

fied material, together with thoughtful commentary from scholars and observers, and the helpful views of Blight and Lang, provide a valuable background to the lessons McNamara draws from 'The Fog of War.' Just as Morris's documentary is 'must' seeing for all thoughtful Americans, the Blight/Lang book is 'must' reading."—**Chester L. Cooper**, former CIA, State Department and White House specialist on Vietnam, and the author of *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam*

"It is difficult to imagine a book more terribly relevant than *The Fog of War*. James Blight and Janet Lang weave together a compelling narrative, important historical documents from the Cuban missile crisis and the Vietnam war, and gripping exchanges of old adversaries met in dialogue in order to offer readers Robert McNamara's darkly prophetic 'lessons.' In so doing, they brilliantly engage the turbulent, complex, endlessly fascinating life of this remarkable public figure. The book is certainly one of the surest guides through the fog, and we would be wise to pay attention."—**Edward T. Linenthal**, author of *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*

"This excellent book is more than a companion volume to the Oscar-winning documentary. The historical case-studies, declassified documents, and vivid photographs shed important new light on Robert McNamara and his efforts to learn from the triumphs and tragedies of his public life."—**Scott D. Sagan**, professor of political science, Stanford University, and the author of *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents and Nuclear Weapons*

"Jim Blight and Janet Lang's book is a novel achievement. The documentation, and their enormously helpful commentary, complement the film in an incredibly valuable way. This book should be read by anyone who wants to understand the perilous world we live in."—**Paul L. Wachtel**, CUNY Distinguished Professor of Psychology, and former director of the Colin Powell Center, City College of the City University of New York



THE FOG OF WAR

Lessons from the Life of
• Robert S. McNamara

**James G. Blight and
Janet M. Lang**

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In memory of
Carmella Vertullo Lang (1915–2003)

and
Martha Schaar Blight (1922–2003)

In gratitude for our “stolen season” ...

Empathy has nothing to do with sympathy, with which it is often confused. This point has been made by Robert McNamara, and it is a central claim made by Ralph K. White, the foremost exponent of the deployment of empathy in international affairs. White, in addition to having the credentials of both a political scientist and a psychologist, also had a successful career in government, as an official with the U.S. Information Agency. White's work has had a considerable impact on McNamara's views of two historical events in which he played a pivotal role—the Cuban missile crisis and the escalation of the Vietnam War. According to Ralph White:

Empathy is the great corrective for all forms of war-promoting misperception. . . . It [means] simply understanding the thoughts and feelings of others. It is distinguished from sympathy, which is defined as feeling with others. Empathy with opponents is therefore psychologically possible even when a conflict is so intense that sympathy is out of the question. . . . We are not talking about warmth or approval, and certainly not about agreeing with, or siding with, but only about realistic understanding.¹

White goes on to explain the implementation of empathy in the cause of reducing the risk of conflict:

How can empathy be achieved? It means jumping in imagination into another person's skin, . . . imagining how you might feel about what you saw. It means *being* the other person, at least for a while, and postponing skeptical analysis until later. . . . Most of all it means trying to look at one's own group's behavior honestly, as it might appear when seen through the other's eyes, recognizing that his eyes are almost certainly jaundiced, but recognizing also that he has the advantage of not seeing our group's behavior through the rose-colored glasses that we ourselves normally wear. He may have grounds for distrust, fear, and anger that we have not permitted ourselves to see. That is the point where honesty comes in. An honest look at the other implies an honest look at oneself.²

White identified three critical mistakes in foreign policy making that prevent empathy from occurring: (1) not seeing an opponent's longing for peace, (2) not seeing an opponent's fear of being attacked, and (3) not seeing an opponent's understandable anger.³

In "The Fog of War," Robert McNamara applies the concept of empathy to this question: why, on the one hand, were he and his colleagues in the Kennedy administration able to escape the Cuban missile crisis without a catastrophic war; while, on the other hand, virtually the same group of advisers in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations led the U.S. into the worst foreign policy disaster in American history—the war in Vietnam? His answer? In the missile crisis, leaders in Washington empathized successfully with Nikita Khrushchev and his colleagues in Moscow—as he says, "we did put ourselves in the skin of the Soviets." In regard to Vietnam, however, he says in the film, "we didn't know them [the Vietnamese communists] well enough to empathize." As a result, Kennedy was able, with the crucial assistance of Soviet specialist Llewellyn Thompson, to offer Khrushchev a deal he could accept. Yet despite the efforts of several presidents, and many (otherwise) able advisers, U.S. leaders appear not even to have fathomed the basic assumptions of their Vietnamese adversary, at least not until the war had escalated to catastrophic proportions.

