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The Vietnam War and China's Third-Line Defense Planning before the Cultural Revolution, 1964–1966

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Introduction

The U.S. escalation of the Vietnam War in 1964 and 1965 posed a significant threat to the security of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The leaders of the PRC responded with a three-pronged policy. First, they increased their military and economic aid to North Vietnam as early as the summer of 1964, in anticipation of the U.S. escalation of the war in August.¹ Following the arrival of U.S. marines in South Vietnam on 8 March 1965, the Chinese authorities also signaled to Washington that they preferred to keep the Vietnam War confined to Indochina but that the PRC was prepared for war and would fight if attacked by the United States.² Finally, Chinese officials in the summer of 1964 devised and subsequently implemented an ambitious strategic program for the relocation and even new construction of cities and vital economic enterprises in the country's interior that was dubbed the Third-Line Defense (TLD). After the landing of U.S. marines in South Vietnam in March 1965, the PRC also hastily engaged in general defense preparations. The TLD planning in 1964–1966 and the related defense preparations are the focus of this article.

Apart from an article written by Barry J. Naughton two decades ago, the TLD project has not attracted much scholarly attention outside China. Naughton focused on the concept and the basic characteristics of the TLD

1. See Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split, 1956–1966* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), chs. 9–10.

2. James G. Hershberg and Chen Jian, "Reading and Warning the Likely Enemy: China's Signals to the United States about Vietnam in 1965," *International History Review*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (February 2005), pp. 47–84, esp. 56–57.

program in the 1960s and 1970s, highlighting two distinct phases of intensive TLD construction. The U.S. escalation of the Vietnam War was the catalyst for the first phase, which lasted roughly from 1964 to the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. The Soviet threat to the PRC following the border clashes in March 1969 spurred a second phase that continued until 1971.³ Although Naughton correctly attributed the causes of the TLD program to security threats, he had no access to a wide range of Chinese archival and published materials that have recently become accessible, and he did not address the defense preparations in 1965 that were closely linked to the TLD program. The new Chinese evidence permits a more nuanced and detailed picture of the early phase of the TLD project, the defense preparations of 1965, and their close connection to the security problems facing the PRC.

In general, the TLD initiative shared many of the previous and subsequent development initiatives for China's western provinces but differed in its purpose. The First Five-Year Plan (FYP) from 1953 to 1957 and Soviet investment in the 1950s focused on heavy and military industrial development in Shaanxi, Ningxia, Gansu, and Qinghai.⁴ Unlike the western development initiative that began in the late 1990s, which is supposed to develop the country more evenly, TLD construction in the 1960s and early 1970s focused on the western provinces solely for strategic and military purposes.⁵ The geographical remoteness and defensibility of these provinces, not their economic underdevelopment, were essential to the decisions made in Beijing.

The basic idea behind the TLD project was the relocation from first-line (coastal and border) provinces to newly constructed cities and industrial enterprises in China's interior, or the third-line defense (TLD) areas of the PRC. The remainder of China's provinces formed the second-line defense zone.⁶ When the U.S. Marines landed in Vietnam in the spring of 1965, the TLD

3. Barry J. Naughton, "The Third Front: Defense Industrialization in the Chinese Interior," *China Quarterly*, No. 115 (September 1988), pp. 351–386.

4. Dong Zhikai and Wu Jiang, "Woguo sanci xibu kaifa de huigu yu sikao" ["China's Third Development of the West—An Overview and Reflections"], *Dangdai Zhongguo shi yanjiu*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (July 2000), p. 82; Chen Dongling, "Zhongguo Gongchangdang sanxian lingdao jiti de xibu kaifa sixiang yu shijian" ["The Theory and Practice of Developing China's West under Three Generations of the Party's Collective Leadership"], *Dangdai Zhongguo shi yanjiu*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (July 2001), p. 77; and Yang Huolin and Yang Yinjian, "Cong jihua pingheng dao da kaifa" ["From Planned Development to Great Development"], *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu*, No. 4 (2000), p. 12.

5. Barry J. Naughton, "The Western Development Program," in Barry J. Naughton and Yang Dali, eds., *Holding China Together: Diversity and National Integration in the Post-Deng Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 253–295.

6. Dong Baoxun, "Yingxiang sanxian jianshe juece xiangguan yinsu de lishi touxi" [An Analysis of the Factor Correlated with the 3rd-Front Construction Policy-Making], *Shandong Daxue Xuebao*, No. 1 (2001), p. 89.



TLD Areas in the People's Republic of China, 1964–1966

program was extended to provincial TLD projects and to ad-hoc defense preparations. These activities, however, suffered a major setback in the run-up to the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), providing a natural endpoint for this article. The resumption of TLD construction following the Sino-Soviet border clashes of 1969 is another story and thus is not covered in this article.

General Characteristics of the TLD Program

The TLD program that emerged in 1964 and 1965 in response to the perceived rising U.S. threat encompassed the relocation of strategically vulnerable industries and cities into an area that was up to 700 kilometers (km) from China's coastline and 1,000 km from the western border (see map). It also involved the construction of new cities and industrial plants in this area. Covering roughly 30 percent of the country's surface, the TLD program stretched from Sichuan to Yunnan and Guizhou in the southwest, to Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia in the northwest, and to Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Shanxi, and Shaanxi to the east in central China. In the case of Yunnan, different parts of the province were designated either as first- or as third-line areas. TLD planners canvassed these eleven provinces in search of plateaus and valleys surrounded by mountains, such as the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, the Dabie Mountains (Hubei), the Taihang Mountains (Henan-Shanxi-Hebei), the Wujiao Mountains (Gansu), Lüliang Mountains, and the area south of

Table 1 Overall PRC Capital Investment, TLD Capital Investment, and Share of TLD in Overall Capital Investment

<i>Year/Period</i>	<i>Overall budget for capital investment in billion yuan RMB</i>	<i>Budget for TLD in billion yuan RMB</i>	<i>TLD share in % of overall capital investment</i>
1965	17.000	7.813	45.96
1966–1970 (3rd FYP)	97.603	48.243	49.43
1971–1975 (4th FYP)	176.395	59.200	33.56
1976–1980 (5th FYP)	246.786	69.100	28.00
<i>1965–1980 (Total)</i>	<i>537.784</i>	<i>184.356</i>	<i>34.28</i>

Source: Li Cunshe, “Woguo sanxian shengchan buju de jibe texheng” [“The Basic Features of the Overall Arrangement of Production for Our Country’s Three-line Defense”], *Zhongguo gongye jingji yanjiu* 1992/1993, p. 48. See also Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi bian [CCP, Central Documents Research Office], *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976* [A Chronicle of Zhou Enlai’s Life: 1949–1976], 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhongyang, 1997), Vol. 2, 725.

Datong (both in Shanxi).⁷ However, as the strategy unfolded, only the TLD projects in the southwest and the northwest were developed.⁸

The costs for this relocation strategy were immense, although data vary from source to source. Several sources suggest that in the eleven years prior to the death of China’s supreme leader Mao Zedong in 1976, the PRC invested more than 200 billion yuan in TLD projects.⁹ Another source provides more detailed but different numbers (see table). They reveal that although investment in TLD projects rose in absolute terms during the 1965–1980 period, it fell in relative terms. The gradual plunge of TLD construction in the PRC’s priorities foreshadowed the formal end of the program with the advent of

7. Wang Hongjuan, “Wenge shijian sanxian jianshe shulüe” [“On the Three-Line Construction during the Period of the Culture Revolution”], *Jiangxi jiaoyue xueyuan xuebao*, Vol. 26, No. 5 (October 2005), p. 111; and Li Yin, “Sanxian yuanqi” [“Origins of the Third-Line Defense”], *Dangde Zongheng*, No. 4 (2005), p. 55.

8. Chao Lihua, “Yunnan sanxian jianshe yu xibu da kaifa” [“Third-Line Construction in Yunnan and the Great Development of the Western Parts”], *Kunming daxue xuebao*, No. 1 (2006), p. 32.

