things on the offensive. They learned that if you are united as a nation, you can overcome any challenge. They learned that if you are united as a nation, you can overcome any challenge.

China wants to demonstrate to the world by standing up to the Soviet Union and its huge military machine that this mighty power is, in the final analysis, just a paper polar bear.