Below are selections from declassified documents and from retrospective dialogues that buttress and expand on McNamara's fundamental emphasis on empathy in the "The Fog of War." We believe these materials fully justify the decision by Errol Morris to make "empathize with your enemy" lesson number one in "The Fog of War."

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS Documents

President Kennedy is angry at Khrushchev and at his own advisers. The Soviet leader has sent him, on October 26, a private letter with terms of a deal that could end the standoff: the U.S. would pledge not to invade Cuba; the Soviets would pledge to remove the missiles from Cuba. But before he can respond, another letter comes in from Khrushchev, this one a public announcement, adding a contingency to the deal previously proposed: that the U.S. also pledge to remove NATO missiles from Turkey. Kennedy's advisers have told him that the Turks, staunch NATO allies, will be furious if the removal of NATO missiles in Turkey were to become part of the deal. Kennedy, however, tells his advisers point blank that, because of the NATO missiles in

aide to his father Anastas Mikoyan, the first deputy premier under Khrushchev, and Georgy Shakhnazarov, a top-level official under the (then) Soviet Chairman Mikhail Gorbachev, tell their U.S. interlocutors that Soviet leaders in 1962, especially Khrushchev, felt that the rapid, clandestine and deceptive deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba seemed the only way to avert a U.S. overthrow of the Castro regime. The former Kennedy administration officials are stunned by this revelation, principally because they recall vividly that after the Bay of Pigs fiasco of April 1961, Kennedy had ruled out any effort to overthrow Castro via U.S. military intervention.

[A discussion in Cambridge, Massachusetts, October 1987, between U.S. and Soviet policymakers, and scholars of the Cuban missile crisis.]¹⁴

Sergo Mikoyan: I think all the [Soviet] participants in the discussion agreed that the United States was preparing for the liquidation of the Castro regime . . . there were invasion plans.

Joseph S. Nye, Jr. [Moderator]: There was also a covert operation at the time code-named "Mongoose," whose aim was to destabilize or overthrow the Castro regime. I don't believe the public knew about it, but the Soviets certainly would have. Mac?

McGeorge Bundy: I remember that in the fall of '62 there was great frustration about Cuba and considerable confusion about what we should do. In my opinion, covert action is a psychological salve for inaction. We had no intention to invade Cuba, but it seems from what you say there was a very solid picture in Moscow that we were going to do something more than we were.

Robert S. McNamara: Let me say we had no plan to invade Cuba, and I would have opposed the idea strongly if it ever came up.

Theodore C. Sorensen: Well, that's the wrong word.

McNamara: Okay, we had no intent.

Georgy Shakhnazarov: But there were subversive actions.

McNamara: That's my point. We thought those covert operations were terribly ineffective, and you thought they were ominous. We saw them very differently.

Nye: That's an important point for our discussion of lessons. Small

actions can be misperceived in important ways, with disproportionate consequences.

McNamara: That's absolutely right. I can assure you that there was no intent in the White House or in the Pentagon—at least in my Pentagon—to overthrow Castro by force. But if I were on your side, I'd have thought otherwise. I can very easily imagine estimating that an invasion was imminent.

Shakhnazarov: I do not wish to turn the meeting into reciprocal accusation. I am inclined to believe you. . . .

In January 1989, at a conference in Moscow, an epochal confrontation occurred, due to the first-ever participation of a high-level Cuban delegation in the ongoing U.S.-Soviet discussions of the Cuban missile crisis. The Cuban group was led by Jorge Risquet, a volatile cigar-smoking revolutionary, who was then the Cuban Politburo member responsible for Cuba's relations with socialist countries, including of course the Soviet Union. Just prior to the conference, the Cubans had acquired from the U.S. sponsors of the conference the just-declassified plans for Operation MONGOOSE, the program of covert operations against Cuba, carried out by Cuban exiles in the employ of the CIA.