9. Estimates of the precise amount vary from source to source, but usually stay within a margin of 2.5 percent. See Gu Zhenhua, “Dui sanxian jianshe de lishi fenxi” [“A Historical Analysis of Third-Line Construction”], *Junshi jingji shi*, No. 6 (2006), p. 78; Xu Tianchun, “Sanxian jianshe—Xin Zhongguo xibu da kaifa de xianxing,” [“Third-Line Construction—The Predecessor of New China’s Western Great Development”], *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao*, Vol. 23, No. 10 (October 2002), p. 6; and Chen Lixu, “Mao Zedong yu woguo sanxian jianshe” [“Mao Zedong and Our Country’s Third-Line Construction”], *Tansuo*, No. 6 (2003), p. 12.

Deng Xiaoping as supreme leader in China in the late 1970s. Despite having been one of the early leaders of the TLD program in the mid-1960s, Deng downgraded TLD programs in January 1979 and subsumed them into the general economic reform program for all of China in 1983.¹⁰

From late 1964 to 1965 alone, 300 new middle- or large-scale enterprises were built or completed in TLD areas, with another 49 to be moved there from first-line provinces.¹¹ All in all, from 1965 to 1979, 125 large-scale enterprises (producing cars, light and heavy machinery, mechanical equipment, rolling mills, etc.) were completed. One source claims that by 1979 the new enterprises jointly reached production levels equal to those of all of China's large-scale industrial plants in 1965. Investment also went into the development of energy production (coal, oil, natural gas, hydroelectricity, and thermal electricity) needed to power these new industries and their adjacent new cities.¹² Furthermore, 8,000 km of railroad tracks and 250,000 km of roads were constructed to support the establishment and maintenance of TLD projects.¹³

Despite these long-term achievements in interior development, the Cultural Revolution had a negative impact on the TLD program. Factionalism at all levels of the political system, the purge of experienced administrators, the reduction of funds, the blocking of railroads, and the general internal chaos created unfavorable circumstances for the smooth relocation of cities and enterprises. The central government reportedly lost large amounts of its investments through misallocation and waste during the initial years of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁴ The Sino-Soviet border clashes in March 1969 and the return to less chaotic internal circumstances after the Ninth Party Congress the following April led to a second high tide of the implementation of TLD projects that lasted until the late 1970s.¹⁵ According to one source, TLD construction reached its peak during the 1969–1971 period, when the threat from the USSR appeared most exigent.¹⁶

10. Han Honghong, "Deng Xiaoping yu sanxian jianshe" ["Deng Xiaoping and the Third-Line Construction"], *Dangdai Wenxian*, No. 4 (2005), p. 100; and Li Caihua, "Sanxian jianshe tiaozheng gaizao de lishi kaocha" ["Historical Observations of the Restructuring and Reform of Third-Line Construction"], *Dangdai Zhongguo shi yanjiu*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (May 2005), pp. 44–45.

11. Xu Tianchun, "Sanxian jianshe," pp. 4–5; and Yang Gang, "Xibu diqu sanci jingji da kaifa jiqi tedian fenxi" ["The Three-fold Great Development of the Western Parts and Its Special Characteristics"], *Jingji shi*, No. 11 (2003), p. 109.

12. Wang Hongjuan, "Wenge shijian sanxian jianshe shulüe," p. 112.

13. Xu Tianchun, "Sanxian jianshe," p. 6.

14. Li Yin, "Sanxian yuanqi," p. 55; and Wang Hongjuan, "Wenge shijian sanxian jianshe shulüe," pp. 111–112.

15. Li Yin, "Sanxian yuanqi," p. 55; Wang Hongjuan, "Wenge shijian sanxian jianshe shulüe," p. 112; and Chen Lixu, "Mao Zedong yu woguo sanxian jianshe," p. 10.

16. Li Caihua, "Sanxian jianshe tiaozheng gaizao de lishi kaocha," p. 43.

Origins of Third-Line Defense Strategy

The leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) promoted the strategic relocation program for several reasons. Lin Biao, the heir apparent to Mao Zedong, had raised the idea as early as January 1962, invoking the specter of a Guomindang attack on the mainland from Taiwan and islands in the Taiwan Strait backed by U.S. naval forces. Lin obviously feared that the country's weakness in the wake of the Great Leap Forward disasters could invite such an attack.¹⁷ The worsening of Sino-Soviet relations following the U.S.-Soviet-British Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of August 1963 had disrupted China's security environment to such a degree that the PRC decided "to strengthen its northern defense."¹⁸ However, this still left Japanese- and Soviet-built industrial plants in Manchuria strategically exposed to the USSR. The signs of increasing U.S. military assistance to South Vietnam following the overthrow of President Ngo Dinh Diem on 1 November 1963 forced the PRC to react to the mounting instability on its southern border. As early as June 1964—before the Tonkin Incident in August 1964 that led to Washington's escalation of the air war—Beijing had announced additional military and economic aid to Hanoi.¹⁹ In early July 1964, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai warned that "if America wants to widen the war by attacking the DRV [Democratic Republic of Vietnam—i.e., North Vietnam] or perhaps by sending troops itself, [thereby] bringing fire to China's periphery, we simply cannot sit by watching."²⁰ The perceived Soviet and American threats to China's security loomed large at the very moment that PRC leaders were beginning to formulate civilian and military priorities of the Third FYP, slated to begin in 1966.²¹

Despite providing aid to Hanoi, Chinese leaders were sensitive to the strategic vulnerabilities of their country. In the spring of 1964, Mao grew concerned about the possibility of large-scale war in East Asia and China's ability to sustain a military effort. A report by the War Planning Office of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Staff on 25 April identified structural defense problems—the overconcentration of population and industrial centers in vulnerable border or coastal provinces—and proposed the relocation of

17. Naughton, "The Third Front," p. 352.

18. Li Danhui, "ZhongSu guanxi yu Zhongguo de yuanYue kangMei" ["Sino-Soviet Relations during China's Resist-America-Aid-Vietnam War"], *Dangdai Zhongguo shi yanjiu*, No. 3 (1998), pp. 115–116. See also Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, chs. 8–9.

19. Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 209.

20. Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi bian [CCP, Central Documents Research Office], *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976* [A Chronicle of Zhou Enlai's Life: 1949–1976], Vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhongyang, 1997), p. 655 (hereinafter referred to as *ZELNP2*).

21. Wang Hongjuan, "Wenge shijian sanxian jianshe shulie," p. 111.

cities and strategically important industrial and military assets into China's heartland.²² During the 1950s, 85 percent of the country's steel, for example, was produced in Manchuria and the country's coastal provinces.²³ According to a March 1965 report by Zhou Enlai, 87 percent of China's industry and 90 percent of its financial administration were in first- and second-line defense areas.²⁴ Given this imbalance of vital economic, financial, and military assets, Mao strongly endorsed the 25 April proposal during a CCP Central Committee (CC) planning conference on the Third FYP (1966–1970) from 15 May to 17 June 1964, noting that “in an age of nuclear weapons, it is unacceptable that China has no rear.”²⁵

The same strategic thinking influenced Chinese advice to the DRV even before the escalation of the war in early August 1964. On 1 July, Zhou Enlai told the vice-director of the Vietnamese State Planning Commission, Nguyen Kim, that it was necessary to build a “second line [and a] third line” in Vietnam “not only in the flatlands, but also in the hilly areas and the mountainous rear.” Summarizing the ideas Mao had just advocated, Zhou counseled that “if industry is too centralized, this is not favorable in times of war, [thus] it should be scattered.” Nevertheless, he concluded that “attention should be paid first” to uninterrupted rural production because it was the underpinning of the whole economy.²⁶

Planning after Tonkin, August 1964 to February 1965

The temporary escalation of the U.S. air war against the DRV following the Gulf of Tonkin incident on 2 August, and the U.S. congressional resolution five days later authorizing President Lyndon B. Johnson to widen the war, underscored the need to implement the recently sketched TLD strategy. As early as 10 August 1964, Mao instructed PLA Chief of Staff Luo Ruiqing and his deputy Yang Chengwu “to implement step-by-step” the 25 April re-

22. “Report of the War Planning Office of the [PLA] Headquarters,” 25 April 1964, in *Dangde wenxian*, No. 3 (1995), pp. 34–35.

23. Nong Zhiyi, “Lun sanxian jianshe yu Sichuan jingji kuayue shi fazhan” [“Discussing the development patterns of the Third-Line Construction and the Sichuan economy”], *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu*, No. 4 (2000), p. 21.