In reading over the documents as the conference is about to begin, Robert McNamara sees clearly why the Cubans (and the Soviets) believed that a U.S. invasion of Cuba was imminent. At the outset of the meeting, McNamara asks to speak first, so that he can address preemptively the issue he knows will be foremost on the minds of the members of the Cuban delegation: the planning for a U.S. invasion of Cuba, and the role of Operation MONGOOSE in that planning. McNamara's surprising intervention elicits an unexpectedly agreeable response from the fiery Jorge Risquet.

[A discussion in Moscow, USSR, in January 1989 with policymakers and scholars of the missile crisis from the U.S., USSR and Cuba.]¹⁵

Robert S. McNamara: I want to state quite frankly that with hindsight, if I had been a Cuban leader, I think I might have expected a U.S. invasion. Why? Because the U.S. had carried out what I have referred to publicly as a debacle—the Bay of Pigs invasion—we'd carried it out in the sense that we'd supported it. We did not support it militarily—and I think this should be rec-

ognized and emphasized, as it was specifically the decision of President Kennedy *not* to support it with the use of U.S. military force—but in any event we'd carried it out, and after the debacle, there were many voices in the United States that said the error was not in approving the Bay of Pigs operation; the error was in the failure to support it with military force, the implication being that at some point in the future, force would be applied. . . . There were [also] covert operations. The Cubans knew that. There were covert operations extending over a long period of time . . . from the late 1950s into the period we're discussing, the summer and fall of 1962 . . . [Finally] there were important voices in the United States—important leaders in the Senate, important leaders of our House—who were calling for an invasion of Cuba.

The second point I want to make—and I think it shows the degree of misperception that can exist in the nuclear age, the danger to all of us—it was a misperception on the part of the Cubans and Soviets . . . I can state this categorically, without qualification, and with the certainty that I am speaking not only of my own knowledge, but of my understanding—and I think it was complete—of the mind of President Kennedy . . . we had *absolutely no intention* of invading Cuba . . . therefore the Soviet action to install missiles . . . was, I think, based on a misconception—a clearly understandable one, and one that we, in part, were responsible for. I accept that.

. . .

Jorge Risquet: I am amazed at Mr. McNamara's frankness in acknowledging that if he had found himself in the Cubans' shoes, the Cuban side had every right to think that there could be a direct invasion by the Americans.



THE VIETNAM WAR

Documents

By early 1967, President Lyndon Johnson and his advisers had deployed a half million Americans in South Vietnam. In addition, the



"In the case of Vietnam, we didn't know them well enough to empathize."

U.S. continued to bomb North Vietnam (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam—the DRV) and suspected routes of the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail, along which the Hanoi government supplied their allies in the South, the insurgents of the "Vietcong" (the National Liberation Front—NLF), with men and arms. Yet Hanoi refused all overtures from the U.S. for a deal by which the U.S. would cease its bombing of the North, if the Hanoi government stopped supplying the southern insurgents, who were engaged in a bloody struggle against the U.S.-backed government in Saigon. Johnson was aggravated by what he saw as North Vietnamese intransigence, but he was also mystified by it. It was obvious, as he saw it, that the U.S. was inflicting severe damage on North Vietnam—damage which could easily be halted, if only Hanoi would agree to stop supplying the NLF, and come to the negotiating table. Hanoi, however, disdained all U.S. offers from mid-1965 onward. Then unexpectedly on January 28, 1967, the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, made this announcement: "It is only after the unconditional cessation of U.S. bombing and all other acts of war against the DRV that there could be talks between the DRV and the U.S."¹⁶

To test whether Trinh's statement means that Hanoi is finally willing to come to the negotiating table, Johnson takes the unprecedented

step of sending a personal letter to Hanoi's leader, Ho Chi Minh, with an offer to begin peace talks, as soon as "infiltration" to the South is halted. The letter is sent a little over a week after Nguyen Duy Trinh's announcement. Johnson is anxious to begin peace talks, obviously, but to do so on terms that prevent the Vietnamese communists, both North and South, from taking advantage of any truce to strengthen their position. The letter is a moving testament to Johnson's sincerity in seeking an end to the war, but also to his utter inability to grasp the way the Vietnamese communists understood the conflict.

[Letter from Lyndon B. Johnson to Ho Chi Minh, February 8, 1967.]¹⁷

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to you in the hope that the conflict in Vietnam can be brought to an end. That conflict has already taken a heavy toll—in the lives lost, in wounds inflicted, in property destroyed, and in simple human misery. If we fail to find a just and peaceful solution, history will judge us harshly.

In the past two weeks, I have noted public statements by your government suggesting that you would be prepared to enter into direct bilateral talks with representatives of the U.S. government, provided that we ceased "unconditionally" and permanently our bombing operations against your country and all military actions against it. In the last day, serious and responsible parties have assured us indirectly that this is in fact your proposal.

Let me frankly state that I see two great difficulties with this proposal. In view of your public position, such action on our part would inevitably produce worldwide speculation that discussions were under way and would impair the privacy and secrecy of those discussions. Secondly, there would inevitably be grave concern on our part whether your government would make use of such action by us to improve its military position.

With these problems in mind, I am prepared to move even further towards an ending of hostilities than your government has proposed in either public statements or through private diplomatic channels. I am prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Vietnam as soon as I am assured

that infiltration into South Vietnam by land and sea has stopped. These acts of restraint on both sides would, I believe, make it possible for us to conduct serious and private discussions leading toward an early peace.

The important thing is to end a conflict that has brought burdens to both our peoples, and above all to the people of South Vietnam. If you have any thoughts about the actions I propose, it would be most important that I receive them as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
Lyndon B. Johnson

Ho Chi Minh responds to Johnson's overture a week later. It is in many respects a remarkable document. For instead of a direct response to Johnson's formulation of the conditions under which the U.S. would be willing to stop bombing North Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh issues forth with a bitter, withering attack on the very idea of negotiating under such conditions. In response to what Johnson no doubt felt was a sincere "peace feeler," he is told by Ho Chi Minh that the Americans should not be in Vietnam, that the Americans are totally responsible for the war, that the Americans are guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and that Hanoi will never negotiate with the U.S. under the conditions laid out by Johnson. Instead, after listing the "crimes" he believes the U.S. has committed in Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh restates the essence of Nguyen Duy Trinh's message of January 28, 1967: Hanoi will agree to negotiate only after the Americans cease all bombing. But Ho Chi Minh also adds: talks can begin only after all U.S. troops leave Vietnam. In other words, the U.S. must surrender unconditionally its basic objective in Vietnam, which is to help insure the survival of an independent, anticommunist South Vietnam. This is the irony of Ho Chi Minh's message: one of the poorest, most backward countries in the world demands the surrender of the world's greatest superpower. No wonder Johnson was mystified.

The stage is set for one of the most emotional and pivotal moments of the conference, and in fact of the entire (by now) nearly decade-long research process. Mr. Tran Quang Co, the former First Deputy Foreign Minister, understands McNamara not to be asking a question primarily about the U.S. peace probes, which was his intent, but rather to be subtly accusing the Hanoi leadership of crimes against their own people—of supreme insensitivity to the pain and suffering of the Vietnamese people. Working up to a fever pitch of emotion, Tran Quang Co suddenly switches from Vietnamese into English and accuses McNamara of being “wrong, terribly wrong,” a phrase made famous by McNamara himself in his 1995 memoir of the war.²¹ Tran Quang Co’s intervention ends abruptly, followed by a long and eerie silence.

Mr. Dao Huy Ngoc, who is chairing the session, next adds that the Vietnamese people have suffered from invasions and occupations for more than 4,000 years, but in the end they always prevail. The invaders and occupiers eventually go home, just as the Americans went home. The discussion is concluded by Mr. Nguyen Co Thach, the former Vietnamese Foreign Minister and head of the Vietnamese delegation, who adds that while leaders in Hanoi certainly wanted peace, the Vietnamese have never accepted “peace at any price.” (Robert McNamara and Nguyen Co Thach subsequently take up this conversation at lunch following this exchange, an event vividly described by McNamara in “The Fog of War” as the point at which “we almost came to blows.”)

[A discussion in Hanoi, Vietnam, in June 1997, between former policymakers from both the U.S. and Vietnamese governments.]²²

Robert S. McNamara: My belief is that there could have been negotiations between the end of '65 and '68 which would have led to a settlement that was roughly the same as the one that eventually occurred, but without that terrible loss of life.