24. Zhou Enlai, “Outline of a Report to the Central Committee Secretariat (Extracts),” 12 March 1965, *Dangde wenxian*, No. 3 (1995), p. 37.

25. Li Chen, ed., *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo shilu* [Records of the People's Republic of China], Vol. 2, No. 2 (Changchun: Jilin renmin, 1994), p. 953.

26. ZELNP2, p. 654.

port.²⁷ Although Mao tried to allay the fears of the North Vietnamese Secretary General Le Duan on 13 August by insisting that neither Washington nor Beijing nor Hanoi wanted to escalate the conflict, he warned during a Chinese CCP Central Secretariat conference later that day that “we must prepare for the possibility that imperialism will start an aggressive war” in Vietnam.²⁸

In the following week, the economic planners Li Fuchun and Bo Yibo, together with Luo Ruiqing, provided Mao with a report covering several basic points regarding projected TLD measures. First, they advised the State Council to establish a special committee with Li as director and Bo and Luo as deputies to oversee China's economic relocation and construction. They also recommended that the central government mobilize wide-ranging human and institutional resources to study the following issues in detail: the completion of ongoing construction and the suspension of future economic projects in fifteen cities with more than one million inhabitants in first-line areas, the transfer of military and machinery industrial enterprises as a whole or in part from first-line provinces to TLD areas, a building moratorium on medium- and large-scale water reservoirs in general, the relocation of academic institutions and their staff to TLD areas, the construction of new enterprises and cities apart from each other and in places concealed by mountains in TLD areas, and the creation of people's militia committees for anti-aircraft defense. Li, Bo, and Luo estimated that the initial TLD planning stage would take until the end of the year.

Second, the Li-Bo-Luo report urged the implementation of civilian defense measures through the Ministry of Public Security. This included, for example, the resumption of the building of the Beijing subway system, obviously for the dual purpose of increasing its capacity and creating bomb shelters. Finally, the report called for instructions to be sent to all provinces relaying the above-mentioned points.²⁹

On 5 September the CCP Secretariat issued the first instruction to the provinces on the establishment of the TLD, including the readjustment of existing first-line projects to the new strategic requirements of the country, a focus on industrial and urban construction in TLD areas, and the develop-

27. “Report of the War Planning Office of the [PLA] Headquarters,” p. 33n.

28. Sun Dongshen, “Woguo jingji jianshe zhanlüe buju de da zhuanbian,” *Dangde wenshan*, No. 3 (1995), p. 45.

29. Li Fuchun, Bo Yibo, and Luo Ruiqing, “Report on the Governmental Economic Construction and on the Question How to Prevent the Enemy from a Surprise Attack,” 19 August 1964, *Dangde wenshan*, No. 3 (1995), pp. 33–35. See also “Report on How Our Country's Economic Construction Should Prepare Itself Against an Enemy Surprise Attack,” 19 August 1964, reproduced as Document No. 3 in Qiang Zhai, “Beijing and the Vietnam Conflict, 1964–1965: New Chinese Evidence,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue No. 6–7 (Winter 1995), p. 243.

ment of TLD industrial enterprises matching existing first-line enterprises to ensure continued production.³⁰ Li Fuchun estimated that the implementation of this program would take seven to ten years.³¹

On 30 October the CC approved a preliminary economic plan for 1965 that took the new TLD requirements into account.³² In a directive to the provinces and autonomous regions, Premier Zhou and PLA Chief of Staff Luo asked for provincial capital construction plans for the next three years to be submitted to Beijing by December and clarified restrictions on capital investment in first- and second-line areas. However, the directive allowed on-going capital construction in first- and second-line areas to be completed.³³

Even as these measures got underway, Mao voiced his fears about the possibility of conflict with the United States or the Soviet Union. U.S. threats to pursue North Vietnamese planes into PRC territory, or what Washington called “privileged sanctuary,”³⁴ seemed to increase the possibility of escalation to nuclear war, as Mao feared in October 1965.³⁵ However, not only possible U.S. aggression worried Mao, but also the prospect of a Soviet attack: “If the Soviet Union attacks us, Xi’an will be our front-line, and Xinjiang, Heilongjiang, and Inner Mongolia will be our first line. . . . We should prepare.”³⁶ Although Sino-Soviet relations subsequently took a turn for the worse,³⁷ most of the planning remained geared toward the U.S. military threat, as events in the following months revealed.

In late November 1964, Mao approved reports by Li Fuchun and Cheng Zihua, a member of the special relocation committee established by the State Council, regarding the mix of planned industrial and energy projects in southwestern China.³⁸ Chinese officials then began planning the details of TLD construction in that region. CCP General Secretary Deng Xiaoping spent much of the period from 2 December 1964 to 13 January 1965 in his native southwest on inspection tours to select sites. The tours often included

30. Han Honghong, “Deng Xiaoping yu sanxian jianshe,” p. 98.

31. Dong Baoxun, “Yingxiang sanxian jianshe juece xiangguan yinsu de lishi touxi,” p. 91.

32. Sun Dongshen, “Woguo jingji jianshe zhanlüe buju de da zhuanbian” [“The Great Transformation of Strategic Distribution of Our Country’s Economic Construction”], *Dangde wenxian*, No. 3 (1995), pp. 45–46.

33. CCP CC, “Instruction with Regard to the Construction of the First and Second Rear Line Defense and the Preparations for War,” 29 October 1964, *Dangde wenxian*, No. 3 (1995), pp. 35–37.

34. “U.S. Said to Allow Pursuit to China,” *The New York Times*, 27 September 1964, p. 1.

35. Zhang Xiaoming, “The Vietnam War, 1964–1969,” *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (October 1996), p. 742.

36. Li Danhui, “ZhongSu guanxi yu Zhongguo de yuanYue kangMei,” p. 115.

37. See Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, ch. 9.

38. Nong Zhiyi, “Lun sanxian jianshe yu Sichuan jingji kuayue shi fazhan,” p. 21.

long hiking expeditions in areas waiting for roads and tracks to be built. Deng's task became more difficult after he injured a leg in a fall and was forced to walk with a cane for some time.³⁹

On 5 February 1965 the CCP Central Committee and the State Council formally approved the establishment of a TLD planning committee for southwestern China.⁴⁰ Around that time, Zhou also presented Mao with a national plan on the relocation of China's military industry, but it is unclear whether a decision was taken on it.⁴¹ Throughout February, Mao alternated with Liu Shaoqi in chairing several central work conferences on the implementation of the TLD strategy.⁴² On 20 February, Luo Ruiqing presented a report on the urgent TLD construction of military factories in several specialized fields, including military aviation, surface weaponry, shipbuilding, and electronics.⁴³ Eventually, on 26 February, the CC sent out its first instruction—after months of planning—to the TLD planning committee for southwestern China to start work.⁴⁴ During most of March and part of April 1965, Deng Xiaoping and other central leaders were in China's southwest and northwest on additional reconnoitering missions.⁴⁵ The northwest region was included, apparently, only after Zhou Enlai had urged the extension of TLD planning to other designated TLD areas.⁴⁶

The Impact of the Escalation of the Vietnam War, March 1965

Planning on the TLD evolved at a steady pace in early 1965, but China's security situation continued to deteriorate. After a lull in the American bombing campaign against North Vietnam in the run-up to the U.S. presidential election in November 1964, the United States resumed its raids against the DRV on an almost daily basis following attacks by South Vietnamese Communist

39. Zhong Baohua, "Wenhua da geming qijan sanxian jianshe de wuzi baozhang" ["The Material Safeguards of Third-Line Construction in the Period of the Cultural Revolution"], *Dangdai Zhongguo shi yanjiu*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (July 2003), pp. 69–70.

40. Nong Zhiyi, "Lun sanxian jianshe yu Sichuan jingji kuayue shi fazhan," p. 21.

41. *ZELNP2*, p. 705.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Zhang Yu and Cai Guangang, "Luo Ruiqing yu guofang gongye" ["Luo Ruiqing and National Defense Industry"], *Dangdai Zhongguo shi yanjiu*, No. 6 (1996), p. 56.

44. *ZELNP2*, p. 715.