Why didn't it occur? Were you not influenced by the loss of lives? Why didn't it move you toward negotiations? Wasn't there, from your point of view, reason to probe the degree to which you could have “manipulated” the negotiations in ways that

would have been favorable to you? Why didn't you at least probe the degree to which we could have been persuaded to reduce the military pressure, to move toward a unified Vietnam, unaligned. Now in a sense that's what ultimately happened. But at a tremendous cost in human life. Why weren't the negotiations started earlier? I have not heard anything this morning that answers that question.

Tran Quang Co: I would like to answer Mr. McNamara's question. You imply that there was a difference in attitude toward the war between the people of North [Vietnam] and the North Vietnamese leadership. You have this misconception that even though the Vietnamese people were suffering because of the war, still the Vietnamese leadership did not want peace, did not want to proceed to peace.

I must say that this question of Mr. McNamara's has allowed us to better understand the issue. During the coffee break, an American colleague asked me if I have learned anything about the U.S. during the discussions of the past few days. And I responded that I have learned quite a lot. However, thanks to this particular question, I believe we have learned still more about the U.S. We understand better now that the U.S. understands very little about Vietnam. Even now—in this conference—the U.S. understands very little about Vietnam.

When the U.S. bombed the North and brought its troops into the South, well, of course to us these were very negative moves. However, with regards to Vietnam, U.S. aggression did have some positive use. Never before did the people of Vietnam, from top to bottom, unite as they did during the years that the U.S. was bombing us. Never before had Chairman Ho Chi Minh's appeal—that there is nothing more precious than freedom and independence—gone straight to the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people as at the end of 1966.

But if Mr. McNamara thinks that the North Vietnamese leadership was not concerned about the suffering of the Vietnamese people, with deaths and privation, then he has a huge misconception of Vietnam. That would be [Speaks in English] “wrong, terribly wrong.” [Resumes in Vietnamese] There was never any

- Faced with that situation, the local naval commanders adopted the policy of striking back at and punishing the pirates who violated our waters and our people's security.
- At noon on Sunday, August 2 1964, our navy's Squadron 3, consisting of three torpedo boats, was ordered to set out and to resolutely punish the "acts of piracy" of the U.S. imperialists, and to attack the destroyer *Maddox*, which had penetrated deeply into our coastal waters in the area between Hon Me Island and Lach Truong in Thanh Hoa Province.¹⁶

Dialogues

In November 1995, Robert McNamara becomes the first senior U.S. official during the Vietnam War to visit Hanoi. He does so to inquire as to whether the Vietnamese government wishes to collaborate on an inquiry into key decision points in the escalation of the war, along the lines of the Cuban missile crisis project, which had produced such striking results. During that visit, McNamara meets with his counterpart during the 1960s, Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, the legendary former defense minister and architect of Hanoi's military strategy.

Supremely confident, dismissive of any suggestion that any of Hanoi's decisions may have been based on false assumptions about the Americans, Giap is the "anti-McNamara." McNamara is remarkably willing to consider the possibility that he was mistaken in ways that contributed to what he calls the "tragedy" of Vietnam. Giap tells McNamara that a Vietnamese-American inquiry would be interesting, though the Vietnamese missed no opportunities, would do nothing different, and were participants in a "noble sacrifice," rather than a tragedy. In their discussion of the Tonkin Gulf incident, with which their discussion began, Giap tells McNamara that he knows that the Americans purposely provoked the affair, because they were anxious to take over the war from the South Vietnamese. Although both of these conclusions are highly questionable at best, McNamara is unable to convince Giap to keep an open mind at least until the planned conference occurs.

Not everyone in Vietnam agrees with Giap. There is plenty of evidence that many Vietnamese feel ambivalent about the war, even

questioning whether it should have been fought at all, though in the tightly controlled Vietnamese society, these sentiments are seldom stated directly and publicly. But our own experience in Vietnam suggests that many have a good deal of sympathy for the view of the writer known as Bao Ninh, whose 1993 novel, *The Sorrow of War*, became a bestseller. The novel is based on the author's experience in 1969, when all but ten of his brigade (of more than 500) were killed in some of the war's bloodiest fighting. The book rejects Giap's smug triumphalism, and focusses instead on "the horrors of war . . . the cruelties, the humiliations . . . all the ridiculous prejudice and dogma which pervaded everyone's life." According to the author, "each of us had been crushed by the war in a different way."¹⁷ The Vietnamese government permitted the publication of the novel, but placed Bao Ninh under house arrest when it became a bestseller, in Vietnam and abroad. One wonders how long it will be before such views can be put forth in Vietnam without fear of official reprisals.