45. Chen Donling, "Zhongguo Gongchangdang sanxian lingdao jiti de xibu kaifa sixiang yu shijian," p. 81.

46. *ZELNP2*, p. 700. Zhou Enlai in fact had urged construction in Henan, Hubei, Hunan, and Shanxi.

guerrillas on the U.S. helicopter base at Pleiku in early February 1965.⁴⁷ The Johnson administration announced the dispatch of the U.S. Marines to South Vietnam on 1 March, and 3,500 U.S. troops landed at Danang Bay only seven days later.⁴⁸ Within another three weeks, an additional 35,000 arrived, and another 45,000 to 50,000 followed by the summer.⁴⁹

Four days after the 8 March landing of U.S. marines, Zhou returned to TLD planning. He realized that the program had not moved fast enough to prepare the country for war even on a minimal level. In a report to the CCP Secretariat, Zhou described the implementation of the TLD as “a race against time” to make the country ready for war. He urged the “acceleration” of TLD projects (especially in national defense industries), the development of agriculture to reach a balance in the import and export of grain (since 1961, the PRC had imported grain as a result of the disastrous Great Leap Forward), and the general development of basic industries able to support national defense enterprises in TLD areas and agriculture throughout the whole country. Zhou ordered that construction of steel plants be resumed in first- and second-line provinces as a stopgap measure so that they could join production in three or four years. He ordered the prompt transfer of metallurgy, machine-building, chemicals, petroleum, and national defense plants to sites close to existing energy supplies (coal and hydroelectricity) in TLD areas so that production gaps could be minimized wherever possible. Stressing that TLD industries should be constructed “close to mountains,” Zhou confirmed China’s southwest as a priority region because of its abundance of mountains and water power. To feed the newly constructed towns associated with these projects, Zhou ordered the stockpiling of grain and the increased use of chemical fertilizers in agriculture, for which he urged the construction of a chemical plant in Sichuan that could exploit existing natural gas fields nearby.⁵⁰

The next day, on 13 March, Zhou extended the national TLD idea to the provincial level, telling an assembly of provincial leaders to erect small TLD (STLD) projects in their own dominions. He promised that the Third FYP (1966–1970) would include appropriate funds and even announced a 15-year

47. Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 326–332.

48. “More Marines Due for Vietnam Duty,” *The New York Times*, 2 March 1965, p. 1; and “Force ‘Strictly Defensive’—Arrival is Protested by Hanoi and Peking,” *The New York Times*, 8 March 1965, p. 1.

49. Hershberg and Chen, “Reading and Warning the Likely Enemy,” pp. 56–57.

50. Zhou Enlai, “Outline of a Report,” 12 March 1965, *Dangde wenzian*, No. 3 (1995), pp. 37–38. For a more detailed instruction on grain stockpiling that was sent out on 1 June 1965, see “Comments by the State Council on the Revision by the Grain Department and the General Logistics Department of ‘The Temporary Ideas to Manage Grain, Oil, and Grass for Horses for Military Use.’” 1 June 1965, *Jiangsu Sheng Dang’anguan [Jiangsu Provincial Archives]*, hereinafter referred to as *JSSDAG*, 3072, zhang 1860, pp. 3–6.

plan for the implementation of STLD projects (1966–1980). However, Zhou cautioned against any STLD-related changes in agriculture. Instead, the focus was supposed to remain on the continued production of high and stable yields per acre.⁵¹ On 14 March the Office of Defense Industry Works of the PRC State Council sent corresponding instructions to the provinces on the organization of STLD projects.⁵²

But a week later, Deng Xiaoping chaired a meeting of CC secretaries with the aim of combating price inflation that could be expected as a result of increased expenditures on STLD projects in first- and second-line provinces.⁵³ The provinces seemed to have used STLD planning primarily as a pretext to request more funds from the central government. On 11 April, the economic planners Li Xiannian, Yu Qiuli, and Gu Mu capped the total capital investment for all of China at 17 billion yuan for 1965, urging the cancellation of unnecessary projects throughout the country and even the deferred construction of some crucial TLD projects.⁵⁴ Military factories, however, seemed to get preference. The CC decided on 21 March to approve the recommendations in Luo Ruiqing's 20 February report on the construction of several specialized defense industries in TLD areas.⁵⁵

Central Defense Planning, April to May 1965

Once Zhou had specified the general direction of TLD and STLD development for both the near term and the extended future, he and other officials turned to the details of defense planning against the backdrop of the mounting crisis in Indochina. On 8 April the Commerce and Trading Office of the State Council submitted a report outlining logistical emergency measures designed to strengthen China's war-fighting capabilities. The report warned that 467 of China's 847 oil depots, representing half of the country's storage capacity (1.07 million of 2.13 million cubic meters) were located in first-line provinces, with another 284 (0.72 million cubic meters, or 34 percent) in second-line areas, and only 96 (0.34 million cubic meters, or 16 percent) in desig-

51. ZELNP2, pp. 716–717; and Sun Dongshen, “Woguo jingji jianshe zhanlüe buju de da zhuanbian,” p. 46.

52. PRC, State Council, Office of Defense Industry Works, “Focal Points on the Construction of the 1st and 2nd Rear [Defense] Line of Each Province,” 14 March 1965, *Dangde wenxian*, No. 3 (1995), p. 38.

53. ZELNP2, p. 719.

54. ZELNP2, 725. According to a Chinese statistical yearbook, capital investment in 1965 in fact was 17,089,000,000 yuan. PRC, State Statistical Bureau, *Statistical Yearbook of China 1981* (Hong Kong: Economic Information and Statistical Agency, 1982), p. 299.

55. Zhang Yu, “Luo Ruiqing yu guofang gongye,” p. 56.

nated TLD areas. The report asserted that the high concentration of depots in first-line areas, the vulnerability of these above-ground structures to enemy attack, and the dearth of investments in the oil depot infrastructure had left China's oil reserve in "an unfavorable condition" with regard to anti-aircraft defense and logistical supply in times of war. The authors of the report proposed the quick establishment of anti-aircraft defense for first-line depots, the rapid transfer of oil stored there to underground facilities in mountainous areas once they were completed, and a general increase of storage capacity in TLD areas. The relocation of whole cities if depots could not be transferred or if they had to be built in urban areas in the absence of feasible alternatives was permitted only in Yunnan, Guangxi, and Guizhou, where oil reserves were supposed to remain easily accessible for direct supply to North Vietnam and for fuel needs of the transport of military assistance there.⁵⁶

At a meeting on 10 April with unidentified party and government leaders, Zhou Enlai outlined China's security situation. Although he dismissed worldwide apprehensions about the possibility of a new global war, he said that the chances of a Sino-American military confrontation were high and that China's capacity to endure such a conflict was problematic.⁵⁷ Given the recent furor about a supposed Soviet attempt to broker a compromise on Indochina with the United States through French President Charles de Gaulle,⁵⁸ Zhou expressed his conviction that the United States and the Soviet Union were colluding over Vietnam and cooperating in attempts to turn back China's development by 20 to 30 years. But he also stressed that U.S.-Soviet collusion had its limits. If the United States attempted to bomb China's nuclear weapons program, Zhou asserted, public opinion around the world would turn against the United States in support of the PRC. Zhou ended his remarks by calling for the speedy completion of TLD projects so that the PRC could rely on three lines of defense in times of war.⁵⁹

At an enlarged CCP Politburo meeting on 12 April, the central Chinese authorities informed regional and provincial leaders about the country's security situation and explained the directives on defense preparations they had just finished drawing up.⁶⁰ Deng Xiaoping opened the meeting with a histori-

56. "Report by Commercial Department on Strengthening the Air Defense and War Preparation Measures of the Oil Depots of the Commercial System," 8 April 1965, *JSSDAG*, 3072, zhang 1864, pp. 5–10.

57. "Report by Premier Zhou Enlai on the War Preparations," 10 April 1965, *Fujian Sheng Dang'anguan* [*Fujian Provincial Archives*, hereinafter referred to as *FJSDAG*], 101-4-384, pp. 16–24.

58. See Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, ch. 10.

59. "Report by Premier Zhou Enlai on the War Preparations," pp. 16–24.

60. Two slightly differing transcripts of this meeting have surfaced in two provincial archives. See "Speeches of Liu, Zhou, and Deng in the Politburo, 12 April 1965," *FJSDAG*, 101-4-384, pp. 71–77; and "Comrade Wang Wei Communicates the Speeches of Some Responsible Comrades Discussing

cal analogy: The PRC should not be as unprepared as the Soviet Union was when Germany attacked in June 1941—"we don't want to commit such a blunder."⁶¹ He quoted from Mao's speech the previous year at the Ming Tombs: "Stalin did not have three things when WW II started: he had no bomb shelters, he had not moved the factories [to the rear], and he had no militias."⁶²

Deng went on to scold the provinces that had allowed valuable time to pass after Zhou's announcement a month earlier had emphasized the need for the establishment of STLD. Relaying Mao's criticism that TLD implementation had in general been "too tardy" and that most provinces had only asked for more money from the central government for their own STLD projects but were unwilling to muster armed troops by themselves, Deng called for the formation of people's militias as well the speedy implementation of the countrywide TLD and provincial STLD projects. He particularly emphasized the need for STLD defense industries to be able to operate independently of each other in case of U.S. intervention.⁶³

Turning to the situation in Vietnam, Deng mentioned the likelihood of war. Describing the gradually increasing U.S. bombing of communications and production targets closer and closer to Hanoi and Haiphong as well as U.S. high-altitude flights over Hainan, he admitted that it was too early to say whether the PRC would be involved in the war—and if it were, to what degree. He envisioned the possibility of war confined to Vietnam alone, but he warned that U.S. attacks could extend from Vietnam to Korea—a worst case that would definitely mean a U.S.-Chinese confrontation on PRC soil. Deng dismissed the possibility that the Soviet Union would honor the 1950 alliance treaty and assist the PRC in that event.⁶⁴ He declared that "we should prepare for the most serious case."⁶⁵

After briefly reviewing the current level of Chinese aid to North Vietnam, Deng specified the most pressing domestic tasks ahead. He called for the mobilization of the masses and the regular army, the establishment of anti-aircraft defenses for industrial enterprises and communication links, civil de-

the 'War Preparedness Instructions' in the Politburo," 12 April 1965, *JSSDAG*, 3011, zhang 1162, pp. 43–49. A short speech by Zhou Enlai from this meeting has been published in China. See Zhou Enlai, "Some Problems with Regard to Capital Construction," 12 April 1965, *Dangde wenxian*, No. 3 (1995), p. 39.

61. "Speeches of Liu, Zhou, and Deng in the Politburo, 12 April 1965."

62. "Comrade Wang Wei Communicates the Speeches of Some Responsible Comrades Discussing the 'War Preparedness Instructions' in the Politburo," p. 43.

63. "Speeches of Liu, Zhou, and Deng in the Politburo, 12 April 1965."

64. "Comrade Wang Wei Communicates the Speeches of Some Responsible Comrades Discussing the 'War Preparedness Instructions' in the Politburo," p. 44.

65. "Speeches of Liu, Zhou, and Deng in the Politburo, 12 April 1965."

fense education, and the setting up of anti-aircraft defense committees throughout the country at all levels of administration. Although Deng told factories not to expend too many resources on such preparations in order to save scarce resources for production, he insisted on the psychological training of workers so that they would be prepared if the United States undertook systematic bombing of China's industrial base.⁶⁶

Zhou Enlai followed with brief remarks on the need to increase defense preparedness at home and to improve foreign propaganda. For political reasons, he said, relations with foreign countries should be improved. Despite defense preparations, industrial production should continue unhampered so that hard currency income from high-quality export products could be invested in foreign aid, with a focus on North Vietnam, North Korea, and Albania. Domestically, China should accelerate TLD measures "month by month" and organize anti-aircraft defense and militias, but always in a manner that would not create public panic.⁶⁷

Finally, Liu Shaoqi spoke about China's duty to support North Vietnam, although he described the current situation in Indochina as a stalemate. Repeating much of what Deng and Zhou had already said, he called for symbolic acts, such as the shooting down of U.S. aircraft and the sinking of U.S. naval ships on the sea, to raise the spirit of the Chinese people.⁶⁸ Liu further maintained that the sinking of a U.S. aircraft carrier in the Taiwan Strait—"these things are expensive"—would be a terrible loss for U.S. forces. He alluded to the possibility of a U.S. nuclear attack on China, arguing that "ordinary bomb shelters are also good against A-bombs."⁶⁹ No special civil defense preparations for nuclear war, however, were envisioned at this or any other point.

In a summary speech, Zhou Enlai recapitulated the main points of the discussion. He demanded the acceleration of capital construction throughout China and emphasized that defense industries, the TLD, and foreign aid were closely connected elements of China's policy with regard to the growing crisis in Indochina. Zhou announced urgent defense preparations in the short term and the implementation of a protracted TLD program in the long run. In

66. *Ibid.*; and "Comrade Wang Wei Communicates the Speeches of Some Responsible Comrades Discussing the 'War Preparedness Instructions' in the Politburo," p. 45.

67. "Speeches of Liu, Zhou, and Deng in the Politburo, April 12, 1965"; and "Comrade Wang Wei Communicates the Speeches of Some Responsible Comrades Discussing the 'War Preparedness Instructions' in the Politburo," pp. 45–47.

68. "Speeches of Liu, Zhou, and Deng in the Politburo, 12 April 1965."

69. "Comrade Wang Wei Communicates the Speeches of Some Responsible Comrades Discussing the 'War Preparedness Instructions' in the Politburo," p. 48.

case of conflicts between the two, defense preparations should have priority. Zhou warned that despite increased governmental expenditures, the available “gunpowder” was “insufficient” for a large-scale war. Thus, defense production had ultimate priority. With regard to TLD construction, he singled out the completion of the Kunming railroad as the most important project because of its importance in moving factories to designated TLD areas and in transporting goods to North Vietnam. With regard to STLD projects, he assigned great priority to southern and coastal provinces.⁷⁰ Four days later, on 14 April, the CCP Central Committee approved detailed instructions on defense preparations.⁷¹

On 20 April the PRC State Council ordered the implementation of the 8 April report on the relocation and in some cases new construction of strategic oil depots as well as their protection through anti-aircraft artillery.⁷² A day later, the State Council sent out a circular to all provinces ordering the reestablishment of provincial anti-aircraft defense militias, which had fallen into disorder after the Great Leap Forward, and the preparation of provincial emergency plans to deal with a U.S. attack on the PRC.⁷³

However, Chinese leaders believed that military relocation and provincial plans would not be sufficient to deter the United States in the long run. In mid-May, Deng gave priority to military enterprises related to “nuclear weapons” and “missile programs” over other defense industries for transfer to or new construction in TLD areas: “We should be prepared in case the enemy uses nuclear weapons to smash to pieces our coastal provinces; then, other places [in China] should be able to produce data [relevant to the nuclear and missile programs]. [Thus,] we will spend our money on these places.”⁷⁴

Zhou announced the general outline for the central government’s defense preparations at a CCP Politburo meeting on 11 May.⁷⁵ The four points in his program called for the PRC to “ensure” defense preparations, foreign

70. Zhou Enlai, “Some Problems with Regard to Capital Construction,” p. 39.

71. Sun Dongshen, “Woguo sancu xibu kaifa de huigu yu sikao,” p. 46.

72. “Comments by the State Council on the Report by Commercial Department on Strengthening the Air Defense and War Preparation Measures of the Oil Depots of the Commercial System,” 20 April 1965, *JSSDAG*, 3072, zhang 1864, p. 5.

73. The order is mentioned in “Circular on Participating in the Work of the People’s Anti-Air Defense,” 6 May 1965, *JSSDAG*, 3072, zhang 1879, pp. 9–10.

74. Han Honghong, “Deng Xiaoping,” 98. Liu gave a similar speech on 19 May. See “Liu Shaoqi’s Speech to the Central Military Commission War Planning Meeting on 19 May 1965,” *Dangde Wenxian*, No. 3 (1995), p. 40.