[A discussion between Robert McNamara and Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap at a November 1995 meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam.]¹⁸

Robert McNamara: General, I want us to examine our mindsets, and to look at specific instances where we—Hanoi and Washington—may each have been mistaken, have misunderstood each other, such as in the Tonkin Gulf episode we've been discussing.

Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap: I don't believe we misunderstood you. You were the enemy; you wished to defeat us—to destroy us. So we were forced to fight you—to fight a "People's War" to reclaim our country from your neo-imperialist ally in Saigon—we used the word "puppet," of course, back then—and to reunify our country.

Robert McNamara: General, I am interested—and my U.S. colleagues are interested—in putting a claim such as you have just made to the test at our conference. Were we—was I, was Kennedy, was Johnson—a "neo-imperialist" in the sense you are using the word? I would say *absolutely not!* Now, if we can agree on an agenda focussed on episodes like Tonkin Gulf, where we may have misunderstood each other, then. . . .

Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap: Excuse me, but we *correctly* understood

something that certainly we did not understand or anticipate at the time. . . . There was a far greater de-centralization of authority and command with respect to the North Vietnamese military than we understood at the time. I think it's an important point, because it now seems as if we may have drawn unwarranted conclusions, based on our misunderstanding of your command and control arrangements.

Second question: did the presumed second attack occur on August 4th—on the *Turner Joy* and the *Maddox*?

Gen. Nguyen Dinh Uoc: I will give you my opinion. Several days ago, when I met with him, General Vo Nguyen Giap did say very clearly that the August 4th "incident" positively did not occur. And the general also said that his private journal testifies that the August 4th "incident" did not occur. And that is the truth.

. . .

Luu Doan Huynh: We understood that the bombing [of August 4–5, 1964] was designed to curb the fighting will of North Vietnam; and also to halt supplies to the South. That is true. We did see those motives behind the decision to bomb the North.

But I would add to this that there was something else that we saw—that was indicated by the bombing. This was a signal—as we saw it—showing that you have not only extended the war to the North, but you were also going to expand the war in the South. You were going to "Americanize" the war. Based on this assessment, we believed that very important decisions would soon be made in Washington. So we have to be careful. We have to be ready to face the possibility of an imminent escalation to a big war with the U.S. This worried us a lot.

In fact, we expected the bombing of North Vietnam to begin sometime in 1963. Yes, I said "1963." One of your high officials, according to your documents, claimed in 1963 that we were using "salami tactics" to avoid your bombing. Anyway, so the bombing began. After the bombing started in early 1965, President Ho Chi Minh made a statement calling on all Vietnamese to fight for the liberation of the country. This is a very significant statement—very significant, and I am not sure the Americans understood the meaning of it at the time. It means that

since you have extended the war to North Vietnam, we are now saying—officially saying—that we are entering the war in the South.

. . .

I told you before that since 1963, we were anticipating the bombing. I don't mean that we thought the bombing was going to begin in 1963. Maybe yes, maybe no. What I mean is that was when we concluded that *at some point* you will begin the bombing. Why? Because at some point, you will see that you are losing ground in the South. So we decided to stand ready.

Now I am talking about August 5, 1964 and the bombing right after. After August 5, the children in Hanoi were ordered to go to the countryside for dispersal. My young son was among these children who were quickly moved to the countryside, because we knew that the bombing—the real bombing in earnest—could begin at any time. Our Foreign Ministry, and many other ministries, organized boarding houses in the countryside for the children.

So, this means that in 1963 we realized—I would say for the first time—that the bombing is coming, at some point. In August 1964, we went on alert, so to speak, and evacuated children from Hanoi, in anticipation of the bombing. And the bombing began the following February.

The Dilemma: We Remain Prisoners of Our Mindsets

Why did Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, after agonizing over the available information from his sources in the Pacific, finally say to President Lyndon Johnson that the alleged "second" attack in the Tonkin Gulf on August 4, 1964, was "probable, but not certain," knowing that Johnson would subsequently order "retaliatory" air strikes against targets in North Vietnam? One answer, suggested in the text of the documents and dialogues of this chapter, is a combination of otherwise unrelated factors, including domestic political concerns (a decision must be made showing the president, who is running for election against a "hawk," Barry Goldwater, to be