75. The date of the Politburo meeting is not certain. One source lists 11 May. See *ZELNP2*, p. 729. The other lists 12 May. See “Parts of Comrade [Chen] Yun Transmitting Two Politburo Meetings (Draft Notes from May 15),” *JSSDAG*, 3011, zhang 1162, p. 53.

aid, TLD implementation, and defense production within the constraints of an austere state budget of 17 billion yuan.⁷⁶ However, Zhou warned against the “chaotic” fulfillment of these ambitious goals in the way the Great Leap Forward targets had been achieved in “1959, 1960.” Given the possibility of an American attack, much more was at stake in 1965 than half a decade earlier.⁷⁷

At the same time that the PRC was accelerating defense preparations in anticipation of military conflict with the United States, Chinese leaders were signaling to Washington that they wanted the Vietnam conflict contained to Indochina, as the historians James Hershberg and Chen Jian have recently revealed. As early as 25 March, the Chinese media publicly announced military aid to Vietnam with the intent of defeating U.S. aggression. During a visit to Pakistan on 2 April, Zhou hoped that President Mohammed Ayub Khan, scheduled to visit Washington soon thereafter, would convey China’s commitment not to provoke a direct confrontation with the United States and Beijing’s simultaneous readiness to go to war if attacked. Zhou’s warning never arrived in the American capital because Ayub Khan’s visit was cancelled on short notice. In late April and May 1965, Zhou repeated the same message to several foreign visitors in China. Worried that none of these messages had arrived in Washington, Zhou chose to go through the British legation in Beijing on 31 May. Seven days later, the legation informed the Chinese Foreign Ministry that the message had been conveyed to U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk.⁷⁸

Provincial Defense Planning, April to May 1965

Evidence on provincial defense planning in 1965 is still fragmentary. Several official histories do not even mention it at all, despite extended coverage of other military issues in the 1960s.⁷⁹ The token information available indicates that Guangxi established people’s militia committees for anti-aircraft defense

76. ZELNP2, pp. 729–730.

77. “Parts of Comrade [Chen] Yun Transmitting Two Politburo Meetings (draft notes from May 15),” pp. 53–60.

78. Hershberg and Jian, “Reading and Warning the Likely Enemy,” pp. 65–78.

79. For example, Beijing Shi difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui [City of Beijing Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed., *Beijing zhi [Annals of Beijing]*, Vol. 30, *Junshi zhi [Military Annals]* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2002); Guangdong sheng difang shizhi bianzuan weiyuanhui [Province of Guangdong Historical Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed., *Guangdong sheng zhi [Annals of Guangdong Province]*, Vol. 22, *Junshi zhi [Military Annals]* (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin, 1999); and Yunnan sheng difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui [Province of Yunnan Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed., *Yunnan sheng zhi [Annals of Yunnan Province]*, Vol. 49, *Junshi zhi [Military Annals]* (Kunming: Yunnan renmin, 1997).

on 5 May,⁸⁰ followed by Jiangsu on 6 May,⁸¹ Yunnan on 12 May,⁸² Fujian on 13 May,⁸³ and Zhejiang on 14 May.⁸⁴ The available evidence suggests that these provinces—all of the first line—took civilian defense seriously but did not hurry with its implementation. Several first-line provinces held defense planning conferences or asked Beijing for clarifications throughout the year and into early 1966.⁸⁵ The absence of similar defense planning activities from official histories of other provinces, especially in second- and third-line defense areas, suggests that primarily first-line provinces engaged in civilian defense planning.

A small number of documents from the Jiangsu provincial archives provide a window into provincial civilian defense planning. The central order on 21 April to reorganize the anti-aircraft militias in the province evidently sparked civilian provincial defense preparations in Jiangsu. On 6 May the Jiangsu Provincial People's Committee issued preliminary instructions to the township people's committees of Nanjing, Wuxi, Xuzhou, Changzhou, Suzhou, Nantong, Lianyung Harbor, and Zhenjiang to set up civilian air defense committees in their Public Security Offices. The tasks of these new committees, the instruction said, were twofold. First, they were supposed to propagate and disseminate knowledge about civilian air defense among the population and to organize defense preparations. Second, they were expected to adopt anti-aircraft defense measures in economic planning and to carry out control measures in conformity with the requirements of wartime anti-aircraft defense.⁸⁶

On 17 May, the Jiangsu Provincial Militia's Air Defense Committee

80. Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui [Ethnic Minority Autonomous Region of Guangxi Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed., *Guangxi tongzhi* [*Gazetteer of Guangxi*], Vol. 59, *Junshi zhi* [*Military Annals*] (Nanning: Guangxi renmin, 1994), p. 488.

81. "Circular on Participating in the Work of the People's Anti-Air Defense," 5 May 1965, *JSSDAG*, 3072, zhang 1879, pp. 9–10.

82. "Yunnan sheng difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui," *Yunnan sheng zhi*, Vol. 49, *Junshi zhi*, p. 30.

83. Fujian sheng difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui [Province of Fujian Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed., *Fujian sheng zhi* [*Annals of Fujian Province*], *Junshi zhi* [*Military Annals*], Vol. 9 (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1995), p. 534.

84. Zhejiang sheng junshizhi bianzuan weiyuanhui [Province of Zhejiang Military Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed., *Zhejiang sheng jun shi zhi* [*Military Annals of Zhejiang Province*] (Beijing: Fangzhi chubanshe, 1999), p. 516.

85. Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Guangxi tongzhi*, Vol. 59, *Junshi zhi*, pp. 492, 493, 497; Jiangsu sheng difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui [Province of Jiangsu Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed., *Jiangsu sheng zhi* [*Annals of Jiangsu Province*], *Junshi zhi* [*Military Annals*], Vol. 64 (Beijing: Junshi kexue, 2000), pp. 672, 705. A report found in the Jiangsu provincial archives specifically mentions Guangdong, Guangxi, and Yunnan. See "Report on the Inspections of the People's Air Defense Work in Guangdong, Guangxi, and Yunnan," 23 July 1965, *JSSDAG*, 3011, zhang 1879, pp. 10–15.

86. "Circular on Participating in the Work of the People's Anti-Air Defense," 5 May 1965, *JSSDAG*, 3072, zhang 1879, pp. 9–10.

submitted a report to the Provincial Party Committee and the Provincial People's Committee with detailed ideas on the tasks of these township civilian air defense committees. Because Jiangsu was a coastal province, the provincial air defense committee envisioned a long-term defense commitment against a U.S. surprise attack involving massive aerial bombardment and against the spread of defeatist views within the population in case of war. The committee also wanted to devise propaganda measures to be implemented by party cadres of level seventeen and higher with the aim of raising the spirit of the masses. In addition, the committee proposed to oversee investigations into the manner of handling dangerous goods, the drafting of plans on ways to scatter and shelter crucial staff, and preparations along STLD lines for the relocation of work units, neighborhoods, and schools to the countryside. Finally, the report envisioned measures to be taken in wartime, including the continued supply of water and electricity, rescue missions, fire fighting, and the maintenance of public security. The report was approved and sent to the township people's committees on 26 May.⁸⁷ To what degree the report was implemented in the province over the following months is unknown.

Central Assessment of Defense Preparations, June–July 1965

Despite having received news from the British legation on 7 June that the warning to Washington had reached Secretary of State Rusk's desk, Chinese officials still continued to expect an American attack in the summer of 1965, as Luo Ruiqing made clear in his "top secret" speech to provincial leaders on 23 June. PLA Chief of Staff Luo ominously warned of U.S. nuclear attacks on coastal provinces.⁸⁸ Mao himself expressed concern about national TLD measures three days later, especially because large-scale enterprises were difficult to move from endangered areas to the country's interior.⁸⁹

It was in this context that Beijing sent a team of eight Defense Ministry

87. "Ideas on Participating in People's Militia Air Defense Work," 17 May 1965, *JSSDAG*, 3072, zhang 1879, 1a–7. See also Jiangsu sheng difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui [Province of Jiangsu Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed., *Jiangsu sheng zhi* [*Annals of Jiangsu Province*], *Junshi zhi* [*Military Annals*], Vol. 64 (Beijing: Junshi kexue, 2000), pp. 669, 686.

88. "Notes of Comrade Luo Ruiqing's Speech," 23 June 1965, *JSSDG*, 3011, long 1162, pp. 66–71. The fact that this speech was found in a provincial archive indicates that the audience consisted of provincial leaders.

89. Mao Zedong, "With Regard to the Question of Fighting War We Shall Have Two Strings to One Bow," 26 June 1965, *Dangde wenxian*, No. 3 (1995), p. 41.

cadres to Hanoi on a 40-day mission to study North Vietnamese experience with anti-aircraft defense.⁹⁰ The mission probably was the result of CCP Politburo proposals on 14 May to learn from North Vietnamese civilian defense experiences and from North Korean skills in concealing cities and enterprises close to mountains.⁹¹ No evidence has surfaced that a Chinese delegation went to North Korea, however.

The report of the mission to North Vietnam, submitted on 29 August, provided manifold advice. Small air raid shelters worked best unless they suffered a direct hit. Continued U.S. bombing necessitated the digging of communication trenches to protect couriers. The best strategy to protect civilians was scattering them to the countryside. The report mentioned that small North Vietnamese cities were routinely emptied out during the day to avoid bombing casualties, but admitted that this might be impossible in large cities. The report stressed that the best defense was striking back, which required close cooperation of regular anti-aircraft artillery units with civilian defense militias. Data from North Vietnam, cited in the report, indicated that 53 of 430 enemy planes were shot down. Finally, the authors of the report argued that propaganda among the population was crucial to maintaining public morale and suppressing defeatism.⁹²

The report's last conclusion seemingly came too late to prevent unfavorable developments in public opinion in China's south. On the one hand, a 23 July report on civilian air defense measures in Guangdong, Guangxi, and Yunnan listed successes of ongoing civilian defense efforts but also the dulling effect of "continued peace" that "slackened public vigilance." On the other hand, the report noted that many overseas Chinese in Guangzhou who had moved to the PRC since 1949 were demanding to leave the country to avoid being caught in war. In Yunnan, where most of the population feared a U.S. attack to various degrees, "60 percent of the engineering and skilled staff" were highly concerned about war.⁹³ Obviously, propaganda work to boost morale had been insufficient.

90. See "Report on Studying and Inspecting the Experience of the Vietnam People's Air Defense Work," 29 August 1965, *JSSDAG*, 3011, zhang 1234, 15a. No precise date is mentioned for the delegation's 40-day mission to North Vietnam.

91. "Parts of Comrade [Chen] Yun Transmitting Two Politburo Meetings (draft notes from 15 May)," *JSSDAG*, 3011, zhang 1162, p. 60.

92. "Report on Studying and Inspecting the Experience of the Vietnam People's Air Defense Work," 29 August 1965, *JSSDAG*, 3011, zhang 1234, 15a–21.

93. "Report on the Inspections of the People's Air Defense Work in Guangdong, Guangxi, and Yunnan," pp. 10–15.

Decisions on the Third Five-Year Plan, July–October 1965

Starting in mid-May, a CC work conference in Beijing discussed the details of the Third FYP (1966–1970), including appropriations for TLD projects. At the outset, Mao complained that economic planning “is bogged down in the second line, and not enough attention has been paid to the third line; now the missing pieces have to be filled in.”⁹⁴ As a result of this gathering, the state planning commission sent a report on 21 July to Zhou Enlai proposing adjustments and revisions in the draft outline of the Third FYP. On the assumption that a massive U.S. attack was impending, the report called for a “race against time” and gave overriding priority to national defense industry construction and defense preparations.⁹⁵ Mao stressed these same priorities at a CC Secretariat conference in August when he announced, “We must not lose an opportunity, time lost is gone for good, if interior construction is not done well, we will not [be able to] sleep one day.” He reminded the conference participants of the need to study Josif Stalin’s failure to prepare military fortifications and to transfer industries to the rear before the German assault in 1941.⁹⁶

The PRC State Planning Commission proceeded from these assumptions on 21 August 1965 when it looked at the large-scale transfer of industries in terms of a national economic readjustment. The agency submitted a draft outline for the Third FYP on 2 September specifying four core tasks to be fulfilled in the 1966–1970 period in the following sequence: active defense preparations, national defense industry construction, acceleration of TLD construction, and progressive transformation of the distribution of industry across China.⁹⁷ The State Planning Commission allocated 48.243 billion yuan (49.43 percent of the 97.603 billion yuan earmarked for capital investment in the whole country) to TLD projects for the subsequent five years.⁹⁸

A CC work conference in Beijing, to which the leaders of all provinces, the heads of all ministries, and the commanders of all major military units were invited, was convened from 18 September to 12 October to inform the participants of the general outline of the plan, to provide them with an opportunity to exchange ideas, and eventually to iron out the details of the Third FYP. Given the limitations of resources available in China, the conference came to the logical conclusion that the stated needs of the Third FYP had to

94. Li Yin, “Sanxian yuanqi,” p. 55.

95. Dong Baoxun, “Yingxiang sanxian jianshe juece xiangguan yinsu de lishi touxi,” p. 90.

96. Li Yin, “Sanxian yuanqi,” p. 55.

97. Dong Baoxun, “Yingxiang sanxian jianshe juece xiangguan yinsu de lishi touxi,” p. 91; and Li Yin, “Sanxian yuanqi,” p. 55.

98. Li Cunshe, “Woguo sanxian shengchan buju de jibe texheng,” p. 48.

lead to a shift in the focus of China's economy from the production of food and consumer goods to defense manufacturing.⁹⁹ This reorientation officially marked the end of the economic consolidation phase that began in 1961 to restore China's economy after the disasters of the Great Leap Forward.

The Decline of Third-Line Defense Planning and Defense Preparations, September 1965-May 1966

With the Third FYP set, most of the CCP leaders shifted to other issues in the run-up to the Cultural Revolution, but Deng Xiaoping, as one of the chief architects of the TLD project, continued to work on its implementation. On an inspection tour with Bo Yibo and other central cadres to Sichuan, Guizhou, and Yunnan, he was reassured that the abundance of coal, oil, iron ore, and other natural resources in this region made it a perfect focus of TLD development, especially once the Kunming railroad was completed.¹⁰⁰ Seeking to benefit from "Stalin's lessons,"¹⁰¹ Deng traveled with more than twenty central cadres on another tour in March 1966, this time to the northwestern TLD provinces of Shanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, and Qinghai to inspect existing arms, aviation, and heavy industries and to approve plans for their expansion.¹⁰² These were the last episodes of TLD planning and implementation before the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution.

The reasons that central leaders shifted their attention from TLD and defense preparations were manifold but not difficult to discern. With the basic decisions on the direction of the Third FYP taken by the fall of 1965, discussions on the issue were essentially terminated. Furthermore, the American threat seemed to have receded. A speech by Zhou Enlai on 15 October describing the international situation sounded much less alarmist than statements by central leaders earlier that year.¹⁰³ In a speech to a Fujian provincial delegation on 25 November, Foreign Minister Chen Yi even asserted that "America lacked the strength" and "determination" to attack China.¹⁰⁴ This assessment was to the point. A battle between U.S. and North Vietnamese

99. *ZELNP2*, p. 7561; and Li Yin, "Sanxian yuanqi," p. 55.

100. Han Honghong, "Deng Xiaoping yu sanxian jianshe," p. 99.

101. From a speech to the National Industry and Communication Work Conference on 26 February 1966. See Han Honghong, "Deng Xiaoping yu sanxian jianshe," p. 98.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

103. "Statement by Zhou Enlai: Informal Meeting on 15 October [1965]," *JSSDAG*, 3011, zhang 1162, pp. 96–100.

104. "Chen Yi's Report on the Current International Situation, Given on 25 November to a Cadre Meeting of the Fujian Provincial Delegation," *FJSDAG*, 101–12–101, p. 16.

troops in the Ia Drang Valley from 13 to 19 November had revealed the high degree of Northern infiltration of South Vietnam and thereby dampened American expectations for the war. After this battle, the Johnson administration launched its first attempt to contact North Vietnam diplomatically with proposals for a negotiated end to the conflict.¹⁰⁵

Finally, the autumn of 1965 also witnessed a major political development that preceded the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution the following year. In November, Mao moved his residence from Beijing to Shanghai, where he started to prepare his next moves against his perceived political opponents in the capital. Mao did not return to Beijing until mid-1966, by which time the Cultural Revolution, which he had stoked from afar, was already in full swing against his fellow leaders.¹⁰⁶

Although the ideological radicalization of domestic politics had started as far back as the late summer of 1962, it did not affect TLD planning until the fall of 1965. For years, Mao had defined revisionism as an ideological deviation from correct Marxist-Leninist positions to empiricist, ideologically degraded policies, which he accused the Soviet Union and some of his fellow central leaders of following.¹⁰⁷ On 10 October 1965, at the end of the CC work conference mentioned above, Mao warned a gathering of provincial first secretaries that the central party apparatus was in danger of becoming revisionist. He asserted that it was the duty of all provinces to implement their own STLD projects in order to become economically and militarily independent so that they could revolt against the revisionist center in the future.¹⁰⁸ At around this same time, Defense Minister Lin Biao, who had not previously been involved in the TLD planning, started to exploit defense preparations for his own purposes. On 12 September, he sent out a circular calling for the all-people's militias to be purged of politically undesirable cadres.¹⁰⁹

Thus, with the advent of the Cultural Revolution, the implementation of

105. See Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, ch. 10.

106. Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3: *The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961–1966* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 443–445; Clive Ansley, *The Heresy of Wu Han: His Play 'Hai Jui's Dismissal' and Its Role in China's Cultural Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), pp. 89–90; Li Zhisui, with Anne F. Thurston, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York: Random, 1994), pp. 440–442; Wu Lengxi, *Yi Mao zhuxi: Wo qinshen jingli de ruogan zhongda lishi shijian pianduan* [Remembering Chairman Mao: Part of a Series of Important Historical Events I Personally Experienced] (Beijing: Xinhua, 1995), pp. 149–151; and Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 15–17.

107. See Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, chs. 7, 9.

108. Dong Baoxun, "Yingxiang sanxian jianshe juece xiangguan yinsu de lishi touxi," p. 92.

109. "Summary Notes of the Work Conference of the General Staff Headquarters and General Political Department on the People's Militia," 12 September 1965, *JSSDAG*, 3011, zhang 1155, pp. 27–32.

the recently approved TLD measures first slowed and then was brought to a complete halt.¹¹⁰ Lin Biao's persecution of Luo Ruiqing in late 1965 deprived the TLD project of its military head.¹¹¹ Two provincial histories explicitly mention May 1966 as the end of civilian defense and SLTD planning.¹¹² Deng Xiaoping's fall from political grace in August 1966 deprived the program of its foremost champion.¹¹³ Not until a new security crisis emerged in early 1969 at the Sino-Soviet border did the TLD measures resume in full force.¹¹⁴

Conclusions

The escalating war in Vietnam sparked a major economic program in the PRC that even outlived the conflict in Indochina for some years. The TLD initiative by all indications was spurred by perceptions of a grave external threat from the United States. Although the steady worsening of relations with the Soviet Union might have initiated such a policy on a smaller level at some later point, the main impetus for the program came from the possibility of a U.S. attack. When Mao Zedong inflated the Soviet menace out of proportion, he did so primarily to suit his needs in the conflict against his domestic political rivals.¹¹⁵ By contrast, the TLD project was essentially directed against the immediate and real perceived threat from the United States. The Chinese leaders' internal discussions of this issue were sober, without the hyperbole and ideological distortions that characterized their conversations about relations with the USSR.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, China's isolation in the world and the ideological radicalism Mao had introduced into daily politics since 1962 seemed to color the stark perception of and hypersensitive reaction to the American threat.

As quickly as the TLD initiative appeared in 1964, it rose to a central position in policy planning in 1965 and then just as abruptly collapsed before

110. Li Yin, "Sanxian yuanqi," p. 55.

111. Huang Yao and Zhang Mingzhe, *Luo Ruiqing zhuan* [A Biography of Luo Ruiqing] (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo, 1996), pp. 512–536.

112. Jiangsu sheng difang zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Jiangsu sheng zhi*, Vol. 64, *Junshi zhi*, p. 659; and Zhejiang sheng junshizhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Zhejiang sheng jun shi zhi*, p. 519.

113. MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, pp. 462–463.

114. Li Yin, "Sanxian yuanqi," p. 55; Wang Hongjuan, "Wenge shijian sanxian jianshe shulüe," p. 112; and Chen Lixu, "Mao Zedong yu woguo sanxian jianshe," p. 10.

115. See Luthi, *Sino-Soviet Split*, chs. 9–10.

116. *Ibid.*, ch. 10.

the start of the Cultural Revolution. Only in the fall of 1965, after the American threat receded and Mao Zedong set in motion the events that led to the Cultural Revolution, did the ideological conflicts among the central leaders become dominant even in TLD planning. Although Beijing continued the TLD project throughout the Cultural Revolution, the effort was stymied by political radicalism. Within only a year after the adoption of the new Third FYP, the two most important leaders of TLD, Luo Ruiqing and Deng Xiaoping, had fallen into political disgrace. Once the TLD was resumed in 1969, it had a great impact on the economic structure of the PRC until the program ended for good in 1979.

Although the autarkic characteristics of TLD seem to resemble, at least on the surface, the communal ideas of the Great Leap Forward, significant differences are worth noting. The Great Leap Forward aimed at creating a proto-Communist society within politically, economically, and militarily autarkic entities (people's communes),¹¹⁷ whereas TLD had exclusively strategic aims. Geographic dispersal and economic autarky were not the result of Mao's utopian ideas of social engineering but the consequence of what he and his fellow leaders regarded as military necessity. Also, unlike the vision of a better future that fueled the Great Leap Forward, military weakness was at the heart of the TLD, as Zhou Enlai hinted to his audience in April 1965. Once China's isolation was overcome by the late 1970s and the country started to look outward, the military hedgehog mentality behind TLD disappeared as well.

In a larger historical context, the TLD initiative resembled Stalin's development drive in Siberia. Although the Chinese Communists claimed that the Soviet Union was not prepared for the German attack in 1941, Stalin in fact had been developing industrial centers east of the Urals since at least the late 1920s.¹¹⁸ However, mistakes in military strategy and foreign policy—rather than the errors charged by the PRC—forced the Soviet Union to transfer large numbers of industrial enterprises from the European Soviet Union to Siberia in a short period of time ahead of the advancing German troops in 1941.¹¹⁹ Even if Chinese leaders misunderstood the underlying causes of Stalin's policies in 1941, they were determined to learn the right lessons.

In a more general sense, the TLD initiative represents one of the Chinese development models for the country's western provinces, even though economic development was not its main purpose. During the early years of the

117. *Ibid.*, ch. 4.

118. W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent: Siberia and the Russians* (New York: Random House, 1994), pp. 318–357; Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 29–71; and Benson Bobrick, *East of the Sun: The Epic Conquest and Tragic History of Siberia* (New York: Poseidon, 1992), pp. 415–453.

119. Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent*, pp. 358–363.

PRC, Mao took over late Stalinist notions of economic development.¹²⁰ With Soviet economic assistance, the First FYP (1953–1957) already displayed a great emphasis on the development of China's interior.¹²¹ Of the 694 industrial projects in the First FYP, 472 (68 percent) were located in what later encompassed the eleven TLD provinces. Among the 150 Soviet projects, 83 (55 percent) were located there, including 35 of the 43 Soviet defense projects (81.4 percent) and 48 of the 107 civilian industrial projects (44.9 percent).¹²² The second development model was the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960). This utopian approach contradicted not only any previous economic experiences but also the strategic thinking behind the Soviet planned economy and even behind the TLD program that followed in the mid-1960s. Deng Xiaoping's advent to supreme leadership after 1978 saw a return of coastal development for export manufacturing and the emancipation of the peasants from the remaining shackles of communization, putting China on a startling path of economic growth.¹²³ Only in 1999 did Beijing again embark on a western strategy that addressed the underdevelopment of China's interior and west.¹²⁴

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120. Hua-yu Li, *Mao and the Economic Stalinization of China, 1948–1953* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

121. Dong Zhikai and Wu Jiang, “Woguo sanci xibu kaifa de huigu yu sikao,” p. 82.

122. Chen Dongling, “Zhongguo Gongchangdang sanxian lingdao jiti de xibu kaifa sixiang yu shijian,” p. 77; and Yang Huolin and Yang Yinjian, “Cong jihua pingheng dao da kaifa,” p. 12.

123. Daniel R. Kelliher, *Peasant Power in China: The Era of Rural Reform, 1979–1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); David Zweig, *Internationalizing China: Domestic Interests and Global Linkages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); and *Freeing China's Farmers: Rural Restructuring in the Reform Era* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997).

124. Dong Zhikai and Wu Jiang, “Woguo sanci xibu kaifa de huigu yu sikao,” p. 85.